

Students' Experiences and Perceptions of Boredom in EFL Academic Context

Elmakki AMIRI(corresponding author)

English language instructor

amiry.elmakki@gmail.com

Abderrahim ELKARFA

Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco.

Mohamed SBAlHI

Regional Center for Education and Training professions, Fez, Morocco

Gabriele IANNÀCCARO

University of Milano-Bicocca

Elena TAMBURINI

University of Milano-Bicocca

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v4i4.1140>

APA Citation: AMIRI, E., ELKARFA, A., SBAlHI, M., IANNÀCCARO, G., & TAMBURINI, E.(2022). Students' Experiences and Perceptions of Boredom in EFL Academic Context. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 4(4).273-288. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v4i4.1140>

Received:

07/12/2022

Accepted:

28/12/2022

Keywords:

boredom, antecedents, boredom coping, coping strategies, emotion, EFL settings.

Abstract

Academic boredom has captured the attention of psychologists. It is one of the most neglected and underexplored emotions in educational settings. As such, drawing on research findings from related domains, boredom can be seen as a prevalent, deactivating and negative emotion whose detrimental impact affects students' academic learning and performance (see Pekrun, Goetz, Daniels, Stupnisky & Perry, 2010). The present study investigated students' perceptions and experiences of boredom in university students. The study also explored different antecedents causing boredom and different coping strategies that students use to cope with it utilizing a mixed-method approach. Quantitative data were collected utilizing a recently designed and validated instrument: Foreign Language Learning Boredom Scale (see Li, Dewaele & Hu, 2021). The sample consisted of 190 Moroccan university students from three countries. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 13 university students describing their experiences of academic boredom. The findings revealed that boredom is pervasive among university students and seen as a complex handicap that may affect the overall well-being of students even though they generally displayed moderate levels of boredom. As such, the findings have also shown several proximate factors and reasons that act as precursors of foreign language learning boredom, including homework, under-challenging and/or over-challenging or meaningless task, teacher-dislike, and PowerPoint presentations. The findings revealed that students used cognitive and behavioural coping strategies to cope with boredom. It is important to note that sometimes students opted for both strategies to combat this negative emotion. Moreover, teachers were also seen as important elements who directly contribute to students' fight against boredom through creating an emotionally safe and supportive environment. Implications for future research and educational practice are also discussed.

1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of emotions has received increasing attention in the past decade as students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts experience a broad range of emotions in different

educational settings (Dewaele 2019; Dewaele and Li 2020; Govaerts & Grégoire, 2008; Pekrun, 2006; Weiner, 2010). Foreign language acquisition (FLA) researchers have become interested in studying the role of emotions in different learning contexts, including enjoyment (Li, Jiang & Dewaele, 2018), anxiety (Gkonou, Daubney & Dewaele 2017) and shame (Teimouri, 2018). Crucially also, research on emotions witnessed a shift from focusing merely on anxiety to becoming increasingly interested in a wide range of emotions (Dewaele & Li, 2020). Interestingly, the emergence of positive psychology transformed the field of FLA by focusing on the critical function of discrete emotions, marking the beginning of another significant movement in studying how emotions affect learning and teaching. Since Pekrun (2006) developed one of the most widely studied theoretical frameworks of achievement emotions, control-value theory, there has been a rise in interest in the study of achievement emotions. Academic boredom is one of the emotions that has captured the attention of psychologists, while it is one of the most neglected and underexplored emotions in FLA even though it is among the most frequently experienced emotions in foreign language learning (FLL) contexts (Li 2021; Li and Dewaele 2020). Drawing on research findings from related domains, boredom can be seen as a prevalent, deactivating and negative emotion whose detrimental impact affects students' academic learning and performance. Research on boredom in FLL contexts show the negative effects of boredom in different EFL contexts, such as (Zawodniak, Kruk & Chumas, 2017; Pawlak, Kruk, Zawodniak, & Pasikowski, 2020; Li et al., 2020; Larson & Richards, 1991).

Moreover, many educational psychologists stress that boredom is the most experienced emotion and has been spreading among adolescent learners (Pekrun et al., 2010; Tulis & Fulmer, 2013).

For this reason, it deserves a thorough understanding of how and when students experience boredom in class as well as different strategies they resort to cope with this unpleasant emotion. Thus, the present study addressed students' accounts of boredom, their experiences and perceptions. The study also sought to help foreign language teachers by providing insights into Moroccan university students' experiences with academic boredom.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Academic boredom

Many definitions have been attributed to the term "Boredom" as an attempt to depict boredom essence. These definitions and perspectives vary widely from one scholar to another and from one context to another. In this respect, Fahlman (2009) formulated a general definition of boredom. She claimed that boredom is a term used to refer to a combination of transient dissatisfaction, disengagement and attention deficit. Eastwood, Frischen, Fenske, and Smilek (2012) defined boredom based on the underlying mental processes happening during an experience of boredom. They concluded that it is a negative emotion experienced when individuals cannot sustain required attention or successfully engage in an activity due to this aversive feeling. Boredom is also defined as a "unique psychophysiological state [that] comprises a set of interrelated emotional, motivational, and cognitive reactions having a common biological basis" (O'Hanlon, 1981, p. 76). Boredom is conceptualized as an achievement emotion that includes upsetting feelings that reduce psychological vigilance (Pekrun et al., 2010) as well as the lack of interest and concentration issues during a task or an activity (Nett, Goetz, & Daniels, 2010). However, a lack of interest is considered a neutral state of mind. Therefore, it should be noted that boredom is an academic emotion that should be investigated in more detail.

