

**BELIEFS, ANXIETY, AND ENJOYMENT: AN EXPLORATION
OF LEARNERS OF CHINESE IN UK UNIVERSITIES**

BY

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the beliefs about language learning, foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and foreign language anxiety (FLA) of UK-based adult learners of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL). Situated within the broader field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), this study aims to address the English-language bias prevalent in existing research by focusing on a less commonly taught and linguistically challenging language. Through a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from online questionnaires with qualitative insights from in-depth semi-structured interviews, the research explores the complex interplay between learners' beliefs about language learning, FLE, FLA and self-perceived L2 achievement.

The study reveals that CFL learners, despite facing the inherent difficulties of learning Chinese, such as its tonal nature and logographic writing system, generally hold positive beliefs about the language and experience high levels of both FLA and FLE. While some of these beliefs align with those of learners studying more commonly taught languages, others are uniquely tied to the specific characteristics of Chinese, supporting Horwitz's (1999) hypothesis that variations in beliefs may stem from the unique features of the target language. Compared to learners of English and other commonly taught languages, CFL learners experience more intense emotions. The challenges of Chinese slightly elevate their anxiety levels but also enhance their enjoyment, driven by a sense of progress and achievement. These results support Luo's (2013) assertion that the difficulty of the language is a significant source of learners' anxiety.

Quantitative findings did not show a significant impact of immersion experience and course levels on learners' beliefs or their levels of FLE and FLA. However, qualitative data revealed that these variables do indeed influence learners' beliefs about language learning. A key insight from this research is that higher levels of FLE are consistently linked to positive beliefs about one's ability to learn Chinese (self-efficacy), the use of effective learning strategies, and higher motivation. Additionally, higher self-perceived writing ability correlates positively with FLE. Conversely,

lower levels of FLA are associated with higher self-efficacy, greater perceived value in learning Chinese, higher overall proficiency, and better self-perceived speaking and listening abilities. Multiple regression analyses revealed that self-efficacy, learning strategies and motivation, and self-reported writing ability significantly predict FLE, with self-efficacy having the strongest impact. Furthermore, learners' self-efficacy, their beliefs about the value of learning Chinese, and their self-reported speaking ability significantly predict FLA, with beliefs about the value of learning Chinese emerging as the most influential predictor.

Qualitative data reveal that CFL learners' enjoyment of language learning stems from factors such as a sense of achievement, the novelty of the Chinese language and culture, a supportive classroom environment, and the practical application of the language. However, their anxiety arises from speaking Chinese in public, fear of making mistakes or facing embarrassment, peer pressure, and a generally anxious disposition.

The implications of these findings are significant for both SLA theory and language pedagogy. Theoretically, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how learner beliefs interact with emotional experiences in the context of learning a non-Indo-European language. Practically, the research provides valuable insights for educators and curriculum designers, emphasizing the need to consider learners' individual beliefs and emotional states when developing instructional strategies. By tailoring teaching practices to address both the cognitive and emotional needs of CFL learners, educators can enhance the effectiveness of language instruction and support learners in overcoming the unique challenges of learning Chinese.

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. The content of this thesis has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This section provides a concise overview of the thesis. It begins with the researcher's personal motivation behind the research and background information that sets the context. Following this, the research rationale and objectives are clearly stated. The significance of the study is discussed to underscore its relevance, alongside a brief overview of the methodology employed. The organization of the thesis is also described to provide a structural roadmap. The section concludes with a summary that encapsulates the main points addressed.

1.1 Personal Motivation

Before embarking on my PhD journey, I dedicated 18 years to teaching foreign languages at the university level — 16 years teaching English in China and two years teaching Mandarin Chinese in England. Reflecting on this extensive experience, I frequently observed that despite their eagerness, some students struggled to master the language. This observation led me to engage in multiple discussions with my students about their perceptions of language learning, both in China and England, exploring how they thought about language learning, optimal learning strategies, effective teaching methods, and their personal approaches to learning. These dialogues consistently revealed a blend of consensus and individual perspectives.

While teaching Mandarin Chinese in England, I noticed that even the most enthusiastic students faced considerable challenges. These students chose to study Chinese driven by genuine interest. However, despite their diligence, many faced significant struggles. This paradox prompted me to review the literature on theories of second language acquisition (SLA), aiming to enhance support for my students. My research revealed a gap: studies predominantly focus on English language education. This trend is consistent with Ma et al.'s (2017) observation that research on language education has historically focused mainly on English, overshadowing other languages and pedagogical approaches. Consequently, the applicability of these theories and findings to the teaching and learning of the Chinese language remains ambiguous (Chan et al., 2022).

My most cherished memories of teaching in the UK revolve around the high engagement levels of my students during classroom activities. They listened intently as I introduced aspects of Chinese culture and history and were captivated by the Chinese video clips I played. Their engagement deepened during cooperative activities, such as pair and group work. Unlike compulsory English language learners in China, these students voluntarily chose to learn Chinese, resulting in higher levels of cooperation and learning autonomy. They responded to my questions with thoughtfulness and were meticulous in completing assignments outside of class. We laughed together and 'grew up' together. Each class ended with a profound sense of joy and shared growth, enriching our collective experience.

However, despite their efforts, it was not uncommon for some students to achieve lower than expected results on assessments. This recurring observation brought me back to a fundamental question in education: 'Why do some students succeed while others do not?'

In the UK, many students engage in learning Mandarin as a foreign language. These learners, typically native speakers of Indo-European languages, face unique challenges in mastering Chinese (Zhang & Li, 2019). Surprisingly, a review of literature revealed a dearth of studies addressing these students' specific experiences and perceptions of learning Chinese. Motivated by this gap, I decided to conduct a study focusing on how these learners perceive and experience the process of learning Chinese.

1.2 Research Background

This section provides an overview of the research background. It begins with an introduction to the research context, emphasizing the growth of Chinese language learning and teaching and challenges of learning Chinese for non-native speakers. Following this introduction, the section delves into fundamental concepts central to the study, including learners' beliefs about language acquisition and emotions in second language acquisition.

1.2.1 Research Context

The learning and teaching of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) have experienced significant growth in recent years (Chan et al., 2022), likely due to China's expanding economic and political influence as one of the world's leading economies by GDP (World Bank, 2021). The primary focus of CFL programs is Mandarin Chinese. The term 'Mandarin' typically refers to 'Standard Chinese,' which is primarily based on a specific variant of Mandarin Chinese spoken in Beijing, China. It is the most widely used and populous of the seven dialect groups in the Chinese language family (Chan et al., 2022; Huang & Liao, 2002). With over a billion native speakers in total (Leben, 2018) and tens of millions of learners all over the world (Duff & Li, 2013), Mandarin Chinese is the most internationally recognized and utilized dialect (Gong et al., 2020).

The teaching of Chinese as a foreign language in the UK has a rich history and has seen dynamic growth, particularly in the 21st century (Zhang & Li, 2019). Historical records reveal that systematic Chinese language teaching in the UK began with pioneers such as Robert Morrison in the early 19th century (Zhang & Li, 2010). More recently, the growth of CFL learning and teaching have been bolstered by various national strategies aimed at expanding Chinese language education in schools. For instance, in 2016 the British government funded the 'Mandarin Excellence Programme' (MEP), aiming to bring 5,000 students to fluency in Mandarin by 2020—a target surpassed by January 2021 (UCL, 2021). Additionally, the global promotion of Chinese language education has been supported by Confucius Institutes (CI), funded by the government of the People's Republic of China. As of 2019, there were 550 CIs operating in 162 countries, providing

support to 1,172 'Confucius classrooms' (CCs) in schools worldwide (Government of the PRC, 2019). By 2022, the UK had hosted 30 of these institutes, the most in any country globally (Henry Jackson Society, 2022). Moreover, the data from Language Trends England 2023 report (Collen, 2023) indicate that Mandarin Chinese, after the 'big three' languages (French, Spanish and German), is the most frequently taught language as a full-curriculum subject in state secondary schools. At the tertiary level, a 2017 survey conducted by the European Association of Chinese Teaching (EACT) indicated that approximately 85% of higher education institutions (117 out of 134) in the UK offer Chinese language courses. This significant coverage underscores the robust presence of Mandarin Chinese in higher education, reflecting not only academic interest but also the broader economic and political significance of China on the global stage.

Despite the sharp growth in learning and teaching CFL, the complex nature of the Chinese language, characterized by its tonal variations and logographic writing system, poses substantial challenges to many second/foreign language (L2) learners, especially those with an alphabetic first language (L1) background (Hu, 2010). According to the Language Difficulty Rankings created by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI, responsible for training American diplomats and other professionals in foreign languages over 70 foreign languages for more than 75 years) of the U.S. Department of State, Chinese is ranked as one of the five most difficult languages [together with Cantonese, Japanese, Arabic and Korean] for native English speakers. Learners need to spend approximately 2,200 class hours (88 weeks) to reach 'general professional proficiency' in speaking and reading. This level of proficiency is often classified as reaching Level 3 on the American Interagency

Language Roundtable (ILR) scale, which is equivalent to a C1 level on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Kubler, 2018).

The challenges associated with learning Chinese as a foreign language might affect learners' expectations of success and potentially influence their beliefs and emotional responses to learning it, despite the high instrumental value Chinese learning may hold for learners (Chan et al., 2022). In summary, CFL presents a distinctive set of challenges and opportunities that may potentially influence learners' emotional and cognitive experiences. This research aims to delve into the complex interplay between learners' beliefs about language learning, their enjoyment of the process, and the anxiety they may face throughout this journey.

1.2.2 Beliefs About Language Learning

Buddha says, 'The mind is everything; what you think, you become'. It underscores the idea that our thoughts and beliefs directly influence our actions, behaviors, and ultimately, our destiny. This idea has been influential in spiritual and philosophical realms and in fields such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, education, and even therapeutic practices (Bar-Tal, 1990). The role and importance of beliefs have greatly interested many scholars from diverse disciplines. In disciplines dealing with human behaviors and learning, for example educational psychology, cognitive psychology and social psychology, beliefs are central constructs to be investigated in relation to their subsequent influence on human behaviors. Researchers have long claimed that people have

preconceived ideas or concepts about various issues and these beliefs help individuals ‘to predict, to explain, to create, to inspire, to be entertained, to feel good, and to buttress confidence’ (Nilsson 2014, p.20) and to define and understand the world and themselves (Abdi & Asadi, 2015; White, 1999). Puchta (1999), for example, viewed people’s beliefs as ‘guiding principles’ of people’s behaviours and claimed that ‘beliefs are generalizations about cause and effect, and [that] they influence our inner representations of the world around us. They help us to make sense of that world, and they determine how we think and how we act’ (pp. 68-69).

Alike, second and foreign language learners of all ages have beliefs about language learning, and they come to class with some presumptions about what language learning is and how a second/foreign language should be learned (Horwitz, 1987). The initial exploration into learners’ beliefs about language learning emerged alongside growing interest in the cognitive aspects of language acquisition (Barcelos, 2011). Early studies focused primarily on understanding how learners’ attitudes and expectations could affect their language learning strategies and outcomes (Ellis, 2008). Researchers like Rubin (1975) began identifying what successful language learners believed and did differently, laying the groundwork for later investigations. Learners' beliefs about language learning (although under different terms, such as ‘mini-theories’ or ‘learning philosophies’), together with other learners' individual differences, such as personality, cognitive styles, learning strategies and motivation were outlined as possible explanations of why some learners succeed in learning languages while others do not. The development of specific instruments to measure learners' beliefs propelled the research area. The most notable of these tools was the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) created by Elaine Horwitz in 1987.

This tool allowed for a systematic exploration of various beliefs learners held about the nature of language learning. Following this, many researchers have used the BALLI, along with other instruments, to document language learning beliefs across different contexts (e.g., Kuntz, 1996; Oh, 1996; Su, 1995; Yang, 1999).

With the promotion of learner autonomy and the subsequent surge in providing learners with learning strategy training, the concept of beliefs was further reinforced by the studies conducted by Wenden in 1986 and 1987 (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013). In her 1987 work, Anita Wenden furthered her exploration into learners' beliefs and strategies in language learning. By conducting interviews with 25 students who had resided in the US for no more than two years and were enrolled in advanced level courses at a language institute, Wenden analyzed learners' metacognitive knowledge about language learning, including their expectations, judgments about their own capabilities, and their assumptions about effective learning strategies. Wenden (1987) emphasized the impact of these beliefs on language learning behavior and strategies, highlighting the importance of aligning educational practices with learners' beliefs to optimize learning outcomes. She argued that for effective language learning to take place, it is crucial for educators to address and potentially reshape learners' beliefs. This study was particularly influential in shaping our understanding of how learners' beliefs about language learning influence their approach to acquiring a new language (Kalaja et al., 2018).

As the field matured in the 1990s (Barcelos, 2015), studies began to diversify both in terms of methodology and the dimensions of beliefs examined. Researchers like Sakui and Gaies (1999) and Wenden (1999) expanded the use of the BALLI and other tools across different contexts and languages. This field also saw an increase in qualitative studies, such as those by Barcelos (2000), which explored the dynamic and context-dependent nature of learner beliefs, showing how they could change over time and influence language learning in complex ways. At the same time, research began to integrate beliefs with broader theories of motivation and self-regulated learning (e.g., Gabillon, 2007; Barcelos, 2015; Gu et al., 2022). The focus shifted toward understanding how beliefs interact with other learner factors like motivation, anxiety, self-efficacy and strategy use. This integration helped to paint a more comprehensive picture of the language learner, recognizing that beliefs are part of a larger system of cognitive and affective factors that affect language learning (Kalaja et al., 2018). More recently, researchers have focused on investigating the maintenance and shift of learners' beliefs about language learning (Zhong, 2022)

Although research on learner beliefs has often occupied a peripheral position compared to other individual variables in language learning (Kalaja et al., 2018), previous studies have extensively documented the important role these beliefs play in shaping both the processes and outcomes of L2 learning. The beliefs held by learners were thought to function like a strong filter of reality (Arnold, 1999) which influence how learners view themselves, other people, and their surroundings (Abelson, 1986). They were thought to be the important stimuli for learners' actions (Scholenfeld, 1983) and a good indicator of learners' decisions (McDonough, 1995) and thereby influence learners' approaches to L2 learning as well as their learning outcomes (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013,

2015; Schommer, 1990). Researchers utilize learners' beliefs about language learning to comprehend learners' approaches and behaviours in the learning process (Kalaja et al., 2018), to understand learners' world and their identity (Barcelos, 2015; Ndzotom Mbakop & Kamgang Ndada, 2021). However, less is known about what learners coming from Anglophone countries believe about learning Chinese.

1.2.3 Emotions in Second Language Acquisition

Learning a L2 is intrinsically tied to a wide spectrum of emotions ranging from joy and pride to frustration and anxiety (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). Historically, the emotional dimension of language learning was somewhat marginalized in research, overshadowed by a dominant focus on cognitive processes within SLA (Barcelos, 2015; Dewaele & Li, 2018; Swain, 2013). Despite this, the investigation of emotions within SLA has not been entirely absent (e.g., Argao 2007; 2011; Arnold 1999; Dewaele, 2005; Imai, 2010; MacIntyre, 1995; Swain, 2013). Early research initiatives, albeit limited, acknowledged the role of affective factors, predominantly focusing on negative emotions such as anxiety (Dewaele & Li, 2020). The introduction of Positive Psychology into SLA studies marked a significant shift, expanding the scope of emotional inquiry to encompass a more balanced view of learner emotions (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Nowadays, L2 emotion research has moved to a central place in SLA (Dewaele, 2022) and the field is undergoing an 'emotional turn' (Prior, 2019).

Dewaele and Li (2020) have argued that the investigation of emotions in SLA can be categorized into three distinct phases: the Emotion Avoidance Phase, the Anxiety-Prevailing Phase, and the Positive and Negative Phase. Each phase reflects the changing attitudes and theoretical perspectives within the field, from initial disregard to a growing recognition of the integral role emotions play in language learning. This evolving understanding has prompted a more holistic approach, examining the interplay between positive and negative emotions and their implications for learner and teacher well-being (Dewaele & Li, 2020; White, 2018).

The Emotion Avoidance Phase, spanning from the early 1960s to the mid-1980s, is characterized by a marked neglect of L2 emotion research within the burgeoning field of SLA. This era, deeply influenced by Chomsky's innatist and cognitivist perspectives, prioritized the exploration of 'scientific' cognitive underpinnings of language acquisition (Swain, 2013; Sharwood Smith, 2017; Shao et al., 2019). Dominated by a cognitive paradigm, this phase largely dismissed emotions as irrational, unscientific, and having only a peripheral impact on language learning processes (Swain, 2013; Prior, 2019; Sharwood Smith, 2017; White, 2018).

Notwithstanding this general trend, notable exceptions exist. Gardner and Lambert's (1972) seminal work, focusing on attitudes and motivation, underscored the significant role these affective factors play in language learning outcomes. Moreover, Moskowitz's (1978) humanistic teaching approach advocated for a pedagogy that addresses students' needs and promotes a classroom environment supportive of emotional well-being. Similarly, Gardner's socio-educational model

(1985) posited that the success of learners in acquiring a L2 relies on their positive attitudes towards the language course, the instructor, their level of integrativeness, and their motivation to engage with the language. Despite the predominance of cognitive focus during this period, these works collectively signal an underlying acknowledgment of emotional dimensions, albeit subsumed under the broad categories of 'affect' or 'affective variables' (Dewaele & Li, 2020), indicating nascent recognition of the importance of emotion in the early stages of SLA research.

The period from the mid-1980s to the mid-2010s, designated as the Anxiety-Prevailing Phase, marks an era in SLA research characterized by a burgeoning recognition of the intricate interplay between cognition and emotion, and the pivotal role of emotion in language learning. Nonetheless, scholarly attention during this period was mainly concentrated on exploring language anxiety. The initiation of this phase is often attributed to two seminal works: Krashen's affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) and the pioneering efforts by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope to define and measure foreign language classroom anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis posited the existence of an affective filter within the human brain, acting as a mental barrier that either permits or obstructs comprehensible input from accessing the learner's mind, thereby impacting L2 acquisition. Despite its simplicity (Swain, 2013), this hypothesis significantly highlighted the critical influence of affective factors in language learning processes (Dewaele, 2005).

Horwitz et al. (1986) conceptualized language learning anxiety as ‘a distinct complex of self-perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process.’ (p.126). They developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a 33-item tool measuring anxiety specific to language learning. This marked the beginning of the Anxiety-Prevailing Phase in SLA research. MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) noted that Horwitz et al.'s (1986) work foregrounded the unique nature of second language learning and separated language anxiety from other anxiety triggers. Foreign language anxiety has been extensively investigated across diverse contexts and marked a significant contribution to the field; however, it simultaneously led to the marginalization of other L2 emotions (Prior, 2019).

The Positive and Negative Phase, delineated by Dewaele and Li (2020), commenced in the early 2010s amidst a burgeoning scholarly interest in the psychology of language learning and the founding of the International Association for the Psychology of Language Learning. This period, marked by what Pavlenko (2013) describes as the ‘affective turn’, posed a formidable challenge to the dominant cognitive paradigm in SLA (White, 2018). The pivotal role of emotions in both language learning and teaching is highlighted. The integration of Positive Psychology into SLA in 2012 provided researchers with fresh perspectives for exploring the emotional experiences of learners and teachers alike, facilitating a holistic examination of both positive and negative emotional states. Researchers began to analyze the intricate interplay between these emotional dimensions and their implications for learner and teacher well-being (Dewaele & Li, 2020; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; MacIntyre, 2016; Jiang & Li, 2017; White, 2018). Consequently, a

richer, more nuanced understanding of the role of emotions in L2 learning and teaching emerged, grounded in theory-driven empirical studies (Prior, 2019).

The field of SLA is currently experiencing what Prior (2019) refers to as an ‘emotional turn,’ where the emotions of learners and teachers are increasingly recognized as integral to the educational process. This paradigmatic shift, as Dewaele and Li (2020) suggest, positions emotions as the ‘fuel’ (p.3) of L2 learning and teaching, signifying a profound transformation in how emotional factors are perceived and investigated within the field.

Among L2 emotion research trends, foreign language anxiety (FLA) and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) have emerged as the most widely studied negative and positive emotions, respectively (MacIntyre, 2017; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019). FLA involves the worry and negative emotional reactions associated with learning and using a second language, particularly in classroom settings (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014a). Because it is an intense, complex but common experience which impedes the learning and/or processing of a second language, it has consistently attracted the attention of SLA researchers, educators, teachers and even language learners worldwide for more than four decades (MacIntyre & Wang, 2022). In contrast, FLE is a positive state that arises when learners’ psychological needs are met during challenging language tasks (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). It has recently emerged ‘one of the cornerstones of individual differences research’ within applied linguistics (Botes et al., 2021, p. 858). The positive association between FLE and other individual differences in language learning reflects the principles of

Positive Psychology in practice within an applied context (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016, Botes et al., 2022b). Given the challenges inherent in long-term foreign language study and the motivating role of positive emotions, FLE has attracted sustained scholarly attention since its introduction to applied linguistics in 2014 (Dewaele, 2022). Specific studies on both FLA and FLE will be discussed in Sections 2.4 and 2.5.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

The literature has demonstrated that learners' beliefs about language learning are of great importance for the learning process and outcomes of language learning. Through the lens of learner's beliefs about language learning, it is possible to know how L2 learners frame their learning experiences (Ellis, 2008), their learning strategies, motivations and emotions (Barcelos, 2015). Within this body of research on learner's beliefs about language learning, a prominent line of inquiry focuses on how beliefs vary across cultural backgrounds and influence the learning of different languages. However, the vast majority of research predominantly targets learners of English as a Foreign or Second Language (EFL/ESL), or those acquiring commonly taught languages, for example, French, Spanish or German. Given that Mandarin is considered one of the most challenging languages for native speakers of English, there is a notable dearth of knowledge regarding the beliefs of learners from Indo-European linguistic backgrounds towards the acquisition of Chinese. Key issues such as whether the perceived difficulty of Mandarin Chinese shapes learners' beliefs about language learning, affects their linguistic aptitude, alters their

learning and communication strategies, and impacts their motivation, expectations and emotions remain largely unexplored.

According to Horwitz (1999), the main purpose of addressing learners' beliefs about language learning is to comprehend their learning strategies and plan appropriate and effective language instruction. It is therefore valuable to delve into these beliefs within the context of Chinese to better understand CFL learners' perceptions about Chinese language learning and tailor educational practices that better meet learners' needs, especially in a setting like the UK where most of the students get used to learning the Indo-European languages as their L2s. This exploration is not only fundamental to improving pedagogical strategies but also with potential to foster a deeper engagement and more successful outcomes in Chinese language education.

Similarly, while studies have begun to address the dynamics of FLE and FLA in various linguistic settings, comprehensive research focusing on these emotional dimensions within CFL learning remains sparse. To my knowledge, no study has yet explored the levels of FLE and FLA among learners of Chinese in the UK context. Consequently, it is still unclear whether learning a challenging language like Mandarin elicits different emotional profiles compared to learning English or other widely taught languages. Moreover, the unique features of the Chinese language necessitate a deeper investigation into how specific linguistic challenges influence learners' emotional experiences. Specifically, there is a need to further explore which linguistic skills most significantly predict learners' FLE and FLA.

In addition, the review of existing literature presented in Chapter 2 highlights that few studies have examined the relationship between learners' beliefs and emotions within applied linguistics. Given the well-documented interconnection between beliefs and emotions in psychology, it is crucial to explore this relationship in the context of applied linguistics. Specifically, investigating how learners' beliefs about language learning influence their emotions, identifying which beliefs correlate with FLA and determining which are associated with FLE are essential. A deeper understanding of these dynamics can enhance the nomological network of FLE and FLA, providing valuable insights that may help manage language learning anxiety, boost FLE and potentially improve teaching methodologies for Chinese across various educational settings.

1.4 Research Objectives

Given the research background and the rationale, this study aims:

- To examine the beliefs about Chinese language learning among UK-based adult learners of Chinese.
- To assess the levels of FLE and FLA among UK-based adult learners of Mandarin Chinese.
- To explore the interrelationship between the learners' beliefs, levels of FLE, FLA, and their self-perceived achievements in learning Mandarin.
- To study how different course levels and the experiences of visiting a Chinese-speaking country affect learners' beliefs, as well as their levels of anxiety and enjoyment.

- To achieve a more in-depth understanding of the UK learners' beliefs about learning Mandarin Chinese and the sources of their FLE and FLA by means of a qualitative approach.

1.5 Methodological Approach

This study adopts both quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches, incorporating a triangulation method that is essential for exploring the sensitive topic like emotion experiences (Dewaele, 2023) and a 'messy construct' like beliefs (Pajares, 1992, p. 307). Compared with studies which used either quantitative or qualitative research methods to investigate learners' beliefs, FLE and FLA, this mixed-methods approach allows for exploring different dimensions of learner beliefs and emotions. The quantitative method can provide broad, generalizable data that reveal patterns and correlations in learner beliefs and emotions, while the qualitative method (semi-structured interview) enables the researcher to delve into the depth of learners' personal experiences and contextualize their narratives. This depth is essential for understanding the complex and subjective nature of beliefs, enjoyment, and anxiety in learning Chinese. Overall, methodologically diverse approaches to investigating learners' beliefs, FLE, and FLA provide a fuller, clearer picture of the language learning experience, which is critical for advancing educational practices and outcomes.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study addresses the English bias in SLA research highlighted by Andringa and Godfroid (2020) by incorporating data from a less commonly studied language with distinct features. Al-Hoorie (2017) and Andringa and Godfroid (2020) caution against overgeneralizing findings from studies on EFL learners. Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie (2017) noted that the ‘English-LOTE [languages other than English] imbalance... creates a reductionist perspective by overlooking a substantial portion of the diverse forms of language attainment across the globe’ (p. 456). Al-Hoorie (2017) emphasizes that most available research is biased towards English, meaning that existing theories are more likely to reflect learning English rather than LOTEs. This research aims to explore Chinese as a foreign language, particularly through the lens of learner beliefs and emotional experiences. By investigating a non-Indo-European language, this research contributes to a broader understanding of SLA across different linguistic contexts.

Methodologically, this research integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively examine CFL learners’ beliefs and emotions. The quantitative data reveals five aspects of learners’ beliefs, their levels of FLE and FLA, and the correlations between these beliefs and emotional states. Semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, delve into personal narratives, providing rich, detailed data on CFL learners’ beliefs and their emotional experiences. Unlike previous studies that utilized either quantitative or qualitative methods to study beliefs, FLA, and FLE, this research triangulates data from both sources. This comprehensive approach aims to

provide a nuanced understanding of the beliefs and emotions influencing CFL learners' language acquisition process.

The findings of the research have practical implications for language educators and curriculum designers. Horwitz (1987) notes that learners' beliefs about language learning vary widely in their validity and originate from diverse sources, often sharply contrasting with the views held by contemporary second language scholars; in many instances, these beliefs could more aptly be termed 'myths' (p. 119). Given the large number of CFL learners in the UK, it is important to examine their beliefs about learning Mandarin Chinese. This investigation can reveal which beliefs are realistic and beneficial versus those that may impede learning. Addressing these 'myths' will enhance our understanding of CFL learners' perceptions about learning the languages and being a CFL learner as well as their strategies, motivations, and expectations regarding Chinese language learning. By understanding CFL learners' beliefs and the specific challenges and resources of their FLE and FLA, educators may adapt teaching methods to align better with learners' beliefs about learning Chinese and develop more effective teaching strategies that not only mitigate anxiety but also amplify enjoyment, potentially improving learning outcomes.

Additionally, integrating rich, multifaceted data can lead to more informed language education policies and curricula that address both cognitive and affective needs. Horwitz (1987) suggests that in a typical ESL classroom, where the teacher is a native speaker and the students come from different cultural backgrounds, differences in beliefs about language learning may originate from

cultural clashes. Examining UK learners' beliefs about language learning and their emotional experiences can inform teachers, curriculum designers, and administrators (mostly native Chinese speakers) (Zhang & Li, 2019) about what UK learners think about learning Chinese and what triggers their FLE and FLA. Such enhancements are likely to result in programs that more effectively support learners in managing anxiety and increasing their enjoyment throughout the language learning process.

Furthermore, this research addresses the gap in the literature by focusing on the interplay between FLA and FLE among CFL learners. FLA and FLE have been the most 'basic pair' of learner emotions (Dewaele & Saito, 2024, p, 173) that have been researched in SLA. While a few previous studies have examined either CFL learners' FLA or FLE in isolation, no research has even been conducted to investigate CFL learners' FLA and FLE at the same time. By exploring both emotions simultaneously, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how these emotions interact and affect learners' experiences and outcomes. The findings will not only enhance theoretical knowledge but also provide practical insights for educators and policymakers to develop more effective language teaching strategies and support mechanisms for CFL learners.

Moreover, literature suggests FLA is commonly observed in language classrooms across all levels as teachers engage with learners who are continuously developing and challenging their capabilities (MacIntyre, 2017). However, literature has not provided a clear answer to what can be done to reduce FLA (MacIntyre & Wang, 2022). Dewaele and Dewaele (2017) discovered that language

enjoyment has a stronger correlation with teacher behaviors than language anxiety does. Considering the negative correlation between FLE and FLA, they suggest that teachers should concentrate on fostering enjoyment in language learning rather than overly focusing on alleviating anxiety. Arousing more positive emotions to offset the adverse effects of FLA has provided interesting pedagogical possibilities (MacIntyre & Wang, 2022). However, there is a potential risk in adopting a completely ‘hands off’ approach to anxiety (MacIntyre & Wang, 2022). Through examine the relationship between learners’ beliefs about language learning and FLE and FLA, this study may provide another possible route to deal with learners’ FLA.

The relationship between beliefs and emotions is central to many approaches in psychological therapy (Butler et al., 2006). This connection forms the backbone of several therapeutic models, particularly cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), which posits that our beliefs about ourselves, others, and the world influence our emotional responses and behaviors (Beck, 1964). In CBT, beliefs are often seen as the cognitive appraisals or interpretations we make about a situation. These appraisals determine our emotional responses (Beck & Haigh, 2014).

For instance, if a person believes they are inadequate, this belief can trigger emotions like sadness or anxiety when they face challenging situations. This is because they interpret these challenges as further proof of their inadequacy (Beck, 1976). Beliefs lead to automatic thoughts, which are spontaneous interpretations of specific events. These thoughts can be realistic or distorted but are deeply influenced by underlying beliefs (Beck, 1995). For example, if someone has a deep-seated

belief that they are unlovable, a small criticism from a partner might be automatically interpreted as an affirmation of this belief, leading to intense feelings of sadness or rejection (Beck et al., 1979).

Emotions influenced by beliefs can lead to behavioral responses that reinforce these beliefs, creating a cycle that can be difficult to break (Ellis, 2004). For instance, someone who believes they are socially awkward may feel anxious in social situations (emotional response) and thus avoid such settings (behavioral response), reinforcing their belief in their social awkwardness (Clark & Beck, 2010). Considering this, therapeutic interventions often focus on identifying and challenging maladaptive beliefs to alter emotional responses and behaviors (Beck, 2011). Techniques such as cognitive restructuring in CBT help clients examine and modify the accuracy of their beliefs and the resultant emotional outcomes (Beck, 2016). By changing how situations are perceived, emotional experiences can also change, leading to more adaptive behaviors and improved mental health (Beck, 2020).

In a similar vein, this research delves into the relationship between learners' beliefs regarding language acquisition and their experiences of anxiety and enjoyment during the language learning process. It aims to identify which beliefs are associated with FLA and which with FLE. By understanding the interplay between beliefs and emotions, language educators may adopt a role akin to psychologists. They may assist learners in managing language learning anxiety by helping them modify or restructure their beliefs about language learning. Additionally, educators may

enhance language enjoyment by reinforcing positive and productive beliefs about language learning.

Overall, this research aims to address several gaps in the current literature on second language acquisition by examining the beliefs, enjoyment, and anxiety of UK learners of Chinese as a Foreign Language. These factors are crucial in shaping effective learning experiences and outcomes, making their exploration essential for advancing both theoretical understanding and practical approaches in language education.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 (Introduction) includes my personal motivation to conduct the research, the research background, the research objectives, the rationale behind the study, the methodological approach, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 (Literature Review) provides a comprehensive overview of existing research on beliefs about language learning, FLA and FLE. It is organized into four main sections: the first section reviews the literature on beliefs about language learning, covering theoretical frameworks, research approaches, and findings; the second section focuses on the role of emotions in applied linguistics, highlighting the evolution and theoretical foundations of this research area; the third section

examines the literature on foreign language anxiety, analyzing its causes and effects; the fourth discusses foreign language enjoyment, exploring the factors that influence it and its impacts.

Chapter 3 (Methodology) describes the methodological approach used in this research. It describes and explains the sample's characteristics, the instruments used, and the procedures for data collection and analysis in the study's quantitative and qualitative components. This chapter elucidates each step involved in the research process.

Chapter 4 (Results of the Quantitative Study) provides a comprehensive account of the statistical analyses performed on the collected quantitative data. It details the findings for each research question, supported by relevant tables, charts, and graphs to illustrate key patterns and relationships in the data.

Chapter 5 (Results of the Qualitative Study) systematically presents the findings for each qualitative research question, providing rich, descriptive accounts that capture the nuances and complexities of participants' beliefs about language learning and their enjoyment and anxiety related to learning Mandarin Chinese. These findings are illustrated with direct quotes from participants.

Chapter 6 (Discussion) thoroughly discusses the quantitative and qualitative findings, contextualizing them within the framework of related research and prior literature. It highlights the study's contributions to the existing body of research and discusses its limitations. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the present research on beliefs about language learning, FLA and FLE. The chapter contains four sections: the first section (Section 2.2) presents literature on beliefs about language learning, including theoretical frameworks, research approaches, and research findings; the second section (Section 2.3) delves into emotion research within applied linguistics, emphasizing its evolution and theoretical underpinnings; the third section (Section 2.4) explores the literature on FLA, examining its causes and impacts. Lastly, the fourth section (Section 2.5) addresses literature on FLE, discussing its influencing factors and effects.

2.2 Beliefs About Language Learning

Beliefs about language learning play an important role in SLA (Ellis, 2008; Horwitz, 1985, 1987; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013; Zhong, 2022). These beliefs, encompassing learners' preconceived notions and assumptions about the nature and process of learning a language, significantly influence their motivation, strategy use, and overall learning trajectory (Ellis, 2008; Horwitz, 1999; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Riley, 1997). This section synthesizes the research on

language learning beliefs, highlighting theoretical advancement, research approaches, seminal studies and research evidence.

2.2.1 Defining Beliefs About Language Learning

In the field of SLA, researchers' interest in learner's beliefs started from the initial focus on identifying characteristics of 'good language learners' in the 1970s (Kalaja et al., 2018). This inquiry aimed to understand why some learners were more successful than others and posited that certain beliefs, together with motivation, attitudes, and learning strategies, might play a crucial role in facilitating effective language learning (Kalaja & Bacelos, 2013). Learners' beliefs about language learning have accordingly been studied from various perspectives and have appeared under different rubrics (Bacelos, 2003), such as learners' philosophy of language learning (Abraham & Vann, 1987), L2 learners' metacognitive knowledge (Wenden, 1986, 1987), folk linguistic theories of learning (Miller & Ginsberg, 1995), representations (Riley, 1989), conceptions of learning and beliefs (Benson & Lor, 1999), and learning culture (Riley, 1997). Language ideologies and cognitions are the latest ones in the field (Kalaja et al., 2018).

The following are some definitions of beliefs used in SLA literature. Horwitz (1987) defined beliefs as 'the ideas or opinions about aspects of second language acquisition (SLA) held by learners' (pp. 119). Wenden (1986) viewed beliefs as a subset of metacognitive knowledge and defined learners' beliefs as stable and expressible, though sometimes incorrect, understandings that learners have

about language and the language acquisition process. Riley (1997) uses the term ‘representation’ to define learners’ beliefs about language learning. She claimed that ‘[Representations are] group ideas which are widely shared and socially forceful because they are collectively created through the interaction of many minds’ (p. 127) and defines beliefs as ‘a set of representations, beliefs and values related to learning that directly influence [students’] learning behaviour’ (p.122).

More recently, the definition of beliefs about language learning has evolved from being merely cognitive entities within learners' minds to being understood as dynamic and socially constructed concepts (Kalaja, 2015). Holding a belief is viewed as a moment when a learner reflects on aspects of language learning or teaching, connects these reflections to their own experiences or those of others, and attributes personal significance to these aspects (Kalaja et al., 2015). This nuanced perspective emphasizes the active, constructive role of individuals in shaping their understanding and actions within the learning process. Beliefs are thus considered as an integral part of students' experiences, deeply connected to their environment (Barcelos, 2003). As Kalaja and Barcelos (2013) claimed, ‘the language to be learned, being a learner, the learning process, and learning contexts are all charged with positive or negative experiences and loaded with personal meanings’ (p.3).

In the present study, beliefs about language learning are construed as ‘the conceptions, ideas or opinions learners have about L2 learning and teaching, and the language itself’ (Kalaja et al., 2018, p.222). This includes beliefs about who can learn a second or foreign language, how to learn and

teach it, the reasons for learning it, the perceived difficulty of learning it, and the nature of language learning. In essence, beliefs about language learning are the ideas that learners consider to be true about language and the process of learning it.

2.2.2 Theoretical Frameworks for Beliefs About Language Learning

Research on learners' beliefs about language learning is underpinned by three major theoretical frameworks: cognitive, sociocultural, and complexity theories (Zhong, 2022). This section will illustrate how each framework shapes our understanding of learners' beliefs by examining their nature, influence, and interplay with other factors in SLA.

Much of the early research investigating learners' beliefs about language learning was guided by cognitive theory. Cognitive theory in language learning emphasizes the mental processes involved in understanding and producing language (Ellis, 2008). It considers how learners process, store, and retrieve linguistic information, and how their attitudes, motivation, and beliefs about language learning shape these processes (e.g., DeKeyser, 2007; Dörnyei, 1998; Oxford, 2003). From a cognitive perspective, beliefs about language learning are the personal understandings or convictions that learners hold regarding the process of acquiring a second language (Barcelos, 2003). They are not just passive reflections of learners' experiences but active filters through which new information is interpreted, and strategies are selected (Bernat, 2005). Beliefs are viewed as metacognitive knowledge, conceptualizing them as mental or cognitive representations residing in

the minds of language learners (Kalaja et al., 2018). Within this framework, beliefs about language learning are seen as stable, static, and less susceptible to change (Barcelos, 2003). The relationship between beliefs about language learning and other individual differences (IDs) is considered causal and linear, under the assumption that beliefs directly influence how learners approach the language learning process, including their motivation, strategy use, and ultimately, the success of the learning outcomes (Zhong, 2022). For example, Yang (1999) explores the relationship between 505 Taiwanese EFL college learners' beliefs about language learning and their use of language learning strategies. The results showed a significant relationship between learners' beliefs and strategy use. Specifically, learners who held more positive beliefs about their ability to learn a language and the nature of language learning were more likely to use various effective language learning strategies.

In summary, the cognitive theory posits that beliefs about language learning are stable, static mental constructs within the learner's mind. These beliefs shape learners' interpretations of their experiences, the strategies they employ, their language processing and usage, and their overall language learning progression. Beliefs are seen as interconnected with other IDs in a linear and causal relationship. According to this framework, beliefs about language learning directly influence learners' learning behaviors and outcomes, indicating a direct link between learners' beliefs and their language learning effectiveness (Zhong, 2022).

Later, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987), which highlights the influence of social and cultural factors on cognitive development, significantly shaped research on beliefs about language learning. According to Vygotsky's framework, these beliefs are profoundly shaped by the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which learners are embedded. This perspective emphasizes that learning a language is not just an individual cognitive achievement but a social process that is mediated by interactions with more knowledgeable others, such as teachers, peers, and even cultural artifacts (e.g., books, media) (Lantolf, 2000). Therefore, beliefs about language learning, under Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, are seen as emerging from and being shaped by social interaction within specific cultural and social contexts. Consequently, they are dynamic, constantly evolving with learners' experiences, and act as mediational means, helping learners make sense of their learning experience and situation. The relationship between beliefs about language learning and other IDs is not straightforward or causal. Instead, the influence of these beliefs on learning outcomes depends on whether they function as mediators in the learning process (Kalaja et al., 2016). For example, grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Yang and Kim (2011) conducted a longitudinal case study to investigate the possible changes in two Korean students' beliefs about learning English while studying abroad. The two students went to study abroad in the U.S. and the Philippines respectively. The findings reveal that learners' beliefs about L2 are not fixed but evolve based on their objectives and experiences during studying abroad. Additionally, changes in beliefs indicate a mediation process between the learner and the L2 environment, emphasizing the learner's active efforts to either pursue or abandon L2 goals.

More recently, complexity theory (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Larsen-Freeman, 2013) has provided a nuanced perspective on beliefs about language learning. Complexity theory views language learning as a dynamic, non-linear process that emerges from the interactions within complex systems. These systems comprise multiple, interconnected elements—including learners, teachers, materials, and the socio-cultural context—that interact in complex ways (Al-Hoorie et al., 2023). Accordingly, beliefs held by a learner are not treated as isolated. In contrast, they are a complex and less-structured system where a set of interrelated beliefs are intertwined, forming a multilayered, dynamic web (Zhong, 2022). This theory suggests that the interactions of beliefs about language learning with other IDs may not be predictable or linear, and thus, the impact of beliefs on learning is much more complex and requires a holistic approach to be fully understood (Kalaja, et al., 2018). For instance, Zhong (2015a) conducted a case study to explore the nature of L2 learners' beliefs by tracking the changes in beliefs of two Chinese language learners over an 18-week period. Based on the analysis of data collected through interviews, diary entries and classroom observation, Zhong (2015a) asserts that learners' beliefs form a complex, multilayered, and multidimensional network, showing how these beliefs can be situational and sometimes contradictory. More importantly, this study highlights the dual nature of learner beliefs, showing that some beliefs are resistant to change while others evolve over time and in different learning contexts, indicating a complex interplay between continuity and change in learners' beliefs.

In essence, Complexity Theory frames beliefs about language learning as dynamic, emergent, and interconnected phenomena that arise from the complex interplay of diverse factors within the

language learning ecosystem. This perspective encourages a holistic understanding of how beliefs develop and change over time, emphasizing the importance of considering the full complexity of the learning environment.

Each of these frameworks contributes to the understanding of learners' beliefs, highlighting the complex nature of how beliefs influence the language learning process. The cognitive approach focuses on the internal representations and their direct impact on learning outcomes. In contrast, sociocultural theory places emphasis on the external influences and the dynamic nature of beliefs as learners navigate their social and cultural environments. Complexity theory further expands this understanding by exploring the interconnectedness and fluidity of beliefs within the broader ecosystem of language learning.

2.2.3 Research Approaches and Evidence

Research on learners' beliefs encompasses diverse definitions of 'beliefs,' which fundamentally shape how these beliefs are investigated and their perceived significance (Kalaja et al., 2018). This diversity is evident in the various frameworks proposed to categorize the methodologies utilized in this field. For instance, Kalaja (1995) delineated studies into 'mainstream' and 'discursive' approaches, whereas Barcelos (2003) identified three distinct categories: 'normative,' 'metacognitive,' and 'contextual.' Kalaja et al., (2016) combined 'normative' and 'metacognitive' approach as 'traditional approach' and classified studies into 'traditional approaches' and

‘contextual approaches.’ This section will review seminal studies based on the dual framework proposed by Kalaja et al., (2016): traditional approaches and contextual approaches.

2.2.3.1 Traditional Approaches

The interest in learners' beliefs about language learning in SLA dates back to the late 1970s, focusing on the characteristics of good language learners (Kalaja et al., 2018). Naiman et al. (1978) were among the first to delve into this area, investigating the strategies and behaviors of learners who were successful in acquiring languages. Their research indicated that these ‘good language learners’ held common beliefs about language learning, including the significance of active engagement with the language and the benefits of making and correcting mistakes.

The understanding of learner beliefs was propelled by the work of Elaine Horwitz in the 1980s. Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988) introduced the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), a tool developed to assess students' beliefs about language learning in five key areas: the difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectations. This tool enabled a systematic exploration of learners' beliefs about language learning. For instance, Horwitz (1987) employed the BALLI to systematically investigate and classify the beliefs held by 32 intermediate-level students in an intensive English program at the University of Texas, Austin, regarding the language learning process. Her research aimed to understand the expectations and misconceptions that

learners might bring to their studies, which could influence their motivation, strategies, and ultimately, their success in language learning. This study revealed that most students believed in language aptitude, the hierarchy of languages, the importance of learning vocabulary and grammar, the benefits of learning in the target country, and the necessity of repetition and practice.

In the following year, Horwitz (1988) employed the BALLI to examine the beliefs of 241 first-semester students studying German, French, and Spanish at the University of Texas. The findings revealed that while most students believed that anyone could learn a foreign language, they also acknowledged that some individuals possess a special aptitude for language acquisition. Interestingly, most did not consider themselves proficient language learners. The students generally agreed that learning a foreign language is markedly different from studying other academic subjects. Particularly, students studying German and Spanish tended to perceive language learning mainly as a process of translating from English to the target language, a belief not as prevalent among their peers studying French. Regarding learning and communication strategies, there was a strong endorsement for the value of repetition and practice. In terms of motivation and expectations, the students demonstrated a greater lean towards integrative motivation—learning a language for cultural and social enrichment—rather than instrumental motivation, which focuses on practical benefits such as employment opportunities. However, the study also revealed that students had some unrealistic expectations, particularly the belief that they could achieve fluency in the language within roughly two years. This reflects a significant disparity between learners' expectations and the typical realities of language learning, suggesting a need for educational interventions to align student expectations with achievable outcomes (Horwitz 1988, 1999).

Studies following the footprint of Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988) constitute a significant strand within the traditional research paradigm. They typically use the BALLI, its adaptations or bespoke questionnaires designed to elucidate data of learners' beliefs and to examine the influence of these beliefs on various aspects of the language learning journey, for example, learning strategies (e.g., Aslan & Thompson, 2021a; Cheng, 2001; Tandang & Arif, 2019), learning process (e.g., Kalaja & Barcelos, 2003; Rad, 2010) and language achievement (e.g., Alsamaani, 2012; Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Ren & Bai, 2016). The combined findings from this research highlight the rich diversity of beliefs that learners contribute to the language learning process, pointing to the significant role these beliefs play in shaping learners' engagement with the language acquisition process (White, 2008). Notably, these studies often conceptualize the relationship between learners' beliefs and various educational outcomes as linear, emphasizing the potential for generalizing results across contexts (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2013).

The research conducted by Wenden in 1986 and 1987 established a pivotal foundation for an alternative trajectory within the traditional approach (Kalaja et al., 2018). Distinct from the studies aligned with Horwitz, data in these studies were gathered mainly through semi-structured interviews and analyzed by content analysis. The foundational premise underlying these investigations posits that learners engage in reflective thought concerning their language learning journey and possess the capability to express certain beliefs they hold about this process (Barcelos, 2003). For example, Wenden (1987) utilized semi-structured interviews to gather deep insights into learners' beliefs and strategies. Twenty-five adult EFL students in advanced-level classes at

Columbia University participated in this study. The study revealed that learners had prescriptive beliefs about language usage, language acquisition, and the significance of personal factors. Studies conducted in line with Wenden (e.g., Victori, 1992; Victori & Lockhart, 1995) empower learners to take a more active and informed role in their language education. The methodological choice underscores a commitment to capturing the depth and complexity of learners' perspectives on self-directed learning, setting Wenden's work apart from other inquiries within the traditional framework.

When reviewing studies, it can be found that the traditional approach often draws on cognitive perspectives, emphasizing the individual learner's internal processes. It views beliefs as relatively stable, internal constructs that can be directly accessed and measured. Methodologically, it primarily employs quantitative methods, such as surveys and questionnaires, including instruments like the BALLI. These tools are used to collect data from a broad group of learners to identify general trends and patterns. Learners' beliefs are often analyzed statistically to determine their prevalence and correlation with other L2 variables. The emphasis is on generalizability and the identification of universal principles that can inform learning and teaching practices (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013).

2.2.3.2 Contextual Approaches

Recent studies have begun to examine the dynamic nature of beliefs, acknowledging that they can change over time and in response to learners' experiences (e.g., Barcelos, 2003; Mercer, 2011b;

Peng, 2011; Zhong, 2015a, 2015b). This body of work does not aim to generalize beliefs about language learning but to better understand beliefs in specific contexts. It favors qualitative methods, such as interviews, observations, and narrative analyses, to explore the depth and complexity of individual learners' beliefs within specific contexts. This approach values rich, detailed insights into how beliefs are formed and changed over time (Kalaja et al., 2018). Learners' beliefs are seen as embedded in students' contexts and are investigated from an emic perspective (Barcelos, 2003).

Theoretically, contextual approaches are informed by sociocultural theories and complexity theories, viewing beliefs as socially constructed and evolving (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2013). Contextual approaches emphasize the role of the environment, social interaction, and cultural norms in shaping beliefs. For example, Alanen (2003) employs sociocultural theory as the lens through which to view the beliefs of young Finns learning English from Grade 3 (or age 9) onwards and uses interviews, observations, learners' diaries, and drawings to gain deep insights into the beliefs of the young learners. The findings uncover a range of beliefs held by young learners about language learning, including their perceptions of what language learning involves, the challenges they expect to face, and their beliefs about their own capacities as learners. These beliefs also reflect the influence of their educational environment, family, and cultural background, suggesting that learners' beliefs are not only individual but also deeply embedded within the social and cultural contexts in which they live and learn. Another example is Borg (2006). Although this study focuses primarily on teachers' beliefs within the context of language teaching, it provides valuable insights into how such beliefs are shaped by and interact with the educational contexts in which teachers and learners operate. In the study, Borg emphasizes the dynamic interplay between teachers' beliefs,

their classroom practices, and the broader educational context. He used interviews, observations, and diary studies to delve into the complexities of teacher cognition in language education. This approach allows for a nuanced exploration of how individual beliefs are influenced by factors such as professional experience, educational background, and the specific demands of the teaching context. Borg's research highlights the critical role of understanding the context-specific nature of beliefs in language education and their impact on learning behaviors, teaching practices, and ultimately, learning outcomes.

In summary, while the traditional approach offers a broad, generalizable understanding of language learning beliefs, the contextual approach provides a deeper, more nuanced insight into how these beliefs function within specific educational and cultural contexts. Beliefs about language learning, in the framework of contextual approaches, are viewed as socially constructed and continually changing and dynamic (Kalaja et al., 2016).

2.2.4 Research Findings on Beliefs About Language Learning

Researchers have utilized various methodologies, notably the BALLI, to systematically investigate learners' beliefs about language learning (Zhong, 2022). Extensive research has been conducted to elucidate learners' beliefs, revealing both commonalities and distinct variations across different linguistic and cultural contexts (Horwitz, 1999; Barcelos, 2003). Furthermore, learners' beliefs about language learning significantly influence their use of strategies, anxiety levels, language proficiency, and various other factors (Zhong, 2022). Moreover, more recent studies have

confirmed that learners' beliefs change or evolve with their learning experience and learning contexts. This section delves into the key findings of such research (Kalaja & Barcelos, 2018).

