Foreign Language Learning Motivation and Self-efficacy: A Focus on the Mediating Role of Fear of Failure

Mehrahafrin Pirzadeh[1*], Sajad Shafiee[2], Masoome Salehi[3]

[1*]M.A. in General Psychology, Faculty of Humanities, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran
mehrafarin.pirzad@yahoo.com
[2]Ph.D. in English Language Teaching, Australian Centre for Education (ACE/idp), Phnom Penh, Cambodia
shafiee.sajad@gmail.com
[3]Assistant Professor, English Department, Shahr-e-Qods Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
mas.salehi84@gmail.com

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Abstract
The process of globalization trend and the global movement toward migration, trade, and interaction with a large number of people from diverse countries have made foreign language learning an inevitable necessity that requires skills, knowledge, and motivation. In this regard, the present research proposed a model to explain the relationship between foreign language learning motivation (FLLM) and self-efficacy (SE) and examines the mediating role of fear of failure (FOF) in this relationship by analyzing the responses of 357 Iranian English learners to the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES), the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI), and the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) for foreign/second language learning using the structural equation modeling method. The findings demonstrated that the direct path from SE to FLLM and the direct path from SE to FOF were significant; however, the direct path from FOF to FLLM did not reach statistical significance. Therefore, the indirect path from SE to FLLM through FOF was not of statistical significance either. Consequently, FOF is not considered a mediating or facilitating factor in the relationship between SE and FLLM.
Keywords: Self-efficacy, Fear of Failure, Foreign/Second Language Learning Motivation, Second Language Acquisition

Introduction
Nowadays, the propagation of professional connections, the publication of scientific and educational literature in other countries, and the mutual interaction of experts from various countries have made systematic international communication a necessity. In this regard, knowledge of foreign languages facilitates educational communication and other interactions, as well as joining the professional community (Farniya et al., 2020; Soltanpour & Valizadeh, 2019). Thus, in many countries across the world, education at various levels is broadly focused on actualizing individuals' professional motivations not only in principal subjects but also in foreign languages. A review of previous studies indicates that studies in the field of foreign language learning motivation (FLLM) primarily focus on the significance of this factor in education and its related advancements, its relationship with teaching methods and educational environments, the applicative use of motivation in language learning, and its connection to influential cultural factors

and social benefits (Busse & Walter, 2013; Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011; Wallace & Leong, 2020). Therefore, the current research, as a novel idea, investigates the relationship between FLLM and self-efficacy (SE) with the mediating role of fear of failure (FOF) to fill the existing gap in knowledge in this area.

Individuals typically seek to learn foreign languages to gain various goals, including the possibility of integrating with the international community members, achieving better job opportunities, traveling abroad, socializing with others, or getting academic goals (Cao et al., 202٣ & Muñoz-Restrepo & Gaviria, 2020). The mechanism through which individuals learn languages other than their native language is called foreign language learning or second language acquisition (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). Motivation is the primary factor in both early second language learning and the driving force for long-term retention of the learning process. All other factors involved in second language acquisition indeed take motivation as a presupposition (Dörnyei, 1998). In the same vein, Dörnyei (2001) regards motivation as a process in which a certain amount of driving force is generated, triggers and continues the action, and provides learners with the initial incentives to start learning a second language. Accordingly, it should be said that motivation is considered one of the determinants in learning and acquiring a second or foreign language. In fact, "without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most significant abilities are unable to achieve long-term goals, and an appropriate curriculum and good training do not sufficiently guarantee their success" (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998).

The study of motivation in second or foreign language acquisition became a prominent research topic following the publication of a detailed summary of a a-decade-long research and the formation of a socio-educational model for second language learning by Gardner and Lambert (1972; as cited in Gass et al., 2020). The socio-educational model of second language learning was introduced by Gardner and colleagues (1976) in an attempt to explain the role of several individual difference variables (e.g., intelligence, language aptitude, anxiety, and motivation) in influencing proficiency in a second language. This model was a formal and advanced version of the theoretical formulations proposed by Lambert (1963) and incorporated aspects of a model proposed by Carroll (1967). This model delineates four distinct components: the social environment in which language education is implemented, the aforementioned individual difference variables, the contexts of language acquisition, and the linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes. The model illustrated how these elements might interact and influence each other.

