Exploring Foreign Language Learning Boredom in EFL Class among Primary Students in China

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Abstract. The present study explores the English learning boredom in second language acquisition among Chinese primary school students' about causes and its effect on English learning performance. Data were collected from 160 Chinese primary school students who answered the Foreign Language Writing Boredom Scale (FLLBS) questionnaire. The FFLBS adopted a 5-point Likert response format. After statistical analysis, main findings were: (1) FLLBS has three main factors including Foreign Language Classroom and Task boredom (FLLBS1), General Learning Trait Boredom (FLLBS2) and PowerPoint Presentation Boredom (FLLBS3). (2) No significantly difference was shown between male and female students. This research filles a gap for English learning boredom in Chinese primary schools and can lay a foundation for further studies in this field.

Keywords: Negative emotion; boredom; second language acquisition; English as a foreign language.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, there has been an increasing focus in emotion as a role in determining individual differences among language learners. Foreign language emotions include anxiety, anger, boredom, disgust, hostility, pride, delight, and so on, with applied linguists focusing on anxiety in foreign language classrooms. However, scant attention has been paid to research in other emotions, especially boredom, a ubiquitous emotion experience in Second language acquisition (SLA). The fast advances of Positive Psychology prompted researchers to look beyond anxiety for a multitude of different emotions influencing SLA [1]. Research on the instigation of boredom has shown its deleterious effects on SLA, and boredom associated with learning foreign languages has been suggested as a crucial component of the newly growing discipline of emotion research in SLA. [2; 3]. Valid research method for the measuring foreign language (FL)-specific boredom have been invented by some relevant pioneer studies [3; 4].

Empirical findings concerning boredom in English classes are mostly based on the data from university school students, neglecting other age groups, especially in the context of junior school students. Besides, emotion-boredom components' prognostic implications are still mostly unstudied. This study intends to investigate how junior high students' English learning outcomes are predicted by their level of boredom in English classrooms.

2. Literature Review

A negative psychological or emotional condition, which includes dissatisfaction, disengagement, attention deficiency disorder, changed time awareness, and reduced energy, is known as boredom. [5].

A research project conducted in 2020 published a two-stage exploration of FLLB among English teachers and EFL students who were not majoring in English in a Chinese university. Based on the data collected from studying 2,223 in the major research and 808 undergraduates in a pilot, the Foreign Language Learning Boredom Scale (FLLBS) was built and verified, which exhibited sound psychometric properties. Besides, Foreign Language Learning Boredom (FLLB) proved to be a prerequisite for both teachers and students to achieve a better outcome in English studies [6].

By adopting a Control-value theory (CTV) approach (control appraisal measure and value appraisal measure), Li Chengchen collected quantitative data from 2002 undergraduates at college in China and qualitative data by interviewing 11 English teachers 11 students [6].

In Poland, Pawlak investigated 107 Polish-speaking participants majoring in English and compiled the BPELC [7]. Daniels examined different causes and coping profiles of boredom by recruiting 446 students studying at Canadian University in the Faculty of Education who received an online questionnaire and completed it within 30 minutes [8]. The research method included 22 items belonging to E-PBS, adapted from PBS and BCS [9]. Therefore, previous studies on boredom mainly focus on the context of university students. However, scant studies are about primary school students, which is the research gap that this study aims to fill in.

Even though the importance of different FL emotions and the relationship between them have been recognized in some studies, the discussion can be progressed in some more aspects. At present, the number of Chinese students in primary school who are learning a foreign language as a compulsory course arrives at more than 107 million [10].

In view of the deficiency of research as mentioned, it is of great significance to identify FLLB's influence on primary school students' FL learning in China. The present study, which concentrates on FL learners of this age group, is aimed at finding responses to the next three research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What is the general profile of FLLB in EFL classes amongst Chinese primary students?

RQ2: What are the underlying factors of boredom in EFL classes amongst Chinese primary school students?

RQ3: How does FLLB impact learning outcomes in EFL classes among primary students in China?

3. Research method

3.1 Participants

The study's target group consisted of 160 EFL students in grades 5 who were between the ages of 10 and 12 (M = 10.6 years; SD = 0.57) and were divided into 90 male and 70 female students. They attended a primary school in Southeast China.

Each participant is a natural speaker of Chinese. All participants were required to take weekly or monthly English exams in order to achieve excellent English scores. The test results they received indicate their performance and outcome in learning English. Before starting this questionnaire, the participants have already been informed of the research's objective.They understood that voluntary engagement required getting permission from them, their parents, their head teachers, and their school.

3.2 Measures

A questionnaire asking for background details with 4 items was created to gather individual data of the participants, covering age, sex and their score in the English final examination in Spring from 2021 to 2022. FLLBS, a 7-item measure, covers five dimensions. Example items include "I satrt daydreaming when I have English lessons and "I yawn during English class as I feel so bored." [6].

