

STUDENT EMOTIONS IN ONLINE FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

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Abstract

Emotions in educational settings can profoundly influence students' learning and achievement (Pekrun, 2014). Despite the recent increase in interest in foreign language student emotions, emotions in the field of online education remain underresearched (Kruk & Pawlak, 2022). The global shift to emergency remote teaching in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has drawn researchers' attention to the emotions experienced by learners whose classes were unexpectedly moved online. Thus far, studies have mainly focused on anxiety, enjoyment, and boredom, while other emotions have not been sufficiently explored. This qualitative study examines the full range of emotions experienced by learners, as well as the factors responsible for those emotions. A total of 218 university learners of English, German, Italian, and French participated in the research. Data were collected via an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Participants were found to experience interest, enjoyment, frustration, anxiety, boredom, pride, shame, helplessness, anger, serenity, relief, sadness, and envy. The most frequently mentioned emotion was interest, followed by enjoyment and frustration.

Keywords: foreign language emotions, emotion sources, emergency remote teaching, synchronous online instruction, tertiary education, student wellbeing

1. Introduction

Students experience a wide range of emotions that are crucial to their learning and well-being. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that teachers understand and address learners' emotions (Pekrun, 2014). Over the past decade, in response to the multi-disciplinary emotional turn (Lemmings & Brooks, 2014), scholars have investigated a variety of emotions experienced by language learners that had previously been overlooked in the literature (Dewaele & Li, 2020).

The global shift to emergency remote teaching (ERT) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has further drawn researchers' attention to the emotions experienced by learners whose classes were unexpectedly moved online. To date, studies have mainly focused on levels of anxiety, enjoyment, and boredom among

online learners, while other emotions experienced during online instruction remain underexplored.

This study addresses this gap by examining the full range of emotions experienced by students in an online learning environment, as well as the factors underlying these emotions. It contributes to foreign language acquisition research by shedding light on emotions that remain underresearched. The findings provide insight into what occurred in learners' minds when foreign language learning shifted online. Such insight is crucial for teachers seeking to promote emotions that facilitate learning and to address those that hinder language acquisition (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Therefore, this study may contribute to the enhancement of online language education, both on an emergency basis and when used to complement face-to-face instruction or delivered as a standalone mode.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The role of affect in language learning

Emotions are defined as "short-lived, feeling-purposive-expressive-bodily responses that help us adapt to the opportunities and challenges we face during important life events" (Reeve, 2015, p. 340) or as "mere instances that people construct based on their past emotional experiences and their predictions created in their brains" (Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021, p. 67). Even though emotions are frequently experienced in classroom settings (Pekrun, 2014), they had been neglected until the humanistic movement in language teaching of the 1970s and 1980s, which began to treat the learner holistically, combining affect with cognition (Mercer, 2006).

Experiencing emotions in an educational setting can profoundly impact students' learning, personality, health and achievement (Pekrun, 2014). Moreover, feelings and emotions have been demonstrated to be an important link between cognition, understanding, memory, motivation and learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Mercer, 2006). Positive emotions (e.g., joy and happiness), experienced as pleasant, facilitate learning (Botes, Dewaele, & Greiff, 2020a) by affecting students' attention, motivation, use of learning strategies and self-regulation of learning (Pekrun, 2014). Negative emotions (e.g., anger and shame), experienced as unpleasant, reduce students' attention (Pekrun, 2014) and thus, hinder learning and achievement (Botes, Greiff, & Dewaele, 2020b; Pekrun, 2014).

According to the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2003), negative emotions narrow learners' thought-action repertoire, which can reduce language input and discourage them from speaking. On the other hand, positive emotions can neutralise the harmful effects of negative emotions, broaden one's thinking and build strengths that can be utilised for overcoming anxiety and summoning the courage to speak. Furthermore, as MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) observed, "positive emotions can be part of an upward spiral towards greater well-being in the future" (p. 198).