Motivation in the socio-educational model is conceptualized as a set of variables, specifically "the combination of effort and desire to achieve the goal of language learning, plus favorable attitudes toward language learning" (Gardner, 1985, p. 10, as cited in Dornyei, 1994). An individual's motivation to learn a second language has been proposed as a direct factor influencing L2 progress and appears to be influenced by a number of socio-psychological variables. Gardner et al. (1985) argued that four components in a learner culminated in motivation: a determined goal, a desire to achieve it, a positive attitude, and an expressed effort. In this model, two affective components, namely integrativeness and attitude toward the learning situation, support motivation, and these attitudes and motivations collectively demonstrate an integrated motivation that promotes language learning. In other words, they identified two important motivational orientations: an "instrumental orientation" that reflects the practical value and benefit of learning a new language, and an "integrative orientation" that demonstrates a genuine and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group. They supposed that an integrative orientation better sustains the long-term motivation required for the challenging task of learning a second or foreign language. The integrative-instrumental dichotomy, with integration

as the more crucial component, was soon extensively accepted, and many subsequent studies approved the theory of Gardner and his Canadian colleagues. In the same vein, Spolsky (2000) noticed that integrative motivation was generally associated with higher scores on foreign language proficiency. He concluded that integrative motivation might be a crucial need for successful language learning; in fact, some teachers and researchers have even stepped forward to the extent that they claimed integrative motivation to be absolutely essential for successful second language learning. However, results in this regard are quite contradictory, and there is no consensus on this issue.

On the other hand, Ryan and his colleagues (Ryan & Deci, 2000) consider self-determination theory, an organismic perspective that believes that individuals have needs from the time they are born and these needs evolve with development. Having the ability to make choices and the ability to manage the interaction between oneself and their environment demonstrates self-determination. A self-determining individual "engages in an activity with a full sense of wanting, choosing, and personal endorsement" (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Cognitive evaluation theory is a sub-theory within self-determination theory and explains why a person is or is not intrinsically motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Intrinsically motivated students engage in an activity simply for its own sake. In other words, they enjoy or are interested in their work (Sivan, 1986). In addition, they seek novelty and challenge with the goal of exploring, learning, and expanding and exercising their capacities (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). In contrast, extrinsically motivated students complete tasks as a means to an end; for example, to receive rewards such as grades or prizes. Recent research suggests that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be viewed as two separate continuums, each of which ranges from high to low. A student may be at both highs, at both lows, or any combination in between (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008 as cited in Toste et al., 2020).

Noels et al. (2000) also noted that, in their study of L2 students, the pattern of their results suggested that intrinsic motivation lies on a continuum separate from extrinsic motivation. For instance, the result of one study found a correlation between students' intrinsic motivation and their self-reported comprehension and actual recall of the material (Ryan, et al., 1990). By contrast, extrinsic motivation has been associated with a number of negative outcomes such as a higher likelihood of dropping out of school (Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992); student anxiety (Ryan & Connell, 1989); lower creativity (Amabile 1983); and less flexible thinking (McGraw & McCullers, 1979).

Individuals' FLLM is influenced by numerous factors, such as gender, age, culture, personal interests, past actions, expectations, social factors, environment, and so forth (Ollero Ramírez, 2014). One factor whose connection with learning motivation has been less addressed is SE. SE or perceived capability is a personal belief in an individual's capability to organize and implement an action required for mastery and achievement in certain tasks (Bandura, 1977). More precisely, SE can be described as an individual's belief and confidence in their capability to perform or fulfill tasks and issues. This factor represents not the individual's actual ability but rather the confidence an individual has in their specific capabilities (Farmer et al., 2022).

Self-efficacy consists of three dimensions: level, strength, and generality. The level dimension indicates the degree of difficulty an individual finds making a decision. Strength indicates the degree to which an individual is confident that he or she can carry out a specific task. Generality reflects the degree to which self-efficacy beliefs are positively related, both within a behavioral domain and across behavioral domains (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000). SE beliefs affect how individuals cope with new challenges and contribute to performance because cognitive processes, motivation, and behavior are influenced by these beliefs (Bandura, 1997).

Importantly, SE is not stable and can change over time. Bandura (1977) believes that four factors influence an individual's SE: 1- Mastery experiences (functional accomplishments): Mastery experience refers to successful fulfillment of a predetermined task. Success in previous tasks will culminate in confidence in performing and fulfilling activities in the future, enhancing SE; 2- Vicarious experiences (modeling): Observing the success of others, particularly those with similar capabilities, increases SE; 3- Social persuasion: Social persuasion or verbal encouragement from others about an individual's capability to perform a task develops SE beliefs; 4- Physiological cue (emotional state): Some people use mental and emotional states as a source to assess their abilities.

