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Anxiety vs. Enjoyment in the Chinese EFL context: Which Predicts Listening Comprehension Better?

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Abstract

While foreign language anxiety has received abundant empirical attention, its relationship with foreign language enjoyment and specific language skills is not clearly understood. The present study explores the relationships between Chinese EFL learners' foreign language listening anxiety (FLLA), foreign language enjoyment (FLE), and listening achievement. Participants (n=255) were undergraduate students majoring in different subjects at two large local universities in China. The Chinese Version of Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (CFLES) and the Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) were used to measure FLE and FLLA, respectively. Correlation analyses performed on the questionnaire data revealed that while listening achievement negatively correlated with FLLA, it was positively correlated with FLE. A multiple stepwise regression analysis revealed that, of the two variables, FLE was found to better predict listening achievement than FLLA. Additionally, listening comprehension was found to be significantly correlated with private enjoyment, but not with variables relating to learning atmosphere or teachers. These findings highlight the importance of positive emotions and experiences in the language learning process and have implications for classroom practice.

***Keywords*:** foreign language listening anxiety; foreign language enjoyment; listening comprehension

Listening is an important skill in foreign language learning and, undoubtedly, the one skill learners are engaged in more than speaking, writing, or reading in the classroom. Listening is a complex skill that involves a range of micro (sentence level) and macro (discourse level) skills (Richards, 1983), and several factors can cause challenges in listening comprehension such as chunking/clustering, colloquial language, rate of delivery, prosodic features, contracted forms, discourse markers, to name a few. Additionally, listening is an important component in many high-stakes standardized language tests, such as the TOEFL iBT and IELTS. Despite being an important skill in language learning and communication, listening has received relatively less attention from researchers compared to other language skills (Vandergrift, 2012) and has thus been referred to as the "Cinderella skill" (Nunan, 2002). One reason attributed to this scant scholarly attention is that listening comprehension is a complex cognitive skill that is affected by a range of factors including but not limited to emotions and language proficiency (Oxford, 2019). Previous empirical research indicated that foreign language anxiety (FLA) as an important individual difference (ID) is a strong predictor of learners listening achievement (Zhang, 2019).

However, some scholars have recently highlighted the need to focus on the role positive emotions on language performance (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Mercer et al., 2016), and investigating both positive and negative emotions could provide a better understanding of the role of emotions in language learning (e.g., Dewaele et al., 2019; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). In fact, some recent empirical evidence suggests that positive emotions might boost learners' enjoyment and thus control their anxiety (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). While FLA and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) are receiving more scholarly attention in second language acquisition (SLA), few studies have explored the possible relationships between these two types of emotions (Li et al., 2018). Some of these studies focused on the relationships between FLE, FLA, and general FL achievement (e.g., Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Li et al., 2019). Others indicated their impact on specific language skills, such as listening (e.g., Wang & MacIntyre, 2021) and speaking (Saito et al., 2018). What requires further empiricial attention is the relationship between specific types of anxiety such as foreign language listening anxiety (FLLA), FLE, and listening as a domain-specific language skill (Dewaele & Li, 2022).

Some researchers have proposed that FLE might reduce students' anxiety and help learners focus more on the content they hear (Wang & MacIntyre, 2021). Therefore, in response to the recent calls for more empirical studies focusing on the relationship between emotions and specific language skills (e.g., Aslan & Thompson, 2018), the present study explores the possible relationships between FLLA, FLE, and listening comprehension in the Chinese English as a foreign language (EFL) context where learning English is a highly anxiety-inducing endeavor. The Chinese EFL curiculum relies heavily on lexico-grammatical competence, and learners are required to take

high-stakes English exams, which creates an anxiety-inducing learning environment for learners. Li et al. (2018) pointed out that since most Chinese students learn English to achieve good grades in college entrance examinations, most of them are under pressure when they learn English and thus are less likely to enjoy learning English. Besides, previous research has also shown that Chinese EFL students had lower levels of language enjoyment in the process of learning English. Li et al. (2018) explored the sources of FLE among many Chinese high school EFL learners. The findings demonstrated that Chinese EFL learners' FLE is mainly rooted in the teacher, followed by the learner and classroom atmosphere. The authors argued that the exclusive role of the teacher in maintaining a positive learning environment was a defining feature of the Chinese culture rooted in high power differentials giving teachers more control in the language classroom. Therefore, the Chinese EFL context exhibits a unique language learning and teaching environment, requiring more empirical attention to explore the relationship between negative and positive emotions and specific language learning experiences.