2.2.4.1 Identification and Comparison of Learners' Beliefs

Elaine Horwitz's pioneering work with the BALLI (1985, 1987, 1988) has been foundational for subsequent research into language learning beliefs. Her research framework has been applied in various contexts to identify and compare learners' beliefs across different languages.

For example, Mohebi and Khodadady (2011) used the BALLI to examine the beliefs of 423 English learners from Iranian universities, aiming to identify and categorize the common beliefs held by these learners. Through descriptive statistics and factor analysis, five primary factors were identified relating to students' beliefs: formal learning and motivation for English learning, confidence in learning English, strategy and attitude towards learning English, aptitude and strategy for English learning, and the perceived importance of English and formal learning. The study also confirmed that students' beliefs significantly influence their learning strategies and outcomes. For instance, beliefs in formal learning and motivation were linked with a preference for structured learning environments and a focus on grammar and vocabulary. At the same time, the cultural and educational contexts in Iran significantly shape students' beliefs about language learning. For example, many students believed that knowing English would provide better job opportunities, reflecting an instrumental motivation.

Jee (2013) investigated the language learning beliefs of students enrolled in three different levels of Korean language classes at an American university. The study aimed to explore the nature of these beliefs and their potential impact on students' final grades. Utilizing the BALLI (Horwitz, 1987), the study engaged 63 students across beginner to intermediate levels. The study found that students generally held positive beliefs about learning Korean, viewing it as a useful language and being highly motivated. Despite these positive attitudes, there were no significant differences in beliefs across varying proficiency levels, nor were there correlations between beliefs and final grades or language levels. This suggests that while students' beliefs about language learning were overall positive, these beliefs did not directly influence their academic performance in Korean language classes.

Likewise, Meshkat and Saeb (2014) conducted a comparative study on Iranian high-school students' beliefs about learning English and Arabic. Utilizing Horwitz's BALLI (1987), the study collected data from 540 high school students to analyze differences in learning beliefs. The study identified significant differences in students' beliefs about learning English and Arabic across four BALLI categories: foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectations. However, no significant difference was observed in their beliefs about the difficulty of learning the two languages. Furthermore, this study found that students displayed more positive beliefs about learning English compared to Arabic across the significant categories, which reflects a higher enthusiasm and more optimistic outlook towards learning English. At the same time, this study suggests that socio-cultural factors significantly influence students' beliefs about learning these languages. English is perceived as

having a more powerful status in Iran due to its global significance and the availability of resources and opportunities for learning outside the school system. Arabic, while holding religious importance and cultural ties, is not as prominently supported in terms of learning resources outside of the educational system.

Diab (2006) examined Lebanese university students' beliefs about learning languages, with a specific focus on English and French. This study aimed to explore the variety of beliefs held by students regarding the learning of these languages and to compare these beliefs to understand how they might be influenced by the socio-cultural and political context of Lebanon. The study utilized a modified BALLI to assess the beliefs of 284 students across three universities in Lebanon. The findings revealed that Lebanese students held diverse beliefs about learning English and French, significantly shaped by the political and socio-cultural context of foreign language education in Lebanon. Specifically, students' perceptions of the difficulty of language learning and their motivations for learning English and French were deeply influenced by the Lebanese sociopolitical landscape. At the same time, students viewed French as more difficult due to its pronunciation and grammatical complexity, which aligns with the popular belief in Lebanon that French is more challenging than English. Most students exhibited strong instrumental motivations for learning English, viewing it as essential for its global utility in business, technology, and international communication. This importance surpassed the traditional social prestige associated with French. At the same time, significant differences in beliefs were found associating with students' educational background (English-medium vs. French-medium schools) and gender.

Similarly, Ariogul, Unal, and Onursal (2009) investigate the beliefs about language learning held by Turkish university students studying English, German, and French. This study, conducted with 343 participants, utilized the BALLI alongside a demographic questionnaire to explore differences and similarities in language learning beliefs across these language groups. The researchers found slight differences in the beliefs held by learners of English, German, and French. Notably, French language learners exhibited more positive expectations towards language learning, and they were more likely to rate their target language as difficult compared to their English and German counterparts.

Collectively, these studies enhance our nuanced understanding of how beliefs about language learning differ among learners of different languages, cultural backgrounds, and demographic groups. Horwitz (1999) synthesized findings from studies using the BALLI to explore how beliefs about language learning vary across different cultural and learner groups. This synthesis included American learners of German, Spanish, French and Japanese, instructors of these languages, and EFL learners from Korea, Taiwan, and Turkey. The synthesis found that beliefs about language learning differ significantly not only between groups from different cultural backgrounds but also among groups within the same cultural context. This variability suggests that both cultural and situational factors may influence these beliefs. For example, Horwitz discovered that learners from Asian backgrounds, such as Korean and Taiwanese students, had different attitudes towards language difficulty and the importance of vocabulary learning compared to American learners. The Asian groups were less convinced about the difficulty of some languages and placed a stronger emphasis on the importance of learning vocabulary. Regarding motivation and expectations of

language learning, EFL learners exhibited stronger instrumental motivations (such as job prospects) compared to American learners who displayed more integrative motivations (such as an interest in the culture and language for their own sake).

More importantly, the study found within-group differences in learners' beliefs (Horwitz, 1999). For instance, among American learner groups, the learners of Japanese showed notable differences in their beliefs compared to learners of other popular languages. They perceived Japanese as more difficult and expected a longer time to achieve proficiency. They strongly believed in specific language learning abilities but were less confident in their own capabilities. Also, their views on the nature of language learning and job opportunities varied greatly from those learning other languages. In terms of language learning practices, these learners place greater importance on acquiring vocabulary and grammar compared to their American counterparts studying other languages. Moreover, distinct from other American language learners, those studying Japanese are more likely to believe that acquiring this language will enhance their job prospects in the future. Furthermore, the study found notable differences between beliefs held by language instructors and their students, highlighting the potential disconnect between teaching approaches and learner expectations or perceptions about language learning.

Horwitz (1999) concluded that it was premature to ascribe this variation in learners' beliefs solely to cultural factors. She hypothesized that the observed differences might be attributed to either the distinct instructional methodologies employed across the language programs or to the specific

characteristics inherent to a target language. She emphasized the need for further research to examine the beliefs of learners from a wider range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds in various learning contexts, aiming to better understand the global variability in language learning beliefs.

Researchers also focus on contrasting learners' beliefs about language learning with those of language teachers. For instance, Siebert (2003) compared the beliefs held by teachers and students in intensive English language programs at a Northwest university in the US. The study involved 156 students and 25 teachers from three intensive English language programs. Data was gathered through the BALLI and demographic questionnaires. The study revealed distinct sets of beliefs between students and teachers, with significant differences in 16 out of 28 items examined. The author claimed that it was of great value to understand and address the mismatch in beliefs between students and teachers as these discrepancies could lead to student frustration, resistance to certain activities, inappropriate study skills, and lack of motivation. Similarly, Borg (2001) explores the beliefs of prospective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers about language learning and compares these beliefs with existing research on learners' beliefs. The purpose was to explore how these beliefs might influence their future teaching practices and their ability to meet learners' needs effectively. Borg (2001) highlighted the need for teacher training programs to address and potentially recalibrate trainee teachers' beliefs about language learning to ensure they are conducive to effective teaching practices.

In brief, identifying and comparing learners' beliefs across different contexts have yielded various key findings. Studies consistently indicated that learners' beliefs about language learning vary significantly across cultural and educational contexts, influenced by cultural, educational, linguistic, and individual factors and consequently influence learners' language learning strategies, motivation, and outcomes. Moreover, the alignment or mismatch between teacher and student beliefs about language learning significantly impacts the learning environment, learner engagement, and educational outcomes (Johnson, 1994, Mercer & Ryan, 2010). An important insight from the studies identifying and comparing learners' beliefs about language learning was the need for teachers to become more aware of their students' beliefs about language learning. This awareness could lead to more adaptive teaching strategies that better align with students' expectations and learning preferences (Borg, 2003, 2019).

2.2.4.2 Beliefs and Language Learning Strategies

Exploring the relationship between beliefs about language learning and the use of learning strategies has been a focal point for some researchers (Zhong, 2022), aiming to understand how learners' beliefs influence their approach to language acquisition (Barcelos, 2003). A recurrent theme across studies is the significant relationship between learners' beliefs and their selection of language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). Learners' beliefs about the efficacy of different strategies, such as the use of memorization, the importance of practice, and the role of grammar and vocabulary learning, influence their approaches to language learning (Azar & Saeidi, 2013).

For instance, Oxford (1990) linked specific language learning strategies to successful language acquisition and highlighted that learners' beliefs significantly influence their strategy use. For example, learners who believed in the importance of communication were more likely to use social and affective strategies. Yang (1999) identified a notable correlation between students' beliefs about language acquisition and their chosen language learning strategies. In particular, those who valued communicative methods were inclined to use interactive and experiential learning strategies. More importantly, the study revealed a reciprocal relationship between beliefs about language learning and the use of learning strategies. Specifically, learners' beliefs about language learning shaped their choice of strategies, which subsequently reaffirmed the beliefs they possessed.

More recently, Azar and Saeidi (2013) examined the correlation between Iranian EFL learners' beliefs about language learning and their use of language learning strategies. Using the BALLI and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL, Oxford 1990), they gathered data from 200 learners at different language institutes. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between learners' beliefs and their use of learning strategies, suggesting that those with strong beliefs about the efficacy and the importance of language learning tend to use a wider variety of strategies. Among the BALLI subscales, 'learning and communication strategies' and 'foreign language aptitude' were identified as significant predictors of overall strategy use. This suggests that learners who hold positive beliefs regarding their own language aptitude and the effectiveness of learning and communication strategies are more engaged in strategic language learning behaviors. In a similar vein, Tang and Tian (2015) conducted an empirical investigation into the interconnections between language learning beliefs and strategic behaviors among 546 Chinese

EFL graduate students. Employing both the BALLI and the SILL, the study disclosed that, with the exception of beliefs concerning the difficulty of language learning, there was a significant correlation between learners' beliefs and their deployment of the six strategic categories delineated by Oxford (1990) — cognitive, metacognitive, memory, compensatory, affective, and social strategies. Intriguingly, the belief relating to the difficulty of language learning did not exhibit a significant correlation with the employment of any strategic categories. This may suggest that perceptions of language learning difficulty may not directly impact strategic selection or utilization. Nonetheless, additional research is imperative to elucidate the nuances of how perceptions of language difficulty might influence learners' strategic choices in language acquisition.

Overall, research investigating the link between language learning beliefs and strategy use has found a positive relationship between certain beliefs about language learning and the use and choice of learning strategies. Learners who possess optimistic beliefs about their language learning capabilities and the importance of communicative competence tend to utilize a diverse array of learning strategies, including both cognitive and social strategies (Oxford, 1990; Dörnyei, 2005). Additionally, some studies indicate that beliefs' effect on strategies can differ according to learner characteristics such as age, gender, language proficiency, and cultural background (Mercer & Williams, 2014). These variables can shape both the learners' beliefs and their strategic choices in language learning (Tang & Tian, 2015; Teng, 2024).

2.2.4.3 Beliefs and Foreign Language Anxiety

The relationship between beliefs about language learning and language learning anxiety has attracted several scholars. Language learning anxiety, often conceptualized as the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts (Horwitz et al., 1986) has been consistently found to relate with learners' beliefs about language learning.

For example, Truitt (1995) explored the intricate relationship between beliefs and anxiety among EFL learners in Korea. This study involved 204 university students from Seoul who were taking English courses. Researchers utilized the BALLI and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz (1986) to measure the students' beliefs and levels of anxiety. Statistical analysis revealed a strong correlation between certain belief factors—namely, self-efficacy/confidence in speaking and perceptions regarding the ease of learning English—and foreign language anxiety. Learners with lower confidence in their speaking abilities and those who perceived English as a difficult language to learn were more likely to experience heightened anxiety. Another key finding of this investigation was the distinct set of beliefs held by Korean EFL learners compared to their counterparts in different cultural and educational contexts, highlighting the influence of cultural background and personal experiences on learners' beliefs. Furthermore, the study revealed that Korean EFL learners exhibited higher levels of foreign language anxiety in comparison to groups studied in earlier research. This underscores the significant role cultural factors may play in shaping the anxiety experiences of language learners.

Several scholars have found similar correlations. For instance, Oh (1996) explored the connection between American university students' beliefs about language learning and their foreign language anxiety while learning Japanese. The study revealed that certain beliefs are commonly held by learners, regardless of the language. However, perceptions about the difficulty of language learning and motivation can vary depending on the specific language, as noted among Japanese learners. Additionally, two belief factors—motivation/confidence in speaking Japanese and the importance of knowing Kanji—were significantly correlated with foreign language anxiety. This indicates that beliefs about self-efficacy in speaking and the significance of learning particular language aspects like Kanji can affect the level of anxiety students experience.

More recently, Aslan and Thompson (2021a) explored the relationship between learner beliefs about language learning and foreign language anxiety within the Turkish EFL context. The research involved 153 university-level Turkish EFL learners and data was gathered through the BALLI and the FLCAS. Exploratory factor analyses and Pearson Correlation analyses found a positive link between the fear of ambiguity and both classroom performance anxiety and negative feelings towards English, aligning with the results of Thompson and Lee (2013) study. Additionally, it was discovered that learners who feel more confident using English are more eager to interact with native speakers and experience less anxiety about language learning. The study emphasizes that positive beliefs about language learning can help reduce anxiety and enhance confidence in language acquisition.

In general, studies examining the relationship between beliefs about language learning and foreign language anxiety consistently show a correlation. Specific beliefs about language learning can significantly influence the levels of foreign language anxiety experienced by learners. For instance, the belief that language learning is a highly challenging and unattainable goal can lead to increased anxiety (Oh, 1996) whereas beliefs that emphasize the achievability and enjoyment of language learning can mitigate anxiety levels (Truitt, 1995). In addition, beliefs related to self-efficacy, or learners' confidence in their ability to learn a new language, show a strong negative relationship with foreign language anxiety (e.g., Aslan & Thompson, 2021; Tandang & Arif, 2019; Thompson & Lee, 2013). Learners with higher self-efficacy tend to experience lower anxiety, suggesting that enhancing learners' confidence can be a key strategy in reducing language learning anxiety. These findings are further complicated by cultural and linguistic differences. For example, learners from cultures that place a high value on accuracy (for example, students from Japan, Korea, and China) may experience higher anxiety due to their beliefs about the importance of error-free language use (Cheng, 2001; Wen & Clément, 2003). Similarly, complex linguistic features like Kanji influence learners' learning beliefs and can also heighten anxiety due to their intrinsic learning challenges (Aida, 1994; Oh, 1996).

2.2.4.4 Beliefs and Language Learning Outcomes

Several studies have explored the connection between beliefs about language learning and language learning outcomes. For instance, Abdolazadeh and Nia (2014) investigated how learners' English language proficiency correlates with their beliefs about language learning. They gathered data from

226 students (113 males and 113 females) in four public schools in Iran using the BALLI and the Key English Test (KET). Their findings revealed a positive correlation between language proficiency and optimistic beliefs about the effectiveness of language learning strategies and the significance of learning English. Similarly, Peacock (1999) investigated the relationship between students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning and its impact on language proficiency. The study included 202 EFL students and 45 EFL teachers from the Department of English at a university in Hong Kong. Data was collected through various methods including the BALLI, proficiency tests, self-rated proficiency sheets, and interviews. Four specific learner beliefs were found to negatively affect EFL proficiency. They were the nature of language learning (specifically the emphasis on grammar rules), underestimation of language learning difficulty, attitudes towards making mistakes early in the learning process, and reluctance to speak in the target language until one could do so correctly. The author concluded that mismatches between teacher and learner beliefs not only potentially hindered learners' proficiency but also led to learner dissatisfaction and frustration due to a lack of understanding of the rationale behind classroom tasks.

A further study on this topic is Tanaka and Ellis (2003). The authors conducted a study focusing on the effects of a 15-week study-abroad program on Japanese university students' language proficiency and their beliefs about language learning. This study aimed at understanding the impact of immersive experiences on language acquisition, examining changes in both the proficiency levels and learner beliefs of 88 participants before and after their program in New Zealand. Data was gathered through a questionnaire about language learning beliefs and TOEFL exams. The findings indicated significant shifts in beliefs related to analytic language learning, experiential

language learning, and self-efficacy/confidence, alongside gains in language proficiency. However, the correlations between belief questionnaire responses and TOEFL scores were generally weak and not statistically significant. Similarly, Ren and Bai (2016) investigated how the beliefs Chinese English-major college students hold about learning influence their academic achievements in English. The researchers found a positive correlation between students' learning beliefs and their English academic achievements; however, this relationship was not significantly important.

Overall, the correlation between beliefs about language learning and learning outcomes is generally found to be weak (Kalaja et al., 2018). The relationships between beliefs and language learning outcomes are thought to be complex and multifaceted (Zhong, 2022). Learner beliefs seem to influence learning outcomes indirectly by affecting the selection and use of language learning strategies and other individual factors, such as language anxiety or motivation. When learners act upon their beliefs by employing certain strategies, this can lead to observable gains in language proficiency. Conversely, a failure to act on these beliefs, or the use of ineffective strategies, may hinder progress. At the same time, the literature indicates that the relationship between beliefs and learning outcomes does not exist in isolation (Kalaja, 2015). It is influenced by interactions with various other factors such as emotions, willingness to communicate, and learner autonomy (Zhong, 2022). These factors can either reinforce or moderate the impact of beliefs on learning outcomes, making the relationship highly contextual and individualized.

2.2.4.5 The Relationship Between Beliefs and Emotions

The intricate relationship between beliefs and emotions has been well addressed in Psychology and is thought to be pivotal in understanding cognitive behavioral processes and their implications for psychological well-being. For example, Beck (1976) posited that beliefs, both explicit and implicit, fundamentally shape how individuals interpret and react to various stimuli, thereby influencing their emotional responses. According to Cognitive Appraisal Theory, as proposed by Lazarus (1982, 1991), emotions are primarily derived from the cognitive appraisals of events; these appraisals are deeply entwined with personal beliefs about the self, others, and the broader world. For instance, a belief that one is incompetent can lead to an appraisal of a challenging task as threatening, which in turn evokes anxiety or fear. This dynamic underscores a bidirectional relationship where not only do beliefs trigger emotional reactions, but the experienced emotions can also reinforce or modify underlying beliefs, creating a feedback loop that can perpetuate emotional disorders (Beck & Haigh, 2014). Consequently, therapeutic approaches like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) target these maladaptive beliefs to alter emotional responses and achieve better mental health outcomes (Hofmann et al., 2012). The transformational potential of modifying core beliefs highlights the critical role beliefs play in emotional regulation and underscores the necessity of addressing an individual's beliefs when trying to manage and navigate their emotional worlds more effectively (Dozois & Beck, 2008).

Barcelos (2015) tentatively explored the complex interconnections between language learning beliefs, emotions and identities within the context of applied linguistics. The researcher reviewed

extensive literature from applied linguistics, education, social sciences, and neuropsychology to frame the relationship between beliefs, emotions, and identities and found that while much research has focused on these constructs separately, there is a substantial gap in studies exploring their mutual interdependence. Grounded in theories like the neuropsychological links between cognition and emotion, social and cultural influences on emotional expression, and the role of identity in shaping language learning experiences, Barcelos (2015) claimed that emotions influence beliefs about language learning both positively and negatively, shaping learners' engagement and educational outcomes. Emotions can reinforce or challenge existing beliefs, thereby playing a crucial role in cognitive adjustments. She called for more empirical research that explicitly addresses the connections between these constructs. Meanwhile, she suggests methodological innovations in applied linguistics research, particularly the integration of qualitative methods that can capture the nuanced interactions of beliefs, emotions, and identities.

Barcelos (2015) effectively highlights the transformational potential of exploring the interconnections between beliefs, emotions, and identities in the language learning process. By proposing that these constructs are co-constructed and mutually influential, she sets the stage for further research that could lead to more nuanced understanding and innovative educational practices in language teaching. This integrated perspective not only aligns with cognitive and emotional theories in psychology but also offers practical pathways for enhancing learner engagement and success in language education. However, the intricate relationship between beliefs about language learning and learners' emotions are severely underexplored in applied linguistics.

Aragão (2011) probably was the first study that investigated the relationship between beliefs about language learning and emotions (except language anxiety) in the field of SLA. Seven students who enrolled in an Integrated English course at a university in Brazil participated in this study. Through exploring the interplay between beliefs, emotions, and actions in the context of foreign language learning in the classroom, Aragão (2011) concluded that beliefs and emotions are deeply interconnected. This relationship is evident in how students conceive their classroom experiences, affecting their engagement and learning processes. The study showed that the emotions felt by students during class were significantly shaped by their own perceptions and the perceptions they held about important figures around them, like instructors and classmates. These perceptions could lead to emotions like feeling daunted or restrained.

In summary, existing literature suggests that learners' beliefs about language learning are closely related to their emotions, significantly influencing their engagement and success. Students with positive beliefs about their abilities and the learning process tend to experience positive emotions, such as enjoyment and confidence, which facilitate their learning. Conversely, students with negative beliefs often experience anxiety and frustration, which impede their progress (Fisher et al., 2022). However, due to the limited number of studies, further research is needed to better understand and address the relationship between beliefs about language learning and emotions.

2.2.2.6 Beliefs and Other Individual Variables

Apart from investigating the correlation with learners' strategy use, language learning anxiety, and learning outcomes, a handful of studies have also investigated the relationships between learner beliefs and a few other learner factors, including gender, willingness to communicate (WCT), motivation, and a series of learner background variables.

For example, Bernat and Lloyd (2007) explored the gender effect on EFL learners' beliefs about language learning. This study found minimal significant differences between male and female learners in their beliefs about language learning. Hong (2006) compared language learning beliefs and learning strategies of monolingual Korean and bilingual Korean-Chinese students. The findings did not find significant gender differences in beliefs about language learning, pointing instead to the importance of linguistic background and cultural context. Arslan and Kafes (2021) examined Turkish prep school EFL students' beliefs about language learning as well as the impact of learner' background variables on their beliefs. The study found no significant relationship between the participants' beliefs about language learning and their gender. In contrast, Daif-Allah (2012) explored the beliefs about language learning among Saudi university students, examining the influence of gender on these beliefs. The research identified some differences in beliefs between male and female learners, suggesting that gender can influence how learners perceive language learning. The contradictory results indicate that the gender effect on learners' beliefs about language learning remains unclear and requires further investigation.

Beliefs about language learning have also been explored in relation to learners' WTC. For instance, Peng (2012) conducted a multiple-case study to investigate factors affecting WTC in an EFL classroom in China. The study found that various elements, such as communication confidence, motivation, learner beliefs, and classroom environment, significantly influence students' willingness to communicate in English. Joe, Hiver, and Al-Hoorie (2017) examine the structural relationships between classroom environment, motivation, willingness to communicate (WTC), and language achievement. Their study sheds light on how learners' beliefs within the classroom context affect their willingness to communicate. The findings highlight a generally positive correlation between positive beliefs about language learning, particularly self-efficacy beliefs, and higher levels of WTC. Learners who hold optimistic beliefs about their ability to learn a language, the usefulness of the language, and the effectiveness of their learning strategies tend to exhibit a greater willingness to communicate in that language.

The relationship between beliefs about language learning and motivation has intrigued several scholars. For example, Dörnyei (2001) posits that motivation is not a fixed attribute but a dynamic system influenced by various factors, including learners' beliefs and attitudes towards the language and its learning process. Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model has pointed out that learners who hold positive beliefs about their ability to learn a language and the value of learning that language are likely to have higher motivation to learn the language. Noels et al. (2000) examined the connection between motivation and beliefs about language learning using self-determination theory (SDT). Their study suggests that learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are shaped by their beliefs about the importance and attainability of language skills. Learners with positive beliefs

about language learning, such as viewing language skills as valuable and achievable, are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation. Conversely, learners who see language learning primarily as a tool for career advancement or fulfilling educational requirements tend to be motivated extrinsically. Similarly, Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) explored how changes in Hungarian students' attitudes towards English and their motivation to learn the language were influenced by their beliefs about the importance and utility of English in their future careers and personal lives.

These studies collectively provide a rich understanding of the intricate relationship between learners' beliefs about language learning and their willingness to communicate and motivation. Specifically, positive beliefs correlate positively with learners' willingness to communicate and learning motivation. Moreover, studies have shown that certain beliefs, such as the belief in the importance of communicative competence over grammatical accuracy, can foster a more intrinsic form of motivation, driving learners to seek opportunities for real-life language use (Noels et al., 2000). Conversely, negative beliefs, such as the perception that language learning is inherently difficult or that one lacks the innate talent for it, can demotivate learners or lead them to adopt less effective learning strategies, which in turn can hamper their language learning progress (Horwitz, 1987).

In addition, researchers have investigated how various learner background variables influence beliefs about language learning, including factors such as age, level of study, school context, social

context, and experience visiting target countries. For instance, Öz (2007) explored the influence of learners' background variables on their beliefs about language learning by analyzing data from 470 Turkish secondary school EFL students using the BALLI. The study revealed several specific differences in learners' beliefs. For instance, older and more advanced learners expressing more sophisticated and realistic views on language learning, such as the importance of practice and persistence, compared to younger learners. Students in private high schools placed greater emphasis on communication and had fewer misconceptions about structural approaches to language learning compared to those in public schools, who expressed more dissatisfaction with the quality of English instruction. Furthermore, social context, including regional differences, further shaped beliefs, as students from urban areas were more likely to value the role of social interaction in learning English compared to those from rural areas.

Several studies have examined the impact of visiting target countries on learners' beliefs about language learning. Tanaka (2004) found that Japanese EFL learners developed more realistic and practical beliefs after a study abroad program in Australia, such as prioritizing communication over grammar-focused learning. Similarly, Isabelli-García and Nisbet (2006) highlighted how study abroad experiences reshaped learners' perceptions of foreign language aptitude and effective learning strategies. Amuzie and Winke (2009) further supported this transformative effect, showing that immersion in a target-language environment shifted learners' beliefs toward the value of authentic language use. Yang and Kim (2011) also demonstrated that learners' beliefs evolved dynamically during study abroad experiences, reflecting adjustments to their goals and environments.

Together, these studies demonstrate that learner background variables—such as age, level of study, school context, social context, and experiences in target countries—play a significant role in shaping beliefs about language learning. However, the limited number of studies in this area prevents definitive conclusions, underscoring the need for further research to better understand these influences.

2.2.2.7 Changes in Learners' Beliefs About Language Learning

Besides examining learners' beliefs about learning different languages and their relationships with a range of individual variables, several empirical studies have delved into how language learners' beliefs evolve over time, offering insights into the dynamic interplay between these beliefs and language learning processes.

For example, Kern (1995) embarked on a study to examine the evolution of beliefs among language learners over a semester. This research involved 180 first-year university students enrolled in a French course in the United States. The BALLI was sent to the participants at the start and end of a 15-week semester. His analysis indicated a notable shift in the beliefs of 35% to 59% of the participants during this period. Many students recognized inaccuracies in their initial beliefs but struggled to alter these perceptions. This observation highlights the dynamic nature of learner beliefs and the challenges inherent in modifying them even when learners become cognizant of their misconceptions. Similarly, Allen (1996) conducted a case study involving a Libyan ESL

intermediate student in Canada to explore the impact of teachers' beliefs on learners' language learning beliefs. Using methods such as classroom observation, document analysis, teacher and student interviews, and learner diaries, Allen discovered that the student's beliefs about language learning evolved over the course of the ESL program. The student's beliefs gradually aligned more closely with those of the teacher.

In White's (1999) study, the evolution of beliefs and expectations in self-directed learners of Japanese and Spanish via distance education was meticulously explored over 12 weeks. Adopting a phenomenographic method, the research focuses on understanding how learners navigate the challenges of distance learning, particularly their expectations, the emergence of new beliefs, and how they conceptualize success in a self-directed learning environment. Through interviews, ranking exercises, questionnaires and various interactive exercises, White found that learners' beliefs about language learning, initially formed by their expectations, undergo significant evolution as they engage with the distance learning environment. A similar result was found in Peng (2011). Peng conducted a longitudinal study to trace the possible changes in beliefs held by a first-year college student over 7 months in China. Data was collected through interviews, classroom observation, and learning journals and was analyzed by narrative analysis and content analysis. This investigation uncovered significant modifications in the student's belief systems, including the types of activities preferred, and learning goals while transferring from high school to university, influenced by the opportunities and resources provided within the classroom environment.

The recent developments in research on language learners' beliefs have highlighted the complex and dual nature of learners' beliefs about language learning (Zhong, 2022). This advanced understanding underscores that while some beliefs about language learning may change in response to new experiences or instructional contexts, indicating their dynamic nature, other beliefs remain stable and deeply rooted within the learner's belief system, showcasing their enduring quality. For example, Mercer (2011) looked through the nature and dynamism of self-concept in foreign language learning through a longitudinal case study of a single Austrian learner of English. Data were collected via interviews and learning journals over three years and analyzed using a Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This study emphasizes the complexity and multidimensionality of self-concept, highlighting how it encompasses a network of interrelated self-beliefs that are both dynamic and stable. This duality suggests that beliefs are not uniformly susceptible to change; instead, their likelihood of evolving depends on their centrality to the individual's belief system (Mercer, 2011a; Rokeach, 1985). Core beliefs, which are seen as integral to a learner's identity or are expressed in more general and global terms, tend to be more resistant to change and are less immediately influenced by context. These beliefs form a foundational part of the learner's self-concept and remain stable over time despite varying situational factors (Mercer, 2011b). In contrast, peripheral beliefs, more closely tied to specific learning experiences are more malleable and reflective of the learner's current learning context (Pajares, 1992). In addition, Mercer's (2011b) findings illustrate the situational nature of some self-beliefs and how learners can hold seemingly contradictory beliefs about themselves, which was supported by findings from Zhong (2015b).

Building on Mercer's (2011b) findings, Zhong (2015b) further explores the intricate nature of learner beliefs over an 18-week period. Her study of five learners highlighted that beliefs are not always harmonious and can sometimes be conflicting or paradoxical. For instance, a learner might recognize the importance of using the language in practice while simultaneously prioritizing grammatical accuracy to the extent of avoiding language use until correctness is ensured. This underscores the multi-layered, intertwined nature of learner beliefs, which are not merely individual, isolated thoughts but part of an interconnected belief system. Some beliefs evolve or shift over time and across different situations, while others remain relatively unchanged, reflecting the dual features of learner beliefs as both stable and dynamic, and occasionally contradictory (Zhong, 2022).

Overall, research on changes in learners' beliefs about language learning emphasizes the situated, dynamic, and complex nature of these beliefs. They are not merely discrete, independent cognitive entities but form a complex, interconnected network (Barcelos, 2011). Recent scholarship advocates for a nuanced approach to understanding and engaging with learner beliefs. It calls for recognizing the interrelated, sometimes contradictory, nature of beliefs and their variable susceptibility to change. Based on study findings, Zhong (2022) concludes that learners' beliefs about language learning exhibit dual features—both stable and dynamic—and can sometimes be paradoxical.

2.3 Emotions in Applied Linguistics

Emotions exist to ‘prepare us with an automatic, very quick, and historically successful response to life’s fundamental tasks’ (Reeve, 2005, p. 354). These adaptive responses stem from our cognitive evaluations of life situations we encounter. Emotions are fundamental to human life (Kvajo, 2016), influencing how we interpret our experiences and contexts and choose to act in the future. They ‘trigger the appropriate biochemicals to set the internal scene in readiness for that action’ (Hansen, 1999, p. 214). Emotions play a crucial role in the experiences of both language teachers and learners, yet their importance has often been overlooked due to the discipline of SLA traditionally emphasizing cognitive rather than affective dimensions of language learning (Richards, 2022). The ‘emotional turn’ (Prior, 2019) in applied linguistics has refocused attention on how learners’ emotions influence their management of language learning.

This section delineates the evolution of emotion research within applied linguistics, focusing on how it is defined and their theoretical underpinnings, and their impact on language learning, with a particular emphasis on the constructs of foreign language anxiety and enjoyment.

2.3.1 Defining Emotion in Applied Linguistics

Learning a new language can evoke strong emotions, as those who have ever tried to acquire or use a second language can confirm (Plonsky et al., 2022). However, defining emotion remains a

challenging endeavor (Kushkiev, 2019; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012), as it encompasses a broad array of physiological, psychological, cognitive, and social dimensions (Damasio, 1994; Izard, 1992, 2010). For example, in cognitive science, emotion is described as ‘short-lived, feeling-arousal-purposive-expressive phenomena that help us adapt to opportunities and challenges that we face during important life events’ (Reeve, 2005, p. 340). Within psychology, emotions are understood as ‘a feeling that motivates, organizes and guides perception, thought and action’ (Izard, 1991, p.14). In neuroscience, emotions are understood as complex physiological and neuronal responses that indicate the level of threat or significance in a given situation (Damasio, 1994, 1996). Damasio's somatic marker hypothesis posits those physiological changes—such as variations in blood pressure, heart rate and skin conductance—serve as somatic markers, reflecting emotional responses in specific situations.

In the early L2 emotion research, the construct of emotion—and its correlate, affect—was broadly conceptualized, encompassing a spectrum of diverse constructs (White, 2018). Notably, Scovel (1978), as a pioneering figure in the study of L2 emotions, posited that emotions served as a counterbalance to cognitive variables, i.e., they are everything that influences language learning but unrelated with learners’ cognition. This perspective treated affect as an encompassing term for a variety of disparate constructs and behaviors (Scovel, 1978). Arnold (1999) broadly described affect as the elements of emotion, feeling, mood, or attitude that influence behavior. According to her, the affective domain encompasses factors such as motivation, anxiety, extraversion, and introversion.

However, this early conceptualization of emotions in applied linguistics has been subject to critique. Pavlenko (2005, 2012) contended that this conceptualization effectively reduced emotions to a ‘laundry list’ of decontextualized and often poorly defined socio-psychological constructs, such as attitudes, motivation, and anxiety, which were treated as internal, individual factors. Imai (2010) further critiqued these definitions for treating emotions as private, individual, and binary entities, categorizing them as either positive or negative and dismissing the interpersonal and communicative dimensions of emotions.

As the field of applied linguistics evolved, scholars began to reassess the conceptualization of emotions, placing greater emphasis on social aspects and the significance of interactions (White, 2018). Maynard (2002) proposed that emotions are not isolated within individuals but are shaped through interactions with contextual factors and the emotional responses of others. Similarly, So (2005) characterized emotions as the psychological result of ongoing interactions among internal and external systems, encompassing physiological, cognitive, behavioral, and social dimensions. According to this perspective, emotions are constantly generated and modified through multiple recursive effects. Aragão (2011) conceptualized emotions as bodily dispositions for situated action, representing various modes of interaction with the immediate environment. Bown and White (2010) describe affect from a social-cognitive psychological viewpoint as the emotional interpretation of L2 learning experiences and contexts. They argue that these interpretations significantly influence the dynamic process of L2 learning. Drawing on appraisal theories of emotion (Lazarus, 1991), Shao et al. (2019) defined L2 emotions as ‘affective experiences that are

tied directly to language learning activities and resulting learning outcomes, a dynamics process which is determined by appraisals of socio-culturally shaped L2 learning tasks' (p.2).

This evolution of the conceptualization reflects a significant shift in the field's understanding of emotions in applied linguistics, moving from a focus on internal, individual factors to a more nuanced appreciation of the social and interactive nature of emotional experiences in language learning (Aragão, 2011; Maynard, 2002). This shift underscores the importance of examining emotions through a sociocultural lens, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in shaping learners' emotional experiences (Pavlenko, 2005; Dewaele & Li, 2020).

2.3.2 Theoretical Foundations of Emotion Research in SLA

The theoretical foundations of L2 emotion research are rich and varied, drawing from a wide range of disciplines and perspectives (Plonsky et al., 2022). Notably, the integration of Positive Psychology has significantly influenced the direction of research, introducing frameworks such as the Broaden-and-Build theory (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004) and the Control-Value theory of Achievement Emotions (Pekrun, 2006). These theories offer insights into how positive emotions can enhance language learning by broadening learners' perspectives and building enduring personal resources. Additionally, the application of Martin Seligman's PERMA model (2011, 2018), which stands for Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment, Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and the model of character strengths,

including the Values in Action (VIA) inventory of character strengths (VIA Institute, 2015), further enriches the understanding of the complex dynamics of emotions in applied linguistics (MacIntyre, 2016). Each of these frameworks will be explained in greater depth in the subsequent sections to provide a more detailed understanding of their relevance and application in L2 emotion research.

2.3.2.1 Theoretical Consideration of Early L2 Emotion Research

Initial investigations into the role of emotion in language learning largely overlooked theoretical underpinnings (Dewaele, 2022). Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1985) briefly served as a theoretical cornerstone, yet it faced critique from scholars (e.g., Gregg, 1984; Zafar, 2009) over methodological and testability concerns. While models like Gardner's socio-educational model (1985, 2010), Clément's socio-contextual model (1980, 1986), and Dörnyei's second language motivational self-system (2005, 2009) acknowledged emotions, their focus predominantly lay within the broader spectrum of motivation (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). For instance, Gardner's model suggests that the efficacy of L2 acquisition relies on learners' favorable attitudes towards the target language and its speakers, the aspiration to learn, and the enjoyment found in the learning process, with these affective components serving to delineate a motivated learner. Similarly, Clément (1980, 1986) outlined two motivational processes influencing L2 proficiency, where self-confidence—seen as reflecting positive self-perceptions regarding L2 usage and reduced anxiety levels—falls under motivational considerations. Other constructs, such as the employment of affective strategies in language learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Bown, 2006) and the significance of affective schemata in language competency frameworks (Bachman &

Palmer, 1996), received endorsement within the field. Nonetheless, these frameworks have received limited attention in research (White, 2018).

2.3.2.2 The Positive Turn in L2 Emotion Research

The field of L2 emotion research has experienced significant growth through the integration of Positive Psychology principles (White, 2018; Dewaele, 2022). Positive Psychology, a subset of psychology, concentrates on the exploration of positive emotions, personal strengths, and virtues that empower individuals and communities to flourish (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In brief, Positive Psychology is the scientific study of how normal people thrive and flourish (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) or ‘the scientific study of what goes right in life’ (Peterson 2006, p. 4). Positive Psychology aims to shift psychology's emphasis from solely mending the adverse aspects of life towards nurturing and enhancing positive qualities and strengths. It acknowledges the existence of challenges and vulnerabilities, yet it advocates for addressing human adversities by leveraging strengths such as optimism, happiness, well-being, self-esteem, life satisfaction, gratitude, hope, and mindfulness, rather than focusing on weaknesses (Jin et al., 2021). Positive Psychology is dedicated to discerning the elements that render life fulfilling and to augmenting overall well-being and happiness. The three pillars supporting Positive Psychology are: positive subjective experience, such as positive emotions; positive individual traits associated with living well, such as being optimistic, creative, resilient; and positive institutions that enable and support people to flourish (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Peterson, 2006).

The advent of Positive Psychology has shifted the focus of L2 emotion research from negative emotions like anxiety and fear to positive emotions such as enjoyment, hope, love and pride, highlighting their role in enhancing language learning and teaching experiences (Byrd & Abrams, 2022). Bolstered by the robust theoretical underpinnings from Positive Psychology, L2 emotion research experienced great development and entered its Positive and Negative phase (see 1.2.3 Emotions in Second Language Acquisition). Two pivotal theories laid the theoretical groundwork for the research: the Broaden-and-Build theory (Fredrickson, 2001, 2006, 2013) from Positive Psychology and the Control-Value theory (Pekrun, 2006) from educational psychology (Dewaele & Li, 2020; MacIntyre, 2016).

The Broaden-and-Build theory, developed by Barbara Fredrickson, is a psychological theory that describes how positive emotions expand an individual's cognitive and behavioral capacities, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being and resilience. The theory posits two main ideas: broaden and build. In terms of broadening, this theory suggests that positive emotions like joy, interest, contentment, and love expand an individual's range of thoughts and actions in the moment. These emotions encourage people to explore new ideas, be more creative, and engage in diverse activities, ultimately enhancing their cognitive and behavioral flexibility (Fredrickson, 2001). For example, joy might encourage play and exploration, while interest might promote curiosity and learning (Fredrickson, 2004). Regarding the dimension of building, this theory posits that over time, these broadened mindsets and behaviors help individuals build enduring personal resources, such as social connections and coping skills, which can be beneficial in facing future challenges

(MacIntyre et al., 2019). With applications in the context of applied linguistics, the Broaden-and-Build theory suggests that positive emotions can enhance learners' cognitive capacities, motivation, and social interactions, thus improving their language learning outcomes (Wang & Jiang, 2022).

MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) introduced the Broaden-and-Build theory into SLA to underscore the distinctive functions of positive emotions in contrast to negative emotions within the domain of language learning and usage. They posited that positive emotions, by broadening learners' perspectives and keeping them receptive to language input, facilitate the construction of beneficial resources for language acquisition. Conversely, negative emotions tend to constrict learners' focus and limit the spectrum of potential language inputs. They maintained that positive emotions not only differ in function from negative emotions but also can neutralize the residual impacts of negative emotions in language learning contexts. Furthermore, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) highlighted that 'emotional reactions are semi-controllable' (p. 200), and teachers have the potential to influence learners' emotions by using the broadening and building power of learners' imagination. They advocated for the creation of classroom environments and learning activities that are both supportive and conducive to positive learning outcomes, emphasizing the critical role of positive emotions in broadening learners' engagement and cognitive receptivity, while also mitigating the limiting effects of negative emotions on the language learning journey.

The incorporation of Positive Psychology has spurred new research and theoretical developments in applied linguistics (Dewaele & Li, 2020). It has expanded the scope of L2 emotion research to

include constructs such as enjoyment, love, pride, hope, grit, and interest, enriching our understanding of how emotions influence L2 learning. Scholars from linguistic, educational, and sociocultural studies have become increasingly interested in the diverse array of emotions experienced by language learners, which were previously underrepresented in research (Dewaele & Li, 2020; Miyahara, 2019).

For example, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) investigated the dynamics between foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) among learners. Their seminal study, which involved an online survey of 1,746 language learners worldwide, assessed both emotions using Likert scale ratings: 21 items for FLE and 8 items extracted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS, Horwitz, 1986) for FLCA, along with open-ended questions. The findings revealed that learners experienced significantly higher levels of enjoyment than anxiety in their language studies, challenging the traditional focus on negative emotions, particularly anxiety, in SLA research.

The study also examined how FLE and FLCA correlate with various factors, including perceived proficiency, the number of languages known, education level, age, gender, and cultural background. Participants who had mastered multiple languages, achieved higher proficiency in the foreign language, felt more confident than their peers, attained higher levels of education, and were older reported significantly greater levels of FLE and lower levels of FLCA. Moreover, participants studying multiple foreign languages demonstrated significantly higher FLE, though FLCA was not

influenced by the number of languages studied. By incorporating the Broaden-and-Build theory into SLA, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) highlighted the unique and constructive impact of positive emotions on language learning and emphasized the need for a more holistic approach to understanding and improving the language learning process.

In recent years, the Control-Value theory of achievement emotions (Pekrun, 2006) has significantly influenced empirical research on L2 emotions (e.g., Li, 2018, 2021; Piniel & Albert, 2018; Han & Hyland, 2019). The Control-Value theory is primarily concerned with achievement emotions in academic settings and is not directly derived from Positive Psychology. However, it overlaps with Positive Psychology in its focus on understanding and fostering positive emotions like enjoyment and pride in educational contexts (Lazarides & Raufelder, 2021).

Achievement emotions are emotions directly related to achievement activities or outcomes (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun & Perry, 2014). The Control-Value theory posits that learners' achievement emotions are determined by two key factors: perceived control and perceived value of the task. According to the theory, high levels of perceived control and value lead to positive emotions (e.g., pride, satisfaction, and enjoyment), while low levels of control and value result in negative emotions (e.g., frustration, anxiety). Additionally, the interaction between control and value can produce mixed emotions, such as disappointment or boredom. Pekrun (2006) classified achievement emotions into three dimensions based on object focus (activity vs. outcome emotions), valence (positive vs. negative), and activation (activating vs. deactivating). This means students experience positive or

negative emotions depending on their appraisals of control and value they place on the tasks or outcomes. Unlike the Broaden-and-Build theory, which focuses solely on the fundamental effects of emotions, the Control-Value theory provides a more comprehensive framework that examines not only the effects of emotions but also their causes and impacts in academic settings (Dewaele & Li, 2020).

For example, Li (2021) adopted the Control-Value theory of achievement emotions to examine the antecedents of boredom in second language learning among Chinese university students. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study investigates how control and value appraisals predict boredom, drawing on quantitative data from 2,002 participants and qualitative insights from interviews with 11 students and 11 English teachers. The study found that both control and value appraisals uniquely or interactively predict boredom in EFL learning contexts. High levels of perceived control and value lead to positive emotions, whereas low levels of control and value contribute to negative emotions like boredom. More specifically, the intrinsic value of learning English plays a central role in predicting boredom, outweighing the effects of control and extrinsic value appraisals. Students who perceive English learning as intrinsically valuable and interesting experience lower levels of boredom. Contrary to a linear negative relationship suggested by quantitative data, qualitative findings indicate a curvilinear relationship between control and boredom. Both extremely high and low levels of perceived control over English learning tasks can induce boredom, pointing to the need for tasks that are neither too challenging nor too easy. In addition, the qualitative data revealed that boredom can result from various combinations of control

and value appraisals, and these appraisals interact to affect students' emotional experiences in EFL classes.

Besides the Broaden-and-Build theory (Fredrickson, 2001, 2013) and the Control-Value theory (Pekrun, 2006), other theories, including Martin Seligman's PERMA (PERMA stands for positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement) model (2011, 2018), Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and the VIA inventory of character strengths (VIA Institute, 2015) also laid foundations for the L2 emotion research (MacIntyre, 2016). For instance, Oxford and Cuellar (2014) use the PERMA model as a theoretical framework to understand the personal narratives of five adult learners of Chinese in Mexico. The grounded theory approach was used to analyze the learners' narratives. The result of the study enabled the researchers to claim that foreign language learners can discover inner meaning and gain a large measure of fulfilment through the journey of language learning. Additionally, learners' positive emotions are closely linked with their experiences of engagement, relationship, meaning and accomplishment. Helgeson (2016), based on the belief that 'happy students learn more' (p. 406), encouraged language teachers to incorporate Positive Psychology strategies and clear language learning goals in ESL/EFL classes. He proposed a series of classroom interventions directly related to the PERMA model, such as making gratitude lists, writing gratitude letters, and giving compliments. These activities not only help students learn and use the language but also enhance their well-being across the five dimensions of PERMA.

Although the significance of positive emotions and affect in L2 learning had not been completely neglected before 2012 (e. g. Arnold, 1999; Dewaele, 2005; Imai, 2010), the integration of Positive Psychology into SLA research marks a pivotal evolution in understanding learners' L2 emotions and their effects on language learning (and teaching) experiences and outcomes (Dewaele, 2022). This integration has spurred an affective shift and promoted a more holistic approach, not only broadening the scope of research to include a wide range of emotions experienced in L2 classrooms, but also providing robust theories underpinning the empirical research (Dewaele & Li, 2020). It is now accepted that emotions play a critical role in language learning, on par with cognition and motivation (Dewaele, 2005) and there is a fundamental connection between emotional and cognitive processes (Lantolf & Swain, 2019; Swain, 2013).

2.4 Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

FLA is widely recognized as a major psychological barrier to language learning (Arnold & Brown, 1999; Botes et al., 2020; Zhang, 2019) and is ranked as “second only to motivation” in scholarly interest (Scovel, 2001, p. 127). It is defined as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). Numerous studies have explored this emotion from various perspectives (Papi & Khajavy, 2023).

FLA manifests in various ways, such as fear of making mistakes, concerns about being judged by others, and the pressure to perform well (Yang, 1999). These emotional responses can create a

barrier to language acquisition, making it more difficult for learners to participate in class, engage in conversations, or even complete assignments (MacIntyre, 2017). Recognizing and addressing foreign language anxiety is crucial for both educators and learners to create a supportive and effective learning environment (MacIntyre & Wang, 2022).

2.4.1 Historical Approaches on Foreign Language Anxiety

MacIntyre (2017) classified FLA research into three main approaches, reflecting historical trends and evolving assumptions: the Confounded Approach, the Specialized Approach and the Dynamic approach.

The FLA research before the mid-1980s borrowed the definition and measurement of anxiety from other disciplines, such as psychology and education, and little consideration was given to how the conceptualization of anxiety was related to the unique task of language learning. Various types of anxiety, such as trait anxiety, state anxiety, test anxiety, achievement anxiety, and facilitating and debilitating anxiety were used by SLA researchers. Consequently, the early FLA research generated ‘mixed and confusing results’ (Scovel, 1978, p. 132). Language anxiety was found to be negatively, positively and nearly zero related with language learning. The inconsistent correlation between anxiety and language learning led Scovel (1978) to conclude that ‘anxiety itself is neither a simple nor well understood psychological construct and that it is premature to attempt to relate it to the global and comprehensive task of language acquisition’ (p. 132). He emphasized the need

for a more specialized instrument that could capture the unique aspects of anxiety experienced by language learners.

The Confounded Approach came to an end when Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) reoriented the conceptualization and measurement of anxiety (MacIntyre, 2017). Based on the measurement used to test French classroom anxiety in Gardner's social-educational models of language learning motivation (Gardner, 1985) and the firsthand descriptions of anxiety-provoking episodes provided by the students themselves, Horwitz and her colleagues (1986) argued that foreign language anxiety is a type of anxiety specific to the context of learning a second language. They associated it with L2 learning and highlighted its role in causing negative impacts on language acquisition and performance. This form of anxiety is distinct from having a generally anxious personality or experiencing anxiety in moment-to-moment situations. Accordingly, Horwitz et al. (1986) created the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to assess the anxiety levels of students in language classes. The FLCAS includes 33 items that reflect common experiences in language learning situations, such as 'I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.' This scale has been extensively used in empirical research, with Horwitz (1986) presenting initial evidence supporting its reliability and validity. In Horwitz (1986), the scale was reported to have an excellent reliability among Spanish students. Additionally, the study reported a non-significant relationship between FLA and trait anxiety, communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. Only the correlation between FLA and text anxiety was found to be moderately significant, but the shared variance of these two constructs was less than 30% (0.53^2). Horwitz (1986) offered strong evidence of the independence of language anxiety.

A situation-specific conceptualization of FLA marked a significant shift in SLA research (MacIntyre, 2002). Research on FLA was able to flourish and entered the Specialized Approach phase. The sources of FLA, the effects of FLA on learners' learning outcomes (general linguistic proficiency and specific learning aspects), cognition, social behaviours, the relationship between FLA and other learner factors, and instructional strategies to reduce FLA were widely studied (Horwitz, 2017; Gkonou et al., 2017). For example, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994a, 1994b) measured both learner's anxiety and their performance in the language input, processing and output stages. They found that learners' anxiety significantly hindered their language acquisition at all three stages. The need for additional time and effort to compensate for inefficiencies in acquiring information from earlier stages was found to be related to FLA; their poor performance in the output stage was also related to FLA. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994b, p.301) claimed that 'the potential effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language appear pervasive and may be quite subtle. Performance measures that examine only behaviors at the output stage may neglect the influence of anxiety at earlier stages as well as ignoring the links among stages'.

