

Mastery Goals and Foreign Language Reading Enjoyment among Chinese EFL Undergraduate Learners

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ABSTRACT

Extensive studies have confirmed that mastery goals can influence learners' enjoyment in multiple educational contexts, while the enjoyment specific to foreign language reading has never been empirically explored. The study, therefore, aimed to investigate the relationship between mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment through a mixed-method research design. The quantitative phase involved 119 EFL undergraduate learners in China completing a self-reported questionnaire. The Pearson correlation analysis confirmed mastery goals can positively and significantly predict the enjoyment of foreign language reading. One hundred eight participants from the quantitative phase agreed to join the qualitative study. One participant was invited to the subsequent semi-structured interview, and the data was analyzed thematically. The qualitative findings reinforced the quantitative results, offering deeper insights into the relationships between mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment. Learners' experiences highlighted that mastery goals for foreign language reading were driven by their interest and the practical utility of the reading materials, which in turn fostered satisfaction and a sense of achievement toward reading and further enhanced their foreign language reading enjoyment.

Keywords: mastery goals; foreign language reading enjoyment; Chinese EFL undergraduate learners; reading; the control-value theory

INTRODUCTION

Reading plays a crucial role in overall English learning by exposing learners to comprehensible linguistic input. It enhances diverse areas of language acquisition, such as vocabulary spelling, collocations, and grammar application, which in turn supports the development of other skills and output activities, including translating, writing, listening, and speaking (Alnan & Halim, 2024; He, 2021; L. Wu & Halim, 2024; Y. Wu et al., 2024; Yamashita, 2013). In addition, as English has increasingly become a lingual franca around the world, English reading offers learners a platform to access global information, thereby broadening the breadth and depth of their knowledge. For example, from written traditions, readers can be exposed to the literature, history, rules, and norms of other ethics, which can be a treasure to the readers (Halim et al., 2021). It is also vital to the student's academic achievement in multiple educational institutes worldwide as they must engage with textbooks and research materials and even join in examinations conducted in English. Moreover, reading can be a kind of in-depth communication through which non-native English speakers can access various cultures, thereby broadening their cultural awareness and enhancing their critical thinking (He, 2021).

Emotions can be naturally prompted during the process of reading, and they can, in turn, enhance the reading progress, as evidenced by gains in knowledge, conceptual shifts and attitude changes (Pekrun, 2022). Additionally, it is also widely advocated to conduct research on the emotional experiences specific to the micro-level of language acquisition since learners may experience different emotions across these subdomains (Khajavy et al., 2022). At the same time, with the introduction of the Positive Psychology movement, increasing research attention has been switched from negative and problematic issues to a more positive emphasis (C. Li et al., 2018). Motivated by this trend, foreign language reading enjoyment has garnered recent research interest. It is defined as the multifaceted emotional responses associated with foreign language reading, encompassing feelings such as “happiness, interest, sense of accomplishment, mood changes, satisfaction, excitement, and relaxation” (Jin et al., 2024, p.8). It has been identified to play a crucial role in improving the multiple dimensions of foreign language reading proficiency (Kone Haidara, 2023; Wang & Gan, 2021).

While numerous research has explored the role of foreign language reading enjoyment, limited attention has been paid to its predictors. Mastery goals show potential in predicting learners’ enjoyment. Defined as the objectives of learners to enhance their skills and the mastery of tasks, mastery goals are closely linked with positive emotions like enjoyment (Schweder, 2020). According to the control-value theory, learners with mastery goals concentrate on mastering the ongoing tasks and recognizing their positive value, making them more likely to experience the positive activity emotions represented by enjoyment (Pekrun et al., 2006). Several studies have investigated this relationship in the contexts of general learning and various subjects (Y. Li, 2022; Pekrun et al., 2006; Schweder, 2020). However, no research has yet specifically examined the link between mastery goals and enjoyment in the context of foreign language reading.

Therefore, building on the theoretical assumptions of the control-value theory and the empirical studies on the goal-emotion relationships, the current research attempts to assess the influence of mastery goals on learners’ foreign language reading enjoyment in the EFL learning context in China at the tertiary level. Specifically, the research questions are:

1. What is the relationship between mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment among Chinese EFL undergraduate learners?
2. How do the experiences and perceptions of Chinese EFL undergraduate learners shed light on the interplay between mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment?