Strong emotions typically reduce performance. Individuals may experience lower SE expectations when they experience extreme fear, acute anxiety, or high levels of stress. High SE contributes to creating a sense of calmness when approaching challenging tasks and activities, whereas individuals with low SE may believe that everything is more challenging than it actually is. This belief can give rise to stress, depression, and a limited insight on the best solutions to a problem (Pajares, 1996). It also impacts an individual's level of FOF.

In past psychological research, FOF has often been investigated as a determinant of the behavior(s) exhibited by individuals in executive areas, such as sports and education (Conroy & Elliot, 2004; Martin & Marsh, 2003). Relying on Lazarus's (1991) cognitive appraisal theory of emotions, Conroy (2001) defined FOF as an emotional response resulting from a cognitive appraisal of experiences that denote a threat to an individual's capability to achieve a meaningful personal goal. In other words, fear originating from concerns about the consequences of potential failure reflects FOF and is often considered a psychological factor inhibiting entrepreneurial behavior (Wagner & Sternberg, 2004).

FOF is contrasted with the desire for success and the motivation to avoid punishment. For most individuals, FOF is uncontrollable. Individuals are often influenced by FOF and, if their success cannot be warranted, they adopt a behavior of avoiding goal achievement (Ajzen, 1991).

In the literature, the multidimensional nature of FOF has been examine, and has led to five unpleasant consequences/cognitive beliefs about the negative consequences of failure: (a) Experiencing shame and embarrassment, (b) devaluing one's self-esteem, (c) having an uncertain future, (d) important others losing interest, and (e) upsetting important others. By accepting the influential capacity of environmental conditions, FOF is regarded a stable state along these dimensions (Cacciotti et al., 2016).

The first dimension is the experience of shame and embarrassment, which reflects the possibility of personal shame and public embarrassment after failure (Conroy, 2001). Another unpleasant consequence is the devaluation of self-esteem, which specifically includes vulnerabilities related to ourselves, such as personal diminution, fear of incompetence, and fear of lack of control. This vulnerability is the result of the belief that one is not capable of acquiring the skills necessary to succeed, thus indicating a loss of confidence in controlling life events to achieve desired goals (Gundaz et al., 2017). Having an uncertain future and losing the interest of important others are other concepts that are related to the emotional consequences of FOF. Another dimension, upsetting important others, requires an interpersonal perspective in which vulnerability to the perceptions of fundamental beliefs is considered (Abdul-Jabbar et al., 2022).

There is, however, a contradiction in the literature, expressing FOF as either a stable state or a temporary emotional state. On the one hand, there are arguments about FOF that regard it as stable tendencies persisting in individuals' lifelong experiences. On the other hand, others view fear as a negative emotion, just like other emotions that have positive or negative tones (Li, 2011),

such as stress, loneliness, psychological pressure, sadness (Patzelt & Shepherd, 2011), joy, anger (Welpe et al., 2012; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), feeling of guilt, and hope (Lazarus & Smith, 1988).

Overall, based on what was mentioned, it is thought that FOF gives rise to the adoption of avoidance-based goals and strategies that have numerous detrimental effects (Elliot & Church, 1997). Individuals' FOF indeed leads them to experience a lack of motivation, making it difficult to start projects. In addition, it culminates in less effort, less perseverance, and poorer performance (Elliot & Thrash, 2004). Hence, when a goal seems too challenging or encompasses learning new skills, individuals may simply surrender or avoid participation.

A review of previous research demonstrates that people who do not perceive themselves as capable of performing well in certain situations are likely to develop a fear of such situations. This shows the negative effect of self-efficacy on the fear of failure (Wennberg et al., 2013). Besides, previous studies have demonstrated the relationship between FOF and motivation (e.g., Ragmac, 2023) and effects of FOF on external motivation (Yıldırım et al., 2023), intrinsic motivation, learning behavior (Caraway et al., 2003; Haghbin et al., 2012) and entrepreneurial intentions (Ng & Jenkins, 2018). Accordingly, the current research assumed that FOF could be related to FLLM and affect it, hence it proposed the following hypothesis:

H_0: FOF plays a mediating role in the relationship between SE and FLLM.

