Original Article

Exploring Language Mindsets, Goal orientations, and Responses to Failure: Proficiency Level in Focus

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Abstract

The priming of different mindsets is expected to guide L2 students to pursue different achievement goals in language learning that direct them to respond differently in challenging situations. This study assessed a significant predictor variable(s) of goal orientation in mindset variables and a significant predictor variable(s) of responses to failure among mindsets and goal orientations. The questionnaires were distributed to 68 university students. Several semi-structured interviews with 10 university students were done. *T*-test, multiple hierarchical regression analyses, and thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. The results showed a significant difference between high and low proficient students regarding mindset and goal orientation. It showed that their mindset positively predicted their goal orientation; furthermore, mindset and goal orientation positively predicted responses to failure. Results of interviews showed that language learning mindset could be improved by hard working. It was concluded that L2 students who held a growth mindset became more proficient; they were inspired to learn more and held more learning goals. The study may have implications for syllabus designers and material developers.

Keywords: EFL Student, Goal orientations, Language learning, Language Mindsets, Proficiency, Responses to Failure

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1. Introduction

Mindsets refer to people's beliefs about whether intelligence is fixed or growth (Dweck, 2017). Language mindsets are argued to be vital because they clarify how people respond to adverse situations when learning an L2 (Dweck, 2017; Mercer & Ryan, 2010). Dweck and her colleagues dispute that each mindset is systematically related to different effort beliefs, attributions, goal-orientations, and learning strategies (Dweck, 2017; Molden & Dweck, 2006). These associations between mindsets and other beliefs can be described as two different meaning systems that clarify why individuals respond differently to the same situation (Molden &Dweck, 2006).

In challenging circumstances, fixed theorists, who interpret failures as a sign that they cannot learn (Robins & Pals, 2002), react in a more helpless-oriented manner so that they show greater concern and avoidance, higher dropout rate, and deterioration in performance. In contrast, growth theorists, who interpret failures as a sign that they need to improve (Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin, &Wan, 1999), react in a more mastery-oriented manner, such that they maintain a positive mood, are more persistent and motivated. In general, various mindsets are likely to direct L2 students in language learning to seek distinct objectives, which will cause them to respond differently in difficult circumstances.

Reviewing the related literature suggests that there is no research investigating the correlation between the three constructs among high and low proficient students in an Iranian EFL context. Hence, the current study aimed to fill this gap in the literature to see whether there was a significant relationship between them. Beyond a test of the relationship between variables, this study addressed the question of the relative contributions of mindset variables in predicting goal orientation and also the relative contribution of goal orientation variables in predicting responses to failure.

The results of this study would highlight the role of mindsets in the language learning processes, by understanding why some students tend to react negatively to setbacks and discontinue their involvement in language learning. The insights from the present study would inspire further interdisciplinary explorations of language beliefs and provide meaningful guidance for practical applications to be used in language education. Therefore, these constructs (mindsets, goal orientations, and responses to failure) could have such a dramatic impact upon student success, understanding them could be very beneficial to students, instructors, and academic advisors. It might also offer a better

insight into the extent to which mindset variables predicted goal orientations and the extent to which mindset and goal orientation variables predicted the responses to failure.

2. Literature Review

Learning a new language is a fundamental process for students to attain educational and professional development. When learning an L2, students may find themselves in situations that challenge their capacities and result in unsuccessful interactions. In this process, language mindsets are argued to be vital because they have implications for how people respond to adverse situations (Dweck, 2017; Mercer & Ryan, 2010).

Few studies in recent years have explored various aspects of mindsets, goal orientations, and responses to failure (Lou, 2014; Mercer & Rayan, 2010, Sadeghi et al., 2020). For instance, adopting Dweck's framework, Sadeghi et al. (2020) investigated how students' language learning mindsets affect their goal setting and responses in challenging situations in an EFL context. Sadeghi et al. (2020) found that Language students' mindset beliefs in accomplishing language tasks are fundamental building blocks of academic and personal success. The findings of their study indicated that holding a growth mindset predisposes language students to display more positive emotions and mastery reactions in response to personal and hypothetical failure situations while learning and/or using foreign or second languages.

Lou (2014) examined how priming fixed language theory or growth language theory can orient language students' goals and, in turn, influence their reactions in failure situations and their intention to continue learning the language. The results showed that in the growth condition, students more strongly endorsed learning goals regardless of their proficiency, and in turn reported more mastery-oriented responses in failure situations and stronger intention to continue learning the target language. In contrast, in the fixed condition, more proficient students endorsed performance-approach goals and in turn, reported more helpless-oriented responses and fear of failure.

Dweck and Leggett (2000) proposed, in their social-cognitive model, proficiency level moderates the influence of mindsets on behavior patterns, suggesting fixed theorists who perceive different ability levels might show different responses when they meet failure. However, this proposed model has been the subject of some debates. Some research found that proficiency moderate the relation between mindset theories and

performance goals (Robins & Pals, 2002; Lou, 2014), while some research found that proficiency does not moderate mindset theories on any goal-setting (Cury, Elliot, Da Fonseca, & Moller, 2006; Elliot & Church, 1997). Moreover, most research did not consider proficiency as a moderator or only find it as another direct predictor (Chen & Pajares, 2010; Dinger, Dickhäuser, Spinath, & Steinmayr, 2013).

As stated before, few studies explored the relationships between mindset theories, goal orientations, and responses to failure in an academic context. In fact, to the researchers' best knowledge, only Sadeghi et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between mindsets, goal orientations, and responses to failure in an EFL context among university students. However, much uncertainty remains about the significant difference between high and low proficient EFL students about their mindsets, goal orientations, and responses to failure. Besides, the significant predictor variable of goal orientation in mindset variables and a significant predictor variable of responses to failure among mindset and goal orientations have not been assessed yet.

Research Question

Based on the purposes of the present research, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Are there any significant differences between high and low proficient students concerning mindsets, goal orientation, and responses to failure?