In what follows, a literature review focusing on the existing empirical research on FLLA, FLE and highlighting the research gaps and the research questions of the present study is presented. Next, the study methodology is described and findings are presented. Finally, the findings are discussed in relation to the relevant literature followed by pedagogical implications.

Review of Literature

Foreign Language Anxiety and Listening Comprehension

Learners may experience a range of emotions (e.g., anxiety, enjoyment, and boredom) in the process of learning a foreign language (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2019; Dörnyei, 2007). Defined as a negative feeling in terms of tension and nervousness (Horwitz et al., 1986), foreign language anxiety has received abundant scholarly attention since the 1960s and has been regarded as one of the most important emotions in predicting language achievement (MacIntyre, 2017). FLA is also considered as a feeling of distress when learners find it difficult to connect with other people through language (Horwitz, 2017).

The previous research focusing on FLA and language achievement, however, provided confounding results with positive, negative, and no relationships between language achievement (for a review, see MacIntyre, 2017). Some research indicated a negative relationship between language anxiety and language achievement (Aida, 1994; Sparks & Patton, 2013, 2018), demonstrating that language anxiety is highly related to students' language proficiency. More recently, Teimouri et al. (2019) suggested that FLA might have a moderate negative relationship with language achievement depending on the language contexts and educational backgrounds of learners.

Previously, similar confounding results were attributed to the difference between language learning anxiety (state anxiety) and general anxiety (trait anxiety) (Horwitz et al.,1986).

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986) – a frequently used instrument in this line of research – focused on language learners' speaking skills (e.g., Aida, 1994). Therefore, conflicting results could possibly be attributed to whether or not the scale can accurately assess learners' other language skills, which necessitates a more focused scale to assess learners' specific language skills. In addition, researchers argued that most of the previous studies focused on the role of FLA on general language proficiency (e.g., Aslan & Thompson, 2018; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019). Only a few studies explored the link between anxiety and specific skills (e.g., Zhang, 2013; Saito et al., 2018), revealing a need to investigate the relationship between FLA and specific language skills (Teimouri et al., 2019; Zhang, 2019).

Although researchers have pointed out that listening is an important language skill in the process of learning a language, research into anxiety and language learners' listening comprehension is scarce (Teimouri, et al., 2019). According to Vandergrift (2012), listening comprehension involves complex cognitive tasks such as attention and memory and is affected by emotions. In addition, when learners feel anxious, their attention might be distracted, and they might miss information when listening to others (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Since listening comprehension can be anxiety-inducing (Zhang, 2019), exploring the relationship between foreign language listening anxiety (FLLA) and listening comprehension could have important pedagogical implications.

The concept of FLLA was first introduced by Elkhaafiafi (2005) to describe the type of anxiety that might arise in the process of listening and be negatively correlated with listening achievement. Thus, he suggested that teachers should help students improve their listening achievement by providing a less stressful learning environment to reduce their FLLA. The Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) developed by Elkhaafiafi (2005) has been widely adopted to assess listening anxiety. The scale is based on a 5-point Likert scale and has high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = .96). Using FLLAS, studies have demonstrated that there is a negative link between FLLA and listening comprehension (e.g., Zhang, 2013; Wang & MacIntyre, 2021). For instance, Zhang's (2013) study revealed that FLLA negatively affected learners' listening comprehension in the Chinese EFL context. However, participants' listening achievement did not have an impact on their listening anxiety levels. More recently, Wang and MacIntyre (2021) have suggested that there is a negative relationship between FLA and listening comprehension in a study involving 410 international university students in Canada. However, the study did not differentiate foreign language contexts given that it was conducted among a group of international students. Thus, the participants' emotional experiences could go beyond classroom contexts and might be

influenced by socio-cultural variables. In addition, due to the complex nature of language learning, FLA is unlikely to be the only factor affecting learners' language achievement. Therefore, future studies are needed to identify the role of other emotions that could positively be related to language achievement, such as foreign language enjoyment (FLE) in language learning (Dewaele & McIntyre, 2014).