Methods

Design of the study

The current research is a descriptive study and is considered fundamental in terms of its purpose. Also, in terms of data analysis, this research is one of correlational research based on structural equation method. Structural equations are a powerful and general multivariate analysis technique from the field of multivariate regression and general linear model extension that allows testing a variety of regression equations simultaneously (Ullman & Bentler, 2012). To be more precise, this method is a comprehensive statistical approach to test hypotheses about the relationships between visible and hidden variables (Francis, 1988).

Participants

Data were collected through a questionnaire from a sample of 357 Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, selected using a convenience sampling method. The first language of the research participants was Farsi, and all of them were familiar with English through studying at school or university. In addition, the participants were at the elementary and intermediate level of English, who were learning English to improve their English language level. The sample consisted of 264 women (73.9%) and 93 men (26.1%), with a mean age of 21.77 (standard deviation [SD]= 6.53) years. In terms of education level, 110 (30.8%) participants had diploma degree, 169 (47.3%) participants had bachelor's degree and 78 (21.9%) had master's degree.

Instruments

The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES)

The GSES, developed by Sherer et al. in 1982, was used to assess general SE of the participants. This scale contains 17 items and measures three dimensions of behavior, including willingness to initiate action, willingness to exert effort to fulfill tasks, and perseverance in the face of obstacles (Sherer Et al., 1982). The scoring is based on a 5-point Likert scale (5=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree) for items 15, 13, 9, 8, 3, and 1, and reverse scoring for the remaining items. In order to calculate the respondent's level of SE, the scores of all items are summed, resulting in a minimum

score of 17 and a maximum score of 68. Evidently, higher scores denote higher levels of SE, and vice versa. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the Persian version of this questionnaire, which had been validated for reliability and validity in Iran, is equal to 0.83 (Asgharnezhad et al., 2006).

The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI)

In the current research, a questionnaire developed by Conroy et al. (2002) based on Lazarus's (1991) cognitive-motivational-relational theory of emotion was used to assess FOF in performance. This 25-item questionnaire measures five dimensions related to FOF, including fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment, fear of decreased self-esteem, fear of an uncertain future, fear of losing the interest of significant others, and fear of discommoding significant others. The scoring method is based on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). A higher score on this questionnaire denotes a higher level of FOF. The reliability and validity of this questionnaire had been confirmed in Iran, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the Persian version was reported to be 0.83 (Abdoli et al., 2013).

The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) for Foreign/Second Language Learning

The AMBT for Foreign Language Learning, short form (Gardner & Lambert, 1959) was employed to measure FLLM. This questionnaire contains 37 items designed to measure four factors: attitude toward the importance of foreign language learning, parental motivation for children's foreign language learning, motivation/tendency toward foreign language learning, and attitude toward the origin of the intended language. These factors consist of two motivational dimensions (factors 2 and 3) and two attitudinal dimensions (factors 1 and 4). The scoring method is based on a 4-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree). The score for each dimension is calculated by summing the scores of the corresponding items. The total questionnaire's score ranges from 37 to 148. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Persian version of this questionnaire, with its reliability and validity validated in Iran, was reported to be 0.93 (Dordi nezhad, 2015).

Procedure

The data in this research were collected by a series of questionnaires. The questionnaires used in this study were made available to the individuals on the websites and social via a link designed by the online questionnaire design and distribution system. Before starting the questions, the directions for answering the questionnaires, the necessity of answering all the questions, and also the ethical principles were provided. After ensuring the confidentiality of the information and awareness of the research objectives, the participants answered the questionnaires with informed consent without receiving any reward. It is worth noting that the observance of ethical principles in this research was approved by the responsible local authorities.

Data Analysis

At first, descriptive indices (mean, SD, skewness, and kurtosis) were calculated. Afterward, structural equation modeling in Amos was used to test the research hypothesis. The following cutoff points were considered for fit indices of the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA): A value of ≥ 0.90 for the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990, as mentioned in Shabahang et al., 2024), ≥ 0.90 for the Tucker Lewis index (TLI; Bentler & Bonnet, 1980, as mentioned in Shabahang et al., 2024), ≤ 0.08 for the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Browne & Cudeck, 1993, as mentioned in Shabahang et al., 2024), and ≤ 0.10 for the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR; Hair et al., 2003, as mentioned in

Shabahang et al., 2024). Data analysis was performed using SPSS statistical software (IBM SPSS Statistics 21.0) and Amos (Love et al, 2004).