The third approach is closely related to the dynamic turn recently happening in the field of SLA (Daubney et al., 2017). The dynamic paradigm is driven by the Dynamic Systems Theory (DST; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008) and frames research as being situated and process-oriented. This approach implies that learners' attributes are not stable or independent of context but instead interact with the context and evolve over time (Hiver & Al Hoorie, 2020). From this perspective, FLA is conceptualized as an emergent and constantly fluctuating product of the interactions among

many factors that affect language learning and development (MacIntyre, 2017). It is a potentially rapidly changing experience, fluctuating over time and continuously reacting to ongoing events. Even a typically relaxed learner may experience FLA at some moment (Dewaele, 2017). FLA in this dynamic framework is measured through a process-oriented lens and on a moment-by-moment time scale. For example, Gregersen et al. (2014) tied a heart rate monitor to each of the six participants while they were doing oral presentations in their L2 (Spanish). After the presentations, the six participants were invited to view their presentation video and at the same time use the idiodynamic method (MacIntyre, 2012) to rank their feelings of anxiety while doing the presentations. The trajectory of their anxiety during the presentation was used as the basis for the following interviews. The spikes in the trajectory were found to be linked with several interacting factors, such as the moments that students forgot words, or got confused with the flow of their presentation or the using of the memorization strategy, or purely being filmed with a camera. Gregersen et al. (2014) highlighted that FLA is dynamic and emergent, resulting from complex interactions among various factors. These factors include the learner's psychological state and the interpersonal and social contexts of the surrounding environment.

2.4.2 Individual and Contextual Factors Associated With FLA

Language anxiety is often believed to arise from negative experiences encountered early in the language learning process (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989) or from the challenges learners face in presenting themselves authentically in a new language (Horwitz et al., 1986). Young (1991) conducted a comprehensive analysis of existing research and identified six key sources of FLA:

(1) personal and interpersonal anxieties, (2) learners' beliefs about language learning, (3) instructors' beliefs about language teaching, (4) interactions between instructors and learners, (5) classroom procedures, and (6) language assessment practices. Over four decades of research, FLA has been found to be associated with a combination of individual differences, contextual factors (Papi & Khjavy, 2023), and the inherent difficulty of the target language (Luo, 2012; 2013). These findings underscore the complex interplay between internal and external influences in shaping language learners' anxiety.

A range of individual learner differences has been found to be associated with language anxiety. For example, Sparks and Ganschow (1991) contended that difficulties in first language (L1) skills, or language aptitude, are the main contributors to second language anxiety. For example, learners who struggle with linguistic aspects in their L1 may face similar challenges in L2 learning (Sparks & Patton, 2014). This perspective, however, has been challenged by other researchers in SLA (e.g., MacIntyre, 1995, 2017; Horwitz, 2000). They claim that L2 anxiety arises from a wider array of factors beyond just L1 abilities. For example, learners' self-perceived and actual linguistic competence have been found to consistently correlate with learners' anxiety. Botes et al. (2020a) and Jiang and Dewaele (2020) have demonstrated that individuals who perceive themselves as more proficient in a L2 experience lower levels of anxiety. Conversely, MacIntyre et al. (1997) discovered that learners with higher levels of anxiety tend to underestimate their L2 abilities, while those with lower anxiety might overestimate theirs. Similarly, Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) investigated the connection between language learning anxiety and various aspects of language proficiency, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Their research indicated that highly

anxious learners often rated their speaking and listening skills negatively. Furthermore, learners' actual language proficiency has been identified as a key predictor of language learning anxiety. For instance, Jiang and Dewaele (2019) examined the impact of various factors, including language proficiency, on foreign language anxiety among Chinese university students studying English. Their research revealed that higher levels of English proficiency significantly predict lower levels of anxiety. This finding indicates that as students become more proficient and confident in their English skills, their language learning anxiety diminishes.

Multilingualism has also been identified to correlate with language anxiety (e.g., Botes et al., 2020c; Dewaele, 2007, 2013; Thompson & Lee, 2013). For example, Botes, Dewaele, and Greiff (2020c) investigated the relationship between multilingualism and anxiety levels experienced in foreign language classrooms. The study found that individuals who spoke multiple languages reported lower levels of anxiety in foreign language classrooms compared to their monolingual counterparts, which suggests that the experience of learning and using more than one language equips learners with strategies and enhanced metalinguistic awareness that help mitigate anxiety (Dewaele, 2013). Similarly, Dewaele (2007) discovered that quadrilingual and trilingual individuals reported lower levels of FLA in their L2 when compared to bilinguals. Thompson and Lee (2013) claimed that multilingual individuals experience reduced anxiety in learning new languages only when they have attained at least an intermediate level of proficiency in their additional languages.

Research has also indicated a cyclical relationship between frequent use of L2 and reduced language anxiety. For example, Jiang and Dewaele (2020) posited that learners who engage more frequently in using their L2 tend to develop a higher sense of self-perceived communicative competence. This increased confidence in their ability to communicate effectively in the L2 encourages them to use the language in a wider range of contexts, which, in turn, helps to reduce their anxiety about language learning. Conversely, Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) and Papi and Khajavy (2021) suggested that learners who experience lower levels of anxiety are more likely to feel confident in their communicative competence from the outset. This confidence propels them to use the L2 more frequently, further reinforcing their proficiency and reducing anxiety in a positive feedback loop.

In addition, certain personality characteristics, such as trait emotional stability, extraversion, and emotional intelligence are found to negatively correlate with learners' language learning anxiety. Research suggests that individuals with higher levels of emotional stability tend to experience less anxiety when learning a new language, likely due to their greater resilience in handling stress and setbacks (Dewaele et al., 2008; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019). Similarly, extroverted learners, characterized by their openness to social interaction and propensity for risk-taking, typically exhibit lower levels of language learning anxiety (Dewaele, 2002; Dewaele & Al-Saraj, 2015). Likewise, individuals with higher levels of trait emotional intelligence experience lower levels of anxiety in learning and using the language (Shao et al., 2013) as they can better manage their emotions and understand others' emotional responses. This ability fosters smoother social interactions and thereby reduces anxiety levels associated with language learning (Jin & Dewaele, 2018). In contrast,

perfectionism (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Dewaele, 2017) and neuroticism (Dewaele, 2013) are found to be positively correlated to language learning anxiety. Learners who set unrealistically high standards for themselves may experience increased anxiety due to fear of making mistakes or not meeting these standards (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Barabadi & Khajavy, 2020). Individuals with high neuroticism are more likely to experience anxiety and stress because these individuals often have a heightened sensitivity to negative feedback and a propensity to perceive situations as threatening (Dewaele, 2013). In addition, learners' anxiety of language learning has been found to correlate with their beliefs about language learning (e.g., Horwitz, 1988; Price, 1991; Tandang & Ariff, 2019; Thompson & Lee, 2013; Young, 1991; see section 2.2.4.3 Beliefs and Foreign Language Anxiety). Research indicates that mistaken or unrealistic beliefs about language learning can diminish learners' perceptions of their own abilities, consequently increasing the perceived difficulty of learning the language and heightening anxiety (Aslan & Thompson 2021; Tandang & Arif, 2019; Thompson & Lee 2013).

Several psychological factors are also found to influence learners' language learning anxiety. For example, self-esteem has been consistently found to have an inverse relationship with L2 anxiety (e.g., Jin et al., 2015; Young, 1991). Specifically, learners with lower self-esteem tend to experience higher levels of L2 anxiety. Young (1991) highlights that the fear of negative evaluation and the pressure to conform to others' expectations can significantly contribute to increased levels of anxiety among L2 learners. Research on whether competitiveness contributes to anxiety has yielded varied results. Bailey (1983) identified competitiveness as a factor that can increase L2 anxiety, suggesting that the drive to outperform peers might contribute to heightened levels of

stress and apprehension in language learning settings. In contrast, Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) found no significant correlation between competitiveness and L2 anxiety, indicating that competitiveness might not universally affect learners' anxiety levels. Adding to the complexity, Jin et al. (2015) reported that competitiveness could actually decrease L2 anxiety, contradicting Bailey's earlier findings.

The interplay between anxiety and motivation has also been addressed by SLA researchers (e.g., Jiang & Papi, 2022; Papi, 2010; Papi & Khajavy, 2021; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021; Teimouri, 2017). Early studies indicated that integrative motivation, namely learning a language to connect with its speakers, revealed a consistent negative relationship with anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Gardner, 2010). More recently motivation orientation studies indicated that learners driven by an 'ought-to L2 self,' which emphasizes obligations related to language learning, often experience higher anxiety levels than those motivated by an 'ideal L2 self,' which is aligned with their aspirations and goals in language learning (Papi & Khajavy, 2021; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021; Teimouri, 2017). This difference is attributed to the former group's focus on avoiding negative outcomes, which heightens anxiety, whereas the latter group's orientation towards achieving positive results and personal growth tends to reduce anxiety levels (Papi & Khajavy, 2021; 2023).

Furthermore, a range of learners' background factors, including gender, age, course level, and experience in the target language country, has been found to influence language anxiety. For example, several studies show significant gender differences, with females scoring higher on

FLCAS than males (e.g., Cheng, 2002; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2016; Ezzi, 2012; Khajavy et al., 2018; Park & French, 2013; Zhao & Whitchurch, 2011), while other studies have found that males reported being more anxious (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2022; Elaldi, 2016) or no significant gender difference (e.g., Aida, 1994; Gopang et al., 2015; Jiang & Dewaele, 2020; Luo, 2013; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). Research linking language learning anxiety with age also yielded mixed results. Some studies (e.g., Dewaele & Al-Saraj, 2015; Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999) suggest that older L2 learners may experience higher levels of anxiety, while other studies (e.g., Arnaiz Castro & Guillén García, 202) indicate that younger learners might face greater L2 anxiety.

How course level influences learners' anxiety also remains unclear. It might be presumed that as students advance in their language courses, their anxiety levels decrease. Yet, empirical findings present a varied picture. Specifically, Saito and Samimy (1996) analyzed the anxiety levels among 257 college students at the University of Texas, who were enrolled in beginning, intermediate, and advanced Japanese language classes. Contrary to expectations, their study revealed that students in advanced-level courses experienced the highest levels of anxiety, while those in intermediate-level courses reported the lowest. Elaldi (2016) and Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) also found similar results that with learners advancing to higher course levels, their levels of anxiety increased. However, contrary results were also reported. For example, Luo (2013) found that with the Mandarin Chinese learners' language proficiency increased, their levels of anxiety decreased. The finding of Luo (2013) was also confirmed in Elkhafaifi's (2005) study where negative correlations were found between students' Arabic listening anxiety and course levels, and general Arabic anxiety and course levels.

Contradictory findings about the influence of being in the target language country on learners' anxiety were also reported. For example, Tompson and Lee (2014) explored how previous abroad experience in the target country affects the anxiety levels of Korean learners of English. Data was collected through the FLCAS and was analyzed by exploratory factor analysis. Four anxiety factors were identified: anxiety about English class performance, lack of self-confidence in English, confidence in dealing with ambiguous English expressions, confidence in interacting with native English speakers and confidence in dealing with ambiguous English expressions. The study found that previous experience abroad was inversely related to the first, second and fourth factors but positively related to the third, suggesting learners with more immersion experience generally experience lower levels of anxiety. Similar results were reported by Aida (1994), Allen and Herron (2003), Dewey et al. (2013), and Baker-Smemoe et al. (2020), among others. However, studies also indicated that not all students experience decreased anxiety after visiting the target language country. For example, Oh (1996) discovered that American students of Japanese who had previously visited Japan exhibited lower levels of motivation and confidence in speaking Japanese compared to those who had not visited the country. Lee (2018) found more complicated results about the effect of being in the target country on learner's anxiety. Lee (2018) investigated the impact of short-term study abroad programs on several dimensions including language anxiety. Beginner and intermediate groups experienced significant reductions in FLA after participating in the short-term study abroad programs. In contrast, the advanced level group did not experience a statistical change in FLA.

Learner-external circumstances are also found to be linked to language learning anxiety. Studies indicate that classroom dynamics and instructional methods play a crucial role. Teaching practices such as harsh or public error correction, being singled out to answer questions or give presentation can significantly increase anxiety by raising fear of embarrassment or criticism (Liu, 2006; Mak, 2011; Young, 1990). In addition, the teacher's strictness and limited use of L2 in the class can also trigger students' learning anxiety (Dewaele et al., 2019). Another external factor influencing FLA is the response of peers to spoken errors and the potential impact this has on one's social standing (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017). In contrast, supportive environments can mitigate anxiety (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019). In addition, the ethnolinguistic context in which language learning occurs is found to influence anxiety levels. For instance, learning a language in a setting where it is politically or culturally sensitive can heighten anxiety (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017).

In addition to the above linguistic, learner-internal and external factors, several studies suggested that the complexity of the target language can influence levels of foreign language anxiety. For instance, Oh (1996) found that the learners' anxiety levels were related to their perception of the complexity of Japanese Kanji. Le (2004) found that learners of Chinese in study-abroad programs reported markedly higher anxiety levels compared to students of other languages, likely due to Chinese's perceived difficulty. Similarly, Saito et al. (1999) observed significant variations in foreign language reading anxiety across three languages—Japanese, Russian, and French—with Japanese learners experiencing the highest anxiety ($M = 56.01$), followed by French ($M = 53.14$), and Russian learners showing the lowest ($M = 46.64$). Additionally, Aida (1994) observed that students learning Japanese exhibited slightly higher anxiety ($M = 96.7$) than those studying Spanish

in Horwitz's (1986) research ($M = 94.5$). Aida attributed this difference to the challenges of learning a non-Western language like Japanese, compared to more familiar Western languages such as Spanish. These empirical findings led Luo (2012, 2013) to argue that the difficulty of the target language should be considered when addressing learners' language anxiety.

In summary, foreign language anxiety emerges from a complex interaction of linguistic, personal, and contextual factors, each exerting a unique influence on the learner's anxiety levels. Negative initial experiences in language learning—characterized by feelings of inadequacy, embarrassment, or frustration—can establish a foundation for persistent anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). This anxiety may lead learners to expect similar distress in future language learning scenarios, thereby perpetuating a cycle of anxiety (Gregersen et al., 2014). The anticipation of anxiety not only persists but can also amplify further anxiety, reinforcing a cycle that detrimentally impacts language learning progress (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Gregersen et al., 2014). MacIntyre (2017) concluded that language anxiety 'is influenced by internal physiological processes, cognitive and emotional states along with the demands of the situation and the presence of other people, among other things, considered over different timescales. Anxiety has both internal and social dimensions' (p. 28). Meanwhile, empirical studies have pointed out that the difficulty of the target language influence learners' language learning anxiety.

2.4.3 The Relationship Between FLA and Learning Outcomes

The impact of foreign language anxiety on learners has been demonstrated to be both profound and multifaceted (Horwitz, 2017), extending beyond mere discomfort to influence cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of language acquisition (Horwitz, 2010; MacIntyre & Wang, 2022). Empirical research has consistently shown a negative correlation between language anxiety and language learning outcomes. This relationship is complex, as anxiety not only influences overall achievement but also affects cognitive processing and performance in specific language skills (MacIntyre, 2017).

MacIntyre (1999) analyzed research on foreign language anxiety and found that there is a moderately negative correlation between language anxiety and different linguistic performance measures. Similarly, Horwitz (2001) reviewed studies on language anxiety and achievement and claimed that ‘the observed negative relationship between anxiety and achievement holds at various instructional levels as well as with different target languages’ (p. 116). However, she also noted that the studies reviewed focused solely on tertiary-level students, leaving the connection between anxiety and language performance in younger students largely unexamined.

Four recent meta-analyses on foreign language anxiety on L2 achievement (Botes et al., 2020a; Dikmen, 2021; Teimouri et al., 2019; Zhang, 2019) confirmed the consensus that L2 anxiety negatively impacts language learning outcomes (MacIntyre, 2017; Horwitz, 2017). For example,

Teimouri et al. (2019) conducted a synthesis of research on the link between L2 anxiety and language achievement, using data from 97 studies, which included 105 independent samples and a total of 19,933 participants across 23 countries. The synthesis revealed an average correlation of $r = -0.36$ between FLA and language achievement, suggesting a moderate negative relationship. This meta-analysis notably incorporated studies that utilized 25 distinct anxiety questionnaires and 170 varied measures of language achievement, encompassing 90 language tests, 40 course grades, 35 self-assessments, and 5 GPAs. This finding provides strong evidence that increased levels of L2 anxiety are associated with decreased language achievement across different educational stages, target languages, and anxiety measurement types. Similarly, the meta-analysis conducted by Botes et al. (2020a) investigated the relationship between L2 anxiety and academic achievement across different competency-specific outcomes: general academic achievement and four specific language competencies (reading, writing, listening, speaking). Analyzing 99 effect sizes from a total sample of 14,128 participants, the study found a moderate negative correlation between FLCA and all forms of academic achievement. This means higher anxiety levels in foreign language classrooms were associated with lower academic performance. The strongest negative correlation was observed in general academic achievement ($r = -.39$), suggesting that as FLCA increases, general academic achievement tends to decrease. This study is characterized by its focus on the FLCAS as a uniform measure of L2 anxiety, facilitating cross-study comparisons. This approach allows for a clearer understanding of how FLCA specifically, as measured by a standardized tool, correlates with various forms of academic achievement.

Research indicates that L2 anxiety impacts learners' cognitive processing (e.g., MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994a, 1994b), learning motivation (e.g., Papi & Teimouri, 2014; Teimouri, 2017), and learning behaviors, such as willingness to communicate (e.g., Hashimoto, 2002; Khajavy et al., 2018; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996), overstudy (e.g., Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre, 1999; Price, 1991) and student drop-out (e.g., Bailey et al., 2003; Gardner et al., 1987). For example, in a pioneering experimental study employing random assignment to mitigate pre-existing variances in abilities and other factors, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994a) investigated the impact of induced anxiety on the efficiency and effectiveness of a computerized vocabulary learning task. This task was designed to distinctly assess the input, processing, and output phases of learning. Anxiety levels were manipulated by presenting a video camera at different stages for various groups of participants. The presence of the camera at specific learning phases heightened anxiety, leading to notable declines in performance during those phases. This effect diminished as students acclimated to the camera, which helped partially compensate for their initial performance deficit. Papi and Khajavy (2021) integrate regulatory focus, L2 self-guides, emotions (anxiety and enjoyment), L2 use strategies (eager and vigilant), and L2 achievement into a comprehensive model. It investigates how these elements interconnect to impact English language learning among 324 students. The researchers found that motivation, particularly a promotion focus, significantly influences second language achievement by fostering enjoyment and reducing anxiety. Furthermore, L2 anxiety prompted students to use the target language vigilantly, suggesting anxious learners would only use it when necessary. Research by Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, and Daley (2003) specifically explored the relationship between foreign language anxiety and dropout rates, finding that highly anxious students were more likely to leave their foreign language courses than their less anxious peers.

Eysenck (1979) argued that anxiety can negatively affect the quality (scores) and efficiency (speed) of cognitive performance by splitting attention into task-related cognition and self-related cognition. Although this hypothesis needs to be tested with more empirical studies (Sparks & Patton, 2014), existing studies suggest a link between anxiety and the cognitive processes involved in L2 language aptitude and performance. Similarly, MacIntyre (2017) highlights that L2 anxiety primarily obstructs L2 learning, acting both as a cause and a consequence of poor performance.

2.4.4. Anxiety Studies on Mandarin Chinese

A limited number of studies have explored the anxiety of learners studying Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language. For example, Zhao and Whitchurch (2011) investigated the factors contributing to foreign language anxiety among students learning Chinese in the United States. This research focuses on several variables including students' perceptions of their language performance, course difficulty, and other background factors. The researchers found a negative correlation between students' FLA levels and both subjective (self-perceived proficiency) and objective measures (final exam grades) of their language performance, suggesting that higher anxiety typically associated with poorer perceived and actual language skills. At the same time, the study revealed that students who perceived Chinese language courses as more difficult than expected exhibited higher levels of anxiety compared to their peers with lower perceptions of difficulty. Anxiety levels varied with students' prior exposure to the target country where Chinese is spoken. Those with experience in China had different levels of anxiety compared to those without such experience. No significant

differences in anxiety levels were found based on gender or the level of the Chinese course being taken. Qualitative data (email interview) revealed that besides speaking and listening, reading and writing in Chinese also significantly contributed to students' anxiety, highlighting the multifaceted nature of language anxiety.

In line with studies on learning other languages, FLA about learning Mandarin Chinese was found to negatively moderately correlated with self-perceived or real learning outcomes. Additionally, a series of learner-internal and external factors were found to related to learners' anxiety of learning Chinese. For example, Luo (2018) investigated factors contributing to anxiety in learning Mandarin Chinese among college students in the United States. This research focused on seven key learner variables: age, motivation, perception of the difficulty of the Chinese language, self-perceived achievement, self-perceived language learning ability, self-expectation in the Chinese class, and perception of the importance of the Chinese language. All seven variables were found to show significant correlations with anxiety levels. Specifically, the perception of the Chinese language's difficulty and age had positive correlations with anxiety, suggesting that older students and those who perceive Chinese as more difficult exhibit higher anxiety levels. Conversely, the other five variables were negatively correlated with anxiety. A multiple regression analysis revealed that except for self-expectation and perceived importance of learning Chinese, all other variables significantly predicted anxiety. Perception of the language's difficulty was the strongest predictor, followed by self-perceived achievement. Luo (2013) found significant differences in anxiety levels among heritage learners (those with a Chinese background) and non-heritage learners. Heritage learners who were exposed to Mandarin or another Chinese dialect at home experienced less

anxiety compared to those without any Chinese language background. Notably, anxiety levels were also inversely related to the proficiency level, with advanced CFL learners showing significantly lower anxiety levels than beginners. Luo (2013) posited that Chinese language learning anxiety is not uniformly high among all CFL learners but is particularly pronounced among beginners and intermediate learners. This suggests that the early stages of learning Chinese are the most anxiety-inducing, potentially due to the initial challenges of adjusting to the tonal and character-based aspects of the language.

Empirical studies about learners' anxiety of learning Mandarin Chinese have been conducted in United States (e.g., Luo, 2011; 2013; 2018), Thailand (e.g., Peng, 2012, Xu et al., 2022), Korea (e.g., Liu, 2020), Myanmar (e.g., Hu, 2020), and Malaysia (e.g., Ting et al., 2016, Ting & Sunarti, 2022). These studies have indicated that CFL learners experienced a moderate (e.g., Luo 2013; Ting et al., 2016; Luo, 2018) to high (Peng, 2012; Xu et al., 2022) levels of FLA. So far, the UK learners' anxiety of learning Mandarin Chinese remains unaddressed.

2.5 Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE)

Scholars' interest in language enjoyment reflects an emerging trend in SLA literature to take a holistic perspective on learners' emotions in language learning and communication (Dewaele, 2022). Inspired by theoretical frameworks in Positive Psychology and Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) proposed the concept of foreign language

enjoyment, as a counterpart concept of the well-studied negative emotion of FLA. It is defined as a broad positive emotional state experienced by language learners when their psychological needs are met in the foreign language classroom (Botes et al, 2022). Compared to the straightforward and pleasant feeling of pleasure, enjoyment is considered a complex emotion that encompasses the interplay between challenges and one's perceived capability, reflecting the human aspiration for achievement amidst challenging endeavors (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).

Foreign language enjoyment has been identified as the first variable of the Positive Psychology movement in SLA (Botes et al., 2020a), and its positive association with other individual differences in language learning reflects the principles of Positive Psychology in practice within an applied context (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016, Botes et al., 2022). Considering the challenges of the long-term undertaking of learning a foreign language and the possible role of positive emotions as a driving force in language learning and communication, FLE has consistently attracted scholars' attention since it was introduced into the applied linguistics lexicons in 2014. It is not exaggerated to say that FLE has been the cornerstone of the recent Positive Psychology research momentum in the field of applied linguistics (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; MacIntyre et al., 2019; White, 2018). Similar to foreign language anxiety, increased research has shown that FLE is associated with a wide range of learner-internal and external variables and some linguistic variables (for a review, see Botes et al., 2022).

2. 5. 1 Individual and Contextual Factors Associated With FLE

Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) explored the dynamics between FLE and FLA among 1,746 foreign language learners worldwide. In addition to utilizing a 21-item Likert scale to measure FLE and an 8-item scale derived from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS, Horwitz, 1986) to assess FLCA, the researchers incorporated an open-ended question. This question asked participants to write a detailed essay about a memorable enjoyable event they had experienced. The research revealed that L2 learners experienced significantly higher levels of FLE compared to FLA, which suggests that learners generally feel more joy and satisfaction in their language learning experiences than stress or anxiety. The study also found that learners' FLE is influenced by several factors, including their perceived proficiency in the language classroom, the number of languages they know, their educational level, age, and their overall level in the foreign language, which ranges from lower-intermediate to advanced. More specifically, learners who perceive themselves as high achievers within their peer groups, more proficient, know more languages (studying three or more) and get higher levels of education tend to report higher levels of enjoyment. At the same time, older, female and North American learners experience more FLE than their younger and male counterparts. In addition, qualitative data indicated that specific activities that induce engagement, creativity and opportunities for authentic language use spark FLE. Besides, recognition from teachers and peer students, successful communication, humor, and supportive peer groups, teachers' professional and emotional skills, the moment of realizing progress, and authentic use of the L2 all contribute to learners' FLE.

Inspired by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), researchers try to underpin the sources of L2 learners' FLE. The relationship between gender, multilingualism and FLE has been examined in several studies. However, mixed research findings are reported. For example, some studies indicate that female students experience higher levels of FLE than male students (Dewaele et al., 2016; Dewaele et al., 2018; Luo, 2018), while other studies found no significant difference (e.g., Alezeni, 2020; Mierzwa, 2018; Jiang, 2023). Multilingualism has been found to correlate with FLE in several studies (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2022), while other studies found no correlation (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2018). Therefore, the effect of gender and multilingualism on FLE remains unclear (Dewaele, 2022). As to age, studies seem to indicate that older learners reported higher levels of FLE than younger learners (Dewaele et al., 2018; Luo, 2018), however, due to the scarcity of studies on the age effect of FLE, no conclusions can be drawn (Botes et al., 2022).

Several positive personality traits, such as emotional intelligence, grit and cultural empathy have been found to correlate with FLE. For instance, Li et al. (2020) examined the impact of the classroom environment and trait emotional intelligence on students' experiences of FLE and FLA. Their study included two groups of EFL learners, consisting of 1,718 secondary school students and 1,295 university students in China. The study found that both classroom environment and trait emotional intelligence were significant predictors of FLE and FLA, affecting these emotions both separately and jointly. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2019) found that students scoring higher on social initiative and cultural empathy experience higher levels of FLE. In addition, grit, namely perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007), is consistently positively correlated with FEL. For instance, Wei et al. (2019) explored the impact of grit on foreign language

performance among middle school students, focusing on the mediating role of FLE and the moderating role of the classroom environment. The study utilized the eight-item Grit Scale-Short Version (Grit-S; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009), the Chinese version of the FLE Scale (Li et al., 2018), and the English Classroom Learning Environment Inventory (Liu & Fraser, 2013) to analyze data from 832 middle school students. The study found that grit positively affect learners' performance, and FLE mediates the relationship between grit and learners' language performance, suggesting that students' enjoyment of learning a foreign language plays a crucial role in translating grit into improved performance. All in all, studies focusing on the relationship between FLE and a series of positive personality traits have found a positive relationship (Botes et al., 2022).

As indicated in Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), some learners' contextual factors influence learners' FLE. For example, the teacher's role has been found to play an important role in learners' FLE (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele et al., 2019; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019). Dewaele et al. (2018) conducted a study with 189 British high school students learning various foreign languages to explore how students' levels of FLE and FLCA correlate with a series of variables, such as attitudes towards the foreign language, the FL teacher, use of FL in class, time spent on speaking, students' relative standing among peers, and their stage of development. The study found that higher levels of FLE are associated with higher scores on attitudes towards the FL, the FL teacher, FL use in class, proportion of time spent on speaking, relative standing in peer group, and stage of development. Lower levels of FLCA are associated with higher scores on attitudes towards the FL, relative standing, and stage of development, but

less so with teacher and classroom practices. The study, along with several other studies, indicated that teachers have a greater impact on learners' FLE than on their FLCA.

In general, a wide range of learner-internal and external variables have been found to impact learners' FLE. Studies seemed to indicate that a language learner with a higher level of enjoyment typically exhibits traits such as emotional intelligence, openness, resilience, and extroversion, experiences lower anxiety, thrives in a supportive and interactive classroom environment, and is often older, possibly multilingual, and demonstrates a strong willingness to communicate in the target language. Additionally, learners who achieve higher actual proficiency and those who perceive themselves as more competent in the language tend to experience greater enjoyment, further enhancing their confidence and effectiveness in language use.

2.5.2 The Relationship Between FLE and Learning Outcomes

Grounded in Positive Psychology theories, FLE has been widely associated with beneficial outcomes in language learning (Botes et al., 2020b). Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between FLE and L2 learning achievement.

For example, Dewaele and Alfawzan (2018) investigated the impacts of FLE and FLA on language performance within the framework of Positive Psychology. Their study spanned two distinct educational settings: secondary schools in London and universities in Saudi Arabia. They found a

positive correlation between FLE and language performance in both contexts, indicating that students who experienced higher levels of enjoyment tended to perform better in language tests. FLCA was negatively correlated with language performance, albeit less strongly than FLE's positive correlation. Students with higher anxiety levels generally performed worse, although the effect size was smaller compared to that of enjoyment. The researchers discovered that the positive impact of FLE not only offset but also surpassed the negative influence of FLA on performance.

In a study by Dewaele and Li (2022), the intricate relationships between FLE, FLA, and English language achievement were examined across both general and specific domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar). The study analyzed data from 1,415 Chinese senior secondary students, utilizing regression analyses to assess the impact of both self-perceived and actual English language competencies on FLE and FLA. The findings revealed that self-perceived English proficiency had a stronger influence on both FLE and FLA compared to actual achievement scores. Notably, perceptions of speaking and grammar skills significantly predicted both FLE and FLCA, highlighting the domain-specific effects on language learning emotions. While perceived reading competence significantly enhanced FLE, it did not predict FLCA, indicating that certain language domains may disproportionately influence positive emotions without affecting negative ones. Additionally, listening, writing, and vocabulary skills did not predict FLE or FLA.

Botes et al. (2022b) reviewed studies on FLE and found positive correlations between FLE and various language learning outcomes, including actual L2 achievement, self-perceived L2 achievement, and willingness to communicate. Additionally, they identified a negative correlation between FLE and FLA. This meta-analysis analyzed 96 effect sizes with a total sample size of 28,166 from 56 studies. The findings revealed a moderate negative correlation between FLE and FLA ($r = -.31$) and moderate positive correlations between FLE and academic achievement ($r = .30$), self-perceived achievement ($r = .27$), and willingness to communicate ($r = .48$). These results suggest that higher levels of FLE in the language classroom are associated with lower levels of anxiety, increased willingness to communicate in the target language, better academic performance, and higher self-perceived language proficiency.

The positive relationships between FLE and the positive learning outcomes underline the significance of FLE in the foreign language learning process. The findings support the value of incorporating Positive Psychology perspectives into the foreign language classroom. As Positive Psychology proposes, while it does not deny the existence of troubles and problems, it aims to complement the traditional focus on pathology by emphasizing the study and cultivation of positive human capacities and virtues. Accordingly, educators in Applied Linguistics should not only focus on negative emotions, such as language anxiety or other learning barriers but also actively cultivate positive traits and an atmosphere where positive emotions flourish. This approach aims to create a more holistic educational experience that supports both academic achievement and personal development.

2.5.3 Studies on Both FLE and FLA

FLE and FLA have been the most basic pair of variables in the affective turn of foreign language research over the past decade (Dewaele & Saito, 2024). The study by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) was the first to examine both variables. Following the landmark study, an increasing number of studies have explored FLE and FLA simultaneously (e.g., Boudreau et al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017, 2022; Dewaele et al., 2023; Dewaele et al., 2024; Elahi Shirvan & Taherian, 2020; Li & Wei, 2023; Jin & Zhang, 2021; Marczak & Wrembel, 2022; Saito et al., 2018; Tsang & Dewaele, 2023).

Findings from studies examining both FLE and FLCA provide insights into the complex interplay of emotions in language learning across various linguistic and cultural contexts. Consistently, research has identified a negative correlation between FLE and FLA (Botes et al., 2020a). This suggests that greater enjoyment in language learning is generally associated with lower anxiety, and vice versa. This relationship highlights the inverse emotional dynamics experienced by learners in the classroom. Research also indicates that FLE and FLA are separate and distinct emotions, not simply opposite ends of a single emotional spectrum (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). The presence of one does not necessarily predict the absence of the other, meaning both emotions can coexist to varying degrees within the same learning environment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Additionally, studies suggest that both FLE and FLA influence learners' language learning outcomes. FLE has been consistently found to positively correlate with both self-perceived and actual language

proficiency and performance (Dewaele, 2022). Conversely, FLA generally negatively impacts language proficiency (MacIntyre & Wang, 2022). Higher levels of anxiety are associated with poor performance in language tasks. The empirical studies also indicate that the impacts of FLE and FLCA are not uniform across all levels of language proficiency (e.g., Dewaele & Dewaele 2017, 2022; Elahi Shirvan & Taherian, 2020; Saito et al., 2018). Moreover, these studies also indicate that both FLE and FLCA are influenced by a variety of contextual factors such as the classroom environment, teacher behavior, and the specific challenges of the language being learned. Individual learner differences, including personality traits and previous language learning experiences, also significantly affect the levels of FLE and FLCA.

Some studies suggest that the target language plays an important role in shaping learners' emotional engagement in the classroom. For example, De Smet et al. (2018) investigated the impact of the educational approach (CLIL vs. non-CLIL) and the target language (English vs. Dutch) on pupils' anxiety and enjoyment in the classroom. This research was conducted across different instructional levels (primary and secondary education) within the Belgian educational system. Participants were 896 pupils from French-speaking Belgium, learning either English or Dutch through CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) or non-CLIL methods. The study revealed that CLIL students experienced significantly lower anxiety levels compared to their non-CLIL counterparts. Additionally, English learners reported lower anxiety and higher enjoyment than Dutch learners, indicating that the target language plays a crucial role in emotional engagement within the classroom.

Similarly, Dewaele and Saito (2024) investigated the emotional and motivational differences between ELF learners and learners of Languages Other Than English (LOTE). They collected data from 360 students at an English-speaking university in Kuwait who were enrolled in English, German, Spanish, and French language courses. The study aimed to assess whether the higher status and prestige of English result in more positive learner emotions and attitudes/motivation compared to the less prestigious LOTEs. The authors discovered that LOTE learners reported significantly higher levels of FLE compared to EFL learners. Both groups reported similar levels of anxiety. Dewaele et al. (2016) also highlighted that the degrees of FLA and FLE may vary across diverse learner groups and language contexts due to the distinct environments in which foreign languages are learned.

While prior research has predominantly concentrated on EFL/ESL learners and those studying widely taught languages like French, Spanish, or German, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature regarding learners of Mandarin Chinese. How learning a challenging language, such as Mandarin Chinese, impacts the interplay of FLE and FLA calls for investigation.

A review of the literature indicates that learners' beliefs about language learning have been investigated among learners from different backgrounds. However, CFL learners' beliefs about language learning remain largely unaddressed. Apart from a handful of studies on CFL learners' FLA, there is no empirical study investigating FLA and FLE in tandem on CFL learners. A few studies have tentatively investigated the relationship between beliefs about language learning and

emotions, but comprehensive research is still lacking. Current research aims to address these gaps and provide deeper insights into the experiences of CFL learners.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework employed in the present study, including the research design, research questions, sampling strategy, data collection methods, and analysis techniques. It commences with an exposition of the research approach and the design implemented. The chapter subsequently elaborates on the following components: research questions, participants, instruments utilized, data collection methodologies, and data analysis techniques.

3.2. Research Approach: Mixed Methods

The present study adopts a mixed method design to investigate learners' beliefs about language learning and their enjoyment and anxiety about learning Chinese, aiming to harness the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. This methodological choice is grounded in the definition by Johnson et al. (2007), who describe mixed methods research as integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches within a single study to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the research question. This integration allows for validating findings through triangulation, enhancing the reliability and depth of conclusions drawn from the research (Timans et al., 2019).

Quantitative study provides a broad overview, enabling researchers to quantify and measure phenomena at a large scale, offering generalizability and statistical validation of hypotheses (Plano Clark, 2017). Its strengths have been summarized as ‘at it best the quantitative inquiry is systematic, rigorous, focused, and tightly controlled, involving precise measurement and producing reliable and replicable data that is generalizable to other contexts’ (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 34). However, the limitation of this approach is that it generalizes findings across all participants, failing to capture the unique, subjective experiences of individual lives by relying on averages (Dörnyei, 2007). Additionally, quantitative methods often lack the sensitivity needed to explore the reasons behind specific observations or to understand the dynamics driving the situations or phenomena being studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, 2011, 2018). It was criticized as ‘overly simplistic, decontextualized, reductionist in terms of its generalizations, and failing to capture the meanings that actors attach to their lives and circumstances’ (Brannen, 2005, p.7). For example, studies using questionnaires to inquire about learner’s beliefs have been criticized for their simplicity in eliciting data on a ‘messy’ (Pajares, 1992, p.307) and elusive construct (Barcelos, 2003) from an etic perspective. With quantitative measures, beliefs are gauged out of context. Learners may interpret survey questions in ways that differ significantly from the researcher's intentions. Moreover, the beliefs highlighted by the researcher may not align with those the learners consider crucial to their learning experience (Barcelos, 2011). Without giving learners opportunities to reflect and talk about their learning experiences, there is no way to know why students have these beliefs, whether they behave in accordance with these beliefs, and how they interact with these beliefs.

The adoption of qualitative inquiry in applied linguistics underscores the increasing recognition of the fact that almost all facets of language acquisition and use are determined or significantly shaped by social, cultural and situational factors (Dörnyei, 2007), and qualitative research is particularly suited for offering insights into such contextual conditions and influences (Dörnyei, 2007). The core principle of qualitative research is that human behaviors are based upon meanings which people attribute to and bring to the situation (O'donoghue & Punch, 2003). As such, only the participants themselves can truly disclose the meanings and interpretations of their experiences and actions. Therefore, qualitative research strives to investigate a topic from an insider perspective (Creswell et al., 2013). It delves deep into individual experiences, providing rich, detailed insights that can explain the 'why' and 'how' behind quantitative results. This is particularly critical in sensitive settings where personal narratives and depth of context bring significant value to the findings (Dörnyei, 2007; Dewaele et al., 2023). However, the downsides of qualitative research are the generalizability issue and the possible researcher biases and idiosyncrasies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The insights and personal meanings from the small sample size in qualitative research may make it difficult to generalize to large populations and cause the issue of 'over-reading' of the individual stories (Yates, 2003, p. 224). Another issue of qualitative research is that the researchers' personal bias and skills may influence the interpretation of qualitative data, as Miles and Huberman (1994) put it: 'The strength of qualitative data rest very centrally on the competence with which their analysis is carried out.' (p. 10).

A mixed methods approach is used to increase the strengths while minimizing the weaknesses (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). It can combine numerical data from quantitative methods with

nanced contextual data from qualitative methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This dual approach not only facilitates the identification of broad patterns across the learner population but also captures the individual variations and in-depth personal experiences that might be overlooked by solely quantitative or qualitative approaches (Plano Clark, 2017). Hammond (2005) suggests that the primary reasons for employing a mixed research method include gaining a detailed and comprehensive understanding of a complex issue by examining it from various perspectives and corroborating findings through diverse methods to strengthen the validity of the conclusions. Additionally, Dörnyei (2007) identifies a third purpose for using mixed methods: to engage a broader range of audiences who might not be receptive to a single methodological approach if used in isolation. In brief, a mixed methods approach enables quantitative and qualitative inquiry to support and inform each other (Plano Clark, 2017).

The present study aims to leverage the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods to offset their respective limitations. It begins with a quantitative phase, providing clear and measurable data that can establish patterns, trends, or relationships. This initial phase offers a focused framework for the subsequent qualitative phase (Ivankova et al., 2006). By following up quantitative results with qualitative data, the researcher can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions. The qualitative phase allows for the exploration of unexpected results or outliers and can provide insights into the context and meaning behind the numbers (Shiyanboda et al., 2021). Specifically, the quantitative study will identify prevailing trends and patterns in beliefs about language learning among the UK-based learners of Mandarin, as well as their levels of anxiety and enjoyment of learning Chinese. It will also explore the

relationships between these beliefs, anxiety, and enjoyment using statistical methods. While sophisticated statistical procedures delineate the patterns and interrelationships among the measured variables, they provide limited insight into the precise nature of learners' beliefs and their actual experiences of enjoyment and anxiety, especially in learning Chinese in higher education institutions in the UK. Considering the dynamic, social and contextual nature of learners' beliefs and learners' emotions, the statistical findings will then be further examined through semi-structured interviews. The inclusion of emic perspectives, which are essential for capturing the subjective experiences and emotional nuances of language learners (Pavlenko, 2002; Dewaele, 2009, 2023) ensure that learners' own voices and interpretations are central in the analysis, providing a richer, more authentic understanding of their learning experiences. By exploring in detail and providing context and depth, this 'sequential explanatory design' (QUAN → qual) (Creswell et al., 2003; Othman et al., 2020) engenders a comprehensive exploration of learners' beliefs about Chinese language learning and their anxiety and enjoyment of learning the language. This methodology offers a balanced, insightful examination by combining the statistical breadth of quantitative research with the contextual depth of qualitative research (Almeida, 2018).

3.3 Research Questions

This study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, quantitative data were collected through online questionnaires completed by 107 learners of Chinese as a foreign language from eight universities across the UK. In the second phase, qualitative data were obtained via online semi-

structured interviews with 10 out of the 107 participants. The research questions were designed to align with the scope of this study.

3.3.1 Quantitative Study

Utilizing the data gathered from the online questionnaires, the quantitative study aimed to explore the following questions:

1. What beliefs do adult CFL learners at UK universities hold about language learning and the Chinese language specifically?
2. How do the course levels and the experience of visiting the target country influence these learners' beliefs about language learning?
3. What are the general levels of Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) among adult CFL learners at UK universities?
4. How do course levels and experiences of visiting the target country affect learners' FLE and FLA?
5. What is the relationship between FLE and FLA?
6. What is the relationship between learners' beliefs about language learning and their levels of FLE and FLA?
7. How do beliefs about language learning and self-perceived linguistic proficiency predict FLE and FLA among CFL learners?

3.3.2 Qualitative Study

To gain deeper insights into the research questions, the quantitative research was supplemented by semi-structured interviews. As the most used technique in qualitative research (Kallio et al., 2016), semi-structured interview involves using a pre-determined set of open-ended questions or topics as a guide, allowing researchers flexibility to explore topics in more depth based on the participant's responses (Adams, 2015). This approach serves to clarify and expand upon questionnaire responses, particularly if any results are ambiguous or unexpected (Dörnyei, 2007). The conversational flow allows researchers to explore new lines of inquiry that emerge during the interview, capturing richer and more comprehensive data (Adams, 2015).

Based on the rationale for using semi-structured interviews, three qualitative research questions were investigated:

1. What beliefs do adult CFL learners at UK universities hold about learning Chinese?
2. What are the sources of anxiety for CFL learners when learning Chinese?
3. What sources contribute to CFL learners' enjoyment of learning Chinese?

3.4 Participants of the Study

The target population of the study is undergraduate students who learn Chinese at the tertiary level in the UK. As the researcher is a member of the British Chinese Language Teaching Society (BCLTS) and once taught Chinese in the Chinese Studies of a UK university, a convenience sampling technique was used to recruit participants in the study. The convenience sampling technique is a non-probability sampling method where participants are selected based on their availability and proximity to the researcher (Dörnyei, 2003). This approach is the most common sample type in L2 research (Dörnyei, 2007). Since the sample is drawn from readily available participants, this method significantly reduces the costs and time involved in reaching out to potential respondents. It allows researchers to gather data quickly, which can be particularly useful in studies with time constraints (Almeida, 2018). However, unlike probability sampling techniques, convenience sampling lacks randomness (Almeida, 2018). This method does not give everyone in the population an equal chance of being selected, so it can lead to sampling bias, where the sample may not accurately represent the population, limiting the generalizability of the findings (Kemper et al., 2003). Dörnyei (2007) contends that bias does not inherently discredit research; however, it necessitates cautious interpretation of the data.

3.4.1 Participants in the Quantitative Study

The researcher first contacted her former colleagues, requesting their help in distributing the online questionnaire link to their students. Given the typically small class sizes of Chinese language

courses in UK universities, the researcher also approached the chairperson of the BCLTS to help disseminate the questionnaire more widely. As a result, 107 participants (40 male, 67 female) from eight UK universities completed the survey.

The participants' age ranged from 18 to 43 years old ($M = 21.35$, $SD = 2.85$). They spoke a variety of first languages: 82 were English L1 speakers, 6 Spanish L1 speakers, 6 Italian L1 speakers, 3 French L1 speakers, and 3 German speakers. The remaining participants spoke Estonian, Hungarian, Japanese, Tagalog, Afrikaans and Hindi as their L1. Among the participants, prior to learning Chinese, 46 were bilingual, 31 were trilingual, and 14 were quadrilingual. Additionally, 5 participants could speak more than five languages, while 9 had not learned any foreign language before taking up Chinese. Five participants reported that one of their parents spoke Chinese.

Among the participants, 74 learned Chinese as a required course, while 28 took it as an elective. Five participants did not specify. The enrollment numbers for students from Year 1 to Year 4 were 24, 24, 22, and 37, respectively, with final year students comprising the largest group at 34.6%. Out of the 107 participants surveyed, 47 individuals, accounting for 43.9%, have had the experience of visiting a Chinese-speaking country. In contrast, the remaining 60 participants, making up 56.1%, have not had such experiences. In this study, the researcher opted to use 'target country experience' rather than 'study abroad' because not all participants who visited China received formal Chinese language instruction. This broader term better captures the varied nature of their interactions with the Chinese language and culture, which includes informal exposure rather than formal study.

Furthermore, participants in this study provided self-rated proficiency scores for their general Chinese language ability, as well as for their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, on a scale from 0 to 100. The mean self-rated general proficiency was 49.5 ($SD = 16.98$). Among the four language skills, reading had the highest average rating ($M = 55.36$, $SD = 19.00$), followed by writing ($M = 46.98$, $SD = 20.22$), speaking ($M = 44.44$, $SD = 19.88$), and listening ($M = 44.27$, $SD = 20.61$).

3.4.2 Participants in the Qualitative Study

As discussed earlier, the main purpose of including a qualitative study is to gain deeper insights into the subjective experiences, perceptions and feelings of the language learners and to help contextualize and enrich the findings derived from quantitative analysis. Dörnyei (2007) emphasized that the primary goal of sampling in qualitative studies is not to ensure the representativeness of the sample, but rather to select individuals who can offer rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation. This approach aims to maximize the depth and breadth of understanding that can be gained from the study. Dörnyei (2007) further suggested that a smaller number of participants is often beneficial in qualitative studies, as it facilitates the collection of 'rich data that is needed to understand even subtle meaning in the phenomenon under focus' (p. 127).

As to the participant selection for the qualitative study, the researcher also used a convenience sampling technique. One advantage of using this sampling strategy in qualitative study is that it typically attracts participants who are willing to engage, which may engender rich data (Dörnyei, 2007). Upon completing the online questionnaire, participants who expressed interest in the research topic were invited by the researcher to participate in follow-up interviews. Ten participants including four male and six female undergraduate students from six universities across the United Kingdom took the online one-to-one semi-structured interviews. Pseudonyms were used for confidentiality purposes. The basic background information about the participants is displayed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Background Information of the Participants in the Qualitative Study

Pseudonyms	Age	Sex	N	Course level	Length of learning Chinese	Course type	SGP	Length of Residence in
Alex	27	M	British	4 th year	Near 10 years	Require	50	2 months
David	19	M	British	1 st year	2.5 years	Require	70	2 years
Mike	22	M	British	4 th year	Near 4 years	Require	70	None
Andrew	21	M	Spanish	3 rd year	2.5 years	Require	57	None
Anna	22	F	British	4 th year	Near 4 years	Require	61	7 months
Alice	20	F	British	2 nd year	1.5 years	Require	51	1 week
Lily	19	F	British	1 st year	5 months	Require	40	4 weeks
Jessica	19	F	British	1 st year	6 months	Require	15	None
Rosy	19	F	British	1 st year	3 years	Require	60	None
Wendy	21	F	Estonia	3 rd year	2.5 year	Electiv	18	2 weeks

Note: M = Male; F = Female; N = Nationality; SGP = Self-rated general proficiency

Table 3.1 provides detailed background information about the ten participants involved in the qualitative study phase. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 27 years. The nationalities within the group were predominantly British, with the inclusion of one Spanish and one Estonian student, adding a layer of cultural diversity that enriches the study. The distribution of participants by course level was fairly even across the years, with a slight majority in their first year. The duration for which participants had been learning Chinese varied significantly, ranging from as little as five months to nearly a decade. Such variation allows for an exploration of how proficiency and familiarity with the language develop over different periods of learning and what impacts these might have on the learners' perceptions and outcomes. Academically, most of the participants were engaged in required Mandarin courses, suggesting a structured and formal approach to their language education. Only one participant, Wendy, was studying Mandarin as an elective course without receiving academic credit, highlighting her personal interest in the language. Additionally, participants' self-rated proficiency scores (SGP), which ranged from 15 to 70, reflected varying levels of confidence and self-perceived ability in their Chinese language skills. Regarding immersion experiences, the extent of participants' residence in China varied widely, from those who had never visited China to those who had lived there for up to two years.

In brief, this selection of participants, characterized by varied lengths of language study, diverse national backgrounds, varied course levels and different levels of immersion in Chinese culture, provides a basis for examining the complex dynamics of learning Mandarin Chinese. The insights gained from this group are intended to deepen the understanding of students' perceptions and feelings of learning Mandarin Chinese in the context of the UK universities.

3.5 Instruments of Data Collection

For the quantitative aspect, three well-established questionnaires were used to measure learners' beliefs about learning Chinese, their levels of foreign language enjoyment and foreign language anxiety. They are the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) (Horwitz, 1987), the short-form Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), the short-form Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (Botes et al., 2021). All questionnaires were slightly adapted to focus on learners of Chinese. Participants were asked to respond to the questionnaire items using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (except items 4 and 14 in the BALLI). A background information questionnaire (BIQ) was included to collect respondents' background information. In addition, students were asked to rate their overall Chinese proficiency and specific skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing using a scale from 0 to 100.