Foreign Language Enjoyment and Language Achievement

Recognized as one of the most important positive emotions in SLA, FLE has received increasing attention in recent years (Botes et al., 2022). FLE is a positive feeling affected by "peers, teachers, the environment, and a sense of accomplishment" (Li et al, 2018, p. 193). According to Boudreau et al. (2018), enjoyment refers to a type of emotion when people's needs are met and surpassed. In a language learning context, this could involve learners being engaged with the target language and improving their achievements. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) pointed out that enjoyment could fuel learners' engagement with the target language in an unfamiliar environment, reduce learners' FLA, and finally help them improve their language achievement. Drawing on the *broaden and build* theory (Fredrickson, 2001) that highlights the significance of discrete positive emotions such as joy, pride, interest, and love in people's attention and thinking, MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) argue that enjoyment as a typical example of positive emotions can enable learners to develop resources for language learning, expand their learning experiences, and increase their learning uptake.

To measure FLE, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) developed the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale and collected data from 1742 participants worldwide, including 90 different nationalities. While the majority of the data represented Western nationalities, such as Belgians and Brits (61%), only small proportions included North and South Americans and Asian learners. Among the Asian sample, only 9.9% was Chinese, suggesting that the scale requires further testing and validation in the Chinese EFL context. Initially, the authors confirmed a two-dimension structure of the scale being FLE-private (a sense of personal achievement in the language learning process) and FLE-social (foreign language achievement in relation to social factors including the learning environment). Later, Dewaele and Dewaele (2017) generated a three-factor structure, the third one being peer-controlled versus teacher-controlled positive atmosphere. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) confirmed the high reliability of the scale with a Cronbach's Alpha of .86. Using this scale, previous studies revealed a positive relationship between FLE and general language proficiency (e.g., Jiang & Dewaele, 2019).

Using a structural equation model, Li (2019) has captured the complex relationship between trait emotional intelligence, FLE, and EFL learning achievement. The findings revealed a positive relationship between FLE and language achievement, which was in accord with other research (e.g., Jiang & Dewaele, 2019). Noting that most of the previous research focused on the role of FLE and general achievement, researchers

wondered whether FLE might be related to domain specific language skills. In this vein, Dewaele and Li's (2022) study focusing on Chinese senior secondary students found evidence for the predictive power of self-perceived English competence in general and in the domains of reading, grammar, speaking for FLE, while actual English competence and perceived competence in English listening, writing, and vocabulary were found as insignificant predictors. These findings show that participants who perceived themselves as competent in English in general, and in English reading, grammar, and speaking were more likely to enjoy the English class. In a similar study, Wang & MacIntyre (2021) explored the relationship between FLLA, FLE, and listening comprehension among 410 international university students in Canada. They found a significant negative correlation between FLLA and FLE, suggesting that higher anxiety and lower the enjoyment can challenge cognitive resources during listening and lead to comprehension difficulties and poor performance. They also found that learners with higher FLE had higher listening comprehension scores on the IELTS test and used better strategies while doing listening comprehension tasks.

In sum, the research reviewed here provides important insights into FLE and language achievement. Although there are ample empirical studies concerning the relationship between FLA, FLE, and general L2 achievement (e.g., Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Li et al., 2018), a small number of studies investigated the relationship between the two types of emotions and specific language skills (e.g., Dewaele & Li, 2022; Saito et al., 2018; Wang & MacIntyre, 2021). In this domain of research, the majority of studies investigated the role of FLE on speaking (e.g., Dewaele & Li., 2022; Saito et al., 2018), while few studies investigated the relationship between FLE and listening comprehension. In addition, the small number of studies that looked at FLE and listening focused on secondary students (Dewaele & Li, 2022; Wang and MacIntyre's (2021). It is possible that the relationship between emotions and language achievement can show variation in different contexts (Teimouri et al., 2019) with diverse learner groups. Therefore, more empirical research from other language learning contexts can enhance our understanding of these emotions and their relationship with the language learning process. To this end, the current study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between learners' FLLA, FLE, and listening achievements in the Chinese EFL context?

2. Do learners' FLLA and FLE predict their level of performance in listening comprehension tests in the Chinese EFL context? If so, which one predicts it better?

Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative design to explore the relationship between FLLA, FLE and listening comprehension in the Chinese EFL context. In what follows, the study characteristics in relation to the participants, data instruments, and data collection and analysis procedures are described.

Participants

Demographic information about the participants was collected through a background questionnaire in which items pertaining to participants' age, gender, and previous language learning experiences were included. Given that the participants came from different English proficiency levels, both English and translated Chinese versions of the questionnaires were presented to the participants following previous research (e.g., Aslan & Thompson, 2018; Thompson & Aslan, 2015).