2. To what extent, if at all, can Iranian EFL students' mindset predict their goal orientation?

3. To what extent, if at all, can Iranian EFL students' mindset and goal orientation predict their responses to failure?

3. Methodology

3. 1. Design and Context of the Study

This study followed a sequential explanatory quantitative-qualitative design. And it is advantageous to use multiple methodologies as the strengths of one method can overcome the weakness of another (Creswell& Clark, 2007). In effect, the research is strengthened when qualitative and quantitative research is used together to produce a more complete knowledge necessary to inform theory and practice (Morgan, 2006).

The researcher initially employed a quantitative questionnaire survey. In other words, the questionnaires and interviews were used in a sequential pattern. First, questionnaires were given to students. Once the results from the three questionnaires were analyzed, the researcher performed the interviews with the students. Then, the qualitative information coming from the interviews was analyzed. After the analysis of two sources of information, the quantitative and qualitative data were integrated and interpreted, then the final report was produced. The current study took place in the EFL context of the Zand University located in Shiraz.

3. 2. Participants

Male and female senior undergraduate students who registered in the College of Language and Literature at Zand University (N=150) were the available population for the study. The participants were 21 to 34 years of age. The sample size (n=108) was calculated using the sample size table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), specifying a five-percent margin of error. The participants' general foreign language proficiency was examined through Michigan English Language Proficiency (MTELP) at the beginning of the study and 68 students whose scores were one standard deviation above and below mean completed the questionnaires. 10 students were chosen randomly from the respondents to the questionnaires to make up the interview group for the qualitative part of the research and their names were not provided for the sake of confidentiality, identifying features such as names were pseudonyms.

Table 1.

Demographic Information of the Students

No. of students	68(30 high proficient & 38 low proficient)
Gender	26 male & 42 female
University	Zand University, Shiraz, Iran
Major	English language and literature
Academic year	2019

3. 3. Instruments

The first instrument was Michigan English Language Proficiency (MTELP), which was used to homogenize the participants. The MTELP used in the present study was a 100-

item multiple-choice test consisting of three sections, measuring students' grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The test included 40 items on grammar, 40 items on vocabulary, and 20 items on reading comprehension.

The second instrument used to assess students' mindset was The Mindsets of Language Learning Scale with 18 items concerning beliefs about the fixedness and malleability of the three aspects of language ability (Lou, 2014). The three aspects are beliefs about general language intelligence, beliefs about second language intelligence, and beliefs about age sensitivity on L2 intelligence. The researcher translated the three questionnaires into Persian. For the sake of confirming the face and content validity of the instrument, it was observed by the two applied linguists at Shiraz Azad University. To make sure that the translated version was the same as the original, the translated questionnaire was back-translated into English without having access to the original English form. For the sake of assessing the reliability of the Persian version of the questionnaire, a pilot study was carried out.

The third instrument used to elicit students' goals was Goal Orientations Scale (Elliot & Church, 1997) including three dimensions with six items in each dimension, including learning goals, performance-approach goals, and performance-avoidance goals. Responses to each item vary along a 7-point Likert scale from "not at all true of me" to "very true of me" (Appendix B).

The fourth instrument used to assess students' responses to failure was the Failure Situation Scale with eight failure scenarios that students might encounter during learning or using their L2. They were asked to rate how anxious/concerned they would be in each situation on a 6-point Likert scale from "not anxious/concerned at all" to "very anxious/concerned". The eight scenarios covered the aspects of writing, reading, speaking, and listening comprehension (Appendix C).

The interviews were face to face and semi-structured, with the interview protocol being designed in advance. The transcripts were then subjected to analysis. During the interview, the researcher asked questions and took notes (the interviews were recorded). Also, it was transcribed and the recurring themes (at least three occurrences) were grouped under relevant categories. The same data then was reorganized under subcategories.

3. 4. Data Collection Procedure

The present mixed-method study was carried out at the Zand University, Shiraz. To check the reliability of the instruments, the questionnaires and the interview questions were piloted on a sample similar to that of the main study. According to the results of the pilot study, the question items were analyzed and changed to increase the reliability and validity of the instrument. This was done by checking whether the questions were clear to the participants, whether the length of the questionnaire was adequate to collect sufficient data for analysis.

To collect the required data, at first, the researcher utilized a quantitative research method applying the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) and then Mindsets of Language Learning Scale questionnaire (MLLS; Appendix A), Goal Orientations Scale Questionnaire (Appendix B) and Responses to Failure Situation Scale (mastery, helpless and anxious responses; Appendix C). It took respondents approximately 40-45 minutes to complete the questionnaires. Participation was voluntary and the participants were willing to share truthfully during the research. To receive reliable data, the researchers explained the purpose of completing the questionnaires and assured the participants that their data would be confidential along with the quantitative data. Then Interview about students' mindset, goal orientation, and responses to failure was done. This was an opportunity to listen to students and their perspectives and to support and enhance the validity of data collected through the questionnaire survey. So, the research inquiry was enhanced through the use of combined research methods. In this study, the questionnaire survey and responses to the interview questions provided rich sources of triangulation for validating the accuracy of the research findings.

3. 5. Data Analysis Procedure

To answer the first question, at-test was used to find whether high and low proficient students differed significantly regarding mindsets, goal orientations, and responses to failure. Also, concerning the second research question, a series of multiple hierarchical regression analyses were run. The first set of regression analyses examined the influence of mindset on goal orientation. The second set of analyses tested the relative effects of mindset and goal orientation on responses to failure. Besides, to analyze the data, audiotaped interviews were transcribed and coded. The information was led to thematic

analysis to identify emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This began with open coding of the answers obtained from the participating EFL students. An initial code (i.e., keyword) was identified as a phrase or a sentence about a theme, as suggested by Freeman and Phillips (2002). A list of three themes was provided at the end of open coding. Focused coding was carried out after the initial analysis to redefine the instances of the six groups into three main themes.