LITERATURE REVIEW

MASTERY GOALS

Achievement goals represent the primary objectives that learners strive for in academic settings. Among them, mastery goals have been considered optimal and most advantageous for learners’ academic success and positive life outcomes (Guo et al., 2022). These goals focus on enhancing one’s competence and mastering tasks, thus learners with mastery goals are inclined to measure their learning progress against personal benchmarks and view errors and corrective feedback as opportunities for growth and learning (Schweder, 2020).

Various research has examined the results of adopting mastery goals. Learners with mastery goals tend to experience more positive experiences and satisfaction in their school life, leading to a stronger sense of subjective well-being (Guo et al., 2022). These goals can also boost intrinsic

motivation, helping students sustain their motivation over time and maintain consistent involvement in their studies (Ma & Jin, 2023). Additionally, Stavropoulou et al. (2023) revealed that such learners exhibit higher self-efficacy and more positive attitudes toward learning, showing greater optimism and flexibility in using both cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Furthermore, in remote learning settings, mastery goals can improve learners' self-efficacy with information and communication technology (ICT), thus further influencing their use of ICT for learning activities and ultimately contributing to their academic performance (Ma & Jin, 2023).

Echoing the advantages of adopting mastery goals, there is a growing body of research exhibiting their focus on the predictors of mastery goals. Regarding personal characteristics, research suggested that students' prior academic success plays a significant role in shaping their achievement goals (King & McInerney, 2016). Furthermore, learners' mindsets about human abilities have been proven to be another key influential factor in the employment of their mastery goals. An incremental mindset, which views intelligence as improvable through effort, can promote the pursuit of mastery goals (Marley & Wilcox, 2022).

POSITIVE EMOTIONS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Over the past few decades, negative emotions represented by foreign language anxiety (FLA) has always attracted predominant research attention. Such a focus can be explained by two potential reasons: firstly, the factors contributing to negative impact outcomes are more likely to be noticed, and there is a natural tendency to emphasize these factors; secondly, it is relatively easier to identify the negative emotions (C. Li et al., 2018).

The Positive Psychology movement aimed to initiate a switch of research attention from diagnosing pathologies and deficiencies. It calls for understanding and developing positive characteristics, strengthening human beings, and contributing meaningfully to the world (C. Li et al., 2018; Seligman, 2011). It also motivates the research in linguistic aspects. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) highlighted the role of positive emotions in acquiring foreign languages and accordingly introduced the concept of foreign language enjoyment (FLE) parallel to foreign language anxiety (FLA). They defined FLE as a state in which learners' psychological needs are fulfilled. To clarify the nature of enjoyment, Csikszentmihalyi (2014) contrasted it with pleasure. In the research, pleasure is explained as a homeostatic process that stems from physiological satisfaction, and it is always linked to contentment. On the other hand, enjoyment arises from engaging in challenging tasks that demand skills, leading to growth and change. These two items have been further distinguished with an analogy that it could be pleasurable when a sports event is won by a large margin, but it is not necessarily enjoyable. Enjoyment, by contrast, involves anticipation of a meaningful yet uncertain outcome through individual effort. Denkci Akkas et al. (2022) added that foreign language enjoyment can be directly associated with learners' well-being in their learning process, encompassing positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments.

In recent years, research has been paying attention to enjoyment specific to foreign language reading. It has been identified to boost reading motivation, influence learning strategies, and contribute to exam performance in EFL settings (Wang & Gan, 2021). Similarly, Kone Haidara (2023) emphasized the role of reading enjoyment in fostering reading engagement, and such a contribution has also been observed to be able to further enhance reading achievement. Brantmeier (2005) specifically explored enjoyment's influence on reading performance, which was evaluated

by two kinds of tasks, finding that enjoyment significantly enhances the performance in recall tasks but not on multiple-choice tasks. To sum up, the research mentioned above underscores the critical contribution of enjoyment to diverse aspects of foreign language reading proficiency.