The BALLI (Horwitz, 1987) is a widely recognized instrument designed to assess learners' beliefs about learning a foreign language. This self-report questionnaire comprises 34 items designed to assess five dimensions of language learning beliefs: the nature of language learning, the difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectations. Thirty-two of these items are responded to on a 5-point Likert scale. The remaining two items ask respondents to evaluate the difficulty level of the target language and estimate the amount of time required to learn it effectively.

The BALLI was originally created to gauge American students' perspectives on foreign language learning. Applying it in a different educational context necessitated adaptations to the wording of the items to better reflect the specific language focus and cultural setting. For instance, the term 'foreign language' was modified to 'Chinese'; thus, the statements like 'Learning a foreign language is different from learning other subjects' was revised to 'Learning Chinese is different from learning other subjects.' Similarly, the statement 'Americans think it is important to learn a foreign language' was altered to 'British people think it is important to learn Chinese.' A complete list of these modifications can be found in Appendix C.

The short-form Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale was chosen to measure CFL learners' levels of enjoyment. The standard 21- item Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale was introduced by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), capturing positive emotional reactions in the language learning context. The short form FLE scale is a nine-item scale developed by Botes et al. (2021) and contains three dimensions: learners' personal enjoyment (3 items, e.g., 'In class, I am proud of my accomplishments'), social enjoyment (3 items, e.g., 'We form a tight group') and teacher appreciation (3 item, e.g., 'My teacher is friendly'). The short-form FLE scale has been validated with many empirical studies (e.g., Dewaele, Saito & Halimi, 2023a, 2023b; Resnik et al., 2023a; Resnik & Dewaele; 2023). For the full list of questionnaire items, see Appendix D.

Learners' foreign language anxiety was assessed by a short-form Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS, Horwitz et al., 1986). As discussed in section 2.4.1, the FLCAS captures dimensions of anxiety such as negative performance expectations, social comparisons, psychophysiological symptoms, and avoidance behaviors (Horwitz, 1986). The condensed version of the FLCAS was first introduced by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) and has been validated by dozens of studies (e.g., Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Elahi Shirvan & Taherian, 2018, 2020; Resnik et al., 2023b). To better understand the learners' anxiety of learning Chinese, the term 'English' was replaced with 'Chinese'. For example, the statement 'Even if I am well prepared for English, I feel anxious about it' was changed to 'Even if I am well prepared for Chinese, I feel anxious about it.' A full list of questionnaire items is provided in Appendix E.

The internal reliability of the BALLI, the short form of the FLE scale, and the short form of the FLCAS, as assessed using Cronbach's alpha, were .55, .82, and .90, respectively. Except for the BALLI, the other two questionnaires demonstrated good internal reliability. For detailed information, see Section 4.4.1 The Reliability of the BALLI, S-FLCAS, and S-FLE (p. 167).

The background information questionnaire (BIQ) was designed by the researcher to gather information about participants' demographic details, educational backgrounds, and prior experiences with language learning. This questionnaire includes items such as age, gender, nationality, first language(s), the number of languages spoken, course types (required or elective),

course levels, length of learning Chinese, number of hours spent weekly in learning Chinese outside the class, self-perceived proficiency in general and in specific skills (Listening, speaking, reading, writing). Additionally, it explores participants' previous immersion experiences by asking whether they visited a Chinese-speaking country and the length of residence. The questionnaire also asks if a parent spoke Mandarin before the participant formally studied the language. The BIQ thus provides a detailed profile of each participant, serving as a foundational tool for subsequent analysis. For more details of the BIQ, see Appendix B.

Complementing this, the qualitative component of the study engages with a smaller group of participants through semi-structured interviews. A set of interview questions designed to explore various aspects of Chinese language learning were used in the qualitative study. Topics include the most important and effective learning methods, changes in opinions about learning Chinese, satisfaction with classes, self-assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, study methods, factors influencing their language learning, anxiety and enjoyment related to learning Chinese, reasons for studying Chinese, and future goals. To review the guiding questions for the interview, please refer to Appendix F: Interview Protocol.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Before initiating data collection for the study, the researcher sought and obtained ethical approval from the University of Birmingham's Central Ethics Committees. The research design, including

the questionnaire and interview questions, underwent a thorough review by the committee and received approval in February 2022.

The online questionnaires were hosted on the Qualtrics platform. The consent form was prominently placed on the initial page, where participants were informed about the study's purpose and assured of the anonymity, voluntariness, and confidentiality of their responses. Participants were guaranteed that their personal and background information would be confidential and used solely for scholarly dissemination. Informed consent was secured at the beginning of the questionnaire when participants checked a box to confirm their agreement to participate. The questionnaire took approximately 25 minutes to complete. For more information, see Appendix A.

The collection of quantitative data spanned approximately five months. As a token of appreciation, each participant who completed the questionnaire received £6 and was encouraged to share the survey with classmates or friends who were also studying Mandarin Chinese at universities in the UK.

At the conclusion of the online questionnaire, the researcher provided her email address and invited participants interested in further discussing the topic to contact her for a one-hour online interview. As a token of appreciation, participants who completed the interview would be compensated £10. A total of 10 students contacted the researcher to arrange online interviews. All participants provided their informed consent via email, agreeing to the interviews being audio-recorded. This

form outlined key project information, such as the voluntary nature of participation, guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality. Additionally, all participants were assured that their identities would be protected throughout the study; they were not identified by name but were instead referred to by assigned pseudonyms.

The qualitative data collection occurred from March to May in 2022, with all interviews conducted via the Zoom platform. All interviews were conducted in English and were recorded. Each of the 10 participants was asked the same set of guiding interview questions. The researcher minimally intervened, allowing participants to freely discuss the topics, and only occasionally requested further explanations or classification, based on the details provided by participants. Although the guiding questions for the interviews systematically addressed relevant topics, participants were encouraged to introduce topics of interest to them. This approach aimed to elicit insightful responses and allowed participants to make spontaneous and subjective contributions to the discussion.

During the interviews, participants could skip any questions they preferred not to answer. While the researcher occasionally prompted discussion to maintain the flow of conversation, there was no pressure for participants to respond if they chose not to. Most interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes, with durations ranging from 29 to 72 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded and securely stored in accordance with the ethical approval granted by the University of Birmingham (Ref. No. ERN_20-0840A)

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Analytical Methods for Quantitative Data

The quantitative data collected from participants via four questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version 29. The statistical methods employed to analyze the data are described below.

- To address Question 1, which explores CFL learners' beliefs about learning Chinese, and Question 3, concerning learners' levels of anxiety and enjoyment, descriptive statistics were computed. These statistics included frequencies, means, and standard deviations for responses to items on the BALLI, the short version of the FLCAS, and the short version of the FLES. Additionally, means and standard deviations were calculated for the five dimensions of the BALLI, to make it convenient to compare with previous studies using the BALLI to investigate learners' beliefs about language learning.
- To address Question 2 and 4, which explore the influence of learners' course levels and their experience of residence in the target country on their beliefs about learning Chinese and levels of language anxiety and enjoyment, independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were conducted (normality assumptions assessed; see Section 4.2, pp. 150-151; Section 4.3.3, p.163)

- To address the research questions regarding the relationships between various constructs, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients were conducted. Specifically, Question 5 explores the correlation between FLE and FLA and Question 6 examines the relationship between learners' beliefs about language learning and their levels of FLE and FLA.
- To answer Question 7, i.e., whether beliefs about language learning and self-perceived linguistic proficiency predict CFL learners' FLE and FLA among CFL learners, two Multiple Regression Analysis were conducted.

3.7.2 Analytical Methods for Qualitative Data

The qualitative data was analyzed with thematic analysis method. After conducting the interviews, the transcribed data were sorted and organized into separate files for each participant. This organization facilitated a systematic approach to the analysis, ensuring that each interview could be accessed and reviewed easily.

The researcher read through each transcription multiple times to immerse herself in the details and subtleties of the participants' responses. During this phase, the researcher made preliminary notes of interesting or recurring themes that emerged from the participants' narratives. Using the insights gained from the familiarization stage, the researcher developed an initial set of codes. Coding

involved labeling specific phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that encapsulated key concepts or ideas relevant to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This was an iterative process, where codes were continually refined, added, or removed based on their relevance to the data.

After coding the data, the researcher grouped related codes into potential themes. This involved looking for patterns and relationships between different codes that could be combined to form a coherent theme. This stage was critical for identifying the overarching themes that captured the essence of the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Each theme was then reviewed and refined to ensure it was supported by sufficient data and accurately represented participant views. Once the themes were finalized, the researcher clearly defined each theme and gave it a descriptive name. Then the researcher began to analyze them in relation to the research questions and the existing literature. This analysis involved interpreting the themes to understand deeper meanings and implications, explaining how they related to the broader research context, and discussing their significance (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

This qualitative study opted for the thematic analysis method over content analysis, despite the latter's frequent application in researching learners' beliefs, anxieties, and enjoyment (e.g., de Godoy & Barcelos, 2021; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Wenden, 1986). Originating as a quantitative technique for examining written texts by counting instances of words, phrases, or grammatical structures within predefined categories (Dörnyei, 2007), content analysis provides a structured and quantifiable approach. In contrast, thematic analysis delves deeper into data

interpretation (Clarke & Braun, 2014). It allows for a deep exploration of how learners perceive and emotionally respond to learning Chinese, identifying underlying themes that may not be immediately apparent. In addition, thematic analysis focuses on interpreting data at both the explicit and latent levels (Braun & Clarke 2022), making it particularly effective for exploring complex constructs such as beliefs, and emotional states like anxiety and enjoyment. Meanwhile, compared with content analysis which often uses predefined categories to which elements of the text are assigned, thematic analysis offers greater flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2020). It allows researchers to adapt the analytical process as new themes emerge from the data, making it particularly effective for exploratory studies where not all dimensions of the data are known at the outset (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

Furthermore, thematic analysis focuses on participants' perspective (Braun & Clarke 2022), emphasizes capturing the perspectives and voices of participants, making it particularly suitable for the current research where understanding the learners' viewpoints is key to understand the intricacy of language learning beliefs and emotions. This method allows the researcher to identify and report on the themes that are most significant to the participants themselves, rather than being confined to a predefined set of categories or themes, as is common in content analysis. Finally, unlike content analysis, which often focuses on the frequency of words or phrases, thematic analysis enables a more comprehensive utilization of data. It involves a detailed analysis of the entire data set to capture a wide range of expressions about beliefs, anxiety, and enjoyment, ensuring that subtle nuances in the data are not overlooked.

Overall, while content analysis might produce primarily descriptive results (Cho & Lee, 2014) and is often viewed as the least interpretive of the qualitative methods (Vaismoradi et al., 2013), using thematic analysis for the research on CFL learners will likely provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the subjective, complex issues related to learning beliefs and emotional experiences in learning Chinese.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter explored the research methodology in depth, starting with a rationale for employing a mixed methods approach. It included a comprehensive overview of the research questions, participant details, tools utilized, and the procedures for data collection and analysis. The next chapter will present the findings from the quantitative data and address the corresponding research questions.

Chapter 4

RESULT OF QUANTITATIVE STUDY

This chapter presents the outcomes of the statistical analysis of data concerning learners' beliefs about language learning alongside their experiences of enjoyment and anxiety related to learning Chinese. To address the first and third research questions—namely, ‘What beliefs do adult CFL learners at UK universities hold about language learning and the Chinese language specifically?’ and ‘What are the levels of these CFL learners' language enjoyment and anxiety?’—descriptive statistics, including percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations, were calculated based on the responses of CFL learners to the BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) items and the short version of FLES (Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale) and short version of FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale).

To address the second and fourth questions, which investigate how CFL learners' background characteristics (experiences of studying and living in a Chinese-speaking country and course level) influence their beliefs about language learning and their levels of FLA and FLE, independent-samples *t*-tests and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used. Additionally, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were employed to answer the fifth and sixth questions: What is the relationship between FLE and FLA? What are the relationships between learners' beliefs about language learning and their levels of FLE and FLA?

Finally, to address the seventh question, ‘How do CFL learners’ beliefs about language learning and self-perceived overall and specific linguistic proficiency predict FLE and FLA among CFL learners?’, two multiple linear regression analyses were conducted.

4.1 The UK Adult CFL Learners’ Beliefs About Language Learning: Descriptive Statistics of BALLI Items

According to Horwitz (1985, 1987), the BALLI was developed to measure students’ beliefs on a variety of issues and controversies regarding language learning. This 34-item inventory measures students’ beliefs in five major areas: the difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivations and expectations. In this section, the descriptive statistics including the frequency of students’ responses in percentages, mean, and standard deviation to the BALLI items are presented category by category. The main findings and discussions of the first research question are provided below.

4.1.1 The Difficulty of Learning Chinese

Six items (3, 4, 6, 14, 24, and 28) in the BALLI measure students’ perceptions of the general difficulty of learning a foreign language and the specific difficulty of learning Chinese. Among them, item 3 is about the belief that some languages are more difficult than others. Item 4 and item 14 were adapted to measure the perceived difficulty of learning Chinese. Item 6 measures learners’

expectations for success in learning Chinese. Items 24 and 28 survey the relative difficulty of different language skills in Chinese. Responses to these items are reported in Table 4.1.

Table 4. 1

Frequency of Responses (in %), Means, and Standard Deviations for the BALLI Items on the Difficulty of Language Learning

Items	Rating					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	1	2	3	4	5		
3. Some languages are easier than others.	1	4	3	36	57	4.44	.80
4. Chinese is 1) a very difficult language, 2) a difficult language, 3) a language of medium difficulty, 4) an easy language, 5 a very easy language.	29	52	16	3	0	1.93	.75
6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak Chinese very well.	2	10	18	51	20	3.76	.95
14. If someone spent one hour a day learning Chinese, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years, 3) 3-5 years, 4) 5-10 years, 5) you can't learn a language in one hour a day.	1	14	46	27	12	3.36	.90
24. It is easier to speak than to understand Chinese.	22	33	14	21	11	2.67	1.32
28. It is easier to read and write Chinese than to speak and understand it.	6	22	14	32	27	3.53	1.25

Note: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree. *Frequency of responses (%) in this table is rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table 4.1 reveals that the majority of UK-based CFL adult learners in this study strongly endorse the idea of a hierarchy in language learning difficulties (item 3). A significant majority (93%) of learners agree or strongly agree that some languages are easier to learn than others. This suggests students' recognition of the diverse linguistic landscapes, where certain languages pose more challenges than others, potentially influenced by linguistic distance, alphabet, and grammatical complexity relative to the learner's native language (e.g., Cargnelutti et al., 2022; Kuiken, 2023).

Accordingly, in item 4, 52% of the respondents ranked Chinese language as a difficult language, and an additional 29% deemed it exceptionally challenging. Contrarily, a mere 3% of the surveyed students perceived Chinese as an easy language. This consensus highlights the perceived challenges posed by Chinese, in line with assessments from linguistic authorities such as the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State, which ranks Chinese among the hardest languages for English native speakers to learn (2018).

The CFL learners in the present study displayed a prevailing sense of optimism and self-assuredness regarding their capacity to acquire proficiency in Chinese. As observed in item 6, 71% of the students demonstrated a strong belief in their success and exhibited optimism about their ability to master Chinese. This reflects a confidence among the students that, despite the acknowledged difficulties, successful language acquisition is attainable. In examining the perceptions of learning time investment (item 14), 61% of participants believed they could achieve fluency in Chinese in less than five years, while 27% anticipated it would take 5 to 10 years. This perception is noteworthy because the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State estimates that reaching proficiency in Chinese requires approximately 88 weeks, or 2,200 hours, of study. These findings suggest that most learners may have unrealistic expectations about the time and effort needed to become fluent in Chinese, underestimating the actual commitment required.

Table 4.1 further unveils varied perspectives among students concerning the difficulties of the four language skills in Chinese. In respect of listening and speaking skills (item 24), a notable 56% of the students thought that spoken production poses a greater challenge compared to listening comprehension. In contrast, 32% of respondents held the viewpoint that comprehending spoken Chinese presents greater difficulty than expressing oneself in the language. The remaining 14% were undecided about the complexities linked to both speaking and comprehending Chinese. When comparing the challenges of listening and speaking Chinese with reading and writing Chinese (item 28), 59% of the respondents thought that reading and writing Chinese are comparatively less demanding than speaking and comprehending it. Only 28% of the students thought reading and writing Chinese are more challenging than speaking and understanding spoken Chinese. In addition, 14% of undecided participants seemed to indicate that they were uncertain about the relative challenges of developing the four language skills in Chinese. The analyses of students' responses to items 24 and 28 indicated that among the four language skills, oral skill is perceived as more difficult than other skills.

Table 4.1 highlight the learners' recognition of the significant challenges posed by Chinese, yet they also demonstrate a strong belief in their eventual success. This duality suggests a motivated group of learners who acknowledge the inherent challenges but are confident in their ability to master the language over time. However, they seem to underestimate the time necessary to become proficient in Chinese. The varied responses concerning the development of specific language skills underscore the subjective nature of language learning experiences where individual experiences may significantly shape perceptions of difficulty (Alhamami, 2019; Tseng & Gao 2021).

4.1.2 Foreign Language Aptitude

Nine items (1, 2, 10, 15, 22, 29, 32, 33, 34) in the BALLI assess students' beliefs about the existence of foreign language aptitude, i.e., a specific talent for learning a foreign or second language (Carroll, 1981; Skehan, 2002) and views about good language learners (Horwitz, 1988). The descriptive statistics of the foreign language aptitude category are reported in Table 4.2.

Table 4. 2

Frequency of Responses (in %), Means, and Standard Deviations for the BALLI Items on Foreign Language Aptitude

Items	Rating					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	1	2	3	4	5		
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	0	5	3	43	50	4.37	.76
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.	5	13	14	43	25	3.71	1.12
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	0	3	11	67	19	4.01	.64
15. I have a special ability to learn foreign language.	8	25	37	28	2	2.92	.95
22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	16	13	59	12	0	2.67	.89
29. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.	33	25	35	6	2	2.19	1.02
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.	1	5	30	52	12	3.70	.78
33. The British are good at learning foreign languages.	15	47	35	4	0	2.27	.76
34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	1	5	4	41	50	4.34	.84

Note: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree. *Frequency of responses (%) in this table is rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

As indicated by table 4.2, a noteworthy 68% of the CFL learners believed that some people are born with a special ability to learn languages (item2), highlighting a widespread acceptance of the concept of language aptitude among the respondents. Intriguingly, as to item 15, a mere 30% of these learners believed that they themselves possessed the unique talent for language learning. Approximately one third of the students (33% of the total) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the content in item 15, and the remaining 37% of the students adopted a neutral stance, neither affirming nor denying they had such a talent. An overwhelming 91% of participants agree that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language (item 34), which emphasizes a strong belief in the universal potential for language learning despite individual differences in aptitude. The collective responses to items 2, 15, and 34 underscore the CFL learners' belief that an inherent talent for language acquisition is not an imperative; instead, a moderate level of language ability suffices for the embark of language learning. Although acknowledging the existence of varying aptitudes for foreign language learning, the students believed that language acquisition is an attainable goal for all learners.

The items concerning perceptions about the attributes of good language learners elicited a range of outcomes. A substantial majority (93%) of the respondents held the belief that children are better at acquiring a foreign or second language (item 1). This observation underpinned the students' belief in critical periods (Lenneberg, 1967) or age-related advantages in language acquisition. Furthermore, a vast majority (86%) agreed that knowing a foreign language makes it easier to learn another (item10), suggesting an awareness of transferable skills or cognitive benefits derived from bilingualism or multilingualism (e.g., Quinteros Baumgart & Billick, 2018). Furthermore, item 32

(‘People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent’) received support from 64% of the participants, which indicates that a significant portion of the participants acknowledged a connection between being highly skilled in multiple languages and possessing higher level of intelligence. In other words, these participants believed that multilingual proficiency is associated with higher intelligence. On the other hand, 30% of the participants maintained a neutral standpoint towards the proposition that being bilingual, or multilingual equates to enhanced intelligence.

Another two commonly encountered beliefs seemed not to find substantial support among the CFL learners. Learners showed neutrality (59%) or disagreement (29%) with the stereotype that women are naturally better at learning languages than men (item 22), challenging traditional gender assumptions in language acquisition. A majority (58%) disagreed with the notion that individuals good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages (item 29), opposing the idea of mutually exclusive cognitive domains. For these students, the notion that excelling in math and science is incompatible with competence in learning languages was not endorsed. Rather, they might believe that those who excel in scientific domains can also thrive as language learners. This collective response to both items 22 and 29 underlines that the CFL learners do not endorse the belief that males or those inclined towards scientific subjects are inferior in their ability to learn foreign languages.

Regarding the language learning abilities of their fellow British (item 33), only 4% of the surveyed individuals supported the statement that British people are good at learning foreign languages.

Conversely, a substantial 62% expressed disagreement with this assertion, while an additional 35% maintained a neutral stance. Although not all of the respondents were British, this finding suggests that the overall sentiment within the surveyed group is not strongly in favour of the belief that British people are skilled at learning foreign languages.

The analysis of Table 4.2 suggests that while CFL learners recognize certain innate abilities as advantageous for language learning, they also strongly believe in the universal capability of individuals to learn languages, irrespective of their inherent talents. Meanwhile, participants acknowledged the adventurousness of children and multilingualism in learning a second language but rejected stereotypes related to gender and academic specialization. This reflects a more inclusive and open view towards language learning aptitude.

4.1.3 The Nature of Chinese Language Learning

BALLI items 5, 8, 11, 16, 20, 25, 26, and 28 focus on Chinese language learners' beliefs regarding the nature of language learning. These items represent learners' responses to statements about language structure comparison (item 5), cultural knowledge necessity (item 8), immersion benefits (item 11), and learning focus on vocabulary (item 16), grammar (item 20) and translation (26). Students' responses to these items are reported in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Frequency of Responses (in %), Means, and Standard Deviations for the BALLI Items on the Nature of Chinese Language Learning

Items	Rating					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	1	2	3	4	5		
5. Chinese is structured in the same way as English.	33	36	11	15	5	2.22	1.19
8. It is necessary to know Chinese culture in order to speak Chinese.	1	7	16	42	35	4.03	.93
11. It is better to learn Chinese in a Chinese-speaking country.	0	1	10	32	57	4.45	.72
16. Learning Chinese is mostly a matter of learning a lot of vocabulary words.	6	25	9	53	7	3.30	1.09
20. Learning Chinese is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.	7	25	18	45	6	3.18	1.08
25. Learning Chinese is different from learning other school subjects.	0	4	3	53	40	4.30	.70
26. Learning Chinese is mostly a matter of translating from my native language.	18	44	21	17	1	2.39	1.00

Note: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree. *Frequency of responses (%) in this table is rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

As shown in table 4.3, a significant number of respondents (69%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that Chinese is structured the same way as English (item 5), indicating a recognition of the fundamental differences in language structure between Chinese and English. The overwhelming agreement (77% agreed or strongly agreed) on the importance of understanding Chinese culture to speak the language (item 8) highlights the learners' belief in the interconnection between language and culture. This suggests a holistic approach to language learning that goes beyond linguistic competence to include cultural understanding. In addition, with a high level of agreement (89% agreed or strongly agreed), learners strongly believed in the benefits of immersion for language acquisition. This reflects the widely accepted notion that immersion in a target language environment enhances language learning by providing authentic contexts for practice and

exposure to native speakers (e.g., Zhang et. al., 2019). Responses to item 16 and item 20 revealed a divided opinion on the focus of learning Chinese, with a majority (60%) viewing it as a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary and half (51%) considering it a matter of learning grammar rules. This indicates a traditional view of language learning where vocabulary and grammar are considered foundational elements. However, it is notable that nearly one third of the students disagreed with these two items. These findings suggest that while traditional views persist, there is a shift towards recognizing the importance of communicative skills in language learning.

The strong agreement (93%) with the statement that learning Chinese is different from learning other school subjects (item 25) highlights the perceived uniqueness of language learning. This may reflect the learners' recognition of the specific challenges and rewards associated with acquiring a new language, which differ from those encountered in other areas of study (Aveni, 2005). Furthermore, a significant portion of respondents disagreed (62%) with the notion that learning Chinese is mostly a matter of translating from their native language, suggesting a preference for more direct or immersive learning methods over translation-based approaches.

These findings from Table 4.3 reveal CFL learners' nuanced understanding of the complexities of Chinese learning, emphasizing the importance of cultural knowledge, immersion experiences, and the structure differences between Chinese and English. They also show a holistic view of language learning among the students, not only focusing on traditional vocabulary and grammar learning but also valuing authentic communication and cultural immersion.

4.1.4 Learning and Communication Strategies

Eight items (7, 9, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21) concern the learners' learning and communication strategies and appear to hold the most direct relevance to a student's practical learning endeavours (Horwitz, 1988). Notably, items 17 and 21 are primarily focused on learners' learning strategies, whereas items 7, 9, 12, 13, 18, and 19 are centred around learners' communication strategies. The statistical analysis of this category is detailed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Frequency of Responses (in %), Means, and Standard Deviations for the BALLI Items on Learning and Communication Strategies

Items	Rating					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	1	2	3	4	5		
7. It is important to speak Chinese with an excellent accent.	2	2	3	45	49	4.36	.79
9. You shouldn't say anything in Chinese until you can say it correctly.	51	36	11	2	1	1.67	.82
12. If I heard someone speaking Chinese, I would go up to them to practice speaking Chinese.	3	20	24	28	25	3.53	1.15
13. It is o.k. to guess if you don't know a word in Chinese.	5	11	7	55	22	3.79	1.06
17. It is important to repeat and practise a lot.	0	0	0	20	80	4.80	.40
18. I feel self-conscious speaking Chinese in front of people.	1	8	9	43	39	4.09	.95
19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of them later one.	9	33	13	37	8	3.02	1.17
21. It is important to practice with audio material.	0	0	3	37	59	4.58	.57

Note: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree. *Frequency of responses (%) in this table is rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Regarding learning strategies, the CFL learners exhibited unanimous support, with 100% of respondents endorsing the significance of repetition and practice (item 17), suggesting that repetitive practice was seen as a key to mastering Chinese. Nearly all participants (96%) see significant value in practicing with audio materials, which points to a preference for auditory learning aids to improve language skills. The responses to items 17 and 21 collectively underscore the CFL learners' beliefs in active engagement and multisensory learning strategies as essential for effective language learning. The strong preference for repetition, practice and the use of audio material suggests that the CFL learners value traditional learning strategies integrated with auditory inputs to enhance their language proficiency. This consensus points towards an understanding of language learning as a skill that benefits significantly from both active practice and exposure to authentic language input.

Responses to items related to communicative strategies portrayed a nuanced perspective regarding some commonly held assumptions associated with communicative language teaching (CLT). Participants assigned considerable significance to pronunciation accuracy (item 7), with an impressive 94% asserting the importance of speaking Chinese with an excellent accent, indicating a high aspiration towards achieving good pronunciation. At the same time, an impressive 91% of the students voiced their disagreement or strong disagreement with the statement in item 9 that 'You shouldn't say anything in Chinese until you can say it correctly', signifying the CFL learners' recognition that errors are an inevitable and constructive aspect of the language acquisition process (Hedge, 2011). Most students (87%) disagreed with the notion of waiting until one can speak correctly before speaking Chinese, highlighting a preference for practice speaking even at the risk

of making mistakes. Concurrently, 77% of the participants agreed with the statement in item 13 that 'It is o.k. to guess if you don't know a word in Chinese', underscoring that the majority of CFL learners were somewhat comfortable with using context clues and inferencing in their language learning process. As to the item concerning making mistakes early on (item 19), the CFL learners show varied opinions on the impact of early mistakes on language learning. Some (45%) agreed that early errors are detrimental to future proficiency, while others (42%) may view them as an integral and correctable part of language learning. The participants' responses to item 19 suggested that, on average, participants are somewhat divided or unsure about whether early mistakes will make it harder to correct language errors later.

Items 12 and 18 in this category focus on students' beliefs and attitudes towards engaging with native speakers and feelings of self-consciousness while speaking Chinese, respectively. For item 12, 53% of the participants agreed that they would come up to talk with people who are speaking Chinese; 24% of them hold neutral opinions while the remaining 23% would not do that. This indicates a certain level of willingness among the CFL learners to seek out speaking opportunities, understanding the value of real-life practice in language acquisition. For item 18, 82% of the CFL learners endorse the statement that 'I feel self-conscious speaking Chinese in front of people'. Only 9% of them disagreed with it. The result suggests that a significant number of participants experienced feelings of self-consciousness when speaking Chinese in front of others. This reflects common challenges learners face in language acquisition, including fear of making mistakes, worry about judgement from others, and overall anxiety related to speaking a foreign language (Papi & Khajavy, 2023).

The findings from Table 4.4, which detail the responses of CFL learners to various statements about their beliefs about learning and communicative strategies, provide a comprehensive look into the complexities and nuances of acquiring Chinese. Respondents placed a significant emphasis on the importance of pronunciation (Item 7) and the necessity of active engagement in learning through repetition and practice (Item 17). This underscores a recognition of the phonetic challenges Chinese presents and the learners' dedication to overcoming these through persistent effort. The data reflects a pragmatic approach to language learning, where learners are generally open to making mistakes (Item 9) and are moderately inclined to engage with speakers proactively for practice (Item 12). This indicates an awareness among the students that language acquisition involves risk-taking, and that real-world practice is crucial, even if it means stepping out of one's comfort zone. The learners' agreement on the importance of practicing with audio materials (Item 21) highlights the learners' belief about the value of exposure to native language input. This suggests an appreciation for diverse learning resources and strategies, particularly those that enhance auditory comprehension and pronunciation skills. A significant finding is the widespread feeling of self-consciousness among learners when speaking Chinese in front of others (Item 18), which points to affective challenges such as anxiety, fear of judgment, and lack of confidence. The responses to the impact of early mistakes on later proficiency (Item 19) show varied opinions, reflecting a different understanding of the learning process. This variation suggests that while some learners may view early errors as detrimental, others may see them as an integral and manageable part of learning.

4. 1. 5 Motivation and Expectations

The fifth area in the BALLI measure students' motivations and expectations in learning Chinese. It contains 4 items (23, 27, 30, 31). Item 23 and item 27 assess learners' instrumental motivations of learning Chinese, while item 31 measures learners' integrated motivation. Item 30 surveys learners' perception of how the British people view the importance of speaking Chinese. All findings regarding learners' motivation and expectations are reported in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Frequency of Responses (in %), Means, and Standard Deviations for the BALLI Items on Motivation and Expectations

Items	Rating					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	1	2	3	4	5		
23. If I get to speak Chinese very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	0	7	7	44	42	4.20	.90
27. If I learn to speak Chinese very well, it will help me get a good job.	1	3	8	42	49	4.33	.81
30. The British think it is important to speak Chinese.	11	37	33	15	4	2.63	1.00
31. I would like to learn Chinese so that I can get to know its speakers better.	2	1	10	59	28	4.10	.77

Note: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree. *Frequency of responses (%) in this table is rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

The data indicates a strong belief among the learners that achieving proficiency in Chinese would open up many opportunities to use the language (item 23), reflected in high level of agreement (86% agreed or strongly agreed). This demonstrates an awareness of the global significance of Chinese, suggesting that learners view the language not just as an academic pursuit but as a key to

unlocking potential in various domains of life. With a higher level of consensus (91% agreed or strongly agreed), participants expressed a strong belief that speaking Chinese fluently is advantageous for securing desirable employment (item 27). This indicates a pragmatic approach to language learning, where proficiency in Chinese is seen as an asset in the competitive job market, reflecting instrumental motivations behind acquiring the language. The participants' responses to item 30 indicated a divergence in perceptions (48% disagreed or strongly disagreed), with a mean score of 2.63 ($SD = 1.00$). The data suggest the belief that the British population may not widely recognize the importance of speaking Chinese. This lower mean score reveals a contrast between the learners' personal motivations and their perception of societal attitudes in Britain, highlighting the discrepancy between the perceived global importance of Chinese and its valuation within specific cultural contexts. At the same time, 87% of the respondents reported that they learn Chinese for the purpose of cultural and interpersonal understanding (item 31). This reflects a high level of integrative motivation, underscoring learners' desires not only for language proficiency but also for a deeper connection with Chinese-speaking communities and a better understanding of their culture.

The analysis of Table 4.5 reveals a nuanced landscape of motivations and perceptions among CFL learners. The strong emphasis on the instrumental benefits of language proficiency, particularly in terms of job opportunities, is coupled with an equally significant interest in cultural engagement and understanding. However, fewer than one-fifth of the students agreed that the British population thinks speaking Chinese is important. Overall, these insights suggest that CFL learners are not only

motivated by practical outcomes but also by a deeper appreciation of the language's cultural and communicative value.

4.2 The Influence of Target Country Experience and Course Level on Learners' Beliefs About Language Learning

The experience of residing in the target country is often transformative, offering learners practical immersion that textbooks or classroom-based learning cannot replicate (Berg et al., 2023). Such real-world exposure may potentially influence learners' beliefs about the usefulness, ease, or relevance of learning the language. Being in the country where the language is spoken provides authentic linguistic and cultural experiences (Dwyer, 2004). These experiences can validate or challenge pre-existing beliefs about language learning, affecting motivation, anxiety, and overall learning strategies (Kinging, 2011). At the same time, according to the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1992) and Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1981, 1983, 1989), language acquisition is enhanced by exposure to comprehensible input and by opportunities to use the language in meaningful ways. Experiences in the target country inherently provide both, potentially influencing learners' beliefs about the effectiveness of these aspects in language learning.

In addition, as learners progress through different levels of language instruction, their exposure to the language and its cultural contexts increases, which might impact their beliefs about language learning. According to the constructivist learning theory, seminal thinkers such as Dewey (1929), Vygotsky (1978), and Piaget (1978) propose that learners actively construct knowledge by

discovering and transforming information, integrating new insights with existing knowledge, and revising rules when they no longer apply. In simpler terms, students learn by assimilating new information with their existing knowledge. It is assumed that when students encounter new concepts, they may need to reconcile these with their previous ideas and experiences, potentially altering their beliefs or dismissing the new information as irrelevant. In addition, empirical studies have indicated that learners' beliefs about language learning are dynamic; these beliefs tend to evolve as learners progress in grades and educational levels (e.g., Barcelos, 2003; Öz, 2007; Peng, 2011; Vildana & Esma, 2019).

Thus, to explore how target country experience (TCE) and students' course levels influence learners' beliefs about learning Chinese, an independent-samples *t*-test and a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted to compare the means of different groups across five dimensions of beliefs about language learning. The results are presented in Table 4.6 and Table 4.7.

The choice of using independent-samples *t*-test and ANOVA instead of the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis H test was based on the fact that parametric statistics are more sensitive to detect differences between groups and they are more powerful to conduct post hoc tests (Pallant, 2020). Before doing further statistical analysis, a Shapiro-Wilk test which is more appropriate for smaller samples (Pallant, 2020) like this study ($n = 107$) was conducted to assess the normality of the distribution of the mean scores of the five dimensions of the BALLI. For the mean scores of

the subdimensions of Foreign Language Aptitude and Learning and Communication Strategies, the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated non-significant deviations from normality ($p = .169$ and $p = .061$, respectively), suggesting that these distributions could be considered approximately normal. The other three subdimensions were not normally distributed according to both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. Given this, both non-parametric and parametric statistics (independent-samples t -test and Mann-Whitney U test, ANOVA and the Kruskal-Wallis H test) were computed on the mean scores of the five subdimensions of the BALLI. The results demonstrated that there was no significant difference in the outcomes of the independent variables when comparing the two statistical approaches. Considering the fact that t -tests and One-way ANOVAs are generally resilient to moderate deviation from normal distribution assumptions, such as skewness, and they facilitate comprehensive post hoc analyses (Rosenkrantz, 2008), results from the parametric statistics are represented in this study.

Table 4.6

Independent-samples t -test for the BALLI Category Differences Based on Target Country Experience

Category	TCE	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	MD	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
DLL	+ TCE	3.22	.42	.07	105	.85	.40
	- TCE	3.25	.42				
FLA	+ TCE	3.31	.29	-.07	105	-1.14	.26
	- TCE	3.39	.34				
NLL	+ TCE	3.34	.39	-.12	105	-1.54	.13
	- TCE	3.46	.43				
LCS	+ TCE	3.77	.36	.06	105	.90	.37
	- TCE	3.71	.32				

ME	+ TCE	3.80	.56	.03	105	-.25	.81
	- TCE	3.82	.57				

Note: values are rounded to two digits after decimal. TCE = target country experience, *MD* = mean difference, *df* = degree of freedom; DLL = difficulty of language learning, FLA = foreign language aptitude, NLL = nature of language learning, LCS = learning and communication strategies, ME = motivation and expectations.

Table 4.6 indicates that target country experience did not influence CFL learners' beliefs about Chinese language learning. There are no differences in learners' beliefs between the students ($n = 47$) who had resided in a Chinese-speaking country and those who had not ($n = 60$). Descriptively, the students who had the target country experience showed higher means in the Difficulty of Language Learning category and the Learning and Communication Strategy category. Students who had never been to a Chinese-speaking country had higher means for the other three categories, but the differences were not statistically significant. These findings could imply that mere exposure to a language-rich environment (like residing in a target country) may not be sufficient to influence learners' beliefs about the nature and challenges of language learning. The results are consistent with those of Llane and Munoz (2009), Isabelli-Garcia (2006), and Alanen (2003), but they contrast with Diab's (2006) study, which found that students' beliefs about the difficulty of learning and speaking English differed between those who had lived in or visited an English-speaking country and those who had not. Additionally, they challenge Tanaka's (2004) findings, where students who spent 12 weeks in New Zealand became more balanced and realistic in their learning perspectives.

To examine the impact of course levels on learners' beliefs about language learning, a one-way between-group ANOVA was conducted to compare the mean score of the BALLI categories across four course levels. The findings from this analysis are detailed in Table 4.7.

Table 4. 7

One-way Analysis of Variance Comparing the BALLI Categories Across Four Course Levels

Categories	Course Levels	N	M	SD	Df	F	p
DLL	Year 1	24	3.33	.53	3, 103	.19	.90
	Year 2	24	3.28	.40			
	Year 3	22	3.25	.37			
	Year 4	37	3.26	.38			
FLA	Year 1	24	3.36	.36	3, 103	.44	.72
	Year 2	24	3.41	.29			
	Year 3	22	3.34	.27			
	Year 4	37	3.32	.34			
NLL	Year 1	24	3.52	.42	3, 103	.99	.40
	Year 2	24	3.40	.44			
	Year 3	22	3.42	.36			
	Year 4	37	3.34	.43			
LCS	Year 1	24	3.83	.33	3, 103	1.02	.38
	Year 2	24	3.70	.30			
	Year 3	22	3.74	.31			
	Year 4	37	3.68	.39			
ME	Year 1	24	3.95	.45	3, 103	.99	.40
	Year 2	24	3.75	.49			
	Year 3	22	3.89	.56			
	Year 4	37	3.72	.67			

Note: values are rounded to two digits after decimal. N = number of participants, df = degree of freedom; DLL= difficulty of language learning, FLA = foreign language aptitude, NLL = nature of language learning, LCS = learning and communication strategies, ME = motivation and expectations.

The results from Table 4.7 suggest that there are no statistically significant differences in the beliefs about language learning across the four course levels for any of the categories studied. This indicates that as learners progress from Year 1 to Year 4, their fundamental beliefs about language learning, as measured by the BALLI, do not significantly change. The lack of differences suggests that course level alone may not be a significant factor in shaping students' beliefs about language

learning, indicating that progressing through course levels does not necessarily lead to changes in these beliefs. This finding aligns with the results of Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005), Peacock (2001), Nikitina and Furuoka (2006), and Kuntz (2006), but challenges the conclusions of Öz (2007), Yang (1999), Barcelos (2003), and Peng (2011), who found that students' beliefs about language learning varied across different grade levels.

Overall, the combined analysis from Tables 4.6 and 4.7 underscores the stability of learners' beliefs about language learning. CFL learners' beliefs about language learning appear to be stable across different educational experiences, whether these involve physical immersion in the target country or progression through academic course levels. This stability might suggest that learners' beliefs are either deeply ingrained or that both the educational environments abroad and at home provide similar influences on these beliefs. The lack of significant differences in beliefs based on target country experience and course level could indicate that other factors, possibly including individual learner differences such as motivation, prior language learning experiences, teaching quality or even broader educational and cultural factors, are more influential in shaping these beliefs. These results could imply that simply sending students abroad or advancing them through more intensive course levels may not impact their beliefs about language learning in a meaningful way.

4.3 The UK Adult CFL Learners' Foreign Language Enjoyment and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

4.3.1 Descriptive Statistics of FLE Items

As discussed in Chapter 3, the UK adult CFL learners' foreign language enjoyment (FLE) was measured by the short form of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (S-FLES, Botes et al., 2021). It has nine positively phrased items, containing three subscales: personal/private enjoyment, teacher appreciation, and social enjoyment. Each subscale includes three items. As responses were given on standard 5-point Likert scales where strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neither agree nor disagree = 3, agree = 4, strongly agree = 5, the total scores of foreign language enjoyment ranged from 9 to 45. A high score indicates a high level of enjoyment in learning Chinese. Conversely, a lower score suggests lesser enjoyment. The results of the descriptive statistics on the CFL learners' response to S-FLES, including frequency of response (in %), mean and standard deviations are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8
Descriptive Statistics for Individual FLE Items

Items	Rating					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	1	2	3	4	5		
1. In the Chinese language class, I enjoy it.	1	6	7	56	31	4.10	.82
2. In the Chinese language class, I have learned interesting things.	0	4	0	46	50	4.43	.69
3. In the Chinese language class, I feel proud of my accomplishments.	2	8	6	46	39	4.13	.95
4. My teacher is encouraging.	1	5	10	34	51	4.30	.89
5. My teacher is friendly.	1	2	5	34	59	4.48	.76

6. My teacher is supportive.	1	5	1	36	58	4.45	.82
7. In the Chinese language class, we form a tight group.	5	18	26	30	21	3.46	1.15
8. In the Chinese language class, we have common legends, such as running jokes.	12	16	39	25	8	3.00	1.10
9. In the Chinese language class, we laugh a lot.	5	22	27	36	9	3.23	1.05

Note: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree; *Frequency of responses (%) in this table is rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table 4.8 reveals a high level of foreign language enjoyment among the participants. The data strongly support personal enjoyment aspects (items 1, 2 and 3), with the most significant being the learners' responses to item 2, where 96% of participants reported learning interesting things in their Chinese language classes, while only 4% disagreed with this statement. Additionally, 87% of learners reported enjoying their Chinese language classes (item 1), and 85% expressed pride in their achievements (item 3). These findings indicate a pronounced sense of accomplishment and pride among CFL learners, which is consistent with Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2016) characterization of foreign language enjoyment as a multifaceted emotion that reflects the interplay between perceived challenges and capabilities, thereby fueling the intrinsic human drive for success in the face of difficult tasks. They describe this phenomenon as occurring when individuals not only meet but also exceed their needs, achieving something new or unexpected. Enjoyment is integral to the spectrum of emotions linked to joy, where, according to Reeve (2005), individuals experience joy when they achieve desired outcomes related to personal success and interpersonal relationships. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) also highlights that enjoyment emerges from engaging in activities that allow for task completion, focused concentration, clear goals, and immediate feedback.

In the study, 87% of participants perceived Chinese as a challenging language. However, when CFL learners made the deliberate choice to engage with the language, embracing the challenges and focusing on overcoming them, they experienced a sense of enjoyment. These are critical elements of psychological well-being and happiness, as outlined in Seligman's (2018) model, which posits that these experiences are fundamental to building a fulfilling life. Dewaele (2022) suggests that individuals who score high in these aspects not only succeed on a personal level but also thrive in a group level, demonstrating how overcoming linguistic challenges can lead to personal and collective flourishing.

Teacher appreciation is defined as the degree to which learners perceive their psychological needs being met by the FL teacher (Botes et al., 2021). This dimension of enjoyment (items 4, 5 and 6) relates to students' perceptions of the FL teacher. Participants in this study, spanning various course levels from eight different UK universities, reported uniformly positive assessments of their Chinese language teachers. Specifically, 94% of the CFL learners viewed their teachers as supportive (item 6), 93% found their teachers friendly (item 5), and 85% considered their teachers very encouraging (item 4).

Literature has emphasized the pivotal role of teachers in influencing student emotions. For instance, Dewaele et al. (2018) examined the foreign language enjoyment and anxiety among 189 secondary FL learners and found that students' perceptions of their teachers significantly affected their levels

of FLE. Those who viewed their teachers positively experienced higher levels of enjoyment compared to those with less favorable perceptions. Similarly, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2019) collected data from 750 FL learners worldwide to delve deeper into the relationship between foreign language enjoyment and anxiety. Their research highlighted that enjoyment is most strongly associated with teacher-related factors, including the teacher's attitude, friendliness, and sense of humor. Moreover, Mercer et al. (2016) argued that teachers significantly affect the psychological well-being of language learners, both individually and collectively. In this study, students experienced high levels of teacher-related enjoyment.

The final dimension in the S-FLES pertains to social enjoyment (items 7,8 and 9), a group-based positive emotion defined as the fulfilment of social psychological needs within the foreign language classroom (Botes et al., 2021). This dimension encompasses the enjoyment derived from social interactions and the overall social environment of the foreign language class. It relates to the emotions learners experience as a result of their membership in a group with which they identify (Mackie et al., 2000). Students' responses to items 7, 8, and 9 indicated variability in CFL learners' social enjoyment. In item 7, just over half of the students (51%) feel a sense of community and belonging in their Chinese language classes, suggesting a moderate level of group cohesion. However, nearly a quarter (26%) of the students do not feel as integrated, highlighting some disparities in social bonding within the class. In item 8, only a third (33%) of the students feel that humor and shared jokes were a part of their classroom experience, with a significant proportion (33% neutral and 28% disagree) not sharing this perception. This suggests that while some students enjoy a humorous class environment, it is not a universal experience, and nearly a third feel

excluded from this aspect of class interaction. In item 9, 45% of the students agree that laughter is a frequent part of their learning experience, indicating a generally enjoyable atmosphere for many. However, a notable portion of the class (27% neutral and 27% disagree) did not regularly share in this laughter, pointing to a divide in how students experience humour and fun in the classroom.

Participants' responses to items 7,8 and 9 suggest varied levels of social enjoyment and cohesion among the students in the Chinese language classes. While there is a noticeable sense of agreement and enjoyment among many, significant portions of the student population feel less connected or engaged with the group dynamics. This variability may be influenced by several factors, including class size, teaching methodologies, and the individual social skills of learners (Zahorik et al., 2002; Chaudhary & Singh, 2022).

The analysis of Table 4.8, which focused on personal enjoyment, teacher appreciation, and social enjoyment, reveals that the primary sources of enjoyment for CFL learners in this study are personal achievement and teacher support. Learners experienced enjoyment when they met and surpassed personal learning objectives, feeling a sense of accomplishment, and when their psychological needs were addressed by their instructors. However, the varied responses to items concerning social enjoyment underscore the diversity in students' experiences with the social dimensions of language learning. While some students reported feeling a sense of belonging and enjoying shared humor and connection in the class, others did not. These findings underscore the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive social environment in Chinese language classes

to address students' social psychological needs and enhance their overall enjoyment of learning Chinese.

4.3.2 Descriptive Statistics of FLCAS Items

Students' foreign language classroom anxiety was assessed by the 8-item Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), which is a short-form measure of Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope's (1986) original 33-item one and validated by Botes et al.(2022a). These eight items measure learners' physical symptoms of anxiety, nervousness, and lack of confidence in learning and using a foreign language and they are considered as a unidimensional scale (Dewaele & McIntyre 2014). Among them, six items are phrased to reflect high anxiety and two are phrased to indicate low anxiety. To make these items consistent, two low anxiety items were reverse-coded. The responses were also given on standard 5-point Likert scales, so the total score for foreign language classroom anxiety ranged from 8 to 40. A high score indicates a high level of foreign language classroom anxiety. In contrast, a low score suggests a low level of foreign language classroom anxiety. The results of the descriptive statistics on the CFL learners' response to S-FLCAS, including frequency of response (in %), mean and standard deviations were also presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Descriptive Statistics for Individual FLCAS Items

Items	Rating					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	1	2	3	4	5		
1. Even if I am well prepared for Chinese language class, I feel anxious about it.	7	10	15	44	24	3.69	1.14
2. I always feel that the other students speak Chinese better than I do.	5	10	19	38	28	3.75	1.18
3. I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in Chinese class.	10	19	8	32	32	3.58	1.35
4. I don't worry about making mistakes in Chinese language class.	22	36	9	23	9	2.62	1.32
5. I feel confident when I speak in Chinese language class.	24	35	13	23	5	2.50	1.22
6. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking Chinese in the Chinese language class.	3	18	28	36	16	3.44	1.05
7. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in Chinese language class.	3	18	9	45	25	3.72	1.11
8. It embarrassed me to volunteer answers in my Chinese language class.	8	27	32	20	13	3.02	1.16

Note: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree; *Items 4 and 5 were reverse-coded so that higher scores correspond to higher levels of anxiety.**Frequency of responses (%) in this table is rounded to the nearest whole number. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

The analysis of items 1-8 from Table 4.9 provides insights into the nature and extent of foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) among UK-based adult CFL learners. In item 1, 68% of students report feeling anxious (44% agree and 24% strongly agree) despite being well-prepared, suggesting that factors beyond academic readiness contribute to students' anxiety levels. CFL learners' concerns about peer comparison and perceived competence are strong (item 2), with 66% of students feeling their peers speak Chinese better than they do (38% agree and 28% strongly agree), which can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. In item 3, the anticipation of being called upon in class causes a high-stress response, with 64% of students experiencing

physical symptoms of anxiety (32% agree and 32% strongly agree). There is a significant concern about making mistakes (item 4), with 58% of students feeling worried about this issue (24% strongly disagree and 35% disagree). Students' confidence when speaking Chinese is notably low (item 5), with 60% of students expressing a lack of confidence (35% disagree and 24% strongly disagree), which is closely tied to their levels of anxiety. Speaking activities are particularly anxiety-inducing, with 52% of students agreed that they feel nervous and confused (36% agree and 16% strongly agree) when speaking Chinese (item 6). Impromptu speaking or activities requiring on-the-spot responses are significant sources of anxiety for 70% of students (45% agree and 25% strongly agree), highlighting the need for preparation and practice to mitigate such feelings (item 7). Volunteering answers in class is a moderate source of anxiety, with 33% of students feeling anxious about this (20% agree and 13% strongly agree), indicating concerns about correctness, judgment, and self-presentation in front of peers and instructors (item 8).

The analysis of items 1-8 of the short version of FLCAS reveals several critical insights into the nature of FLCA among CFL learners. First, a significant portion of the anxiety stems from fears related to speaking in front of others, making mistakes, and being judged by peers and instructors. Second, a lack of confidence in speaking skills exacerbates anxiety, suggesting that building confidence could be key to reducing FLCA. Third, anxiety is fuelled by comparisons with peers, highlighting the importance of creating a supportive environment that minimizes competitive pressures. Last but not least, the need for preparation and the fear of unprepared speaking suggests that structured practice and strategies to handle impromptu speaking situations could alleviate anxiety. Addressing these aspects through pedagogical strategies, such as providing a supportive

classroom environment, encouraging positive feedback, and implementing structured speaking practices, could help mitigate FLCA and enhance the learning experience for CFL learners.