4. Results

The quantitative findings based on the data obtained from the survey questionnaires are presented below:

4. 1. The First Research Question

To explore if there was a significant difference between high and low proficient students concerning mindset, the Mann-Whitney U test was used since the average scores of mindset in high and low levels did not have a normal distribution (see Table 2).In this test, the null hypothesis demonstrated the average equality of mindset in high and low-level students, and the alternative hypothesis showed the difference.

Table 2.

Results of Mann-Whitney U and Z Value of Mindset and Goal Orientation Variables

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Low	38	19.50	741.00
High	30	53.50	1605.00
Total	68		
Mann-Whitney U	.000		
Z	-7.045		
Asymp. *Sig*. (2-tailed)	.000		

The mean rank of mindset in the low proficiency group was 19.50, and the mean rank of mindset in the high proficiency group was 53.50. Mann-Whitney U statistics is 0.000 and Z statistics was 7/045, and the significance level was 0.000 that was less than 0.05, therefore, there was a significant difference between high and low proficient students

and the mean ranks of mindset in high proficient students was more than low proficient students.

To identify if there was a significant difference in high and low proficient students concerning goal orientation score, a *t*-test was run. The result of this test was shown in Table 3. This test illustrated the mean equality of goal orientation in high and low proficient students, and the alternate hypothesis stated the difference.

Table 3.

Results of Independent Samples t-Test of Goal Orientation Variables among High and Low Proficient students

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t*-test for Equality of Means			
	F	*Sig.*	*T*	*Df*	*Sig.*(2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances not assumed	4.873	.031	-2.094	49.04	.041	-.55439

The Independent *t*-test consisted of two tests. At first equality of variances was tested in which F statistics was 4.873 with 0.031 level of significance. The significance level was less than 0.05, so the theory of equality of variances was rejected, and the results under the title of "Equal variances not assumed" began to draw the attention to the mean equality of the two samples." The *t*-test for equality of variances was -2.094 with a 0.041 significance level that was less than 0.05, therefore, there was a significant difference between goal orientation means in high and low proficient students, and the mean rank of goal orientation in low proficient groups was 0.55 that was less than high proficient groups.

In this part, the mean rank of high and low proficient students concerning responses to failure was examined and the mean score distribution of responses to failure in high and low proficient students was normal (see Table 4); therefore, it was necessary to run an independent *t*-test, the results of which were shown in Table 4. The null hypothesis in this test demonstrated the mean scores' equality of responses to failure in high and low proficient students and the alternate hypothesis showed the difference.

Table 4.

Results of Independent Samples t-Test of Responses to Failure Variables among High and Low Proficient students

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	*Sig.*	*t*	*Df*	*Sig.*(2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	.008	.927	-1.447	66	.153	-.26715

4. 2. The Second Research Question

To explore whether Iranian EFL students' mindset could predict their goal orientation, regression was used. Table 5 showed the correlation between mindset and goal orientation that is .34, and the squared correlation between mindset and goal orientation was .12.

In Table 6, the data were presented using ANOVA and F statistics. The null hypothesis showed that the predictive variable coefficient was zero, and it was not a suitable model, but the alternate hypothesis demonstrated the difference. F statistics was 9.010, and the significance level was 0.004 which was less than 0.05, and it showed that it was a useful model.

Table 6.

Results of ANOVA Mean Difference of Mindset on Goal Orientation

	Sum of Squares	*Df*	Mean Square	*F*	*Sig.*
Regression	9.155	1	9.155	9.010	.004
Residual	67.064	66	1.016		
Total	76.219	67			

The model's coefficient is shown in Table 7. The T value was 4.520 and its significance level was 0.000 which was less than 0.05 and should be presented in the model. T statistics was 3.002 with a 0.004 significance level that was less than 0.05, hence the null hypothesis was rejected and was presented in the model and this model could be written as goal orientation=0/347 mindset, mindset positively predicted goal orientation.

Table 7.

Results of Coefficients between Mindset and Goal Orientation

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	*t*	*Sig.*
	B	*Std*. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.275	.503		4.520	.000
Mindset	.411	.137	.347	3.002	.004

4. 3. The Third Research Question

To identify whether Iranian EFL students 'mindset and goal orientation could predict their responses to failure, regression was used. Table 8 shows multiple relations between mindset and goal orientation toward responses to failure. The squared relation between mindset and responses to failure was 0.194.

Table 8.

 Summary of Correlation and Square of Correlation Estimation between Mindset and Responses to Failure

R	*R* Square	Adjusted R Square
.440	.194	.169

In Table 9, the appropriateness of the model was demonstrated by using ANOVA and F statistics. The statistics were 7.824 with a significant level of 0.001 that was less than 0.05 and it showed that it was a good model.

Table 9.

Results of ANOVA Mean Difference of Mindset on Responses to Failure

	Sum of Squares	*Df*	Mean Square	F	*Sig.*
Regression	7.545	2	3.773	7.824	.001
Residual	31.341	65	.482		
Total	38.886	67			

The coefficient of the model is shown in Table 10. T statistics was 5.401, with a significant level of 0.000 that was less than 0.05 and should be present in the model statistics of mindset was 3.562 with a significance level of 0.001 that was less than 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and t statistics of goal orientation was 0/380 with its significant level of 0.705 and it was more than 0.05, and the null hypothesis was accepted, and it was not present in the model.

Table 10.

Results of Coefficients between Mindset and Responses to Failure

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	*t*	*Sig.*
	B	*Std.* Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.143	.397		5.401	.000
Mindset	.358	.100	.423	3.562	.001
Goal orientation	.032	.085	.045	.380	.705

The model could be written as responses to failure is equal to 0.423 mindset and mindset positively predicted responses to failure. The significance level of fixed mindset and subcategories of goal orientation (performance goal orientation and performance-avoidance goal orientation and learning goal orientation) was in order.

