**Exploring Emotions and Coping Strategies of L1-Russian Speaker University Students when Dealing with Listening Tasks in English Language Learning Classrooms: A mixed-methods approach.**

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**Introduction**

Listening is one of the essential skills for successful communication in L2. It involves the use of auditory perception, immediate comprehension, and full concentration, which might be a challenging task for students who have to deal with various emotions while working on the task (Resnik & Dewaele, 2020). According to Gonen (2009), listening is the most spontaneous skill which requires more concentration and working strategies to deal with overwhelming emotions. Although, a considerable amount of research on the topic of emotions and their impact has already been written. No study investigates students’ both positive and negative emotions while performing tasks in listening and the coping strategies that could be used to deal with negative emotions. Thus, this research aims to study students’ positive and negative emotions while dealing with listening tasks within the context of an English language learning classroom and seeks the solution and further implications of coping strategies that students utilize. Moreover, this study aims to investigate L1-Russian language speakers’ emotions because there is a population gap where the emotions of university students whose first language is Russian were not studied before.

The present study investigated how negative emotions can be coped with in order to feel positive emotions more when dealing with listening tasks. The present study will answer the following research questions:

1. How do L1-Russian speakers' emotional experiences vary when dealing with listening tasks in English language classrooms?
2. What are the primary sources of negative emotions encountered by L1-Russian speakers during listening tasks in English language learning classrooms?
3. What coping strategies do L1-Russian speakers employ to manage and overcome negative emotions when engaging in listening tasks in English language learning classrooms?

**Methods**

**Design**

The present study used a mixed-methods approach which aimed to identify how emotions experienced during listening tasks vary, the sources of negative emotions, and coping strategies used to deal with them. The combination of quantitative survey data and qualitative interview narratives facilitated a detailed understanding of the students’ emotional background and aided in the selection of interview participants, ensuring that they have experienced both positive and negative emotions. The quantitative study was conducted first to collect information about the range of emotions experienced by students. Then qualitative research was conducted to thoroughly examine the reasons behind these emotions and explore coping mechanisms.

**Participants**

The quantitative study was conducted among 56 L1-Russian-speaking university students who had English language classes. The sample consisted of 40 females and 16 males. The sample includes participants from Kazakhstan. So, the sampling strategy used in this study is a non-probability sampling procedure, more specifically self-selection sampling. This sampling method ensures that all participants are willing to participate, which leads to more accurate and reliable results (Dörnyei, 2007).

The qualitative part involved a purposeful sampling approach to choose participants who could give rich and detailed answers about sources of negative emotions and coping strategies. Specifically, 4 students who deal with both positive and negative emotions were selected for the interviews.

**Instruments**

The quantitative method was conducted first by using an online questionnaire made accessible via Google Forms (Google, 2024). The data for the research was collected by the instruments that were adapted and created based on the previous empirical investigation (Albert et al., in press) and it was peer-reviewed by the professor for construct validity. Participants had to rate using the 5-point Likert scale (1 = ‘strongly disagree’, 2 = ‘disagree’, 3 = ‘undecided’, 4 = ‘agree’, 5 = ‘strongly agree’) (Dörnyei, 2007) to what extent they experience certain positive (enjoyment, hope, pride, curiosity) and negative (anxiety, boredom, shame, confusion) emotions when dealing with listening tasks in the language learning classroom. There were 4 statements to answer for each emotion. For example, statements about enjoyment were “I enjoy being able to understand English by listening to audio in class”, “I enjoy it when I can successfully complete the listening tasks during the English lesson”, statements for investigating anxiety when completing listening tasks were “I get frustrated if I can’t understand an English audio text”, “I get anxious when I don’t understand every word that is said to me in English”. For a complete set of questions see appendix.

Interviews were conducted after the collection of survey results. Interviews delved deeper into specific negative emotions previously identified, exploring what causes these emotions, and how the students cope with them. It included open-ended questions to allow participants to give full answers. For instance, some of the questions were “Can you describe a recent experience during an English listening task where you felt negative emotions?” or “When you encounter negative emotions during English listening tasks, what strategies do you use to cope with those feelings?”.