4.3.3 The Influence of Target Country Experience and Course Levels on CFL Learners' FLE and FLA

This research also investigated the influence of target country experience and course levels on UK-based adult CFL learners' perceptions of foreign language enjoyment and anxiety. Before conducting further statistical analysis, the internal consistency of the FLE and FLA scales was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha values of .82 and .90, as reported in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.5 Instruments of Data Collection, p. 123). Given this, an independent samples t-test was utilized to assess the effect of target country experience on the responses on the S-FLE and S-FLCAS, while an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to evaluate whether students' course levels influence their FLE and FLA. The results of these statistical analyses are presented in Tables 4.10 and 4.11, respectively.

Table 4.10

Independent-samples *t*-test for the Differences in FLE and FLA Based on Target Country Experience

Category	TCE	N	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	MD	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
FLE	+ TCE	47	3.87	.55	-.15	105	-1.34	.18
	- TCE	60	4.02	.61				
FLA	+ TCE	47	3.36	.97	-.26	105	-1.51	.13

- TCE	60	3.62	.85
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Note: TCE = target country experience, N = numbers, *MD* = mean different, *df* = degree of freedom; FLE = foreign language enjoyment, FLA = foreign language anxiety

As indicated in Table 4.10, the effect of target country experience was not significant for either FLE ($df = 105, t = -1.34, p = .18$) nor FLA ($df = 105, t = -1.51, p = .13$), suggesting that living or studying in a Chinese-speaking country does not influence CFL learners' enjoyment or anxiety levels. The findings from this study suggest that while experiential factors like living in the target country are often considered beneficial for language acquisition, their impact on affective outcomes such as enjoyment and anxiety may be limited.

These findings contradict Dewey et al. (2018), who reported that American learners of Arabic experienced reduced anxiety and increased enjoyment after a semester-long study abroad program in Amman, Jordan. Regarding the effect of target country experience on foreign language anxiety, this study's finding challenges those of Allen & Herron (2003), Hessel (2016), and Thompson & Lee (2014), where students experienced reduced FLA after studying and living in the target country. However, the results align with Wang (2009), who found no reduction in FLA during a 3-week study abroad program.

Table 4.11

One-Way Analysis of Variance Comparing FLE and FLA across Four Course Levels

Categories	Course Levels	N	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
FLE	Year 1	24	4.14	.58	3, 103	1.54	.21
	Year 2	24	3.78	.63			
	Year 3	22	3.96	.37			
	Year 4	37	3.95	.59			
FLA	Year 1	24	3.43	1.05	3, 103	1.88	.14
	Year 2	24	3.85	.83			
	Year 3	22	3.56	.58			
	Year 4	37	3.32	.98			

Note: FLE = foreign language enjoyment, FLA = foreign language anxiety

As indicated in table 4.11, the ANOVA results indicate that while descriptively there are differences in FLE and FLA across four course levels, these differences were not statistically significant, suggesting that the course level does not influence the levels of enjoyment and anxiety experienced by UK adult CFL learners. This finding may imply other factors such as learners' language proficiency, instructional methods or learning environment may play a more significant roles in influencing learners' foreign language enjoyment and anxiety.

4.3.4 Levels of FLE, FLCA and Their Relationship

The mean scores for FLE and FLA were 3.95 (*SD* = 0.59) and 3.51 (*SD* = 0.91), respectively. A Pearson correlation revealed a significant negative correlation between FLE and FLCA, $r(105) =$

$-0.41, p < 0.001, R^2 = .17$. According to Plonsky and Oswald (2014), the correlation coefficient between FLE and FLCA is medium. This correlation underscores the interconnected nature of these emotional experiences in language learning. The 17% overlapping variance suggests that approximately 17% of the variation in FLA can be explained by FLE, and vice versa. This indicates a moderate inverse relationship between the two variables, implying that as learners' enjoyment of learning the language increases, their anxiety tends to decrease, and vice versa.

4.4 The Interrelationship Between the CFL Learners' Beliefs About Language Learning, Foreign Language Enjoyment and Anxiety, and L2 Learning Achievement

This section explores the interrelationships among CFL learners' beliefs about language learning, their levels of enjoyment and anxiety in foreign language learning, and their L2 learning achievement. Initially, the reliability of the BALLI, the S-FLE and S-FLCAS were verified. This was followed by a discussion on the strategies used to analyze the BALLI. The study then examined the correlations between the beliefs, anxiety, and enjoyment of UK adult CFL learners in learning Chinese and their L2 achievement. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients were conducted for the mean scores across five factors of the BALLI, the S-FLCAS, the S-FLES, and learners' self-reported overall and specific L2 achievements in four language skills. Additionally, multiple regression analyses were conducted to assess the predictive power of learners' beliefs and L2 achievement in influencing these two emotional states.

4.4.1 The Reliability of the BALLI, S-FLCAS, S-FLE

Before doing further statistical analysis, all the three questionnaires were subjected to an internal consistency reliability test, measured by Cronbach's alpha. Internal consistency reliability is an estimate of the degree 'to which scores on the different items correlate with each other' (Taber, 2017), and Cronbach's alpha is a coefficient (ranging from 0 to 1) that indicates the degree to which the different items are consistently measuring a single (unidimensional) construct (McNeish, 2018). The closer the value of the Cronbach's alpha is to 1, the more consistently the items are measuring the same construct.

In the present study, Cronbach's alpha of the BALLI was .55, computed on 107 subjects. This low value is expected as the BALLI is designed to measure a range of different opinions about foreign/second language learning. It is broad in scope, with items measuring learners' opinions on different aspects of foreign/second language learning (Horwitz, 2017). So, it is possible to get a low Cronbach's alpha value calculated wholly on the 34 items. For this reason, a different approach was adopted, which is described in 4.4.2 below.

In contrast, the internal consistency shown by the other two questionnaires was very high, all computed on 107 subjects. In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha of the anxiety scale was .90, indicating that these eight items have high internal consistency, and they were measuring a single

unidimensional construct. The Cronbach's alpha of the enjoyment scale was .82, also indicating a high internal consistency.

4.4.2 Factor Analysis of the BALLI

A significant body of the research investigating the relationship between learners' beliefs about language learning and other learner variables, such as foreign language anxiety, language learning strategies, often involves submitting learners' responses to the BALLI to factor analysis (e.g., Aslan & Thompson, 2021, Hong, 2006; Öz, 2007; Tang & Tian 2015; Truitt, 1995; Yang, 1999). Factor analysis is a data reduction technique which can be used to examine a wide range of data sets. Through scanning for the interrelationship of a set of variables, factor analysis aims to identify a way the data may be reduced or summarized to a smaller set of components or factors (Kline, 2014). The primary objectives of performing factor analysis include summarizing correlation patterns among observed variables, reducing the quantity of observed variables to a more limited set of factors, offering a practical definition (through a regression equation) for an underlying mechanism based on observed variables (Gorsuch, 2014), and evaluating theoretical propositions regarding the nature of these underlying mechanisms (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Horwitz (1985, 1987) developed the BALLI by synthesizing the perspectives of teachers and students at the University of Texas-Austin. She logically categorized the 34 most prevalent opinions into five distinct categories. This logical classification has led to criticism. For example, Kuntz (1996) noted that Horowitz did not base the themes on statistical analyses such as principal

components, factor analysis, cluster analysis, community estimation, or correlations, thus bypassing the testing of hypotheses through inferential statistics. Horwitz (2007) herself reminded researchers that ‘The BALLI was not designed to elicit a single delineated construct in the way measures of anxiety or motivation are; rather, it is composed of 34 statements of distinct beliefs about language learning’ (p. 5). Thus, ‘it is not possible to compute a correlation of the BALLI as a whole with other measures such as strategy use or learning style’ (Horwitz 2007, p. 6).

Given the above reasons, in this study, to explore the relationship between learners' beliefs and their language learning emotions—specifically, enjoyment and anxiety—the responses to the BALLI were initially subjected to a principal component analysis (PCA). This method was selected with the aim of effectively simplifying the data into a smaller set of linear combinations that best represent the underlying patterns of correlation among the variables (Pallant, 2020).

PCA is a widely used method for dimensionality reduction and data analysis, and it can be less demanding on sample size compared to other multivariate techniques (Abdi & Williams, 2010). Studies have demonstrated that PCA can yield reliable results even with smaller sample sizes through the use of bootstrap simulations. For example, Shaukat et al. (2016) conducted simulations with sample sizes as small as 20 and found that PCA could still accurately identify principal components. PCA reduces the dimensionality of the data while preserving as much variability as possible (Elhaik, 2022). This means it can extract meaningful patterns even from smaller datasets, which is beneficial when dealing with sample sizes like 107 participants in the current study. The

technique is less dependent on large sample sizes because it focuses on the principal components that capture the most variance in the data (Shaukat et al., 2016).

Principal component analysis (PCA) was employed to reduce the original responses from the BALLI into a smaller number of principal components that encapsulate the underlying patterns among the BALLI items. To identify the number of components to retain, Kaiser's criterion (Kaiser, 1960), also known as the 'eigenvalues greater than one' rule, was applied. This criterion led to the initial identification of fourteen components with eigenvalues exceeding one. Further refinement was achieved through a Scree test (Cattell, 1966). Scree test involves plotting each factor's eigenvalues and finding the turning point where 'the shape of the curve change directions or become horizontal' (Pallant 2020, p. 191). The Screeplot showed that the turning point appeared on the seventh factor. However, to reach the balance between the need to find a solution with as few factors as possible and the need to explain as much of the total variance in the original data set as possible, five factors were finally selected. Subsequent to this selection, a varimax rotation, a method of orthogonal rotation, was applied to maximize the variance of squared loadings of a factor (variable) on all the components, thus facilitating a clearer interpretation of the results (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). This rotation led to a five-factor solution that explained 34.2% of the total variance in the questionnaire responses. The final factor loadings for the belief items included in the selected five components are presented in Table 4.12. Detailed procedures and results from the PCA are documented in the Appendix G.

Table 4.12

Varimax Rotated Five-Factor Matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Item 6	.700				
Item 15	.638				
Item 12	.581				
Item 18	-.482				
Item 24	.448				
Item 17.		.590			
Item 21.		.586			
Item 27.		.556			
Item 10.		.500			
Item 23.		.482			
Item 22.			.556		
Item 29.			.541		
Item 34.			-.514		
Item 16.			.510		
Item 20.			.499		
Item 2.			.463		
Item 31.				.564	
Item 7.				.558	
Item 4.				.480	
Item 14					.707
Item 32					-.498
Item 25					.453

In this study, factor interpretation was limited to items with a factor loading of .45 or greater, adhering to the thresholds set by Comrey and Lee (2013). They categorized loadings as follows: above .71 as excellent, with 50% overlapping variance; .63 as very good, with 40% overlapping variance; .55 as good, with 33% overlapping variance; and .45 as fair, reflecting 20% overlapping

variance. Items with a loading of .32 were deemed poor, signifying just 10% overlapping variance. This approach ensured that only items with a significant degree of relevance to their respective factors were considered for analysis.

Following the PCA of the initial 34 items from the BALLI, five distinct factors emerged, collectively encompassing 22 of the original items. These factors are categorized as follows:

1. Self-efficacy in learning Chinese, which captures beliefs related to personal ability and confidence in learning Chinese.
2. Learning strategies and motivation in learning Chinese, which focuses on the practical learning strategies and motivational factors for learning Chinese.
3. Folk beliefs about language learning, which includes common myths and common assumptions about language acquisition.
4. The value of learning Chinese, which reflects the perceived benefits and importance of learning Chinese.
5. The uniqueness of learning Chinese, which highlights aspects considered unique to the Chinese language learning experience.

These factors represent a departure from the original categorizations proposed by Horwitz (1985, 1987), demonstrating the advantage of a data-driven approach in uncovering the underlying

structure of the dataset. Specifically, the factors explain 9.0%, 8.1%, 6.0%, 5.8%, and 5.3% of the variance in the questionnaire responses, respectively.

Self-efficacy in learning Chinese. It could be seen from Table 4.13 that five items loaded highly on Factor 1 (e.g., ‘I believed that I will ultimately speak Chinese very well’) with loadings that ranged from -.48 to .70. It is noticeable that item 18 ‘I feel self-conscious speaking Chinese in front of other people’ showed negative correlation with the factor on which it loaded significantly. The item loadings on Factor 1 collectively reflect learners' beliefs in their ability to master Chinese and their emotions related to speaking the language, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .71. Consequently, Factor 1 was labelled as ‘Self-efficacy in Learning Chinese.’

Table 4.13

BALLI Factor 1: Self-Efficacy in Learning Chinese

Items and statements	Loading	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak Chinese very well.	.70	3.76	.95
15. I have foreign language aptitude.	.64	2.92	.95
12. If I heard someone speaking Chinese, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking Chinese.	.58	3.53	1.15
18. I feel self-conscious speaking Chinese in front of other people.	-.48	4.09	.95
24. It is easier to speak than understand Chinese.	.45	2.67	1.32

Learning strategies and motivation in learning Chinese. As shown in Table 4.14, five variables loaded on Factor 2. Item 17 ‘It is important to repeated and practice a lot’ and item 21 ‘It is important to practice with audio material’ were both loaded with the highest value ‘.59’. Item 23 ‘If I get to speak Chinese very well, will have many opportunities to use it’ was the variable with the lowest loading (.48). These items collectively seem to better represent students’ beliefs regarding the experience and practice in foreign language learning, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .68. Therefore, Factor 2 was named ‘Learning Strategies and Motivation in Learning Chinese.’

Table 4.14

BALLI Factor 2: Learning Strategies and Motivation in Learning Chinese

Items and statements	Loading	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	.59	4.80	.40
21. It is important to practice with audio materials.	.59	4.58	.57
27. If I learn to speak this language very well, it will help me get a good job.	.56	4.33	.81
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	.50	4.02	.64
23. If I get to speak this language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	.48	4.20	.90

Folk beliefs about language learning. As shown in table 4.15, BALLI factor 3 comprised six items (e.g., ‘Women are better than men at learning foreign language’) with loadings from -.51 to .56. Among them, item 34 ‘Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language’ indicated a negative correlation with Factor 3. These items reflect common cultural and social beliefs about language

learning capabilities, methods, and inherent language aptitude, including stereotypes and generalizations related to gender and academic background. Hence, this factor was named ‘Folk Beliefs About Language Learning,’ with a Cronbach’s alpha of .64

Table 4.15

BALLI Factor 3: Folk Beliefs About Language Learning

Items and statements	Loading	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
22. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	.56	2.67	.89
29. People who are good at math and science aren't good at learning foreign languages.	.54	2.19	1.02
34. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	-.51	4.34	.84
16. Learning Mandarin is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.	.51	3.30	1.09
20. Learning Mandarin is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.	.50	3.18	1.08
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.	.46	3.71	1.12

The value of learning Chinese. As shown in Table 4.16, three items (items 31, 7, 4) loaded on Factor 4, with loadings from .48 to .56. Students seemed to view learning Chinese as a way of getting access to or getting to know Chinese people. To them, Chinese is a difficult language, and an excellent pronunciation matters. These items emphasize the intrinsic motivation for learning the language, including cultural engagement and the recognition of the challenges involved, all of which contribute to the perceived value of acquiring Chinese language skills. Therefore Factor 4 was labelled as ‘the Value of Learning Chinese’, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .62.

Table 4.16

BALLI Factor 4: The Value of Learning Chinese

Items and statements	Loading	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
31. I would like to learn this language so that I can get to know its speakers better.	.56	4.10	.76
7. It is important to speak Chinese with an excellent pronunciation.	.56	4.36	.79
4. Chinese is 1) a very difficult language 2) a difficult language 3) a language of medium difficulty 4) an easy language 5) a very easy language.	.48	1.93	.75

The uniqueness of learning Chinese. Three items loaded in Factor 5 (see Table 4.17). They are item 14 with the highest loading value of .71, item 25 with a modest loading of .45 and item 32 with the lowest loading value of -.50. These three items seemed to share the characteristics of the uniqueness of Chinese language learning. As most students thought Chinese language is a difficulty language, they would be aware that learning Chinese takes long time. So, three years is the minimum time needed for becoming fluent in learning Chinese to most of them. Students tended to agree that Chinese language learning is different from learning other subjects. Many students thought that the ability to speak more than one foreign language is correlated with high intelligence, but some of them were not sure whether these two things are related. In brief, these items capture students' perceptions about the time commitment to achieve fluency, the benefit tied to multilingual abilities, and the difference between learning Chinese and other subjects, so Factor 5 was labelled as 'the Uniqueness of Learning Chinese', with a Cronbach's alpha of .58

Table 4.17

BALLI Factor 5: The Uniqueness of Learning Chinese

Items and Statements	Loading	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
14. If someone spent one hour a day learning Mandarin Chinese, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years 3) 3-5 years 4) 5-10 years 5) you cannot learn a language in 1 hour a day.	.71	3.36	.90
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.	-.50	3.70	.78
25. Learning Mandarin is different from learning other school subjects.	.45	4.30	.70

4.4.3 Factor Scores of the BALLI

Section 4.4.2 describes the extraction of five factors from the BALLI items using PCA. Subsequent statistical analysis required assigning a score to each component for every participant. DiStefano et al. (2019) discuss two prevalent methods for computing these factor scores, which encapsulate the variables associated with each factor: refined and non-refined.

The refined method computes factor scores as linear composites of the optimally weighted original variables. This method considers both the regression weight and the loading values of each item. It aims to maximize validity by producing scores that are highly correlated with the relevant factor and to provide unbiased estimates of the true factor scores through standardized scores akin to a z -score metric (DiStefano et al., 2019). This computation method, while more complex and technical, is supported by most commonly used statistical software packages.

Conversely, the non-refined method offers a simpler approach, both in computation and interpretation. It involves summing the scores of all variables that strongly load on a particular factor without multiplying by optimal weights. Hence, all items on a component are given equal weight, disregarding the varying loading values among them.

Although both methods are frequently employed to calculate factor scores in social science research, the refined method was selected for this study due to the differing loading values of items within a factor. This method was implemented automatically in SPSS, which calculated the regression weights and computed each subject's factor score by multiplying their responses by the respective weights and summing the results. Thus, the factor score derived through the refined method represents the optimally weighted score achieved by an individual on the retained factor.

4.4.4 The Correlation Between the CFL Learners' Beliefs About Language Learning, FLE FLCA and Self-Perceived Chinese Proficiency

To explore the relationship between learners' beliefs about language learning and their levels of FLE, FLA, Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were conducted. Additionally, to examine how learners' self-perceived Chinese proficiency predict their FLE and FLA, Pearson Correlations were first computed between self-reported general and skill specific Chinese proficiency and FLE and FLA to determine their relationships. The results were displayed in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18

Correlations Between Independent Variables, FLE and FLA

Independent Variables	Correlations with FLE		Correlations with FLA	
	<i>r</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Factor 1	.33	<.001**	-.42	<.001**
Factor 2	.22	.02*	.73	.46
Factor 3	.04	.65	.03	.77
Factor 4	.18	.06	-.33	<.001**
Factor 5	-.13	.17	-.08	.41
General proficiency	.17	.08	-.21	.03*
Listening	.02	.87	-.24	.012*
Speaking	.19	.06	-.33	<.001**
Writing	.22	.02*	-.13	.18
Reading	.12	.24	-.162	.11

Factor 1 = Self-efficacy in learning Chinese, Factor 2 = Learning strategies & motivation in learning Chinese, Factor 3 = Folk beliefs about language learning, Factor 4 = The value of learning Chinese, Factor 5 = The uniqueness of learning Chinese. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.18 indicated that the UK adult CFL learners' FLE was related to two belief factors and their self-perceived writing skill. A positive correlation was found between FLE and factor 1 (self-efficacy of learning Chinese), $r = .33$, $p < .001$, and factor 2 (learning strategies & motivation in learning Chinese), $r = .22$, $p = .02$, showing that positive views on self-efficacy, learning strategies and motivation are associated with higher enjoyment. As to learners' Chinese proficiency, only the writing skill was found to positively correlated with learners FLE ($r = .22$, $p = .021$), indicating that better perceived writing skills are related to higher levels of FLE.

In terms of the UK adult CFL learners' FLA, several significant correlations were found. Two belief factors were found to correlate with learners' FLA. Factor 1 (self-efficacy of learning Chinese) was found to negatively correlated with learners' FLA ($r = -.42, p < .001$), suggesting that higher self-efficacy relates to lower anxiety. Factor 4 (the value of learning Chinese) negatively correlate with FLA ($r = -.33, p < .001$), suggesting that the higher the value learners place on learning Chinese is related to lower levers of anxiety they experience. Learner' self-perceived general Chinese proficiency showed a negative correlation with FLA ($r = -.21, p = .30$), indicating that higher self-reported overall Chinese proficiency is associated with lower anxiety. Self-reported speaking ability was significantly negatively correlated with FLA ($r = -.33, p < .001$), showing that better perceived speaking skills are strongly associated with lower anxiety. In addition, CFL learners' self-reported listening ability was found to negatively correlate with FLA ($r = -.24, p = .01$), suggesting that better listening ability is correlated with reduced language learning anxiety.

In summary, the analysis indicates that higher FLE is consistently linked to positive beliefs about one's ability to learn Chinese (higher self-efficacy), effective learning strategies and higher motivation. Additionally, a higher self-reported writing ability also positively correlates with FLE. Conversely, lower level of FLA is associated with higher self-efficacy, greater perceived value of learning Chinese, higher self-reported overall Chinese proficiency, and better self-reported speaking and listening skills.

4.4.5 Multiple Regression Analysis of the Beliefs, Self-Perceived Chinese Proficiency on FLE and FLA

To determine the most effective predictors of CFL learners' FLE and FLA, multiple stepwise linear regression analyses were conducted. To prevent issues of multicollinearity, only those independent variables that demonstrated significant associations ($p < .05$) with the dependent variables were incorporated into the regression models. Table 4.19 shows the model summary of the regression analysis of FLE on the factors which significantly correlated with the FLE score in the correlation analysis.

Table 4.19

Model Summary of the Multiple Regression Analysis on FLE

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
1	.45	.20	.18	8.63	<.001

Predictors: (Constant), writing, factor 1 (self-efficacy in learning Chinese), factor 2 (Learning strategies & motivation in learning Chinese)

The first multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable FLE. Table 4.19 demonstrated that the model was statistically significant, ($F = 8.63$, $p < .001$), indicating that the predictors collectively explained a significant portion of the variance in the dependent variable. The multiple correlation coefficient was $R = 0.45$, with an R^2 value of 0.20, meaning that the model accounted for 20% of the variance in the FLE score. The adjusted R^2 value (0.18) suggests that the model provides a reasonable fit, with minimal risk of overfitting.

Specifically, the R^2 value (0.20) indicated that 20% variance in the FLE score was explained by the three predictors, namely the CFL learners' self-reported writing skill, self-efficacy in learning Chinese and learning strategies & motivation in learning Chinese. In order to see in which proportion the three predictor variables predicted the FLE score, the standard regression coefficients were studied. Table 4.20 displays the regression coefficients of the three predictor variables.

Table 4.20

Multiple Regression Analysis Using Three Variables as Predictor of FLE

	Standardized Coefficients β	t	p
Constant		27.70	<.001
Factor 1 Self-efficacy in learning Chinese	.31	3.44	<.001
Factor 2 Learning strategies & motivation in learning Chinese	.24	2.71	<.001
Writing Ability	.21	2.35	.02

As detailed in Table 4.20, the regression analysis reveals that self-efficacy in learning Chinese, learning strategies & motivation in learning Chinese, and self-reported writing ability are significant predictors of FLE, with self-efficacy showing the strongest impact. The β value of self-efficacy in learning Chinese (.31) means that for every one unit increase in learners' self-efficacy in learning Chinese, there is an expected increase of 0.31 units in FLE. In brief, as learners' self-efficacy in learning Chinese increases, their FLE also increases.

In the second stepwise multiple regression analysis, the mean score of FLA was regressed on the four variables that demonstrated significant correlations with it. The model summary was presented in Table 4.21.

Table 4. 21

Model Summary of the Multiple Regression Analysis on FLA

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
1	.58	.34	.31	10.36	<.001

Predictors: (Constant), Self-perceived general proficiency, speaking ability, listening ability, factor 1 (self-efficacy in learning Chinese), Factor 4 (the value of learning Chinese)

Table 4.21 demonstrated that the model was statistically significant, ($F = 10.36$, $p < .001$), indicating that the predictors collectively explained a significant portion of the variance in the dependent variable FLA. The adjusted R^2 value (.34) indicated that 34% variance in the FLA score was explained by the five predictors, namely self-reported general proficiency, speaking ability, listening ability, Self-efficacy in learning Chinese and the Value of learning Chinese. In order to see in which proportion the five predictor variables predicted the FLA score, the standard regression coefficients were studied. Table 4.22 displayed the regression coefficients of the five predictor variables.

Table 4. 22

Multiple Regression Analysis Using Five Variables as Predictor of FLA

	Standardized Coefficients β	t	p
Constant		16.01	<.001
Factor 1 Self-efficacy in learning Chinese	-.34	-3.99	<.001
Factor 4 the value of learning Chinese	-.35	-4.20	<.001
Speaking ability	-.36	-2.69	.00
Listening ability	-.01	-.05	.96
General proficiency	.15	1.03	.31

The regression analysis revealed that learners' self-efficacy in learning Chinese, their beliefs about the value of learning the language, and their self-reported speaking ability significantly predict their FLA. The analysis identified students' beliefs about the value of learning Chinese as the most influential predictor in the model, suggesting that as students perceive Chinese as more valuable, their FLA decreases significantly. Following closely are self-efficacy in learning Chinese and self-perceived speaking ability. Each of these predictors exhibits a negative correlation with FLA, indicating that higher ratings in the value of learning Chinese, self-efficacy and better perceived speaking ability are associated with lower anxiety.

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented the quantitative analysis of data collected from adult CFL learners at UK universities to address several research questions concerning their beliefs, enjoyment, and anxiety related to learning Chinese. Data indicated that adult CFL learners held specific beliefs about

learning Chinese. They generally perceived Chinese as a challenging language but believed that proficiency is attainable. The BALLI data revealed strong beliefs in the importance of cultural knowledge and immersion experiences. Learners also valued diverse learning and communication strategies, emphasizing repetition, practice, and the use of audio materials.

The analysis indicated that neither the course level nor the experience of living in a Chinese-speaking country significantly influenced learners' beliefs about language learning. Both the independent-samples *t*-tests and ANOVAs showed no statistically significant differences across these variables, suggesting that learners' beliefs about language learning are not susceptible to change with learners' course levels or their experiences of living a Chinese-speaking country.

The descriptive statistics of FLE and FLA indicate high levels of enjoyment and anxiety among the CFL learners. Enjoyment was strongly associated with personal achievements and teacher support, while anxiety was mainly linked to speaking activities, making mistakes, and peer comparison. Similar to beliefs, neither the target country experience nor the course level significantly impacted FLE and FLA.

A Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between FLE and FLA, indicating that higher levels of enjoyment are associated with lower levels of anxiety. Additionally, Pearson correlation analyses showed that learners' beliefs about language learning were significantly related to their FLE and FLA. Specifically, learners' FLE was positively related to their self-efficacy, learning strategies & motivation in learning Chinese, while their FLA was negatively related to their self-efficacy and the value they place on learning the language.

Multiple regression analyses revealed that learners' self-efficacy in learning Chinese, their learning strategies & motivation, and their self-reported writing ability were strong predictors of FLE, with self-efficacy exerting the most significant impact. For FLA, predictors included learners' self-efficacy in learning Chinese, their beliefs about the value of the language, and their self-reported speaking ability. Among these factors, students' beliefs about the value of learning Chinese emerged as the most influential predictor in the model.

Chapter 5

RESULTS OF QUALITATIVE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the semi-structured online interviews with 10 CFL learners. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the purpose of the interviews was to address the participants' beliefs about Chinese language learning, their enjoyment, and anxiety of learning Chinese in detail. The organization of the chapter is as follows. It starts by introducing the 10 participants, focusing on their general Chinese language learning experience. This is followed by the major themes extracted from the interviews concerning their beliefs about learning Chinese and their enjoyment and anxiety of learning the language. The relationship between participants' beliefs about learning Chinese and their enjoyment and anxiety are then discussed.

5.2 Background of the Participants

Four male students and six female students participated in the semi-structured online interviews following the quantitative data collection. One student was from a university in Scotland, one from a university in London, three from a university in central England, and the remaining five were from a university in northern England. The cohort comprised four first-year students, one second-year student, two third-year students, and three final-year students. Six of the participants had

visited China. Pseudonyms are used for ethical considerations. The basic background information on the interviewees can be found in Table 3.1.

Alex (British, 27) was from an elite university in Scotland. He was 27 years old and was waiting for the result of his dissertation when the interview was conducted. He had been learning Mandarin Chinese since he was 18 years old and was going to get his BA degree in Chinese studies after getting the result of his dissertation. Alex was a mature student, which made him feel different from other interviewees (e.g., ‘I’m 27 now and all my classmates are like 22, 23, so I don’t really have much to talk. I feel like I’m much older’). When he was little, he was fascinated by Bruce Lee’s movies, and thought Chinese people were ‘very cool’. He started to learn Mandarin Chinese with a local Confucius Institute and had been sent twice by the Confucius Institute to participate in 4-week summer camps in China in 2015 and 2016. The original motivation for Alex to choose Chinese Studies as his subject was that students were assumed to spend a year living and studying in China when they were in year three. But the outburst of the COVID pandemic made the sojourn in China impossible. Alex felt regret that that he missed the opportunity to study in China for a year.

David (British, 19) was doing his BA Chinese at a university in London which is an extremely popular destination for thousands of Chinese international students. Before David came to the university, he had lived in Changzhou China for 2 years, doing his gap years and teaching English and music in a local international school. Changzhou is a small city in east China and David was

‘literally their [the local people] first time meeting a European person’, so he got massive opportunities to use Chinese in daily life (‘The baseline being you’re expected to speak Chinese, expected to be eating Chinese food’). In addition, David asked for one-on-one Chinese tutorials while doing teaching in Changzhou. The 2-year sojourn experience in China made David feel very confident in his Chinese. He chatted with the researcher in Chinese occasionally during the 50 minutes interview. Although he was in year 1 when the interview was conducted, he was put into an intermediate advanced level with some postgraduate students who were doing master's or PhD degrees in Chinese language or related subjects. The arrangement to some degree became David’s pain in doing BA Chinese, as according to the policy of the university, the more proficient the student is, the less language contact he gets. In contrast with the mainstream BA students who have 10-12 hours of weekly language contact, David only got 3 hours of language contact each week, two online teaching hours and one face-to-face teaching hour. To this teaching arrangement, David commented as ‘of course, it’s quite interesting’.

Mike (British, 22) was a British Indian with English as his native language. His grandparents immigrated from India to England in the 1930s. He was in his final year in BA modern languages when the interview was taken. As a student choosing languages as his major, Mike learned three languages at the same time: French, German and Chinese. Mike liked Chinese very much as ‘it is the most interesting’ and ‘it’s completely different from European languages.’ To Mike, the similarities among the Asian cultures facilitated his Chinese language study as he ‘already has the that in my [his] Indian culture’. In his view, the west ‘makes some comments about China’ because ‘they don’t understand, like the culture of China, why China is doing certain things’. So, learning

Chinese really gave him ‘a better insight into China as well as culture and society’. The pandemic meant that his university changed the arrangement of the study abroad project, from physically going to an elite university in mainland China to a ‘visual study abroad’ (online) at a Taiwan university. Using the traditional Chinese system [the original form of Chinese characters, used primarily in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. These characters have been preserved in their original form, maintaining the complex structure and strokes that have been used historically] at the Taiwan university brought Mike significant stress as he never learned any traditional Chinese in his home university. He ‘literally couldn't read and write anything’ during the five-month online study abroad in Taiwan, which made him conclude that ‘it wasn't that good to improve my Chinese’.

Andrew (Spanish, 21) was a native Spanish student who came to the UK for an exchange of one academic year. He was doing translation and interpretation which requires students to choose a major language and a minor language. He chose English as a major language and chose Chinese (‘go for a challenge’) instead of French (‘too easy for me’) as a minor language. Andrew has been learning Chinese for two and half years and his attitude towards learning Chinese changed from ‘Oh, my God, this is too difficult. I'm never gonna, I'm never gonna do this’ to ‘Oh, my God, this is crazily interesting’ and ‘I really love this language’.

Anna (British, 22) was in her final year in BA modern languages when doing the interview. She spent 6 months in a Taiwan university to study Chinese during the COVID pandemic. Before departure to Taiwan, she never learned traditional Chinese, but different from Mike, the 6-month

sojourn in Taiwan gave her ‘extra motivation to improve and learn more’. During the 45-minute interview, she extensively discussed her experience in Taiwan and how her enjoyment was linked to being compelled to use Chinese due to the limited English proficiency of the local population (‘because their first language isn’t English, and they don’t really know it very well’). This necessity to communicate in Chinese facilitated interactions with people in Taiwan and allowed her to engage with their cultures.

Alice (British, 20) was a second-year student of Chinese Studies. She did GCSE Chinese when she was in secondary school and had a one-week visit to China for a summer camp. When choosing university major, she first chose Music Theories, but she ‘hated it’, so she transferred to Chinese Studies because ‘it [Chinese] was first useful’ and she’d already known that she liked it (‘it was something I loved. I knew I’d like it, so I did it’). Alice was a thoughtful student; she would choose to actively answer the teacher’s questions because she thought ‘It’s not fair for a teacher who’s worked really hard for a lesson, but people don’t engage with it’. At the same time, the ‘awkward silence’ made her feel uncomfortable, so when nobody answered the teacher’s question, she would ‘have to fill it because the awkward silence is very painful’. By intentionally engaging in the class activities, Alice found that her Chinese proficiency improved, so she claimed, ‘So obviously, it’s still scary but I know that I’ve been improving, and I sort of feel like, more confident than some other people at answering’.

Lily (British, 19) had been learning Chinese for 5 months when the interview data was collected. She was doing the Chinese language study as a part of her joint honours degree with Documentary Film Practice. In her penultimate year in secondary school, Lily attended an international summer camp in China. Besides teaching English in a high school, she also visited some Chinese cities with her UK friends and made some Chinese friends. To Lily, the four-week sojourn in China was ‘like a really kind of eye-opening experience’, which triggered her interest in Chinese culture and Chinese language and ultimately led her to choose Chinese as part of her major (‘it was only really when I went to China that I realized that like I really wanted to learn Chinese’). Lily was highly motivated to learn Chinese because she planned to make the most of her third year in China (‘I really want to be able to live in China in my third year and it’s important that I get a good level’) and thought living in China is ‘the most vital way to [learn a] language’. Lily’s father had lived in China for some time and spoke highly of China, which made Lily more interested in China’s history and related aspects. Lily thought it would be ‘very cool’ if she could speak Chinese with the friends she made in China. To Lily, learning Chinese is ‘really rewarding’. She hopes to connect with more people through learning and speaking Chinese as ‘it’s like just such a major language’.

Jessica (British, 19) was doing a joint honour degree, Chinese alongside Politics. She was in year one and had been learning Chinese for 7 months. Different from other participants, Jessica was a complete English monolingual before learning Chinese. Learning languages was very new to her, but she chose to ‘just dive in and go straight with Chinese’. The brave move made her frequently feel ‘Oh, my God, it is so hard’, but she enjoyed learning Chinese very much (‘I never thought I’d enjoy it as much as I do’). Although lacking experience in learning a second language, Chloe

always resorted to the situations that people learn English as a second or foreign language, like ‘I usually apply it to say like someone who's just learned English and things like that’ or ‘I think so many people who've come to the UK and haven't had any sort of their own language spoken to them, and they've learned so well’. Although Chloe felt Chinese language is difficult, she loves learning it. She spent around 9 hours a week studying Chinese outside the class.

Rosy (British, 19) was a year one student in Chinese Studies but had been learning Chinese since she was in secondary school. She came from a background to some degree related to Chinese: her father speaks Cantonese (her father immigrated from Vietnam to England when he was five). The family background allowed Rosy to feel more familiar with Chinese culture (‘like with my family, I feel like I already know a lot of the culture anyway, even if I didn't actually know the language’), and also facilitated her Chinese language study (‘He says things in a certain way, then I will be like “oh, that’s kind of like the Chinese way of saying it, not in English”. So, I think, in that way it's helped me out’). Rosy was a highly proficient Chinese language learner; all aspects of the language was ranked by herself as 70 or above. Rosy had never been to a Chinese-speaking country, but she hoped to use Chinese to speak to her relatives when she got a chance to visit them.

Wendy (Estonian, 21) was in her third year in BSc Psychology. Different from all other participant, she did not take any credit for learning Chinese. For Wendy, the Chinese language was an optional module, and she chose to learn it because she wanted to do something different outside her primary field of study (‘just because I want to learn something new, and I think it's fun, because it's like

different from my major, so I can do every week a day or two, but for something different’). Even so, Wendy was not a novice in learning Chinese. She had acquired some proficiency during her secondary school years, but there was a two-year period during which she did not engage with the language. Wendy recommenced her Chinese language studies upon entering university, accumulating a total learning duration of 30 months. In addition, she had participated in a two-week Chinese language summer camp in Chinese when she was in her secondary school.

5.3 CFL Learners’ Beliefs About Learning Chinese

As addressed in Chapter 2, learners’ beliefs about language learning were defined as the L2 learners' opinions, ideas or assumptions on various issues related to language learning. They consist of general assumptions that learners hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing language learning, and about the nature of language learning and teaching (Victori & Lockhart 1995). Considering the purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to delve deeper into learners' beliefs about Chinese language learning and provide further insights and interpretation for the quantitative findings, the interview data concerning beliefs were coded and categorized in line with the five aspects of the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory: the nature of Chinese language learning, the difficulties of learning Chinese, language learning strategies, language aptitude and motivation (and expectations) of learning Chinese. Compared with previous studies focusing on addressing learners’ beliefs about language learning, the present study included learners’ opinions about online courses and online exams which happened during the COVID pandemic. This analysis is presented in 5.3.6.

5.3.1 Beliefs About the Nature of Chinese Language Learning

Beliefs about the nature of language learning represent learners' opinions about the language learning process, what it means to learn a language and how to go about it (Horwitz, 1999). Thus, students' ideas about learning Chinese grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, the best way of learning Chinese were categorized in this dimension.

5.3.1.1 Beliefs About Chinese Language Grammar

In contrast to Indo-European languages, the Chinese language exhibits notable grammatical distinctions, characterized by the virtual absence of verb conjugation and agreement. In Chinese, verbs do not change form for tense, person, or number. Tense and aspect are usually indicated by context or with the use of particles and time phrases. Plurality is understood from context or specified with quantifiers and numbers (Lu & Ke, 2018). These grammatical features made all participants assert that Chinese differed structurally from Romance languages. As multilinguals (except Jessica), all the participants spontaneously compared Chinese grammar with their L1 or other L2s they had learned. The vast majority of the students felt that that Chinese was grammatically easier and believed that 'there's less to learn in terms of grammar and there are characters turn' --- Lily). However, it is noteworthy that one advanced-level student (David) expressed a contrasting perspective, considering Chinese grammar to be more challenging.

For example, when talking about Chinese word orders, Wendy said ‘In Russian, and also in my first language [Estonian], you change the words like case, but in Chinese, you don’t; you just put words after each other’. In addition, although Alice felt the difficulty of Chinese grammar was increasing with the course level, she still thought compared with French, Chinese made more sense to her. She noted that:

I found it [Chinese] easier than French. Maybe I found French really hard, [...]. But I love the fact that Chinese doesn't have to do sort of tense, verb endings, endless verbs all that sort of thing, and it seems to make much more sense to me than French did.

Similarly, Alex, who had to learn 10 months of Spanish to enter the university, felt very frustrated while learning Spanish. When comparing the grammar of Spanish and Chinese, he said:

To what was Spanish, you have a verb conjugation. Like every single verb, you need to learn all the rules for the past tense, present tense, future, everything from that. So, sometimes you can have like 10 different ways of saying a verb. [...] In Chinese, it's like you can either just add ‘le’ [particle] or ‘guò’ [particle] or something to change the

thing you do. You don't have to change the word itself. You change the sentence for it.

The aforementioned excerpts revealed that the students perceived Chinese grammar as comparatively easier primarily because it lacks the intricacy of verb conjugations found in French and Spanish. Learners do not need to memorize different verb forms for different subjects or tenses, which simplifies the learning process. At the same time, using particles, instead of conjugating verbs, to indicate tenses or aspects was viewed as more straightforward compared to the extensive verb conjugations in Indo-European languages. Thus, most of the participants thought that Chinese grammar was 'Okay' in terms of learning difficulty.

However, one student, David, expressed an opposite opinion on the difficulty of learning Chinese grammar. He noted that:

For European language speakers or native language speakers and they sometimes struggle more, at least I did struggle more with learning Chinese grammar due to the flexibility and say 'oh, it's flexible, which makes it easier', but I think for people who are more, like approach language more mathematically, I like to think 'okay,

to form the past tense, it needs to be in X particle plus Y form of the verb, and I think the Chinese a lot harder, so fluffy.

What David addressed is another difference between Chinese and Indo-European languages: the information structure of sentences. Different from subject-prominent languages, such as English and Spanish, which build sentences upon a subject and predicate, Chinese is a topic-prominent language conveying information through the statement of a topic and its comment (Hu & Landragin 2023). This topic-prominent characteristic of Chinese allows for the flexible arrangements of syntactic elements, which are notably unique and distinct compared to the arrangements found in subject-prominent languages (Shyu, 2014; Lu & Ke 2018). The flexibility inherent in the information structure of Chinese prompted David, who identified himself as a learner learning languages with a mathematical approach, to perceive Chinese as grammatically more challenging.

Besides Chinese, David also learned Latin, German and French. Years of learning and using the Romance languages shaped David's rule awareness, making him believe the grammar of the Romance languages was 'so prescriptive' (e.g., 'this is how you conjugate the verb, and it has to be like this, there has to be here in the sentence'). However, different from other participants who learn Chinese in a formal foreign language classroom setting, David started to learn Chinese when he was in China and with one-to-one language tutors. The 2-year living experience in China let David fully experience the flexibilities of Chinese expressions, so to David, the flexibility in

Chinese grammar was a challenge ('I've been learning a couple years now, and I still struggle with use of 'le' [particle], like where it goes in the sentence') and he did not 'enjoy having the flexibility'.

The analysis of the provided excerpts indicates that learners' perception of Chinese grammar is based on the comparison between Chinese and their L1 or other L2s. All participants agreed that Chinese is structured differently from the Romance languages, and the vast majority of the participants thought that Chinese grammar was easier to understand and use. One participant went to the extent of characterizing Chinese grammar as 'the friend of a Chinese learner.' However, the learning environment seemed to play a role in shaping the learners' perception about the difficulty of learning Chinese grammar. Participants who thought Chinese is grammatically easier primarily learn Chinese in a foreign language environment and through formal classroom instructions. For individuals like David, who learned Chinese in a naturalistic setting, the perceived flexibility of the Chinese language posed additional challenges. The Indo-European languages, in contrast, were perceived as more accessible due to their 'prescriptive' nature.

5.3.1.2 Beliefs About Chinese Characters

Unlike letters in the alphabetic writing system, written Chinese is composed of logographic symbols called characters (Wright & Wang, 2023; Chan et al., 2020). Each character carries fine or complex visual details and contains orthographical, phonological, and semantical information (Zhang & Ke, 2018). In addition, each character, and all of this information, is packed into a square

shape area (Zhang & Ke, 2018). These unique features make Chinese characters phonologically opaque and visually and functionally different from the alphabetic writing system (Wright & Wang, 2023).

The ‘mystery’ of Chinese characters was expressed by most of the participants. For example, Andrew, a native speaker of Spanish, compared learning French or English vocabularies with learning Chinese characters. He said:

Just because French is a Roman [Romance] language and it's so close to Spanish, like one of the things that kept me on motivated when I started learning Chinese is: English and French, even though I'm not a native speaker, I can kind of invent some words. Even though I don't know them, because they are close to Spanish. So, I can kind of make up words. But in Chinese I cannot. It's either you know it, or you don't know. So, I think that would be like the biggest difference that you cannot say something, unless you know the exact characters or the exact words.

What Andrew tried to emphasize is the crosslinguistic influence during the process of the L2 acquisition. Crosslinguistic influence refers to the phenomenon wherein the existing language knowledge affects the acquisition or usage of another language (Guo & Yuan, 2021; Guo, 2022; Jarvis & Goldren, 2017; Odlin & Yu 2016; Sharwood Smith, 2021). Extensive literature on

crosslinguistic influence has revealed that learners often establish interlingual connections between features of two or more languages, involving the transfer of knowledge from one language, typically the L1, to another, usually the L2 (Gujord, 2017). The extent of this 'transferability' (Jarvis, 2009) depends on the degree of similarity between the L1 and L2 (Odlin, 2022; Gujord, 2020)., When learners perceive their L1 and L2 as typologically similar (i.e., when psychotypology suggests shared features or structures (Nelson et al., 2021)), they may experience positive transfer, resulting in higher accuracy and a faster rate of L2 learning. Conversely, when learners' prior language knowledge significantly differs from that of the L2, negative transfer becomes more likely, leading to learning challenges and errors (Jarvis & Golden, 2017).

As most of the participants pointed out, the Western-European languages, like French or Spanish, share similar linguistic roots, vocabulary, and grammatical structures. This commonality allows for positive L1 transfer, enabling learners to intuitively guess or 'invent' words in a Romance L2 based on their L1 or other previously learned languages. Such positive transfer eases the learning process due to the similarity between languages. In contrast, Chinese, with its distinct linguistic system and character-based script, does not offer the same level of cross-linguistic similarity. This results in minimal L1 transfer, where the knowledge of the learner's prior languages does not significantly aid in learning Chinese. So, like Andrew, most of the participants agreed that 'you just have to know it' when confronted with Chinese characters. There is no room for guesswork based on their L1 knowledge.

Accordingly, the participants unanimously thought that Chinese vocabulary learning took more mental effort than in other languages, just like Mike commented:

I find unlike European languages, like, for example, I do French, I could learn 10 words in like 20 minutes or half an hour, but for Chinese, I literally learn like five words in an hour, because it takes me a lot longer to learn words, remember the Pinyin, remember the tones and how to write the characters. It takes me a long time.

Mike's statement highlighted the multifaceted nature of learning Chinese characters. This process involves not only vocabulary acquisition but also aspects like Pinyin (a system for representing the sounds of the Chinese language using the Latin alphabet (Odinye 2020), tones, and Chinese orthography. In contrast to alphabetic systems, where a small set of symbols can be combined to form a large number of words, and written forms map visual symbols onto phonemes (Treiman & Kessler, 2013), the logographic nature and visual complexity of Chinese characters, as well as the tonal characteristics of the language, place a heavy cognitive load on learners' memory (Ke, 1998; Wright & Wang 2013). Learners of Mandarin Chinese cannot rely on the same grapheme-to-phoneme rules used in alphabetic languages. Instead, they must simultaneously recall and retain various elements and utilize the visual and orthographic cues when read or recognize Chinese characters (Li et al., 2022). Thus, most of the participants claimed that they had to invest more time in learning Chinese characters.

As to learning of Chinese character, it seemed that most of the participants have not yet developed a clear radical awareness. Radicals are the meaningful orthographic components of characters and serve as fundamental perceptual units within Chinese characters (Shen & Ke 2007; Chen, 2022). An integral character comprises a single radical, whereas a compound character incorporates a minimum of two or more radicals. According to their orthographic functions, radicals can be classified into two categories: phonetic radicals and semantic radicals (DeFrancis, 1986). Phonetic radicals indicate the sound of their host characters and semantical radicals cue the meaning of their host characters. Learners' radical awareness—learners' ability to utilize embedded phonetic and semantic radical information to help memorize and recall characters (Shen & Ke, 2007)—have been proved to play a vital role in character recognition, meaning retrieval and inference, as well as character memorization, both in learners' L1 and L2 studies (e.g., Chan et al., 2023; Chen, 2022; Tong & Yip, 2015; Yeh et al., 2017; Wong, 2017;). Most of the participants, however, primarily engaged with Chinese characters through a focus on their graphical features, namely through repetitive mechanical memorization and reproduction of their graphical features, as articulated by Andrew: 'It is so different. You have to write out the character over and over and over and practice the stroke'.

Strokes are the smallest writing units of Chinese characters. A single character is composed of diverse stroke types, such as dots, lines, and hooks, and exhibits variability in number of strokes (i.e., 1–29) (Shen, 2013), placement and order. The more strokes a character has, the more graphic

information it contains, thus the more difficult it is to reproduce by hand (Lu et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2018). While mechanical and repetitive writing aids character retention, it also increases the memory burden when learners retrieve and reproduce the character by hand (Shen, 2013).

Although the facilitative role of radical awareness has been widely acknowledged in literature, how and when learner develop their radical awareness remains unclear (Chen, 2022). In this qualitative study, only one student, David, talked explicitly about his radical awareness and his suggestion to Chinese language teaching. He stated:

A student should be introduced to radicals, memorizing radicals as soon as possible, because as soon as you do it, it makes life easier. When you have, like, the tool to figure out the meaning component and that also the sound component to the character, makes it a lot easier, but it seems like that I didn't learn until HSK (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi) 3, just like when I was in HSK 3 base studies, [...] but they [the Chinese teacher] didn't say like 'Oh, in quite a lot of characters you have one character, which is the sound and one is the meaning and they come together for a word.

Here, David compared radical knowledge to "the tool" for processing Chinese characters, but he also confessed that he did not gain this awareness until he reached the intermediate level (HSK3, Hànyǔ Shuǐpíng Kǎoshì (Level 3), which translates to Chinese Proficiency Test (Level 3)).

Additionally, his teacher did not seem to have explained the importance of radical knowledge in learning Chinese characters to the students. Therefore, David suggested that pedagogically teachers or language instructors should provide precise guidance on the identification of radicals and character-internal structures so that learners can develop radical awareness during the early stages of their learning journey. When talking about his ‘eureka’ moment, David said ‘I remember when I learned about that, I was like: ‘This is ground-breaking! This makes my life so much easier! Like I can kind of guessing characters.’ However, this ‘eureka’ moment has not come to most of the interviewees yet, especially the beginners and the intermediate learners.

With regard to the writing of Chinese characters, there was an unavoidable question: the necessities of handwriting Chinese characters. It is known that mastering Chinese handwriting skill is a laborious and time-consuming process (Zhang & Ke, 2018), and learners may feel frustrated when having to hand write the characters (e.g., ‘If you're sitting there, handwriting, you can feel very, very boring. Sometimes you can write something like a hundred times and then you go to the next page, and you forgot how to write it already’---Alex). In the interviews, all students talked about their thoughts about traditional paper-pen handwriting Chinese and computer-assisted writing Chinese (using Chinese-word-processing software to type in Chinese). Two participants (Alex and Mike) mentioned that they did not even remember the last time they used paper and pencil to write English, so they thought handwriting Chinese was only necessary to students who learn it academically at the university level. For example, Mike said:

You know I never really write with a pen to write English now anyway. Like if I was to work in China or use my Chinese, like most of the time, I just be typing on a phone or on a computer. It's just, I think, just for university exam like you have to write them.