Results

According to the results, the mean and SD were 60.29 and 11.04 for SE; 72.62 and 19.01 for FOF; and 101.79 and 15.98 for FLLM, respectively (see Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive indices and correlation matrix of research variables

Variable	M	SD	SE	FOF	FLLM
SE	60.29	11.04	1		
FOF	72.62	19.01	**-0.398	1	
FLLM	101.79	15.98	**0.205	**-0.123	1
Sk	-	-	-0.171	0.033	-0.408
K	-	-	-0.286	-0.314	0.113

SE: self-efficacy, FOF: fear of failure, FLLM: foreign language learning motivation, SK: Skewness, K: Kurtosis, M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation

**P<0.01

*P<0.05

Moreover, the findings demonstrated a significant positive correlation between SE and FLLM ($r = 0.20$, $p < 0.01$). On the other hand, there was a significant negative correlation between SE and FOF ($r = -0.40$, $p < 0.01$). Finally, a significant negative correlation was observed between FOF and FLLM ($r = -0.12$, $p < 0.01$) (see Table 1).

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed to evaluate the normality of the sample, the results of which revealed that the normality assumption was met for all research variables. Additionally, skewness and kurtosis of the observable variables were used to determine normality. Bentler (2010) consider a cutoff point of ±3 appropriate for skewness. For kurtosis, values greater than ±10 are generally problematic in structural equation modeling (Kline, 2018). The values obtained for skewness and kurtosis denoted meeting the assumption of normality in the research variables (see Table 1). Multicollinearity refers to a situation where observable variables (indicators) are highly correlated. A common method for assessing multicollinearity is to examine the correlation matrix between the observable variables, and the results indicated the lack of multicollinearity among them (see Table 1). Moreover, variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance index statistics were used to assess the assumption of multicollinearity. Since none of the tolerance index-related values were less than 0.1, and none of the VIF-related values exceeded 10, the assumption of non-collinearity was confirmed.

A structural equation modeling approach was employed to assess the mediating role of FOF in the relationship between SE and FLLM.