The participants were 342 university students from two large local universities in Chengdu, China. The two universities are top-tier universities in China; therefore, the students are required to pass the National College English Test (Band 4) (more details about this test are given in the next section) to graduate from the university. Since 87 of the participants did not provide their listening comprehension scores from this test, their responses were removed accordingly, which resulted in a final sample of 255 participants. The participants were from different majors including but not limited to English, engineering, and medicine. The mean age was 19.58 (SD = 1.23), ranging from 18 to 27. There were 240 females (70.18%), 100 males (29.24%), and 2 remained undisclosed (0.58%). Participants' English level was intermediate. Nearly none of the participants had previous language learning experience in English speaking countries (99.13%). Seventy-five per cent of the participants reported studying English 2-3 hours per week.

Data Instruments

Questionnaires were used in the study as they helped gather information from a large group of participants and allowed for inferential statistical analysis (Rose et al., 2019; Révész, 2012) to explore the relationships between the variables in question. The participants' FLLA was assessed through the 20-item Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) (Elkhafaifi, 2005). The scale was created based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The higher scores indicated higher FLLA. The scale was originally adapted to measure Arabic listening anxiety from Saito et al.'s (1990) Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS). For the purposes of the present study, the scale was adapted to Chinese EFL learners and the word "Arabic" in items were replaced by "English". The FLLAS was tested with 233 participants and showed an acceptable level of reliability, with an internal consistency coefficient of .96. The complete questionnaire can be seen in Appendix 1.

In the present study, the Cronbach's Alpha for FLLAS was .84.

To measure participants' FLE, the Chinese version of Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (CFLES) (Li et al., 2018) was utilized in the present study. The scale is made up of 11 self-report items based on a 5-point Likert scale with good construct, discriminant and convergent validity and internal consistency reliability measures. The higher scores indicated higher FLE. In addition, according to Li et al. (2018), the scale consists of three factors. The first factor, FLE-private consisting of items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 refers to the private enjoyment of personal progress, excellent performance and/or interesting and novel language learning experiences. The second factor, FLE-teacher with items 7, 8, and 9, pertains to the positive experiences in relation to foreign language teachers' support and encouragement as well as their pedagogical practices, such as the use of multimedia, songs, and cultural activities. Finally the third factor, FLE-atmosphere (items 5, 10, and 11), involves enjoyable episodes in the foreign language class related to the positive teacher-mediated activities such as group presentations, story-telling, role-play and recitation, highlighting the social aspects of classroom environment. The internal consistency of the scale was assessed by using Cronbach's Alpha with values of .82 for the whole scale and .79, .89, and .77 for the subscales of FLE-Private, FLE-Teacher, and FLE-Atmosphere, respectively. These values indicated that the scale had high reliability. The CFLES is included in Appendix 2. In the present study, the Cronbach's Alpha for CFLES was .86.

The National College English Test (CET) band 4 was used in this study as a measure of participants' listening achievement. Being a national standardized English proficiency test, CET is a key language proficiency test in China. The CET4 is the requirement for graduation in most of the Chinese universities. In addition, many employers require applicants to pass the CET4 test when they are looking for potential employers. The test is a large-scale high-stakes test and thus has high reliability and validity (National College English Testing Committee, 2016, and also see Zheng and Cheng, 2008 for a detailed review). The test is made up of four parts, namely, listening comprehension, reading, writing, and speaking. The full mark of the test is 710 with 249 (35%) marks allocated for listening comprehension. The listening comprehension part consists of 25 multiple-choice questions, where test-takers are required to choose correct answers by listening to different content including news reports, conversations, and scientific articles. The listening component of the test is aimed at assessing students' ability to get the main idea of short listening material, find important and detailed information, understand the speakers' attitude, deduce what the speakers infer, use linguistic features to understand the listening content, and use strategies to help them understand the content (National College English Testing Committee, 2016). The listening material is played once only, and the test-takers are required to write their answers on an answer sheet (National College English Testing Committee, 2006). Being a robust measure of language proficiency, CET was also used in previous studies