2.2. Boredom and its antecedents

Several theories and models have discussed several factors and reasons that act as precursors of Foreign Language Learning Boredom (FLLB). The theories and models that are widely discussed in the literature are the *under-stimulation models* (Larson & Richards, 1991), the *forced-effort model* (Hill & Perkins, 1985), The attentional theory of boredom proneness (Harris, 2000) and The *control-value theory of achievement emotions* (CVT) (Pekrun, 2006).

- The under-stimulation model: according to this model, boredom is an emotion related to the absence of challenging and engaging activities due to repetition. This leads to under arousal.
- The forced-effort model: this model shows that boredom can be attributed to the great mental effort students invest on a task or activity that results in frustration. This happens in situations when teacher time talk is dominant.
- The attentional theory of boredom proneness: the main factor that causes boredom, according to this theory, is failing to maintain attention (attention deficit). When the task does not encourage students' attention, their motivation decreases.
- The *control-value theory of achievement emotions*: the theory highlights boredom as resulting from control-value appraisals as being two main antecedents of boredom in an educational setting, which predict emotions experienced.

2.3. Types of boredom

Two types of boredom can be distinguished; trait boredom vs state boredom. The former refers to proneness boredom that is frequently experienced (Barnett & Klitzing, 2006). Trait boredom seems an innate or inseparable part of humans' personalities. On the other hand, state boredom is a momentary experience and situation-specific (Putwain et al., 2018) and a short-term state when students perceive the learning context as not sufficiently stimulating (Bench & Lench, 2013).

2.4. Measures of boredom in psychology and educational psychology

Measuring emotions in (FL) learning contexts accurately has traditionally relied on methods that have limitations in both validity and reliability. These methods include Verbal self-report scales such as open-ended questions or self-ratings (Dewaele & Li 2018). The measurement of FLLB has been widely neglected in literature (Vodanovich, 2003), except the Boredom Proneness Scale (Farmer & Sundberg, 1986). The other scales developed earlier do not measure the general construct. Rather, they assess particular aspects of boredom or be a part of a more general scale (Vodanovich, 2003). Given this, educational experts designed accurate scales and subscales to measure the propensity to experience boredom in (FL) learning contexts. The most important of which is the Boredom Subscale of the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire and Foreign Language Learning Boredom Scale (FLLBS) used to assess students' FLLB in class-related and learning-related boredom (Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfeld, & Perry, 2011).

2.5. Boredom in FL learning

A foreign language classroom is a multicultural theatre where students experience a wide range of negative emotions. However, recent years witnessed a mounting interest in positive emotions thanks to the flowering of positive psychology (Pawlak et al., 2020). As noted earlier, boredom in the EFL context has received little attention. Few studies dealt with FLLB experienced by students in the foreign language classrooms.

Kruk (2016a) research sought to detect the changing nature of boredom during English classes. He concluded that boredom changes from one specific context to another. He also conducted another study investigating the changes in boredom in acquiring English in Second Life. The study revealed that students experience low boredom (Kruk, 2016a). Kruk & Zawodniak (2017) focused on the concept of boredom to help the EFL community with reflections for a better understanding of the concept of boredom. A year later, the two researchers conducted another study on boredom in practical English language classes. They concluded that learning English is a matter of choice. Students who do not choose what they want to study get bored. They also stated several boredom antecedents, including repetitive and unchallenging tasks, discouragement, teachers' personalities...etc. Thus, as has been shown, despite the great efforts to approach boredom as a distressing and debilitating variable, it remains insufficiently understood in academic settings.

2.6.Coping with boredom strategies

It is important to note that a significant body of research into negative emotion coping strategies have focused on specific emotions, including stress (see, e.g. Holahan, Moos, & Schaefer, 1996) and anxiety (see, e.g. Davis, DiStefano, & Schutz, 2008), with research into boredom coping strategies remaining disproportionately less prevalent. The work mentioned above focused on two coping strategies; cognitive versus behavioural and approach versus avoidance strategies. The work of Nett et al. (2010) and Nett, Goetz, and Hall (2011) is considered groundbreaking regarding Given this, Nett and colleagues used the same framework to explore how students cope with boredom. They introduced four categories classified by two dimensions (approach vs avoidance and cognitive vs behavioural), as explained in the table below.

Table 1: Classification system of students' strategies for coping with boredom (Nett et al., 2010)

Type of coping	Approach coping	Avoidance coping
Cognitive	Thinking differently to change the perception of the situation.	Thinking of something else not associated with the situation.
Behavioral	Taking actions to change the situation.	Taking actions not associated with the situation.

As the name implies, approach strategies refer to the ability to face the issue and try to solve the problem by contrast avoidance strategies means that students cope with boredom through evading or skipping from the actual events. The second dimension is related to combatting the phenomenon through changing the perception of the situation without changing the objective event (cognitive), or through being part of the process and taking actions to change the situation (behavioral).