It has been observed that negative emotions can also generate positive effects (Kruk & Pawlak, 2022; Kruk, Pawlak & Zawodniak, 2021). Pessimism, fear, or feeling

of difficulty can lead to reduced risk-taking or more effective functioning (Komorowska, 2016). Conversely, as Komorowska (2016, p. 46) highlighted, positive emotions, such as high self-esteem, can have problematic effects. Crucially, as Kruk, Pawlak & Zawodniak (2021) illuminated, negative emotions should not be overlooked, and there needs to be a balance between positive and negative emotion research.

MacIntyre (2007) has pointed out that ambivalent emotions prevail in language learning. Therefore, rather than the absence of negative emotions, the goal is to create and nurture positive ones (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Most importantly, as Pekrun (2014, p. 6) underscored,

From an educational perspective, emotions are important because they influence learning and development, but students' emotional well-being should also be regarded as an educational goal that is important in itself.

2.2. Emotions in second language acquisition (SLA)

Even though learners experience a wide range of both positive and negative emotions, only a few have been studied extensively. Foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA), recognised by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) and defined as "the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language" (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 27), has been the most widely studied (see Horwitz, 2010). Its recognition has been a milestone in language acquisition research since it affects the well-being and class participation of one-third of language learners (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p. 130) and consequently hinders their progress (Gkonou, Dewaele & Daubney, 2017). The theory that high anxiety levels create a barrier that prevents foreign language input from being cognitively processed, known as the Affective Filter Hypothesis, had been devised by Krashen (1982) before the term language anxiety was coined, yet it had not been scientifically proven.

Since the arrival of positive psychology in SLA, positive emotions have begun to draw the attention of researchers. Enjoyment, defined as "a positive affective state that combines challenge, happiness, interest, fun, sense of pride and sense of meaning" (Dewaele & Li, 2021, p. 5), has been the most frequently studied positive emotion (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Dewaele et al., 2018; Elahi Shirvan & Taherian, 2018). Over the last ten years, scholars have been interested in a wide range of language learners' emotions, e.g., pride (Ross & Stracke, 2016), shame (Teimouri, 2018), love (Pavelescu & Petrić, 2018) and curiosity (Nakamura, Darasawang & Reinders, 2020) that had been overlooked in the literature. In their study of secondary school Italians learning German as a foreign language in a high-contact context, MacIntyre and Vincze (2017) identified and explored 19 basic second language (L2) learning emotions (joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, love, anger, contempt, disgust, embarrassment, guilt, hate, sadness, feeling scared and being stressed).

Recently, foreign language boredom (FLB) defined as "a negative emotion with (an) extremely low degree of activation/arousal that arises from ongoing activities

(...) (that) are typically over-challenging or under-challenging" (Li, Dewaele, & Hu, 2021, p. 12) has attracted exceeding scholarly attention (Kruk, Pawlak & Zawodniak, 2021; Pawlak et al. 2022).

2.3. Student Emotions in Online Settings

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, anxiety was the main focus of study in planned online language courses (Coryell & Clark, 2009; Hurd, 2007; Pichette, 2009). However, due to the outbreak of the pandemic, face-to-face language courses were moved online on an emergency basis. Consequently, a number of scholars investigated how this sudden transition to emergency remote teaching (ERT) (Hodges et al., 2020) affected learners' emotions. Most studies that looked at FLCA in ERT (Alemany-Arrebola et al., 2020; Budzińska, 2024; Kaiser & Chowdhury, 2020; Resnik, Dewaele, & Knechtelsdorfer, 2022) revealed that some ERT facets, such as the use of technology (Maican & Cocoradă, 2020; Resnik, Moskowitz, & Panicacci, 2021; Resnik et al., 2022), physical isolation from peers (Resnik & Dewaele, 2021; Sun and Zhang, 2021) or household disruptions (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Maican & Cocoradă, 2021) increased FLCA, while others decreased it, mainly anonymity (Resnik & Dewaele, 2021) and consequent task evasion.