Mike's statement may encapsulate a prevalent attitude toward the acquisition of Chinese characters among learners of Chinese language. They express a preference for utilizing computers to facilitate word recognition, selecting characters from a set based on both phonological and graphic information. The integration of computer-assisted writing has the potential to ease cognitive demands in both orthographic and semantic processing (Chen et al., 2007; Coltheart et al., 2001; Mangen & Velay, 2014; Zhang & Min, 2019) and enhance learners' writing efficiency (Feder & Majnemer, 2007; Jen & Xu, 2000). However, it is not without limitations in character recognition and retention (Mangen, 2013; Mangen & Velay, 2014; Lu et al., 2019). For example, in contrast to alphabetic orthographies, which usually systematically and consistently represent spoken language sounds (Castles, et al., 2018), the Chinese writing system displays a loose or minimal correlation with its phonemic information (Gao et al., 2022). This characteristic poses a challenge for learners in selecting the correct character from a set that shares the same Pinyin or exhibits similar graphic features. Just like Anna said: 'we might have typos because we type like some characters have the same Pinyin but maybe with different tones.'

In contrast to Alex and Mike, the other participants thought that although computer-assisted writing was convenient and useful, handwriting Chinese was part of their learning process, facilitating character retainment and recognition. For example, Anna noted:

I've always had to hand write when I've been learning Chinese and I think it, I think it always helps. It helps me to write the characters out because [...], then it helps me to learn them. Because I think I can learn to recognize them, but I found it doesn't stay in my mind as well; whereas when I kind of write them out on practice and learn to write them, it helps me to remember them, and they stay in my head. And I feel that, like I just know them better if I can write them. So, I think it is more helpful to learn to write them.

As indicated in Anna's statement, handwriting, to most of the participants, is a beneficial and effective method for learning Chinese characters. Writing characters out can push students to pay attention to character details and force them to think hard about the strokes, radicals and configuration of the characters to be copied (Ke, 1996; Shen, 2013). This heightened focus can be reinforced through iterative writing exercises, establishing a stable motor memory that endures for an extended duration (Mangen, 2013). Therefore, compared to using word processors and software as character writing tools, handwriting is thought to be more advantageous in facilitating learners' Chinese character recognition and retention. Just like Alice noted: 'It's very easy to overlook

character if it's typed or if you've typed, whereas if you just write it down, the process of writing, you have to get everything right'.

The qualitative findings revealed that the participants paid much attention to the Chinese character learning. Nonetheless, the majority lacked a well-defined knowledge of radicals and the internal structure of Chinese characters and predominantly relied on rote memorization and mechanical repetition in their Chinese character acquisition. While two students viewed handwriting Chinese as primarily academic, most participants held the belief that manually writing Chinese characters contributed positively to their character learning process.

5.3.1.3 Beliefs About Chinese Tones and Pronunciation

A clear feature that distinguishes Chinese from most other languages is its use of lexical tones in the spoken language (Zhang, 2018). Every syllable within Mandarin Chinese carries a tone. Syllables formed from the same segments but carrying different tones differ in meaning (Hao, 2012). There are four primary tones and a neutral tone noted for its shorter duration and context-dependent pitch in Mandarin Chinese (Hao, 2012). More importantly, Chinese tones are not isolated entities; their phonetic realization is deeply influenced by the linguistic context, with dynamic interaction and overlapping with neighbouring tones and other phonological elements within utterances, such as segments, stress, and intonation patterns (Wang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022).

In this qualitative study, participants almost unanimously agreed that accuracy in tones was of great importance in learning Chinese. Lily shared her personal story from which she realized how important tones are in securing a smooth communication in Chinese. She reflected: 'I've tried before to speak a little bit of Chinese in like Chinese restaurants and stuff like that, and they just didn't understand me because I was using the wrong tones.' The failure in communication let Lily lament that 'in Mandarin, like obviously, I could be saying something completely different from what I mean'. Anna made it even clearer that 'if you can't really get the tones right, then it's quite difficult to speak to somebody'.

It is noticeable that the participants' awareness of the importance of tones developed (or even emerged) with their experiences of learning Chinese or with the advance of their language proficiency. For example, Andrew talked about how his beliefs about the importance of tones changed during his first year of learning Chinese. He said:

At first, I thought to myself 'oh, it's okay. I don't know the tones because Chinese people will understand I'm not a native person and they're probably going to understand what I'm saying'. But actually, if you don't pronounce the tones correctly, most likely Chinese people will not understand.

As revealed in previous excerpts, most of the students started to learn Mandarin Chinese without realizing the pivotal role of tones. They might have known that Chinese is a tonal language but assumed that the native Chinese speakers could understand them even they spoke Chinese with inaccurate tones. However, with the increases of their experiences in learning and using the language, they increasingly realized that even slight alterations in tone exerts considerable influence on the meaning of words in Mandarin Chinese. Accordingly, a substantial portion of participants, particularly those in the advanced stage of their university studies, emphasized the significance of tone study when being asked to give advice to novice Mandarin Chinese learners.

Like Anna said:

Focus at the beginning a lot on the different tones, [...], because I think that is like completely new. Because, like English doesn't have that and a lot of the language don't have that. I think you need to spend quite a lot of time on that [tone] at the very beginning, because it takes a while to get used to. [...], because otherwise it is more difficult to then speak and also like to understand listening as well, you need to kind of be able to distinguish between the different tones.

The excerpt suggests that initially, Anna might have underestimated the importance of tone, given her background in English that doesn't use tones. However, through the learning process, she has come to realize that tones are critical and require dedicated focus. Her beliefs about language

learning appear to be evolving from potentially seeing language learning as a uniform process to a more nuanced appreciation of the specific features of the language she is learning, particularly the importance of tones.

As a highly proficient learner of Mandarin Chinese, David aimed at not only accuracy in tones, but attaining native-like pronunciation. To David, a native-like accent meant more than smooth communication; it was related to aesthetics and identity. He told the researcher that ‘I would always argue that when you learn the language, you should be aiming to express yourself in a degree of kind of fluency and sound like a native speaker’. He used ‘break down all the barriers’ twice in expressing how important a fluent and native-like pronunciation was to a Mandarin Chinese learner. He noted that:

I think, if your goal of learning language is ‘Ok, I want to be able to do business transactions for my company in Chinese, then from kind of like an aesthetic point of view, if you're meeting Chinese speakers and you sound like a native speaker, it looks a lot better as opposed to [...]. To speak with more of a degree of fluency kind of breaks down all the barriers. I’ve had the kind of occasions in China where you just walk into a shop. When you speak to a shop owner in Chinese, they kind of got put on a face like ‘You can speak Chinese!’ [...] I think it’s also one of the ways that you can speak and present yourself when you pronounce accurately.

The previous excerpt suggested that the accuracy in tones and a nativelike accent to David has far beyond being understood by native speakers, facilitating effective communication, and reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings. What mattered to him is social integration. He believed that a clear and accurate pronunciation enabled him to engage more smoothly in conversations with native speakers and helped him to better build relationships and connections in a new linguistic and cultural environment. Therefore, when talking about his expectations of learning Chinese, David told the researcher that ‘I’d like to be like a native speaker. I like to be if someone had their eyes closed and was talking to me, and think I was from, like, I was Chinese.’

Among the interviewees, only one student (Jessica) thought the accuracy of tones and pronunciation was not that important. Jessica was a beginner learner and had never learned any L2 before learning Chinese. Although she lacked experience of learning L2, she usually thought of the scenarios of how people learn English to help herself learn Chinese. She stated:

I usually apply it to say like someone who's just learned English and things like that, like I understand what they're saying. I'm perfectly fine, even if it's not the perfect pronunciation or not how we pronounce it. So, I'm kind of apply it both ways. So, if I'm speaking in Chinese and I don't pronounce it right, I feel like they would still understand what I'm saying.

The above quote suggests that, compared with pursuing accuracy in pronunciation, Jessica places greater value on comprehensibility in communication. Jessica's viewpoint aligns to some degree with that of a number of scholars in the field of L2 pronunciation research. These scholars have pointed out that most adult L2 speech is foreign-accented (e.g., Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Flege et al., 1995; Piske et al., 2001), and they emphasize that L2 learners should be encouraged to pursue more realistic and achievable goals, such as comprehensible pronunciation and adequacy, instead of focusing on mastering native-like pronunciation (Levis, 2005, 2018, 2020; Saito, 2021).

However, it is noteworthy that Jessica's perspective largely disregards the tonal nature of Mandarin Chinese, where minor tonal variations can alter a word's meaning significantly (Zhang, 2018), which will cause issues in comprehensibility. This perspective is reflective of her learning experience. During the early stages of her Mandarin studies, Jessica engaged in approximately nine hours of daily study, including classroom instruction. Her authentic language exposure was limited to interactions with a classroom language tutor, without physical use of the language in communication with Chinese speakers. Classroom environments which typically focused on reading and writing skills (Jiang, 2015), together with self-study, did not significantly shape Jessica's recognition of the importance of tones in language acquisition.

The qualitative data analysis indicates that learners' perceptions of Mandarin Chinese tones and pronunciation evolve throughout their language learning journey. While most participants initially recognized Mandarin as a tonal language, distinct from the Indo-European languages they previously learned, they only grasped the significance of tones when they really engaged with the language for a while or in real-life communication contexts. In the foreign language classrooms where most participants studied Chinese, both the quality and the quantity of L2 experience are often limited compared to immersion settings (Larson-Hall, 2008; Suzukida, 2021). Consequently, many participants developed a heightened awareness of tone accuracy only in the later stages of their Chinese language education. For a beginner like Jessica, who had not yet used the language for real-world communication, awareness of tone accuracy was still nascent. Conversely, for David, who started learning Chinese in a naturalistic environment, tone and pronunciation accuracy extended beyond mere communication efficiency, encompassing social integration and identity formation through language.

5.3.1.4 Beliefs About Study Abroad as the Best Way of Learning Chinese

It was not unexpected that when queried about the best way of learning Chinese, study abroad was consistently mentioned. Study abroad refers to a short and usually temporary sojourn in a destination country where the L2 learners can have the opportunities to immerse themselves in the target culture and to use the target language (Varela, 2017). There exists various study abroad programmes, but the two primary goals of the study abroad programmes at tertiary level are to help

students develop and improve L2 language proficiency and to enhance their cultural understanding (Baker-Smemoe et al., 2014).

In this qualitative study, almost all the participants believed that studying abroad was the best way of learning Chinese. They emphasized the importance of being constantly exposed to the language and the opportunity to practice with native speakers. The experience of being in the target country and the necessity to communicate in the target language were seen as crucial for rapid language improvement. To students who had lived in China, they spoke highly about the benefits of study abroad; to students who were in their first two years of study and were going to do year abroad, they had high expectations; to students who missed the opportunity due to the hit of COVID, they had much regret and believed that they would have reached a higher level in Chinese had they been able to study in China.

Among the ten students, Anna was technically the only one who physically and academically participated in the year abroad programme organized by universities. After finishing the two-year formal instructed study in the UK university, she went to Taiwan studying for 6 months and lived in Beijing for a month. She told the researcher that when she was in a Chinese-speaking environment, she was 'forced' to 'communicate in Chinese with everyone to be understood'. Those intensive, regular, contextualized L2-use opportunities in the target language context let Anna claim that study abroad experience not only improved her language proficiency but gave her extra motivation to learn and improve. She said:

I think, being in the target country like you can immerse yourself and you hear it all the time, so you do kind of improve. And it's easy to prove because you see it all the time, you hear it all the time and you kind of meet native people. [...]. It made me really motivated to improve. And it made me want to learn more. Umm, I think just being in that environment where you were in the country, and it's all around you all the time, it just kind of gives you that, like extra motivation to improve and learn more. yeah, I just thought more motivated when I was actually there.

Anna's statement underscores the participants' commonly held beliefs in the advantages of immersion in the target country for language learning. They believed that the constant exposure, the natural learning environment, the real communication with native speakers created a conducive atmosphere for learning, allowing for learning through observation, mimicking native speakers and absorbing language patterns, which in turn aided in both linguistic and cultural understanding. In addition, the improvement in linguistic proficiency triggers extra motivation to learn the language and to engage in social communication. In essence, studying abroad was viewed as a transformative experience that fosters both learning and motivation through immersion in a foreign language and culture.

The participants' strong beliefs in the effect of being immersed in the target language environment was also reflected in Lily's statement about her plan for the year abroad program in her third year. Lily was a year one student when doing the interview. She recalled her first experience of visiting China for a summer camp when she was in high school and described that two weeks as 'a really eye-opening experience'. She told the researcher that 'I really want to be able to live in China in my third year and it's important that I get a good level.' So, Lily had been studying very hard. To study abroad in China in her third year, she had a high expectation and determined to use the year wisely. She said:

If I do go to China in the third year, and I'd like to go as early as I can, and leave as late as I can, and just really try and make the most of that experience and go to lots of different cities and stuff, and just like try to, I don't really just want to stay in like an English speaking bubble, I want to try and meet lots of Chinese people and stuff because I think that's the most vital way to language.

In addition to the language contact and authentic communication, Lily also saw studying abroad as a valuable experience for cultural exposure. Her desire to explore different cities and avoid staying in an "English speaking bubble" reflects a belief in the importance of engaging directly with the local culture. Through maximizing the language contact and the cultural exposure during study abroad, Lily believed that 'by the time I'm living in China and then my accent will be a lot better,

because I'll be like kind of exposed to it all the time. So, I'll feel way less anxious about speaking in front of people'.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, two students, Mike and Alex, participated in an online study abroad program. They enrolled in online classes offered by host universities in China. Both students expressed regret at missing the opportunity to physically immerse themselves in a Chinese-speaking country, as they believed that their language proficiency would not reach the same level as those who had the chance to live and study in China. Alex, who had visited China briefly in 2015 and 2016, recalled how these short trips had significantly enhanced his Chinese proficiency. Consequently, he firmly believed that the most effective way to learn a second language, particularly Chinese, is to be in the target country. He stated:

I think, probably the same for every language but Chinese is such a hard language as it is. Then I think the best way to learn is there because when I was in there for a month in 2015. I feel like I've progressed much quicker than I had like for three years, two years or however I was before that. So just about very small-time frame for like a progress a lot.

Here, Alex highlighted the importance of immersive experiences in the target country for effective language learning, with a specific emphasis on the challenges and benefits of learning Chinese. He believed that that even a short period of immersion, such as a month, can lead to substantial progress in language proficiency. This belief was based on his personal experience, as he felt that the progress made during a one-month stay in China in 2015 was greater than the progress made over several years of study prior to that. Alex felt that missing the opportunity to study abroad in China due to the pandemic was a significant drawback. He believed that his language proficiency would not improve as much as it would have with physical immersion in the country.

It is interesting to see a few students, especially those who had visited China, have more balanced thoughts about studying abroad. They did not think being in the target context would automatically improve their language proficiency. They believed that to maximize the benefits of studying abroad, learners should have at least had some basic language level or should be given formal instruction when doing year abroad. For example, Alice, Wendy and Lily all mentioned how they confused everyone and were confused by everyone and everything when they first visited China in high school. Alice strongly believed that the immersion in the target language should be combined with formal instruction. She addressed that:

I if I learn a new word, for example on the street by talking to somebody I'm not going to know all of the background and different uses of that words, I'm just going

to know it in that single context. So, if I learned that in the street, and then I go into my classroom and I asked my teacher ‘I learned this new word, could you tell me about it?’ They can give me that, they can focus on the all different uses of that word and then, if I can use it in different ways as well, rather than just the single context that I learned.

In line with previous studies on learners’ beliefs about language learning (e.g., Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Kalaja, 2003; Mercer, 2009; Peng, 2011; Wenden, 1986, 1987; Zhong 2015a; 2015b), this qualitative study indicated that immersion in the target country was viewed by all participants as the best method for improving language proficiency and deepening cultural understanding, particularly for Chinese. Compared to at-home classroom learning, studying abroad was believed to provide language learners with valuable opportunities to experience various L2 discourse options and engage in authentic communication with native speakers. Given the inherent difficulty of Mandarin Chinese, the experience of residing in a Chinese-speaking country was considered even more critical. Specifically, immersion in the target country was seen as especially important for learning a challenging language like Chinese.

Unlike the quantitative analysis, which found that target country experience did not impact CFL learners’ beliefs about language learning, the qualitative study revealed that students who had visited the target country held more comprehensive and balanced beliefs about the effects of immersion. These students recognized that while living in the target country offers valuable

exposure, it does not lead to straightforward improvement in language proficiency. They believed that the natural learning environment must be supplemented with formal instruction and a certain threshold of language proficiency to be effective.

5.3.2 Beliefs About the Difficulties of Learning Chinese

According to Horwitz (1999), beliefs about the difficulty of language learning addresses language learners' perceptions of the general difficulty of learning a second language (e.g., some languages are easier to learn than others) as well as their opinions of specific target language (e.g., the language I am trying to learn is difficult or easy). The quantitative measure can only reveal how language learners feel about learning a specific language and how long they think it may take to master the language; what the quantitative cannot tell is which aspects learners consider most difficult to learn, why they think so, what factors influenced their language learning and what they speak about the learning process and making mistakes. This section reveals the answers to these questions.

5.3.2.1 Chinese Is a Challenging Language

In this qualitative inquiry, all participants perceived Chinese as a challenging language, with some considering it the most challenging among the L2s they had encountered. Some participants confessed that they had thought about giving up learning Chinese and changing to another language

during the learning process, just as Andrew said: ‘In fact, at some point I want to drop it, like to change languages. It was just that thinking ‘‘Oh, my God! I’m never, I’m never gonna dominate this language.’’

The reason for ranking Chinese as a challenging language appears to be related to the participants' perceptions of a substantial linguistic gap between Chinese and their native language. According to Chiswick and Miller (2005), linguistic distance pertains to the extent to which languages differ from each other. The underlying assumption is that the closer (structurally similar) the L1 and the L2, the more straightforward the learning task. In the context of this study, participants' L1s exhibited greater linguistic similarity to other Indo-European languages than to Chinese. One participant, Anna, delved deeper into her perspective on why she considered Chinese to be 'the most difficult':

I think Chinese is the most difficult language I've ever learned, compared to all of the other languages that I've learned, like European languages, Romance languages. So, they're from, they kind of all have, like they're more similar like, words from different languages are similar, and the grammar rules are kind of the same. So, once you've learnt one romance language, if you try and learn another, it's much easier. But Chinese is completely different. And because it doesn't have like the same alphabets as English or Spanish. It's [...]. It is like a lot more difficult to learn.

Anna's statement revealed that the dissimilarity between Chinese and the European language caused the primary difficulty of learning Chinese. The absence of shared alphabets with English or other Indo-European languages and the distinctiveness of the grammar rules were all perceived as learning hurdles, making learning Chinese language more difficult than learning other European languages.

5.3.2.2 Speaking Chinese Is the Most Challenging Task

Although students' perception about the level of difficulty associated with the four language skills in learning Chinese varied, more than half of the participants considered speaking to be the most challenging undertaking, especially for beginner learners. For example, Alice told the researcher: 'What I found hard for me most would be speaking and speaking practice and finding the way to get over the nerves of speaking I find the most hard.'

The tonal nature of Mandarin Chinese was identified as the primary factor contributing to students' perception that speaking Chinese was the most challenging aspect of their language learning journey. Many students expressed concerns about the possibility of unintentionally conveying a different meaning if they used tones incorrectly, echoing the sentiment shared by Anne: 'It's just

difficult because if you say something with the wrong tone, you could actually be saying a different word.'

In addition, the lack of speaking opportunities inside and outside the classroom was viewed as another reason deterring students from speaking Chinese. Several students mentioned that the limited teaching hours were mostly used to teach characters and develop students reading ability. Tone accuracy and speaking ability were less emphasized. For example, Lily said:

It's definitely more important in the class setting to know the characters than it is to be able to pronounce them properly, because even if I said something, like mispronounced it, I think the teacher would still know what I was saying. We also don't do like that much speaking in class. It's mainly like reading out altogether.

The development of learners' pronunciation skills is influenced by various factors including the type of instruction (Norris & Ortega, 2000), the extent of recent classroom instruction (Saito & Hanzawa, 2016), and additional L2 learning outside the classroom (Muñoz & Llanes, 2014). In a non-native context, teaching hours in the classroom are the major source of language contact that students can get. However, in a classroom where reading and recognizing characters were centred, the opportunity for students to practice speaking Chinese was constrained, hindering their ability

to overcome the challenges of pronunciation and tone. In addition, the teachers' leniency towards incorrect tones and pronunciation inadvertently discouraged students from striving for precision in these areas, which further hindered proficiency in speaking.

Out-of-class language contact has been proved to benefit learners in many aspects of linguistic competence (Thomason & Kaufman, 2023). Speaking with native speaker, for example, have been proved to related to phonological control (Muñoz & Llanes, 2014) and oral fluency (Suzuki & Kormos, 2023). In this qualitative study, students also reported feeling intimidated by the prospect of conversing with native speakers, often due to fear of making mistakes or being refused (for example, 'because maybe they don't like me, or they may think I'm just like flirting or something else' ---Alex). This reluctance leads to missed opportunities for practical language application, which is crucial for mastering a new language. The reasons why many students hesitated to converse with native Chinese speakers outside the classroom will be discussed in 5.3.3. CFL learner' beliefs about the learning strategies.

The qualitative data revealed that the linguistic differences between Chinese and the students' L1 or Romance L2s made Chinese particularly challenging for them. The tonal nature of Chinese, which is absent in Western languages, combined with the complex character system, makes the learning undertaking challenging. Unlike learning most commonly studied languages, where listening is often considered the most difficult task (Abdalhamid, 2012; Darti & Asmawati, 2017), speaking Chinese emerged as the most formidable skill among the four language competencies.

Challenges with pronunciation and tones, limited instruction and practice opportunities, the teachers' tolerance of inaccurate tones and pronunciation as well as the reluctance to engage with native Chinese speakers outside the class collectively accounted for students' perception of speaking Chinese as particularly challenging.

5.3.2.3 CFL Learners' Beliefs About the Learning Process

Although Chinese was considered by the students as a difficult language, the participants in this qualitative investigation demonstrated a rational mindset regarding the complexities of the learning journey, recognizing the importance of dedicating time and effort to the process. For instance, Lily offered valuable insights into her personal thought about the difficulty of learning Chinese, she said: 'I don't think it's as difficult as people make it out. It is definitely difficult, but I think it's more like putting in time to learn it rather than actually being a difficult language.'

More than half of the participants expressed an attitude that in the journey of learning a language, they sought to keep practising and making progress instead of pursuing perfection or being good enough in the language. For example, Alex said:

I feel that (learning) a language is something that can never be fully perfect [...]. it's going to be a lifelong thing which I've already started to just accept, because if I

keep going for perfection, I'm never going to get it. But I might as well just keep improving anyway.

And David. When responding to the researcher's compliments to his Chinese proficiency, he commented:

There's never good enough in learning a language, just that you should constantly be practicing and practicing, practicing, I believe, and you never finished learning a language, do you?

The excerpts from Alex and David underscore a prevalent mindset among the participants: a focus on continuous improvement in language learning rather than striving for perfection or a specific proficiency level. This attitude embodies a pragmatic approach to language acquisition, acknowledging the complexity and ongoing nature of mastering a language.

Alex's statement underscores the belief that language learning is an unending journey, one where the goal of achieving 'perfection' is not only unrealistic but also potentially counterproductive (Dewaele, 2017). His acceptance of this ongoing process and commitment to continual

improvement, despite the inherent imperfections, suggests a resilience and adaptability in his approach to language learning. In addition, David's emphasis on relentless practice and the belief that one never truly 'finishes' learning a language highlighted his beliefs that learning a language is a perpetual journey rather than a final state of being 'good enough'. This belief demonstrates a humble and dedicated approach to language learning which is particularly pertinent for Chinese, a language with numerous subtleties and intricacies that require ongoing engagement and learning.

A shared consensus emerged among the students, indicating that the perceived difficulty of learning Chinese gradually diminished as they progressed in their language proficiency. For example, Anna talked about how she felt about the Chinese language learning journey:

I think in the beginning, it is more challenging because everything is completely new. But as you start learning it, I think you do improve. Like when I first started learning, it would take me ages to learn one character, but the more like the longer that you learn over time, you get a lot quicker at learning characters, and you get a lot quicker in writing them, because sometimes they're similar to other characters. Like you, it doesn't take, it doesn't always take ages to learn one character. You get quicker in doing it. And you do improve, so that if it's really hard at the beginning, just don't be put off by it.

Here Anna emphasized that Chinese seemed more daunting at the outset due to its novelty and its significant differences from the Romance languages. However, this initial difficulty diminishes over time as learners become more accustomed to the language patterns and structures. Her experience of gradually becoming faster at recognizing, learning, and writing characters is indicative of the cognitive process of knowledge accessible by means of automatic processing (Segalowitz, 2003; Suzuki, 2023). As learners become more familiar with the language, they can retrieve familiar information from long-term memory with fewer working memory resources (Suzuki & Kormos, 2023) and acquire new elements more quickly (Lim & Godfroid, 2015).

The interview data reflects a broader trend among the participants: a recognition of the challenges posed by learning Chinese and a commitment to continuous learning and improvement. This attitude, characterized by persistence and a focus on incremental progress rather than perfection, is essential for successfully navigating the complexities of Chinese language acquisition. It also speaks to a broader understanding that language learning is a dynamic process. What was challenging at the outset of learning becomes manageable with the promotion of language proficiency, just like Andrew articulated: ‘Like learning every language, you always go to a stage where you like “oh, my God. I’m never going to do this”, but then you realize it’s not that hard. You just have to put some effort.’

5.3.3 Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies refers to the specific actions, thoughts, steps or techniques that individuals use - often consciously - to facilitate their progress in internalizing, storing, retrieving and using the language (Oxford, 1992). Language learning strategies play an important role in the process of language learning. Numerous studies have consistently demonstrated that the deliberate and customized utilization of learning strategies is associated with language attainment and proficiency (Cohen, 2011; Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020).

The qualitative data indicated that the most of the participants learned Chinese through a traditional pedagogical approach, characterized by classroom-based instruction, reliance on textbooks, teacher-led lessons, an emphasis on grammar-centric exercises, and the systematic memorization of vocabulary and grammatical principles. All participants had the awareness that they learned Chinese in the UK (a foreign language setting), so it was their responsibility to increase authentic language input or to create a learning environment where they can ‘immerse’ themselves in the language. Therefore, outside the classroom, students exerted their learning autonomy, applying the resources at their disposal to increase language input and maximize the opportunities to immerse themselves in a Chinese context. They listened to Chinese podcast, watch Chinese episodes, read Chinese books, listen to Chinese music, write down the lyrics and analyse them. These strategies were reflected in, for example, the interview with Alex. He said:

And sometimes I just have like a live stream or music or something playing in about current on doing other things, or if I'm just sitting on the bus doing nothing, or you know it's just one of those things, you can have it playing constantly so you get used to it. I think when I first started, I would just play Chinese there was some things on YouTube like learn Chinese. In 60 minutes or something I just listened to it over and over and over again, to get used to the sounds.

The above quote indicates Alex's belief in the importance of the exposure to the language. He believed the importance of maximizing language input and tried to integrate Chinese into his daily life by listening to live streams or music while performing routine tasks or during idle moments, allowing him to continually expose himself to the language. Additionally, Alex emphasizes the significance of repetition, especially in the early stages, as he diligently listened to Chinese materials repeatedly to become more accustomed to the sounds and pronunciation. His resourceful utilization of online platforms like YouTube demonstrates a self-directed and adaptive approach to seeking out diverse learning resources. In fact, many participants in this study were like Alex. They learned Chinese through the strategies of consistent exposure, repetition, and resourcefulness, with a focus on fostering familiarity to enhance their language proficiency, just like Alice concluded that: 'just do more and do it more often'.

While most of students held the view that engaging in conversations with native Chinese speakers could enhance their language skills, fewer than half of them would actively seek opportunities to

talk with native Chinese speakers. They expressed reluctance when queried about their willingness to practice spoken Chinese with Chinese international students. Various factors contributed to their reluctance, such as personality, anxiety or no opportunities, however, lacking confidence in their Chinese language abilities was identified as the major reason. For example, Alice articulated her concern:

I think that's something that I'm always thinking about. And I've never had quite enough confidence to get someone asked them which is something I should do. But again, because my speaking level, I feel is relatively low. I'm too anxious that I'm gonna not be able to say anything. And then I'm, umm, they're not really going to, I don't know, talk to me if my Chinese is really bad. But it definitely is something that would make, I mean, I know that it would make a huge difference, but [...].

Alice's statement highlights the paradoxical nature of learners' beliefs (Zhong, 2015a, 2015b, 2022), where intellectual understanding conflicts with emotional barriers. Although Alice clearly recognizes the significant benefits of practicing her speaking skills, she is hindered by her own lack of confidence and anxiety about her self-perceived low language proficiency. This creates a situation where, despite knowing that engaging in conversation would 'make a huge difference' in her language development, she avoids doing so out of fear that her inadequate skills will lead to negative outcomes. This internal conflict underscores the complex nature of language learners' beliefs, where the desire for improvement is overshadowed by the fear of failure. As a result, Alice

remains trapped in a cycle of inaction, embodying the paradox where the very activity she knows would benefit her is the one she feels too anxious to undertake.

Like Alice, most of the participants recognized communication with native speakers would greatly benefit their Chinese language study, especially their listening and speaking abilities. However, the perception of their 'low' language proficiency level likely makes them anxious about making mistakes or not being able to express themselves adequately during conversation. Due to the tonal nature of Mandarin Chinese, students concerned that their speaking could result in misunderstanding or a breakdown in communication. This fear of ineffective communication made students hesitant to engage in conversation with native speakers. Furthermore, the possibility of being judged or rejected by native speakers due to their language proficiency also discouraged them from seeking out practice opportunities.

Only a few students not only realized the importance of contacting native speakers but also took positive action to seek communication opportunities. For example, Andrew said:

Since the year one of learning Chinese, I tried to start speaking to native people, which is crazy because I could only say 'Nihao' (hello), 'Nihaoma' (how are you). And they would reply that I would not understand, but I'd really tried my best. And

I think that really helped me because I was doing it since year one. [...]. I just think it's the easiest way to learn.

Here Andrew described his actions as ‘crazy’ because he initiated conversations with his limited language proficiency from the beginning of his language journey. Despite his minimal language skills, he demonstrated great determination and persistence to engage with native speakers. This willingness to communicate reflected his proactive approach to language learning. Andrew valued the immersive and practical nature of language learning through real-life conversations, where he can hear authentic pronunciation, learn idiomatic expressions, and improve his listening skills. Therefore, he viewed contact with native speakers as ‘the best and easiest way to learn languages’.

The learning and communication strategies in the BALLI also address L2 learners’ attitude towards making errors. All participants had a positive mindset regarding making errors during the learning process. They all recognized the inherent learning value associated with errors and error corrections. For example, Andrew talked about his attitude toward making errors in his language learning journey. He said: ‘I know I’m going to make mistakes, but I don’t mind about that. I learn from mistakes. And I’m not shy about speaking.’ Similarly, David suggested that: ‘Remember that you’re allowed to make mistakes when you speak the language, particularly something so different from before. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes. Speak! Speak! Speak!’

It is noticeable that participants' perspectives regarding making errors in language learning evolved with their language learning experiences. Beginner students tended to exhibit heightened apprehension regarding errors, a concern that frequently hindered their willingness to engage in spoken Chinese within the classroom setting. In contrast, participants at the intermediate or advanced levels demonstrated a greater comfort level with the prospect of making errors. For instance, Alex reflected on his journey of learning Chinese, recounted his anxiety regarding errors at the age of 18 and how his perspective had changed over the course of ten year of Chinese language learning. He asserted that:

I think I've kind of learned that making mistakes is just natural for learning languages. You don't pick it up first time and just speak perfectly. It takes (me) 10 years to realize that, but I'm glad to have [...].

The excerpt captures Alex's evolved understanding of language learning, highlighting the acceptance of errors as a natural and inevitable part of the learning process. Alex, along with many other students, has transitioned from an initial fear of making mistakes to recognizing that errors are an integral aspect of acquiring a new language. This change signifies a shift towards a more positive and pragmatic approach to language learning.

Cognitive theories, such as the interaction hypothesis (Long, 1991, 1996), the output hypothesis (Swain, 1985), the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1995) as well as the theory of skill learning (Dekeyser 2007, 2020), have pointed out that corrective feedback makes great contribution to the development of learners' interlanguage. In this study, several students mentioned their beliefs about the value of corrective feedback. For example, Mike talked about how the feedback he received from the teacher helped him develop a better understanding of the correct language forms and structures, and better internalized the grammar rules and vocabulary, which led to an improved accuracy and enhanced fluency in learning Chinese. He addressed that:

We had homework every week on each topic, and the teacher corrected all errors. So, when it was the exam I sort of memorized parts of my essays, like in really advanced Chinese and corrected by the teacher. So, in the exam I could just write it out, like I could like, if the question came up, I was able to just write what I knew was right, like in advanced Chinese.

Here Mike expressed his positive view about the error correction. Mike believed that by having his errors consistently corrected, he was able to learn the correct way to express ideas in advanced Chinese. This continual correction helps in reinforcing the right structures and vocabulary. Mike also emphasized that the corrective feedback from the teacher led him to consciously notice the gap between the right target language and his interlanguage, and he can later incorporate the

specific linguistic elements or structures into his implicit or subconscious language knowledge and automatically write them out in the exam.

The interview data concerning learners' strategies for learning Chinese indicated that students employed a variety of strategies. Most students learned Chinese through repetition and practice, utilizing various resources to increase their language input, and creating an 'immersed' learning environment. However, echoing with previous studies, the qualitative study also revealed that learners' beliefs about language learning were not always harmonious and sometimes conflicted (Kramsch, 2003; Mercer, 2009, 2011; Zhong, 2015). While all learners recognized the importance of communicating with native speakers, some expressed anxiety or reluctance due to self-perceptions of their language ability or personality. Additionally, the study indicated that students' beliefs about making errors evolved with their language learning experience. Beginner learners often viewed making errors as a source of anxiety or a deterrent to speaking Chinese in class, whereas most intermediate and advanced learners saw errors as a natural part of the learning process, particularly for a language as difficult as Chinese. Furthermore, some students reported benefiting from making errors and receiving corrective feedback from teachers.

5.3.4 Beliefs About Language Learning Aptitude

Learners' beliefs about language learning aptitude address whether learners agree with the existence of a special ability to learn foreign languages and their opinions about the kind of

individuals who possess it (Horwitz, 1999). Learner's beliefs about who have the language learning aptitude have been found to relate to learners' expectation for their own success (Horwitz, 1999).

The interview findings unveiled that a majority of eight out of ten opposed the existence of a language aptitude. To them, anyone could learn a foreign language and the so-called talent of learning a language was the embodiment of hard work, dedication or interest. For example, Alex talked about his self-talk when hearing people said to him that he was talented to learn Chinese. He mentioned:

A lot of people said I have, but can I just think that it's more just, you know, practice? That I have a feeling some people are very gifted when it comes to learning languages, but then you don't know how often they have to study to become proficient at that language. That everyone's think they're some sort of genius, but then you don't think he's probably just sat down for a long time and putting a lot of work.

David used Gladwell's '10,000-hour rule' (Gladwell, 2008) to explain his understanding about the expertise in learning a language. Although he admitted that some people who grown up in a

bilingual household might pick up languages quicker, the language aptitude, to him, most of the cases, was a manifestation of 10,000 hours. He addressed that:

I think everybody can learn language; I think it's case of putting time into it. And so, I think, for me, I don't necessarily have a special ability, but I put a lot of time into, kind of sitting and spending two hours learning vocabulary or sitting and trying to figure something out. [...] I think obviously it's more the case of just putting in the hard work. That manifests into language.

From the above excerpts, we can see that Alex and David rejected the idea of having a special ability for language learning. They suggested that their own success in language learning is not due to any innate talent but rather the result of their commitment to putting in the required effort. They emphasized the importance of hard work and dedication in language learning and believed that language learning is a skill that can be developed by most people. An inherent special ability, to them, is just a manifestation of consistent effort and practice.

Students' interpretation of language aptitude was not only restricted to 'it's easy for him because he's putting a lot of dedication and hours to do it' (Lily), but also extended to

interest and motivation to learn languages. For example, Andrew and Alice attributed their easiness to learning Chinese to their interest of learning it. Andrew told the researcher that:

‘I think it's not a matter of talent, I think it's that since I was a kid I was really interested in in languages. And it's just that interest. And I kept all my interest in languages, and I wanted to learn more and more, so that kept me motivated to learn. ... When you're interested in something, and you enjoy learning something, it's gonna be much easier.

To Andrew, language learning aptitude is not primarily about talent but rather about having a genuine interest and motivation to learn languages. He emphasized that his early fascination with languages as a child fuelled his motivation to learn more and believed that when someone is genuinely interested in and enjoys learning a language, it becomes less burdensome and easier to grasp. This interest acts as a motivating factor to continue the learning journey. Just like Alice concluded: ‘it's that I love it so much that I don't mind putting the work in. But it doesn't feel like I'm really having to struggle to learn it, because I love learning it.’

Among the interviewees, only Mike and Wendy agreed that there existed some special ability to learning foreign language, but the difference is Mike thought himself had the aptitude, whereas

Wendy didn't. Mike compared himself with his brother in learning school subjects and found that he was indeed doing better in learning foreign languages. So, he believed that he was born with the ability to learn foreign languages better. He said:

I'm just naturally like, good at learning languages, compared to other subjects. Whereas my brother he wasn't very good at learning languages, but he is better in other subjects. so, I feel like, it's just one, I think it's one of those things that's just natural, like you can work on it, but some people will find it easier than others, just like in other subjects.

Here Mike's belief about his language aptitude based on the fact that he could learn languages easier, compared to other academic subjects. He believed that there exists some degree of innateness in learning any subjects. To Mike, although people could work on learning languages, the inherent abilities can make learning process easier and faster. But he also acknowledged that language aptitude is not universal and can vary from one individual to another.

The literature on the beliefs about the language aptitude seemed to indicate that students who thought they lack the aptitude would lack confidence to learn the language or even not try hard to learn a language (Bidari, 2021; Fielden Burns & Rico García; 2017; Horwitz, 1987), but Wendy's

account seemed to indicate a different picture. Wendy didn't think herself as a good language learner as she believed that she was not born with a special ability to learn language quickly. But this awareness did not discourage her to learn the language but made her to try harder. She noted:

I think it's because I don't, I have to like actively study the vocabulary. I don't just like learning quickly like in some classmates, they hear it once and they like learn it immediately, but I have to like, umm, work to memorize it. ... I think it might make me work harder, so I can [be] at the same level with them.

Wendy's belief about language learning aptitude seems to be that she did not possess a natural or innate ability for learning languages as quickly or effortlessly as some of her peers. She had to actively and deliberately study, particularly in memorizing vocabulary, as opposed to some classmates who seem to grasp and remember new words more immediately upon hearing them. This perceived difference in learning speed and ease suggests that Wendy believed that language learning aptitude as varying among individuals, with herself having to put in more effort to achieve similar results. Additionally, the perception of herself as lacking a language aptitude did not discourage Wendy from learning languages, instead, encouraged her to work harder to reach a level comparable to her peers.

The students' perspectives on language learning aptitude reveal a consensus that language acquisition is achievable for everyone, with variations primarily in the pace of learning. These

learners underscore the crucial role of consistent effort, dedication, and personal enthusiasm in mastering a language. Although some acknowledged a natural inclination towards language learning, they equally acknowledged the indispensable importance of diligent practice and effort in attaining proficiency.

5.3.5 Motivation (and Expectations) of Learning Chinese

The core role of L2 learning motivation has been recognized and confirmed by research in SLA. It is regarded as one of the most important predictors of successful L2 learning and students' task achievement (Dörnyei, 2019), and connects to individual's choice making, the engagement in an action, the persistence in the action, and the effort expended to attain success (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013). Motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the second language and later the driving force to sustain the 'long and often tedious learning process' (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 65).

The interview data revealed that as China's global influence continuing to rise, the Chinese language tends to attract highly motivated and career-focused students. Many students expressed that their motivation for learning Chinese was primarily driven by their aspirations for professional use. Virtually all students, except for Wendy, believed that learning Chinese could open up better job opportunities compared to other commonly taught languages, given China's economic and political growth. For instance, David's commitment to learning Chinese was evident as he spent two years studying the language in China prior to attending university. His exposure to China's

development during his stay, coupled with his keen interest in international politics, reinforced his belief that speaking Chinese would greatly enhance his personal and professional growth. In his own words:

I think Chinese is going to become more and more fundamental in the world. It's going to be something that if I speak, I'm gonna put myself in the best position, coming kind of up in the job market, financially, or that kind of stuff.

In the interview, Mike compared China in his grandparents' day (in 1930s and 1940s) and in the present. He believed that as a fast-developing country, China would provide more opportunities to people who speak the language and know about the culture. He mentioned that:

China is like going, is really powerful and it's like developing so fast. [...] It's economically developed. it's got a lot of job opportunities. And I feel like, no English people, like British people like, learn Chinese really, and it would like to stand out for me, so I can get a better job opportunity.

The above excerpts indicated that students' motivation of learning Chinese is primarily centred around the beliefs that China is becoming increasingly fundamental in the world and that learning Chinese is a strategic move to position themselves better in the job market and potential prospects. Compared to students who learn those commonly taught languages, such as French or Spanish, learning Chinese was seen to differentiate themselves and gain a competitive edge in the job market, just like Jessica commented: 'Because I want to work internationally in a in a business or a bank, and it will be such a good language to have like under your belt'.

Personal interest is identified as the second important motivation of learning Chinese. More than half of the participants mentioned that they chose to study Chinese because they were attracted by Chinese culture. They either once visited China or once encountered with Chinese culture in their daily life and felt fascinated by the culture difference or the novelty of the language. For example, Lily mentioned that her motivation of learning Chinese was triggered by her summer camp in China. She exclaimed that she got culture shock, but 'in a good way' and described her visit to China as an eye-open experience. So, after coming back from China, she made decision to learn Chinese. She said: 'I was not really ever interested in learning Chinese, like it just didn't ever cross my mind. [...]. Like I said it was only really when I went to China that I realized that like I really wanted to learn Chinese.'

Social engagement and communication emerged as the third important motivation of learning Chinese. Several students mentioned that Mandarin Chinese is the most widely spoken language

or a major language, the ability to communicate in Chinese was believed to open opportunities for social engagement with native speakers and other learners. The interpersonal connection can be a source of great enjoyment, allowing for meaningful cultural exchanges, making new friends, and experiencing the language in a lively interactive setting. Andrew illustrated this perspective:

Having friends is also a motivation for learning the language. and if I have no Chinese friends, I would think it pointless to learn, like, obviously not pointless, but I would think why, why would I want to learn Chinese? I think having like, you can have the motivation of working, but I think that's not enough. And if you got a closer motivation, it is I have a friend, I want to communicate with my friend and just have fun with the language.

Andrew's statement expressed the motivation to build interpersonal connections and friendships through learning Chinese. To him, the meaning of learning Chinese was beyond having an edge in job market, fostering interpersonal relationship and engaging in enjoyable interactions with people in their own language provided a more compelling reason to learn the language. Like Andrew, the desire to connect with Chinese people becomes a driving force behind students' language learning efforts.

Personal challenge and intellectual curiosity emerged as another major motivation. As Chinese was ranked as a difficult language by all the students, more than half of them viewed learning Chinese as an appealing challenge to enhance their cognitive ability and mental acuity. For example, Anna said:

I think I kind of decided that I wanted to learn like a more rare (rarer) language, like a more difficult, and not just a romance language or a European language, because I think I just wanted something a bit more challenging. And I kind of thought the, I thought the university was like the best time to learn a rare language, because, like kind of outside of it, like school and university, I think it's a bit difficult to like learn any language, especially one that's more difficult because you just don't have the time to commit to it.

The above excerpt reflects Anna's desire for intellectual challenge and personal growth. She wanted to learn a language that is not commonly studied by native speakers of European languages, specifically avoiding more familiar Romance languages. Her goal was to engage with a language that is considered more difficult and less commonly pursued, seeking an experience that is both challenging and unique. Additionally, Anna believed that the university setting provided an ideal opportunity to learn such a 'rare' or less commonly studied language, likely due to the resources, structured learning environment, and support available in an academic setting as well as the commitment that students can afford to learn the language.

Except Wendy, all students hoped to get a better career route through learning Chinese. In accordance with this, most of them aimed to reach a higher language proficiency, from being able to use Chinese to do daily communication up to a professional level. This future self-image was in line with the ideal L2 self in Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System model. According to this model, the ideal L2 self is an image of oneself as a proficient L2 speaker. The motivation to learn the L2 language arises from endeavours aimed at minimizing the discrepancy between one's actual self (current capabilities) and the ideal self (the desired proficiency level). The interview data suggested that most of the students (Except Wendy) had very clear ideal L2 self: an aspirational image of the self as an accomplished L2 speaker, embodying the individual's language-related goals, desires, and hopes (Dörnyei, 2009). For example, Anna had high expectations towards her Chinese language learning. She hoped to get a better opportunity in job market and do a business job in China or with China. Accordingly, she aimed to reach an advanced level to be capable of better communicating with Chinese people and functioning well in a business world. She said:

Maybe like more of an advanced level where I can like communicate with people a lot better in speaking. And I can actually, I can have just a lot, a better conversations with people about like a broader range of topics. And yeah, and I'd like to be able to like understand people a lot better than I can now. Just so I can kind of feel more confident that I do actually have quite good, like I'm quite good at Chinese.

In line with the literature based on the L2 Motivational Self System model, the interview data also revealed that the ideal self, the vision an individual has of their future self as a proficiency and successful user of the target language, serves as a powerful motivator, driving learners to work hard and persist in their language learning efforts to achieve their desired state of language proficiency. Among the interviewees, Andrew, Alice, David, Lily, Mike, Alex, Jessica and Rosy all mentioned how their successful future images supported their language learning momentum and guide their learning process. For example, Alice explained the reason she failed to learn French was she could never image herself ‘as being a human French speaker’, living in Franch or using French for a job. But as to learning Chinese, she commented:

I pictured the future a lot. I know what my goal is, and I can think about that, so if I need to keep that focus in my head, aware of what I’m doing. Otherwise, there's no point learning it. That's why I failed in French, [...]. But because I can imagine that of Chinese and that's where I really want my life to go. I’ll do work, by the work, solve the problem, I will do it.

Based on the interviews, it was discovered that seeking for a better position in the job market was the most important motivation for the students learning Chinese as a second language. Given the difficulty of the language and the fact that it was a less-common taught language as well as the

upcoming of China, the learners believed that learning Chinese was a means to distinguish themselves and access enhanced professional opportunities. Alongside this primary motivation, connection with more people, personal interest, and improve cognitive abilities were also the reasons students chose to embark on learning Chinese. Almost all the participants had a vivid future self in mind which can sustain their learning journey. Just like Andrew said: 'I can picture myself in Karaoke in China, singing Chinese songs with my Chinese friends'.

5.3.6 Beliefs About Online Learning and Online Exams

The whole world was suffering the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic at the time the interviews were conducted. The global health crisis has had a profound impact on education worldwide, leading to a significant shift towards online teaching and learning from school to the tertiary level. The adoption of digital platforms and tools for delivering educational content proved instrumental in ensuring the continuity of education amidst the pandemic's challenges, however, it has not been without challenges (Kim & Asbury 2020). In the interviews, certain participants shared their perspectives on online language teaching and learning, as well as the conduction of online examinations.

In general, students hold negative opinions towards online teaching and learning. To them, learning a language was different from learning other subjects; it needed more interaction and communication between the teacher and the students, as well as among students themselves.

Although virtual classrooms presented new routes for learning, collaboration and connectivity, the lack of face-to-face interaction and physical classroom environment posed challenges for student engagement, motivation and social interaction. For instance, Alex expressed his dissatisfaction towards the absence of practice and face-to-face interactions in online education. He stated that:

Just sitting there looking at an online class for three hours and then just going away and not practicing, it's just easy to forget, I think. If you're in like a group online class of like 10 people, you can just mute the microphone and talk to the person beside you or something.

Here, Alex's view on online language learning appears to be somewhat sceptical, particularly regarding its effectiveness and the level of engagement it fosters. He expressed his concern that merely attending an online class for a long duration, such as three hours, without actively practising or interacting with teachers and peer students, leads to easily forgetting the learning content. In his view, passive participation in online classes is not sufficient for effective language learning. In addition, Alex pointed out a specific issue with online classes, where the format allows for minimal participation or engagement. In a group online class, students can easily mute the microphone and not actively participate, perhaps even getting distracted by talking to someone else. The observation indicates that Alex believed that the online learning environment was not adequately replicate the engagement and interaction necessary for effective language learning that is more achievable in a traditional, in-person classroom setting.

Alex and Mike were final year students. When the COVID-19 burst globally, they were assumed to spend a year in China, immersing themselves in the target context to learn the language and to experience the culture. However, the nationwide lockdown restrictions forced their universities to change the year abroad programme from physical being in the target country to a virtual one, namely, students learned Chinese language and Chinese culture with the year-abroad host universities, but through online study platform. When being deprived the opportunities to physically immerse themselves in the target language and cultural context, the objectives of study abroad program seemed to become pale. For instance, Mike analysed the reasons why his speaking ability was the weakest among the four language skills. He complained:

It's very hard for us because we never went to China, so I never actually got opportunities to improve my speaking. I think that's going to China is the best way to improve you speaking because you have to speak every day and listening to Chinese people. Whereas when you're online, in the lesson you don't really speak a lot when the teacher is talking. So, your speaking isn't really developing. You're just listening. So, I think, yeah, that's my weakest.

The above excerpt indicated that Mike did not feel that an online study abroad experience was effective for developing speaking skills. He expressed a strong belief that physically being in China,

immersed in the language environment where he would need to speak and listen to Chinese daily, is the best way to enhance speaking skills. In contrast, in an online class setting, there was limited opportunity for students to speak, as much of the time is taken up by the teacher instructions or lectures. This leads to a situation where he felt that he was mostly listening, rather than actively practising speaking. Lack of authentic immersion in China, Mike felt that he lost the opportunity to improve his speaking ability in Chinese. An online study abroad did not provide the same immersion setting as physically being in China, therefore less beneficial for developing speaking abilities.

The time difference between China and the UK deteriorated the students' online learning experience. Alex told the researcher his enjoyment of learning Chinese dramatically decreased during the virtual study abroad period. He explained:

So, the third year it was all online and the classes were at 5 am. I really just didn't show up to most of them because I felt like I wasn't learning anything and there's actually no chance to practice what I learned in class.

