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The Relationship between EFL Learners' Academic Perfectionism and Their Foreign Language Engagement*

İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğrenen Öğrencilerin Akademik Mükemmeliyetçilikleri ve Yabancı Dil Dersi Katılımları Arasındaki İlişki

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ABSTRACT: Language development is significantly shaped by a learner's personality characteristics. Due to the rise of the role of positive psychology in education, the interest in the study of the psychological constructs has influenced language instruction. In the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, an investigation into the relationship between academic perfectionism and foreign language engagement is essential to enhance educators' understanding of the role of personality traits in foreign language education. This correlational study investigates the relationship between EFL learners' academic perfectionism and their foreign language engagement. It also assesses whether these variables statistically and significantly differ in terms of gender, department, and years of learning English. The study consists of 275 EFL learners of a foundation university in Türkiye. Gathering of data entails "Academic Perfectionism Scale", "Language Learner Engagement Scale" and "Personal Information Form". The independent samples t-test, one-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation test were used in the analysis of the data. The findings show that EFL learners' academic perfectionism was not found to be associated with their foreign language engagement. Additionally, academic perfectionism and foreign language engagement among EFL learners showed a significant difference based on gender, whereas department and years of learning English had no role in academic perfectionism and foreign language engagement.

Keywords: Academic perfectionism, foreign language engagement, learner engagement, EFL learners.

ÖZ: Dil gelişimi, önemli ölçüde öğrencinin kişilik özellikleri tarafından şekillenir. Pozitif psikolojinin eğitimdeki rolünün artması nedeniyle, psikolojik yapılar üzerine yapılan araştırmalara olan ilgi dil öğretimini de etkilemiştir. Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce bağlamında, akademik mükemmeliyetçilik ile yabancı dil dersi katılımı arasındaki ilişkinin araştırılması, eğitimcilerin kişilik özelliklerinin yabancı dil eğitimindeki rolünü anlamalarını geliştirmek açısından önemlidir. İlişkisel tarama modeli kullanan bu çalışma, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenen öğrencilerin akademik mükemmeliyetçilikleri ile yabancı dil dersi katılımları arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Ayrıca çalışma, bu değişkenlerin cinsiyet, bölüm ve İngilizce öğrenme süresi açısından istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir farklılık gösterip göstermediğini de incelemektedir. Araştırma, Türkiye'deki bir vakıf üniversitesinde 275 İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerden oluşmaktadır. Verilerin toplanması, "Akademik Mükemmeliyetçilik Ölçeği", "Yabancı Dil Dersi Katılım Ölçeği" ve "Kişisel Bilgi Formu"nu içermektedir. Bu nedenle, verilerin analizinde bağımsız örneklemler t-testi, tek yönlü ANOVA ve Pearson korelasyon testi kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, bu öğrencilerin akademik mükemmeliyetçiliklerinin yabancı dil dersi katılımlarıyla ilişkili olmadığını göstermektedir. Buna ek olarak, öğrencilerin akademik mükemmeliyetçilik ve yabancı dil dersi katılımları cinsiyete göre anlamlı farklılık gösterirken, bölüm ve İngilizce öğrenim süresinin bu değişkenler üzerinde herhangi bir etkisi bulunmamıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Akademik mükemmeliyetçilik, yabancı dil dersi katılımı, öğrenci katılımı, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrenciler.

* This study is from the first author's master's thesis titled: "The Relationship between EFL Learners' Academic Perfectionism and Their Foreign Language Engagement", conducted under the supervision of the second author.

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Individual differences and personality traits have a role that is essential to foreign language learning, and thereby foreign language educators have become aware of the psychological factors that have significance for effective language learning. According to MacIntyre and Mercer (2014), the focus of incorporating psychology issues into language education is on the emotional and social states of learners that affect their engagement in the learning context. Angelovska et al. (2021) indicate that learners' psychological characteristics are major determinants of language learning engagement, and therefore, improve their learning achievements.

In this sense, academic perfectionism, as a personality factor, has an interrelation with academic achievement of language learners (Pishghadam & Akhondpoor, 2011). Academic perfectionism can result in improved academic performance; therefore, it can provide personal and social success (Fernández-García et al., 2022). As perfectionism is linked with higher self-confidence and more intense focus on learning (Loscalzo et al., 2018), it can help language learners to have a sense of perfectionism. Additionally, foreign language engagement, as a psychological factor, is an active state in which students enjoy, reflect on, and participate in language learning activities (Mercer, 2019). According to Svalberg (2009), foreign language engagement comprises cognitive, affective, and social dimensions where the learner is the active agent, and where the language is the medium. Therefore, foreign language engagement affects the learning process as students need to spend time using and practicing the language in order to enhance their language skills. Perfectionism and engagement contribute to students' performance in their educational goals (Bernabé et al., 2023; Fredricks et al., 2004). Thus, the interplay between them should be investigated in the EFL environment to disclose potential implications of these constructs on the language learning process.

