Exploring Different Emotions and Their Effects and Relations on English Performance on Online Classroom Environment During COVID-19

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Abstract. Previous research in the area of SLA has examined a few variables related to various linguistic emotions and the relationships between these emotions. This paper initially looked at the three scales that have been used to assess the Online version of the CFLES, FLCAS, and FLLBS. Using a sample of 226 undergraduates with non-English majors from two regular institutions in Shandong province, this article used a mixed methodology. The examination of the association between the emotions and performance in the first stage of the research supported the structures of the 8-item FLCAS, 11-item and 4-factor CFLES, and 8-item FLLBS. This fit was optimal between the descriptive statistics of four emotions and their English performance. In the second stage of the study, the qualitative analyses of interviews with 10 of the 226 participants on an open-ended question on the four emotions revealed a variety of different sources of sentiments and emotions from these L2 learners who took the online English courses. The results of this study, which are impacted by the ongoing effects of COVID-19, add to ongoing research on the dependabilities of the CFLES, FLLBS, and FLCAS in these specific circumstances. This report also presented ideas for future research on guilt associated with learning a second language in this situation, which has significant pedagogical ramifications for L2 practitioners.

Keywords: SLA · Emotions · Anxiety · Enjoyment · Boredom · Shame · Online Teaching

1 Introduction

Emotion has long been considered as irrelevant and illogical in the study of second language acquisition (SLA) [1]. However, motivated by emotion research in educational psychology and positive psychology, scholars in applied linguistics gradually turn their focus to emotion research in second language acquisition. In addition, the research object has expanded from single anxiety to a variety of positive and negative emotions from the initial single emotion. The relevant theoretical discussions and empirical studies are increasing day by day, which thus provides an important scale for this paper. However, the existing studies on L2 emotions mainly focus on the traditional classroom, with less attention to the online learning environment [2]. Furthermore, combined with the

characteristics of web-based technology, foreign language teaching is becoming more diversified, which is more likely to cause changes in students' sense of experience and their language learning performances. The efficiency of foreign language learning and teaching is directly tied to learning engagement, which is intimately related to learning emotions [3]. This is the first rationale for this research, the second one is the influence of COVID-19. This is not only different from the traditional classroom, but also the online teaching environment set up in the initial period of COVID-19 in 2020.

In the context of modern online foreign language learning, this study explores the levels of enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom that Chinese college students feel when learning a second language. It then explores the relationship between the four emotions and offers teachers and researchers more suggestions on the learning impact of online foreign language teaching during covid.

2 Literature Review

In the past decade, since the importance in studying language learning and the contribution to facilitating language learners, second language acquisition (SLA) researchers' attention to foreign language emotions has increased dramatically [4]. Emotional language learning has, however, received relatively little research [5, 6]. Emotions are challenging to define scientifically, just like many notions of psychology. For example, if we ask someone around us what kind of emotions were about a certain thing or occasion, mostly they could give us a certain answer, "yes" or "no", but they could not give a reasonable definition, or the definitions they provide would overlap [7]. Learning emotions are not simply described as having a positive or negative impact on the learning process, despite the fact that emotions may normally be categorized as either positive or negative. [5, 8]. Emotions have been demonstrated to have an impact on the process of learning a second language and linguistic success [9]. It can be argued that the interaction effect of emotions and other factors can be either beneficial or detrimental. According to the particular situation or object, students place different degrees of importance on their study, thus, some emotional information can be observed in the language learning classroom, like, feelings, physiological responses, and behaviors [10]. Researchers agree that, like in other educational contexts, children experience a spectrum of emotions while learning a language [11] [12]. Until a decade ago, linguistic scholars started to engage attention to the different learning emotions in the classroom [13].