Resnik, Dewaele and Knechtelsdorfer (2022) explored differences in 437 online and face-to-face learners' FLCA before and during the pandemic. Statistical analyses of data gathered using a web questionnaire revealed a slight drop in FLCA in ERT. Qualitative data from item-level analysis and 21 interviews demonstrated that online learners worried less about peers being better than them and being unprepared for class. Nevertheless, they were less willing to provide answers. The scholars also found that the main sources of online anxiety differed from those inherent in face-to-face instruction and that technology was a major FLCA trigger. The absence of a physical classroom suited some students who preferred to remain in the background, but it aggravated their anxiety when called to intervene.

Maican and Cocoradă (2021) adopted a mixed-method approach to research enjoyment and FLCA of 207 Romanian FL university students in ERT. The FLE scale and five other tools elaborated on or adapted by the authors were employed. The scholars observed mixed feelings towards the new online learning environment.

Resnik and Dewaele's (2021) mixed-method study examined the effect of the introduction of ERT on the emotions of 510 European university EFL students. Online classes were found to generate less enjoyment, less anxiety and more boredom than face-to-face instruction. The downside was that the drop in FLCA was linked to students' reporting speaking L2 less in ERT classes than 'in-person'. Decreased enjoyment was attributed to a lack of group solidarity and laughter as well as the superficiality of student relationships with teachers and peers. Increased boredom resulted from teacher-centred instruction. In addition, it was found that enjoyment outweighed anxiety in both face-to-face and ERT contexts.

Resnik, Moskowitz & Panicacci (2021) used a web survey to investigate grit, trait emotional intelligence, anxiety and enjoyment among 481 European EFL

learners in ERT. Data from two open-ended questions, answered by 227 and 233 learners, revealed that positive group dynamics, teacher appreciation, humour and innovative use of technology boosted FLE. The main anxiety sources were: speaking in front of others, overwhelming workload, the use of technology, uncertainty about the task and the fear of making mistakes.

Dewaele, Albakistani and Ahmed's (2022) mixed-method study examined FLE, FLCA and foreign language boredom (FLB) in ERT and face-to-face instruction among 168 Arab and Kurdish learners of English as a foreign language. Statistical analyses demonstrated that learners experienced significantly more FLE and FLCA but less FLB in physical classes than online. Qualitative data analysis revealed that many online participants felt more isolated, disengaged, distracted, and missed interactions with peers and teachers. FLCA in ERT mainly stemmed from issues with Internet connection rather than the fear of making errors in front of others. The main source of boredom turned out to be a lack of exciting social interactions and monotony in delivery.

Several studies have specifically looked at boredom in ERT (e.g., Derakhshan et al., 2021; Pawlak et al. 2022). Derakhshan et al. (2021) explored the causes of and solutions to boredom in ERT as well as the time of class perceived as more/less boring. The study involved 208 students majoring in English in Iran. The data collected through a written, open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews revealed teacher factors, e.g., teachers' long, monotonous monologues, lack of student participation, IT/computer factors (e.g., poor Internet connection, lack of face-to-face interaction and teacher/student illiteracy), task factors (e.g., boring topics and dull materials) and student factors (e.g., students' physical fatigue and unmotivated individuals).

Thus far, research on emotions in an online language learning environment has focused on FLCA, FLE and FLB. Other emotions experienced remain underexplored. This study fills this evident gap by considering the whole range of emotions experienced by students whose language courses were moved online as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The identification and awareness of all emotions experienced in a digital mode of delivery, as well as the factors responsible for those emotions, will empower online foreign language instructors to promote facilitative emotions and reduce debilitating ones.

2.4. Research questions

Based on the above-mentioned literature, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1: What emotions did learners experience during online foreign language instruction?

RQ2: What factors were responsible for those emotions?

3. Methodology

3.1. Context

In March 2020, face-to-face courses were replaced with synchronous online instruction on an emergency basis as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study took place three months later. The aim of the study was to explore all emotions experienced by students whose language courses were moved online. L2 learning emotions (joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, love, anger, contempt, disgust, embarrassment, guilt, hate, sadness, feeling scared and being stressed) from MacIntyre and Vincze's (2017) analysis framework were used as a reference point.