Succinctly stated, all strategies that contribute to cope with boredom either through doing something else or through doing something that is not related to the event-raised fall into the avoidance dimension. This helps students to handle the situation without leaving the class or getting negative outcomes. They may think of something motivational or exciting, or do something enjoyable. On the other hand, strategies that are related to the situation are seen as approaching strategies. For instance, students may think that the lesson is very interesting even though the teacher or the materials are boring (cognitive process). They may also participate in the classroom discussion by asking questions or giving remarks and comments (behavioural process).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Aim of the study and research questions

The main aims of the present study were to investigate students' perceptions and experiences of boredom among Moroccan university students. The study also aimed to discover different factors causing boredom and how students cope with it. In more specific terms, the present study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: Do students experience FLLB in EFL settings?

RQ2: What are the main factors causing boredom?

RQ3: How do the students cope with boredom in EFL settings?

3.2. Participants

The participants in the study were 190 undergraduate students of English studies enrolled in different universities in Morocco, of which 77 were males (40.5%), 112 were females (58.9%) and one preferred not to say (0.5%). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 45 years old, their mean age was 25.69 years old ($SD = 5.45$). They were from 12 different disciplines in which English was the language of instruction. In addition, 13 students took part in the study, nine females and four males. They were interviewed on how they experienced boredom in EFL classes. As such, demographic information including age, gender, university, and grades was also collected.

Student	Gender	Age	Grade	Major	Frequency of feeling of boredom	Period of the lesson students get bored
S1	Female	25	Master 2nd year	Applied linguistics	Sometimes	End
S2	Male	28	Master 2nd Year	Translation	Sometimes	Middle
S3	Male	23	Undergraduate, 3rd year	literature	Sometimes	Beginning
S4	Female	46	Undergraduate, 2nd year	Linguistics	Sometimes	End
S5	Male	38	Undergraduate, 3rd year	Literature	Sometimes	End
S6	female	24	Master 2nd Year	Applied linguistics	Sometimes	Beginning/middle/end
S7	Female	30	Master 2nd Year	Literature	Sometimes	Middle & end
S8	Female	25	Master 2nd Year	Applied language studies	sometimes	End
S9	Female	25	Master 2nd Year	Applied linguistics	Rarely	End
S10	Female	27	Undergraduate, 3rd year	Literature	Often	End
S11	Male	28	Master 2nd Year	Applied language studies	Often	Middle
S12	Female	22	Undergraduate, 3rd year	Linguistics	Sometimes	Middle
S13	Female	33	Undergraduate, 3rd year	linguistics	often	middle

Table 2: Information of interviewees.

3.3. Data collection and Procedures

Foreign Language Learning Boredom Scale (FLLBS) was used to gather quantitative data. It is an instrument designed and validated by Li, Dewaele and Hu (2021), adopting an exploratory

Students' Experiences and Perceptions of Boredom in EFL Academic Context

design based on qualitative analysis. Improving measurement techniques makes it a psychometrically sound tool that contributes substantially to FLLB research. The items are grouped into seven factors/subscales: Factor 1: Foreign Language Classroom Boredom (consists of eight items), Factor 2: Under-Challenging Task Boredom (consists of five items), Factor 3: PowerPoint Presentation Boredom (consists of three items), Factor 4: Homework Boredom (consists of four items), Factor 5: Teacher-Dislike Boredom (consists of four items), Factor 6: General Learning Trait Boredom (consists of five items), Factor 7: Over-Challenging or Meaningless Task Boredom (consists of three items). Thus, the items in this scale consist of 32 affirmative statements (see appendix 1) with five response options ranging from “Always” to “Never” and from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”.

Sample items from this scale are: “The English class bores me”, “I start yawning in English class because I’m so bored”, and “I always think about what else I might be doing to kill time rather than sitting in this English class”. In addition, the scale applies to non-English majors, unlike other different types of scales. As such, the data collection instrument was created and then administered via Google Forms. The link to the questionnaire was shared with university students to collect their responses through snowball sampling. Questionnaires that were not properly completed were excluded and disregarded ($n = 3$). Furthermore, to collect qualitative data, 13 undergraduate students participated in responding to semi-structured interviews to get further insights into the antecedents of boredom and ways to cope with it. During interviews, students were asked to describe their experiences and perceptions of boredom in EFL classes. The interviewees were asked the following questions:

- 1) Have you ever experienced boredom in EFL classes? If yes, when did you feel the most bored (beginning, middle, end...etc.)?
- 2) Why did you feel bored in English classes?
- 3) What did you do to cope with boredom in English classes?

3.4.Data analysis

Quantitative data were collected utilizing the Foreign Language Learning Boredom Scale and semi-structured interviews. They were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. In other words, quantitative data were analyzed via SPSS Statistics 26.0 through conducting descriptive statistics, correlation analyses and normality tests. They basically involved determining the mean, standard deviation, standard error deviation and so on. For qualitative data, interviews were done in students’ native language before two of the authors (Multilinguals) transcribed and translated them from Italian and Arabic to English. Excerpts related to the research questions were identified.

4. RESULTS

This subsection deals with the presentation of the results of the study. It followed the order of the research questions starting from students’ experiences of academic boredom, the main antecedents of academic boredom, and student participants’ boredom coping strategies.

