

# Enjoyment and anxiety in second language communication

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# A message of thanks

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Thank you to students and colleagues who participate in our research

Thank you to Cape Breton University, CGI, NSRIT & SSHRC for funding

Thank you to the conference organizers!

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# Outline

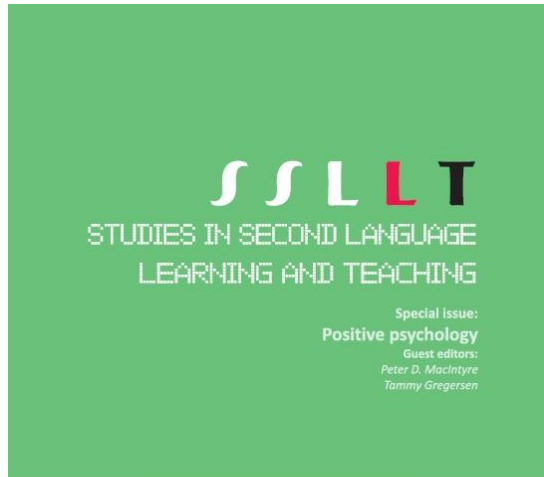
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How do anxiety and enjoyment relate to each other in a second language context?

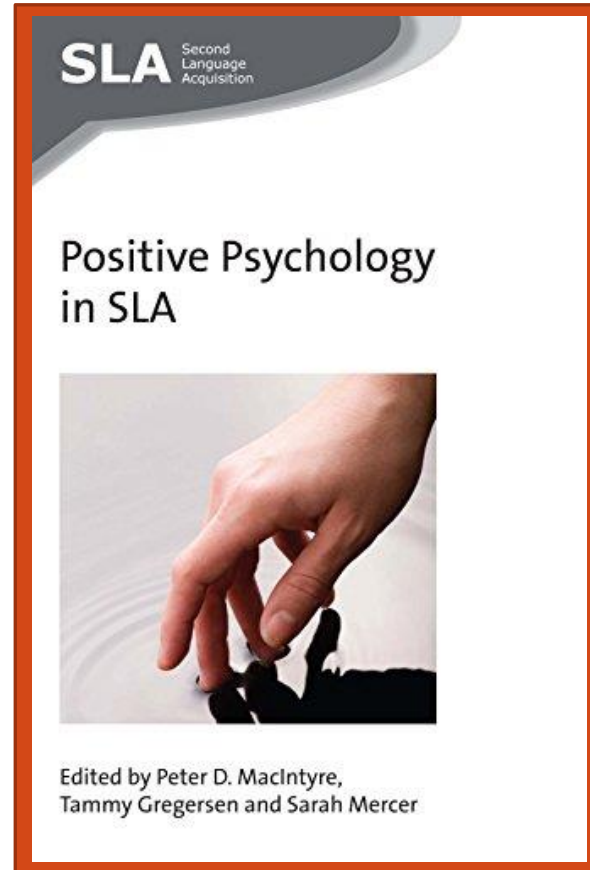
Two different methods to discuss

- Part 1 – Web-based Survey
- Part 2 - IdioDynamic

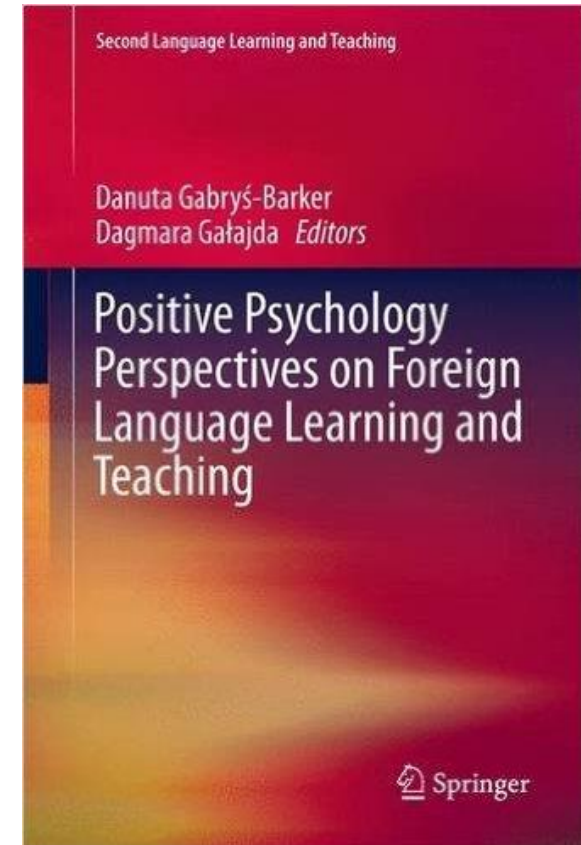
# Positive Psychology in SLA (second language acquisition)



Special Issue June 2014:  
Open Access  
<http://bit.ly/29iXAJS>



2016



2016

# Emotion and Motivation in SLA

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## ➤ **Emotion**

- Not yet well established as a core SLA concern
- Ongoing reactions to language learning and communication guide cognition & behaviour
- Emotion creates established patterns and exceptions

# We need to know more about emotion in SLA

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SOME EMOTIONS HAVE BEEN STUDIED AND OTHERS NOT



# In SLA, the emotion studied most often: Anxiety

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Foreign/Second Language Classroom Anxiety has been a focus since 1980s:

- **cognitive** interference with learning, distraction
- **feelings** of nervousness, apprehension, fear
- **behaviours** including avoidance & withdrawal



There are LOTS of other emotions to consider



# Broaden-and-Build Theory:

there are different functions for positive & negative emotion

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## NEGATIVE EMOTION

### Narrowed focus

- Predispose specific behavior
- Focus thoughts
- Strong emotion takes over
- Adaptive