**Data collection procedures**

Quantitative data were obtained through the survey which was developed through piloting and refinement, consisted of Likert-scale items and open-ended statements probing students’ range of both positive and negative emotions during listening tasks on several occasions. The strategy of informed consent ensured that participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous. Respondents did not deal with sensitive topics and could withdraw from the studies without restraint (Dörnyei, 2007).

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 4 students selected based on their survey responses. To contact them, they were asked to voluntarily provide an email address at the end of the questionnaire. Interviews were conducted via an audio-recording tool allowing for in-depth exploration of individual experiences and strategies. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the data collection process, with informed consent obtained from all participants, confidentiality assured, and data securely stored.

**Data analysis procedures**

The data analysis procedures for this study employed a systematic approach to derive meaningful insights from the collected data. Descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendency, were computed to summarize the main characteristics of the data. Then, statistical techniques such as Cronbach’s alpha value were employed to examine the internal consistency reliability of the items and their correlation with each other (Dörnyei, 2007). The qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews in audio format were transcribed to provide accurate interpretation. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis which reveals common categories across the provided responses by different students. By identifying common categories the primary sources of students’ negative emotions when dealing with listening tasks and the main coping strategies were identified.

**Results**

**Quantitative analysis:**

**Table 1**

Descriptive statistics for each construct (enjoyment, anxiety, boredom, hope, pride, curiosity, confusion, shame) consisting of four items each were analyzed by measuring Cronbach’s alpha value.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Mean | *SD* |
| I enjoy being able to understand English by listening to audio in class.  I enjoy it when I can successfully complete the listening tasks during the English lesson.  I enjoy improving my English comprehension skills through classroom listening activities.  I enjoy listening to English content outside of the classroom. | 4.36  4.39  4.04  4.46 | .903  .623  .830  .538 |
| I get frustrated if I can’t understand an English audio text.  I get anxious when I don’t understand every word that is said to me in English.  I feel anxious when asked to answer questions based on what I've heard in English listening activities.  I feel anxious about making mistakes during listening tasks. | 3.46  3.07  2.79  2.88 | 1.078  .970  1.074  1.010 |
| It’s boring when I have to do listening tasks during our lessons.  I find audio that we listen to in English boring.  I quickly lose interest when listening to English audio in class.  I feel disengaged when listening to English audio materials that are not interesting to me. | 2.25  2.66  2.50  3.20 | .879  .920  1.044  1.052 |
| I hope that I will understand the text in the listening tasks.  I feel hopeful that we will do some listening tasks during the lesson.  I feel hopeful that I will improve my English skills through listening activities in class.  I hope that I will understand the content of English audio without translating it to my native language. | 4.14  3.46  3.89  4.07 | .724  .830  .731  .850 |
| I am proud when I manage to understand text when listening without translating the text into my native language in my mind.  I am proud of my listening skills.  I am proud when I achieve a high score in English listening tasks.  I feel proud when I notice improvement in my ability to understand English audio over time. | 4.50  4.14  4.30  4.46 | .603  .841  .685  .538 |
| In English lessons, we listen to texts that arouse my curiosity.  I find the process of doing listening tasks in English interesting.  During our listening tasks, we deal with interesting things that raise my curiosity.  The possibility of improving my listening skills during the English lessons usually makes me enthusiastic. | 3.57  3.93  3.70  4.23 | .850  .871  .829  .687 |
| Sometimes it is confusing if I do not understand everything when doing listening tasks.  If I listen to an English text and I cannot keep up, I get confused.  Complicated listening tasks in English usually confuse me.  I find it quite confusing if someone speaks English with a strong accent. | 3.75  3.59  3.04  3.02 | .745  .910  1.078  1.053 |
| I feel ashamed if I get a bad grade in listening tasks.  I feel ashamed if I can’t answer a question while listening.  I feel ashamed when I do not understand something during listening tasks.  I am ashamed of my listening skills. | 3.21  3.04  2.98  1.96 | 1.140  .972  1.018  .972 |

1.     A Cronbach’s alpha of .394 suggests low internal consistency reliability among the items measuring enjoyment. In addition, principal component analysis showed that enjoyment is not scale specific meaning that students don't link it to listening skills.  However, on the other hand, the highest mean value among items revealed that students derive the most enjoyment from listening to English content outside the classroom, finding it more engaging than classroom exercises.

