The Effect of Task-Specific Anxiety vs. Task-Specific Enjoyment on Language Mindset in L2 Listening Tasks

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses a significant knowledge gap in understanding the effects of task-specific enjoyment and anxiety conditions on the language mindset of Iranian EFL learners in a listening course. Using a quasi-experimental design, 75 male high school students were divided into three groups: a task enjoyment (TE) group, a task anxiety (TA) group, and a control group. The TE group participated in a low-stakes, autonomy-based listening task designed to foster enjoyment, while the TA group completed a high-stakes, evaluative listening task intended to induce anxiety. Data were collected using standardized instruments, including the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES), the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), and the Language Mindset Inventory (LMI). A series of T-tests and ANOVA were conducted to analyze pre- and post-test scores across the three groups. Results showed that the TE group experienced significantly higher levels of task enjoyment and subsequently developed significantly stronger growth-oriented beliefs regarding overall linguistic intelligence and second language learning compared to both the TA and control groups. Conversely, the TA group exhibited significantly higher anxiety levels and a shift toward more fixed language mindsets. No significant differences were found between groups regarding beliefs about age sensitivity in language learning. These findings highlight the importance of considering task-related emotions in language teaching and suggest that fostering enjoyment through autonomy-supportive tasks can promote a growth mindset, while anxiety-inducing tasks may reinforce fixed beliefs about language learning.

KEYWORDS: Language mindset; Listening comprehension; Task anxiety; Task enjoyment

1. Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a teaching method that promotes the development of second language (L2) skills through meaning-focused tasks, giving individuals the opportunity to strengthen their communication abilities and engage in social interactions essential for their academic and professional goals (Ellis et al., 2019). In TBLT literature, tasks have been viewed either as static work plans, such as design and mode, created by material designers or as dynamic processes involving preparation, interaction, and repetition carried out by educators and students (Jackson, 2022; Samuda, 2015). Despite the structured nature of TBLT, a major challenge remains—learners vary in their ability to benefit from these tasks due to differences in cognitive resources and learning preferences. Even the most well-designed tasks do not guarantee equal learning outcomes for all students, as individual engagement and participation are essential in influencing success. Learners should be seen as active contributors to the educational process instead of just passive recipients, as their willingness to engage with tasks and their emotions significantly impact the effectiveness of TBLT (Almukhaild & King, 2023).

Emotions significantly influence how we learn, influencing how students engage with L2 tasks. Reeve (2024) describes emotions as short-lived reactions that support individuals in navigating challenges. While research has explored various emotions, much of the focus has been on anxiety (Dörnyei, 2009; Horwitz et al., 1986). Foreign Language classroom anxiety (FLCA), described as feelings of concern and negative responses associated with learning or using an L2 (MacIntyre, 1999), can negatively impact cognitive abilities, academic performance, self-efficacy, and willingness to communicate, sometimes even leading to language learning avoidance (Teimouri et al., 2019; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). However, anxiety can also serve a positive role by fostering tension, focus, and resilience when kept at manageable levels (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). According to Ellis (2003), anxiety becomes harmful when it leads to panic and impairs performance, but in moderate amounts, it can enhance motivation and engagement.

At the beginning of the new millennium, with the advent of positive psychology, there was a shift in focus within Western psychology towards highlighting human strengths and positive emotions, as opposed to solely concentrating on weaknesses (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This shift has broadened the research focus to include both negative and positive emotions in language learning (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; 2016; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). One commonly observed positive emotion is foreign language enjoyment (FLE), which plays a crucial role in shaping learners' experiences (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). FLE is characterized by a combination of challenge and perceived ability, reflecting a learner's motivation to succeed despite difficulties (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). A number of studies have indicated that there are noteworthy and favorable connections between FLE and perceived and actual foreign language ability, and academic achievements (Botes et al., 2020b; Dewaele et al., 2023; Teimouri et al., 2019). Of course, it can be challenging to examine how learners' emotions and their proficiency or learning are connected because the causal pathways between them can be bidirectional (Botes et al., 2020b).