Example: ***Language Anxiety***

## POSITIVE EMOTION

### Expanded focus

- notice more new things
- Take-in more information
- Learn most efficiently

### -Builds resources for the future

- Social capital
- Expanded abilities
- Undoing lingering negative emotions

Example: ***Language Enjoyment***

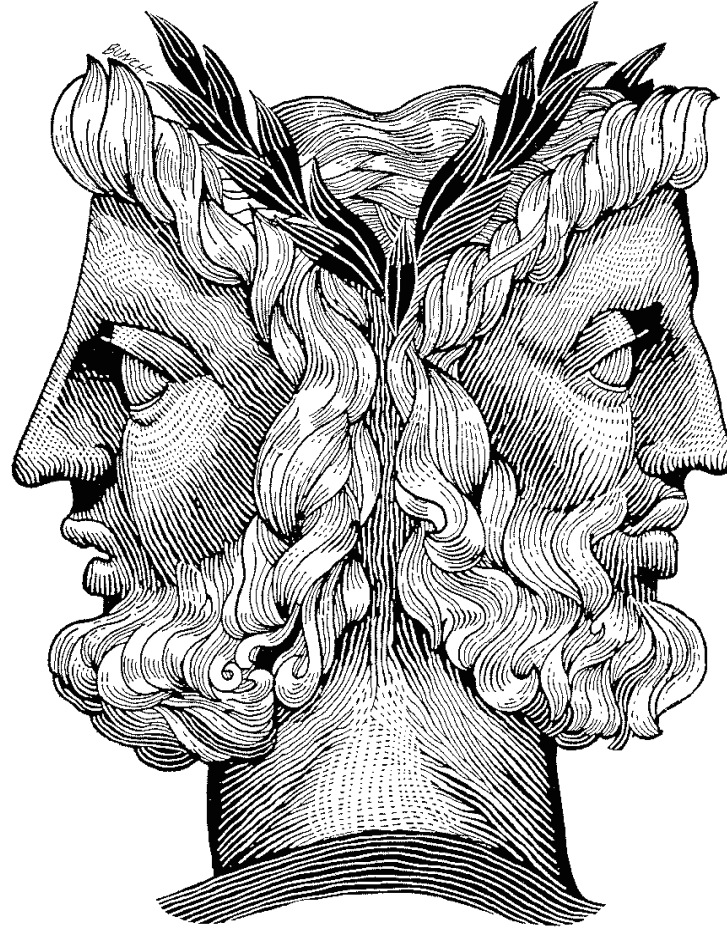
# The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and Enjoyment in the Foreign Language Classroom

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DEWAELE & MACINTYRE (JUNE, 2014) IN SSLT

Enjoyment

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Anxiety

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Ancient Roman mythology: **Janus** is god of beginnings & transitions

Perfect god for language learners ... endless beginnings followed by a very long succession of transitions

# FLE & FLA

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- **Foreign language anxiety (FLA)**

“The worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language” (MacIntyre, 1994: 27)

- **Foreign language enjoyment (FLE)**

“The fun of learning or using a foreign language”

# Research Questions

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1. Do learners experience more joy in FL classes than anxiety?
2. Are FLE and FLCA correlated?
3. What are effects of various demographic variables on FLE & FLCA?
4. What characterizes positive episodes in the FL class? (qualitative)

# Internet Survey Method: Participants

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- Web-based survey
  - Convenience sampling, international networks of teachers/learners
- Total of 1746 multilinguals (1287 females, 449 males)
  - Mean age = 24 years, SD = 8.5
  - High school (91), high school diploma (113), BA (994), MA (450), PhD (94).
  - 24% low intermediate, 6% intermediate, 42% high intermediate, 28% advanced
  - Standing: Far below average(2%), below average (10%), average (44%), above average (36%), far above average (7%)

# Method: Participants

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- 90 different nationalities
  - Europeans (86%), Asians (13%), North Americans (9%), South Americans (5%) & Middle Eastern (5%)
- Studying 1 FL (1322), 2 FLs (n = 215), 3 FLs (n = 37)
- Studied English as a FL (49%), followed by French (16%), Spanish (13%), Dutch (9%) German (8%)
- Bilinguals (26%), trilinguals (32%), quadrilinguals (24%), pentalinguals (12%), sextalinguals (4%)

# Methods: Instruments

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- Biographical info
- 21 FLE items (new)
- 8 items from FLCA (Horwitz et al. 1986)
- Reliabilities FLCA & FLE scales (*Cronbach alphas* = .86)

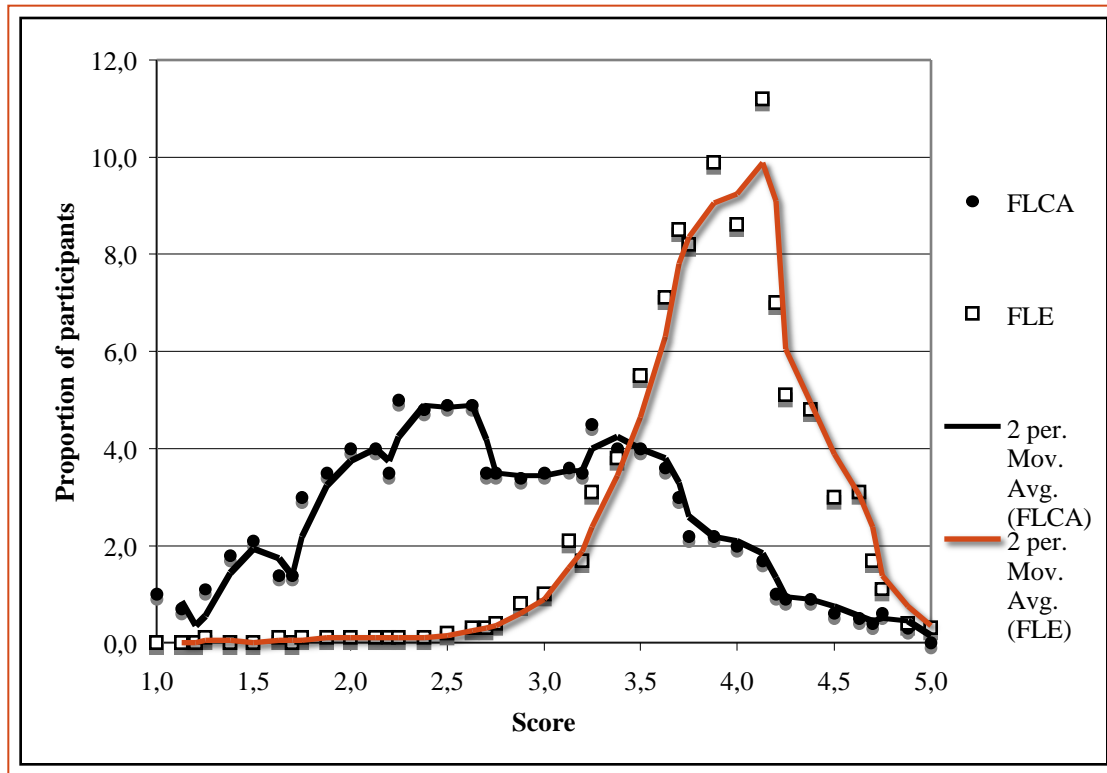
Final open question:

**“Describe one specific event or episode in your FL class that you really enjoyed, and describe your feeling in as much detail as possible”**

- 52,471 words from 1076 participants → content analysis → 7 themes



# Anxiety and Enjoyment



Enjoyment –  
frequent experience

Anxiety – wide range  
of experiences

# Correlation Between FLE & FLCA

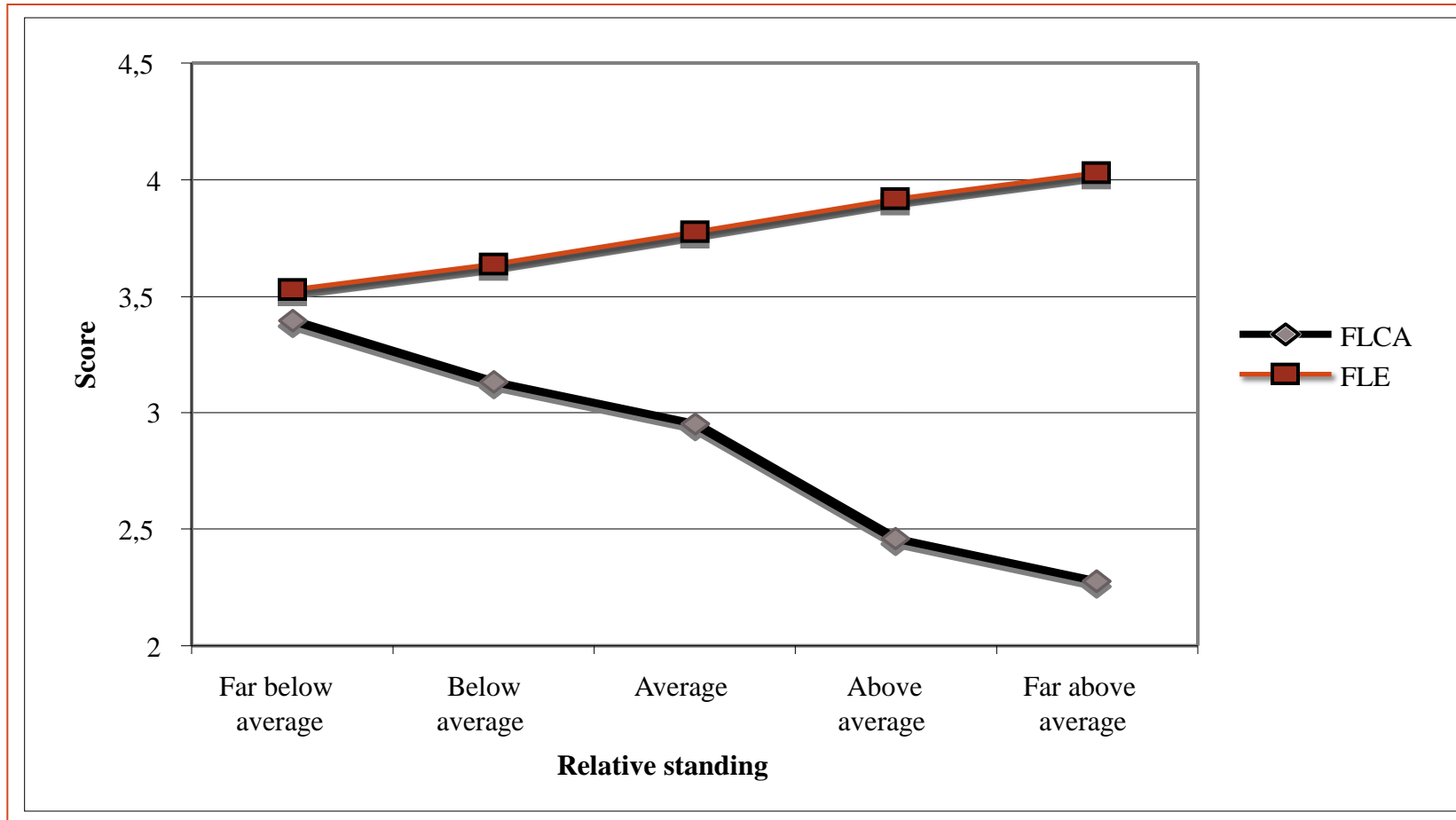
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$$r = -.36,$$