4. 4. Qualitative Analysis

Using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the interviews, we formed three main categories as follows:

4. 4. 1. Second Language aptitude

Based on the perspective of the students, it was indicated that while certain students may tend to various degrees of fixed or growth mindset, it might be easier to think of mindsets as a continuum rather than dichotomous groups. Most interviewees reported different mindsets about various language learning skills and their level of ultimate attainment. The interview results suggested that language learning mindsets are complicated, situated, socially developed belief structures (Mercer & Ryan, 2010; Ryan & Mercer, 2012). In other words, most of the interviewees insisted that there is

such a concept as innate talent, especially for languages; however, hardworking is an essential part of that. The following interview quotes clarify second language aptitude.

<<I think I like to work and work harder. I am relatively hard working. I am good at writing, learning and I am focused; I try not to waste time. (Arta)>>

<<I think mindsets are very intertwined. Cause talent always gets you to a point, but hard work always gets you to your goals, but some scientists were unbelievably naturally talented. (Ahmad)>>

<<Yes, I definitely think there is a natural talent for learning languages, some people learn languages quite quickly, it depends on the person. (Sadaf)>>

4. 4. 2. Effort beliefs

The results were against the belief that high proficient students with a fixed mindset, set more performance-approach goals, but high proficient students with a growth mindset were less willing to set performance-approach goals. Fixed mindset students who thought that they were not proficient were opted to plan a performance-avoidance goal to focus on preventing others' negative assessment of proficiency. These students might be completely inactive in their behavior to not fail the class. (Elliott &Church, 1997). The findings of the interview did not demonstrate any significant difference between those who had a growth mindset and a fixed mindset regarding performance-approach goals. As both groups said that their aim in the class was to get a higher mark than other students. Moreover, there was no significant difference between fixed and growth mindset students regarding learning goal orientation. Two of their accounts are as follows:

One common point in the interviewees' responses was the agreement of most of the students with a fixed mindset on performance-avoidance goal orientation as when it was asked from Faezeh and Sara they mentioned:

<<I am terrified of the likelihood of having a terrible grade in the class or they stated that my goal for most of my classes is to avoid performing poorly. (Sara)>>
While those with a growth mindset agreed that <<I would like to know a great deal from the class. It is necessary to comprehend my lessons fully. (Faezeh)>>

4. 4. 3. Fear of failure

A majority of the students described their situation in the class circumstances as to avoid failing the course (See Table 10). In a failure situation, regardless of participants who liked to be evaluated proficient (performance-approach) or avoided providing proof of their weakness (performance-avoidance), fixed mindset students would sound very insecure and afraid of failure, and behaved desperately since their failure was due to their fixed talent (Elliott & Church, 1997).

Here are three examples from the responses that participants with the fixed mindset said, <<I am pretty anxious, and I do not want to be judged by those who are more proficient. (Amir)>>that was a negative/avoidance response because the participant only mentioned negative feeling about the situation.

<<I do not feel disappointed with my language performance in a failure situation>> (Shayan) was a neutral/mixed response, because the participants with a fixed mindset or growth mindset neither showed mastery response, pleased about their failure nor bad feelings.

<<I was pleased I had the fundamental comprehension of the language, but I was eager to expand my English proficiency>> (Ali) was a positive/mastery response because the participant with a growth mindset emphasized a learning goal and only mentioned positive emotion.

Below were a few answers to the growth mindset students:

Niyosha responded: <<I write a plan for myself to how to overcome these challenges and find a new way out of these obstacles. I find a solution for it; if not, I communicate with others and ask elders because they are more experienced.>> Arta said: <<The first thing I do is to be panic. Then I reassure myself and think about my situation and plan, focus on my goals, set them apart, finish them one by one and succeed effectively, and I recollect on what I did and try to improve, every work that they give us is not impossible. It is dependent on the time that I have if I have enough time I do not feel worried about it>>.

Table 11.

Results from the Qualitative Content Analysis of the students' Responses Qualitative Content Analysis of the students' Responses

Category	Codes	Excerpts of the students' responses
Second Language aptitude	Innate talent	I think there is a natural talent for learning languages some people learn languages quite quickly.
	Anyone can learn a language	I believe that if you want to achieve it you can.
Effort beliefs	Passive vessel	"I am concerned about the likelihood of getting a terrible grade in the class or they claimed that my goal for most of my classes is to avoid performing poorly.
	Active agent	Understanding the content of the L2 course is crucial for me in the L2 class.
Fear of failure	Mastery response	I was pleased I had the fundamental comprehension of the language, but I was eager to expand my language skills.
	Neutral/mixed	I do not feel disappointed with my language performance in a failure situation.
	Anxious response	I am pretty anxious, and I do not want to be judged by those who are more proficient.

5. Discussion

This study assessed how high and low proficiency made any differences on mindsets, goal orientations, and responses to failure variables; besides, it specified the predicted effects of goal orientation on mindset variables and the predicted effects of responses to failure on mindset and goal orientations variables.

Concerning the first question, the results showed that there was a significant difference between high and low proficient students regarding the mean ranks of mindset and goal orientation. However, there was no significant difference between the mean ranks of responses to failure in high and low proficient students. Related findings have been reported in surveys done by Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1994) that Language skills were explicitly or implicitly correlated with academic achievement (for instance, willingness, marks, classwork accomplishment) as well as emotional conditions (such as stress and fear). Along the same lines Bandura (1993) and Dinger et al., (2013) stated that less competent students often experienced less control over the classroom instruction, and also

some studies found that even after controlling for mindset, proficiency still was a powerful sign of motivation and success. Thus, proficiency may independently attribute different variables related to learning.

Relevant findings were found in the current studies conducted by Lou (2014) that proficiency was the antecedent to the relationship between mindset theories and performance-approach goals and it was declared that the interaction was essential for comprehending goal context, meaning that those who held a fixed mindset and felt proficient were more willing to seek to surpass others. However, that would not be the problem in this research due to the students with different proficiency levels that may regulate the findings and thus did not identify clear results. Besides, the impact of mindset theory on learning goals was more obvious for those with higher L2 proficiency. It is possible that as growth mindset students get very fluent, they are driven to know more and therefore demand more learning targets for L2. However, fixed-minded L2 students might be less prepared to embrace a learning goal irrespective of the level of proficiency since they would not think hard work will improve their ability.