4.1.Students’ experiences of Foreign Language Boredom in EFL settings

Regarding students’ experiences of boredom in the EFL setting (Question 1), overall results from the Foreign Language Learning Boredom Scale show that subjects experienced boredom in the academic context. The average score was $M = 3.27$ ($SD = 0.74$), as shown in Table 3

below. More than half of the participants indicated that they sometimes experience boredom in the classroom. As such, other participants claimed that they either rarely or usually feel bored.

Table 3: Frequency of students' experience of academic boredom

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
FLCB	190	1,13	5,00	3,2783	,05395	,74365
Valid N	190					

Note: FLCB = Foreign Language Classroom Boredom

This indicates that most student participants generally displayed moderate levels of boredom. That is, they were sometimes bored. Yet, a limited number of students experienced either a high or a low boredom threshold. Similar to quantitative data, results from qualitative data show that boredom is a negative emotion experienced by university students in the classroom. Many interviewees did when asked whether they recalled an incident or a situation where they had felt bored, as illustrated in the extracts below.

S8 (Female, 25): *“Um yes, I think I do uh it was when I first entered spoken English in my first year at the university... I wasn't I wasn't interested in this specific module and it sounded weird. you know how to pronounce and to try the sounds for me back then sounded meaningless. Because I thought to myself that, I've already picked up the English pronunciation and the accent. Afterwards I I I saw the usefulness of this module. So I used to feel bored in this specific module yes”*

S1 (Female, 25): *“Of course I have experienced boredom in EFL classes but not very frequently. The feeling was rare when it comes to some of the active lessons that I used to enjoy and which have a more scientific frame such as grammar and linguistics or debatable types. However, when dealing with literary types of lessons, I used to feel bored a lot especially during the session and at the end”.*

S6 (Female, 24): *“I recall when I was having a class taught by a female professor. She was teaching us the history of Britain and America... all these things seemed to me as. when I used to attend her classes. I felt bored and uh I can't describe the feeling”*

S12 (Female, 24): *“Yes I do recall an incident. I was a student in the sixth semester. I remember the situation when the professor was explaining syntax using a PowerPoint presentation. He didn't write on the board at all and we didn't used to that. We used to do more practice and then I felt boredom”*

S5 (Male, 38): *“ Yes, many times many times uh in many classes that have nothing to do with English...and also some subjects related to English like uh like journal linguistics I didn't like that subject it was boring...well there are many situations actually”*

S2 (Male, 28): *“I was a student at the faculty of sciences of education where students were asked to deliver a presentation at each module we used to study... He used to drive out of the context of his presentation to talk about his personal experiences and views, which are totally irrelevant to the topic under discussion. I used to feel so bored when it comes to his presentation”*

4.2. Boredom antecedents in EFL classes

Table 4: Boredom antecedents in EFL classrooms in Moroccan universities

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Under Challenging tasks	190	1,00	4,60	2,8579	,72229	-,174
PowerPoint Presentation	190	1,00	4,00	2,0754	,71074	,356
Homework	190	1,00	5,00	3,2355	,99342	-,389
Teacher dislike	190	1,00	4,50	2,7697	,82211	,147
Over Challenging Meaningless Tasks	190	1,00	4,33	2,4825	,71885	,245
Valid N	190					

As shown in table four above, overall results from the subscales/factors dealt with boredom antecedents reveal that different underlying causes intervene to determine the extent of students' boredom. We conclude from the results that all antecedents have moderate roles on students' boredom ranging between $M = 2.07$ and $M = 3.23$. Similar to quantitative data, interviewees showed a moderate effect of these variables on evoking boredom in EFL classes. Below are some boredom factors identified by student participants.

Homework

The most frequently mentioned antecedent of boredom is homework tasks as shown in the table above. It was named by the majority of student participants as the main antecedent of this emotion ($M=3.23$). In this respect, interviewee 2 (Male, 28) highlighted the role of homework in causing boredom. He stressed *'Yes, sometimes when it is too much and repetitive. Working on the same thing again and again leads to boredom.'*

Moreover, interviewee four (Female, 46) said: *"for homework. What can I say. It depends on the subject. When you like the subject, you will never feel bored... you spend a lot of time doing homework... but when you don't like a subject. You can't even do an exercise. I see things this way"*

Under-challenging and/or over-challenging or meaningless task

As shown in table above, one of the main factors that contributed to the participants' experience of boredom is under-challenging, over-challenging or meaningless tasks or activities with a mean of $M = 2.85$ and $M = 2.48$ respectively. In fact, activities and tasks that participants felt were meaningless, lack diversity, unimportant or irrelevant cause boredom. To substantiate this, excerpts from the interviews exemplified how these factors push students to feel bored in the EFL context. For instance, interviewee four (Female, 46) clearly put it: *"Under-challenging or meaningless tasks are a great reason behind boredom as it makes me feel not motivated and even lazy"*. In a similar vein, interviewee one (Female, 25) stressed that *"boredom could be the*

result of tasks that are overwhelmingly difficult or meaningless. That's due to the effort invested in them". As such, other participants mentioned over-challenging or meaningless tasks to play a role in boredom experience including S1 (Female, 25), S2 (Male, 28), S4 (Female, 46), S5 (Male, 35), S6 (Female, 24), S9 (Female, 25) and S11 (Male, 28). Yet only S7 (Female, 30) stressed that under-challenging is the main source of boredom for her.