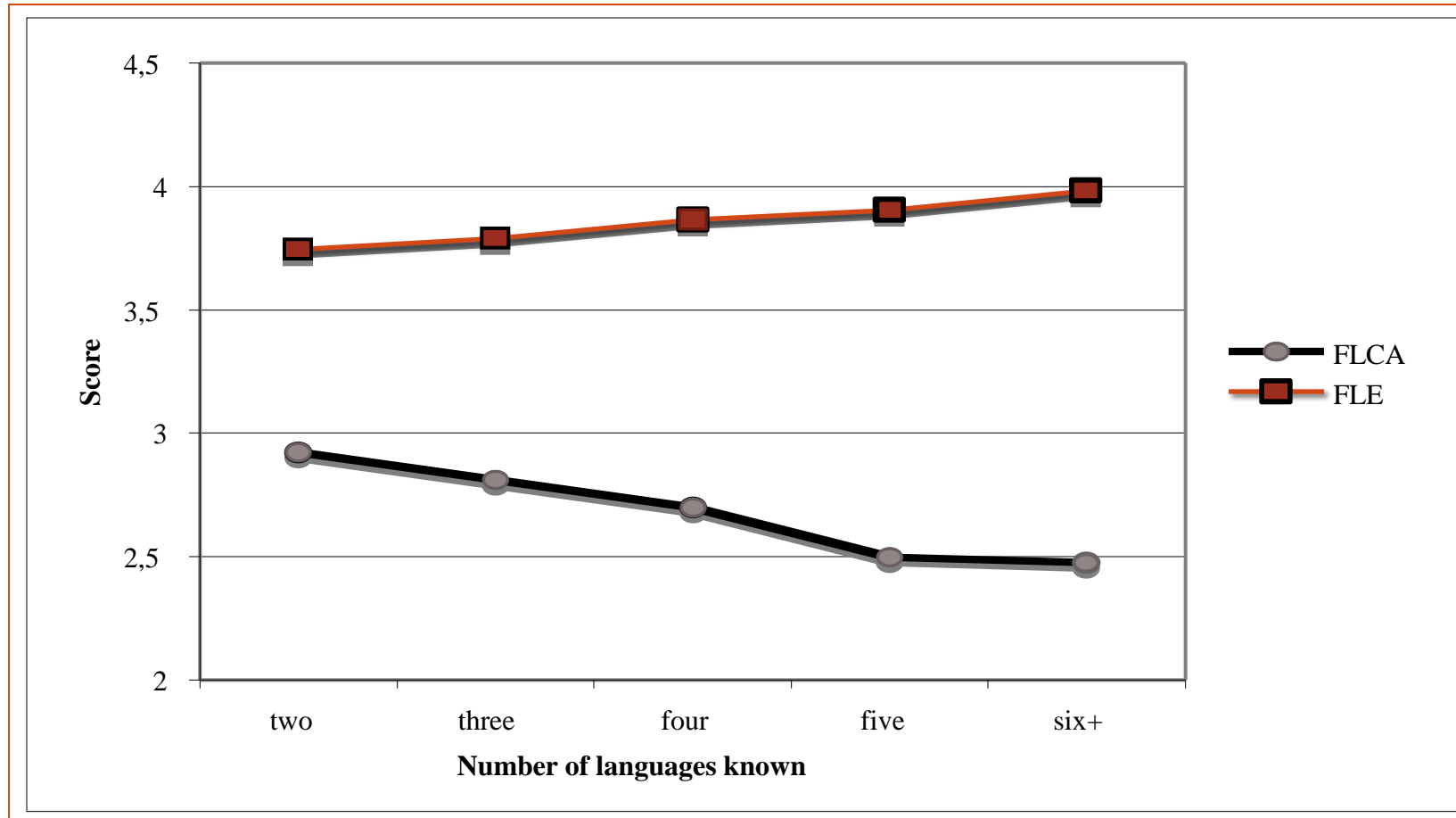
$$N = 1746, p < .0001$$

- share only 12.9% of variance

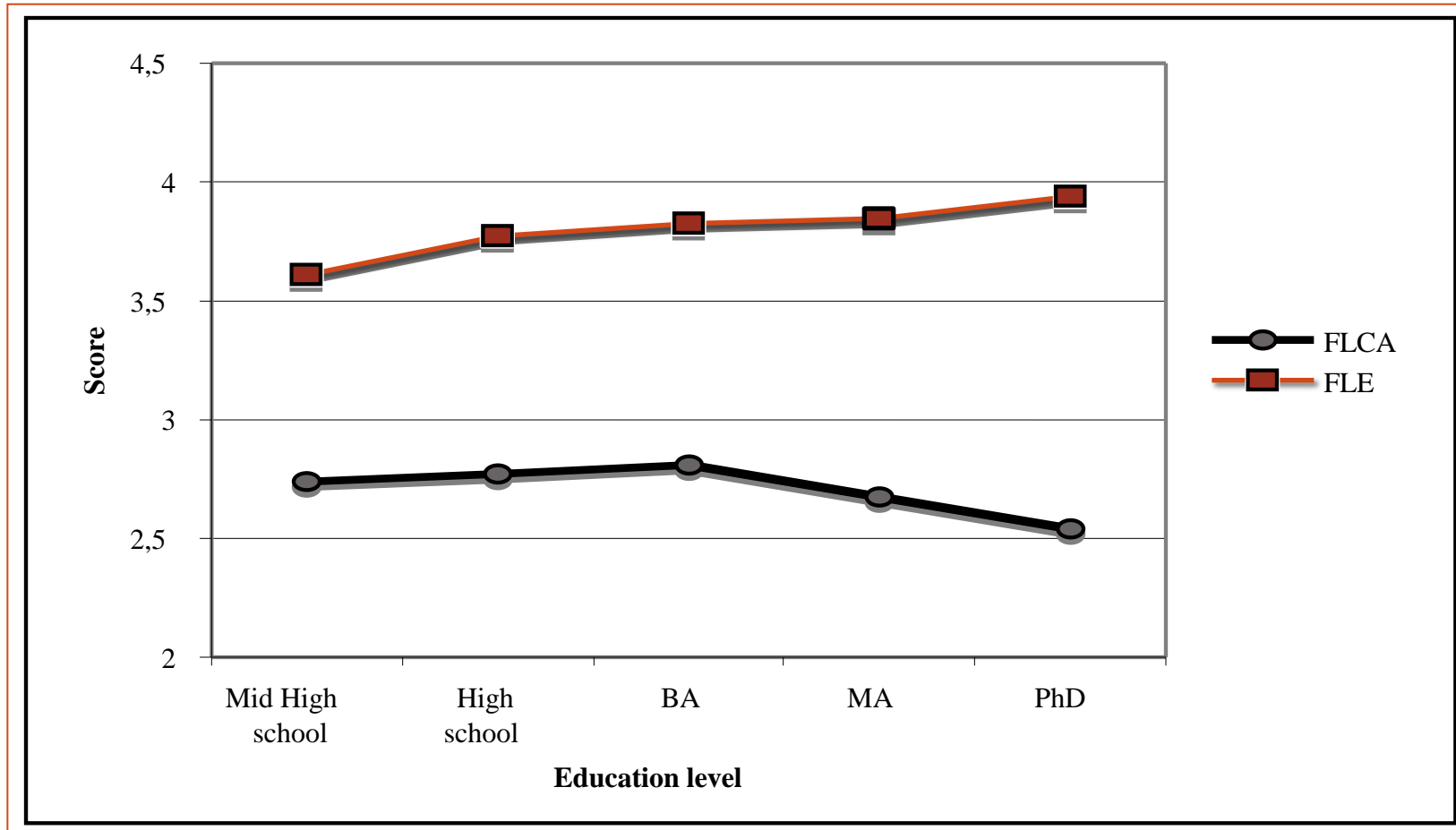
## Relative Standing (above/below average learners)