(e.g., Sun & Wang, 2020). Following the instructions in line with previous research (Vandergrift, 2015), the current study used participants' self-reported listening scores from the last time they took this test as a measure of their listening proficiency after completing the questionnaires. While the participants were not asked to specify the date they took the exam, the test is held twice a year at the end of each semester.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection lasted for about two months starting in May 2022 and ending in July 2022. The data collection procedure consisted of two steps. The first step was administering the questionnaires. Online questionnaires were generated via an online tool (www.wenjuanxing.cn), and a link to the questionnaires was generated automatically. Later, the link and information about the study were sent to the course instructors via email. The aim of the study was presented at the beginning of the survey, and participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, the participants were given enough time to read the information sheet. After clicking "agree" at the end of the information sheet and consent form, the participants were allowed to fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaires were completed during the break between two regular classes with the help of two instructors. The instructors first shared the link with the students, and the students opened the link to the questionnaire using their mobile phones. It took the participants an average of 10 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

The study complied with the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and was approved by the ethics committee at a leading UK higher education instituition. Informed consent procedures were followed – participants had to click on 'agree' to complete the online questionnaires after reviewing the information sheet, reserving their right to withdraw from the study at any time. No compensation was offered for participation and all responses were anonymous and had no bearing on participants' course grades.

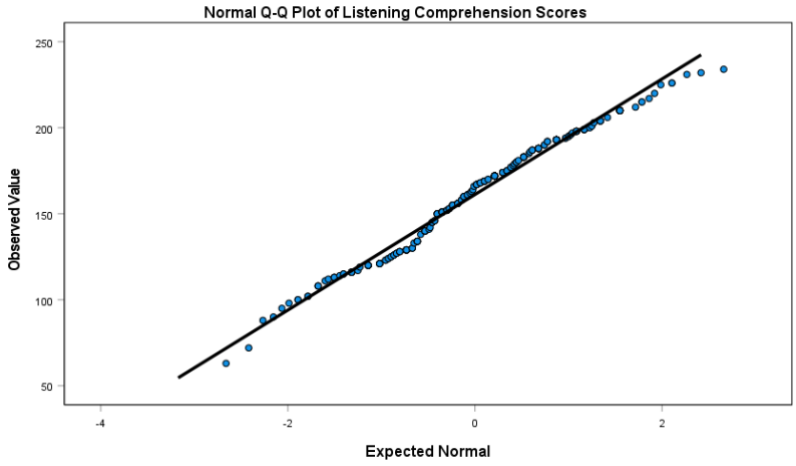
Data Coding and Analysis

To prepare the data for analysis, the three items (2, 7, 18) in FLLAS that were negatively worded were reverse coded before further analysis. The normality of the data was checked through a series of Shapiro Wilk tests. The results indicated that participants' scores on FLLAS and CFLES were normally distributed ($p > .05$). Since the scores on participants' listening comprehension scores did not require the assumption of normal distribution, a non-parametric method was obtained as suggested by previous studies (e.g., Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Zhang, 2021). A closer examination of the QQ-plot (Figure 1) indicated the data were distributed normally. Thus, a wider range of parametric methods could be opted in the present study.

Following data preparation and coding, a range of inferential statistical analyses were completed via the SPSS version 28 to answer the two research questions. To answer the

first research question, a series of Pearson Product Correlation analyses were performed to explore any significant relationships between the study variables. The correlation coefficient was measured based on the benchmarks set by Norouzian and Plonsky (2018). More specifically, the *r* value lower than .25 indicates a weak correlation, the *r* value ranging from .25 to .37 reveals a medium correlation, and the *r* value higher than .60 indicates a strong correlation. The effect sizes were calculated by r^2 based on the benchmarks set by Norouzian and Plonsky (2018) and an r^2 value below .20 indicated a small effect size while the r^2 value above .50 implied a large effect size. To answer the second research question, a multiple regression analysis was performed to assess how the independent variables (FLLA and FLE) predict the dependent variable (CET4 listening scores). The *r* square value was utilized to assess the effect size of this model.

Figure 1. The Normal Distribution of Listening Comprehension Scores.



Findings

In response to the first research question, correlation analyses (Table 1) revealed a significant negative and weak correlation between participants' listening proficiency and FLLA ($r = -.17$, $p = .006 < .01$), meaning that participants with higher FLLA are more likely to have lower listening comprehension. In terms of the relationship between participants' listening proficiency and FLE, a weak positive relationship was found ($r = .22$, $p < .001$), meaning that participants with higher FLE have better listening comprehension than those with a lower level of FLE.