3.2. Participants

The study was conducted at a technical university language centre in Poland, where students are required to take a foreign language course in addition to their major subject. The sample consisted of 218 students of English, German, Italian and French. Most students ($N = 212$) were aged between 20 and 23 years. The participants were predominantly Polish ($N = 206$), with five Ukrainians and two Belarusians. There were 148 males and 70 females. One hundred and sixty-nine of the respondents were learners of English, while 40 studied German, eight Italian and one French. Proficiency levels ranged from Pre-Intermediate to Advanced.

3.3. Instruments and Procedure

An anonymous Google Forms online questionnaire was used. The author sent an email with the questionnaire link to foreign language instructors, informing them about the purpose of the study and asking them to administer the questionnaire during their language class. The survey had questions in both English and Polish, allowing respondents to answer in either language. The author translated Polish responses into English. The questionnaire was administered by instructors who volunteered to participate in the research. It contained two open-ended questions. Participants were asked to indicate the emotions they experienced during online foreign language education and specify the situations in which they experienced those emotions. At the end of the survey, participants were invited to take part in an interview. Four students agreed and provided their email addresses. The author contacted them and organised two in-depth semi-structured interviews with two participants at a time through a Microsoft Teams video conference. The interviews provided additional details on the survey data. They lasted a total of 90 minutes and 25 seconds. Respondents were asked the following questions:

What emotions did you experience during ERT and in what situations?

What were your strongest emotions? In what situations did you experience them?

Did you experience any new emotions that you did not experience during classroom education?

Did you experience any emotions related to:

a) technology

b) lesson quality?

The total data corpus is 20 913 words. The excerpts from the questionnaire are marked with (Q), whereas the excerpts from the interviews are marked with (I).

3.4. Research Ethics and Consent

Online consent was obtained individually at the beginning of the questionnaire. The participants were informed about the study's purpose and assured anonymity. The interviewees agreed to the conversation being recorded and used for the purpose of this study.

3.5. Analysis

Data analysis involved transcribing the interviews using Otter.ai, compiling them with the narratives from the open-ended questionnaire, manual coding and inductive data analysis. A grounded-theory approach was applied (Charmaz, 2006). According to grounded theory, the collected data should be analyzed for repeated themes, which are then tagged with codes. Codes are subsequently grouped into categories that can give rise to new theories. The transcripts were scrutinised by the author and their colleague with a view of pinpointing all emotions self-reported by the respondents, as well as the factors accounting for experiencing them. At this stage, annotations were made to record any salient thoughts. The frequency of each reported emotion was calculated using Excel. To identify categories, clusters of similar emotions were formed and umbrella terms were selected, based on the most frequently mentioned emotions in each cluster. After identifying the categories, the data were analyzed again, assigning units of analysis to categories, i.e., coding. Each data sample was analyzed in depth, subjecting it to multiple waves of coding and categorization, until the point of saturation was achieved. The data were analyzed by the two researchers separately. Any disagreements regarding interpretation and categorization were discussed and resolved. The inter-coder agreement reached 95%, which is considered acceptable (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

4. Results

4.1. RQ1: What emotions did learners experience during ERT?

Based on the frequency with which each emotion was mentioned, participants were found to experience the following emotions: interest, enjoyment, frustration, anxiety, boredom, pride, shame, helplessness, anger, serenity, relief, sadness and envy. The term enjoyment was used here as an umbrella to refer to a cluster of similar positive emotions: joy, enjoyment, happiness, and satisfaction. Anxiety was used as an umbrella term for anxiety, stress, fear and worry. Shame represented shame and embarrassment. Anger referred to anger and irritation.