Presenting emotions like enjoyment and anxiety as polar extremes on a continuum might give the impression of simplicity and clarity; however, studies have revealed that FLCA and FLE are actually related but independent, rather than being like a see-saw where they move up and down in opposite directions. In other words, having one emotion does not exclude the possibility of the other being there, and the reverse is also valid. FLE and FLCA are distinct emotions that do not oppose each other on a single continuum, and they are better seen as complementary to each other (Botes et al., 2022; MacIntyre & Ayers-Glassey, 2021). In recent years, research on FL learning and teaching has increasingly adopted a complex dynamic systems theory (CDST) perspective, emphasizing the ever-changing nature of emotions (MacIntyre et al., 2014). This approach suggests that emotions, though they may seem stable over long periods, actually fluctuate on much shorter timescales, such as seconds or minutes, and that learners within the same group do not necessarily experience emotions in the same way (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2020).

Given the significant role of emotions in shaping learning experiences, another key psychological factor influencing academic achievement is mindset. The idea of mindset is gaining traction within the realm of language education, and scholars are now exploring language mindsets, which are attitudes toward the malleability of language-learning abilities (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2021). This theory suggests that individuals have an inherent belief or mindset regarding intelligence. There are two main types of mindsets: a fixed mindset, which assumes that intelligence is unchangeable, and a growth mindset, which views intelligence as flexible and improvable through effort (Dweck, 1999). Lou and Noels (2019b) introduced the language mindset meaning system, which explains how different language mindsets relate to key motivators such as effort beliefs, achievement goals, fear of failure, and language anxiety. Evidence is mounting that adopting a growth mindset fosters greater achievements in academic settings, as learners with this perspective tend to be more motivated and resilient in their studies (Gouëdard, 2021). The recognition of a growth mindset as a key ingredient for success in language learning is resonating throughout academic circles, which is why an impressive rise has been observed in the breadth of research being conducted in this area within second language acquisition (SLA). Studies indicate that teachers have the ability to nurture a growth-oriented mindset in students. This type of outlook can assist learners in dealing with challenges and difficulties (Papi et al., 2019). Developing growth mindsets has the potential to improve learners' self-perception and emotional well-being (Zarrinabadi et al., 2021).

Given the critical role that emotions play in L2 acquisition, understanding how task enjoyment, defined as the positive emotional state experienced while engaging in specific language tasks, and task anxiety, defined as the negative emotional response felt during task performance, influence learners' language mindset is essential. While previous research has explored language anxiety and enjoyment as independent emotional factors, little attention has been paid to their direct effects on language mindset, particularly in task-based learning contexts. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how task-specific anxiety and enjoyment interventions impact Iranian EFL learners' views on language intelligence and L2 learning during a listening course. By doing so, the study provides insights into how emotional experiences shape learners' perceptions and attitudes, adding depth to our comprehension of the diverse individual factors influencing L2 acquisition.

2. Literature review

Emotions and cognitive factors play a crucial role in SLA. Research has explored the impact of FLE, FLCA, and language mindset on learners' motivation and performance. This section reviews key studies on these factors and their significance in SLA.

2.1. Research on foreign language enjoyment, and foreign language classroom anxiety

Psychologists have been studying how students' emotions impact general education for some time. Language anxiety emerged as the initial emotional factor to be recognized as a significant personal distinction among learners in the field of SLA research (Dewaele, 2022). Horwitz et al. (1986) put a spotlight on FLCA, presenting it as a distinct psychological concept separate from

general anxiety, specifically experienced in the context of language learning. Moreover, the development of their reliable instrument to measure FLCA triggered a period of extensive research within the field.

Research suggests a negative correlation between language anxiety and academic achievement. A meta-analysis by Teimouri et al. (2019) analyzed how anxiety relates to L2 achievement by drawing on a wide range of studies. They examined 97 studies across 23 countries and found an overall correlation of $r = -0.36$, indicating that higher anxiety levels negatively impact L2 learning, with factors such as assessment type and educational level influencing this relationship. Similarly, Zhang (2019) analyzed 46 studies, and a correlation of $r = -0.34$ was reported, indicating a negative interplay between anxiety levels and language performance; However, there was variation in the connection between anxiety and performance across different skill domains. Specifically, the link between anxiety and performance was the strongest in the context of listening ($r = -0.53$), while the association between anxiety and performance was less pronounced in reading and testing, with correlation values of $r = -0.23$ and $r = -0.27$, respectively. Similarly, Botes et al. (2020a) conducted a third meta-analysis of 59 studies, confirming a correlation of -0.39 between language anxiety and academic achievement, with varying effects among different language skills, particularly in listening and writing. Listening seems to be the most difficult among the four skills due to its complexity and fleeting nature. Unlike written text that can be revisited, sound fades away and cannot be easily reviewed, leaving the listener with little ability to influence or modify the input (Kim, 2000).