The results of the second question indicated that Iranian EFL students' mindset positively predicted their goal orientation. The mindset was a crucial predictor of goal orientations to explain students' behaviors in failures and challenges.

The findings of the present study supported the assumption of Dweck (2017), asserting that the influence of mindset on learning goals was more obvious among L2 students who were more proficient. Consistent with this finding, studies by Braten and Olaussen (1998); Stipek and Gralinski (1996) found evidence that mindset was the proximal determinant of goal orientation. They found that the relationship of language mindset was mediated by goal orientation, even though this relationship was relatively weak because goal orientation was also determined by environmental factors, for instance, the purpose of the tasks, the classes, or more practically, the learning structure, school, or university.

The results of the third question stated that mindsets positively predicted responses to failure. However, the results of the present study did not confirm Dweck's theory (2017), in which goal orientations were critical predictors to describe students' behaviors throughout difficulties. Similarly, the findings of this research did not generally support the predictive pattern of Lou's (2014) mindsets-goals-responses, that selecting growth or fixed

belief directed L2 students to establish various goals that in turn determined students' behaviors when facing failure situations.

Consequently, the results of interview sessions confirmed those of the questionnaires that some students were inspired to not fail the class. To prevent being incompetent to themselves or others, such students might be completely passive in their behavior. On the contrary, most of the interviewees insisted that the language learning mindset could be improved by hardworking as an essential part of learning. In the context of effort beliefs, most of the active students wanted to learn much more from the class. It was essential for them to thoroughly understand the content of the lesson and in contrast to most of the passive ones who were concerned about the likelihood of getting an awful grade in the class or they claimed that their goal for most of their classes was to avoid performing poorly.

6. Conclusion

The present study examined whether there was a significant difference between high and low proficient EFL students about their mindsets, goal orientation, and responses to failure. Furthermore, it assessed a significant predictor variable of goal orientation in mindset variables and a significant predictor variable of responses to failure among mindset and goal orientations.

Based on the quantitative and qualitative findings of this research, EFL proficiency was described as the interpretation of students of their ability to successfully use the language. Besides, students with less proficiency considered less control over the studying situations, and after controlling for mindset theory, L2 proficiency still was a noticeable determiner of students' academic performance. Hence, L2 students who held a growth mindset became more proficient were motivated to learn more, and as a consequence set a higher learning goal. But L2 students who believed language ability was stable, probably adopted a learning goal regardless of their proficiency level because they didn't believe effort could change their ability. This pattern was only marginally significant in the present research.

To conclude, the present study declared that Iranian EFL students' mindset positively predicted their goal orientation even though it was not significant. In other words, the mindset was an essential forerunner to goal orientation, which was a crucial predictor to

explain students' behaviors in the face of failures and challenges, and also, it was found that mindsets positively predicted responses to failure. However, the findings of the present study did not indicate that goal orientation was a critical predictor to explain students' behaviors in the face of failures and challenges.

This study carries clear implications for syllabus designers and material developers to incorporate salient themes integral to goal orientations, mindsets, and failure situations into instructional materials and resources. Another important implication is that the enhancement and development of the growth mindset are liable to lead to a reduction in students'' failure rate. Therefore, there is a need to consider language students mindset as a crucial factor in dealing with EFL students' failure rate. Thus, material developers are expected to take into account the vitality of attending to students' language mindset more accurately than before.

Informed of the limitations of the research, such as the sample size and sample characteristics, future studies could be replicated on larger sample size and over a longer period to further generalize the study's findings. Besides, the research was not conducted in a true state; participants did not get any negative feedback or any challenges during the study. Furthermore, future empirical and longitudinal studies are necessary to identify whether actual L2 proficiency will change under challenging situations and overtime if participants maintain different mindsets or receive interventions promoting one or another mindset.

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Appendix A.

The Implicit Theory of Language Intelligence Scale

Instructions: Below are a number of statements about language intelligence, language Intelligence is the capacity to use spoken and written language, your native language, and perhaps other languages, to express what's on your mind and to understand other people. People with high language intelligence display a facility with words and languages. They are typically good at reading, writing, telling stories.

Please rate how much you personally agree or disagree with these statements. There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in your ideas.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

Beliefs about general language intelligence (GLB):

1. You have a certain amount of language intelligence, and you can't really do much to change it.

2. Your language intelligence is something about you that you can't change very much.

3. To be honest, you can't really change your language intelligence.

4. No matter who you are, you can significantly change your language intelligence level

5. You can always substantially change your language intelligence.

6. No matter how much language intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.

Beliefs about second language learning (L2B):

1. To a large extent, a person's biological factors (e.g. brain structures) determine his or her abilities to learn new languages.

2. It is difficult to change how good you are at foreign languages.

3. Many people can never do well in a foreign language even if they try hard because they lack natural language intelligence.

4. You can always change how your foreign language ability.

5. In learning a foreign language, if you work hard at it, you will always get better.

6. How good you are at using a foreign language will always improve if you really work at it.

Beliefs about age sensitivity and language learning (ASB):

1. How well a person speaks a foreign language depends on how early in life he/she learned it.

2. People can't really learn a new language well after they reach adulthood.

3. Even if you try, the skill level you achieve in a foreign language will advance very little if you learn it when you are an adult.

4. Everyone could do well in a foreign language if they try hard, whether they are young or old.

5. How well a person learns a foreign language does not depend on age; anyone who works hard can be a fluent speaker in that language

6. Regardless of the age at which they start, people can learn another language well.

Note: * These items are incremental theories.