4.2. RQ2: What factors were responsible for those emotions?

4.2.1 Interest

Most sources of interest were related to foreign language instruction in general. Interest stemmed from attractive lesson delivery, stimulating topics and discussions, and engaging activities or materials. Novelty elements such as break-out rooms and learning new things, were also mentioned. Additionally, students felt interested when they were provided with opportunities to talk about their passions or share personal experiences. Learners also mentioned their interest in language learning.

4.2.2 Enjoyment

The most frequently mentioned source of enjoyment was the sense of accomplishment when, as one participant put it, "everything went (their) way". Learners were happy when they gave the correct answer to the teacher's question, were pleased with their speaking performance, thought their "accent sounded good", when they had given a presentation and when they had passed the final test, particularly with a good grade.

Enjoyment was also experienced during engaging activities such as discussions in break-out rooms.

I was very happy when we managed to put a great discussion about pros and cons on a given topic with our group. (Q)

The topics discussed in chat rooms were reported to have an impact on students' positive emotions.

The strongest emotions were joy, happy etc. when we were speaking in our separate rooms and we found some funny topic to talk about during our exercise. (I)

In addition, enjoyment was revealed to stem from the instructors' praise, friendly attitude, patience and helpfulness. Several participants attributed their happiness to the fact that classes were moved online and learning occurred in a comfortable, home environment while the instruction quality remained the same.

I felt happy. I find online classes to be a lot more comfortable for most students probably because the quality of lesson doesn't really go down and we can sit cozily in our chairs in homes instead of going to the building especially when it's cold like in this winter. (I)

Finally, some respondents derived their enjoyment from their passion for language learning.

The emotion I experienced the most was enjoyment because I like studying foreign languages. (Q)

4.2.3 Frustration

Technology was the main source of frustration. Learners predominantly reported issues with unreliable equipment.

I was frustrated when I had problem with microphone on day of my presentation and because of that everyone was waiting especially for me. (Q)

Internet breakdowns were also a common cause of frustration.

I was frustrated when I could not connect to the Internet for half of one class and there was nothing I could do about it. (Q)

4.2.4 Anxiety

Anxiety causes can be divided into those inherent in language learning and those related to an online mode of delivery. The main anxiety source in the first group of stressors was speaking in front of the entire class. Some participants also worried that they would not know the answer when asked or would not understand the teacher's question. Moreover, students reported test-related anxiety. One respondent was apprehensive about their reading comprehension tasks because they experienced difficulties with concentration.

Anxiety related to an online mode of delivery mostly resulted from technological failures. Additionally, speaking through a microphone heightened self-consciousness and made learners afraid of being scrutinised by others. Poor sound quality was reported to provoke listening anxiety.

I'm more anxious during emergency remote classes because then I know everybody is listening to me when I speak. During normal classes I can feel less watched. (Q)

The inability to see peers or teachers (in some cases) was another anxiety trigger.

I get confused when I'm supposed to talk to other people I can't see. This makes me stressed. In the classroom I feel more confident. (Q)

Several respondents mentioned apprehension experienced when being placed in a chatroom with a student they had never met in person (see section 4.2.8) or who was unwilling to contribute.

I got quite anxious when we were forced to work in pairs with someone I didn't really know. (Q)

Anxiety was also caused by teacher-centred instruction, ineffective time management and teachers' insufficient ability to use the platform. Other sources were household disruptions and a lack of peer support.

Online classes can be more stressful. I sometimes lose plot and there is no one nearby to tell me what to do. (Q)

One participant was worried that background noise from his household might be broadcast once his microphone was on.

I am more stressed when studying online because when I am speaking, my family members behaving in a noisy way may be heard. (Q)

Furthermore, respondents were under pressure because of other issues related to the pandemic, such as additional household duties and the challenge to study their major, technical subject online.

4.2.5 Boredom

Participants who reported boredom stated that classes lacked variety, were insufficiently challenging, progressed at a slow pace, and addressed irrelevant topics. One participant commented that gallery viewing was dull and compared it to “looking at fish in an aquarium.” Another respondent reported feeling bored during grammar classes. Boredom was also attributed to the long hours spent in front of a screen.