THE CONTROL-VALUE THEORY

Several theories developed under the umbrella of Positive Psychology support the extensive studies in linguistic areas. Seligman (2011) established the "well-being" theory with the "PERMA" model to illustrate well-being. In this theory, positive emotions have been constantly believed to be a significant component of well-being. Also, Fredrickson (2001) developed the broaden-and-build theory to illustrate how positive emotions can broaden one's awareness, attention, cognition and action, which facilitates building personal resources. These positive emotions could momentarily as well as enduringly contribute to people's physical and mental health, personal growth, and well-being. Meanwhile, resonating with the Positive Psychology movement, the control-value theory involves diverse positive emotions in the scope of achievement emotions and emphasizes the implementation of emotional intervention in educational contexts (Pekrun et al., 2006).

Most previous studies interpret positive emotion in foreign language learning based on the broaden-and-build theory and the well-being theory, while the attention to the control-value theory is limited. Dewaele and Li (2020) believe that compared with the broaden-and-build theory, which interprets emotions in general, the control-value theory can be more related to the educational context and shows more applicability to the language learning aspect. Shao et al. (2019) also advocate the integration of control-value theory into the field of language learning research as this established theory in psychology and learning sciences can facilitate linguistics researchers to their empirical exploration, while the investigation of domain-specific emotions from language learning aspect can, in turn, expand the control-value theory. The fundamental assumptions of the control-value theory are reviewed in this chapter.

ACHIEVEMENT EMOTIONS IN THE CONTROL-VALUE THEORY

Based on the control-value theory, emotions refer to affective arousal directly associated with achievement tasks and outcomes, typically assessed by a certain standard of capability (Pekrun et al., 2023). These emotions could be classified through multiple dimensions. Pekrun et al. (2006) established a 2×2 structure to categorize emotion with object focus and valence. The former further differentiates activity-related emotions experienced during the learning process from outcome-related emotions concerning the failure and success of learning outcomes. In this dimension, activity-related emotions can be exemplified by enjoyment, boredom, and anger towards the study process. The outcome-related emotions can be further categorized into ones related to retrospective outcomes, such as the pride originating from past success and shame due to the previous failure, and the prospective outcomes regarding future learning outcomes, such as hope and anxiety. Valence, on the other hand, includes positive and negative dimensions. Based on this structure, Pekrun et al. (2023) introduced the concept of arousal. It identifies high-arousal emotions that activate learners' physiological status, such as excitement about the learning tasks, and low-arousal emotions that deactivate learners' states, such as boredom towards classroom activities. This $2 \times 2 \times 3$ taxonomy divides the emotions into 12 groups, as shown in TABLE 1.

TABLE 1. The 2 × 2 × 3 Taxonomy of Achievement Emotions (Pekrun et al., 2023)

Object focus	Positive		Negative	
	Activating	Deactivating	Activating	Deactivating
Activity	Enjoyment Excitement	Relaxation	Anger Frustration	Boredom
Outcome- prospective	Hope Anticipatory joy	Assurance	Anxiety	Hopelessness
Outcome-retrospective	Pride Retrospective joy Gratitude	Relief Contentment	Shame/Guilt Anger	Disappointment Sadness

The control-value theory is constructed based on the assumption that the general functional mechanisms underlying human experience and emotions are universal (Pekrun et al., 2006, 2023). That is, the taxonomy of achievement emotions mentioned above can be applied to diverse domains and subjects across various learning contexts. Meanwhile, the theory also highlights situational specificity, suggesting that the emotional responses and experiences can be domain-specific, as learners' emotional experience in language learning can be relatively independent of their experiences in other subjects (Shao et al., 2019)

THE LINKAGE BETWEEN ACHIEVEMENT GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENT EMOTIONS

Learners with mastery goals tend to evaluate their learning based on absolute standards that relate to the task itself and the intrapersonal stand that emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge. They focus on mastering the ongoing learning tasks and their benefits. Such a focus can thereby contribute to positive activity emotions such as enjoyment and reduce negative emotions such as boredom. In addition, they tend to view challenges as opportunities for growth, interpreting difficulties as a sign of needing more effort rather than failure. This mindset increases the likelihood of experiencing success, as it is measured by their progress and competencies. By contrast, performance goals are oriented around normative standards. These goals can lead learners to focus on whether they can demonstrate their abilities and accordingly evoke positive emotions such as pride. Besides, performance-avoidance goals are shaped by the fear of failure and concern over uncontrollability, and they often trigger negative emotions such as shame due to the perceived risk of not meeting external standards (Pekrun et al., 2006).