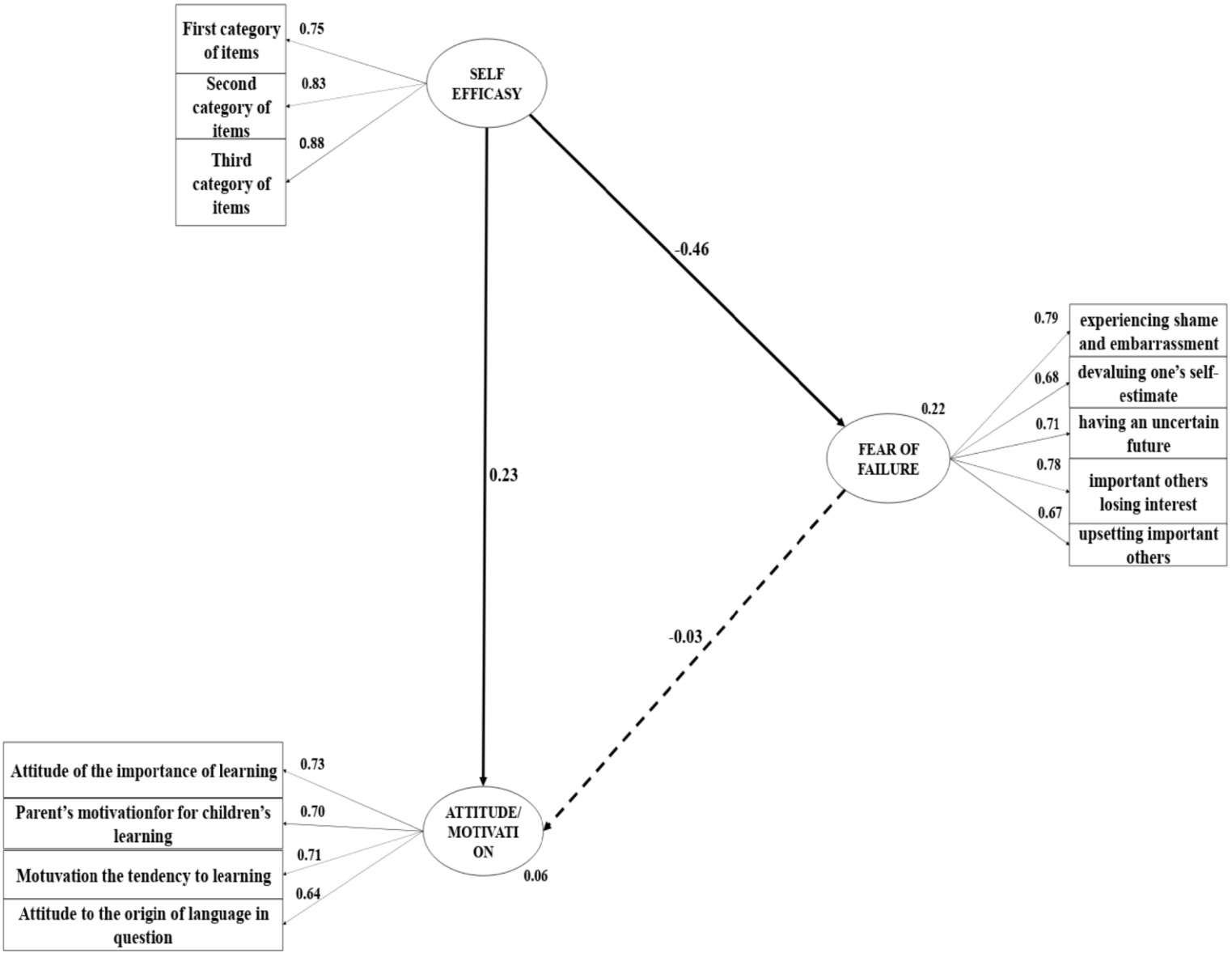

Figure 1. Standard path coefficients of research variables in the original model

NOTE: Significant paths are shown as continuous and non-significant paths are shown as discontinuous lines.

The model had a good fit ($\chi 2$=131.162; *df*=14; *p*=0.006; CFI=0.953, IFI=0.953, GFI=0.942, TLI=0.944, RMSEA=0.066 [90% C.I. 0.040–0.113], SRMR=.045).

Afterwards, the direct and mediating paths of the research variables were assessed based on which the direct and indirect effects of the research variables on FLLM are approved or rejected. In cases where the *t* statistic is outside the range of +1.96 and -1.96, or the significance level is less than 0.05, two variables are significantly correlated. Accordingly, the direct path from SE to FLLM was significant (t=3.061, β = 0.229), while the direct path from FOF to FLLM was not significant (t=-0.423, β =-0.032). Finally, the direct path of SE to FOF was significant (t =-7.314, β=-0.464) (see Table 2).

Table 2

Assessing the direct relationships of variables in the research model

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Non-standardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	Standard Error	*t*	*p*
Self-efficacy	Foreign language learning motivation	0.485	0.229	0.158	3.061	0.002
Fear of failure	Foreign language learning motivation	-0.031	-0.032	0.072	-0.432	0.666
Self-efficacy	Fear of failure	-1.008	-0.464	0.138	-7.314	0.001

Bootstrap method with 2000 resamples was used to determine the indirect path. The results revealed that the indirect effect of the SE variable on FLLM through FOF was not significant (b = 0.031, p>0.05) (see Table 3).

Table 3

Assessing the direct relationships of variables in the research model

Independent Variable	Mediating Variable	Dependent Variable	Non-standardized Coefficients	Lower Rate	Upper Rate	*p*
Self-efficacy	Fear of failure	Foreign language learning motivation	0.031	-0.119	0.238	0.751

Discussion

The crucial function of motivation has been universally acknowledged. As a result, an increasing number of researchers are focusing on FLLM. In the same vein, the current research, as a novel idea, investigated the relationship between FLLM and SE with the mediating role of FOF. The findings did not support the facilitating role of FOF in the mentioned relationship.

The findings revealed a direct path and a significant positive correlation between SE and FLLM. In simpler terms, as SE levels increased, FLLM levels increased, too. Consistent with the findings, Wigfield and Eccles (2000) suggested that SE impacted individuals' behaviors through

their emotions, thoughts, self-motivation, and performance. In other words, they regarded SE to be essential for gaining mastery and achievement in specific tasks, and stated that SE was a key component in theories of motivation and learning across various fields. Learning motivation fosters perseverance in fulfilling tasks, resistance against obstacles, and tireless learning (Muhammad et al., 2015), all of which warrant learning success. Consequently, since SE is somehow considered a prerequisite for mastery and achievement, it can influence learning motivation, which is linked to learning achievement.