Teacher-Dislike

In this study, teacher dislike was one of the antecedents that play an important role in evoking boredom mentioned by participants (M=2.76). Results from qualitative data also showed the effect and role of teacher dislike on students' feeling of boredom. Not surprisingly, evidence for this effect was found in the excerpts from interviewees. To be more precise, some interviewees claimed that it is the teacher who either can make them bored or excited. In this respect, interviewee 12 (Female, 22) stated that *"Yes, for me it is the teacher who makes me love the subject domain"*. S11 (Female, 22) also pinpointed: *"for the teacher yes. If you don't like them.. If they complicate lessons and make comprehension difficult. If they don't care at all. These things cause boredom"*. Additionally, S1 (Female, 25) added: *"Teacher-Dislike is also an important cause of boredom as I feel losing interest in what he says and in the whole subject too"*. Thus, the results indicate that boredom and teacher dislike are positively correlated.

PowerPoint Presentation

PowerPoint Presentation is another factor that provokes boredom in the EFL context, as quantitative and qualitative data show a mean of (M=2.07). Numerous variables make presentations unappealing and dull to students, leading to disengagement and boredom. Importantly, interviewee participants mentioned a number of these factors. For instance, S1 (Female, 25) put it clearly: *"Concerning PowerPoint presentations, it depends on the quality of the presentation. When the presenter is very competent in using the software and very selective in including the main ideas, it enhances learning. On the other hand, when the presentation is overloaded with texts and the quality is low, then it totally creates boredom"*. Importantly, this idea of presenting too much content in a visually unappealing way was mentioned by interviewee 12 (Female, 22) who stressed, *"PowerPoint presentations are so boring especially when the text is small and not clear"*. Hence, even though it is not a main reason for boredom, PowerPoint presentation leads to unengaged and bored students when it is unappealing or not sparking the interest of students.

4.3.Strategies and techniques used to tackle academic boredom (coping with boredom)

The third research question asked what strategies and techniques were used to tackle academic boredom. The qualitative results from student participants in response to this question show variety in techniques and methods used. That is, they resorted to either cognitive or behavioral approaches in which they try to either approach or avoid the situation to combat boredom. Using both strategies (approach coping and avoidance coping), students' ways vary significantly between the previously mentioned techniques to fight boredom. It is worth mentioning here that some students use more than one coping strategy. The following excerpts exemplified the coping boredom strategies.

Cognitive approach

S11 (Male, 28). *I just tried to understand the lesson despite the challenges.*

Students' Experiences and Perceptions of Boredom in EFL Academic Context

S9 (Female, 25). *To demure boredom in class, I personally tried to change my attitude towards what I learnt.*

S7 (Female, 30). *I remind and motivate myself to keep the focus on the learning process*

Cognitive avoidance

S5 (Male, 38). *I think of something else*

Behavioral approach

S2 (Male, 28). *I usually try to participate in the session through questions and open discussions partially.*

S1 (Female, 25). *One of the solutions I used to follow to minimize the feeling of boredom is to prepare for the lesson of the session at home so as to be able to participate and feel engaged.*

Behavioural avoidance

S3 (Male, 23). *I checked my Social Media and read a book that is unrelated to the class.*

Cognitive avoidance/behavioural avoidance

S6 (Female, 24). *Honestly speaking, I sometimes tried to shed light on some interesting points regarding the issue or topic to eliminate monotony and involving in class discussion as much as possible. However, I sometimes just ignored what being said through surfing my Facebook or Instagram*

Cognitive approaching/ Behavioral approaching

S8 (Female, 25). *I usually try to pay more attention to what is being discussed, Getting back on track by participating in the discussion*

5. DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to investigate students' experiences and occurrence of boredom in EFL context and, secondly, the different antecedents of boredom. In addition, the study aimed to discover various techniques students use to cope with such negative emotions.

Question 1

Evidence from quantitative and qualitative data collected through FLLBS and semi-structured interviews showed convincingly that they happened to be bored in a variety of contexts confirming previous research on this front (Li 2021; Li & Dewaele 2020; Li et al., 2020; Pawlak et al., 2020; Pekrun et al., 2010; Putwain et al. 2018). Most students claimed that they sometimes experienced boredom in the EFL context. Not surprisingly, the results showed clearly that boredom remains a common emotion experienced by EFL students despite the great efforts made by all stakeholders, which indicated that the classes were not engaging and engaging. An important observation here is that more than 92% (12 out of 13) of the interviewees did experience this negative emotion either in the middle or in the end of the session (see table 2). That is, they had not come to the classroom holding various beliefs and prejudices towards the classroom environment. Rather, the events and incidents lead to academic boredom. Interestingly, the results indicate the extent to which academic boredom is pervasive in Moroccan higher education institutions. Even though the overall rating was not very high, it might become a serious issue if not taken seriously.