Each issue was given a 5-point Likert rating, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree." Better perfromance in the examination means greater expectations and personalized values. The scale adopted in the current study has great internal consistency according to reliability analysis (Cronbach alpha = 0.98)

3.3 Data Collection

The current research was carried out during the eleventh week of the term after all the participants finished the final examine in Spring and have been accustomed to their EFL courses. The questionnaire adpoted was a Chinese version so that participants would have a better understanding of the questions given, and the translation was taken direclty from the original FLLBS. The questionnaire, which included 37 items, was distributed via WeChat (a Chinese instant messaging

app) to students who acted as study participants. Although there was no time limit for completing all of the questions, participants were urged to complete the activity independently in order to prevent other influences

4. Results

4.1 Factor analysis of FLLBS (N=160)

Table 1. Factor analysis

Questions	FLLBS 1	FLLBS 2	FLLBS 3
1	**0.655**	-0.126	-0.227
2	**0.728**	-0.079	-0.093
3	**0.843**	-0.201	-0.092
4	**0.785**	-0.155	-0.205
5	**0.805**	-0.065	-0.168
6	**0.793**	-0.106	-0.147
7	**0.842**	-0.219	-0.081
8	**0.879**	-0.113	-0.085
9	**0.814**	-0.218	-0.133
10	**0.816**	-0.142	-0.113
11	**0.846**	-0.103	-0.050
12	**0.854**	-0.038	0.042
13	**0.865**	-0.109	0.021
14	0.546	0.077	**0.619**
15	0.603	-0.015	**0.674**
16	**0.776**	0.043	0.351
17	**0.837**	-0.103	-0.032
18	**0.759**	-0.133	0.079
19	**0.767**	-0.112	0.030
20	**0.882**	-0.172	0.072
21	**0.776**	-0.140	-0.070
22	**0.839**	0.042	0.031
23	**0.723**	0.188	0.188
24	**0.620**	0.200	0.339
25	**0.866**	-0.004	-0.160
26	**0.666**	0.500	-0.123
27	**0.655**	0.538	-0.157
28	0.498	**0.660**	-0.248
29	0.589	**0.593**	-0.139
30	**0.739**	0.393	0.071
31	**0.799**	0.088	0.116
32	**0.802**	-0.011	0.059

Table 1 provides a method to categorize the items as follows: items 1, 2， 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32 are placed under Foreign Language Classroom and Task boredom (FLLBS1), items 28, 29 are placed under General Learning Trait Boredom (FLLBS2), items 14, 15 are placed under PowerPoint Presentation Boredom (FLLBS3).

The loading ranged from 620 to 882 for FLLBS 1, -219 to 593 for FLLBS 2, -248 to 619 for FLLBS 3.

4.2 Gender Difference in Students' FLLB.

Table 2. Correlational analysis

Correlational analysis		Frequency of boredom in EFL class	Gender
Pearson Correlation	Frequency of boredom in EFL class	1.000	0.012
	Gender	0.012	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Frequency of boredom in EFL class		0.440
	Gender	0.440	
N	Frequency of boredom in EFL class	159	159
	Gender	159	159

Notes: P=0.044 < 0.05

Table 2 illustrates the correlational analysis of the frequency of boredom in EFL classes and students' gender. There is a significant difference found in their correlations (P = 0.044 < 0.05), which can prove that the frequency of boredom in EFL has a correlational relationship with their gender.

5. Discussion

5.1 Profiles of the Participants' FLLB

Data analysis in the present study shows that the percentage of students revealing their boredom in English learning is much smaller than the results shown in Li and Dewaele's research. More than 51% students never feel bored in English class, and more than 45% of student sometimes get bored. The fact that the participants in the research are elementary school students who are not occupied with numerous required courses, homework and examinations that are important for university students may be the cause. Without great pressure, they would easily be more interested in their English study and less likely to get bored.

5.2 Factor analysis

Rotated factor analysis demonstrates that FFLBS includes 3 significant factors, which are Foreign language classroom and task boredom, General Learning Trait Boredom, and PowerPoint Presentation Boredom.

These six factors are consistent with the findings in Li and Dewaele's study (2021)The FLLBS in the present study is adopted from Li and Dewaele's study, so the name of the factors is in line with their research. However, this study focuses on Chinese primary school students, which is an extension of age group compared with previous studies.

According to the findings of this study, there are some differences between Chinese primary students' English learning boredom and that of Li and Dewaele's study. Therefore, future investigation of similar studies in Chinese primary schools is needed to further testify to the validity of this study. Furthermore, future studies could an investigation the relationships between English learning boredom and other variables related to English language learning among primary school students, for instance, students' self-confidence and academic output.

5.3 Gender difference in Students' FFLB

Previous researches have found that genders impose an influence on students' level of boredom [11]. However, this study indicates an irrelevance between gender and FFFB, since the statistics of neither males nor females, according to Table 2, display signs of correlation with FLWAS1, FLWAS2, FLWAS3 or FLWAS.

The underlying cause of this phenomenon is that this study investigates FLLB among primary school students, who receive almost the same amount and level of English language education despite their gender difference, due to the quality monitoring of education supervised by China's Ministry of

Education for students under the age of 18. There is room to determine the specific causes of why there is no correlation between gender and the components of FLLB in Chinese high school students.

6. Conclusion

This study researches on the scale of FL (English) learning boredom in Chinese primary schools, calculates the profile of participants' FL learning boredom, and analyzes the gender difference for FL learning boredom among Chinese primary school students. Currently, the following two findings are concluded: (1) Factor Analysis reveals that there are 3 components in FLLBS, and they are: Foreign Language Classroom and Task boredom (FLLBS1), General Learning Trait Boredom (FLWAS2) and PowerPoint Presentation Boredom (FLLBS3); (2) Regarding gender, according to statistical results, it can be concluded that neither of the two sexes is of importance to determining the scale of FLLBS1, FLLBS2, FLLBS3 or FLLBS. As a result, this study complements quantitative research on Chinese primary school students' worry over learning English and paves the way for future, more focused studies.

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