2.1 Foreign Language Anxiety

Although it seems that there is a connection between anxiety in the classroom and proficiency in foreign languages, it is also clear that anxiety does not act alone. In the past, many studies searched for other factors that might be linked to linguistic anxiety. A lot of research have looked at the causes of linguistic anxiety [14, 15]. According to Young [17], there are a variety of variables that might affect a student's anxiety during the L2 learning process, including motivation, cultural influences, teaching methods, students' problem-solving abilities, experiences, attentiveness, self-concept, and views about L2 learning. Despite these attempts, it is still unclear how anxiety interacts with

other personal characteristics linked to L2 performance. In fact, the author is given a different perspective on this subject by the ongoing COVID-19 environment and the transformation of the online classroom.

2.2   Foreign Language Enjoyment

The idea of emotion has mostly been used in earlier studies on individual differences to describe attitudes connected to motivations [17]. Since the initial motivation-related studies acknowledged the negative effects of anxiety, anxiety in SLA has been the most prevalent affective variable in the field of SLA [18]. Due to the influence of positive psychology (PP) and the emotion researches in educational psychology, the research topic has expanded from the traditional interest in foreign language anxiety to a variety of positive and negative emotions, such as enjoyment, pride, hope, love, boredom, shame, guilt, anger, sadness, etc. [19–21]. The calling for a holistic view to explore the second language emotions broaden the topic range of emotion studies. Next to the language anxiety, the researches of language enjoyment and the comparison with anxiety attract the second most attention [19]. A series of empirical studies proved that language anxiety and language enjoyment have a significant predictive effect on the academic achievement [9]. MacIntyre and Gregergsen [13] pointed out that positive emotions can improve learners' ability of paying attention to new things and promote them to absorb more language input. The purpose of positive psychological interventions, or PPIs, is to support pleasant feelings. Randomized controlled trials have demonstrated that PPIs enhance wellbeing and decrease depressive symptoms.

2.3   Foreign Language Boredom

Boredom in language learning is considered to be an unpleasant emotion state caused by the low stimulation and low arousal [22], which is regarded as a negative and low activation academic emotions [4]. Teachers simply attribute student boredom to some factors, such as, laziness, depression or the personality etc. [3]. However, compared to other emotional states in SLA, this unpleasant emotion has gotten comparatively less attention [23]. The FLLBS offers a conceptualization and assessment in the potentially useful field of emotion research [24].

2.4   Foreign Language Shame

For many years, the definitions of emotion research were separated into two major categories: positive and negative emotions. As a result, a variety of unpleasant emotions, including anxiety, humiliation, sadness, embarrassment, and others, were grouped together under the heading of linguistic anxiety [18, 25]. The Oxford English Dictionary and Merriam-Webster define "shame" as the unpleasant or unpleasant sensations of sadness and guilt you have when you realize you have done something wrong and stupid or when you feel ashamed and absurd about someone else's remarks or conduct. The wide range of different concepts and meanings of this word as sadness, humiliation,

depression, embarrassment, and anxiety reflects "shame" is and quite negatively, multi-faceted and pathogenic factors. It is noteworthy that often, the American Psychological Association (APA) proposes no definition of a shame [26].

Even while some studies have looked at the damaging impacts of shame, studies that have looked at how shame affects SLA are still uncommon. Therefore, the emotion researches need new theoretical perspectives, this research aims to introduce shame and emotion into the area of SLA, test and record the data on their effects on students' feelings and learning achievement in the environment of COVID-19.

3 Research Questions

As reviewed, in the past 35 years, anxiety and enjoyment have been the core research topics in the field of SLA, also the relevant studies are quite mature [27] [28]. Various kinds of scales for these emotions, for example, FLCAS and FLES have been verified by many researchers [29–32], which provide useful instruments for the present study. A number of recent studies have also focused on the boredom in the FL environment and investigated its items of potential negative influence, bringing scales for boredom measurement as well. Additionally, since the item originally assembled under the category of anxiety, boredom, and shame attract more attention these days [12]. Because of resource constraints and the lack of a measure scale for language learning shame, the author decided not to further test and develop the scale's items for this paper.

The current study set out to investigate how these four emotions relate to one another and how they relate to students' academic achievement. The following inquiries were developed to accomplish this goal:

1. To what extent are Chinese university students' English anxiety, enjoyment, boredom and shame in the current online learning environment?