It's pretty hard to concentrate on the computer while sitting on the computer like for 10 hours, so I do have a feeling I'm bored, I do not have energy for all those lessons. (I)

4.2.6 Pride

Participants typically felt proud when they provided correct answers or successfully achieved tasks, particularly when praised by the teacher or awarded with a good grade.

I felt proud - when teacher told me that my answers were excellent. (Q)

I experienced pride when I wrote an e-mail and was asked to read it out loud and got a 5! (Q)

The fact that other learners witnessed someone's success also contributed to their pride.

I was proud when I could demonstrate my fluency in front of everyone. (Q)

Additionally, pride was experienced when learners felt that they were more successful than others.

I experienced pride when I was better than others. (Q)

4.2.7 Shame

Respondents reported feeling ashamed when they encountered difficulties with a task or did not understand the teacher's instructions or explanations. Feeling overcorrected also contributes to shame and embarrassment. Some sources of shame were triggered specifically by an online delivery mode, mainly the Internet connection.

I frequently feel embarrassed because of breaks in the Internet connection. I tend to miss the reply to what I've said. (Q)

During their online language class, some learners were working on other university assignments or looking after siblings who were also forced to spend time at home. Consequently, they were not always focused on the lesson and felt ashamed and embarrassed when the teacher discovered that they were not following the class. One respondent revealed feeling embarrassed when the teacher asked them a question and they had not even opened their coursebook by then.

I frequently feel embarrassed because of breaks in the Internet connection. I tend to miss the reply to what I've said, or I don't know what is happening in class because during my language course I have to work on other university subjects. Another thing that attracts my attention during my class is looking after my younger siblings. (I)

4.2.8 Helplessness

Helplessness was mostly attributed to technology issues, particularly the lack of stability of the Internet.

I was helpless when I wanted to attend classes but the Internet connection was bad. (Q)

I experienced helplessness when I lost my Internet connection during answering. (Q)

Experiencing helplessness was common when placed in a chatroom with an unfamiliar classmate (see section 4.2.4). Additionally, certain participants expressed a sense of helplessness when the task presented was too demanding, when they could not find appropriate words to articulate their thoughts, when they were unsure about the expectations, or when they were requested to elaborate on an answer they provided but did not know how to expand on.

I felt helpless when I didn't know what to do. (Q)

I sometimes felt helpless when I didn't hear what we are doing next. (Q)

4.2.9 Anger

Learners usually felt angry due to technological issues and insufficient cooperation in break-out rooms.

The strongest emotion I experienced was anger when divided into rooms on MS Teams nearly nobody wants to participate in a discussion and I am the only one showing any initiative. (Q)

One learner revealed his irritation stemming from being disrupted by the noise coming from their neighbours' renovation taking place during the lockdown.

The most irritating thing for me during pandemic lessons were renovations. My neighbours were having some renovation, there was a lot of noise which was distracting for me to having lessons. (I)

The remaining anger sources were mistakes, inability to retrieve words, or learners feeling inferior about their target language level.

4.2.10 Serenity

Most participants who experienced serenity revealed feeling "more relaxed at home" than during their classroom instruction. The main reason for this was anonymity resulting from students not using cameras, which made some learners less afraid of making mistakes.

During my emergency remote language class, I am less anxious than in the classroom because there are just voices and I don't feel afraid to make a mistake. (Q)

There were also respondents whose serenity stemmed from the intimacy of working in pairs or groups in break-out rooms with "nobody hearing it". Learners commented that in a physical classroom, they always overheard each other's conversations, which contributed to their stress.

Breakout rooms made a lot of students feel comfortable because, in a big group in the classroom, you cannot always make a small group of people. After all, even though there are groups of two or three people speaking between themselves, it is also heard by others and online you can make a group only for 2-3 people and no one hears what they are saying. (I)

Furthermore, online instruction turned out to evoke serenity in learners who called themselves "introverts", "loners", or "lonely learners". Such learners, as one participant observed, prefer studying on their own in a quiet place because they find the physical classroom environment and the company of other learners uncomfortable.