In line with literature, the focus of the previous studies has been on university students' domain-general perfectionism and engagement, disregarding the potential prominence of domain-specific constructs (Bernabé et al., 2023; Cazan & Stan, 2019; Closson & Boutilier, 2017; Damian et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2007). In their study, Teimori et al. (2020) state that the use of non-language-specific or domain-general measures can be insufficient to identify specific features of learners in the foreign language context. That is, the domain-specific constructs which can be defined as specific types of concepts identified or characterized in a particular context are necessary to focus on understanding the specific aspects of foreign language learning. As a consequence, an examination into the domain-specific factors can shed light on the association between EFL learners' perfectionistic orientations and language engagement. To the best knowledge of the researcher, there has been little information on the relationship between the two factors in the EFL field; therefore, an investigation into whether EFL learners' academic perfectionism is associated with their foreign language engagement can enable foreign language teachers and educators to understand, take into account, and offer insights into the interplay between one of the personality traits as academic perfectionism and language learners' engagement in foreign language learning.

Literature Review

Perfectionism is a personality trait that involves setting very high goals and carefully judging one's own performance (Stoeber, 2018). The interest in this trait increased with Alfred Adler's work in psychodynamic theory (Hewitt et al., 2017). Adler (1956) states that the desire to do well is a natural part of human life and gives people a sense of meaning. Building on this idea, Hollender (1965) characterizes perfectionism as the tendency to demand a particular level of achievement, to reject outcomes that fall short of that ideal, and to pursue flawless performance. Frost et al. (1990) likewise describe perfectionism as the practice of setting extremely high personal objectives coupled with a tendency to evaluate one's own accomplishments in a sharply critical manner. Research has consistently shown that perfectionism is associated with diverse psychological and academic factors: rumination and worry (Xie et al., 2019), academic performance (Madigan, 2019), gender differences (Ghosh & Roy, 2017; Topoğlu, 2022; Yaoar, 2008), and variations depending on academic achievement levels (Camadan & Yüksel, 2012). As perfectionism is linked with higher self-confidence and more intense focus on learning (Loscalzo et al., 2018), it can help language learners to have a sense of perfectionism in their academic pursuits. These findings collectively indicate that perfectionism shapes students' emotional and academic experiences and these findings provide a strong rationale for the examination of the academic perfectionism in terms of its role in students' foreign language learning processes.

Additionally, engagement, as a psychological construct, is conceptualized as an expression of the action (Hiver et al., 2021). In this regard, engagement is different from motivation because motivation reflects intention rather than behavior (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Gourlay (2015) defines engagement as a behavior which emerges from strong motivation and determination. Therefore, motivation drives students' active engagement (Lee & Reeve, 2012; Skinner et al., 2008). The Self Determination Theory (SDT) serves as the foundation for engagement, which is defined as a motivated behavior that students have to achieve their intended learning outcomes (Skinner et al., 2009). Motivational sources are thought to be the cause of student engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In educational contexts, engagement has been recognized as a critical factor in students' academic success (Ladd & Dinella, 2009; Wang & Peck, 2013). Research shows that engagement is influenced by various factors, such as self-efficacy, autonomy, growth mindset, and competence (Mercer, 2019), teacher-student interactions, proactive behaviors, emotions, attitudes, cognitive skills, supportive teacher actions, and access to resources as well as personal traits (Li & Xue, 2023). Moreover, assumptions about gender roles (Li et al., 2025) and demographic characteristics such as gender and age (Santos et al., 2021) can shape students' engagement. To sum up, both perfectionism and engagement are psychological constructs which contribute to students' performance in their educational goals (Bernabé et al., 2023; Fredricks et al., 2004), and thereby an investigation into the interplay between academic perfectionism and foreign language engagement should be investigated in the EFL environment to reveal their potential implications for the language learning process.

Academic Perfectionism

Individuals who set a high academic purpose in educational environments have academic perfectionism (Odacı et al., 2017). Academic perfectionism is shaped and predicated by cultural constructs, such as religious beliefs, types of parenting styles, educational systems, and moral principles (Burns, 1980). Planting the idea of academic excellence into the minds of learners can start at an early age based on the standards of the society or culture and family (Malik & Ghayas, 2016).

In line with the diverse perspectives on academic perfectionism, the presence of perfectionism as a psychological construct can have both positive and negative driving forces for education (Liu & Berzenski, 2022). Students who are oriented to be perfectionists in their academic goals can have difficulty in experiencing satisfaction (Pacht 1984); hence, academic perfectionism can affect well-being of learners in a negative way (Satıcı et al., 2020). In contrast, when academic perfectionism can be managed effectively, it can lead to learner success and enjoyment efficiently (Akbaba, 2024).