## Number of Languages Spoken

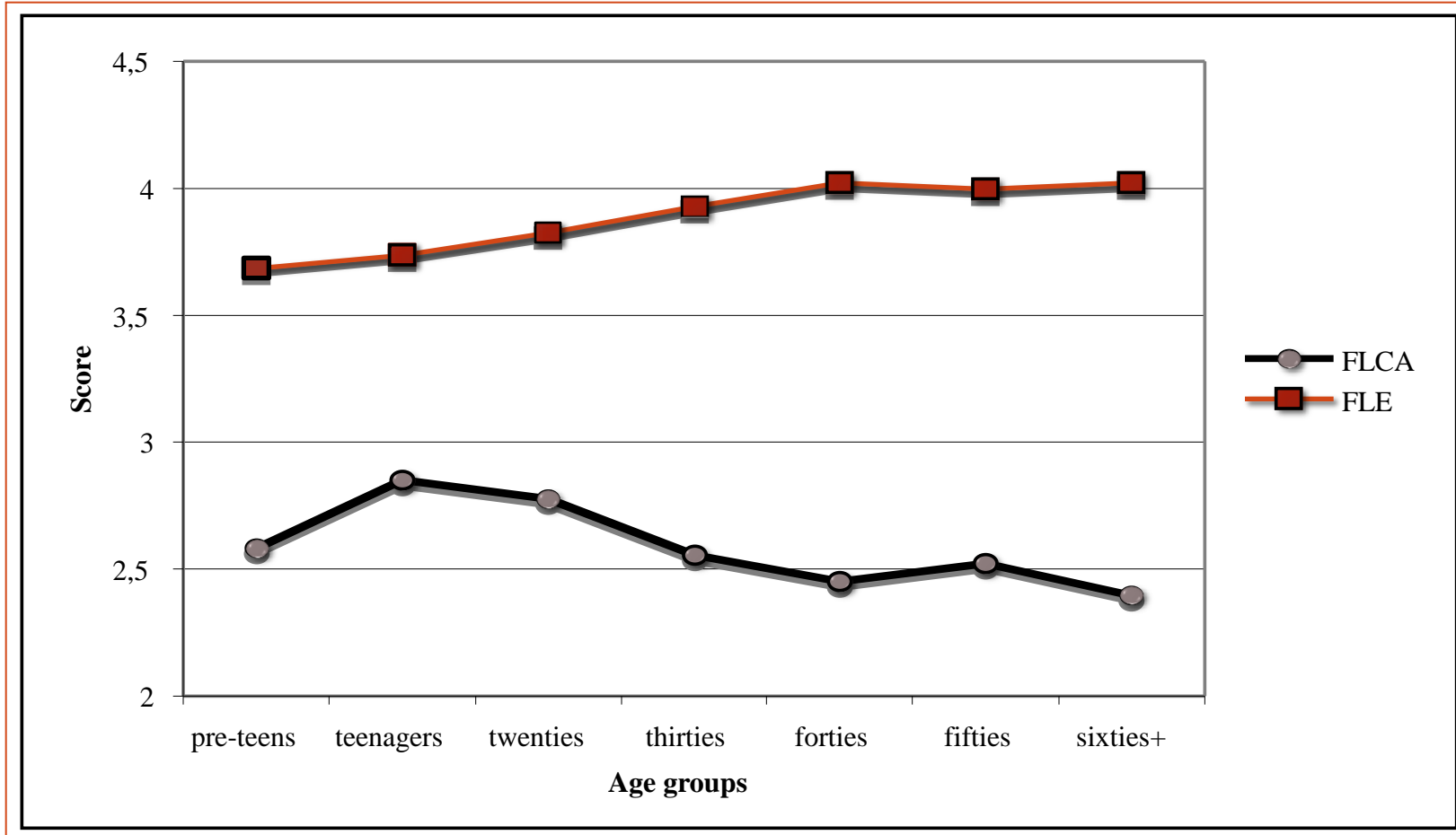


## Highest Education

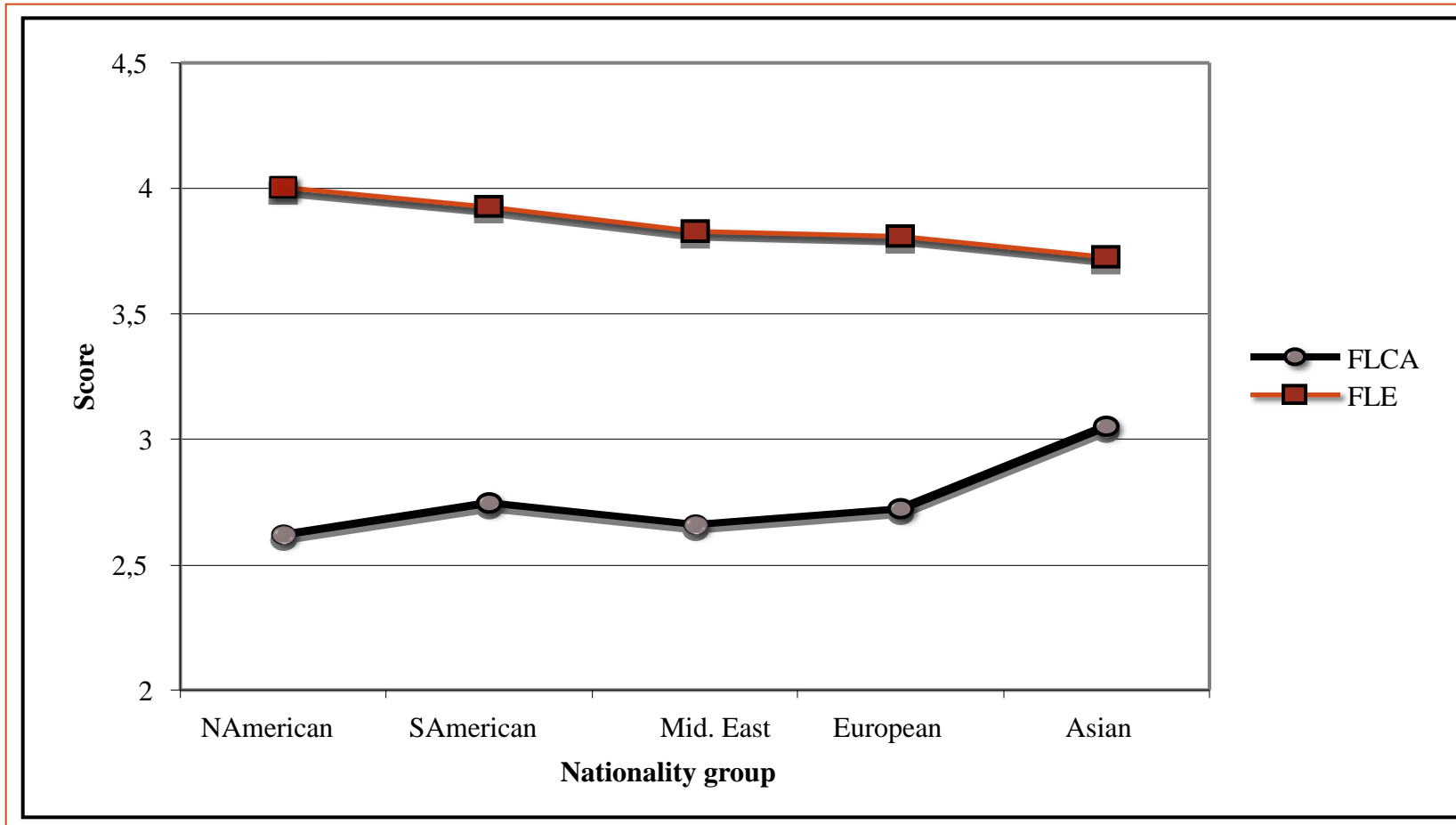


# Results

## Age Group



## Regional Group



# Main themes : FL enjoyable episodes

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Theme	Frequency	%
Specific activities	441	41.0
Peer recognition	146	13.6
Other	141	13.1
Teacher recognition	116	10.8
Realisation of progress	108	10.0
Teacher skills	98	9.1
Authentic use of FL	26	2.4

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# Key findings: Anxiety vs Enjoyment

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- Overall, higher scores for enjoyment
- Anxiety scores showed much more variation
- Anxiety and enjoyment are not strongly related
  - Not opposite ends of the same dimension
  - Balance tipped in favour of enjoyment, with some anxiety present

# FLE & FLCA: not the two faces of Janus

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## FLCA

Phobus, Greek God of Fear



## FLE

Laetitia, Roman Goddess of Joy



...Now, a different approach to anxiety and enjoyment



# An idiodynamic approach

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CARMEN BOUDREAU & PETER MACINTYRE

- ✧ HOW DO ANXIETY AND ENJOYMENT RISE AND FALL DURING A TARGET LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION EVENT?
  - ✧ HOW DO THESE TWO VARIABLES CHANGE CORRELATION OVER THE COURSE OF EACH COMMUNICATION TASK?
  - ✧ WHEN INTERVIEWED POST-TASK, TO WHAT DO PARTICIPANTS ATTRIBUTE THE OBSERVED FLUCTUATIONS IN EMOTION?
- 

## New Types of *Dynamic* Research Questions

# Carmen Boudreau's study

## Task one: The picture task

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Participants asked to bring in a picture of something enjoyable

- E.g. event, memory, hobby, place, activity, relationship

Discuss this picture in L2 (French) for 3-5 minutes

A task that could be done in-class



# Task two: Oral interview questions

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Five oral tasks, adapted from MacIntyre and Legatto (2011)

- Describe what you are wearing
- Discuss the role of parliament in the Canadian government
- Discuss the education system in your home country in some detail
- Count to 100 by 10s
- Give directions from this point to the nearest shopping mall