In addition to the negative impact on learners' motivation and engagement, the participants also voiced their apprehensions about learning and writing Chinese characters in an online setting. As

discussed in section 5.2.1.2, i.e., CFL learners' beliefs about Chinese character learning, handwriting Chinese to most of the students was an integrate part of the learning process. Whereas when all the teaching and learning activities were moved online, students appeared to be lacking opportunities for handwriting Chinese characters. For instance, David informed the researcher that throughout the pandemic, they were permitted to complete all their writing tasks online. As a result, students did not necessarily need to possess the skill of handwriting Chinese characters; instead, they relied on pinyin to locate the characters, namely typing out Chinese. To a learner who strongly advocated learning Chinese characters through handwritten practice, he worried that he might not be able to physically write the characters when all learning activities shifted offline one day. Similar concerns were also raised by Alex and Mike during the interviews.

Mike used 'plagiarism' to describe typing Chinese and online Chinese exam. As a student who found value in corrective feedback from the teacher, typing Chinese characters posed challenges to his vocabulary learning. With the conventional handwriting learning approach, he would practice writing the characters, store them in the brain and retrieve them when needed. When receiving homework feedback, he would take notes and assimilate the teacher's input, which allowed him to confidently write out the correct content during exams. However, with the shift to online typing of Chinese characters, this cognitive process seemed to vanish, making the learning experience more difficult. He told about his perception about the difference between conventional handwriting Chinese (and conventional exams) and typing Chinese (and online exams). He noted that:

I feel like that (handwriting Chinese and conventional exams) was like really, umm, showing your ability, rather than doing it with resources (typing Chinese and online exams). Because then people who don't know words and like don't bother to learn the words can still do well without putting effort into the Chinese. ... You know, it's, it's like plagiarism.

The plagiarism perception was expressed by Anna, Alex and David too. To these students, typing Chinese in homework or in exams could not distinguish students who really made efforts to learn Chinese and who were not. For example, Alex rated his writing ability as 10 out of 100, but online typing Chinese covered his flaw in writing ability. He told the researcher that:

I think if you do an examination on the computer, it's going to be a lot harder people not to cheat as it made the exam so much easier, like I probably know hundreds of characters how they actually write or how they look but cannot write them at all. So, I think it's, it kind of separates people that have learned Chinese properly from people like me who have just learned to recognize.

The above excerpts indicate students' views on online examinations, particularly for Chinese language learning, appear to be critical, especially concerning the potential for academic dishonesty

and the limitations in accurately assessing certain skills. Students believed that conducting exams on a computer makes it significantly harder to prevent cheating and allows individuals to perform well without genuinely learning the words. They might not effectively differentiate between students who have deeply learned that language ('learned Chinese properly') and those who have primarily developed recognition skills without the corresponding ability to produce the language in written form. These statements suggest a concern among students that the integrity of online exams may be compromised compared to traditional, in-person testing environments. Students expressed a preference for traditional methods of examination, such as handwriting in Chinese, which they believed more accurately reflect a student's skills and efforts.

The transition to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic was essential for maintaining educational continuity. However, this study's interviews highlight distinct challenges encountered by language learners, particularly in the context of Chinese language acquisition. Participants unanimously agreed that language learning was different from other academic disciplines, emphasizing the necessity for active engagement and consistent practice, rather than passive listening in a classroom setting.

The shift to online learning environments notably impacted students' motivation and engagement levels. The lack of direct interaction with instructors and peers, coupled with reduced practice opportunities, led to feelings of disconnection and discouragement. This sentiment is encapsulated in Alex's statement: 'I just finished the class, if I just not practise, I wasn't learning any that of the

vocabulary. I can just sit and practise on my own.’ Additionally, the study highlights the diminished efficacy of study-abroad programs conducted online. The absence of physical immersion in a native language environment, limited interaction opportunities, and challenges posed by time zone differences significantly reduced the program's effectiveness. A notable concern raised by participants was the reduced cognitive effort involved in typing Chinese characters compared to handwriting them. This change was perceived to hinder the memorization and retention of vocabulary, making language learning more challenging. Overall, the participants perceived online classes and assessments as less effective and potentially less honest compared to traditional, in-person methods.

5.4 CFL Learners’ Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE)

As discussed in literature review section 2.5, foreign language enjoyment (FLE) refers to the positive emotion experienced by language learners when their psychological needs are met in the foreign language classroom (Botes et al., 2020). This enjoyment is described as ‘enjoyment, fun, interest, and lack of boredom’ (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, p. 242, cited in Li & Wei, 2022) experienced specifically concerning the L2 environment. Unlike the simple sensation of pleasure, enjoyment is seen as a multifaceted sentiment that captures the interplay of challenges and perceived competence. This reflects the human drive to achieve success when faced with difficult tasks (Dewaele & e & MacIntyre, 2016). Foreign language enjoyment is associated with a variety of individual variables, such as multilingualism (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2024), trait emotional intelligence (e.g., Li & Xu, 2019), level of mastery in the FL (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele

& MacIntyre, 2014; Mierzwa, 2018), relative standing in the group (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017), attitudes towards the FL (e.g., Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Dewaele, Özdemir et al., 2019; Dewaele & Proietti Ergün, 2020). It is also influenced by contextual variables, such as teacher's role (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele et al., 2019c; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Li et al., 2019), school context (e.g., De Smet et al., 2018; Dewaele & Proietti, 2020; Resnik & Dewaele, 2021) and societal context (e.g., De Smet et al., 2018). These factors collectively contribute to the overall experience of foreign language enjoyment, highlighting its complexity and multifaceted nature.

5.4.1 The Sources of CFL Learners' FLE

During the interviews, the students talked about some specific enjoyment episodes or their general enjoyment of learning and using Chinese. Their statements indicated that the CFL learners' language enjoyment arose from various factors, including a sense of achievement, the novelty of the Chinese language and culture, a positive classroom environment, and practical use of the language.

Sense of achievement is the primary origin of the participants' foreign language enjoyment. In line with the literature on FLE, learners' perceptions of their progress and success in acquiring the language play a crucial role in FLE (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2023). Achieving milestones and receiving positive feedback boost learners' confidence and enjoyment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, Dewaele, 2022). All participants experienced enjoyment when they perceived that their skills could meet the

challenges of acquiring Chinese; they could ‘get something right’, attain good test results, understand difficult content or successfully answer questions. For example, Jessica described her enjoyment as: ‘It’s such a good feeling when you do finally get something right, and you start to feel like I’m getting good at this, and it’s so worth it.’ And Mike talked about a specific episode that happened in the Chinese language class. After students had read texts out loud in the class, the teacher randomly asked questions about the content. Mike and another student were the only two students who could answer the questions. He felt very proud of himself and noted that:

So, I feel, like, quite happy that I actually understand the questions that weren’t written down, like, she literally just asked us questions, just made the question herself and asked us what it was about in the text. I found that was quite good for me because I was able, I showed that I actually do understand Chinese when she asked random question.

It can be inferred from the above excerpt that Mike felt proud of himself for understanding questions not directly taken from the text but created spontaneously by the teacher. Mike believed the ability he demonstrated indicated a deeper level of engaging with the language in a dynamic and practical manner and beyond just memorizing or recognizing written material. This sense of achievement boosted Mike’s confidence in his Chinese language proficiency and instilled his enjoyment of learning and using Chinese.

In addition to achieving proficiency in Chinese language acquisition, the ability to conquer the fear or anxiety associated with learning and using the language significantly contributes to learners' sense of accomplishment, ultimately leading to the experience of language learning enjoyment. For example, Alice expressed her pride in initiating a speaking exercise with her language tutor before a speaking test. She stated that:

I thought I was very brave by doing it, because I find it really scary. And when we did that, I really enjoyed myself. Firstly, because she's really nice, but also because I felt myself getting over for the fear that I initially had and by actually just chatting in Chinese that I felt much more confident to learn and to do my speaking practice. So that was enjoyable. From my perspective, obviously it was enjoyable to just chat but also it was nice to feel a bit of comfort that it wasn't quite as scary as I thought.

The above excerpt indicated that Alice's language learning enjoyment comes from a mix of personal achievement in overcoming the fear of speaking Chinese, gaining confidence through using the language to communicate with her teacher, and the comfort of realizing that the challenge was not as daunting as she had feared. This sense of achievement not only came from the act of facing and conquering a fear of speaking a new language but also came from the increased self-confidence which signals personal growth and proficiency in the language. This feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction after successfully overcoming challenges, exerting effort, and realizing personal growth or improvement contributed to the participants' overall enjoyment,

creating a positive learning experience that led to feelings of satisfaction, pride, and fulfillment, just like Rose put it: ‘I really enjoy it more, because I know that I can understand and I'm doing well. If I wasn't doing well, I think I wouldn't enjoy it as much’.

The novelty of the Chinese language and culture emerged as another important source of the participants' language enjoyment. Literature has suggested that the attitudes that foreign language learners hold towards their target languages are closely tied to the emotions they feel during lessons (e.g., De Smet et al., 2018, Dewaele & Proietti Ergün, 2020). Students with a favourable view of a particular FL are more likely to experience positive emotions in those classes (Dewaele & Saito, 2024).

The unfamiliarity of the language, particularly the opacity of the writing system and the tones, led the students to perceive Chinese as a challenging language. However, paradoxically, this novelty of the language also contributed to the learners' enjoyment. They found satisfaction in learning, reading and writing Chinese characters and derived enjoyment from the cognitive challenges required for decoding characters, completing tasks, exercises, and examinations. For example, during the interview, Lily used the word ‘rewarding’ twice to portray her emotional experience with the learning process, and she explicitly expressed to the researcher that: ‘like I can go to the library and do few hours of revision, then I do enjoy it, I find it quite like therapies somehow’. And Jessica loves learning Chinese characters. Learning and writing Chinese characters to her were ‘not a chore after uni’ but gave her ‘lots of fun’, so she thought learning Chinese characters was the

‘finest part and the best part’. David equated completing Chinese exercises and examinations to ‘puzzle solving’ and he attested that ‘a lot of the times, particularly comprehension and translation, it is like solving a puzzle, so I got quite a lot of satisfaction from that’.

A similar perception was expressed by Alice as well. Alice loved learning Chinese. She found delight in studying Chinese characters and derived enjoyment from figuring out answers to teachers’ questions and doing exercises. According to Alice, the mental endeavour required to memorize characters and deduce answers played a pivotal role in her overall experience of enjoyment. In her own words,

Actually, I like to do exercises. Like little tasks that we have to do. If I had a whole book of them, I could go through them. I’d forget the time and I’d just do them, and I really enjoy that sort of problem-solving process.

What Alice tried to emphasize was a flow experience, a subjective state where one is completely involved in something to the point of forgetting time, fatigue, and everything else but the activity itself (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014). Flow experience happens when perceived challenges and skills are well matched (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). When challenges surpass one's skills, anxiety often sets in; conversely, when skills outpace challenges, one relaxes and then becomes bored. Chinese, with its unique characters, grammar, and structure, presents a set of intriguing challenges that engage learners’ problem-solving skills (Xu et al., 2022). Students found enjoyment when they

found that their learning skills match well with the challenges of doing Chinese exercises or tasks. Like Alice, more than half of the participants reported that they achieved enjoyment from the challenges of learning Chinese. The process of decoding the language's intricate writing system, grammar, and pronunciation was viewed as intellectually stimulating, leading to greater enjoyment.

Similarly, the novelty of Chinese culture intrigued the participants and instilled their learning enjoyment. The majority of the participants expressed a deep love for Chinese culture during the interviews. More than half of the participants specifically chose to learn Chinese due to their genuine interest in Chinese culture, which they described as 'so different' or so 'eye-opening'. Through their language learning endeavors and the subsequent improvement of their Chinese proficiency, these students were able to explore a wider range of Chinese literature, history and cultural works. Just as David stated, 'there's a lot of stuff obviously in China, being such a big base, bigger history and culture that I want to access'. Consequently, they derived immense enjoyment from gaining insights into various facets of Chinese culture.

For instance, David and Mike loved Chinese music, and they enjoyed the melodies and learned Chinese through writing down the lyrics of the songs. Jesscia loved Chinese characters ('I love learning new characters and I love writing the characters. I think that's the finest part and the best part') and enjoyed reading Chinese children's books and knowing related Chinese culture. Andrew, after occasionally participating in the cultural events related to 'Qingming festival' (Tomb-Sweeping Day, a traditional Chinese festival), found that the family culture behind the festival was

‘crazily interesting’, which triggered his interest in learning more Chinese festivals and therefore learning the language. He said:

I thought to myself ‘this is just one festival that I did not know about, but there are a lot of festivals, and I want to know about them all’. I want to know about the origin and [inaudible] and that kept me like I want to learn all about these. And I want to learn the language and I just want to know more.... The more I knew about the culture, the more I wanted to learn Chinese to get involved in it.

From the above excerpt we can see that like most of the participants, Andrew’s Chinese learning journey started from his curiosity to Chinese culture. The more he learned about Chinese culture, the more interested he was in the culture (and the language). Cultural curiosity acted as a motivating factor (Zheng et al., 2023), creating a desire among the learners to engage more deeply with the language and more aspects of the Chinese culture. At the same time, language learning was viewed far beyond a set of linguistic symbols, but a tool to gain a more profound understanding of the culture. To these students, the desire to learn Chinese is not solely for practical reasons but was driven by a genuine interest in understanding and engaging with the culture.

In summary, the participants’ genuine interest in the Chinese language and culture fueled their language enjoyment. Learning a language that is vastly different from their native tongues or other familiar languages provides a novel experience. The cognitive challenge of learning Chinese was

described as rewarding and puzzle-solving. The process of decoding Chinese characters involves significant mental effort and problem-solving, which can be intellectually stimulating. This intellectual stimulation leads to a sense of enjoyment and satisfaction, maintaining high levels of engagement. Additionally, the cultural richness associated with learning Chinese enhances enjoyment. As learners immerse themselves in Chinese, they explore its history, culture, and traditions, which are deeply fulfilling and enjoyable.

A positive classroom environment was emphasized as another crucial source of the participants' language enjoyment. All students acknowledged that a conducive and safe learning environment greatly impacted their emotional well-being and exerted significant influence on their progress in language learning. **The teacher, teaching practice, and fellow learners** were consistently identified as key elements building up the learning environment.

As indicated in literature, the presence of caring, supportive, and engaging teachers significantly contributes to creating a positive emotional atmosphere in the classroom, which, in turn, boosts students' FLE (e.g., Ahmadi-Azad et al., 2020; Arnold, 2011; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Dewaele et al., 2018; Li et al., 2018). Most of the students highlighted the crucial role played by teachers in sustaining their learning momentum and fostering a positive learning atmosphere. As an example, Alex acknowledged that his language enjoyment stemmed from the presence of good teachers in his learning journey. In his own words:

When I started learning Chinese, it was very enjoyable because of the teachers. I think I've probably had like 30 plus different teachers, ... and they're all great. I don't think there's one teacher I didn't like. ... I don't even think it's important what the teacher is teaching, I think, as long as the teachers are nice, then no matter what they're teaching, you're probably learning from them.

Several students even explicitly expressed to the researcher that their continuation of learning such a challenging language would not have been possible without the presence of compassionate and supportive teachers. As Alex aptly put it:

If you know every week, you're going to be meeting someone you don't like, you're not going to have fun. You're gonna hate the class.

Alex's statement underscores the important role teacher playing in creating a good emotional atmosphere in the classroom. Research has demonstrated that positive emotions in language learning environments lead to increased motivation, greater resilience, and a more profound engagement with the learning material (e.g., Arnold 1999; Borg, 2006; Dewaele, 2015; Dewaele et al., 2018; Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014; MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012). Teachers who are able to establish a supportive and enjoyable learning environment help students lower their affective filters, making them more open to language input and more likely to enjoy the learning process (Arnold, 2011; MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012). Conversely, a negative perception of the

teacher can overshadow the content of the lessons, causing the student to associate the subject with unpleasant emotions rather than with interest or enjoyment.

In addition to showing kindness, friendliness, and support, good pedagogical practices are essential for sustaining and enhancing students' motivation and fostering positive emotions (Li et al., 2018; Piccardo, 2013). Four students (David, Jessica, Anna and Andrew) specifically discussed how their teachers used vivid and engaging methods to facilitate the comprehension and retention of Chinese characters. These students expressed a strong sense of enjoyment and satisfaction with the teaching methods utilized. For instance, Jessica shared with the researcher her favorite Chinese character ‘朋’ [péng] and described in detail how her teacher taught it. She said:

I remember my Chinese lecturer told me that the character of ‘朋’ ([péng], friend) is the two moons. And she said, it’s a way of how to remember it for like ‘朋友’ ([péng you], friends). Just saying that it’s two friends who can walk together at night is a true friend. I think it’s such a nice meaning for a character. So, I think that’s my favorite character now.

The traditional teacher-centred pedagogy (Mascolo, 2009) was not widely favoured among the participants. A few students expressed that deviating from the typical teaching routine and granting

them more autonomy to learn and utilize the language in the classroom significantly enhanced their language enjoyment. For instance, Andrew articulated that:

Especially when we do something different, like watching a video or something like that, I really enjoy it. Umm, I don't quite enjoy that much when, like when we are like learning something really, I don't know the word, 'heavy'?

Andrew used 'heavy' to describe the conventional classroom learning. It can be inferred from the interviews that the emphasis of Chinese language teaching was placed on learning the rules of grammar, vocabulary lists, and the translation of texts. Textbooks are the major learning material and lessons often involve extensive explanations of grammatical structures and the memorization of vocabulary. These traditional forms of language instructions/ learning lack emotional engagement, making them monotonous, boring, and less likely to capture students' interest (Dewaele, 2005, 2011, 2015). In contrast, when classes incorporate diverse teaching methods, such as interactive activities or video content, students are more likely to be actively engaged and interested. For instance, Alex recounted an incident during a speaking class that brought him immense language enjoyment:

Last Tuesday we had an oral class and the teacher originally had something on the board. And then we went off on a tangent and to spend the next hour and a half just talking about any subject, but everyone in the class was engaged and enjoying

themselves, so I think that's more important than learning whatever she was trying to teach us on the board.

The narrative above underscores the significance of empowering students by giving them a sense of autonomy, which plays a crucial role in creating a dynamic and enjoyable classroom atmosphere (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). As highlighted in the literature, students are more likely to feel enjoyment when in an interactive, engaging and student-centred discussion (Dewaele et al., 2018). The flexibility of the class empowered students and engendered active participation (Kirk et al., 2016). A high level of engagement, in turn, enhanced enjoyment as students felt more involved and invested in the lesson (Shen, 2021; Turan-Ozturk & Ozkose-Biyik, 2023). At the same time, the sense of community and collaboration in a class where everyone is participating and enjoying themselves was believed to significantly contribute to the enjoyment of language learning (Dewaele, 2022). It creates a supportive and dynamic learning environment (Järvenoja et al., 2020)

In addition, the inclusion of authentic language input in the classroom was identified to link with the participants' enjoyment of the language. Some students expressed their delight in learning Chinese by watching Chinese videos during class. They believed that being exposed to real-world language usage not only expanded their vocabulary and comprehension skills but also helped them develop a profound appreciation for the cultural aspects embedded within the language. For example, Anna said:

We watched quite a lot of videos about, like, business in China, umm, like, yeah, like businesspeople, like interviews in China and in Chinese. I think I really enjoy that because it's nice to hear some like native, I don't know, I think it's good practice for listening, but it's good because they're interesting videos and I've been able to learn about the culture as well through it.

Anna's enjoyment comes from the combination of authentic language exposure, cultural insights, practical listening practice, engaging content, and interaction with native speech, all of which contribute to a richer and more enjoyable language learning experience. Watching videos about business in China and interviews in Chinese was believed to provide students with exposure to the authentic language use. This real-world application of the language lets students feel more engaging than examples in textbooks. Although indirectly, interacting with native speech patterns and accents through videos was viewed by Anna as an important method to get accustomed to the nuances of the language as it is naturally spoken, which Anna believed can significantly enhance her listening comprehension abilities. All in all, exposure to authentic material seemed to capture learners' interest, and increased engagement and enjoyment, which made the learning process more effective.

Furthermore, the emotional support provided by fellow students was found to have a significant impact on the overall language enjoyment of learners. It became evident that a sense of connection

and familiarity with their classmates played a crucial role in creating an environment conducive to enjoyment (Li & Zhang, 2018). In fact, a number of students expressed that it was challenging to experience genuine enjoyment when they knew little about their peers. As Rosy aptly articulated: ‘like at the start of the year, it was too hard to a bit enjoy that because I didn’t want to give any answers wrong because I didn’t know anyone’.

Lily's statement further underscored the significance of peer learners. She told the researcher that:

And sometimes if we're in a class where like everyone's been quite shy, and no one's really saying anything, then it kinds of discourages you from wanting to talk as well, whereas if people are putting their hand up and stuff, that I'll feel more like, confident to do it myself.

The statement made by Jessica illuminated the importance of establishing a supportive and inclusive classroom community. When students become more acquainted with one another and develop a sense of trust and camaraderie, they are more likely to engage in and enjoy the learning process.

I think being around people who are learning at same level as me as well, because we all make mistakes, and it can be quite funny sometimes when someone says

something and it's, like completely wrong. I feel that's really fun. And even our teacher laughed a little bit. That's quite fun as well because it feels less serious, and it feels like more of a comfortable setting.

Jessica's statement underscored the important role of peer students in establishing a supportive and comfortable learning environment. Surrounded by students who were at a similar learning level, in Jessica's view, created a sense of mutual understanding, which made the learning journey more comfortable and encouraging. Through learning together and laughing together, peer students helped create a supportive environment where everyone is going through similar challenges. This shared experience fosters a sense of belonging and mutual support. The interactions among peers, especially when laughing together about the 'funny' mistakes contributed to a less formal and more relaxed learning atmosphere. At the same time, the presence of peer students who also make mistakes seemed to normalize the error-making process in language learning, letting Jessica as well as other students realize that making mistakes was a natural and important part of learning. This light-hearted mood to errors contributes to a fun and less intimidating learning environment.

The interview data highlights the pivotal role of a positive classroom environment in learners' emotional well-being. The teacher plays a crucial role in fostering learners' enjoyment in the language learning process by creating a supportive and positive classroom atmosphere. This includes using engaging and interactive teaching methods, providing opportunities for autonomy and real-world language use, encouraging a sense of achievement, and building a community of

learners. In addition, a supportive and inclusive classroom community fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance among students, which in turn enhances their engagement and enjoyment. In such an environment, students are more likely to express themselves freely, share their thoughts and ideas, and take intellectual risks without fear of judgment or exclusion. This supportive setting lays the foundation for a meaningful and enjoyable learning experience.

The practical use of Chinese language both within and beyond the classroom emerged as a frequently cited source of enjoyment in the Chinese language learning. The participants derived pleasure from the ability to apply their acquired knowledge in real-life scenarios. Engaging in conversations with fellow classmates or native speakers while establishing social connections through the language significantly enhanced the students' enjoyment of learning. For most of the students, Chinese was perceived not only as a subject or a challenging language, but also as a novel tool for cultivating broader personal and social networks. For instance, David, a highly proficient learner of Chinese language, derived immense enjoyment from conversing with Chinese individuals in Chinese. He believed that ‘talking to people in their own language kind of breaks down the barriers in conversation’, and he gained enjoyment from forging social connections in addition to the sense of accomplishment of using the language. He noted that:

I enjoy, like, it might be at a party and meet some Chinese people, just clicking into Chinese and just let me just chat with them, ... I don't know, I just like to talk to people, just the basic level or I can spend the whole night just talking, talking and

talking and just sticking in Chinese that's where I get the enjoyment from. One thing, a bit stupid, I love is making jokes in Chinese.

To participants who were not as highly proficient as David, they also found enjoyment through using the language for real communication. Several participants stated that they derived pleasure from conversing with their language partner, not only to enhance their language skills, but also to foster social connections. As an illustration, Andrew highlighted that:

I think, when we do speaking activities with our partners, I always have fun with that. Yeah, because I, I don't know, I just enjoy talking with my partners, and I think that that makes me learn as well.

The above excerpts indicate that students derived enjoyment from using the Chinese language to engage in interactions with others, thereby fostering broader interpersonal relationships and social connections. The Chinese language was not merely perceived as a challenging subject, but as a tool for cultivating meaningful social connections. Engaging in conversations with native speakers or peers allows students to build connections and share experiences. For instance, David enjoyed socializing and making jokes in Chinese, while Andrew found fun in speaking activities with partners. This interaction fosters a sense of community and belonging.

In summary, as indicated in the literature, practical use of the language leads to higher enjoyment and engagement levels (Dewaele et al., 2018; Shen, 2021). Students are more motivated when they see the immediate benefits of their language skills in social interactions. This motivation enhances their learning experience, making it more enjoyable. Successfully using the language in real-world situations reinforces students' beliefs about their language proficiency and boosts students' confidence and sense of competence.

5.5 CFL Learners' Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) has been the most widely studied emotion in the field of second language acquisition (MacIntyre 2017). It was described as 'the worry and negative emotional reaction when learning and using a second language and is especially relevant in a classroom where self-expression takes place (Gregersen & MacIntyre 2014, p. 3). The arousal of FLA has been found to link to various linguistic, personal, and environmental factors (Daubney et al., 2017; Papi & Khajavy 2023). For example, Young (1991) identified six key sources of FLA, including personal and interpersonal anxieties, learner beliefs, instructor beliefs, instructor-learner interactions, classroom procedures, and language testing.

5.5.1 The Sources of CFL Learners' FLA

Participants in this qualitative study reported various experiences of anxiety related to learning Chinese as a foreign language in UK universities. These experiences included tenseness, reduced participation, avoidance of using Chinese, forgetting what they intended to say, over-studying, and withdrawing from social interactions. Speaking Chinese was identified as the biggest trigger of foreign language anxiety. Specific situations that heightened this anxiety included being called on to answer teachers' questions, being asked to read aloud, or giving presentations. Speaking Chinese in an exam setting further intensified the anxiety. Students' anxiety towards speaking Chinese originated from their fear of making mistakes or embarrassment, peer pressure and comparison, and general anxious disposition.

Speaking Chinese in public has been identified as the most important factor provoking FLA. Most of the participants acknowledged that they experienced intense anxiety when being picked up to answer the teacher's questions or to read Chinese aloud or to do a Chinese presentation in front of the whole class, especially during their initial stages of learning Chinese. Alex, for instance, described his feelings when faced with the teacher's questions in his first and second year of learning Chinese. He stated that:

Yeah, every time the teacher asked me, I just get like this horrible feeling in my stomach. [...]. Every time they kind of go around in a circle, and like make everyone reply, one by

one and I absolutely hated it every class, I just want to give up. I don't want to be here. Can I just leave?

Alex's described a persistent sense of dread during his early language classes, particularly when required to respond in a circle. This method of engagement, where each student was expected to answer in turn, created an environment of heightened stress. The anticipation of responding in front of the class and the potential negative consequences, such as judgment or making mistakes, intensified Alex's anxiety, leading to a strong desire to escape the situation. He told the researcher, 'Even before class, I just had these really bad feelings of anxiety, hoping the teacher not here or that if I go home, she doesn't know I've shown up.'

Several other students expressed a similar opinion. For example, Anna experienced anxiety when speaking in front of the class, especially during her early years of learning Chinese. She was particularly nervous about making mistakes in pronunciation and tones, fearing that her errors would expose her lack of proficiency. She recalled, 'I was kind of nervous that I would say something wrong like might make a big mistake in like, my sentences or my tones, and wouldn't be able to understand.' Rosy also told the researcher that: 'I didn't want to answer questions in front of the class, or the answer is wrong, and sometimes the teacher will like, just call on you like on the spot. Then we had anxiety because I wasn't like prepared or like ready to answer'.

The fear of making errors is a significant underlying reason for the participants' anxiety of speaking Chinese in public. This fear often stems from a deep-seated concern about being judged or embarrassed in front of peers and instructors. For instance, Alice, describes her intense anxiety around making errors:

I'd like to say that I rank myself quite highly with right Chinese level compared to the class. And so, if I get something wrong, I feel, I would feel embarrassed. So, I'm quite anxious to, to be right. Does that make sense? I'm fearful of getting things wrong.

Alice's fear of making mistakes was related to her high self-expectations. She perceived herself as one of the top students in her Chinese class. This self-imposed status created pressure to maintain her ranking and avoid making mistakes, fearing that errors would be embarrassing and diminish her standing among her peers. Her anxiety about making mistakes was rooted in the fear of not meeting her own standards and the expectations she believed others had of her, leading to a reluctance to make mistakes.

Jessica's experience further illustrates the impact of this fear. She often feels nervous before and during lessons, particularly when she anticipates being called on to answer questions. Her anxiety is compounded by self-doubt and a fear of sounding stupid or being laughed at by her classmates. This self-doubt makes her hyper-aware of her potential mistakes, heightening her anxiety. She stated:

I definitely do feel quite nervous when I'm sitting there, kind of having that feeling in my stomach the whole time. [...], because I do doubt myself a lot of what I know. And I feel like what about I sound stupid or what if they're just going to like laugh in my face and say like 'you're not good enough'.

Jessica's fear of being judged significantly impacts her overall confidence in using the language. Despite acknowledging that making mistakes are a natural part of the learning process ('I tell myself to feel less nervous that everyone makes mistakes and it's ok'), she still secretly prays, 'Oh my God, don't pick me to answer.'

Lily and Rose, two other participants in the study, also highlight how fear of making mistakes hindered their language learning. Lily felt particularly anxious when she was not confident about new characters or grammar points, fearing she would be asked to perform in front of the class and embarrass herself ('I'd feel quite anxious and also sometimes when one of the teachers picks on me to do an exercise that is quite long. I'll be thinking, 'Ahhh, what am I going to say?'''). Rose, on the other hand, struggles with perfectionism, feeling intense pressure to avoid mistakes, especially with tones ('Before they ask a question, I was worried they're going to ask me. I just don't want to say the tone wrong. I just get a bit of perfectionism'). This perfectionism causes her to speak less and avoid participation, she said: 'I might speak less to people that I wouldn't want to say the wrong thing.'

Peer pressure and comparison was another commonly mentioned stressor for the participants' anxiety. Nearly half of the participants expressed concerns about being judged by their peers while they had to speak in front of the class or answer questions that they are uncertain about. This pressure was compounded for those who perceive their classmates as more proficient or for whom Chinese might have a familial or cultural connection. For example, Lily said:

The other thing is a lot of people in my class, although they're in the beginner's class, they've already done, like, A- level Chinese, then they didn't get into the level-b class of university. A lot of people, kind of links to Chinese, like some of them have, like speak Cantonese and stuff which obviously isn't the same, but I do feel a little bit anxious. So yeah, sometimes I will just think like, 'Ahhh, like, this is kind of embarrassing' because the other people in my class, like, are really good.

Lily's anxiety rooted in a feeling of relative inadequacy compared to her classmates in the aspect of learning Chinese. She mentioned that some of her classmates, although in the beginner class, have already studied Chinese at an advanced level, such as A-level. This prior experience could mean that these peers have a stronger foundation in the language, making Lily feel as though she was at a disadvantage or needed to catch up. In addition, some classmates come from the background of Cantonese. Even though Cantonese and Mandarin are distinct languages, having familiarity with one can offer advantages in learning the other due to shared cultural elements,

written characters, or language learning strategies. Therefore, Lily perceived this as a further gap in her own ability and her classmates' abilities. Lily thought her classmates were 'really good', which likely exacerbated her perception of her inadequacy in learning Chinese. This perception made her feel intense anxiety and embarrassment, especially in situations where she might have to demonstrate her language skills in front of others or try to keep pace with the class.

Mike expressed similar concern about making mistakes, but he admitted that his concern was not related to being laughed at by his classmates but linked with his ranking among the students and his self-confidence in his ability of learning Chinese. He said:

I think before a little bit, and not that they laugh at me and think I'm a bit stupid, but I feel like, [...], after getting my like grade, I'm not, like, actually one of the highest in the class. So, I feel like I need to have more confidence in my own [abilities].

Mike's anxiety was less about the actual making of mistakes and more about his perception of other aspects following these mistakes. He feared that errors would lead to lower grades which might influence his performance rank in his class, which in turn impacted his self-esteem. His high expectations of being one of the highest achievers in his class might lead to a fear of making mistakes as any error could be seen (by himself or his peers or his teachers) as a significant deviation from his usual standards of excellence. Mike's acknowledgement of his fear of not being one of the highest in the class revealed a comparison with peers in an academic setting, suggesting

that his confidence was not solely rooted in objective measures of performance (like grades), but was also affected by how he believed he stacked up against his classmates in academic achievement. He needed higher rank to boost his confidence and to internalize his belief in his ability to meet the challenges of learning Chinese.

General anxiety disposition was identified as another trigger of anxiety mentioned by the participants. Some students confessed that they felt anxious because they were anxious people. For example, Alex said:

I'm okay with failure. So, like in general, I'm just an anxious person. I don't really talk to people unless it's absolutely necessary. So I don't think it's me scared of using Chinese. I think it's just more of me scared of talking in general.

A similar opinion was also expressed by Anna and Rose. They confessed that their anxiety was not specifically tied to the act of using Chinese or fear of failure in language learning; rather, it is rooted in a broader anxiety related to social interactions and communication in general. They all described themselves as 'an anxious person' and expressed reluctance to speak Chinese in public or to engage in conversations unless it was unavoidable. The stress of speaking in front of others or initiating conversations is related to more generalized social anxiety rather than one confined to the context of learning or using Chinese, just like Rose said: 'I'm just an anxious person anyway, so I didn't want to answer questions in front of the class'.

Participants' anxiety towards speaking Chinese intensified in exam settings. The formal nature of these assessments, the immediate need for correct responses, and the fear of negative judgment contribute to a high-pressure environment that can significantly impact students' performance and confidence. Alice, for instance, articulated her terror of speaking exams, describing them as a primary reason for discontinuing Chinese studies at the A-level. The formality and immediacy of oral exams heightened her anxiety, as the inability to retract or correct spoken errors in real-time felt overwhelming. She noted:

It's the speaking exam setting that terrifies me. That's why I stopped doing Chinese at school, because I did in GCSE, but didn't do A-level, because I was so scared of the speaking exam. Because it is so formal, and I don't know, you can't take back everything you say. Because if you get it wrong, you get it wrong. But if you're doing a written exam, you could go 'oh, no, I got that wrong', rubber it out and do it again.

It can be inferred from the interviews that a typical oral assessment task involves the learners producing a long turn whereby they must speak for one to three minutes on a topic and one-to-one communication with the teacher. This formal setting let Alice as well as several other participants feel a great deal of stress. They all highlighted the permanence of spoken errors and agreed that in written exams, there's the possibility to erase errors and correct them, but in speaking exams, once

something is said incorrectly, it cannot be taken back or revised. Alex echoed this stressor with ‘in an oral exam, it’s like you have to answer the question right now. You can’t skip it. [...], but it’s the fact that extra stress of being marked on this. It’s very important’.

The insights gained from these qualitative interviews provide a deeper understanding of the emotional challenges faced by CFL learners and highlight the importance of creating a nurturing educational environment. Public speaking tasks in Chinese, such as answering questions, reading aloud, or giving presentations were identified as particularly anxiety-inducing activities. The anxiety associated with speaking Chinese stems from a fear of making mistakes and being judged or embarrassed in front of peers and instructors. Some participants feared negative judgment from teachers and peers, leading to self-doubt about their abilities to learn Chinese. Others had high self-expectations, striving to achieve top ranks among peers, and viewed errors as damaging to their self-esteem and confidence. This peer pressure and comparison contributed to their anxiety of learning Chinese. Additionally, some participants noted that their anxiety was not solely tied to learning Chinese but was also due to their general nervous disposition. The formal nature of oral assessments and the pressure to perform accurately in front of instructors amplified the participants’ anxiety towards speaking Chinese. The anxiety towards speaking Chinese, as reflected in the interviews, can lead to avoidance of participation, heightened anxiety, and potentially slower progress in language acquisition. As David observed, ‘I know people in my class, when the teacher asking the question, the first responses are ‘不知道‘ (I don’t know).’

Chapter 6

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter synthesizes and interprets the findings presented in the previous chapters, integrating both the quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of CFL learners' beliefs, enjoyment, and anxiety related to learning Chinese. By situating the results within the broader context of existing literature and theoretical frameworks, this chapter highlights the study's contributions to the field, elucidates the implications of its findings, addresses its limitations, and proposes directions for future research.

6.2 Summary and Discussion of the Major Findings

This study aimed to explore UK-based adult CFL learners' beliefs about language learning, particularly their beliefs about learning Chinese and examined their levels of FLE and FLA, using a mixed-methods approach. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To describe the beliefs that adult CFL learners at UK universities hold about language learning and specifically about learning Chinese

- To examine the effects of the course levels and the experience of visiting the target country on these learners' beliefs about language learning.
- To describe the general levels of Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) among adult CFL learners at UK universities.
- To examine the effects of course levels and experiences of visiting the target country on learners' FLE and FLA.
- To investigate the relationship between FLE and FLA.
- To investigate the relationship between learners' beliefs about language learning and their levels of FLE and FLA.
- To investigate how learners' beliefs about language learning and self-perceived linguistic proficiency predict FLE and FLA among CFL learners.
- To identify the sources of the CFL learners' FLE and FLA.

Each of these issues is addressed below.

6.2.1 CFL Learners' Beliefs About Language Learning

The first research question investigated the beliefs held by adult CFL learners at UK universities regarding language learning in general and the Chinese language in particular. Findings from this mixed-methods study indicated that these learners generally held positive beliefs about both

language learning and the process of learning Chinese. While some of these beliefs were common across language learning experiences, others were uniquely tied to the Chinese language itself.

6.2.1.1 Beliefs About the Difficulty of Learning Chinese

In examining CFL learners' beliefs about the difficulty of language learning, it became clear that these learners perceived a distinct hierarchy in the challenges presented by different languages. This perception aligns with findings from other studies, which suggest that most L2 learners believe some languages are inherently more difficult than others (e.g., Altan, 2006; Ariogul et al., 2009; Horwitz, 1987; Tandang & Arif, 2019). Unlike beliefs studies focused on EFL learners, where English was often considered a language of moderate difficulty (e.g., Ariogul et al., 2009; Diab, 2006; Meshkat & Saeb, 2014), Mandarin Chinese was widely regarded as particularly challenging by CFL learners. Among the four language skills, speaking Chinese was identified as the most difficult. This finding contrasts with most belief studies, where listening was typically perceived as the most challenging skill to develop (e.g., Bernat & Lloyd, 2007; Horwitz, 1987; 1999; Siebert, 2003). While most CFL learners recognized the difficulty of learning Chinese and expressed strong confidence in their ability to master it, many underestimated the time and effort needed to achieve proficiency.

Qualitative data further shed light on these perceptions, revealing that the perceived difficulty of learning Chinese was primarily rooted in its substantial linguistic differences from the learners' native languages or other Indo-European languages they had previously studied (Baker, 2003). The

absence of cross-linguistic transferability made vocabulary acquisition harder in CFL than in other languages, since learners could not easily draw on intuitive guesses or prior language knowledge. Additionally, the tonal nature of Chinese introduced an additional layer of complexity to the language-learning process, aligning with studies that highlight tonal complexity in Chinese language acquisition (Chen & Zhang, 2018; Tse, 2011; Wang, 2014).

The qualitative data revealed that Chinese grammar did not present significant learning challenges for most participants, largely because Chinese lacks verb conjugation and agreement. In contrast, the logographic nature of Chinese characters, which represent words or morphemes rather than sounds, required learners to memorize intricate visual details and establish connections between characters and their meanings, sounds, and uses. Participants also observed that the visual complexity of the characters increased cognitive load, making vocabulary acquisition a particularly labor-intensive process.

The use of tones in Chinese, which affects meaning, was perceived as another major challenge. Learners initially underestimated the importance of accurate tone production but gradually realized that even slight variations in tone could change the meaning of words and incorrect tones could lead to misunderstandings. Advanced learners emphasized the importance of mastering tones to achieve fluency and effective communication.

6.2.1.2 Beliefs About Foreign Language Aptitude

In the realm of beliefs about language learning aptitude, a significant proportion of CFL learners believed that some individuals had a natural talent for acquiring foreign languages, though fewer perceived themselves as possessing this ability. This finding is consistent with previous studies on language learning beliefs (e.g., Bernat & Lloyd, 2007; Diab, 2006; Horwitz, 1987, 1999; Tang & Tian, 2015; Teng, 2024). Additionally, CFL learners in this study acknowledged the advantages children have in language acquisition and generally believed that anyone could learn to speak a foreign language. Unlike earlier studies (e.g., Horwitz, 1987; Truitt, 1995; Yang, 1991), these learners also recognized the cognitive benefits of multilingualism and were more likely to view individuals who spoke a foreign language well as highly intelligent.

The qualitative data provided information about students' interpretation of language learning aptitude, showcasing the reasons why most of the learners thought everyone could learn languages and the factors they considered crucial for success. Most participants in the qualitative study interpreted the notion of language learning aptitude as the embodiment of hard work, dedication and interest. Accordingly, they believed that anyone could learn a foreign language through these qualities, rather than relying on innate talent, just like David emphasized that 'it's more of the case of just putting in the hard work'.

Students' interpretation of language learning aptitudes reflected a pervasive growth mindset among the students. According to Dweck (2017, 2014, 2006), students who believe that their ability cannot

change have a fixed mindset, while those who believe that they can improve their learning ability with effort and practice have a growth or incremental mindset. The belief in a fixed or incremental nature of language aptitude significantly impacts students' approach to language learning (Fielden Burns & Rico García, 2017). Students who believe that success in language learning depends on their efforts, strategies, and determination (internal factors) exhibit higher self-efficacy (Bai & Wang, 2023). This positive belief leads to greater perseverance and better learning outcomes (Blackwell et al., 2007; Sadoughi et al., 2023).

In this qualitative study, only two students, Mike and Wendy, believed in some degree of innate ability to learn languages, but they displayed different attitude towards foreign language aptitude. Mike felt that he was naturally better at learning languages compared to learning other subjects, therefore, he was more motivated and more confident in learning Chinese, as indicated in the literature (e.g., Docherty, 2017; Lee, 2016); Wendy, on the other hand, did not consider herself to have a special ability for learning languages. However, unlike previous studies that indicate students who see themselves as lacking this ability typically doubt their capacity to improve, resulting in lower motivation and effort (e.g., Horwitz, 1987; Hayati, 2020), Wendy believed that this perception made her work harder, as she stated: 'I have to actively study the vocabulary. I don't just learn quickly like some classmates who hear it once and learn it immediately. I have to work to memorize it. This might make me work harder so I can be at the same level with them', which suggests that besides losing motivation and showing less confidence to learn the language, as suggested by literature (e.g., Horwitz 1987; Hayati, 2020; Mantle-Bromley, 1995), some learners may develop a different attitude towards the belief of lacking language aptitude among learners.

6.2.1.3 Beliefs About the Nature of Learning Chinese

In the context of learners' beliefs about the nature of language learning, quantitative data revealed that a significant majority of students recognized the fundamental structural differences between Chinese and their native language(s). Consequently, most students rejected the notion that learning Chinese was merely a matter of translating from their native languages. This contrasts with findings in the literature on learners studying languages from the same language family (e.g., Horwitz, 1987, 1999). Consistent with existing research, most CFL learners prioritized vocabulary and grammar acquisition, emphasizing the importance of understanding Chinese culture for effective communication. They also strongly believed in the benefits of immersion in a Chinese-speaking environment. Additionally, there was a general consensus that language learning is distinct from other academic subjects, which aligns with the literature.

The interview data further illustrated learners' thoughts about the nature of learning Chinese. Almost all participants prioritized the learning of Chinese characters, however, most of them reported relying primarily on rote memorization rather than leveraging radical (orthographic components that provide clues to pronunciation and meaning) knowledge. This indicates a gap in instructional strategies that could have facilitated more effective vocabulary learning. The complexity of writing characters by hand, combined with a lack of radical awareness, added to the difficulty of learning Chinese characters, although most participants viewed handwriting Chinese as an important way of learning the language.

In addition, CFL learners held strong beliefs about the value of immersion experiences for effective language learning, which aligns with the literature on learners' beliefs (e.g., Al-Osaimi & Wedell, 2014; Ariogul et al., 2009; Lee, 2013; Young, 1999). They viewed living in a target country as a transformative experience that provided essential language practice, cultural exposure, and increased motivation, making it a crucial component of effective language learning. Many participants believed that studying abroad was the best way to learn Chinese because it provided constant exposure to the language and opportunities for real-life practice with native speakers. Those who had lived in China or participated in study abroad programs spoke highly of the benefits, noting rapid improvement in their language skills and increased motivation. For students who were in the early stages of learning Chinese, they expressed high expectations and determination to make the most of their time by engaging directly with the local culture and people. Participants who missed the opportunity to study abroad due to the COVID-19 pandemic, like Mike and Alex, expressed regret, believing that physical immersion would have led to greater language proficiency.

6.2.1.4 Beliefs About the Learning and Communication Strategies

When it came to learning strategies, CFL learners placed high importance on repetition, practice, and the use of audio materials to enhance their language skills. This belief aligns with existing literature, which suggests that L2 learners universally value repetition, practice, and maximizing language input in learning a second language. Similarly, most students were willing to guess if they did not know a word and did not support the notion that they should refrain from speaking Chinese

until they could speak it perfectly. Like learners of other languages, the vast majority of CFL learners felt self-conscious about speaking Chinese in front of others, indicating a significant level of anxiety related to speaking and/or using a foreign language. However, unlike much of the literature, CFL learners in this study placed greater emphasis on the importance of speaking Chinese with an excellent accent.

The interview data further supplemented the quantitative findings. Participants employed various learning strategies to enhance their language learning. These included repetition, extensive reading, and the use of multi-media resources to create an immersive environment. Consistent practice and exposure to authentic language use were deemed essential for improving proficiency. Alex, for example, incorporated listening to Chinese music and live streams into his daily routine, underscoring a belief in maximizing language input through consistent exposure.

However, while learners recognized the benefits of communicating with native speakers, many expressed reluctances to engage in conversations with Chinese speakers. This hesitation often stemmed from self-perceived low proficiency and the fear of making mistakes or being rejected. The tonal nature of Chinese heightened CFL learners' sensitivity to pronunciation accuracy. Most participants were aware that slight variations in tone could alter the meaning of a word, though this awareness was more prevalent among advanced CFL learners.

6.2.1.5 Motivation and Expectations of Learning Chinese

CFL learners in this study exhibited motivation patterns similar to those identified in belief studies focusing on EFL learners (e.g., Altan, 2006; Arıgöl et al., 2009; Hong, 2006; Tang & Tian, 2015). Their motivation was driven by both practical benefits, such as job opportunities, and a genuine interest in the language, culture, and building interpersonal connections. There was a strong belief among learners that proficiency in Chinese would open up numerous opportunities, although they perceived that the importance of speaking Chinese was not widely recognized within the British context.

Although quantitative data indicated that CFL learners expressed nearly equal levels of instrumental and integrative motivation, qualitative data revealed that career aspirations primarily drove them. As China's global influence continues to grow, most participants viewed learning Chinese as a strategic move to enhance their professional opportunities. For example, David, who spent two years studying in China before university, believed that proficiency in Chinese would significantly boost his job prospects in the international market. Similarly, Mike saw China's rapid economic development as a source of numerous job opportunities for those who could speak Chinese, making this a key factor in his motivation to learn the language.

Personal interest in Chinese culture emerged as the second most significant motivator. Over half of the participants chose to study Chinese out of fascination with its culture, often sparked by experiences such as visiting China or encountering Chinese cultural elements in daily life.

Additionally, the desire for social engagement and the ability to communicate with Chinese speakers motivated students to learn the language. For learners like Andrew, the prospect of building interpersonal connections through language learning was particularly compelling.

Beyond career considerations, personal interest, and social engagement, qualitative data revealed that nearly half of the students chose to learn Chinese for its cognitive challenges. They found Romance languages too easy and deliberately opted for a more challenging language to strengthen their cognitive skills. The unique difficulties of learning Chinese not only presented challenges but also served to enhance cognitive abilities, providing learners with a sense of accomplishment. As Anna explained, ‘I wanted to learn a rarer, more difficult language—not just a Romance or European language—because I wanted something a bit more challenging.’

In conclusion, the motivations of CFL learners were multifaceted, encompassing career aspirations, personal interest in Chinese culture, social engagement, and cognitive challenges. Recognizing and addressing these diverse motivations can inform the development of effective teaching strategies that cater to the specific needs and expectations of CFL learners.

6.2.2 The Effect of Course Level and Target Country Experience on Learners' Beliefs About Language Learning.

The second question focused on how course levels and the experience of visiting a Chinese-speaking country influenced CFL learners' beliefs about language learning. The research findings are presented below.

6.2.2.1 The Effect of Course Levels on CFL Learners' Beliefs About Language Learning

In the quantitative study, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the impact of course levels on CFL learners' beliefs about language learning. The analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in the beliefs across four course levels for any BALLI categories. This finding is in line with previous studies (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2006; Kuntz, 1996; Wenden, 1986). This suggests that beliefs may be relatively stable and not easily influenced by the progression through course levels alone. However, this quantitative finding contrasts with research by Horwitz (1987), Peng (2011), Kalaja et al (2015) and Yang (1999), which found that educational level can significantly impact learners' beliefs.

The lack of significant differences in this quantitative study could be attributed to the uniformity in course structure and teaching methods across the different levels, or possibly the deeply ingrained nature of these beliefs. For example, if the instructional methods and materials used in CFL courses were consistent across different levels, this could result in a uniform set of experiences for learners regardless of their course level. Moreover, if all levels emphasized similar teaching

techniques, such as rote memorization, grammar-translation methods, or character recognition practices, students might develop and maintain similar beliefs about language learning, leading to no significant differences across levels. In addition, cultural and contextual factors may also account for the homogeneity of beliefs across levels. The similarity of the prior language learning experience may strongly shape CFL learners' beliefs, making them resistant to change despite advancing through different course levels. For example, most of the CFL learners were multilinguals, having previous experience with language learning (mostly West-European languages). If a learner had successfully learned another language(s) through memorization, he/she might continue to believe in the effectiveness of this approach, even at higher levels of CFL courses. Moreover, most of the CFL learners came from similar cultural backgrounds where specific beliefs about language learning are deeply ingrained and reinforced through educational systems, societal norms, or personal experiences. These cultural influences may overshadow the influence of course level, leading to a situation where students across all levels hold similar views on language learning, regardless of their progression.

However, the analysis of the qualitative data revealed that grade level was a significant factor in shaping learners' beliefs about language learning. As learners progressed through different study stages, their beliefs often became more complex, reflecting their growing experience and understanding of the language learning process. For example, students' interpretation of the importance of tone accuracy evolved. Many participants confessed that in the early stages of learning Chinese, they knew it was a tonal language but assumed that native speakers would still understand them even if their tones were not accurate. It was only when they began using the

language authentically to communicate with native Chinese speakers or moved to higher levels of study that they realized the critical importance of accurate tones in Chinese. For instance, Jessica, who had been learning Chinese for six months exclusively in a classroom setting, did not fully grasp the critical role of tone accuracy. She believed that communication could still be effective despite tonal inaccuracies. In contrast, almost all intermediate and advanced students realized the crucial importance of accurate tones in Chinese communication and emphasized the importance of tone learning when asked to advise beginner learners. To highly advanced learners, like Alex, accuracy in tone and pronunciation went beyond smooth communication, but related to the new identity he could build with the language.