METHODOLOGY

Mixed methods research is an effective inquiry approach. Compared with the single qualitative or quantitative method, it can provide wider and deeper insights by combining the data collected from both two methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The primary features of this methodology include: first, both the two types of data are collected and analyzed rigorously in alignment with the research questions and hypotheses; second, the data and results of the two phases are integrated; third, the research follows specific procedures that combine elements of both designs; and finally, the research design is guided by the theory and philosophy. This approach leverages the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods while offsetting the limitations and providing more robust evidence and diverse insights to facilitate answering complex questions that cannot be fully addressed by employing either method alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The current study utilized a mixed methods approach, specifically an explanatory sequential design. The research began with a quantitative stage to establish relationships between the variables, followed by a qualitative phase to further elaborate on these findings. In the qualitative stage, the mechanisms behind the relationships are explored, offering explanations based on the authentic experiences and perspectives of the Chinese EFL undergraduate learners. This combination allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic by integrating both numerical data and deeper contextual insights.

PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted in a comprehensive university in Guangdong province of China. The quantitative phase involved 119 participants, with 54 males and 65 females. They were sophomore undergraduate students aged from 18 to 22 (Mean=20.02, SD=0.83). They enrolled in diverse majors, including human resources, finance, computer science, civil engineering, electrical engineering, and education while taking the English course as a compulsory subject.

INSTRUMENTS

In this study, a composite questionnaire has been adopted in the quantitative phase, followed by a semi-structured interview in the qualitative phase. The questionnaire includes demographic information, assessment of mastery goals, and learners' foreign language reading enjoyment on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. A sample of the composite questionnaire is attached in the appendix. The questionnaire and interview were both in Chinese to make sure the content was fully understood. To ensure the accuracy of the Chinese questionnaire, one researcher was invited to back-translate the Chinese version into English. Afterwards, it was compared with the original one. This procedure can help to check whether the Chinese version can reflect the same item content as the original. In addition, member checking was adopted to maintain the validity of the qualitative phase, with a copy of the analysis emailed to the respondent to check the accuracy of the interpretation.

MASTERY GOALS MEASURES

The items to assess mastery goals were selected from the study of Elliot and McGregor (2001). In this study, they developed the achievement goal questionnaire to evaluate learners' mastery approach goals, mastery avoidance goals, performance-approach goals, and performance-avoidance goals. There are a total of 12 items in the questionnaire, with three items evaluating each type of achievement goal. The four types of achievement goals were proved to be independent. Considering that mastery-avoidance goals have been identified to be more commonly associated with the senior generation rather than students (Schweder, 2020), the present study excluded the items for mastery-avoidance goals and selected three items measuring mastery-approach goals. These items were adapted to the context of English reading, with the sample item "In our English reading class, I want to learn as much as possible". The scale showed a strong reliability in this study, with Cronbach's alpha being 0.902.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE READING ENJOYMENT MEASURES

This research employed the English Reading Enjoyment Scale (ERES) (Jin et al., 2024) to measure learners' foreign language reading enjoyment. This scale is specifically designed for EFL learners in China who have relatively limited access to authentic English-speaking environments in their daily lives. There are 11 items on this scale, covering a broad emotional range related to enjoyment. It involved learners' both cognitive and expressive responses to reading. A sample item is "I want to continue during reading." The scale demonstrated excellent reliability in the current research with Cronbach's alpha of 0.976.

PROCEDURES

The quantitative stage deployed a convenience sampling strategy. The author uploaded the composite questionnaire to an online survey platform named Wenjuanxing. During the breaks of the English class, the link of the questionnaire was sent to three classes of students. There was a total of 163 students in the classes while 119 of them agreed to participate in the study, yielding a response rate of 73%. The participants were requested to provide their Email addresses if they volunteered for the subsequent qualitative research.