The rise of positive psychology at the beginning of the 21st century provided a fresh outlook within the discipline (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and sparked a surge in SLA investigations into the impact of different emotions (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). In addition to the focus on anxiety as a negative emotion, the role of FLE as a motivating and uplifting emotion in language acquisition has sparked a growing body of research (Dewaele, 2022). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) revealed a meaningful moderate negative correlation ($r = -0.36$) that connects FLCA and FLE. This implies that there is a certain level of interrelationship between these two factors; However, it's worth noting that language anxiety doesn't always act as the opposite of language enjoyment, since high levels of anxiety can exist alongside high levels of enjoyment (Dewaele et al., 2018). Botes et al. (2022) conducted a meta-analysis analyzing 96 effect sizes from 28,166 participants and found a negative relationship between FLE and FLA. Additionally, FLE showed positive correlations with academic achievement and self-perceived success. Research has also linked FLE to emotional intelligence (Li, 2020; Li & Xu, 2019), and grit (Lee, 2022; Wei et al., 2019) as well as curiosity (Mahmoodzadeh & Khajavy, 2019). Since FLE is a fairly new factor, its connections with other variables are still developing, but initial results are encouraging for researchers exploring language learning through a positive psychology lens.

In the realm of TBLT, the impact of designing and implementing tasks in shaping learners' emotions has been a key area of study. Students have indicated that they experienced greater enjoyment alongside reduced anxiety when given more freedom in their tasks (Nakamura et al., 2021; Phung et al., 2021). Additionally, Lambert and Zhang (2019) found that students had lower anxiety levels when working on tasks that involved content generated by the learners themselves rather than by the teacher. Moreover, higher levels of enthusiasm, confidence, and interest were noted when participants had prior exposure to the task's subject matter and underlying concepts (Aubrey et al., 2022; Phung, 2017). Therefore, instead of thinking that emotions are just a stable trait that pops up because of a few specific factors, we should recognize that they actually come from a bunch of different factors all happening at the same time (Oxford & Gkonou, 2021). To develop a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of various factors, it could be beneficial to take into account how the emotions of learners evolve over different time spans, during various tasks, and within individual task performances when planning a study on TBLT, and emotions (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014; MacIntyre et al., 2019)

2.2. Research on language mindset

Several studies have suggested that mindsets may vary depending on the domain of application (Dweck, 2006; Dweck et al., 1995), and this idea has gained interest in recent studies on SLA (Khajavy et al., 2022; Waller & Papi, 2017). Some research revealed that adopting a growth mindset correlates positively with learning goals, effort beliefs, and mastery-oriented strategies. On the other hand, it shows an inverse relationship with anxiety, goals centered on preventing failure, and avoidance-based coping methods (Cutumisu & Lou, 2020; Dweck & Yeager, 2019; Lou & Zarrinabadi, 2022). Because of these findings and the potential impacts that a language mindset can have on SLA and learning in the classroom, it is a psychological concept that merits further exploration and potential action or application within an educational setting. The concept of a language mindset seems to be worth examining in more depth and addressing through educational interventions, given its implications for how students learn a new language.

So far, with the notion that people's mindsets can be altered through intervention (Blackwell et al., 2007; Wilson & English, 2017), only few research studies have examined how different interventions impact Language mindset within the SLA field. In a study conducted by Lou and Noels (2016), 150 university students participated in a randomized controlled trial. The results showed that after reading a mock article on growth mindset, students had a more constructive response to challenges, putting in more effort and showing a higher and increased motivation to persist in learning their L2. Similarly, Lou and Noels (2019a) reported that intervention on mindsets had a notable impact on intergroup anxiety, language-related rejection, along with expectations for adapting to a new culture. Moreover, Lou and Noels (2020), employing a similar research design (reading articles on language mindsets in a single session) as Lou and Noels (2016; 2019a), reported that implementing a growth-mindset intervention led to a decrease in the perceived rejection and avoidance of future interactions in ESL learners with limited English proficiency.