2.     A Cronbach's alpha of .702 suggests good internal consistency reliability among the items measuring anxiety. As a result, students feel anxious more about their ability to comprehend audio in English, which could refer to the low level of language proficiency.

3.     A Cronbach's alpha of .801 suggests good internal consistency reliability among the items measuring boredom. According to the statistics, students get bored most when encountering English audio tasks that don’t align with their interests.

4.     A Cronbach's alpha of .578 suggests adequate internal consistency reliability among the items measuring hope. Statistics indicate that students have an optimistic and hopeful mindset about their ability to understand the text presented in listening tasks.

5.     A Cronbach's alpha of .692 suggests good internal consistency reliability among the items measuring pride. On average, students feel proud when they can successfully comprehend the audio tasks without relying on translation to their native language.

6.     A Cronbach's alpha of .780 suggests good internal consistency reliability among the items measuring curiosity. The highest mean value was for the fourth item, representing students’ curiosity and eagerness to enhance their listening skills.

7.     A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .715 suggests good internal consistency reliability among the items measuring confusion. Statistics revealed that students experience the most confusion when they encounter difficulties in comprehension of listening tasks which can cause the feeling of uncertainty about their level of language proficiency.

8.     A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .748 suggests good internal consistency reliability among the items measuring shame. It was investigated that poor grades make students feel ashamed, which means that students attach significant emotional value for outcomes in their academic performances.

**Table 2**

A paired sample t-test was used to analyze how students’ emotional experiences vary when dealing with listening tasks. As we investigated both positive and negative emotions, we took two opposing emotions from each construct, in total examining four pairs. This analysis also helped us to find out whether negative or positive emotions prevail when learners perform audio tasks in English.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Mean | SD | t-value | p-value |
| Pair 1 | I get frustrated if I can’t understand an English audio text.  I hope that I will understand the text in the listening tasks. | 3.46  4.14 | 1.078  .724 | -4.371 | < 0.01 |
| Pair 2 | Complicated listening tasks in English usually confuse me.  During our listening tasks, we deal with interesting things that raise my curiosity. | 3.04  3.70 | 1.078  .829 | -3.340 | < 0.02 |
| Pair 3 | I am ashamed of my listening skills.  I am proud of my listening skills. | 1.96  4.14 | .972  .841 | -11.414 | < 0.01 |
| Pair 4 | It’s boring when I have to do listening tasks during our lessons.  I find the process of doing listening tasks in English interesting. | 2.25  3.93 | .879  .871 | -8.641 | < 0.01 |

1.     The first paired t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the two scales (*t* = -4.371, *p* < 0.01). The mean value was higher for the second statement proving that students experience more hopefulness about understanding the text in listening tasks than feeling frustrated when they struggle to comprehend them.

2.     The second paired t-test also showed a statistically significant difference between the two scales (*t* = -3.340, *p* < 0.02). The statement about dealing with entertaining things that raise curiosity received a higher score in comparison with the statement about feeling confused by difficult listening tasks. These results underscore students’ active engagement during listening tasks which fosters their curiosity and motivation to learn more.

3.     The third paired t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the two scales (*t* = -11.414, *p* < 0.01). The findings revealed that students mostly have a positive perception of their listening abilities. Thus, they experience confidence as a source of sense of accomplishment rather than being ashamed or embarrassed of their skills when dealing with audio tasks.