The domain-general perfectionism, as a broad personality-level construct, might have the unexplored aspects which are not linked with the examination of the specific domain (Liu & Berzenski, 2022). Thus, the domain-general perfectionism, which provides insights into understanding the general or overall aspects and structure of perfectionist tendencies, may not shed light on the evaluation of perfectionism that manifests in education. With respect to the study of academic perfectionism in the EFL field, the study by Ghorbandordinejad and Afshar (2017) shows that perfectionism does not serve as a mediator in the association between self-efficacy and English achievement among Iranian EFL students. In an investigation into the impact of perfectionism on Chinese EFL college students' writing skills, Lin (2020) further states that particular domains of perfectionism, such as personal standards and parental expectations and criticism may negatively affect the second language writing performance, which underlines the prominence of the approaches to psychological aspects. In another study, Bukenova (2024) finds that while perfectionism promotes discipline and grammatical precision, it also leads to self-judgment, motivational problems, and mental health challenges. The study by Fernández-García et al. (2022) demonstrates that academic perfectionism was associated with better academic performance; however, it can cause well-being problems.

Foreign Language Engagement

Storch (2008) characterizes language engagement as moments of recognition in a situation where the use of language plays a significant role. Svalberg (2009) says that this description can be used, but it may constrain the concept of engagement in relation to the involvement of factors beyond cognition. Rather, Svalberg characterizes language engagement as a state in which learners act out mentally, emotionally, and socially through language. With this perspective, Svalberg claims that engaging in a language is composed of social, affective, and cognitive aspects that affect one another in interaction. From this perspective, Svalberg asserts that cognitive engagement incorporates knowledge, attention, and knowledge construction while affective engagement stands for openness to experience language. Svalberg states that social

engagement means initiating and extending discussions. According to Mercer (2019), all these three dimensions are necessary for a genuine language engagement.

Research on language learning has mostly focused on the task-level engagement (Sang & Hiver, 2021). Philp and Duchesne (2016) investigated learner engagement in second language task activities by stressing its complexity, context-dependent feature, and social dynamics. Recent studies on the second language engagement have progressed from focusing just on task engagement to including factors, such as educational context and involvement (Henry & Thorsen, 2018), and disaffection and disengagement (Sulis & Philp, 2021). In conclusion, based upon the aforementioned studies, there are dimensions of foreign language engagement due to the interaction between the learner, context and social relationships.

Affective Engagement

Affective engagement refers to reactions of learners by interest, boredom, and happiness or anxiety (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Learners' affective engagement comprises diverse emotional states (Unrau & Quirk, 2014). Though it is sometimes neglected, emotional involvement is essential in language instruction (Swain, 2013). For Svalberg (2009), qualities, such as passion and tenacity, are indicators of emotional engagement of language learners. Oga-Baldwin's (2019) research shows that student assignments can boost their engagement emotionally when students are engaged in those assignments in terms of behavioral and cognitive aspects. In a study in which Huang (2023) finds a positive relationship between affective engagement and the quality of the relation between teacher and student, writing performance is correlated with the affective engagement of learners in the EFL classes in a positive way. Finally, the study by Yu et al. (2020) demonstrates that a positive correlation is seen between affective engagement and learning persistence.

Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive engagement is related to process of thinking in an active way when a learner engages in a task (Posner, 1980; Rueda et al., 2004). It also involves psychological aspects of learning (Fredricks et al., 2004). The psychological aspect comprises motivation to succeed in tasks (Zimmerman, 1990). Key indications include learners' way of thinking and their attention and focus (Svalberg, 2009). This type of engagement process incorporates critical thinking, including questioning and answering, comparing and contrasting, and reflecting as well as making an inference (Svalberg, 2009). Khan et al. (2023) find a strong correlation between academic productivity, performance, and cognitive engagement of learners. According to Ammade et al. (2023), cognitive engagement should be enhanced for learners' active participation. Al-Ariqi and Prasad (2024) further say that the degree of cognitive engagement is a predictor of academic performance and productivity of EFL and ESL students.

Social Engagement

Social engagement emphasizes learners' classroom interactions in educational environments (Mihai et al., 2022). Social engagement enhances collaboration between learners (Baralt et al., 2016; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). The essence of social engagement depends on the active involvement of learners, communication, and group

work (Dao & McDonough, 2018; Storch, 2008). In Svalberg's (2009) opinion, social engagement means that language learners socially engage in a language through discussions and conversations by feeling ready and prepared to involve in interactions. According to Svalberg, evaluation of social engagement in language requires observing the way of learners' communication and interaction. While social engagement research in EFL is sparse, Dewaele and Li's (2021) research demonstrates that teacher enthusiasm is linked to EFL learners' social engagement and enjoyment.

Significance of the Study

Although foreign language engagement and academic perfectionism have been examined separately, empirical research directly linking these two constructs in EFL contexts remains scarce. Therefore, this study casts light on the interplay between the foreign language engagement and academic perfectionism among EFL learners. In this respect, the study can provide language instructors with insights to enhance their teaching instruction to involve learners in foreign language learning by considering learners' academic perfectionism in language education.

Aim of the Study

The study aims to measure the relationship between the academic perfectionism and foreign language engagement among EFL learners. Furthermore, this study seeks to determine if academic perfectionism and foreign language engagement among EFL learners differ by gender, department, and years of learning English. Thus, the research questions asked are:

RQ1. Does EFL learners' academic perfectionism differ statistically significantly by:

a. gender?

b. department?

c. years of learning English?