The Persian version of Implicit theory of language intelligence scale

دستورالعمل: در زیر تعدادی از اظهارات در مورد هوش زبانی وجود دارد، هوش زبانی توانایی استفاده از زبان گفتاری و نوشتاری، زبان مادری خود واحتمالا زبان های دیگر برای بیان آنچه در ذهن خود و درک افراد دیگرمی باشد. افراد دارای هوش زبانی بالا دراستفاده از کلمات و زبان مهارت دارند. آنها به طور معمول در خواندن نوشتن، گفتن داستان خوب هستند. لطفا مشخص کنید چقدر شخصا موافق یا مخالف این اظهارات هستید. هیچ پاسخ درست یا غلطی وجود ندارد.

۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶
به شدت مخالف	تا حدودی مخالف	کمی مخالف	کمی موافق	تا حدودی موافق	کاملا موافق

نظریه‌ها در مورد هوش عمومی زبان

١. شما میزان مشخصی هوش زبانی دارید و در واقع کار زیادی برای تغییر ان نمی توانید انجام دهید.

٢. هوش زبانی چیزی در مورد شماست که چندان نمی توانید ان را تغییر دهید.

٣. اگر بخواهم صادق باشم شما واقعا نمی توانید هوشی زبان خود را تغییر دهید.

۴. مهم نیست شما چه کسی هستید، شما می توانید به طور قابل توجهی سطح هوش زبان خود را تغییر دهیدشما همیشه می توانید به طرز قابل ملاحظه ای هوش زبانی خود را تغییر دهید.

۵. مهم نیست که چقدر هوش زبانی دارید، شما همیشه می توانید آن را تا اندازه ای تغییر دهید.

باورها در مورد یادگیری زبان دوم

۱. تا حد زیادی، عوامل زیستی یک فرد (به عنوان مثال ساختارهای مغزی) توانایی های فرد را برای یادگیری زبان های جدید مشخص میکند.

۲. خوب هستید دشوار استغییر دادن اینکه چقدر در یادگیری زبانهای خارجی.

۳. بسیاری از مردم هرگز نمی توانند عملکرد خوبی در زبان دوم داشته باشند به دلیل اینکه فاقدهوش ذاتی برای یادگیری زبان هستند.

۴. توانایی زبان خارجی خود را تغییر دهید. شما همیشه می توانید.

۵. در یادگیری یک زبان خارجی ، در صورت تلاش کردن همیشه بهتر خواهید شد.

۶. بهبود خواهد یافت. اگر واقعا تلاش کنید مهارت شما در استفاده از زبان خارجی.

باورها در مورد حساسیت سن و یادگیری زبان

۱. چگونگی خوب صحبت کردن زبان خارجی یک فرد بستگی به این دارد که چقدر زود شروع به یادگیری کرده است.

۲. مردم واقعا نمی توانند به خوبی یک زبان جدید را پس از رسیدن به بزرگسالی یاد بگیرند.

۳. حتی اگر تلاش کنید، سطح مهارت شما در یک زبان خارجی پیشرفت کمی خواهد داشت اگر در بزرگسالی ان را فرا میگیرید.

۴. هر کس خواه پیر یا جوان می تواند عملکرد خوبی در زبان خارجی داشته باشد اگر سخت تلاش کند.

۵. مهارت فرد در یادگیری زبان خارجی به سن بستگی ندارد بلکه با میزان تمرین زیاد می تواند خوبصحبت کند.

۶. بدون در نظر گرفتن سن افراد می توانند به خوبی زبان دیگری را یاد بگیرند.

Appendix B.
Goal Orientations

Adapted from Elliot & M. Church (1997)

Performance-approach goal

1. It is important to me to do better than the other students in my [L2] class.

2. My goal in this [L2] class is to get a better grade than most of the students.

3. I am striving to demonstrate my ability relative to others in this [L2] class.

4. I am motivated by the thought of outperforming my peers in this [L2] class.

5. It is important to me to do well compared to others in this [L2] class.

6. I want to do well in this [L2] class to show my ability to my family, friends, advisors, or others.

Performance-avoidance goal

1. I often think to myself, "What if I do badly in this [L2] class?'

2. I worry about the possibility of getting a bad grade in this [L2] class.

3. My fear of performing poorly in this [L2] class is often what motivates me.

4. 1 just want to avoid doing poorly in this this [L2].

5. I'm afraid that if I ask my TA or instructor a "dumb question, they might not think I'm very smart.

6. My goal for this [L2] class is to avoid performing poorly."

Learning goal

1. I want to learn as much as possible from this [L2] class.

2. It is important for me to understand the content of this [L2] course as thoroughly as possible.

3. 1 hope to have gained a broader and deeper knowledge of [L2] when I am done with this [L2] class.

4. 1 desire to completely master the material presented in this [L2] class.

5. In a [L2] class like this, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn.

6. In a [L2] class like this, I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things.

Notes: [L2] will be replaced by the name of the language class that participants are taking

The Translated Version of the Goal-Oriented Scale

اهداف رویکرد عملکردی

۱. برای من اهمیت بسیاری دارد که بهتر ازدیگر دانش آموزان این کلاس زبان انگلیسی عمل کنم.

۲. هدف من در کلاس زبان انگلیسی این است که نمره ی بهتری از بسیاری از دانش آموزان بگیرم.

۳. من در تلاش برای نشان دادن توانایی های خود نسبت به دیگران در کلاس زبان انگلیسی هستم.

۴. فکرداشتن عملکردی بهتر نسبت به سایر همسالان در کلاس زبان به من انگیزه میدهد.

۵. برای من مهم است که در مقایسه با دیگران در کلاس زبان انگلیسی عملکرد بهتری داشته باشم.

۶. می خواهم عملکردخوبی در کلاس زبان انگلیسی داشته باشم تاتوانایی خود رابه خانواده، دوستان، مشاوران، و یا دیگران نشان دهم.