4.     The fourth paired t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the two scales (*t* = -8.641, *p* < 0.01). The results showed that for students listening tasks are considered to be more entertaining rather than boring, which potentially leads to the increase of motivation and plays as a source of active participation and effective language learning.

**Qualitative analysis:**

Participants of the interview were asked to answer open-ended questions about the sources of different negative emotions and strategies used to tackle them. The categories that emerged from the interviews were slightly similar for both topics. In general, all four participants mostly experienced anxiety, confusion, and nervousness and only one felt shame. The sources of these emotions varied from different accents, complicated vocabulary, time pressure, and lack of practice to probable low level of English. For example, participant no.1 said: “Sometimes I was confused while getting some meanings of specific terms.” because of  “an advanced or proficient level of English vocabulary” used in the listening task, while participant no.2 felt nervous when “there was a time pressure”. Anxiety was felt when they “could not understand the accent and a lot of words from the video” (participant no.3) or if they “wanted to receive a good grade.” (participant no.3). The source of shame was “low level of proficiency of English” (participant no.4) because they “didn't have any opportunity, back in the day, studying in English as I graduated school, studying only in Russian and Kazakh languages” (participant no.4). To deal with these emotions participants mentioned strategies such as warm-up tasks, listening several times, discussion before listening, beforehand vocabulary practice, and asking help from peers and teachers. To be more specific, participant no.2 believes that negative emotions can be felt less when you “re-listen again to the task itself, and maybe while listening to make some pauses, as I mentioned, to divide them into the chunks”. The necessity of warm-up tasks was mentioned by 3 out of 4 participants: “I've always tried to warm up”, “good warm-up helps me”, and “warm-up before listening tasks.”.

**Discussion**

The first research question aimed to investigate how emotional experiences vary when dealing with listening tasks. Firstly, after conducting descriptive analysis for each construct, interestingly, enjoyment turned out to be not scale-specific in terms of listening tasks. However, according to Cronbach's alpha results other seven constructs have good internal consistency reliability, which suggests that items in the scales are highly correlated with each other, and data can be applied to the whole population. Considering the previous studies, researchers paid detailed attention mainly to anxiety, pointing out that this is a skill-specific negative emotion that affects listening comprehension (Elkhafaifi, 2005; Zhang, 2013). However, the adequate internal consistency reliability of all emotions except enjoyment again proved that all these emotions take part and operate during listening tasks. Secondly, we used paired sample t-tests to observe which emotional group prevailed among participants. In accordance with numerical data, it became clear that among L-1 Russian-speaking university students positive emotions such as hope, pride, and curiosity predominate when dealing with listening tasks in English language classrooms. Positive emotions were experienced in the context of understanding the text, entertaining tasks, and confidence in listening skills. As Fredrickson (2001) says, positive emotions urge people to imagine future achievements, explore new information, and develop skills. So, our positive emotions directly facilitate students’ motivation to enhance their listening abilities, active participation in such tasks, and productive language acquisition process.

The second research question considers the primary sources of negative emotions encountered by students. Compatible with previous research (Goh, 1999) this study has revealed that speed rate, accents, and repetition are the main factors of negative emotions. However, the low level of English language, lack of experience in listening, and time pressure can also affect students’ emotions in a bad way. One of the most common emotions experienced by students because of incomprehensible accents is nervousness and anxiety. According to Gregersen and MacIntyre (2012), anxiety is triggered in a scenario where people can't comprehend the conversation and are put in a vulnerable position. This means that students unfamiliar with British, Indian, or French accents could feel these negative emotions.

As this study shows, low levels of English proficiency and lack of learning experience in the English language trigger shame in learners. This could be because “the experience of shame is characterized by a sense of the entire self-being diminished, inadequate or defective.” (Galmiche, D., 2018). Students due to lack of knowledge and previous experiences feel worthless when it comes to listening tasks and are ashamed to feel flawed in front of others (peers, teachers, parents). As one of the interview participants said “I don't talk to my English language teacher at university because, like, I'm afraid to show, that I am stupid or maybe I would feel guilty in front of her for not doing enough.”, it illustrates how listening tasks in the classroom make her feel and how he/she is afraid of creating a negative impression.