RQ2. Does EFL learners' foreign language engagement differ statistically significantly by:

a. gender?

b. department?

c. years of learning English?

RQ3. Is there a significant relationship between EFL learners' academic perfectionism and their foreign language engagement?

Method

Research Model

The study determines whether a significant relationship exists between academic perfectionism and foreign language engagement among EFL learners. The study also assesses whether the difference was statistically significant between EFL learners' academic perfectionism and between their foreign language engagement based on gender, department, and years of learning English. To this end, the study employed the correlational research design, which is one of the survey research methods. In this

regard, the correlational study is particularly used to determine the degree of co-variation among multiple variables (Karasar, 2014).

Participants

Convenience sampling was used for the selection of 275 EFL students from the School of Foreign Languages at Çağ University. When participants are the representative of an accessible population, the convenience sampling is a method used by the researcher (Rahi, 2017). The data were gleaned in March, the 2023-2024 academic semester.

Based on the demographic information obtained from 275 EFL learners, 96 (34.9%) were males and 179 (65.1%) were females. Additionally, participants' departments in which they were enrolled to study after the School of Foreign Languages were categorized in three groups as language department (in which the focus is on the foreign language specialization and skills), verbal department (in which the major focus is on analytical thinking and qualitative interpretation skills) and equally weighted department (in which the focus is on analytical, qualitative and quantitative interpretation skills). There were 63 (22.9%) students in the language department, 134 (48.7%) in the verbal department, and 78 (28.4%) in the equally weighted department. Besides, years of learning English was classified in four groups as 0-3, 4-7, 8-11, and 12 years and above; thus, 84 (30.5%) students had zero to three years of learning English, 19 (6.9%) students had four to seven years of learning English, 128 (46.5%) had eight to eleven years, and 44 (16.0%) of them had twelve and more than twelve years of learning English.

Data Collection Instruments

Personal Information Form

With aim of obtaining information about the demographic background of participants, the researcher designed the form which is composed of questions, such as gender, department, and years of learning English. Therefore, the Personal Information Form was used to determine whether those participants' academic perfectionism and foreign language engagement had a statistical variation based on gender, department, and years of learning English.

Academic Perfectionism Scale

To assess university students' levels of perfectionism, Odacı et al. (2017) developed the Academic Perfectionism Scale which is composed of 13 items in three factors: "Idealization", "Comparison" and "Self-doubt." The scale with three factors explains the 52.36% of the total variance. Self-doubt is the act of doubting one's own skills and behavior; comparison is the process of assessing oneself by comparing himself/herself with others; and idealization is the act of establishing standards for oneself in that achievement will come if they are met and failure will follow if they are not met (Topoğlu, 2022). The reliability analysis for this current study showed that .81 (Self-doubt), .63 (Comparison), and .60 (Idealization) were found as the internal consistency coefficients. The total internal reliability score of the scale was .83. According to George and Mallery (2019), $\alpha>.9$ is determined as excellent, $\alpha>.8$ as good, $\alpha>.7$ as acceptable, $\alpha>.6$ as questionable, $\alpha>.5$ as poor, and $\alpha<.5$ as unacceptable. It

should be indicated that there is low reliability for the comparison dimension (α=.63) and low reliability for the idealization dimension (α=.60), but these values are above α>.5 which is regarded as poor and α<.5 which is defined as unacceptable.

Language Learner Engagement Scale

This scale developed by Oruç and Demirci (2020) measures learners' foreign language engagement levels in English language. The scale has 18 items in three factors as "Social Engagement", "Cognitive Engagement" and "Affective Engagement". The scale with three factor structure explains 49.24 % of the total variance. Svalberg (2009) states that students' being ready to be in communication with others is regarded as social engagement; students' being ready to interact and having goals and autonomy is defined as affective engagement; and students' willingness to reflect and use problem-solving skills is defined as cognitive engagement. According to the reliability analysis for this current study, the affective, cognitive, and social engagement dimensions were found to have the internal consistency coefficients of α=.92, α=.79, and α=.60, respectively. The overall reliability score of the scale was found to be α=.90. It should also be acknowledged that there is low reliability for the social engagement dimension (α=60) but the value is above α>.5 which is accepted as poor and α<.5 which is defined as unacceptable.