In addition, as learners progressed through different levels of language instruction, their beliefs on making errors in learning Chinese evolve significantly. In the early stages, many students experienced high anxiety and fear about making mistakes, often due to a lack of confidence and a desire for perfection. For example, Jessica was initially hesitant to speak up in class, fearing judgment or misunderstanding. However, as students advanced to intermediate levels, their perspective shifted; they began to see mistakes as an inevitable and crucial part of the learning process. Andrew, for instance, acknowledged that he was anxious about making mistakes in his first year but later realized that errors were normal and beneficial for improvement. At advanced levels, students generally adopted a more positive attitude toward errors, recognizing them as valuable learning opportunities. Alex, for example, came to accept that perfection is unattainable, and that continuous improvement was the goal. He emphasized the importance of not being afraid to make mistakes, viewing them as natural and beneficial in language acquisition. Over time, errors,

initially seen as setbacks, were increasingly viewed as essential components of learning. As Mike and David noted, embracing mistakes and using them as learning tools was key to achieving fluency, with David advising beginners to ‘Speak! Speak! Speak!’ without fear of making errors.

Furthermore, students' perceptions of the difficulty of learning Chinese also evolved over time. Initially, learners viewed Chinese as a highly challenging language. However, as they advanced through different course levels, their beliefs shifted to emphasize the importance of consistent effort, practice, and accepting mistakes as a natural part of the learning process. This progression fostered increased confidence and a more positive, resilient attitude toward the challenges of learning Chinese. As Andrew observed, ‘I think that's normal with learning any language. You always reach a point where you think, 'Oh my God, I'm never going to get this,' but then you realize it's not that hard—you just have to put in the effort.’

6.2.2.2 The Effect of Target Country Experience on CFL Learners' Beliefs About Language Learning

In the quantitative study, an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to examine whether residing in a Chinese-speaking country significantly alters the beliefs of CFL learners about the nature and challenges of learning Chinese. Interestingly, the analysis revealed no significant differences in beliefs between learners who had lived in a Chinese-speaking country and those who had not. This finding suggests that the mere experience of living in the target country may not be sufficient to alter deeply held beliefs about language learning.

These findings align with previous research that questions the transformative impact of study abroad experiences on learners' beliefs (e.g., Llanes & Muñoz, 2009; Isabelli-García, 2006). These studies suggest that studying abroad does not always lead to significant changes in language learning beliefs, emphasizing that factors such as limited interaction with native speakers, lack of cultural immersion, or even short duration of stay may contribute to the stability of pre-existing beliefs. On the other hand, the findings in this study contrast with other research that reported significant changes in learners' beliefs following study abroad experiences. Studies by Amuzie & Winke (2009) and Tanaka & Ellis (2003) found that learners often develop more positive beliefs about language learning and the importance of cultural immersion after spending time abroad. These studies suggest that extended exposure to the target language and culture, coupled with meaningful interaction with native speakers, can significantly alter learners' perceptions and enhance their confidence in language learning.

The lack of significant change in CFL learners' beliefs in the quantitative study may be due to several reasons. First, as suggest in the literature, the effect of study abroad experience on learners' beliefs about language learning may depend on the length of the sojourn experience, the quantity and quality of interaction with the local people, the degree of cultural immersion or other individual differences (e.g., Alanen, 2003; Kinginger, 2009; Shao & Gao; 2016). In this quantitative study, CFL learners only reported the duration of their stay in a Chinese-speaking country, without detailing the contact hours spent inside or outside the classroom. Some participants had only brief visits to China (e.g., 1 or 2 weeks), and others did not receive any formal instruction during their

stay in the target country. The quantity and quality of contact with native speakers and the degree of cultural immersion remain unknown. Second, learners' pre-existing beliefs may be deeply entrenched. Students often enter study abroad programs with well-established beliefs about language learning (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009). These beliefs, shaped by years of prior experience, education, and cultural influences, can be deeply ingrained (Barcelos, 2011). As a result, short-term exposure to a new environment might not be enough to challenge or alter these entrenched beliefs. For instance, if a student strongly believes that language learning is primarily about memorization and grammar, they may continue to prioritize these aspects even in an immersive environment. In some cases, the experiences students have while abroad might actually reinforce their existing beliefs. For example, if a student encounters difficulties communicating due to a lack of vocabulary or grammatical knowledge, they might conclude that their pre-existing focus on these aspects was justified. Thirdly, some psychological and emotional factors may play a role in whether students change their beliefs about language learning while being in the target environment (Dewey et al., 2018). Psychological factors such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and self-consciousness can also prevent students from engaging fully in the language learning process while abroad. If students are anxious about speaking or making errors, they may avoid opportunities for practice and interaction, limiting the potential for belief change.

Unlike the findings in the quantitative study, the qualitative study indicated that visiting the target country influenced learners' beliefs about learning Chinese. Among the 10 participants, those who had lived in China had a more balanced view of the effects of immersion experiences. Unlike participants who had never been to a Chinese-speaking country, these students did not assume that

immersion alone would automatically improve their language skills. They understood that achieving a threshold level of Chinese proficiency was necessary, and that immersion experiences needed to be complemented with formal instruction to be truly effective.

The contradictory findings from the quantitative and qualitative research suggest that closed-ended questionnaires are not sensitive enough to effectively capture learners' beliefs about language learning (Barcelos & Kalaja, 2013). The recent literature describes language learning beliefs as a complex, multi-dimensional, situated, and dynamic construct (Barcelos, 2003; Zhong, 2022). Without providing the necessary context or background to understand why learners hold certain beliefs or how these beliefs evolve over time, it becomes challenging to accurately interpret changes in beliefs using static and surface-level questionnaire data.

In addition, the contradictory findings in this research also underscore the importance of employing a mixed-methods approach when investigating learners' beliefs about language learning. The literature suggests that learners' beliefs form a complex, multi-dimensional, and interrelated system (Mercer, 2009, 2011; Zhong, 2022). These beliefs are not uniformly susceptible to change; their evolution depends largely on their centrality within an individual's belief system (Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968; 1985). For example, core beliefs, which are deeply tied to a learner's identity and expressed in broader, more generalized terms—such as beliefs about language learning aptitude, learning strategies, and motivation—tend to remain stable even as learners gain more or new experience. In contrast, peripheral beliefs, which are closely linked to specific learning experiences,

such as beliefs about making errors, the importance of tones in Chinese, or the effect of immersion experience, are more malleable and reflective of the learners' ongoing experiences and contexts.

Given this complexity, a mixed-methods approach provides a more comprehensive means of investigating the nature of learners' beliefs. Quantitative methods are valuable for identifying general patterns across a broad sample, allowing for observing the stability or changes in beliefs across different course levels or learning experience. However, these quantitative findings alone might only capture the general picture of learners' beliefs or reveal which beliefs are more stable and subject to change. Implementing the quantitative findings with a qualitative method can better capture the duality or paradoxical nature of learners' beliefs. By delving into the individual experiences and contexts behind these beliefs, qualitative research can provide the necessary depth to explain the nuances and contradictions that quantitative data might overlook.

6.2.3 CFL Learners' FLE and FLA

The third research question focused on the general levels of FLE and FLA among adult CFL learners at UK universities. Quantitative data from this study indicated that CFL learners reported high levels of FLE ($M = 3.95$, $SD = .59$) and high levels of FLA ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .91$). When compared with the international sample ($N = 1,746$) in Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), where students reported a mean FLE of 3.82 and a mean FLA of 2.75, CFL learners in this study demonstrated higher levels of both FLE and FLA. Similarly, compared with the cohort of 750 foreign language learners from around the world in Dewaele and MacIntyre (2019) where learners

reported an FLE mean of 3.9 and an FLA mean of 2.4, CFL learners reported slightly higher level of FLE and higher levels of FLA. In addition, compared with the EFL sample of 1307 Chinese undergraduates in Li, Dewaele, and Jiang (2020), which had an FLE mean of 3.70 and an FLA mean of 3.43, CFL learners reported slightly higher levels of FLE and FLA.

These findings suggested that CFL learners experienced more intense emotions—both positive and negative—during their language learning process. Higher levels of FLE among CFL learners indicated greater enjoyment and satisfaction with their learning experience, possibly due to strong sense of achievement, effective teaching methods or a supportive learning environment. On the other hand, higher levels of FLA could have reflected increased pressure or anxiety related to the high expectations and challenges associated with learning Chinese as a foreign language.

In addition, the findings on CFL learners' levels of FLE and FLA in this study partially support the results of Dewaele and MacIntyre (2022) and Dewaele and Saito (2024), where learners of languages other than English (LOTE) reported higher levels of enjoyment than EFL learners. The findings also support the authors' claim that the global dominance and high prestige of English do not necessarily lead to greater enjoyment of English classes for learners worldwide (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2022). However, in contrast to the findings by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2022) and Dewaele and Saito (2024), which reported similar levels of FLA among EFL learners and learners of LOTEs, this study found that CFL learners experienced higher levels of FLA. Notably, the

majority of LOTE learners in the referenced studies were students of commonly taught languages such as French, Spanish, and German.

These comparisons suggest that while learning a challenging language might not significantly affect learners' FLE, it could have a notable impact on their levels of FLA. This distinction highlights that the difficulty of the language does not necessarily diminish the positive emotions associated with language learning but can increase anxiety levels due to the perceived challenges and complexities. This underscores the importance of considering the inherent difficulty of the target language when addressing sources of foreign language anxiety, as noted by Luo (2012, 2013).

6.2.4 The Effect of Course Levels and Target Country Experience on Learners' FLE and FLA

6.2.4.1 The Effect of Course Levels on CFL Learners' FLE and FLA

To explore the influence of course levels on CFL learners' foreign language enjoyment and foreign language anxiety, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on data from 107 CFL learners. The analysis revealed no significant differences in either FLE or FLA across students at different course levels. These findings indicated that as learners progressed through their language courses, their levels of enjoyment and anxiety remained relatively stable. Course progression alone did not appear to significantly influence these emotional experiences.

In the realm of FLE, this study found that FLE remained relatively stable across different course levels, suggesting that merely advancing through course levels did not significantly impact the enjoyment learners experience. This finding diverges somewhat from prior research, which indicates that FLE generally increases as learners gain more language learning experience and improve their proficiency in foreign language contexts (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). In the context of learning Chinese as a foreign language in the UK, it appeared that a combination of internal and external factors, rather than course levels alone, may have played a more significant role in shaping learners' emotional experiences. This perspective aligns with research (e.g., Closs et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023) that emphasizes the complex interplay of psychological and contextual factors in shaping FLE, suggesting that enjoyment in language learning is not solely a function of proficiency or course level, but also of the broader learning environment and personal experiences.

Regarding FLA, these findings align with those of Gkonou (2013), Matsuda & Gobel (2004), and Yan & Horwitz (2008), which suggest that learners' anxiety do not necessarily fluctuate with advancing course levels. Instead, anxiety appears to be more strongly influenced by personal, psychological, and contextual factors, such as individual differences, classroom environment, teaching methods, and prior language learning experiences (MacIntyre & Wang, 2022). For example, beginners often experience higher anxiety due to unfamiliarity with the language, while advanced learners encounter anxiety related to performance and perfectionism (Alqahtani, 2019). This research further support the notion that foreign language anxiety affects learners at all proficiency levels (MacIntyre, 2017). It also challenges the findings of Horwitz et al. (1986),

Dewaele et al. (2016), Luo (2013) and Elkhafaifi (2005), which suggested that anxiety levels decrease as learners progress through course levels.

6.2.4.2 The Effect of Target Country Experience on CFL Learners' FLE and FLA

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to examine the effect of immersion experience on CFL learners' FLE and FLA. The results indicated no significant differences in FLE and FLA between students who had visited a Chinese-speaking country and those who had not.

Unlike studies that indicated FLCAS scores decreased during study abroad (e.g., Allen & Herron, 2003; Cubillos et al., 2008; Dewey et al., 2018; Thompson & Lee, 2013), living in a Chinese-speaking country did not significantly reduce CFL learners' FLA. This could have been because most participants had short immersion experiences, with some spending less than a month in China. Research, such as that by Roitblat et al. (2020), highlighted that learners who only spent a few weeks abroad often experienced peak anxiety rather than a reduction. Cultural differences and the challenges of adapting to a new environment might actually exacerbate anxiety, especially if the study abroad experience is too brief to allow learners to fully acclimate (Wang, 2009). The initial stages of cultural adjustment can be stressful, potentially increasing FLA rather than reducing it (Roitblat et al., 2020). Additionally, due to the COVID-19, some students participated in online study abroad programs, taking courses from the host university in China without physically being in the target language environment. The online platform and the lack of daily immersion and interaction with native speakers likely influenced their FLE and FLA. Dewey (2004) also claims

that the effect of immersion experiences on reducing CFL learners' anxiety is significant only when learners are physically immersed in the target country for a relatively long period (Dewey, 2004). Furthermore, individual differences among learners, such as personality traits, prior language experience, and coping mechanisms, can influence how study abroad impacts learners' FLA (Kinginger, 2008).

Although research by Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014), Dewey et al. (2018), and Kinginger (2008) suggested that study abroad experiences could enhance learners' FLE, this study found that being in a Chinese-speaking country did not significantly influence learners' enjoyment. This discrepancy could be attributed to various factors. Besides the above-mentioned factors, such as the duration of the study abroad experience, the intensity of language use, or the learners' individual differences, the uniqueness of Chinese language and Chinese culture might have played a role in shaping learners' emotional experience. Unlike more familiar languages, Chinese presents substantial linguistic and cultural barriers, including the complexity of its writing system, tonal pronunciation, and distinct cultural norms. These challenges may dampen the enjoyment that learners typically experience during language immersion.

6.2.5 The Relationship Between the CFL Learners' FLE and FLA

The fifth question explored the relationship between FLE and FLA. The study found a significant medium negative correlation between FLE and FLA ($r = -.41$), with 17% overlapping variance, among UK adult CFL learners. This indicated that as learners' enjoyment of learning Chinese

increased, their anxiety decreased, and vice versa. This supported the findings of Botes et al. (2022a), who reported an overall correlation of $r = -.31$ across 46 studies investigating this relationship. These results confirm that while FLE and FLA are related, they are distinct and independent emotions (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; 2016; Shao et al., 2019).

6.2.6 The Relationship Between CFL Learners' Beliefs About Language Learning, FLE, FLA and Self-Perceived L2 Achievement

The quantitative analysis demonstrated that CFL learners' beliefs about language learning were significantly associated with their emotional experiences (FLE and FLA) and their self-perceived success in acquiring Chinese. These findings highlight the interconnected nature of cognitive and affective factors in language learning (Barcelos, 2015). The following sections discuss these relationships in details.

6.2.6.1 The Relationship Between CFL Learners' Beliefs About Language Learning, FLE and FLA

The sixth question asked relationship between learners' beliefs about language learning and their levels of FLE and FLA. Pearson correlations revealed significant relationships between belief factors and learners' FLE and FLA. Notably, self-efficacy beliefs positively correlated with FLE and negatively with FLA. Learning strategies and motivation showed a strong positive correlation with FLE. The value of learning Chinese negatively influenced FLA. The folk beliefs about

language learning and the uniqueness of learning Chinese did not significantly correlate with FLE or FLA.

The research findings on the relationship between learners' beliefs about language learning and FLA align with existing literature, which underscores the critical role of self-efficacy beliefs in shaping learners' emotional experiences. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that learners' beliefs in their ability to learn a language were strongly related to their anxiety levels (e.g., Aslan & Thompson, 2021; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Oh, 1996; Thompson & Lee, 2013). The findings in this study further confirm that learners with higher self-efficacy tend to experience lower levels of FLA, and conversely, those with lower self-efficacy are likely to experience higher levels of anxiety. At the same time, the negative correlation between the value of learning Chinese and FLA also supports Oh (1996) which showed that learners' FLA was closely related to learners' self-efficacy and the importance placed on learning the language.

The relationship between FLE and self-efficacy beliefs, along with learning strategies and motivation, observed in this study aligns with the broader literature that underscores the crucial role these factors played in fostering positive emotional experiences in language learning. Research by Bonyadi et al. (2012) and Calafato et al. (2023) similarly highlighted that higher self-efficacy and effective use of learning strategies were strongly associated with increased motivation, which in turn enhanced FLE. Hence, the current research helps to reinforce the idea that learners who believe in their ability to succeed and who actively engage with the language through strategic

learning and highly motivated are more likely to experience enjoyment in the language learning process, or conversely, the learners who experience higher enjoyment of learning the language are more likely to feel confident in learning the language, using more learning strategies and have strong motivation to learn the language.

6.2.6.2 The Relationship Between CFL Learners' Beliefs About Language Learning, FLE, FLA and Self-Perceived Chinese Proficiency

The seventh question asked how CFL learners' beliefs about language learning and their self-perceived overall and specific Chinese proficiency predicted their FLE and FLA. Regression analyses revealed that self-efficacy in learning Chinese, learning strategies and motivation in learning Chinese, and self-perceived writing ability were significant predictors of FLE, with self-efficacy having the strongest impact. Similarly, learners' self-efficacy in learning Chinese, their beliefs about the value of learning the language, and their self-perceived speaking ability significantly predicted their FLA. The analysis identified students' beliefs about the value of learning Chinese as the most influential predictor, suggesting that as students perceived Chinese as more valuable, their FLA decreased significantly. Closely following were self-efficacy in learning Chinese and self-perceived speaking ability.

It is surprising to note that learners' self-perceived overall Chinese proficiency did not predict their FLE or FLA. Instead, CFL learners' self-perceived writing ability predicted their FLE, while their self-perceived speaking ability predicted their FLA. These results suggest that CFL learners'

emotional responses are closely tied to their confidence in specific skills rather than their overall language proficiency. This contrasts with the findings of Dewaele and Li (2022), where EFL learners' self-perceived general proficiency and reading ability were more influential in predicting FLE, and general proficiency, along with speaking ability, predicted FLA. This divergence underscores the need to consider the unique challenges and experiences of CFL learners, particularly in skills like writing and speaking, which may require more targeted support to enhance their enjoyment and reduce anxiety in language learning.

6.2.7 The Sources of FLE and FLA

Interview data helped explain the sources of CFL learners' FLE. The sources of learners' FLE included a sense of achievement, the novelty of the Chinese language and culture, a positive classroom environment, and the practical use of the language.

The primary source of FLE among the participants was a sense of achievement. Learners experienced enjoyment when they perceived their skills met the challenges of learning Chinese. This included understanding difficult content, successfully answering questions, and performing well in tests. This sense of achievement boosted their confidence and self-efficacy, making them feel more in control of their learning activities and outcomes (Piniel & Albert, 2018). Thus, a strong sense of achievement fosters FLE (Dewaele et al., 2022).

The novelty of the Chinese language and culture significantly contributed to learners' enjoyment. The unique aspects of Chinese, such as its writing system and tones, posed challenges that were simultaneously rewarding. Lily found learning Chinese characters 'therapeutic,' while Jessica enjoyed the process of writing characters and regarded it as 'fun.' Additionally, learners like David and Andrew derived enjoyment from exploring Chinese festivals, music, and literature, viewing language learning as a gateway to cultural understanding. As Ainley and Hidi (2014) argued, unlike pleasure, which is the satisfaction derived from fulfilling basic needs and desires, enjoyment goes beyond these limits by involving new experiences driven by curiosity and interest (Ainley & Hidi, 2014). Engagement driven by genuine interest and curiosity in the language and culture enhances FLE (Fathi & Mohammaddockht, 2021).

A positive classroom environment emerged as a crucial source of FLE, as supported by extensive literature (e.g., De Smet et al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Pavelescu & Petrić, 2018). Supportive and engaging teachers, varied teaching methods, and a collaborative learning atmosphere were highlighted as important factors. Alex emphasized the role of compassionate teachers in sustaining his interest in learning Chinese. Students appreciated it when classes included interactive and less traditional activities, such as watching videos or having open discussions, which increased engagement and enjoyment. Peer support also played a significant role, with students like Jessica noting that a comfortable and inclusive classroom community fostered a sense of belonging and made learning more enjoyable.

The practical application of Chinese both within and beyond the classroom was another significant source of enjoyment, which aligned with the literature (e.g., Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Jiang & Dewaele, 2020; Papi & Khajavy, 2021). Engaging in real-life conversations with classmates or native speakers can provide learners with a sense of accomplishment and social connection (Khajavy, 2021). David, for example, enjoyed making jokes in Chinese and using the language in social settings, which he found rewarding and enjoyable. Similarly, Andrew highlighted the enjoyment he derived from speaking activities with partners, which facilitated both language learning and social interaction.

The qualitative study identified several key sources contributing to CFL learners' FLA. These sources included speaking Chinese in public, fear of making mistakes, peer pressure and comparison, formal assessments, and general anxiety disposition.

Speaking Chinese in public emerged as the most significant source of anxiety for CFL learners. Many participants reported feeling intense anxiety when required to answer questions, read aloud, or give presentations in front of the class, especially during the initial stages of learning Chinese. The fear of making mistakes was a significant source of anxiety for over half of the participants. This fear often stemmed from concerns about being judged or embarrassed in front of peers and instructors. Peer pressure and comparison also contributed to anxiety among CFL learners. Some participants felt anxious when they perceived their classmates as more proficient, particularly those with prior knowledge of Chinese or related languages like Cantonese. Formal assessments,

particularly speaking exams, were identified as significant sources of stress. The pressure to perform accurately without the opportunity to correct mistakes heightened anxiety. Some students attributed their anxiety to a general anxious disposition rather than language-specific challenges.

In summary, this qualitative study helps to confirm that learners' FLE and FLA are multifaceted (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016). Both personal and teacher-related factors significantly contribute to learners' enjoyment (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019, 2022; Piniel & Albert, 2018). Students experienced enjoyment through personal achievements, interest in the novelty of the language and culture, supportive classroom environments that provided encouragement and a sense of community, and practical language use inside and outside the classroom. Although CFL learners' FLA was primarily triggered by teachers' teaching practices, such as asking students to read or speak Chinese in public, the underlying factors included fear of making errors, negative evaluation, and comparison with peers, leading to self-doubt and adversity. This supported the literature suggesting that FLA is more likely to be related to internal factors (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Dewaele & Saito, 2024).

6.3 Contributions and Implications

6.3.1 Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

This study makes a significant contribution to SLA by addressing the English-language bias highlighted by scholars such as Andringa and Godfroid (2020) and Al-Hoorie (2017). These

researchers have cautioned against the overgeneralization of findings from EFL studies, which can overlook the diversity of global language learning experiences (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). By focusing on Chinese—a non-Indo-European language with distinct linguistic and cultural features—this study broadens the theoretical framework of SLA. It challenges the assumption that findings from EFL contexts are universally applicable and instead emphasizes the unique aspects of learning Chinese, particularly through the lens of learner beliefs and emotional experiences.

Specifically, this research explores the under-researched area of beliefs and emotional experiences among learners of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) at the UK tertiary level. Insights from this study can help educators tailor their teaching methods to better align with learners' needs and beliefs, as suggested by Zhong (2022). Additionally, by integrating findings from L2 emotion research on Chinese and Iranian EFL learners (Dewaele & Saito, 2024), this study enhances our understanding of FLE and FLA among learners of languages other than English (LOTEs). By providing data on a less commonly taught and challenging language, it helps to counterbalance the English-language bias in SLA research and deepens our understanding of the emotional dimensions of learning a foreign language. This knowledge can also inform the development of Chinese curricula that enhance enjoyment and reduce anxiety, making language learning more effective and accessible for a diverse range of learners.

Furthermore, this study builds on the work of Mercer (2011a, 2011b) and Barcelos (2015) by examining the relationship between learners' language learning beliefs and their emotional

experiences. The findings reveal how these beliefs can shape learners' emotions, providing deeper insights into ways to enhance enjoyment, reduce anxiety, and improve overall language acquisition. In addition, the relationship between beliefs about language learning and FLE and FLA expands the nomological network of these emotional constructs, highlighting beliefs as a crucial factor in managing FLA and enhancing FLE. Understanding these beliefs can play a key role in helping learners reduce anxiety and increase their enjoyment in the language learning process.

Methodologically, this study makes a significant contribution by employing a mixed-methods approach, which allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of learners' beliefs about language learning and their emotional experiences. By combining quantitative data, which identified general trends and relationships, with qualitative data, which provided deeper insights into the personal and contextual factors shaping these experiences, this research was able to capture the complexity and nuance of learners' beliefs about language learning and their emotional experience in a way that single-method studies often cannot. In addition to quantitatively measuring learners' FLE and FLA, this study incorporates an emic perspective to explore learners' emotional experiences. By giving UK-based adult CFL learners a voice, this research captures their personal experiences and emotions during the process of learning Chinese, providing valuable insights into the factors that foster enjoyment and those that trigger anxiety. These insights are crucial for informing teaching practices and creating a more supportive and effective learning environment.

6.3.2 Practical Implications for CFL Education

The findings from this study have several important implications for CFL education. The study reveals that CFL learners generally hold positive beliefs about learning Chinese, demonstrating a prevalent growth mindset and high motivation among them. Additionally, learners widely acknowledge the difficulty of learning Chinese, but underestimate the time required to achieve proficiency. Regarding learners' beliefs about the nature of language learning, language aptitude, and learning and communication strategies, CFL learners did not indicate much difference compared to EFL learners. Understanding that CFL learners' beliefs are similar to those of EFL learners allows educators to apply proven EFL strategies in CFL contexts (Yang, Zeng & Xu, 2021). This can include interactive and communicative methods that have been successful in other language learning settings (Guo, 2021). Given the prevalent growth mindset among CFL learners, educators can build on this foundation by incorporating growth mindset principles into their teaching practices. This can enhance learners' motivation and resilience in the face of challenges, ultimately leading to better learning outcomes (Ng, 2018; Papi & Khajavy, 2023). Recognizing the challenges of learning Chinese and the often-underestimated time required for proficiency should guide curriculum design. Programs should be structured to offer sustained support over an extended period, ensuring that learners have the necessary resources and encouragement to continue their studies. Additionally, CFL teachers should work to help learners develop realistic expectations about the time and effort involved in mastering the language.

Additionally, compared to studies on EFL learners' FLE and FLA, CFL learners tend to experience these emotions more intensely. The challenges of learning Chinese do not reduce their enjoyment; instead, they may enhance it slightly due to the sense of achievement and progress learners feel as they overcome difficulties. However, the inherent difficulty also elevates learners' anxiety levels, underscoring the need for targeted support and anxiety-reduction strategies in CFL programs. The negative correlation between FLE and FLA indicates that boosting CFL learners' enjoyment may reduce their levels of anxiety of learning Chinese. Therefore, fostering a positive and supportive classroom environment is essential to counterbalance the anxiety that comes with learning a difficult language.

The relationship between learners' beliefs and FLE and FLA underscores the importance of self-efficacy. The study found that higher self-efficacy is associated with greater enjoyment and lower anxiety. This implies that educators could focus on building learners' confidence in their language abilities through positive reinforcement, constructive feedback, and opportunities for successful language use. In addition, the findings suggest that learning strategies and motivation are crucial for increasing FLE. This finding suggests that CFL instructors could help learners develop effective learning strategies and cultivate motivation to boost learners' enjoyment. Learners' beliefs about the value of learning Chinese was found to negatively correlate with FLA, which indicates that educators can help learners realize the importance of learning Chinese and provide clear explanations about the nature of language learning, the role of mistakes in the learning process, and the benefits of consistent practice, so as to reduce learners' anxiety and improve their overall learning experience.

As to the relationship between self-perceived L2 proficiency and FLE and FLA, this study found that CFL learners' FLA was related to their overall proficiency, speaking ability, and listening ability. Surprisingly, CFL learners' FLE was related to their writing proficiency. This suggests that learners who perceive themselves as more confident in their general language proficiency, speaking, and listening ability tend to experience lower levels of anxiety. Learners who perceived themselves as more competent in writing Chinese character are more likely to experience higher levels of enjoyment.

Qualitative findings reveal that anxiety stems from public speaking, fear of errors, peer pressure, and a generally anxious disposition. Conversely, enjoyment is driven by a sense of achievement, the novelty of Chinese language and culture, a positive classroom environment, and practical language use.

Based on these above findings, to reduce FLA and boost FLE, CFL instructor could:

- Create a supportive classroom environment and encourage positive interactions and reduce peer pressure. Activities that promote collaboration, peer support, and mutual encouragement can make language learning more enjoyable and less stressful.
- Emphasize speaking and listening practice: Provide ample opportunities for practice in a non-judgmental setting.

- **Integrate self-efficacy training:** Incorporate strategies to improve students' self-efficacy, such as goal setting, self-assessment, and celebrating small achievements. This can help students build confidence in their language skills, increase enjoyment, and reduce anxiety.

By focusing on these areas, teachers can help students feel more confident and enjoy their language learning journey, ultimately improving their proficiency and reducing anxiety.

6.4 Limitations and Future Direction

There were several limitations associated with this study. First, the instruments used in this study, particularly the online questionnaire, required approximately 25 minutes to complete, exceeding the recommended duration of 15 minutes for such surveys (Dörnyei, 2007). Furthermore, the study population, specifically students enrolled in tertiary-level Chinese courses, was relatively small compared to students of more commonly taught languages such as English, French, Spanish, and German. Consequently, only 107 participants completed all the online questionnaires. This relatively small sample size may have constrained the generalizability of the findings to a wider population. To enhance the generalizability of findings, future studies should aim to include larger and more diverse sample sizes.

The study relied on self-reported data from participants, which can introduce biases such as social desirability bias and inaccurate self-assessment (Brutus et al., 2013). Students may have provided answers they perceived as more socially acceptable rather than being truthful, leading to skewed

data (Parry et al., 2021). Participants might have overestimated or underestimated their levels of FLA and FLE, and their L2 achievement. In addition, the study's cross-sectional design provided a snapshot of learners' beliefs, FLE, and FLA at a single point in time. Although the researcher tried to trace changes in learners' beliefs about language learning and their enjoyment and anxiety of learning Chinese through analyzing the quantitative and the interview data, longitudinal data could offer better insights into how these factors evolve over time. Future research could adopt a longitudinal design to track changes in learners' beliefs, FLE, and FLA over time. This approach would provide deeper insights into how these factors evolve and interact as learners progress in their language studies, offering a more dynamic understanding of their experiences.

The data was collected during the COVID lockdown, so this study did not include classroom observations, which could have provided valuable context and insight into how learners' beliefs manifested in actual learning environments. This omission limited the understanding of the interaction between learners' beliefs and their classroom behaviors. Furthermore, learners' FLE and FLA have been suggested to be related to classroom dynamics, teacher-student interactions, and peer relationships (Dewaele et al., 2018). Without classroom observations, it was challenging to understand the situational and environmental factors that influenced FLE and FLA and provided a dynamic view of FLE and FLA as they occurred. Hence, incorporating classroom observations into future studies would help to contextualize learners' beliefs and emotional experiences in real-time learning environments. Observations would allow researchers to explore how classroom dynamics, teacher-student interactions, and peer relationships influence FLE and FLA.

In addition, there were several limitations related to the research findings. This study was conducted within the context of UK universities, which may have had unique cultural and educational practices influencing CFL learners' beliefs and emotional experiences. This context-specific nature might have limited the applicability of the findings to other regions or educational systems. Additionally, the results may have been confounded by the participants' education levels and past language learning experiences, as all participants had higher degrees and most had learned other L2s before Chinese. Therefore, expanding the research to include learners from different regions, educational systems, and varying levels of Chinese proficiency would provide a more comprehensive view of learners' beliefs and emotions.

The impact of COVID-19 on learners' beliefs and L2 emotions was also significant. All quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the COVID lockdown, and the online learning platform, along with the lockdown's side effects, might have influenced learners' beliefs, language learning anxiety, and enjoyment. Moreover, the online study abroad programs conducted by many UK universities during COVID-19 might have affected the interpretation of the immersion experiences' effects on learners' beliefs and their language learning enjoyment and anxiety.

Several studies have compared learner emotions in FL classes during the pandemic with those experienced in traditional, in-person FL classes (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2024a; Resnik et al., 2023a, 2023b). These findings highlight the context-sensitivity of FLE and FLCA, indicating that

emotional responses can vary considerably across different teaching modalities. Building on this research, future studies could further examine the impact of online versus face-to-face instruction on learners' beliefs, FLE, and FLA. Such investigations could provide deeper insights into how different educational environments shape the interplay between learners' beliefs about language learning and their learning experiences, while also informing strategies to better support their emotional well-being.

6.5. Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn based on the research findings. The study found that UK-based adult CFL learners generally hold positive beliefs about language learning and the process of learning Chinese, although they recognize Chinese as particularly challenging, especially in speaking. This recognition aligns with the broader literature on language difficulty perceptions, emphasizing the unique challenges presented by non-Indo-European languages like Chinese.

Despite challenges, learners maintain a high level of confidence. They believe language aptitude as a manifestation of dedication and interest. Based on this understanding, the majority of students firmly believed that Chinese language proficiency is an achievable goal. However, most of the CFL learners' underestimate the time investment in speaking Chinese well. CFL learners demonstrated equally strong instrumental and integrative motivation to learn Chinese. They anticipated that their language skills would lead to better job opportunities, a view shared by most of the EFL learners, but not shared by learners of other commonly taught languages (Horwitz, 1999).

Aside from the perceived difficulty and motivation associated with learning Chinese, UK-based CFL learners exhibit language learning beliefs similar to those of learners studying more commonly taught languages (e.g., Bernat & Lloyd, 2007, Horwitz 1987; 1999, Jee, 2017; Li & Liang, 2011; Siebert, 2003). They adopt comparable learning and communication strategies and share similar views on language learning aptitude. This finding supports Horwitz's (1999) conjecture that the large amount of commonality across the beliefs may suggest that a global culture of language learning and teaching exists, encouraging learners from various cultural backgrounds to view language learning in a similar way. The minor difference in learners' beliefs about learning different languages may be attributed to the particular nature of the target language (Horwitz, 1999) and the motivation to learn it (Mantle-Bromley (1995). In brief, learning a difficult language does not significantly influence learners' beliefs about language learning.

The analysis of course level and target country experience on CFL learners' beliefs highlights the dual nature of these beliefs. Some beliefs hold a core, stable position in the learner's belief system, deeply ingrained and resistant to change through short-term experiences (Zhong, 2022; Mercer, 2011), such as the importance of effective learning strategies and the characteristics of good language learners. In contrast, peripheral beliefs are more dynamic and can evolve with new experiences, such as beliefs about visiting the target country or speaking with accurate tones (Zhong, 2015). This study on UK CFL learners confirms that learner beliefs form an interconnected system where stable and dynamic beliefs coexist, supporting both long-term stability and adaptability (Mercer, 2011; Zhong, 2015, 2022).

High levels of both FLE and FLA were observed among CFL learners. This suggests that the unique challenges of learning Chinese, such as mastering tones and complex characters, contribute to a heightened emotional experience. While these challenges may intensify anxiety, they also seem to amplify the sense of achievement and satisfaction when learners overcome them. Self-efficacy in learning Chinese, along with effective learning strategies and motivation and self-perceived writing ability were identified as strong predictors of FLE. Conversely, low self-efficacy, the value of learning Chinese and self-perceived speaking ability were significant predictors of FLA. This highlights the importance of fostering confidence and a positive perception of the language's value to enhance enjoyment and reduce anxiety.

The qualitative data provided deeper insights into the sources of these emotions, emphasizing the significant role of personal achievements, interest in the novelty of the language and culture, supportive classroom environments, and practical language use in enhancing FLE. Conversely, FLA was primarily triggered by fear of making errors, negative evaluation, and peer comparison, particularly during public speaking activities. Compared with English as a Foreign Language learners and learners of LOTEs, CFL learners reported slightly higher levels of FLE and higher levels of FLA. This indicates that learning a challenging language like Chinese does not diminish learners' enjoyment; rather, it may enhance it. However, the increased difficulty of the language also contributes to heightened anxiety among learners.

Course levels and immersion experiences did not significantly affect learners' FLE and FLA. This confirms that FLE and FLA are influenced by a complex interplay of factors (MacIntyre, 2017; Dewaele, 2022), including personal motivation, self-efficacy, and previous language learning experiences. These factors may overshadow the impact of course levels and immersion, making them less significant predictors of emotional responses in language learning.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent Sheet

University of Birmingham

The School of Education

Edgbaston, Birmingham,

B15 2TT

Telephone (0)121 4144866

Email: education@bham.ac.uk

Web: www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/education/index.aspx



**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**

Title of the proposed study

**BELIEFS, ANXIETY, AND ENJOYMENT: AN EXPLORATION OF LEARNERS OF CHINESE
IN UK UNIVERSITIES**

Fair Processing Statement

You have been invited into a research study that investigates language learning beliefs, foreign language anxiety and enjoyment among university students studying Chinese in the UK. The study is conducted by Ms. Yanan Lu (doctoral researcher) at the Department of Education, University of Birmingham, England. The information that you supply will be entered into a filing system or database and will be accessed by authorised personnel involving in the project only. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will be used for the purpose of the research only. By supplying information, you are consenting to the University to store your information for the purposes of the study. The information will be handled by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Statements of understanding/consent

Please initial all boxes

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information leaflet for this study. I know how to contact the researcher with any further questions regarding the study or regarding my participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw within 15 days after data collection without giving any reason. If I withdraw my data will be removed from the study and will be destroyed. My anonymous data can be presented for research talks, conferences and teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I understand that all data collected for this study is handled according to the regulations set out in the Data Protection Act 2018.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Based upon the above, I agree to take part in this study.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name, signature and date

Name of participant..... Date.....Signature.....

Name of researcher Date..... Signature.....

If you would like to receive the result of the research, please provide your email address:

Thank you for supporting the study with your participation.

Appendix B: Background Questionnaire

BELIEFS, ANXIETY, AND ENJOYMENT: AN EXPLORATION OF LEARNERS OF CHINESE IN UK UNIVERSITIES

Fair Processing Statement

You have been invited into a research study that investigates learners' beliefs about language learning and foreign language enjoyment and anxiety among students studying foreign languages at the UK universities. The study is conducted by Ms Yanan Lu (doctoral researcher) at the Department of Education, University of Birmingham. The information that you supply will be handled by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provision of the Data Protection Act 2018. No identifiable personal data will be published.

If you have further questions about the study, please feel free to contact the researcher by sending an email to [REDACTED] or by calling or texting to [REDACTED]

1. Background Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions. This is for the research purpose only and your response will be always kept confidential.

1. What gender are you?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

2. How old are you?

3. What is your native language?

4. What year are you in?

Year 1

Year 2

Year 3

Year 4

5. Is this module (Chinese Language) required or optional for you?

Required

Optional

Required because of my major

6. How many **hours** do you study Chinese outside of class per week?

7. For how long have been studying Chinese? (**Months**)

8. Does anyone in your immediate family speak Chinese? Mark all those which apply.

Yes, my parents (one or more)

Yes, my grandparents (one or more)

Yes, my brothers and/or sisters (one or more)

No

9. Have you studied other foreign languages?

Yes

No

10. If yes, what language(s) have you learned?

11. If yes, how long in total? (Months; Please be specific in every language you have learned so far)

12. If yes, do you consider yourself a good language learner in that language(s)?

Not at all.

Not very.

Slightly.

Fairly.

Very much.

13. Have you been to Chinese Speaking countries?

Yes.

No.

14. If yes, how long in total? (**Months**)

15. If yes, did you receive formal Chinese instruction in that country?

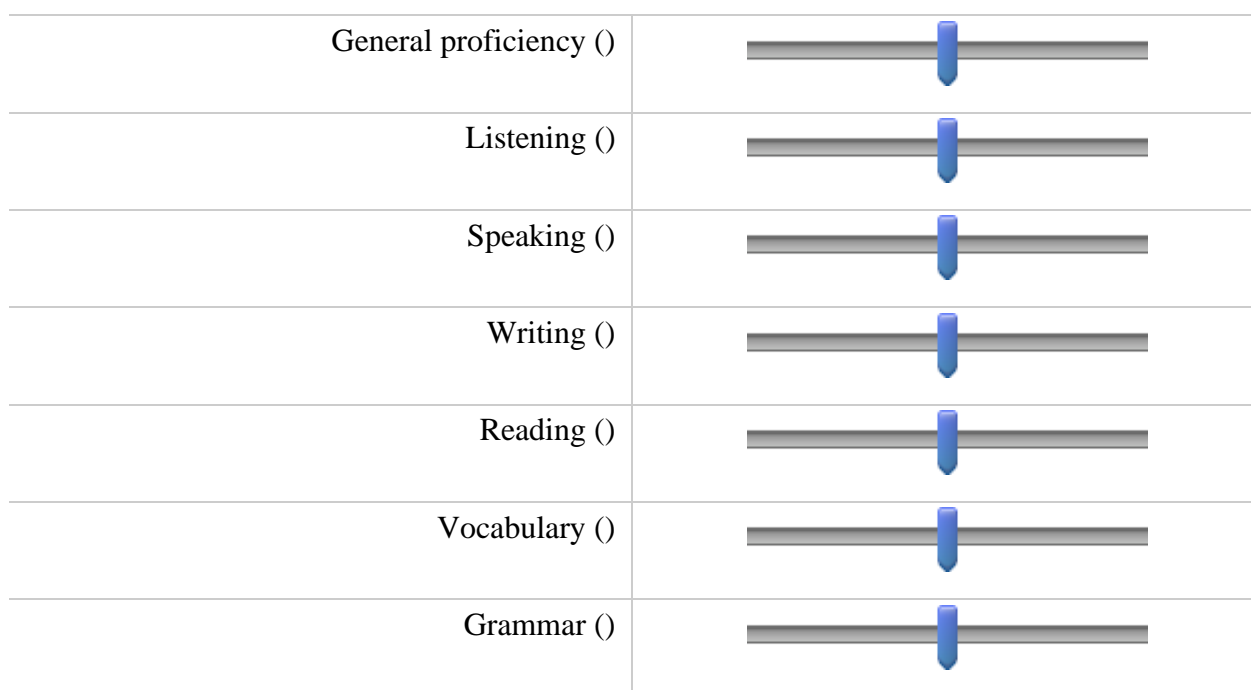
Yes. (1)

No. (2)

16. If yes, in total **how many months** of formal instruction did you receive?

17. How could you rank your Chinese language proficiency?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



Appendix C: Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)

Directions: This section contains some beliefs that people hold about learning foreign languages. Please read each item and indicate whether you **strongly disagree**, **somewhat disagree**, **neither disagree nor agree**, **somewhat agree** or **strongly agree**.

1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

2. Some people are born with a special ability for learning foreign languages.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

4. Chinese is _____.

a very difficult language

a difficult language

a language of medium difficulty

an easy language

a very easy language

5. British are good at learning foreign languages.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

6. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak Chinese very well.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

7. It is important to speak Chinese with excellent pronunciation.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

8. It is necessary to know about the Chinese cultures to speak Chinese well.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

9. You shouldn't say anything in Chinese until you can say it correctly.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.

- Strongly disagree

- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

11. It is best to learn Chinese in a Chinese-speaking country.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

12. If I heard someone speaking Chinese, I would go up to them so that I could practice speaking Chinese.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

13. It's O.K. to guess if you don't know a word in Chinese.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

14. I have a special ability for learning Chinese.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

15. Learning Chinese is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

16. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

17. I feel self-conscious speaking Chinese in front of other people.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

18. If beginner students are permitted to make errors in Chinese, it will be difficult for them to get rid of them later on.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

19. Learning Chinese is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

20. It is important to practice with audio material.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

21. Women are better than men at learning Chinese.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

22. If I get to speak Chinese very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

23. It is easier to speak than to understand Chinese.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

24. Learning a Chinese is different from learning other school subjects.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

25. Learning Chinese is mostly a matter of translating from my native language.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

26. If I learn to speak Chinese well, it will help me get a good job.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

27. It is easier to read and write Chinese than to speak and understand it.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

28. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

29. British think it is important to speak Chinese.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

30. Chinese is structured in the same way as English.

Strongly disagree

somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

somewhat agree

strongly agree

31. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

32. I would like to learn Chinese so that I can get to know its speakers better.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

33. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

34. If someone spend one hour a day learning Chinese, how long would it take them to speak Chinese very well.

- Less than a year
 - 1-2 years
 - 3-5 years
 - 5-10 years
 - You can't learn a language in one hour a day
-

35. Do you have any other ideas about learning Chinese which is not mentioned above?

Appendix D: Short Version of Foreign Language Enjoyment

Directions: This section contains items that may reflect your feelings about your Chinese class and about yourself as a Chinese language learner. Please read each item and indicate whether you **strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither disagree nor agree, somewhat agree or strongly agree.**

1. In the Chinese language class, I enjoy it.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

2. In the Chinese language class, I've learnt interesting things.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

3. In the Chinese language class, I feel proud of my accomplishments.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

4. My teacher is encouraging.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

5. My teacher is friendly.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

6. My teacher is supportive.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

7. In the Chinese language class, we form a tight group.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

8. In the Chinese language class, we have common 'legends', such as running jokes.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

9. In the Chinese language class, we laugh a lot.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

Appendix E: Short Version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale.

Directions: This section contains items that may reflect your feelings about your Chinese class and about yourself as a Chinese language learner. Please read each item and indicate whether you **strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither disagree nor agree, somewhat agree or strongly agree.**

1. Even if I am well prepared for Chinese class, I feel anxious about it.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

2. I always feel that the other students speak Chinese better than I do.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

3. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in Chinese class.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

4. I don't worry about making mistakes in Chinese language class.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

5. I feel confident when I speak in Chinese language class.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

6. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking Chinese in Chinese language class.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

7. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in Chinese language class.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

8. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my Chinese language class.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

Please leave your email address. The researcher will get in touch within 15 working days to issue the compensation (£6) for your time.

Appendix F: Interview Protocol

The School of Education

University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2TT
United Kingdom

Telephone (0)121 4144866

Email: education@bham.ac.uk

Web: www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/education/index.aspx



**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**

Participants Declaration:

- I have been informed about the nature of this interview and voluntarily consent to participate.
- I understand that all data collected from this interview will be kept anonymous, ensuring that I will not be identifiable in the final report or any subsequent publications.
- I am aware that I have the right to terminate the interview at any point.
- I understand that the interview will be recorded and that the recording will be destroyed once it has been transcribed.
- I confirm that I am over 16 years of age.

Before starting the interview, show gratitude to the participant for giving the researcher an interview. Briefly introduce the project and ask permission to record the online interview.

1. What do you think is the most important aspects of learning Chinese?
2. What do you think is the most effective way of learning Chinese?
3. Did your opinions about learning Chinese changes compared with the time that you just started to learn it?
4. What do you think Chinese language should be taught? Why?
5. Are you satisfied to your Chinese language classes? Why or why not?

6. How did you like your Chinese study so far? Are you satisfied with your current level? Why or why not?
7. How do you feel about yourself as a Chinese language learner? What do you think are your strengths and weakness?
8. How do you learn Chinese? Did you do anything particular to improve your Chinese language learning?
9. Can you think of any factors that influence your Chinese language learning?
10. Do you feel anxious about learning Chinese? Where do these anxieties come from? Do you think this anxiety of learning Chinese influence your learning?
11. Do you experience enjoyment in learning Chinese? Where do these enjoyments come from? What makes you feel enjoyable about your Chinese language study? Do you think these enjoyments facilitate your Chinese language learning?
12. Why you choose to study Chinese language? As it is a difficult language.
13. What level would you like to achieve? Do you have any plan for that?

Appendix G: Varimax Rotated Five-Factor Matrix of the BALLI

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Item 6	.700	.214	-.087	.068	-.226
Item 15	.638	.087	.102	-.139	-.343
Item 12	.581	-.062	-.132	.195	.049
Item 18	-.482	.243	.055	-.398	.059
Item 24	.448	-.211	.148	-.395	.170
Item 30	.415	.006	-.048	.171	.024
Item 13	.345	.206	.012	-.208	.058
Item 28	-.267	.267	.234	.082	-.063
Item 8.	.153	.138	.132	.028	-.028
Item 17.	-.009	.590	.127	.051	-.028
Item 21.	.010	.586	.092	-.033	.068
Item 27.	.191	.556	-.036	-.027	-.312
Item 10.	.216	.500	-.080	-.123	.420
Item 23.	.361	.482	-.241	.158	-.090
Item 11.	-.168	.414	-.036	.113	.145
Item 22.	-.012	-.039	.556	.017	-.201
Item 29.	.236	-.204	.541	.167	.101
Item 34.	.022	.161	-.514	.116	-.168
Item 16.	-.068	.083	.510	.141	-.161
Item 20.	-.127	.314	.499	-.148	-.065
Item 2.	-.107	.201	.463	-.152	.272
Item 19.	.159	.311	.406	.119	.167
Item 9.	-.237	.038	.361	-.069	-.136
Item 31.	.099	.279	-.123	.564	-.202
Item 7.	.041	.191	.242	.558	-.028
Item 4.	.220	-.055	.153	.480	.183
Item 26.	-.119	.208	.274	-.442	-.119
Item 33.	.013	-.029	.091	-.385	-.076
Item 3.	.091	-.024	-.135	-.331	.238
Item 5.	.069	-.051	.020	.214	-.188
Item 14.	-.135	.095	.026	.123	.707
Item 32	-.012	.174	.135	.211	-.498
Item 25	-.102	-.006	-.069	.126	.453

Item 1	.200	.073	.220	-.160	.408
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Appendix H: Mean, SD, Skewness and Kurtosis of the BALLI Items

BALLI Items	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
B1	4.37	0.76	-1.41	2.29
B2	3.71	1.12	-0.78	-0.16
B3	4.44	0.8	-1.86	4.16
B4	1.93	0.75	0.54	0.12
B5	2.22	1.19	0.78	-0.42
B6	3.76	0.95	-0.77	0.31
B7	4.36	0.79	-1.91	5.43
B8	4.03	0.93	-0.86	0.37
B9	1.67	0.82	1.3	1.95
B10	4.02	0.64	-0.66	1.63
B11	4.45	0.72	-1.07	0.37
B12	3.53	1.15	-0.25	-1.0
B13	3.79	1.06	-1.12	0.71
B14	3.36	0.9	0.17	-0.35
B15	2.92	0.95	-0.23	-0.59
B16	3.3	1.09	-0.58	-0.86
B17	4.8	0.4	-1.55	0.41
B18	4.09	0.95	-1.07	0.72
B19	3.02	1.17	-0.07	-1.2
B20	3.18	1.08	-0.41	-0.9
B21	4.58	0.57	-0.64	-0.26
B22	2.67	0.89	-0.7	-0.24
B23	4.2	0.89	-1.29	1.59
B24	2.67	1.32	0.35	-1.11
B25	4.3	0.7	-1.16	2.26
B26	2.39	1.0	0.42	-0.65
B27	4.33	0.81	-1.43	2.63
B28	3.53	1.25	-0.43	-1.02
B29	2.19	1.02	0.38	-0.54
B30	2.63	1.0	0.34	-0.29
B31	4.1	0.76	-1.34	3.97
B32	3.7	0.78	-0.51	0.7
B33	2.27	0.76	0.03	-0.44
B34	4.34	0.83	-1.6	3.01