Table 1. The Correlation Analysis

Variables	Listening Comprehension	
	r	*p*
FLLA	-.17	.006*
FLE	.22	.000*
Private Enjoyment	.31	.000*
Teacher Variables	.05	.43
Atmosphere Variables	.04	.53

*$p < 0.01$(2-tailed)

Given that the CFLES was based on a multidimensional construct, a set of further correlation analyses was performed to explore the relationship between the sub-scales (FLE-private, FLE-teacher, and FLE-atmosphere) of the CFLES and listening comprehension. The relevant statistics are presented in Table 1. The findings revealed a moderate positive correlation between FLE-private and listening comprehension ($r = .31$, $p < .000$), demonstrating those who had higher levels of private enjoyment also had higher listening achievement. Interestingly, neither FLE-teacher nor FLE-atmosphere was correlated to listening comprehension. These findings will be discussed in the discussion section.

To address the second research question, a multiple stepwise regression analysis was performed to identify the significant predictors of listening comprehension. To avoid multicollinearity of the findings, the study only involved variables that were significant in the previous correlation analysis, and these were FLLA and FLE-private as the predictor variables in the regression model. The value for the variance inflation factors (VIF) was 1.03, indicating no signs of multicollinearity were found in the current study. The regression model is displayed in Table 2. A significant regression equation was found F (2, 254) = 15.48, p = .000 with a R^2 of .11, R^2 $_{\text{Adjusted}}$ .10, meaning that the predictors could explain 11% of the variance and indicating a small effect size based on the benchmark set by Cohen (1988).

Table 2. The Regression Model Summary

Model	*R*	*R* Square	Adjusted *R* Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.33	.11	.10	31.83

Predictor variables: (Constant), FLLA, private enjoyment of FLE
Predicted variable: Listening comprehension

Following Larson-Hall's (2010) guidelines, in order to identify the significance of each predictor in the model, the squared semipartial correlations (sr^2) were examined in the SPSS output. These coefficients are displayed in Table 3 along with 95% confidence intervals and *t*-tests for the contribution of each predictor to the model. The examination of the coefficients revealed that private enjoyment of FLE was the better predictor of

listening comprehension (sr^2 = .28) followed by FLLA (sr^2 = -.12). In addition, the standardized beta values were checked to see which predictor has more importance in the model (Field, 2013). The standardized beta value for FLE-private enjoyment (.29) indicates stronger positive relationship to response variable (listening comprehension), whereas the standardized beta value for FLLA negatively correlated with it (-.1.3) without statistical significance. These findings suggest that while listening comprehension is related to FLLA and FLE, private enjoyment of FLE as a positive variable predicts listening comprehension better than a negatively associated variable of FLLA.

Table 3. The Regression Coefficients

	Coefficients					95% Confidence Interval		Correlations	
	Unstandardized		Standardized						
Model	*B*	Std. Error	Beta	*t*	*p*	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Partial	Semi-partial
(Constant)	152.2	17.97		8.47	< .001	116.81	187.58		
FLLA	- .44	.21	-1.3	-2.1	.037	-.85	-.03	-.12	-.12
Private enjoyment of FLE	2.39	.50	.29	4.75	< .001	1.40	3.38	.29	.28

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study was guided by two research questions. In addressing the first research question, the findings revealed a negative relationship between participants' FLLA and listening proficiency, which is in line with previous literature (e.g., Zhang, 2013). This negative relationship can be attributed to the demands that anxiety can have on cognitive processing resources leading to distraction and attention problems. Some of these attention problems may be related to the unknown words learners encounter while listening. Unfamiliarity with speaker accents in the listening texts can be another source of difficulty during listening. More specifically, an unfamiliar accent could increase learners' listening anxiety while listening and divert their attention from the content of the listening text to pronunciation, causing them to miss some important information crucial to answering questions in the listening comprehension test or activity. Additionally, participants with higher FLLA had lower achievement in listening comprehension, while listeners with higher FLE had higher achievement in the listening comprehension test. This finding suggests that anxiety might induce attention problems during a listening activity and can lead to less optimal performance outcomes. This finding is in line with Teimouri et al. (2019) who found a moderate negative relationship between FLLA and listening comprehension. Another possible reason might be that the participants' limited exposure to target language input and use. Since nearly none of the participants reported studying in an English-speaking environment, their FLLA might be linked to their limited exposure to English and opportunities for out-of-class

language interaction. Therefore, future research might be useful in differentiating the contextual learning experiences related to foreing language enjoyment, including study abroad, online tutoring envrionments, and private language schools.