Data Analysis

In the analysis, parametric tests were run in that Skewness and Kurtosis values, which are between -2.0 and +2.0, do not significantly deviate from the normal distribution (George & Mallery, 2019; Hair et al., 2022; Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012). To ascertain whether the academic perfectionism and foreign language engagement among EFL learners vary based on gender, department, and years of learning English, one-way ANOVA as well as independent samples t-test were applied. Additionally, Levene's Test was run before the use of the one-way ANOVA. According to Can (2014), Levene's Test value is considered homogeneous (p>0.05). Furthermore, the effect size of .01 is accepted as small, of .06 is accepted as medium, and of .14 is accepted as large (Büyüköztürk, 2019). Finally, the Pearson correlation test was used to delve into whether academic perfectionism was correlated with foreign language engagement among EFL learners. According to Büyüköztürk (2019), the correlation coefficient is seen as high when it ranges from 1.00 to 0.70, as medium when it ranges from 0.69 to 0.30, and as low when it ranges from 0.29 to 0.00.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical approval numbered as E-81570533-044-2400003674 (Date: 06.05.2024), was taken from the Research Ethics Committee of Çağ University. Also, the authorization was given by the School of Foreign Languages at Çağ University to execute the study. To utilize the scales for this study, permission was taken from the developers of each scale. Prior to the data collection, participants were given a consent form to ensure their voluntary participation before responding to the scales and the Personal Information Form. Data were taken from the participants face-to-face in March of the 2023-2024 academic semesters.

Results

Table 1 presents the results of the independent samples t-test performed to assess whether there was a statistically significant difference in academic perfectionism of EFL learners based on gender.

Table 1

T-Test Results of Academic Perfectionism Based on Gender

Scale/Sub-dimension	Gender	N	M	SD	t	df.	p
Self-doubt	Female	179	3.01	.87	2.25	273	.025
	Male	96	2.75	.90			
Comparison	Female	179	2.23	.78	0.34	273	.734
	Male	96	2.26	.86			
Idealization	Female	179	3.76	.85	3.13	273	.002
	Male	96	3.41	.92			
Academic Perfectionism Scale	Female	179	2.94	.68	2.11	273	.036
	Male	96	2.75	.71			

N=275

As shown in Table 1, academic perfectionism scores of the female EFL learners are significantly higher than male EFL learners (t=2.11; p<.05). Similarly, female EFL learners have higher self-doubt scores than male EFL learners (t=2.25; p<.05). Nevertheless, no difference was found in comparison scores of them based on gender (t=-0.34; p>.05). Additionally, the difference was statistically significant between idealization scores of participants regarding gender (t=3.13; p<.05).

One-way ANOVA was further run to find the statistically significant difference between EFL learners' academic perfectionism regarding department.

Table 2

One-Way ANOVA Results of Academic Perfectionism Based on Department

Scale/Sub-dimension	Department	N	M	SD	F	p	Between Group Difference	η2
Self-doubt	Verbal[1]	134	2.89	.81	.45	.63		
	Equally weighted[2]	78	2.89	.93				
	Language[3]	63	3.02	1.01				
Comparison	Verbal[1]	134	2.27	.82	1.30	.27		
	Equally weighted[2]	78	2.13	.80				
	Language[3]	63	2.34	.80				
Idealization	Verbal[1]	134	3.74	.77	3.09	.04	1> 2	.022
	Equally weighted[2]	78	3.43	.94				

	Language[3]	63	3.68	1.02		
Academic Perfectionism Scale	Verbal[1]	134	2.89	.62		
	Equally weighted[2]	78	2.78	.73	1.23	.29
	Language[3]	63	2.96	.79		

N=275

Total academic perfectionism scores of participants were not statistically significantly different according to department (F=1.23; p>.05). Furthermore, their comparison scores (F=1.30; p>.05) and self-doubt scores (F=.45; p>.05) did not have any variation according to department. On the contrary, the department-based difference between their idealization scores was seen (F=3.09; p<.05). According to the LSD test, EFL students from the verbal department scored higher on idealization than the ones from the equally weighted department. The small effect of the department on idealization scores was determined ($\eta^2 = 0.022$).

Table 3 below indicates the results of one-way ANOVA which was performed to evaluate the statistical difference between EFL learners' academic perfectionism with regard to years of learning English.

Table 3

One-Way ANOVA Results of Academic Perfectionism Based on Years of Learning English

Scale/Sub-dimension	Years	N	M	SD	F	p	Between Group Difference	η2
Self-doubt	0-3[1]	84	3.09	.85	2.84	.03	1>3 2>3	.031
	4-7[2]	19	3.23	1.02				
	8-11[3]	128	2.79	.90				
	12 and above[4]	44	2.86	.82				
Comparison	0-3[1]	84	2.19	.80	.95	.41		
	4-7[2]	19	2.50	.92				
	8-11[3]	128	2.27	.81				
	12 and above[4]	44	2.16	.77				
Idealization	0-3[1]	84	3.65	.87	.39	.75		
	4-7[2]	19	3.84	.97				
	8-11[3]	128	3.61	.89				
	12 and above[4]	44	3.60	.90				
Academic Perfectionism Scale	0-3[1]	84	2.94	.67	1.57	.19		
	4-7[2]	19	3.14	.82				
	8-11[3]	128	2.81	.71				
	12 and above[4]	44	2.81	.64				

N=275

The number of years spent for learning English did not have an influence on participants' academic perfectionism scores (F=1.57; p>.05). Depending on self-doubt scores (F=2.84; p<.05), participants that have 0–3 and 4–7 years of learning English scored higher than participants that have 8–11 years of learning English; thus, participants' scores of self-doubt differed statistically. The effect size of years of learning English on self-doubt was small (η^2=0.031). Besides, participants' scores of comparison (F=0.95; p>.05) and their scores of idealization (F=0.39; p>.05) had no statistical variation regarding years of learning English.