Asked to respond in L2

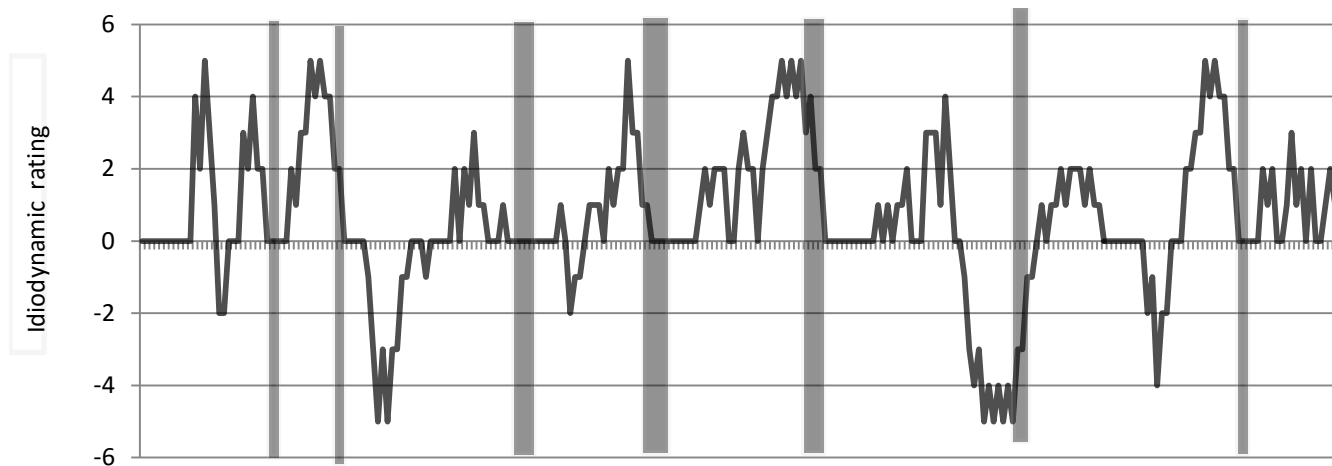
Similar to many types of in-class activities



# The idiodynamic method (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011)

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1. Record speech
2. Moment-by-moment ratings of their enjoyment and anxiety for each task.
3. A graph is produced showing fluctuations in each variable.
4. The graph is reviewed and reasons for changes in each variable are discussed.



# Expected patterns

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↑ Anxiety, ↓ Enjoyment

- Lack of vocabulary
- Lack of things to say
- Environmental factors (e.g. Presence of recording device)

↓ Anxiety, ↑ Enjoyment

- Understood task and new how to respond
- Talking about something meaningful, authentic communication
- Personal connection to topic

# Unexpected patterns

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↑ Anxiety, ↑ Enjoyment

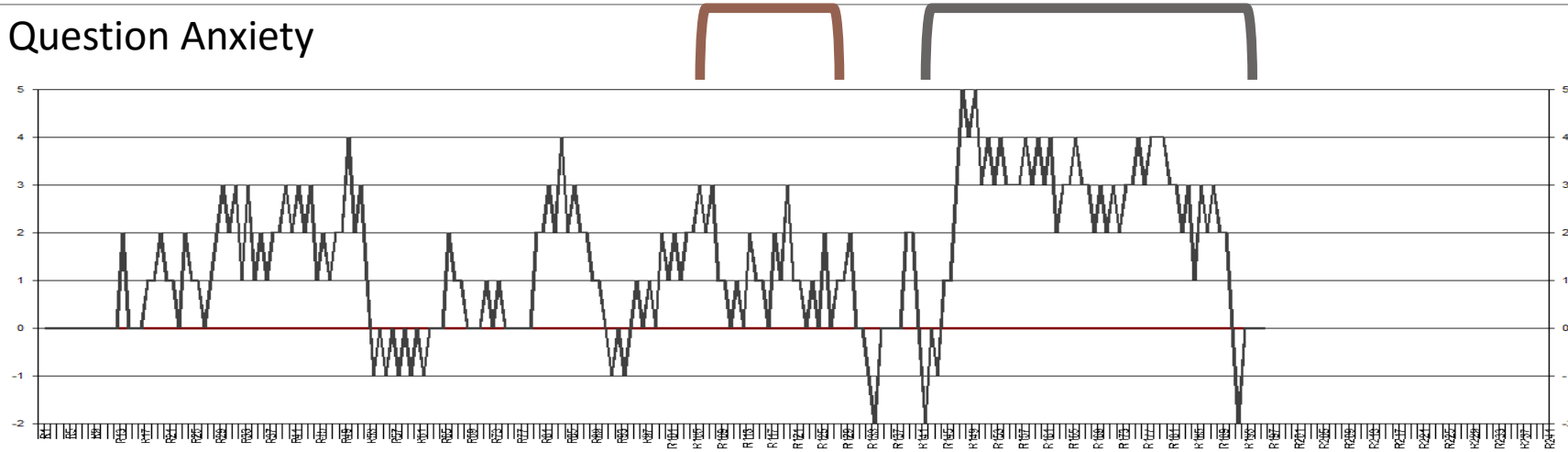
- Experiences of flow
- Optimal levels of challenge and engagement
- Personal interest
- Focus on task

↓ Anxiety, ↓ Enjoyment

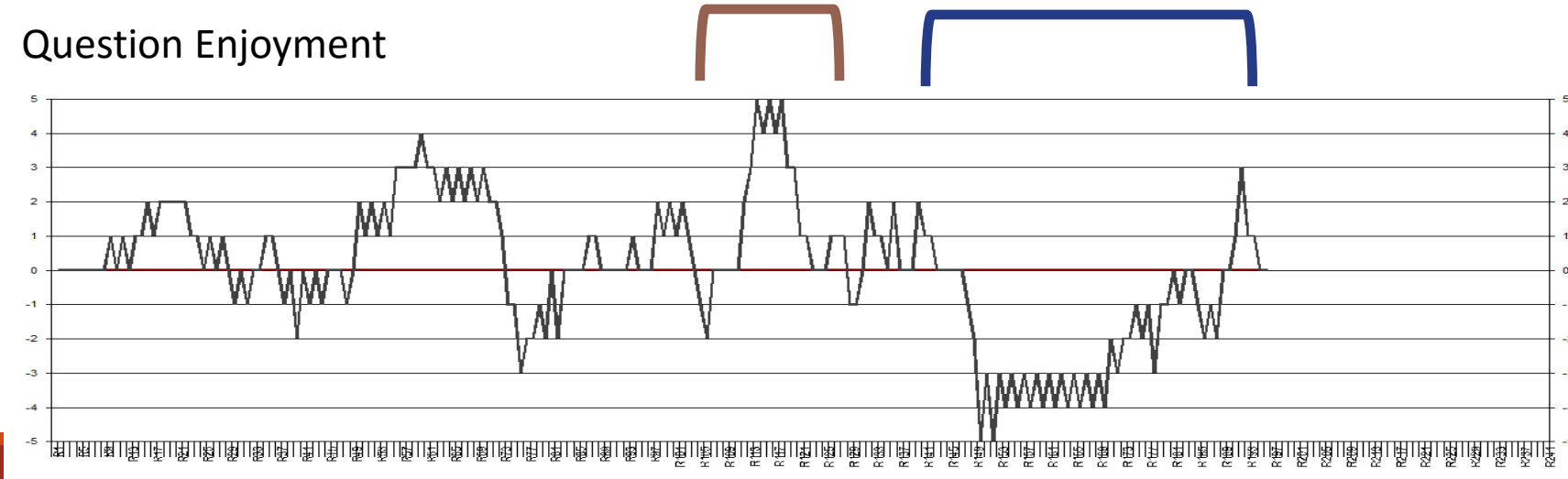
- Feelings of boredom or disengagement
- Nothing left to say (e.g. towards the end of a task)