اهداف اجتناب عملکردی
هدف عملکرد اجتناب

۱. من اغلب با خودم فکر می کنم چه اتفاقی می افتد اگر عملکرد بدی در کلاس داشته باشم

۲. من در مورد امکان گرفتن نمره بد در کلاس زبان انگلیسی نگران هستم.

۳. اغلب ترس من از عملکرد ضعیف در کلاس زبان انگلیسی به من انگیزه میدهد.

۴. فقط می خواهم از عملکرد ضعیف در کلاس زبان جلوگیری کنم .

۵. من میترسم که اگر سوال احمقانه ای از مربی خود بپرسم ممکن است فکر کنند کهخیلی باهوش نیستم

۶. هدف من در کلاس زبان این است که از عملکرد ضعیف اجتناب کنم.

اهداف یادگیری

۱. من می خواهم تا آنجا که ممکن است از این کلاس یاد بگیرم.

۲. برای من درک مطالب درسی زبان انگلیسی به طور کامل اهمیت دارد.

۳. امیدوارم دانشی گسترده تر و عمیق تر از زبان انگلیسی را در پایان این کلاس به دست اورم.

۴. من ارزو دارم تا بر مطالب اراعه شده در کلاس تسلط پیدا کنم .

۵. در کلاس زبانی مثل این ترجیح می دهم مطالب درسی باعث برانگیخته شدن حس کنجکاوی من شوند حتی اگر دشوار باشند.

۶. در کلاس زبانی مثل این ترجیح می دهم مطالب درسی من را به چالش واقعی بکشند تا بتوانم مطالب جدید یاد بگیرم.

Appendix C.

Responses in Failure Situation Scale (Mastery, Helpless, And Anxious Responses)

Instruction: Following I provide several scenarios that may happen to you. Imagine what you will react when you are in such situations. There are no right or wrong answers to the following questions.

Situation 1. Imagine that you are in a room with several [L2] speakers. You just heard a joke from one of them and everyone in the room is laughing but you totally didn't understand the joke.						
What is the likelihood that you will just leave the room or just ignore their speaking?	Very unlikely			Very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
What is the likelihood that you will keep listening to their talk and try to understand their talking?	Very unlikely			Very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
How anxious/concerned would you be under this situation?	Very unconcerned			Very anxious		
	1	2	3	4	5	6

Situation 2. Imagine that you are in a [L2] classroom with native L2 teachers. You just hear an important announcement, but you are not very clear what the teacher said.						
What is the likelihood that you will ignore the announcement?	Very unlikely			Very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
What is the likelihood that you will raise your hand and ask the teacher for clarification?	Very unlikely			Very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
How anxious/concerned would you be under this situation?	Very unconcerned			Very anxious		
	1	2	3	4	5	6

Situation 3. Imagine that you are at a fast-food restaurant in the country where the [L2]is spoken and you are placing the order with the cashiers who cannot understand English, so you order in [L2], but the cashiers there do not understand your order.						
What is the likelihood that you will change to another restaurant where you could use English?	very unlikely			very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
What is the likelihood that you will keep trying to use the [L2] order your food in a different way?	very unlikely			very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
How anxious/concerned would you be under this situation?	very unconcerned			Very anxious		
	1	2	3	4	5	6

Situation 4. Imagine that you are in a [L2] Club. The organizer asks students to form several groups for discussion. But you are left out probably because your [L2] is not as good as the others.						
What is the likelihood that you won't take part in the club again?	very unlikely			very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
What is the likelihood that you will keep going to the club and try to learn from the others?	very unlikely			very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
How anxious/concerned would you be under this situation?	very unconcerned			Very anxious		
	1	2	3	4	5	6

Situation 5. Imagine that you are in a [L2] class one day. The professor asks a particular question. A few students, including yourself, raise their hands to answer the question. Assume that the professor didn't choose you because he/she thinks your [L2] is not good enough to express your ideas.						
What is the likelihood that you won't raise your hand again?	very unlikely			very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
What is the likelihood that you will get prepare and meet with the professor?	very unlikely			very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
How anxious/concerned would you be under this situation?	very unconcerned			Very anxious		
	1	2	3	4	5	6

Situation 6. Imagine that you are going out and a few foreigners from the country where your [L2] is spoken ask for help because they lost their way to their hotel. You use [L2] to point them the way but all of them get confused because they didn't understand you [L2].						
What is the likelihood that you won't help [L2] foreigners speaking again?	very unlikely			very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
What is the likelihood that you would better prepare yourself to help the [L2] speaking foreigners in the future?	very unlikely			very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
How anxious/concerned would you be under this situation?	very unconcerned			Very anxious		
	1	2	3	4	5	6

Situation 7. Imagine that the L2 class that you are in is having a large group discussion. The professor invites the native speakers to the class and you have to discuss with them. They obviously don't understand you while you are expressing your opinion because you cannot speak it fluently.						
What is the likelihood that you will ignore the discussion and do your own task?	Very unlikely			Very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
What is the likelihood that you will keep expressing your opinion?	Very unlikely			Very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
How anxious/concerned would you be under this situation?	Very unconcerned			Very anxious		
	1	2	3	4	5	6

Situation 8. Imagine that the L2 class that you are in is having a voluntary activity that students exchange their writing and provide comments. The first time, you received a comment from your a classmate who has one sentence, "your writing is hard to understand."						
What is the likelihood that you won't take part in this voluntarily exchange writing activity again?	Very unlikely			Very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
What is the likelihood that you will seek outside help/practice before the next class?	Very unlikely			Very likely		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
How anxious/concerned would you be under this situation?	very unconcerned			Very anxious		
	1	2	3	4	5	6

The Persian version of Responses in failure situation scale

دستور العمل: در زیر چندین موقعیت که ممکن است برای شما اتفاق بیفتد وجود دارد. تصور کنید زمانی که شـما در چنـین شرایطی هستید چه واکنشی نشان می‌دهید. هیچ پاسخ درست یا غلطی در مورد سوالات زیر وجود ندارد.