Table 4 presents the results of independent samples t-test performed to determine whether there was a statistical difference in foreign language engagement of EFL learners based on gender.

Table 4

T-Test Results of Foreign Language Engagement Based on Gender

Scale/Sub-dimension	Gender	N	M	SD	t	df.	p
Affective Engagement	Female	179	3.76	.84	2.78	273	.006
	Male	96	3.44	1.03			
Cognitive Engagement	Female	179	3.58	.68	1.62	273	.106
	Male	96	3.43	.82			
Social Engagement	Female	179	3.56	.63	2.53	273	.012
	Male	96	3.34	.76			
Language Learner Engagement Scale	Female	179	3.63	.61	2.66	273	.008
	Male	96	3.40	.76			

N=275

Language learner engagement scores of female EFL learners are significantly higher than male EFL learners (t=2.66; p<.05). Likewise, female EFL learners have higher affective engagement (t=2.78; p<.05) and social engagement scores (t=2.53; p<.05). On the other hand, cognitive engagement scores (t=1.62; p>.05) showed no statistical variation by gender.

One-Way ANOVA was used to examine whether EFL learners' foreign language engagement is statistically different based on department.

Table 5

One-Way ANOVA Results of Foreign Language Engagement Based on Department

Scale/Sub-dimension	Department	N	M	SD	F	p	Between Group Difference	η2
Affective Engagement	Verbal[1]	134	3.54	.88	5.75	.004	3>1 3>2	.041
	Equally weighted[2]	78	3.57	.85				
	Language[3]	63	3.99	1.03				
Cognitive Engagement	Verbal[1]	134	3.54	.66	.37	.69		
	Equally weighted[2]	78	3.47	.69				
	Language[3]	63	3.57	.91				
Social Engagement	Verbal[1]	134	3.44	.61	.65	.52		
	Equally weighted[2]	78	3.49	.69				
	Language[3]	63	3.57	.83				
Language Learner Engagement Scale	Verbal[1]	134	3.51	.59	2.01	.13		
	Equally weighted[2]	78	3.50	.66				
	Language[3]	63	3.70	.83				

N=275

Participants' total scores of language learner engagement did not differ by department (F=2.01; p>.05). On the contrary, their affective engagement scores (F=5.75; p<.05) varied by department. As a result, with regard to affective engagement, EFL learners in the language department scored higher than those in the verbal and equally weighted department. Thus, the effect size (η2=0.041) indicates a minor impact of EFL learners' department on their affective engagement scores. Cognitive engagement scores (F=0.37; p>.05) and social engagement scores (F=0.65; p>.05) did not differ by department.

One-way ANOVA was performed to evaluate whether EFL learners' foreign language engagement differs based on years of learning English. Table 6 displays the results.

Table 6

One-Way ANOVA Results of Foreign Language Engagement Based on Years of Learning English

Scale/Sub-dimension	Years	N	M	SD	F	p
Affective Engagement	0-3	84	3.59	.86	2.04	.10
	4-7	19	3.99	.60		
	8-11	128	3.57	.98		
	12 and above	44	3.86	.94		
Cognitive Engagement	0-3	84	3.56	.71	.40	.74
	4-7	19	3.42	.73		
	8-11	128	3.50	.72		
	12 and above	44	3.60	.84		
Social Engagement	0-3	84	3.53	.70	.37	.76
	4-7	19	3.52	.85		
	8-11	128	3.44	.66		
	12 and above	44	3.52	.68		
Language Learner Engagement Scale	0-3	84	3.56	.67	.68	.56
	4-7	19	3.63	.62		
	8-11	128	3.50	.67		
	12 and above	44	3.66	.73		

N=275

Participants' total scores of language learner engagement were not affected by the number of years spent in learning English ($F=0.68$; $p>.05$). Additionally, their scores of affective engagement ($F=2.04$; $p>.05$), cognitive engagement ($F=0.40$; $p>.05$), and social engagement ($F=0.37$; $p>.05$) did not have any variation based on years of learning English.

Pearson correlation test, the findings of which are illustrated in Table 7, was run to determine whether EFL learners' academic perfectionism is significantly associated with their foreign language engagement.

Table 7
Pearson Correlation among the Variables

Sub-dimensions/Scales	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Self-doubt	1							
2. Comparison	.517**	1						
3. Idealization	.445**	.336**	1					
4. Academic Perfectionism Scale	.903**	.759**	.675**	1				
5. Affective Engagement	-.024	-.061	.304**	.054	1			
6. Cognitive Engagement	.031	-.028	.340**	.108	.649**	1		
7. Social Engagement	.064	-.042	.338**	.122*	.544**	.623**	1	
8. Language Learner Engagement Scale	.020	-.051	.377**	.104	.881**	.892**	.792**	1

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

Learners' academic perfectionism was not associated with their language learner engagement (r=.104, p>.05). However, idealization had a moderate, positive and meaningful correlation with language learner engagement (r=.377, p<.01). Besides, idealization had a moderate, positive and meaningful correlation with affective engagement (r=.304, p<.01), with cognitive engagement (r=.340, p<.01), and with social engagement (r = .338, p<.01). Furthermore, academic perfectionism had a low, positive and meaningful correlation with social engagement. (r=.122, p<.05).