In the same vein, Alhadabi et al. (2019) believes that SE and learning motivation are interconnected and that individuals with high SE, compared to those with low SE, exert greater effort when faced with challenges; they probably say, "I can do it," boosting their motivation in the learning process. Accordingly, increasing SE can promote FLLM, as a specific form of learning motivation. Furthermore, SE plays a crucial role in regulating personal motivation (Omar et al., 2019). SE beliefs help determine the individuals' extent of effort in an activity, their duration of persistence when faced with obstacles, and their flexibility in confronting undesirable situations (Pajares, 1996).

Human motivation is mostly established cognitively. Individuals motivate themselves and orient their actions through their future-related thoughts (Schroeder & Fishbach, 2015; Ferlazzo, 2013). Hence, individuals' beliefs in their capability to fulfill tasks, master a situation they are encountered, overcome obstacles, and achieve goals (Zimmerman, 2000) can impact FLLM, as an individual's extent of effort in acquiring a foreign language successfully, as well as the satisfaction experienced from this activity (Gardner, 1985, quoted by Huang & Wang, 2013). Consequently, increased SE can extend FLLM. Moreover, individuals with SE believe in their capabilities and apply more and better strategies to achieve their goals (Diseth, 2011). These factors culminate in their learning passion. Similarly, Compri (2016, as cited in Sakka et al., 2022) equates learning motivation with the desire to learn and regards it as a crucial factor in its formation. Therefore, SE can influence learning motivation. Accordingly, increased levels of SE can improve FLLM, as a specific form of learning motivation.

Moreover, the findings demonstrate a direct path and a negative significant correlation between SE and FOF. In simpler terms, as SE levels increased, FOF levels decreased. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that SE is a personal belief in an individual's capability to organize and implement an action (Farmer et al., 2022), or more precisely, an individual's confidence in their capabilities to fulfill a specific task successfully (Bandura, 1997). One of the factors that can undermine beliefs in capabilities is FOF. In line with this idea, Cacciotti et al. (2015) argue that FOF can lead individuals to question their talents and believe that they are not apt to try new things. It can indeed culminate in an individual's uncertainty about their talents and capabilities (Duong & Vu, 2024). This highlights the inverse relationship between SE and FOF: The more confident an individual is in their capabilities, the less likely they are to question their talents. Hence, it is logical that increased SE decreases FOF, which aligns with the findings of the current research.

Solanki (2022) and Kevin et al. (2020) reported the presence of a positive correlation between SE and self-esteem. Furthermore, SE can predict self-esteem in individuals. More precisely, higher levels of SE improve self-esteem. High levels of self-esteem are factors that reduce FOF in an individual. In simpler terms, individuals with low self-esteem may constantly worry about their performance and the possibility FOF. Thus, SE contrasts with FOF in this way, and increased levels of SE reduce FOF. On the other hand, in a research study, Karademas (2006) suggested that high SE led to increased optimism. Optimism means hopefulness and confidence in the future or a successful outcome of an action. Optimism refers to the belief that an individual

will encounter positive outcomes (Wrosh & Scheier, 2003). Optimists view their lives positively (Wrosh & Scheier, 2003) and believe that they will encounter good situations in the future. An individual's belief and confidence that their actions will end in positive results and success reduce their internal fear when they think they may not achieve a specific goal- FOF (Birney et al., 1969, quoted in Dapra et al., 1985). In other words, the higher an individual's SE, the less their FOF in achieving their goals, indicating the SE-FOF contrast. Therefore, an individual's increased SE leads to their reduced FOF.

Regarding the relationship between FOF and FLLM, the results revealed a significant negative correlation between these two variables. In other words, as FOF increased, FLLM decreased. In line with these findings, Elliot and Thrash (2004) demonstrated that FOF results in less effort, less perseverance, and poorer performance. Since FLLM is an active approach to learning and striving for getting better outcomes, individuals' FOF can hinder this process. In fact, FOF can reduce FLLM in an individual because it leads to less effort in performing a task, procrastination, and quitting the action at the last minute (Martin, 2012), ultimately giving rise to undesirable outcomes.