The qualitative stage utilized theory-based sampling by inviting participants who clearly exemplify the theoretical concepts of mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment to the semi-structured interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). They can explain what the statistical evidence of the quantitative study actually means and provide real-world examples of how these constructs interact in the language learning process. One hundred-eight participants from the quantitative study volunteered to join the interviews and provided their email addresses. One respondent was selected whose scores for mastery goals (4.00) and foreign language reading enjoyment (3.18) were closest to the group mean (mastery goals: 3.93, SD = 0.83; foreign language reading enjoyment: 3.26, SD = 0.94). Theoretical sampling is guided by concept, and the participants selected should be able to inform the concepts. The selection criterion of this study can ensure that the interviewee represents the average experience within the sample, and her description can provide detailed and practical insights into the statistical findings of the quantitative study, which directly addresses Research Question 2.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analyses of the quantitative data involve descriptive statistics and correlation analyses through SPSS 22.0 to answer the RQ1. The analysis of the qualitative data will follow the 6-phase thematic analysis, which includes familiarizing with data, initial coding, searching for themes, theme reviewing, defining and naming themes, and reporting.

RESULTS

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

The results of descriptive statistics are presented in TABLE 2. It is suggested that the participants had a high level of mastery goals and a moderate level of enjoyment in reading foreign languages.

TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics of Mastery Goals and Foreign Language Reading Enjoyment

	Item Number	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
MG	3	119	3.93	0.825	3	15
FLRE	11	119	3.26	0.943	11	55

Note. MG=Mastery Goals; FLRE=Foreign Language Reading Enjoyment.

The relationship between mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment has been examined through Pearson correlation analysis, and the results are presented in TABLE 3. Clearly, there is a positive and significant relationship between mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment.

TABLE 3. Correlation coefficient matrix.

Variable	FLRE	
	-r-	-p-
MG	.457**	.000

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The qualitative data was collected from one participant from the quantitative phase whose mastery goals significantly influenced her foreign language reading enjoyment and volunteer to participate in the qualitative study. Her basic information is presented in TABLE 4. The findings of semi-structured interviews illustrated the learner's goals and her emotional experience in foreign language reading and helped to explain the relationships between mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment based on her perceptions and experiences.

TABLE 4. Basic information of the participant

	Gender	School Year	Age	English Level	Major
Participant	Female	2	21	Intermediated	Education

PRACTICALITY AND UTILITY AS MOTIVATORS

The practicality and utility of the reading materials serve as an important motivator for the respondent to improve her English reading skills. She found that many English reading materials are directly useful to her life or academic requirements, so she wanted to improve her English reading ability to understand the materials fully. She highlights this in the interview:

...there are some reading materials I need to read so that I can gain the information to help me in my life. For example, last semester, I needed to read many materials about American literature because the teacher required us to do a presentation. This motivated me to engage in reading.

INTEREST AND CURIOSITY AS DRIVERS

Interest and curiosity also drive her motivation for learning and reading in English. She reported that she felt it necessary to master English reading skills because she always encountered interesting English reading materials. She defined the success of reading English as understanding the content of the reading materials. She described how interest drives her reading motivation in the interview:

...sometimes, I randomly browse social media and encounter some interesting English stories. I feel like the stories could be interesting, and I am curious about what would happen in the story; it makes me want to read. Therefore, I would keep reading.

Also, the attractiveness of the reading materials can motivate her to adopt learning strategies for understanding the materials and improving her reading skills. For example, she admitted that she would use dictionaries in her reading:

...and for the parts I cannot understand, I would use the dictionary to assist me. I hope to improve my reading skills so that one day, I can read the articles I am interested in without a dictionary.

Meanwhile, her interest in English reading appears closely related to the content itself, and she might give up reading materials irrelevant to her interest. This selective interest may explain her intermediated-level mastery goals observed in the quantitative phase.