4.2.11 Relief

Several participants mentioned feeling relieved when they gave the correct answers. One learner reported experiencing relief when they found out that presentations would be given on the platform instead of face-to-face. Relief was also generated by the

transfer of the course online partly because some learners were "scared of Covid back then" (Q) and partly because of "not having to commute"(Q).

4.2.12 Sadness

Learners reported feeling sad and upset because they "love spending time with people", while during online classes, they felt isolated. Sadness was also caused by incorrect answers and equipment failures.

4.2.13 Amusement

Amusement was mentioned in relation to teachers' sense of humour and funny anecdotes, which made learners laugh.

My teacher is very funny and outgoing; she makes us all laugh. (Q)

My teacher laughs with us, tells stories and creates a really good atmosphere. (Q)

4.2.14 Envy

Envy was reported by only one participant who recounted feeling jealous of students whose foreign language level was better than theirs.

5. Discussion

The first research question focused on the emotions experienced by learners in online foreign language instruction. Just as in classroom learning, participants reported a wide range of positive and negative emotions (Kruk, Pawlak & Zawodniak, 2021; Pekrun, 2014) such as interest, enjoyment, frustration, anxiety, boredom, pride, shame, helplessness, anger, serenity, relief, sadness and envy. Apart from anxiety, enjoyment and boredom, the emotions had been neglected by existing online language instruction research. It must be highlighted that the two most frequently reported emotions, i.e., interest and enjoyment, were positive, which confirms the previous finding that enjoyment outweighed anxiety in online language education (Resnik & Dewaele, 2021).

This result may be attributable to the similarity of instruction, which was achieved owing to the synchronous mode of teaching (Maican and Cocoradă, 2021) and the use of break-out rooms, as well as the fact that the participants were technologically-minded (Maican and Cocoradă, 2021) technical university students. The present data also confirm that positive and negative emotions can co-occur in both face-to-face (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) online instruction (Fraschini & Tao, 2021; Maican & Cocarada, 2021).

The second research question focused on the factors responsible for all reported emotions. Many of the recounted emotion causes, such as accomplishment, appealing lessons, or speaking in front of others (Resnik et al., 2021), are inherent in SLA and seem to provoke the same emotions in both face-to-face and online contexts.

The present research also identified sources of emotions characteristic solely for the online delivery mode, which confirms Resnik et al.'s (2021, 2022) observation that some FLCA triggers experienced online differ from the triggers inherent in face-to-face learning. Anonymity was reported to evoke serenity (Resnik & Dewaele, 2021), anxiety and boredom (Derakhshan et al., 2021). In previous research (Resnik & Dewaele, 2021), anonymity had been linked to anxiety reduction. An explanation may be that the same factors may generate different, even contrasting emotions in different learners. Technology-related issues were found to cause frustration, helplessness, anger, anxiety (Resnik et al., 2021) and shame. In Resnik et al.'s (2021) study, technology had also been associated with enjoyment. This suggests that, when not disrupted by technical failures, technology may be enjoyable for learners. Speaking through a microphone heightened an anxiety element - fear of negative evaluation. The sense of isolation associated with technology was found to induce sadness and anxiety (Resnik et al., 2021), while reducing apprehension in introverted learners. The home environment as a place of study evoked serenity, apprehension and anger. Not having to commute gave rise to enjoyment (Resnik et al., 2021; Resnik & Dewaele, 2021) and relief. Excessive screen time was found to lead to boredom (Derakhshan et al., 2021). Breakout rooms generated interest, serenity and enjoyment for some learners (Resnik et al., 2021), but triggered anxiety in others. Unwillingness to contribute by peers was reported as a source of anxiety and anger. Unmotivated peers had been previously found to induce boredom (Derakhshan et al., 2021). Increased workload and additional responsibilities were cited as sources of anxiety (Resnik et al., 2022) and shame. Not knowing interlocutors was found to provoke anxiety (Resnik & Dewaele, 2021) and helplessness. On one hand, limited teacher control decreased anxiety, but on the other hand, it reduced effort and increased disengagement (Resnik & Dewaele, 2021).