In the same vein, Li (2011) argued that FOF is an emotion about the consequences of a new action affecting individuals' evaluation of the value and likelihood of its initiation. In other words, it leads to a lack of motivation, making it difficult to start projects (Elliot & Thrash, 2004). In fact, FOF causes uncertainty, a type of emotional doubt that can hinder action or delay its occurrence (Lipshitz & Strauss, 1997). Although motivation provides the first impetus for starting the language learning process (Ollero Ramírez, 2014), FOF can inhibit it. More precisely, FOF can hinder motivation, which is the driving force behind starting second language learning, by creating doubt and interfering with the initiation of an action. Moreover, FOF is primarily regarded as an obstacle to achieving optimal performance (Morgan & Sisak, 2016). Being praised by those who are important to an individual is a form of motivation in learning processes, including foreign language learning processes (Filgona et al., 2020). In other words, being praised by important people is a motivation for an action, particularly learning, for a person. This idea highlights the contrast between FOF and learning motivation. FOF induces anxiety and doubt in an individual's ability to succeed (Covington, 1992, quoted in Richardson et al., 2012), resulting in personal inefficiency. The lack of desirable efficiency prevents being praised by significant others, reducing an individual's motivation. Therefore, increased levels of FOF can reduce the individual's FLLM by creating inefficiency.

Despite the significant correlation between FOF and FLLM, results revealed that the direct path from FOF to FLLM was not significant. More precisely, FOF, compared to SE, could not impact FLLM. Therefore, due to the insignificance of the indirect path of SE to FLLM through FOF, this factor did not play a mediating role in the mentioned relationship.

Limitations and Future Research

There were some limitations in the current research. For example, the present research was conducted cross-sectionally, which makes it difficult to draw causal conclusions. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies be conducted experimentally. Moreover, this research was conducted on an Iranian sample, so it is recommended that future research be conducted in other cultures to recognize the factors stemming from cultural differences that can affect the results. Since there was no equality between the research participants regarding gender and the number of women was greater, it is suggested that future studies be conducted on samples with an equal number regarding gender. Since foreign language learning has become a social issue nowadays, it is suggested that

future studies investigate the relationship between social SE and FLLM. The relationship between FOF and FLLM was investigated for the first time in the current research, so there is a research gap in this field. It is suggested that future research investigate the relationship between FOF and intrinsic motivation to learn a foreign language and extrinsic motivation to learn a foreign language separately. Also, researchers can identify various factors that can affect the relationship between FOF and FLLM could be another area of investigation for future research.

Conclusion

The present research facilitates recognizing the relationship between FLLM and individual characteristics in the form of an innovative idea to investigate the relationship between SE and FLLM with the mediating role of FOF. According to the results, SE had a direct path and a significant positive correlation to FLLM, indicating that an individual's belief in their capability in performing and fulfilling activities successfully and overcoming obstacles can impact their extent of active efforts toward successful foreign language learning- or FLLM. Findings also demonstrated a direct path and a significant positive correlation between SE and FOF, suggesting that individuals' intrinsic belief and confidence in their talent can affect FOF, which is the uncertainty factor in talent, reducing it. On the other hand, FOF culminates in less effort, laxity, and delay in starting and implementing the action. Hence, increasing its levels in the individual reduces FLLM, which is a self-willed and active effort for foreign language learning. This result is aligned with the research results regarding the negative correlation of FOF with FLLM. Ultimately, the current research discloses an important result. Since the indirect path of SE to FLLM through FOF is not significant, FOF does not play a mediating role in this relationship.

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Biodata

Mehrahafrin Pirzadeh holds a Master's degree in General Psychology from Tarbiat Modares University (2021-2023). Her research interests include social psychology, clinical psychology, emotions, and psychopathology and therapy.

Email: *mehrafarin.pirzad@yahoo.com*

Masoome Salehi an assistant professor of TEFL at Islamic Azad University, Shahr-e-Qods Branch, where she has been a faculty member for about twelve years. She both teaches various courses at BA and MA level and conducts research in the field of TEFL, especially in testing and CALL.

Email: *mas.salehi84@gmail.com*

Sajad Shafiee is an assistant professor of ELT and has published extensively in prestigious journals in the field of SLA. His main areas of interest include technology-enhanced language instruction, teaching language skills and components, and individual attributes of EFL learners.

Email: *shafiee.sajad@gmail.com*