SATISFACTION FROM CONTENT ALIGNMENT

The participant reported a strong sense of satisfaction when reading English materials aligned with her interests. She admitted that such reading activities can satisfy her curiosity and contribute to her enjoyment:

...after I finish reading an article that exactly suits my interests, I feel my curiosity has been satisfied. I can feel happy for the whole day. However, reading English can also cause me suffering when I have to read materials that I am not interested in. For example, sometimes, the articles of the reading examination are difficult and boring, but I have no choice but to read them.

SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT FROM MAKING PROGRESS

Also, a sense of achievement is another source of enjoyment for her in English reading. It is also tied to the recognition that her previous study on English reading pays off. For example, she mentioned in the interview:

...sometimes, the English reading materials are bilingual, with Chinese translations nearby. After I finish the reading, I may look through the Chinese version as well to check my understanding. I can gain a sense of achievement when I find my understanding is almost correct.

DISCUSSION

The quantitative study revealed that mastery goals had a positive and significant influence on foreign language reading enjoyment. Such a finding has also been confirmed by previous studies in multiple educational contexts (Y. Li, 2022; Pekrun et al., 2006; Schweder, 2020). The connection between mastery goals and enjoyment in the foreign language reading contexts has further supported the relative universality of emotions posited by the control-value theory, which suggests that the underlying mechanism of emotions and their causes and effects are universal across individuals, genders, learning subjects, and cultural backgrounds (Pekrun et al., 2006, 2023).

On the other hand, the control value theory also indicates that emotional experiences, such as the frequency, focus, and intensity of emotional experiences, can vary significantly across individuals, depending on their personal characteristics, developmental trajectories, and diverse environments and cultures (Pekrun et al., 2006, 2023). Therefore, the occurrence of emotions needs to be explained by learners' authentic perceptions and experiences. The semi-structured interview, illuminating how individual and contextual factors shape their goals and emotional experiences, provides a fuller picture of the relationships between mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment. It supports the quantitative findings by confirming the relationship between mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment while extending the insights with detailed illustrations based on the real-world example of the participant.

According to the qualitative findings, learners' mastery goals can stem from the reading materials aligning with their interests and being of great practical value to them. The self-determination theory can interpret such findings (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to the theory, learners pursuing goals can be either driven by fun or enjoyable experiences, namely intrinsic regulation, or the utility and practical value to them, namely as identified regulation.

The interviewee confirmed that her mastery goals for reading skills led to her greater engagement, satisfaction, and enjoyment in reading activities. Mastery goals can prompt learners to define success as mastery of content, which is more attainable than performance goals focusing on peer comparison (Elliot & McGregor, 2001). Such achievement goals can arouse learners' sense of achievement when they understand the content of reading materials and see their previous effort rewarding, thus contributing to positive emotional experiences.

This finding is in line with Khajavy et al. (2022), who noted that learners adopting mastery-oriented goals consider reading skills to be enhanced through endeavour rather than a fixed, innate ability. These learners would be more likely to gain enjoyment once they have achieved their goals through hard work. Similarly, the Japanese learners in Judge's (2011) study reported a stronger sense of achievement when completing English books compared with Japanese books. The self-determination theory and well-being theory can also explain this phenomenon. In the self-determination theory, when learners' goals are related to their intrinsic aspirations, such as improving their reading skills and understanding interesting reading materials, they experience direct satisfaction of competence needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This can contribute to their overall well-being reflected by positive emotions, which is consistent with the well-being theory (Seligman, 2011).

The mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment can also contribute to autonomous learning. For the materials that align with the respondent's interest but are relatively difficult, she would use dictionaries to assist her reading instead of giving up. This can perfectly support the implication of the control value theory that positive activating emotions such as enjoyment can enhance learners' self-regulation in their learning process (Pekrun et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the test-oriented educational pattern can negatively impact mastery goals and enjoyment of foreign language reading. When learners have to read materials irrelevant to their interests, their motivation for mastering reading ability may decline, and they may gain less pleasure from the reading. This phenomenon has also been observed in Su's qualitative research (2022). One respondent said, "There was a period of time when everyone was preparing for the College English Test in class. Looking at students around me who were working hard on it, I felt quite anxious. I thought I couldn't make it. My English was so poor." In Japan, Dhanapala (2008) also described such a phenomenon in the intensive test-oriented contexts of Japan, where learners did not read English with personal enjoyment.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

A deeper understanding of the interplay between mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment can ultimately help teachers employ strategies to enhance learners' foreign language reading enjoyment. Such implications could be significant as foreign language reading enjoyment not only plays an important role in foreign language reading comprehension as well as overall language learning achievement but also contributes to learners' well-being (C. Li et al., 2018). Both quantitative and qualitative findings from this study have demonstrated the positive and significant influence of mastery goals on foreign language reading enjoyment, and their pedagogical implications can be summarized in two dimensions.