Molway and Mutton (2020) conducted a study in the UK where they presented students with research findings on mindsets. The researchers found that this intervention helped to promote growth mindsets and influenced how students reacted to challenges. In a longitudinal study, Lee et al. (2023) examined the effects of an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing program on the

language mindsets and academic writing skills of undergraduate students. Findings reveal significant improvements in students' growth language mindsets, particularly in general language intelligence beliefs, alongside notable enhancements in writing proficiency. Additionally, the results of the latent transition analysis suggested that the mindset intervention would lead to dynamic shifts in profile membership. In a more recent study, Bigverdi and Sabet (2024) examined the effects of online peer feedback (OPF) and online teacher feedback (OTF) on the writing development and language mindset of Iranian EFL learners. Using a quasi-experimental design, the researchers assigned 72 participants to three groups: OPF, OTF, and a control group. The findings revealed that while both feedback types improved writing performance, OPF positively influenced learners' language mindset, promoting a growth-oriented attitude toward language learning.

Research on language mindset interventions suggests that they can temporarily lead to brief changes in learners' mindset and motivation. However, in TBLT, insufficient focus has been given to the learner's role and individual differences, particularly in how emotions fluctuate during tasks (Almukhaild & King, 2023). While most studies have explored the effects of emotions over extended periods, task-specific emotions have received limited attention, especially in listening tasks, which research has shown to be highly anxiety-inducing (Botes et al., 2020a; Zhang, 2019). Given that listening requires real-time processing without the ability to revisit the content, it poses unique cognitive and emotional challenges, making it a suitable context for investigating task-related enjoyment and anxiety. Understanding how these emotions influence language mindset can help teachers and curriculum developers create more supportive learning environments, improving student engagement and motivation. By examining task enjoyment and anxiety interventions in a listening course, this study aims to provide insights into their impact on language mindset, contributing to more effective pedagogical practices and learner support strategies.

2.3. Research questions

This study tried to investigate the effects of task-specific enjoyment (the enjoyment that students experience performing a particular task) intervention and task-specific anxiety (the anxiety that students experience performing a particular task) intervention on the mindset of the students in a listening course. In summary, the research questions are as follows:

1. Does task-specific anxiety reduce listening anxiety among EFL learners?

2. Does task-specific enjoyment enhance listening enjoyment among EFL learners?

3. Does task-specific anxiety influence the language mindset among EFL learners in a listening course?

4. Does task-specific enjoyment influence the language mindset among EFL learners in a listening course?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The study involved 75 male students, aged 16 to 18 (M= 16.9, SD= 0.53), who were organized into three intact classes. Participants were selected using convenience sampling, as the researchers had access to students from three schools located in Northwestern Iran. The students were similar in terms of intelligence, and they were all enrolled in schools for gifted students and came from comparable socioeconomic backgrounds. To evaluate the impact of the interventions, participants were randomly assigned to two experimental groups and one control group. All participants were Persian and Turkish bilinguals and they had passed English courses at high school. Based on their scores throughout the semester, they were all classified at an intermediate level of proficiency in English.

3.2. Research design

The study adopted a quantitative research design, including a quasi-experimental approach that utilized pre-test and post-test measures with control and experimental groups. This design allowed for the comparison of task-specific enjoyment and anxiety, as well as changes in learners' language mindset, between the groups exposed to different interventions within a listening course. The data collection consists of administering a set of standardized questionnaires to a sample of Iranian EFL learners.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. Foreign language enjoyment scale

Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) developed the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES) which is composed of 21 statements that are worded positively. The participants were required to provide feedback on these statements using a standard 5-point Likert scale. The FLES is structured in a way that groups the items into three categories, which reflect the various aspects of FLE. These categories comprise items that reflect the private dimension of FLE (learning experience), the social dimension (peers), and those that relate to the foreign language teacher. The FLE scale in its Persian adaptation (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2024) was implemented in this research. A pilot study with 18 students was performed and the measurement scale displayed strong internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.86$).

3.3.2. Foreign language classroom anxiety scale

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS; Horwitz et al., 1986) is a widely used measure of anxiety experienced by learners in the classroom. The scale consists of 33 items and the respondents rate the degree to which they experience each item on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The Persian version of the FLCAS (Amiri & Ghonsooly, 2015) was used for this study. A pilot study with 18 students was undertaken, which showed that the measurement scale possessed significant internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.88$).

3.3.3. Language Mindset Inventory

Language Mindset Inventory (LMI) developed by Lou and Noels (2017) consists of 18 questions on a 6-point Likert scale. The LMI is organized into three distinct categories that represent different facets of language mindset. These categories consist of items that indicate beliefs about general language intelligence (GLB), beliefs about second language learning (L2B), and beliefs about age sensitivity and language learning (ASB). For this study, the Persian version of LMI (Khajavy et al., 2021) was employed. The measurement scale showed strong internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.83$) in a pilot study involving 18 students.

