

# A Correlational Study on Enjoyment, Anxiety and Boredom in a Foreign Language Context: A Comparison between Male and Female Turkish Learners of English as a Foreign Language

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**Abstract:** Foreign language learning is a complicated process impacted by several factors, including emotional experiences and motivational aspects. Understanding the interaction between these factors is essential for optimizing the language learning environment and strengthening learners' proficiency. To date, limited research has specifically examined the correlational patterns between enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom among Turkish EFL learners, particularly in terms of potential gender differences. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the relationship between these affective factors and their potential variations based on gender. To obtain the results of this correlational study, the three emotions scales: Foreign language enjoyment (Botes et al., 2021), Foreign language boredom (Li et al., 2023) and Foreign language classroom anxiety (Botes et al., 2022) were administered to 69 Turkish learners of English as a foreign language. The correlational data were obtained to see the connection between foreign language enjoyment, anxiety and boredom.

**Keywords:** English as a foreign language (EFL); foreign language enjoyment (FLE); foreign language anxiety (FLA); foreign language boredom (FLB); Turkish EFL learners.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Recent research has highlighted the importance of emotional factors in language learning, emphasizing the role of positive affective states such as enjoyment and negative affective states such as anxiety and boredom (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Pekrun et al., 2017). These three emotions are being investigated by several scholars and researchers for having an impact and for playing a role in the success of the failure of learning English as a foreign language. Enjoyment has been found to enhance motivation, engagement, and language learning outcomes (MacIntyre et al., 2019). When learners enjoy the process of learning English, they tend to be more engaged, motivated, and willing to invest time and effort into their studies. Furthermore, anxiety can hinder language learning by impeding performance, reducing confidence, and increasing avoidance behaviors (Horwitz et al., 1986). High level of anxiety can lead to an obstruction of the learning progress and negatively impacts the performance of the learners. Although it is less explored in the language learning context, boredom has been recognized as a potential factor that can influence learners' engagement and motivation (Pekrun et al., 2011).

Overall, enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom are interconnected affective factors that can influence the process and outcomes of learning English as a foreign language. While positive factors can enhance motivation and engagement, negative factors can delay progress and destroy motivation. Therefore, it is very important for educators and researchers to understand the connection between these factors in order to provide a supportive and an engaging environment for language learners. This study aims to investigate whether male and female Turkish EFL learners differ in terms of their experiences with enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom.

### *Theoretical framework*

Previous research has indicated that gender can influence affective experiences in language learning (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Therefore an investigation of potential gender differences in the experiences of enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom among Turkish learners of English is needed. The correlation between enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom in a foreign language context, with a focus on male and female Turkish learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), draws on several key concepts and theories. First, enjoyment in language learning has been associated with increased motivation, engagement, and persistence (MacIntyre et al., 2019). According to self-determination theory (SDT), enjoyment is linked to intrinsic motivation, which refers to engaging in an activity for the inherent satisfaction it provides (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Learners who experience enjoyment are more likely to be self-motivated and invested in their language learning attempt. Second, language learning anxiety encompasses feelings of fear, apprehension, and discomfort experienced by learners when using or learning a foreign language (Horwitz et al., 1986). The affective filter hypothesis posits that high anxiety levels can create a mental barrier that hinders language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Third, boredom is an affective state characterized by feelings of disinterest, lack of engagement, and reduced motivation (Pekrun et al., 2011). Cognitive engagement theory suggests that boredom can negatively impact learning by reducing attention, effort, and active participation (Fredricks et al., 2004). Gender differences have been studied by MacIntyre et al. (1998), which found that female learners reported higher levels of enjoyment in language learning than male learners. However, individual variation also plays a significant role in these gender differences.

### *Literature review*

To investigate foreign language enjoyment, researchers have utilized self-report measures such as the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES) developed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014). The FLES measures different dimensions of enjoyment, including classroom enjoyment, teacher-related enjoyment, and general foreign language enjoyment. This scale has been used in studies involving Turkish EFL learners to assess their levels of enjoyment and explore the factors that contribute to their enjoyment in the language learning process (e.g., Öztürk, 2018).

Anxiety in Turkish EFL learners has been investigated using instruments such as the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). The FLCAS measures anxiety levels in language learning contexts and assesses learners' anxiety related to communication, test situations, and fear of negative evaluation. Studies have employed the FLCAS to examine anxiety levels among Turkish EFL learners and identify the factors that contribute to their anxiety (e.g., Gürbüz, 2015). Additionally, qualitative methods such as interviews and open-ended questionnaires have been used to gain deeper insights into learners' experiences of anxiety and its impact on their language learning process (e.g., Başoğlu & Akpınar, 2019).

Boredom in Turkish EFL learners has been investigated using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative studies have utilized self-report measures such as the Boredom Proneness Scale (BPS) (Boredom Proneness Scale, 1990) to assess learners' propensity for boredom and examine its relationship with language learning outcomes (e.g., Yıldırım, 2020). Qualitative studies, on the other hand, have employed interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations to explore the sources and manifestations of boredom in the language learning context and understand its impact on learners' motivation and engagement (e.g., Arslan, 2017).