Discussion and Conclusion

Considering the findings, a statistically significant difference which was determined in the overall academic perfectionism scores based on gender indicates that female EFL learners tend to exhibit higher levels of perfectionism compared to males. This result could be interpreted in relation to the sociocultural factors. For instance, from Khan et al.'s (2020) point of view, women in patriarchal societies frequently encounter obstacles in education, and they need to pursue their rights. Therefore, women aim for academic success as a way to gain power in diverse structures of life including socio-economic and political layers (Reshi et al., 2022). In line with this, Ghosh and Roy (2017) found that female students exhibited higher levels of perfectionism. Moreover, in the present study, female EFL learners also exhibit higher levels of self-doubt than male EFL learners. According to Arslan et al. (2010), this result could be related to societal norms that are oriented to encourage women to adopt nurturing roles. In the present study, female EFL learners achieved higher scores in the idealization sub-dimension, which implies that they tend to establish higher and occasionally unrealistic academic expectations for themselves. This result could be predicted by different psychological and cultural factors that impact how females would

like to see their self-image in education. Idealization generally involves setting greater expectations or idealized benchmarks for oneself (Topoğlu, 2022). In Topoğlu's (2022) view, female students often value academic achievement more than male learners. Er and Aydemir (2022) also indicate that female learners have higher idealization scores. Based on the results of this study, comparison scores of learners show that both male and female students evaluate their language accomplishments in a similar way without the role of gender.

The findings also reveal that EFL learners' academic perfectionism does not significantly vary in terms of department. This conclusion aligns with Yaoar's (2008) research which indicates no difference in students' perfectionism scores in terms of department. Furthermore, learners' self-doubt shows no difference according to department. This outcome also suggests that EFL learners from diverse academic backgrounds encounter similar levels of academic self-doubt. Similarly, their comparison indicates no difference in terms of department, which means that students generally assess their academic success relative to their peers regardless of their field of study. The study reveals a statistically significant difference in learners' idealization related to department. EFL learners from verbal departments achieved higher scores than those from equally weighted departments. This outcome corresponds with the findings of Camadan and Yüksel (2012) who note that secondary school students in the verbal field exhibit superior scores across multiple dimensions of perfectionism compared to their counterparts in the equally weighted or quantitative field where their quantitative skills are evaluated. Their research also indicates that EFL learners in the language field may exhibit a greater tendency to establish elevated academic goals. In the present study, despite the statistically significant difference in the learners' idealization, the impact of department on idealization is quite minor. The findings underscore the intricate nature of academic perfectionism and suggest that although department can affect the inclination to establish elevated standards, it is not the primary determinant of EFL learners' academic perfectionism.

The current study reveals that EFL learners' academic perfectionism does not have a variation in terms of years of learning English. However, learners with 0–3 years as well as 4–7 years of learning English had greater self-doubt than those with 8–11 years of learning English. This outcome corresponds with prior studies which found that learners have less self-doubt but more confidence in using their language skill when they get more experience (Baracheta, 2024; Gaines, 2015; Gao et al., 2015). Conversely, EFL learners' comparison and idealization do not show any variation according to years of learning English. This result indicates that learners' inclinations to compare themselves to others and establish high ideals remain the same over time.

The findings indicate that EFL learners' foreign language engagement varies according to gender. Research indicates that male EFL learners exhibit lower foreign language engagement than females. This outcome may be linked to the sociocultural influence of the context where traditional gender roles are challenged by women through education. In history, women had limited opportunities and support for education compared to men and this resulted in a lower continuation rate of women for higher education (OECD, 2007). Women are frequently encouraged and motivated to learn foreign languages, particularly English in Türkiye in that it is viewed as crucial for education, professional advancement, and bettering life chances. EFL learners' affective

engagement was statistically significantly different regarding gender. Consequently, it is determined that female EFL learners demonstrate more willingness to engage with the language and demonstrate enhanced purposefulness, independence, and positive attitudes towards English in comparison to their male peers. Furthermore, learners' social engagement is statistically significantly different based on gender. The study indicates that female learners have greater behavioral readiness to initiate and sustain conversation in a foreign language. Conversely, their cognitive engagement is not statistically different concerning gender; that is, all EFL learners show equivalent levels of predisposition to employ reflection and problem-solving abilities. In their research which investigates gender stereotypes based on language learning engagement, Li et al. (2025) detected more engagement in female EFL learners because of the generalized views females have on seeing foreign language learning as a feminine domain which highly motivates them and encourages them to feel positive and to be engaged in language learning. In a different study in which Santos et al. (2021) examined the impact of emotion control tactics on learner engagement in public schools and colleges, Santos et al. found that male students exhibited significantly lower engagement scores than their female counterparts. In another research conducted by Oga-Baldwin and Nakata (2017), girls also exhibited higher levels of engagement in English classes compared to boys.