In terms of FLE, a positive correlation was found in the current study, which is in line with previous findings (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Wang & MacIntyre, 2021). Interestingly, the correlation coefficient in the present study (r = .31, p < .000) was slightly higher than the correlation between FLE and self-perceived English achievement (r = .200, p < .001) reported in Li (2019). One explanation for this could be the language context. In Li's (2019) study, the participants were a group of high school students, thus, the students received an exam-oriented education system. In other words, the main goal of the learners was to prepare for the college entrance examination, thus they needed to go to cram schools (Yung, 2020) – specialized schools providing additional teaching support with private tutors to help students improve their performance in examinations – and they might feel stressed and were less likely to enjoy language learning. In the present study, however, the participants were university students, and they did not need to prepare for standardized high-stakes tests; therefore, they might have felt more relaxed and were more likely to enjoy listening activities. In addition, as Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) pointed out that learners in higher education settings could experience more FLE. Furthermore, the findings might be attributed to gender differences. Previous research showed that females may experience a higher level of FLE compared with male learners (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). In the current study, the majority of learners were female, thus they might experience more enjoyment than male learners. Therefore, a careful consideration of the contextual factors (Teimouri et al., 2019) and social variables related to learners, educational systems, and assessment practices might be useful in understanding the complex relationships between emotions and foreign language learning.

The finding that private language enjoyment had a moderate positive correlation with listening comprehension may indicate that if a learner enjoys the listening material (e.g., an inspirational TED talk, a movie, or a lecture), it is likely that they will comprehend the content better. This could be due to the fact that listening is generally an individual and learner-internal cognitive domain involving mechanisms of attention and memory and can be independent from the teacher and teaching environment. In other words, when the learner is listening to a lecture on climate change, for example, their interest in the topic might play a bigger role in the comprehension of the content, rather than the teacher facilitating the listening activity. In addition, since receptive listening is an individual activity, the social dimensions of the learning environment (i.e., classroom atmosphere) may not have much relevance to the comprehension of the material. The strength of the relationship being weak between FLE and listening comprehension can be attributed to the fact that listening comprehension is likely related to the content of listening materials. That is, if a listener is not familiar with the content or has difficulties

understanding words or concepts, not matter how high their FLE might be, their comprehension might still be low.

In response to the second research question, the findings revealed that private enjoyment of FLE is a better predictor of participants' listening comprehension than FLLA. While this finding supports previous research suggesting that the two types of emotions can co-exist in the language learning process (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), it is interesting to note that FLE as a positive factor better predicts listening comprehension. In the present study, participants' private enjoyment was found to significantly correlate with their listening comprehension, suggesting that when they feel confident, they can potentially more easily follow information. The confidence and good sense of achievement in learning could then reduce their FLLA and help them have better listening achievement than those with a lower level of FLE.

The present study did not find significant correlations between listening comprehension and FLE-teacher and FLE-atmosphere factors. These findings contradict Li et al. (2018) who found that Chinese EFL learners' FLE is mainly rooted in the teacher, followed by the learner and classroom atmosphere. While classroom dynamics are central to learning experiences, in the context of listening comprehension, they may not be immediately relevant during listening activities. This might be due to the fact that listening is a receptive skill that does not always require interaction with others, particularly when learners engage in 'extensive' listening activities for content learning (e.g., lectures, instructional videos) and exam preparation and practice (Flowerdew & Miller, 2014).

A number of limitations pertaining to this study need to be acknowledged. One limitation has to do with sampling. While the participants in this study (n=255) constituted a relatively large sample for sound statistical analyses, they were from two top-tier universities in China with relatively high English proficiency. Therefore, they do not represent a wider population of Chinese learners or foreign language learners in general. Therefore, results may vary with different groups of learners in different higher education contexts where practices and experiences of teaching English for academic purposes may be quite different and can lead to different FLE and FLLA profiles. Additionally, because foreign language learning is generally optional at the university level, there might be greater variation in learners' FLE and FLLA levels, as those who take foreign language courses are likely to be motivated and enthusiastic about language learning. Another limitation is the reliance on data from self-report questionnaire and listening comprehension scores, which may include positive or negative biases in participants' responses. That being said, the reliability of scales and pattern of results confirmed the credibility of the data. In future research, more objective and in-depth qualitative methods could be adopted, including alternative listening tasks, cross-sectional, retrospective or longitudinal interviews, classroom observations, and

narrative data including learner diaries or reflective journals focusing on episodes of foreign language enjoyment and anxiety.