### *Overview of the present study*

As mentioned above, emotions are of a giant importance in the learning process of English as a foreign language. Enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom are important affective factors that can significantly influence the language learning process. Understanding their interrelationships and their potential gender differences is crucial for creating effective language learning environments and designing appropriate interventions to support learners' needs. The study aims to

explore the potential differences in the experiences of these affective factors between male and female learners and shed light on their implications for language learning outcomes. With these concerns in mind, the study seeks to answer the following research question:

- Is there a relationship between enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom in the Turkish EFL learning context?
- How does the relationship between enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom in Turkish EFL learning context vary from males to females?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Given the importance of the individual experience of each of enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom in learning English as a foreign language among Turkish male and female learners. This correlational study investigates the relationships between these factors and their potential gender differences. Since the relationships between FLE, FLA, and FLB among male and female Turkish EFL learners were the focus of this study, questionnaires and scales would be necessary to obtain data on these latter variables.

### *Participants*

Participants in this study are 69 Turkish learners of English as a foreign language who were or still are students attending different English language institutes/academies, such as English Time, Cambridge Academy, and English Spoken Café in Istanbul. These participants include 34 females and 35 males. The purpose was to discover how male and female Turkish EFL learners experience enjoyment, anxiety and boredom during their guided and supervised learning process, and whether there is a relationship between these variables.

### *Tools*

To collect data, Foreign language enjoyment (Botes et al., 2021), Foreign language boredom (Li et al., 2023), and Foreign language classroom anxiety (Botes et al., 2022) were put into a questionnaire form which was administered to the sample group. The questionnaire consisted of 25 items and was divided into three sections. The first section consisted of nine items regarding FLE, the second one consisted of eight items regarding FLB, and the last one consisted of eight items regarding FLCA. The items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree).

### *Procedure*

After the approval from one of the developers of the three emotions scales, an online version of the questionnaire was shared via Google Forms. A small text was inserted in the description of the questionnaire to inform the participants about the study's purpose, confidentiality and voluntariness of their responses. The participants were invited to take part in the study through their e-mails and Whatsapp messenger application. The form was kept online for two weeks. After that, the questionnaire was closed and the data was collected and put into order using Excel. And finally to analyze the correlation between enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom and determine whether they vary between male and female participants, a calculation of the Pearson correlation coefficient was separately made for each gender. The resulting correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) will range between -1 and 1. Similar to the Pearson correlation coefficient, a value close to 1 indicates a strong positive correlation, a value close to -1 indicates a strong negative correlation, and a value close to 0 indicates no significant correlation.

## 3. RESULTS

The values in Table 1 show that there is a weak positive correlation between enjoyment and anxiety for both male and female participants. The correlation between enjoyment and boredom is also weakly negative for both genders. The correlation between anxiety and boredom is weak and close to zero for both genders. These correlations hold true for both male and female participants, indicating a similarity in the relationships. However, it's worth noting that the correlations are relatively weak, which suggests that other factors might play a more considerable role in determining the levels of enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom in the English class.

**Table 1. Correlation between enjoyment, anxiety and boredom for male and female participants**

Gender	Variables	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)
Male	Enjoyment and Anxiety	r = 0.24
	Enjoyment and Boredom	r = -0.19
	Anxiety and Boredom	r = -0.11
Female	Enjoyment and Anxiety	r = 0.15
	Enjoyment and Boredom	r = -0.11
	Anxiety and Boredom	r = 0.12

In order to compare how enjoyment; boredom and anxiety vary from male to female Turkish EFL learners, the mean score for each statement in Linkert scale was calculated for both male and female participants. Table 2 shows that for enjoyment, the mean score is slightly higher for females (4.36) compared to males (4.13) which indicates that females, on average, enjoy the English class more. For boredom, the mean score is higher for males (2.37) compared to females (1.91) which suggests that males, on average, find the English class more boring. When it comes to anxiety, the mean score is slightly higher for males (1.91) compared to females (2.45), which indicates that males experience slightly more anxiety in the English class than females.

**Table 2. The mean score of enjoyment, boredom, and anxiety for male and female Turkish EFL learners.**

Gender	Mean Score		
	Enjoyment	Boredom	Anxiety
Male	4.13	2.37	1.91
Female	4.36	1.91	2.45

The data suggests that there are some variations in the perceptions and experiences of male and female Turkish EFL learners in the English class. Females tend to enjoy the class more and experience less boredom compared to males. While males seem to experience slightly more anxiety than females.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings on this research, the results show some slight variations between male and female participants. In terms of enjoyment, females generally expressed a stronger agreement with positive statements such as finding the teacher encouraging, friendly, and supportive, enjoying the English class, and feeling proud of their accomplishments. They also reported forming a tight group, laughing a lot and having fun in class. On the other hand, male participants' responses varied more with some showing strong agreement and others who could not make a decision. Regarding boredom, female participants generally disagreed strongly with statements that indicate boredom, and disagreed with feeling physically present in the classroom while mentally being somewhere else. However, male participants again had mixed responses with some agreeing strongly, some strongly disagreeing and others being undecided. With anxiety statements, female participants have expressed more confidence and less anxiety in the English class. They strongly disagreed with feeling anxious even when they are well-prepared and feeling that other students spoke English better. While on the other hand, male participants had a wider range of responses. Some strongly agreed with feeling anxious, some strongly disagreed, and the rest were undecided. These variations between both genders indicate potential differences in their experiences in the English class. However, these results and differences were based on a small number of participant which means that an examination of a larger sample needs to be done for more accurate results and insight on the potential gender differences of the three variables.

The results obtained from the study also shows a strong positive correlation between enjoyment and positive classroom experiences, while a negative correlation exists between boredom and positive experiences. And the relationship between anxiety and other variables is less straightforward, with varying responses from participants. Therefore, it is important to

consider individual differences and other factors that may affect anxiety levels in the English class. For this reason, further qualitative and experimental research would be valuable to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the correlation between the variable and how it varies from males to females.

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