3.4. Procedure

First of all, to collect the data, ethics approval was obtained from the schools to conduct this study. The participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups: Control, Task Enjoyment (TE) Group, and Task Anxiety (TA) Group. The TA Group participated in a high-stakes listening task designed to simulate a real testing environment. This task was officially part of their mid-term assessment, contributing 4 out of 20 points toward their exam score. The task consisted of three challenging listening comprehension podcasts, sourced from the Vision Book series— the standard English textbook used in Iranian high schools (See Appendix A). After each podcast, students needed to address comprehension questions directly tied to the content. The podcasts included academic topics and formal dialogues at a level above the learners' current proficiency, which increased task complexity. Participants were explicitly informed of the importance of this task for their final grade, reinforcing the evaluative pressure. This intervention was aimed at inducing task-specific anxiety, in line with prior studies showing that listening tasks, particularly those tied to assessments, tend to elevate anxiety (Botes et al., 2020a, Zhang et al., 2019).

Alternatively, the TE Group engaged in a low-stakes listening task designed to foster enjoyment. These students were given the autonomy to choose from a list of familiar and personally relevant topics based on a needs analysis conducted prior to the study. Topics included everyday conversations, hobbies, travel stories, and humorous podcasts, all set at a lower difficulty level to match the TA group's task length and structure while lowering the cognitive load. Most students opted for a stand-up comedy podcast, followed by a series of light comprehension and reflective questions (See Appendix B). Importantly, students were informed that this activity was not graded and had no impact on their course assessment. This combination of topic familiarity, choice, and absence of grading was intended to create a more enjoyable and relaxed learning experience, helping to isolate the emotional response of enjoyment without the confounding influence of task difficulty.

Data collection occurred in December 2024 over two weeks. In the first week, LMI, FLES, and FLCAS were distributed among all participants. In the second week, TA and TE groups received the intervention and completed the LMI, FLCAS, and FLES immediately after receiving the intervention. It's important to point out that the Persian versions of the scales were checked by some experts and were used for collecting the data.

3.5. Data analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS 26. Descriptive statistics were computed for all variables. To examine the effects of the interventions, a series of t-tests and a one-way ANOVA were conducted to compare post-test scores across the three groups (TA, TE, and Control) on task-specific anxiety, enjoyment, and the dimensions of language mindset (GLB, L2B, and ASB). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test were performed. The significance level was set at $p < .05$.

4. Results

Prior to running the t-tests and ANOVA, assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances were tested. Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated that the data for all variables were normally distributed ($p > .05$). Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was conducted for each dependent variable, and results showed no significant violations of homogeneity, confirming that the assumption of equal variances was met for the analyses ($p > .05$).

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for task-specific enjoyment, task-specific anxiety, and the three dimensions of language mindset across the TE, TA, and Control groups.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error

FLCA (pre-test)	TA Group	25	88.84	16.375	3.275
	TE Group	25	89.08	14.611	2.922
	C Group	25	88.92	19.687	3.937
	Total	75	88.95	16.790	1.939
FLCA (Post-test)	TA Group	25	99.24	16.205	3.241
	TE Group	25	85.24	13.128	2.626
	C Group	25	88.12	17.582	3.516
	Total	75	90.87	16.681	1.926
FLE (pre-test)	TA Group	25	64.72	12.821	2.564
	TE Group	25	64.92	10.924	2.185
	C Group	25	64.44	12.793	2.559
	Total	75	64.69	12.047	1.391
FLE (Post-test)	TA Group	25	61.64	12.446	2.489
	TE Group	25	73.04	13.834	2.767
	C Group	25	63.84	12.844	2.569
	Total	75	66.17	13.803	1.594
GLB (pre-test)	TA Group	25	28.44	3.190	.638
	TE Group	25	28.24	3.333	.667
	C Group	25	28.12	3.468	.694
	Total	75	28.27	3.289	.380
GLB (post-test)	TA Group	25	26.00	3.304	.661
	TE Group	25	31.12	2.651	.530
	C Group	25	28.16	3.287	.657
	Total	75	28.43	3.713	.429
L2B (pre-test)	TA Group	25	28.08	3.081	.616
	TE Group	25	28.12	3.257	.651
	C Group	25	27.80	3.000	.600
	Total	75	28.00	3.076	.355
L2B (post-test)	TA Group	25	25.16	3.223	.645
	TE Group	25	30.72	2.747	.549
	C Group	25	28.24	2.919	.584
	Total	75	28.04	3.718	.429
ASB (pre-test)	TA Group	25	28.32	3.579	.716
	TE Group	25	28.16	3.287	.657
	C Group	25	27.84	3.105	.621
	Total	75	28.11	3.290	.380
ASB (post-test)	TA Group	25	27.60	3.055	.611
	TE Group	25	28.84	2.154	.431
	C Group	25	27.52	3.280	.656
	Total	75	27.99	2.897	.334