Question 2

The analysis of the results obtained concerning the causes of academic boredom suggests that boredom is subject to different underlying causes. Homework, under-challenging and/or over-challenging or meaningless task, teacher dislike, and PowerPoint presentations were identified as the most common antecedents of boredom. As shown in table four above, homework was the main factor contributing to the boredom experience. In fact, the effect of homework on students overall is considered a debatable issue among experts and policymakers. Needless to say that homework is an essential part of students' academic career. Yet, it is important to mention that the quality, quantity and appropriate homework may decrease boredom and thus the academic burden. Moreover, results revealed that boredom are also provoked when an ongoing task or activity is perceived as under-challenging and/or over-challenging or meaningless. In other words, the pace of teaching can be a stimulus or a burden. Overachievers have a strong need to be challenged and thus get bored when it is not met. For low achievers, the lack of understanding the lesson or feeling lost or helpless make them subject to boredom. These findings corroborate the findings of some previous research more specifically the under-stimulation model (Larson & Richards, 1991) that considers the absence of challenging and engaging activities due to repetition as a main antecedent of boredom. As such, teacher dislike boredom was also found to contribute significantly to the experience of this negative emotion. It is interesting to note that the teacher is essential in the classroom. He/she plays a vital role in creating an emotional, safe, supportive environment for students. Yet, teachers sometimes become a source of boredom through inappropriate teaching behaviours. In line with these findings, Hill & Perkins (1985) in their forced-effort model found that the teacher might be a source of boredom when he/she is considered as the only source of information, the authority and their time talk is dominant in the classroom. Finally yet importantly, participants in this study highlighted the role of PowerPoint presentations in evoking boredom in the classroom. It is worth pointing out that teachers use diverse technological tools to explain lessons to students. This process requires teachers to be digitally literate and trained to use technology. This approach fosters students' creativity, interactions, and thinking skills. However, when teachers are not digitally literate using boring PowerPoint presentations with too much text on the slides, students become less engaged and more likely to be bored. Thus, digital literacy is an essential element in confronting boredom among students.

Question 3

The third research question was devoted to depicting the different strategies that students resort to when experiencing boredom. Having a closer look at the different boredom coping strategies investigated, student participants were found to resort to both cognitive and behavioural approaches, and sometimes mixed techniques from both strategies. This indicates that they are willing to change the situation by changing their perception of it or taking action to achieve such a goal. They try to get back on track by participating in the discussion and developing positive thoughts. As such, the results show that students' strategies were categorized along the dichotomous dimension of 1) avoidance or approach and 2) cognitive or behavioural. This idea was confirmed and well documented in the literature by Nett et al. (2010) and Nett et al. (2011), who thoroughly explored the issue at both state and trait levels.

Furthermore, needless to say that coping with this deleterious emotion is not an easy task. The ability of students to display and regulate boredom in EFL contexts is a debatable and controversial issue among experts in the field. More studies should be done on this front to further explore the issue.

5.1. Implications for future research and educational practice

Scanning the most prominent work documented in the literature shows an upsurge of interest and concern in positive emotions thanks to the introduction of positive psychology into education (Dewaele, Chen, Padilla, & Lake, 2019). Yet, several questions deserve further investigation and implications should be brought up for possible effective change in the future. First, more research is needed to understand the pervasive and fluctuating nature of boredom in EFL contexts. Second, based on previous studies suggesting that the experience of emotions, including boredom is person-specific and context-specific (Goetz, Frenzel, Pekrun, Hall, & Lüdtke, 2007; Frenzel, Becker-Kurz, Pekrun, Goetz, 2015), more studies should be undertaken to develop and validate boredom scales related to other academic domains (Languages, science...etc.) in different learning contexts. Third, researchers should not neglect the effective role of multicultural learning environments in the overall achievement of students (Amiri & Elkarfa, 2021) to better understand different boredom antecedents and effective boredom coping strategies. Fourth, it is crucial to consider trait and state approaches to boredom coping and the effectiveness of students' coping techniques in future research.

Interestingly, the findings in this study depict an image of the detrimental effects of boredom that are likely to happen if not taken seriously by policymakers and stakeholders in general and teachers in particular. Thus, a need to come out with effective ideas and ways to combat academic boredom is more needed than ever before. Certainly, teachers should encourage both cognitive and behavioural strategies to cope with boredom. They should create a healthy emotional climate that fosters a willingness to participate in open discussions to voice their opinions. Additionally, students should be given chances to actively develop creative thinking skills to cope with such negative emotions. Hence, it is necessary then to develop curricula and programs bringing theory and practice to tackle the issue of boredom and thus have a supportive learning environment. As such, unlike some previous programs that were developed for this goal, including the Skill Streaming series (McGinnis & Goldstein, 1997) and Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (Greenberg, Kusche, Cook, & Quamma 1995), these programs should focus on the modern trends in psychology such as positive education whose goal is to relate the principles of positive psychology to all positive learning and teaching practices.

5.2. Limitations

It is worth pointing out that despite the contribution of the present study to our understanding of the occurrence, antecedents and coping strategies of boredom, it is not immune from some limitations. The first weakness has to do with the generalizability of the findings. The number of student participants is not very high due to students' reluctance to participate in online questionnaires, which calls for future research to use a larger sample. Another limitation has to do with the types of participants who took part in this study. There is a high chance that most respondents are overachievers, as low achievers do not often respond to online questionnaires. Such considerations will definitely need to be considered in future investigations focusing on academic boredom.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study contributes to our understanding of the detrimental effects of academic boredom experienced by students in EFL contexts. In light of the obtained results and the ensuing discussion, boredom can be seen as a complex handicap that may affect the overall well-being of all stakeholders within a specific context. Given this negative emotion's relevance, acquiring information about its pervasive nature is of paramount importance. This will reveal the significance of research in this area and provide future researchers with useful materials to further investigate the issue in more detail and find out effective strategies to cope with it.