۶	۵	۴	۳	۲	۱
خیلـی احتمـال دارد	تــا حــدودی احتمال دارد	کمـی احتمـال دارد	کمی بعید است	تا حدودی بعید است	خیلی بعید است

موقعیت اول

تصور کنید که شما در یک اتاق با چندین سخنران زبان انگلیسی هستید .به تازگی شوخی را از یکی از ان هـا مـی شـنوید و همه در اتاق به ان جک می خندند اما شما اصلا متوجه ان شوخی نمی شوید.

١. چقدر احتمال دارد که شما فورا اتاق را ترک کنید یا به صحبت ان ها بی توجهی کنید.

٢. چقدر احتمال دارد که همچنان به صحبت کردن ان ها گوش دهید و تلاش کنید که صحبت ان ها را بفهمید؟

چقدر احتمال دارد که تحت این شرایط عصبی و نگرن شوید؟3.

موقعیت ۲

تصور کنید که در کلاس زبان با معلم انگلیسی زبان هستید هم اکنون یک اطلاعیه مهم می شنوید اما انچه معلـم مـی گویـد برای شما خیلی واضح نیست.

١. چقدر احتمال دارد که به اطلاعیه بی اعتنایی کنید؟

٢. چقدر احتمال دارد که دست خود را بلند کنید و تقاضای توضیح بیشتر کنید؟

٣. چقدر احتمال دارد که تحت این شرایط عصبی و نگران شوید؟

موقعیت ۳

تصور کنید که در فست فود کشوری که در ان زبان دوم صحبت میشود هستید و می خواهید سفارشانگلیسی را بـه صـندق دار که انگلیسی متوجه نمی شود بدهید .

١. چقدر احتمال دارد که رستوران را به جایی که بتوان از انگلیسی استفاده کنیدعوض کنید؟

٢. چقدر احتمال دارد که به تلاش خود برای استفاده از انگلیسی ادامه دهید تا سفار ش غذا را به روش متفاوتی دهید؟

٣. چقدر احتمال دارد که تحت این شرایط عصبی و نگرن شوید؟

موقعیت ٤

تصور کنید که در کلاس زبان هستید.معلم از دانش اموزان تقـا ضـا میکنـد تـا چنـدین گـروه را بـرای بخـث کـردن تشکیل دهند.اما شما کنار گذاشته میشوید.احتمالا به دلیل اینکه زبان انگلیسی شما به خوبی دیگران نیست.

١. چقدر احتمال دارد که دیگردر کلاس زبان شرکت نکنید؟

٢. چقدر احتمال دارد که به رفتن به کلاس ادامه دهید و تلاش کنید تا از دیگران یاد بگیرید؟

٣. چقدر احتمال دارد که تحت این شرایط عصبی و نگرن شوید؟

موقعیت ۵

تصور کنید که در کلاس زبان هستید. استاد یک سوال خاص می پرسد.تعدادی از دانش اموزان از جمله شما دست خود را بلند می کنید تا به سوال جواب دهید. فرض کنید که استاد شما را انتخاب نمیکند به دلیل اینکه فکر میکند که انگلیسی شما به اندازه ای خوب نیست که نظر خود را بیان کنید.

١. چقدر احتمال دارد که دوباره دست خود را بلند نکنید؟

٢. چقدر احتمال دارد که خود را اماده کنید تا با استاد ملاقات کنید؟

٣. چقدر احتمال دارد که تحت این شرایط عصبی و نگران شوید؟.

موقعیت ۶

تصور کنید که بیرون رفته اید و تعدادی خارجی از کشوری انگلیسی زبان درخواست کمک می کنند به خاطر اینکه راه خود را به هتل گم کرده اند .شما از زبان انگلیسی خود استفاده می کنید تا به ان ها راه را نشان دهید اما همه ی ان ها سر در گم شده اند به خاطر اینکه متوجه ی زبان انگلیسی شما نشده اند.

١. چقدر احتمال دارد که دیگر به خارجی ها کمک نکنید؟

٢. چقدر احتمال دارد که خود را بهتر اماده کنید تا در اینده به خارجی ها کمک کنید؟

٣. چقدر احتمال دارد که تحت این شرایط عصبی و نگران شوید؟

موقعیت ۷

تصور کنید بحث گروهییزرگی در کلاس زبانی که در ان هستید در جریان است.استاد از انگلیسی زبانان دعوت می کند تا به کلاس بیایند و شما مجبور به بحث کردن با انان هستید.ان ها به وضوح متوجه شما در هنگامی که نظر خود را بیان می کنید نمی شوند چون صحبت کردن شما روان نیست.

١. احتمال دارد که بحث را نادیده گرفته وتکلیف خود را انجام دهید؟

٢. چقدر احتمال دارد که به ابراز نظر خود ادامه دهید؟

٣. چقدر احتمال دارد که تحت این شرایط عصبی و نگران شوید؟

موقعیت ۸

تصور کنید کلاس زبانی که در ان هستید فعالیت داوطلبانه ای دارد که دانش اموزان نوشته های خود را با یکدیگرعوض می کنند و نظر می دهند. برای اولین بار نظری را از یکی از همکلاسی ها دریافت می کنید که یک جمله دارد : درک نوشته ی شما مشکل است.

١. چقدر احتمال دارد که دوباره در فعالیت عوض کردن نوشته ها شرکت نکنید؟

٢. چقدر احتمال دارد که به دنبال کمک یا تمرین قبل از کلاس بعدی باشید؟

٣. چقدر احتمال دارد که تحت این شرایط عصبی و نگران شوید؟

Appendix D
Semi-structure Interview

1. How do you describe yourself as a student?
2. What are your goals (personal/academic/professional)?
3. What do you do when you face a very difficult academic task?
4. What do you think about the relationship between ability and success?
5. What do you do when you face a challenging situation in the classroom?
6. So which is more important, natural talent or hard work?
7. And do you think that there is such thing as a natural ability for languages?