4.1. Task-specific anxiety

To assess the impact of the intervention on task-specific anxiety levels, an independent-sample t-test was performed to compare the TA Group, which was exposed to a high-stakes, anxiety-inducing listening task, with the Control Group, which received no intervention (See Table 2).

Table 2. Independent samples test (post-test task anxiety scores)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
FLCA	Equal variances assumed	.607	.440	2.325	48	.024
	Equal variances not assumed			2.325	47.685	.024
FLE	Equal variances assumed	.027	.870	-.615	48	.541
	Equal variances not assumed			-.615	47.953	.541

The results of the independent-sample t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in task-specific anxiety levels between the TA Group and the Control Group. Specifically, participants in the TA Group reported significantly higher anxiety

(M = 99.24, SD = 16.205) compared to the Control Group (M = 88.12, SD = 17.582), t(48) = 2.325, p= .024, indicating that the intervention successfully induced a heightened anxiety response relative to the levels observed in the Control group. However, the level of FLE between the TA Group and the Control Group was not significantly different (p= .541), suggesting that the anxiety-inducing conditions did not notably diminish enjoyment levels.

4.2. Task-specific enjoyment

To further examine the emotional impact of the FLE intervention, another independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the levels of task-specific enjoyment between the TE Group, which engaged in a low-stakes, autonomy-supportive listening task, and the Control Group, which did not receive any specific intervention. The data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Independent samples test (post-test task enjoyment scores)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
FLCA	Equal variances assumed	4.686	.035	-.656	48	.515
	Equal variances not assumed			-.656	44.417	.515
FLE	Equal variances assumed	.000	.988	2.437	48	.019
	Equal variances not assumed			2.437	47.738	.019

The statistical analysis demonstrated that the TE Group, which participated in the low-pressure, learner-centered listening task, experienced significantly greater task-specific enjoyment (M = 73.04, SD = 13.834) compared to the Control Group (M = 63.84, SD = 12.844). This difference reached statistical significance, t(48) = 2.437, p = .019, suggesting that the incorporation of learner autonomy, topic familiarity, and the removal of evaluative pressure meaningfully and significantly enhanced participants' enjoyment. However, the comparison of FLCA levels between the TE Group and the Control Group showed no statistically significant difference (p= .515), indicating that the enjoyment-enhancing conditions did not significantly reduce anxiety levels.

4.3. Language mindset outcomes

Following the confirmation that the data met the necessary statistical assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances, a one-way ANOVA was performed to investigate potential differences across the TE, TA, and Control groups on each dimension of the language mindset construct (See Table 4).

Table 4. One-way ANOVA (post-test language mindset scores)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
GLB	Between Groups	330.347	2	165.173	17.235	.000
	Total	1020.347	74			
L2B	Between Groups	387.920	2	193.960	21.994	.000
	Total	1022.880	74			
ASB	Between Groups	27.387	2	13.693	1.661	.197
	Total	620.987	74			

Considering the first subscale of LMI (i.e. GLB), a significant group difference was found for beliefs about general language intelligence between groups, F(2, 72) = 17.235, p = .000. Similarly, for L2 learning beliefs (L2B), there was a significant difference among the groups, F(2, 72) = 21.994, p = .000. However, the ANOVA analysis failed to find a significant difference in beliefs about age sensitivity (ASB) between the groups, F(2, 72) = 1.661, p = .197.

A Tukey post-hoc test was performed to determine which groups exhibited differences and to provide a more detailed insight into the variations among them. Table 5 outlines the findings, emphasizing the group pairs with statistically significant differences in GLB and L2B.