REFERENCES

- Amiri, E., & El karfa, A. (2021). The Impact of Learning Environment on EFL students' Academic Achievement: A study of Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Academic Achievement. *Arab World English Journal*, 12 (4) 387-400. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no4.25>
- Barnett, L. A., & Klitzing, S. W. (2006). Boredom in free time: Relationships with personality, affect, and motivation for different gender, racial, and ethnic student groups. *Leisure Science*, 28, 223-244.
- Bench, S. W., & Lench, H. C. (2013). On the function of boredom. *Behavioral Science*, 3(3), 459–472.
- Davis, H. A., DiStefano, C., & Schutz, P. A. (2008). Identifying patterns of appraising tests in first-year college students: Implications for anxiety and emotion regulation during test taking. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100(4), 942–960. Doi: 10.1037/a0013096
- Dewaele, J.-M., & Li, C. (2018). Editorial: Special Issue “Emotions in SLA [J]. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 8(1): 15-20.
- Dewaele, J.-M., & Li, C. (2020). Emotions in second language acquisition: A critical review and research agenda. *Foreign Language World*, 196, 34–49.
- Dewaele, J.-M., Chen, X., Padilla, A.M., & Lake, J. (2019). The flowering of positive psychology in foreign language teaching and acquisition research. *Frontiers in Psychology. Language Sciences*, 10, 2128. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02128.
- Eastwood, J. D., Frischen, A., Fenske, M. J., & Smilek, D. (2012). The unengaged mind: defining boredom in terms of attention. *Perspectives on Psychology Science*, 7, 482–195. Doi: 10.1177/1745691612456044
- Farmer, R., & Sundberg, N. D. (1986). Boredom proneness: The development and correlates of a new scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 50, 4-17,
- Frenzel, A. C., Becker-Kurz, B., Pekrun, R., & Goetz, T. (2015). Teaching This Class Drives Me Nuts! - Examining the Person and Context Specificity of Teacher Emotions. *PLOS ONE*, 10(6), e0129630. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0129630
- Gkonou, C., M. Daubney & Dewaele, J.-M. (Eds.). (2017). *New Insights into Language Anxiety [C]*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters - Govaerts, S., & Grégoire, J. (2008). Development and construct validation of an academic emotions scale. *International Journal of Testing*, 8, 34–54. doi: 10.1080/15305050701808649
- Goetz, T., Frenzel, C. A., Pekrun, R., Hall, N. C., & Lüdtke, O. (2007). Between- and within-domain relations of students' academic emotions. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(4), 715–733.
- Greenberg, M. T., Kusche, C. A., Cook, E. T., & Quamma, J. P. (1995). Promoting emotional competence in school-aged children: The effects of the PATHS curriculum. *Development and Psychopathology*, 7 (1), 117–136. doi:10.1017/S0954579400006374.

Students' Experiences and Perceptions of Boredom in EFL Academic Context

- Harris, M. B. (2000). Correlates and characteristics of boredom proneness and boredom. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 30*, 576-598.
- Hill, A. B., & Perkins, R. E. (1985). Towards a model of boredom. *British Journal of Psychology, 76*(2), 235-240.
- Holahan, C. J., Moos, R. H., & Schaefer, J. A. (1996). Coping, stress resistance, and growth: Conceptualizing adaptive functioning. In M. Zeidner & N. S. Endler (Eds.), *Handbook of coping. Theory, research, applications* (pp. 24–43). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Kruk, M. (2016a). Investigating the changing nature of boredom in the English language classroom: Results of a study. In A. Dłutek, & D. Pietrzak (Eds.), *Nowy wymiar filologii* (pp. 252-263). Płock: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Zawodowej w Płocku.
- Kruk, M. (2016b). Variations in motivation, anxiety and boredom in learning English in Second Life. *The EUROCALL Review, 23*(1), 25-39.
- Kruk, M., & Zawodniak, J. (2017). Nuda a praktyczna nauka języka angielskiego. *Neofilolog, 49*(1), 115-131.
- Kruk, M., & Zawodniak, J. (2018). Boredom in practical English language classes: Insights from interview data. In L. Szymański, J. Zawodniak, A. Łobodziec, & M. Smoluk (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary views on the English language, literature and culture* (pp. 177–191). Zielona Góra: Uniwersytet Zielonogórski.
- Larson, R. W., & Richards, M. H. (1991). Boredom in the middle school years: Blaming schools versus blaming students. *American Journal of Education, 99*(4), 418-433.
- Li, C. (2021). A control-value theory approach to boredom in English class among university students in China. *The Modern Language Journal 105*(1). (Forthcoming).
- Li, C., & Dewaele, J.-M. (2020). The predictive effects of Trait Emotional Intelligence and online learning achievement perceptions on Foreign Language Class boredom among Chinese university students. *Foreign Languages and Foreign Language Teaching 5*, pp. 33-44. ISSN 1004-6038.
- Li, C., Dewaele, J.-M., & Hu, Y. (2021). Foreign language learning boredom: conceptualization and measurement. *Applied Linguistics Review, 0*(0). doi:10.1515/applirev-2020-0124
- Li, C., Jiang, G., & Dewaele, J.-M. (2018). Understanding Chinese high school students' foreign language enjoyment: Validation of the Chinese version of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale [J]. *System, (76)*:183 – 196
- McGinnis, E., & Goldstein, A. P. (1997). *Skill streaming the elementary school child: New strategies and perspectives for teaching prosocial skills*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Nett, U. E., Goetz, T., & Daniels, L. M. (2010). What to do when feeling bored? Students' strategies for coping with boredom. *Learning & Individual Differences, 20*(6), 626–638.