Additionally, EFL learners' foreign language engagement is not statistically different in terms of department. The reason may be related to the implementation of a standardized EFL curriculum for learners from all departments through consistent teaching methods and resources in the context of this study. This result only corresponds to Uyan's (2023) research, which revealed no difference in behavioral, affective and cognitive engagement across verbal and STEM departments. In the current study, although department has no effect on foreign language engagement, EFL learners in language departments reported higher affective engagement. Language students' personal drive and commitment to study languages may explain this result (Liu & Huang, 2011).

In this study, there is no impact of years of learning English on EFL learners' foreign language engagement. Besides, EFL learners' affective engagement, cognitive engagement and social engagement are not statistically significantly different regarding years of learning English. It may be concluded that the degree of positive feelings and motivation does not have any variation among these learners in terms of their affective engagement, and all of them are likely to reflect on and solve problems at the same level in terms of their cognitive engagement. In terms of the social engagement of EFL learners, it can be stated that they all get engaged in communication regardless of years of learning English. In this respect, there is no research which can be referred back to as a field study that assesses the difference in EFL learners' foreign language engagement in terms of years of learning English. Despite the focus on an undiscovered gap, no statistical difference has been found in this study.

Based on the findings, EFL learners' academic perfectionism is not statistically correlated with their foreign language engagement. On the other hand, Bernabé et al. (2023) found that self-oriented perfectionism is indirectly related to academic engagement through passion among Spanish university students during the distance education. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2007) reported a correlation between positive

perfectionism and engagement among Chinese university students. Ljubin-Golub et al. (2018) also found that positive perfectionism correlates with cognitive and behavioral engagement among Croatian university students. Closson and Boutilier (2017) observed that self-oriented perfectionism increases academic engagement, while socially prescribed perfectionism reduces engagement for the students with honour status. Likewise, Damian et al. (2017) found a link between school engagement and perfectionistic strivings. Furthermore, idealization is correlated with affective engagement in a moderate and positive way and thereby it can be said that EFL learners who have higher personal standards are volunteer to interact in that foreign language. There is also a moderate and positive correlation between idealization and cognitive engagement which shows that EFL learners can focus on the skills that they can have when they expect to get higher outcome in foreign language learning. Finally, a positive and moderate correlation is seen between idealization and social engagement, and this results in idealization of social interactions and responses in foreign language. Finally, the moderate and positive relationship between foreign language engagement and idealization shows that learners can engage in foreign language more when high aims are set by themselves for learning a foreign language. In this study, academic perfectionism and social engagement have a weak but a statistically significant positive correlation, which suggests that as students develop their social skills, their perfectionism may increase.

Learners who hold high standards for themselves can also develop more favorable attitudes towards the language, pay closer attention, and show greater readiness to communicate. The results also suggest that starting and having linguistic exchanges in the foreign language could be influenced by higher personal standards. Consequently, diverse psychological factors can be considered in education and shed light on. According to Felder and Brent (2005), learners' needs can be met effectively when educators gain insights into individual differences of learners considering psychology.

Implications

The research results indicate that teachers together with administrators and curriculum developers need to evaluate the role of perfectionism when promoting learners' engagement in language learning. The implementation of possible strategies to manage perfectionist tendencies can lead to a classroom culture where students can learn from their mistakes and develop personal objectives. Teachers who can establish specific rubrics and assist students in creating achievable expectations may reduce students' frustration about unmet high standards while helping them to maintain their well-being and achievement in a balanced way. The association between academic perfectionism and foreign language engagement should be considered to develop an effective educational curriculum by curriculum designers and teachers as well as educators.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

In the study, participants from one foundation university participated. For future research, it might be beneficial to have data from other universities in different regions of Türkiye to obtain more general results. Since a quantitative approach is applied to

assess the correlation between two variables, student journals, interviews, and classroom observations can be applied through a qualitative approach in further research to enrich the data in depth. Furthermore, the different psychological constructs in positive psychology are not taken into account in this present study; therefore, variables such as foreign language enjoyment and psychological capital should be considered as the latent variables to correlate with academic perfectionism and foreign language engagement in further research. In doing so, more complex and dynamic relationships can also be explored by carrying out Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to shed light on whether the aforementioned variables, academic perfectionism, and foreign language engagement are associated or to offer insights into whether other variables, such as emotion regulation, play a role in their interplay or association with each other. Therefore, the mediating role of the emotion regulation in the relationship between academic perfectionism and foreign language engagement can be investigated to understand the role of regulating emotions in a foreign language classroom in further research.

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Statement of Responsibility

Conceptualization: M.Ç., B.A.; Design: M.Ç., B.A; Supervision: B.A.; Data Collection: M.Ç.; Data Analysis: M.Ç.; Literature Review: M.Ç.; Writing: M.Ç.

Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflicting interest between authors.

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