Table 5. Multiple comparisons of GLB and L2B (post-hoc test)

Dependent Variable	(I) Groups	(J) Groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
GLB	TA Group	TE Group	-5.120[*]	.876	.000
		C Group	-2.160[*]	.876	.042
	TE Group	TA Group	5.120[*]	.876	.000
		C Group	2.960[*]	.876	.003
	C Group	TA Group	2.160[*]	.876	.042
		TE Group	-2.960[*]	.876	.003
L2B	TA Group	TE Group	-5.560[*]	.840	.000
		C Group	-3.080[*]	.840	.001
	TE Group	TA Group	5.560[*]	.840	.000
		C Group	2.480[*]	.840	.012
	C Group	TA Group	3.080[*]	.840	.001
		TE Group	-2.480[*]	.840	.012

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The post-hoc analysis revealed that the TE Group (M = 31.12) scored significantly higher than the TA Group (M = 26.00, p = .000) and significantly higher than the Control Group (M = 28.43, p = .003) in the GLB. On the other hand, the TA Group scored significantly lower than the Control Group (mean difference = -2.160, p = .042).

Considering L2B, the TE Group (M = 30.72) significantly outperformed the TA Group (M = 25.16, p = .000) and the Control Group (M = 28.24, p = .012). Furthermore, the post hoc test indicated that the TA Group scored significantly lower than the Control Group (mean difference = -5.560, p = .001).

5. Discussion

The current study sought to explore how task-specific enjoyment and task-specific anxiety interventions influenced the language mindset of Iranian EFL learners in a listening course. The findings revealed significant and nuanced insights, extending the existing literature in several meaningful ways. While the effects of long-term emotions such as trait anxiety and enjoyment have been well-documented (Botes et al., 2020b; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), this study contributes to the underexplored area of task-specific emotional dynamics. Unlike prior research that has focused predominantly on classroom-level emotions across longer timeframes (MacIntyre et al., 2019; Oxford & Gkonou, 2021), this study emphasizes how discrete task-based emotional episodes can shape cognitive beliefs.

Concerning the first and the second research questions of the study, the interventions successfully manipulated task-specific anxiety and enjoyment. Specifically, the results highlighted that those in the TA Group exhibited significantly higher anxiety levels compared to the Control Group, while the TE Group reported significantly higher enjoyment than the Control Group. These findings are consistent with previous research by Botes et al. (2020a), who emphasized that listening tasks, because of their inherent cognitive demands and transient characteristics, often induce heightened anxiety among language learners. On the other hand, studies by Nakamura et al. (2021) and Phung et al. (2021) suggested that learner autonomy and task familiarity increase enjoyment—both of which were deliberately incorporated into the TE group's intervention design.

Consistent with prior research, the present findings reinforce the claims articulated by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) and Botes et al. (2022) that anxiety and enjoyment are not polar opposites but can co-exist independently. The present findings indicate that enjoyment-enhancing interventions, such as low-stakes tasks featuring humor and learner choice, can significantly bolster positive emotional responses even in an otherwise anxiety-prone domain like listening.

Concerning the third and the fourth research questions of the study, the results revealed that task-specific emotions were found to significantly affect two dimensions of learners' language mindset: GLB and L2B. Specifically, the TE Group demonstrated a substantial improvement in both GLB and L2B compared to the TA and Control groups. In contrast, the TA Group's beliefs about general language intelligence and L2 learning significantly declined relative to the other groups. These findings align with the growing body of research linking positive emotions such as enjoyment with adaptive cognitive and motivational patterns (Dewaele et al., 2023; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). More specifically, the results echo Lou and Noels (2016) and Bigverdi & Sabet (2024), who found that interventions promoting positive affect—whether through mindset instruction or peer feedback—can foster a growth-oriented attitude in learners.

Moreover, the negative impact of anxiety on learners' mindsets is consistent with earlier research (Cutumisu & Lou, 2020; Dweck & Yeager, 2019), which suggests that high anxiety correlates with maladaptive coping strategies and fixed mindsets. The finding that anxiety negatively and significantly influenced both GLB and L2B reinforces the notion that when anxiety is task-induced, particularly in evaluative contexts (as in the TA group), it can foster a fixed view of one's language-learning potential. However, neither intervention yielded a significant impact on ASB. This finding suggests that while task anxiety and task enjoyment interventions may influence other aspects of language mindset, they did not notably alter participants' perspectives on age sensitivity in the context of language acquisition. The lack of significant effects on ASB in this study could

indicate that participants' attitudes toward age-related sensitivity in language learning are deeply ingrained and may not easily change through short-term interventions targeting task anxiety and task enjoyment.

Additionally, while Lou and Noels (2016) demonstrated that growth mindset interventions can foster positive responses to general language challenges, the current study uniquely shows that task-induced emotional states—specifically enjoyment and anxiety in a single listening task—can similarly shape learners' mindset profiles. This situational perspective, grounded in CDST (MacIntyre et al., 2014), underscores the importance of understanding emotions as fluctuating, context-dependent variables with immediate cognitive repercussions.