- Nett, U. E., Goetz, T., & Hall, N. C. (2011). Coping with boredom in school: An experience sampling perspective. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 36(1), 49–59. doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2010.10.003
- O'Hanlon, J. F. (1981). Boredom: Practical consequences and a theory. *Acta Psychologica*, 49(1), 53–82. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-6918\(81\)90033-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-6918(81)90033-0)
- Pawlak, M., Kruk, M., Zawodniak, J., & Pasikowski, S. (2020). Investigating factors responsible for boredom in English classes: The case of advanced learners. *System*, 102259. doi:10.1016/j.system.2020.102259
- Pekrun, R. (2006). The control-value theory of achievement emotions: Assumptions, corollaries, and implications for educational research and practice. *Educational Psychology Review*, 18(4), 315–341.
- Pekrun, R., Goetz, T., Daniels, L. M., Stupnisky, R. H., & Perry, R. P. (2010). Boredom in achievement settings: Exploring control-value antecedents and performance outcomes of a neglected emotion. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(3), 531–549. doi:10.1037/a0019243
- Pekrun, R., Goetz, T., Frenzel, A. C., Barchfeld, P., & Perry, R. P. (2011). Measuring emotions in students' learning and performance: The Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (AEQ). *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 36(1). 36–48.
- Putwain, D. W., Pekrun, R., Nicholson, L. J., Symes, W., Becker, S., & Marsh, H. W. (2018). Control-Value Appraisals, Enjoyment, and Boredom in Mathematics: A Longitudinal Latent Interaction Analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 000283121878668. doi:10.3102/0002831218786689
- Teimouri, Y. (2018). Differential Roles of Shame and Guilt in L2 Learning: How Bad Is Bad? *The Modern Language Journal*. doi:10.1111/modl.12511.
- Tulis, M., & Fulmer, S. M. (2013). Students' motivational and emotional experiences and their relationship to persistence during academic challenge in mathematics and reading. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 27, 35–46.
- Vodanovich, S. J. (2003). Psychometric Measures of Boredom: A Review of the Literature. *The Journal of Psychology*, 137(6), 569–595. doi:10.1080/00223980309600636
- Weiner, B. (2010). The Development of an Attribution-Based Theory of Motivation: A History of Ideas. *Educational Psychologist*, 45(1), 28–36. doi:10.1080/00461520903433596
- Zawodniak, J., Kruk, M., & Chumas, J. (2017). Towards conceptualizing boredom as an emotion in the EFL academic context. *Konin Language Studies*, 5(4), 425–441

AUTHORS' BIO

Elmakki Amiri is an English language instructor. He is also a research assistant in British Council Gender-ing ELT project. He is a Ph. D candidate conducting his research on the role of emotions in educational settings. His areas of interest are linguistics, Language teaching and learning, gender and education. His most recent publication is 'The Impact of

Learning Environment on EFL Students' Academic Achievement: A study of Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Academic Achievement'.

Abderrahim Elkarfa is a full professor of Applied Linguistics and Leadership at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University, Fez, Morocco. He is a member of the University Council. As such, he is a former Director of the Research Laboratory: Language, Literature and Communication. Research Interests: Applied Linguistics, Leadership Education, Critical Thinking Education, English Language Education, and lifelong Learning. He is an author of many books and articles in different topics.

Mohamed Sbaihi is an Associate Professor and teacher trainer of the Didactics of English at the 'Centre Régional des Métiers de l'Éducation et de la Formation (CRMEF)' of Fez. He is also a professor of Research Methodology and Applied Linguistics for Master Programmes at the University of Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah, Fez, Morocco.

Gabriele Iannàccaro was a Full Professor of Linguistics at the University of Milano-Bicocca. He taught in several Italian and European Universities (lately at Stockholms universitet). Visiting professors in European and Asian Universities. Founder and co-director of the Centre d'Études Linguistiques pour l'Europe. Organiser of a number of International congresses and meetings. He is author of 10 monographs, about 130 scientific papers and editor of many volumes.

Elena TAMBURINI is a Master Student in Linguistics at the University of Pavia. She graduated in Intercultural Communication at the University of Milano-Bicocca, where she collaborated with the International Affairs Division for one year. She also studied Language Science at Paris-Descartes University through the Erasmus program. Her recent publication is «Siflikom msg f tel opostitha hna rj3 l history»: mescolanze di codice nella comunicazione mediale in Marocco, published in the catalogue of Annali di Ca' Foscari