SELECTING APPROPRIATE READING MATERIALS

The qualitative results suggest that the appropriate materials can motivate learners to master reading skills, thereby contributing to increased satisfaction, a sense of achievement, and, ultimately, greater enjoyment. According to the response of the interviewee, it is suggested to select reading materials demonstrating practical values and align with learners' interests.

For practicality and utility, teachers can select the materials to expand the knowledge learners require in the reading activities. Yamashita (2013) similarly reported that learners can gain satisfaction and enjoyment when they acquire new knowledge and information through reading. So, teachers consider the characteristics of the target students in different majors and select the materials related to their future career development. Besides, English reading activities can be integrated into a comprehensive task where understanding the materials can contribute to subsequent activities, thereby boosting autonomous learning and enhancing English reading enjoyment.

In addition, the reading materials could cater to learners' interests. This idea is often referred to as "Reading for pleasure" and has been recommended by various studies (Brantmeier, 2005; Judge, 2011). Teachers can select the materials based on their students' characteristics, such as age and cultural background. Besides, they can allow learners to select reading materials by themselves based on their practical needs and interests, which can boost autonomous learning (Yamashita, 2013). This is also supported by Jin et al. (2024), who highlighted that learners' autonomy in selecting reading materials could contribute to their satisfaction and sense of accomplishment while alleviating their stresses in the reading and ultimately benefit their behavioural and cognitive engagement.

DESIGNING FLEXIBLE EXAMINATION APPROACHES

Traditional examinations may impede learners from enjoying reading. To address this, teachers can explore alternative assessment methods to evaluate learners' foreign language reading ability in addition to the traditional paper tests. The reading tests should demonstrate learners' developmental progress of their skills in real-life reading contexts (Afflerbach, 2005). It can be beneficial for Teachers and administrators to include the formative assessment and provide learners with more autonomy in designing examinations. For example, teachers can allow students to autonomously select reading materials from a certain book list and periodically assess their understanding of the materials.

CONCLUSION

Positive emotions in language learning have gained significant attention with the introduction of the Positive Psychology movement. Previously, studies have been conducted based on the control-value theory and have proved the positive relationship between mastery goals and enjoyment in learning multiple subjects, including foreign language learning. However, the enjoyment specific to the foreign language reading process has not been explored. Therefore, the current study investigated the influence of mastery goals on foreign language reading enjoyment in the EFL learning context of China.

Based on the findings of the mixed-method investigation, mastery goals have a significant and positive influence on foreign language reading enjoyment. Also, the qualitative study provided a comprehensive insight into the mechanism under the interactions of mastery goals and foreign language reading enjoyment. The interest and the practical value of the reading materials can motivate learners' goals of mastering reading skills. With these goals, learners are more likely to engage in the reading and yield satisfaction and a sense of achievement from their reading, thus contributing to reading enjoyment.

In light of the research findings, EFL teachers and administrators can gain a deep understanding of learners' mastery goals in reading comprehension, what can motivate their goals, and how mastery goals can contribute to positive emotional experiences. Accordingly, multiple strategies can be designed to intentionally interfere with learners' mastery goals and enhance their foreign language reading enjoyment.

Despite the above-mentioned findings and implications, the current study has limitations. Firstly, the current study was conducted on a small scale and only focused on the Chinese tertiary educational contexts. Future research is suggested to involve more participants from diverse contexts with both quantitative and qualitative research instruments. Besides, considering that emotional experiences may vary across different subdomains of language learning (Khajavy et al., 2022), future studies are recommended to further explore the goal-emotion relationships in other subdomains, such as speaking, listening, and writing of language learning.

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