Another noteworthy aspect of this study is its focus on listening tasks. While prior studies (Zhang, 2019; Kim, 2000) have identified listening as the skill most susceptible to anxiety due to its fleeting input and limited learner control, this research demonstrates that task design (i.e., stakes, topic familiarity, and autonomy) can substantially modulate learners' emotional experiences and their subsequent mindsets.

Theoretically, this study supports the notion that emotions in SLA should be framed within the CDST lens, given their rapid fluctuation and complex interaction with cognitive variables like mindset (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2020). Pedagogically, the results suggest that TBLT practitioners must attend not only to task complexity and learner proficiency but also to the emotional affordances of tasks. Specifically, fostering enjoyment through autonomy, relevant content, and non-evaluative contexts can cultivate more adaptive views on the process of language learning. Conversely, this study also highlights the risk of high-stakes, anxiety-inducing tasks. Even when used for assessment purposes, such tasks may reinforce fixed beliefs about language intelligence and undermine motivation—findings consistent with Ellis's (2003) argument that anxiety, when excessive, hampers learning.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of task-specific enjoyment and anxiety interventions on the language mindset of Iranian EFL learners within a listening course, providing novel insights into the immediate impact of task-induced emotions on learners' views on language learning. The findings revealed that fostering task-specific enjoyment through autonomy, familiar content, and low-stakes environments significantly promoted growth-oriented beliefs about general language intelligence and second language learning. Conversely, inducing task-specific anxiety with the use of high-stakes listening tasks resulted in more fixed and maladaptive language mindsets. These results highlight the critical role of task design in shaping learners' emotional experiences and subsequent cognitive perceptions within the TBLT framework.

The study reinforces the importance of integrating positive psychology principles into language education, particularly when designing listening tasks that are often prone to triggering anxiety. From a pedagogical standpoint, educators are encouraged to create emotionally supportive learning environments that prioritize learner autonomy and task relevance to cultivate more adaptive mindsets and enhance engagement. Theoretically, these findings contribute to the growing body of research advocating for the application of CDST in SLA, emphasizing the fluid and context-sensitive nature of learner emotions and language mindset.

While the study provides meaningful contributions, some limitations should be mentioned. One limitation of this study is its reliance on a male-only sample from a specific geographic and cultural context (Northwestern Iran). Future studies should explore more diverse populations, including female learners and different age groups, to ensure broader generalizability. Additionally, while this study focused on immediate post-task emotional and cognitive shifts, longitudinal designs could investigate the durability of these mindset changes over time. Further, future research could integrate qualitative data (e.g., learner diaries or interviews) to gain richer insights into the subjective emotional and cognitive experiences of learners during task performance.

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8. References

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9. Appendices

9.1. Appendix A

Comprehension questions of TA group

Listening

Audio file 1:

Listen to the speaker and answer the questions.

1. The woman did <u>NOT</u> want to buy any..............in the shop.
a) cheese   b) rice   c) milk   d) tea

2. The woman was in a foreign country for .... months.
a) four   b) two   c) three   d) five

3. She walked around the shop for half an hour.
a) True   b) False

Audio file 2:

Listen to the conversation and answer the questions.

4. Based on the conversation, which one is correct?
a) Both of them will probably take part in the exam.
b) He doesn't have time to help his friend.
c) The exam is so easy that it doesn't need hard work.
d) Just one of them paid attention to the notice.

5) There will be an Olympiad Exam next ....
a) winter
b) spring
c) autumn
d) summer

Audio file 3:

Listen to the conversation and answer the questions.

6. Which one does Marsha do on Sundays?
a) playing tennis   b) sleeping late   c) visiting friends   d) swimming

7. Marsha goes to school on weekdays.
a) True   b) False

8. Marsha exercises .... days a week.
a) four   b) three   c) two   d) five

9.2. Appendix B

Comprehension questions of TE group

Provide short answers to the following questions:

1. What was your favorite part of the podcast?

2. Did you find any jokes confusing? Which ones?

3. How did the podcast make you feel? Happy, relaxed, or something else?

4. Would you recommend this podcast to a friend? Why or why not?

5. What did you like most about the comedian's style?

6. Was there anything you didn't like about the podcast?

7. Did you learn anything new from the episode? What was it?