Several sources of emotions found by the present research, for example, a substantial amount of time spent by learners online recognized as a FLB trigger, have not been recognized so far by any published FLB research. Furthermore, the most frequently reported source of boredom in the present research has turned out to be exhaustion, also stemming from long hours spent studying in front of the screen (Moraes Bezerra & Silveira, 2022), rather than inferior lesson quality resulting from monotonous tasks and teacher-centred instruction (Pawlak et al., 2022; Derkhshan et al., 2022). This could possibly be explained by the fact that break-out rooms were employed, and lessons were perceived to be delivered in a similar way to face-to-face instruction.

The identification of emotions in ERT and the factors responsible for them gives rise to some pedagogical implications. To prevent anxiety resulting from inferior quality of instruction, teachers should be trained in their mastery of information technology as well as effective use of essential online techniques such as organising break-out rooms, sharing documents or PowerPoint presentations (Gao & Zhang, 2020), using an interactive whiteboard, attaching documents, or exploiting the chat box (Heines, 2021). As for anxiety stemming from the absence of body language,

teachers should have their cameras switched on and learners should be encouraged to switch their cameras on as well, at least when they are speaking. In order to prevent anxiety and helplessness induced by not being able to get to know peers (Resnik & Dewaele, 2021), teachers could focus on rapport-building by using personalisation (Helgesen, 2020), caring and sharing activities (Moskowitz, 1978; Gabryś-Barker, 2016) or Positive Psychology interventions (Helgesen, 2021). Teachers could also encourage learners to switch on their cameras and show their homes, pets, etc., at least occasionally, and thus take advantage of online instruction opportunities, which would not be possible in the physical classroom. This should additionally help reduce sadness resulting from isolation. In addition, to prevent anxiety and shame, just as in the physical classroom, teachers should avoid over-correction, criticism and nominating learners to speak in front of others.

To avoid boredom resulting from screen time – outdoor learning could be implemented at schools as an alternative to ERT (Myhre & Dewaele, 2022). Boredom could further be offset by appealing authentic materials (Derakhshan et al., 2021), such as short films or music videos. Teachers could also use some of many existing websites or applications, e.g., word clouds, interactive polls, or quizzes. Negative emotions resulting from technology failures and household disruptions, such as frustration, anger, helplessness, anxiety and shame, cannot be prevented by the teacher but can be alleviated through their patience and understanding. In addition, learners' negative emotions stemming from Internet breakdowns could be mitigated by writing down instructions on the interactive whiteboard or in a chatbox in case they are missed.

Furthermore, instructors could enhance learners' positive emotions such as enjoyment, interest and serenity by organising speaking activities in break-out rooms. Other positive emotions can be induced by variables that are not only limited to online education. Interest can be generated by engaging lessons, materials and delivery as well as novelty elements and personalisation. Providing opportunities for accomplishment may induce pride. Enjoyment may be evoked by a positive atmosphere, instructors' friendliness, patience, helpfulness and praise. Teachers' sense of humour is conducive to amusement.

The present study has some limitations. The main one is the fact that the emotions were self-reported, which involves a possible lack of objectivity. Additionally, since the data come from an open question, certain experienced emotions might have been overlooked.

6. Conclusion

The present study contributes to online foreign language education research by qualitatively exploring a wide range of emotions. Awareness of both positive and negative emotions, as well as the factors responsible for them, is crucial for teachers to promote those that facilitate learning and to address those that hinder language acquisition (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Such awareness not only enhances online language acquisition but also supports a primary educational goal: the emotional well-being of learners (Pekrun, 2014).

Future research could further explore the understudied emotions identified in this study. Another important research avenue would be to investigate the characteristics that make certain types of learners more predisposed to online forms of education. For example, the relationship between introversion and preferences for online learning could be examined.

Funding statement: The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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