Cognitive strategies involve repeating and summarizing information heard, and taking notes, which are used by students because they prefer listening several times and post-listening discussions (O’Malley & Chamot, 1989). It can enhance the acquisition of skills as these strategies are problem-solving. Thus, cognitive strategies are useful for listening tasks as they can reduce the shame students experience after completing tasks.

Socio-affective strategies mean collaboration with peers to lower anxiety and improve their understanding of the text (O’Malley & Chamot, 1989). For example, our respondents said that “talking to my peers who have the same problem, the same level of English helps well, because we have like the same problems and we can discuss them and I don't feel like shame”. It shows that non-academic techniques can enhance listening skills by fostering a sense of empathy and connection between students, which results in less shame.

**Conclusion**

This study provided valuable insights into a variety of emotions experienced by students, their primary sources, and the coping mechanisms used. Through a mixed-methods approach, we understood that L1-Russian-speaking students experience positive emotions more during listening tasks, though negative emotions are present too. These emotions are influenced by factors like unfamiliar context, performance pressure, and fear of judgement. However, participants employ metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies to overcome these emotions and succeed in listening.

One limitation of this study could be the homogeneity of the sample which consisted of L-1-Russian-speaking university students from Kazakhstan. Even though this sample provided valuable information about the emotional experiences of the population, it may not fully represent L-1 Russian speakers from other countries. Future research could explore emotions across different Russian-speaking countries to discover cultural variations, educational systems, and language learning strategies that affect emotional responses to listening tasks. Also, this study did not analyze the enjoyment construct which showed a low Cronbach’s alpha value and principal component analysis indicating a potential issue with students' perceptions.

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**Appendix**

Gender - male female

Age - 18-25, 26-35, 36-45

**Enjoyment**

I enjoy being able to understand English by listening to audio in class.

I enjoy it when I can successfully complete the listening tasks during the English lesson.

I enjoy improving my English comprehension skills through classroom listening activities.

I enjoy listening to English content outside of the classroom.

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**Anxiety**

I get frustrated if I can’t understand an English audio text

I get anxious when I don’t understand every word that is said to me in English.

I feel anxious when asked to answer questions based on what I've heard in English listening activities.

I feel anxious about making mistakes during listening tasks.

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**Boredom**

It’s boring when I have to do listening tasks during our lessons.

I find audio that we listen to in English boring.

I quickly lose interest when listening to English audio in class.

I feel disengaged when listening to English audio materials that are not interesting to me.

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**Hope**

I hope that I will understand the text in the listening tasks.

I feel hopeful that we will do some listening tasks during the lesson.

I feel hopeful that I will improve my English skills through listening activities in class.

I hope that I will understand the content of English audio without translating it to my native language.

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**Pride**

I am proud when I manage to understand text when listening without translating the text into my native language in my mind.

I am proud of my listening skills.

I am proud when I achieve a high score in English listening tasks.

I feel proud when I notice improvement in my ability to understand English audio over time

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**Curiosity**

In English lessons, we listen to texts that arouse my curiosity.

I find the process of doing listening tasks in English interesting.

During our listening tasks, we deal with interesting things that raise my curiosity.

The possibility of improving my listening skills during the English lessons usually makes me enthusiastic.

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**Confusion**

Sometimes it is confusing if I do not understand everything when doing listening tasks.

If I listen to an English text and I cannot keep up, I get confused.

Complicated listening tasks in English usually confuse me.

I find it quite confusing if someone speaks English with a strong accent.

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**Shame**

I feel ashamed if I get a bad grade in listening tasks.

I feel ashamed if I can’t answer a question while listening.

I feel ashamed when I do not understand something during listening tasks.

I am ashamed of my listening skills.

How often do you use coping strategies when faced with challenging listening tasks? (Rarely, Occasionally, Regularly)

Would you like to participate in further interviews? If yes, leave your email.