The findings of this study have some pedagogical implications. In higher education contexts where English is taught for academic purposes, vocabulary and academic jargon may pose challenges for listening comprehension. Therefore, to prepare learners for the academic contents, teachers can provide a list of words with which students may be unfamiliar before listening or assign reading activities in relation to the listening content prior to the class. Given FLE-private was found to be the only correlated variable to listening comprehension in the present study among the other subscales of FLE (FLE-teacher or FLE-atmosphere), it is important to understand learners' experiences with listening. In this vein, teachers can ask students to keep a foreign language enjoyment diary (Goh, 1997) where they record personal experiences with respect to listening comprehension outside the classroom, such as listening to a popular song and understanding its lyrics, watching a movie and understanding its plot, and listening to an enjoyable podcast about entrepreneurship, to name a few. These experiences could later be built into classroom discussion based on reflection probes (Goh & Taib, 2006) so that both students and teachers become aware of what makes listening enjoyable. Such activities could in turn alleviate listening anxiety and boost confidence and enjoyment while listening.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS)

1. I get upset when I'm not sure whether I understand what I'm hearing in English. 当我不确定我能否理解到我听到的英文时我感到沮丧。

2. When I listen to English, I often understand the words but still can't quite understand what the speaker is saying. 当我听英语时，我经常可以听懂英文单词但是不能很清楚地理解说话内容。

3. When I'm listening to English, I get so confused I can't remember what I've heard. 当我听英语时，我经常感到困惑并且记不清我听到的内容。

4. I feel intimidated whenever I have a listening passage in English to listen to.每当我有一段英语文章需要听时，我就感到害怕。

5. I am nervous when I am listening to a passage in English when I'm not familiar with the topic.当我听到一段英语写的我不熟悉的话时，我感到紧张。

6. I get upset whenever I hear unknown grammar while listening to English.当我听英语遇到不知道的语法现象时我感到沮丧。

7. When listening to English I get nervous and confused when I don't understand every word.当我听英语时不能理解每一个单词的意思时我感到紧张并且困惑。

8. It bothers me to encounter words I can't pronounce while listening to English. 当我听英语时听遇到我不会读的单词时我会感到困扰。

9. I usually end up translating word by word when I'm listening to English. 我听英语时经常是一个词一个词地翻译。

10. By the time you get past the strange sounds in English, it's hard to remember what you're listening to.当你遇到发音很奇怪的英语单词时，你很难记住你听到的内容。

11. I am worried about all the new sounds you have to learn to understand spoken English.我对那些学会了才能理解英语口语的新的声音感到担忧。

12. I enjoy listening to English.我喜欢听英语。

13. I feel confident when I am listening to English.我在听英语时感到自信。

14. Once you get used to it, listening to English is not so difficult.当你习惯听英语以后，你发现听英语并不是那么困难。

15. The hardest part of learning English is learning to understand spoken English.学习英语最难的部分就是听懂英语口语。

16. I would be happy just to learn to read English rather than having to learn to understand spoken English 我很乐意仅仅学会读英语，而不是必须学会理解英语口语。

17. I don't mind listening to English by myself but I feel very uncomfortable when I have to listen to English in a group.我并不介意一个人听英语，但是当我在一个小组里听英语时我感到不舒服。

18. I am satisfied with the level of listening comprehension in English that I have achieved so far. 我对我现在英语听力达到的水平感到满意。

19. English culture and ideas seem very foreign to me.英语文化以及观点对我来说很陌生。

20. You have to know so much about English history and culture in order to understand spoken English.你需要了解许多英语历史以及文化来帮助你理解英语口语。

Appendix 2: Chinese Version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (CFLES)

1. I don't get bored.我不厌倦英语学习。

2. In class, I feel proud of my accomplishments.我享受英语学习。

3. I've learned interesting things.学英语的过程中，我学了很多有趣的事情。

4. In class, I feel proud of my accomplishments.在班里，我为自己的英语成绩感到自豪。

5. It's a positive environment.周围英语学习的氛围很好。

6. It's fun.学英语很有趣。

7. The teacher is encouraging.老师总是鼓励我们。

8. The teacher is friendly.老师很友善。

9. The teacher is supportive.老师总是支持我们。

10. There is a good atmosphere.我身边有很好的英语学习氛围。

11. We form a tight group.我们有紧密的学习小组。

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