# Positive and negative correlation patterns within Participant 9

Question Anxiety



Question Enjoyment



# Participant 9

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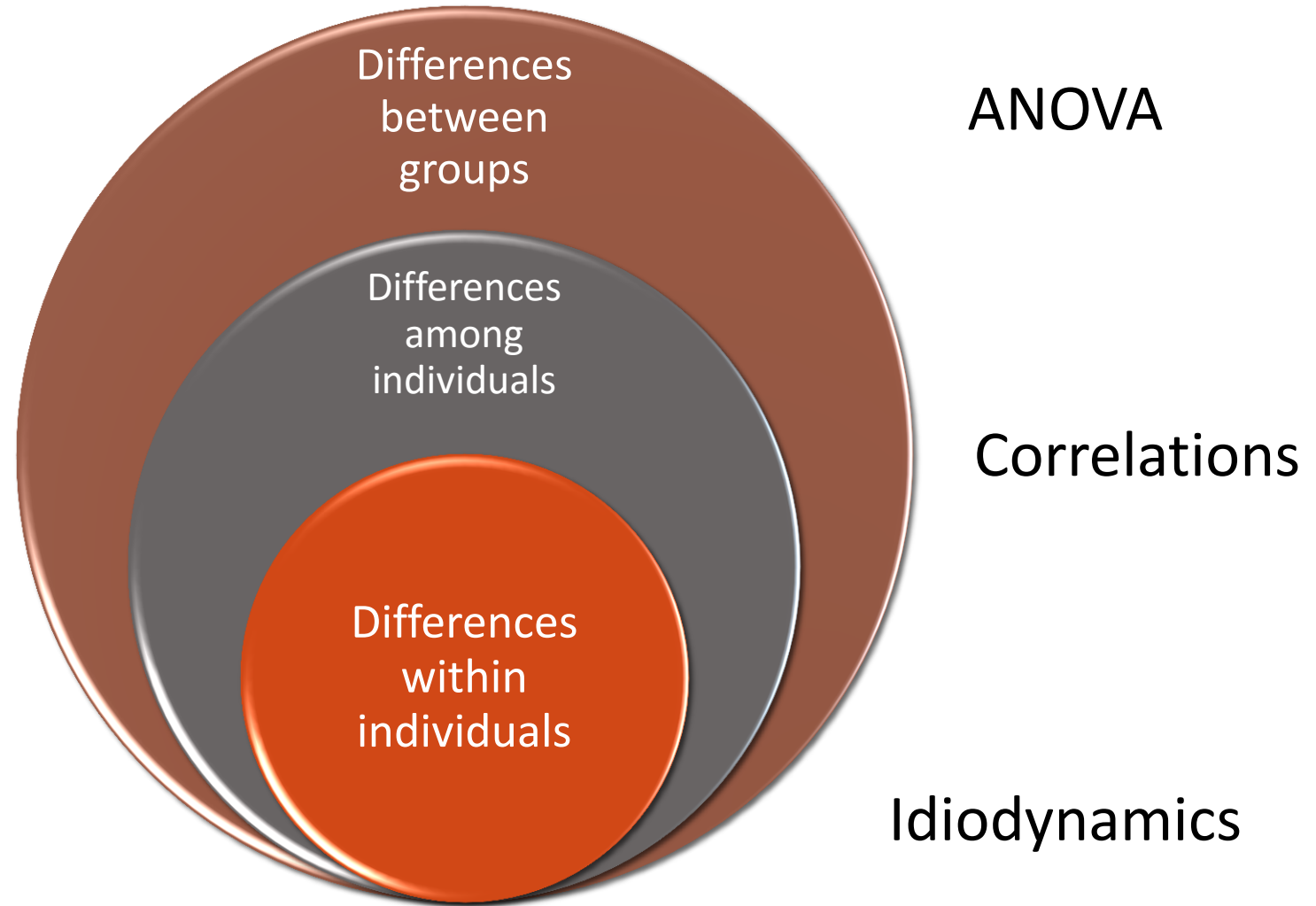
## Question Activity

- *“I liked what I was talking about and I knew what I was saying a little bit. Once I knew what I was talking about, and what direction to go in, then it was more enjoyable because I was into it.”*

## Picture activity

- *“My enjoyment dipped down after that because I was having trouble explaining some stuff about it. When I had low enjoyment parts it was because I really just couldn’t express those ideas as effectively as I would’ve liked because I just didn’t have the words.”*

What is the  
relationship  
between  
anxiety and  
enjoyment in  
SLA?



# In conclusion

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SLA is a rich area for Positive Psychology research

- among learners
- among teachers

Studies of emotion dynamics within individuals provide a novel way to address new research questions

- the correlation & interactions between positive & negative emotion

Anxiety and enjoyment correlate both negatively AND positively

# Enjoyment and anxiety in second language communication

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