2. What is the relationship between these four emotions?

3. How do these emotions effect their English learning performances?

4 The Study

4.1 Participants

4.1.1 Students Participant in the Open Questionnaire

According to the 226 valid surveys, every participant in this study was enrolled in the "College English" course, and they all used the same textbooks and the same evaluation criteria for their semesterlong performance from February to June 2022. The course's main objective was to improve students' overall English proficiency, including their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. The 226 non-English major students in the current study have an average age of 20.3 and have studied English for an average of 14 years between them. They are all from two universities in Shandong province. Additionally, because of the COVID-19 pandemic's countrywide lockdown, all of their lessons were converted to open online courses using an instant messaging interface (Table 1).

Table 1. The Participants Who Complete Questionnaires

Total	Female	Male	Average age	Average years of English study
226	78	127	20.3	14.2

4.1.2 Students Participant in the Interview

The five students invited to participant in the interview are studying in two universities in Shandong province in China and got different academic performances in their final examinations. The students—4 boys and 6 girls—with an average age of 20.6 and ages ranging from 18 to 22—were all questioned about their emotional experiences during this semester's online language sessions. The following are the suggested questions for this semi-structured interview:

1. Have you ever experienced any emotions in online English learning environment this semester? What, when and why?
2. Compared with the traditional classroom, how does this web-based teaching model affect your foreign language learning? What's the difference?
3. Could you give any other examples?

4.2 Instruments

Along with the scales developed and validated by scholars, such as the FLCAS [18, 19], CFLES [32], and FLLBS [24], the author also seeks to create and validate a new measure or instrument.

4.2.1 The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

A common concept in applied linguistics research, FLCA is typically assessed using the 33-item FLCAS, which has five alternative answers ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." According to Horwitz's theory, the three fears of communication apprehension, fear of unfavorable assessment, and test anxiety are reflected in the questionnaire's items [18]. These three anxieties are seen as theoretically fundamental aspects of FLA. In order to create a condensed version as part one of this essay, the author applied the eight questions chosen by Dewaele and MacIntyre [19]. The scale items in this study only have "Online English Classroom" as their context.

4.2.2 Chinese Version of Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (CFLES)

Regarding the methodological framework for evaluating FLE, one of well-known measurement, FLES was developed by Dewaele and MacIntyre [19]. The FLES is a questionnaire with 21 items that are rated on a Likert scale. Li [32] developed the 11-item CFLES from the traditional FLES according to the Chinese L2 learners. In this study, the context of the scale items is also limited to "Online English Classroom".

Table 2. The Five Focal Interviewees' Characteristics

Focal Participants Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Years Of English Study	English score of final exam in the first semester of 2022	Emotion-related Episodes
A	22	F	16	80	a female learner who struggles and exhibits a lack of confidence and an overall sense of worthlessness. a stressful past marked by numerous anxious episodes.
B	22	M	15	72	No worry or enjoyment-inducing episode in either language. reports a stronger sense of ennui.
C	19	F	12	89	powerful L2 self. She had just one severe embarrassing moment in an online class, which she overcome by visualizing her successful previous and future selves.
D	22	F	15	86	At school, I used to experience anxiety and humiliation. Strong picture of her in the future, using English to succeed abroad. An exceptional learning trajectory for English with very active self-control. Strongest possible future for him.
E	18	M	12	73	His story has numerous episodes of guilt and fear.
F	20	F	14	74	Strong anxiety for his future study aborad.
G	21	M	15	85	Teacher's feedback always encourage him. Stong self-confidence ESL learner.
H	18	M	12	78	Teacher's feedback always make him nervous which have a strong influence on his plan of further study.

(continued)

Table 2. (*continued*)

Focal Participants Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Years Of English Study	English score of final exam in the first semester of 2022	Emotion-related Episodes
I	18	F	12	70	No specific emotions in ESL class or feel it boring.
J	19	F	13	83	The devices and network can make her anxious and shame. Reports more achievement and enjoyment in L2 class.

4.2.3   Foreign Language Learning Boredom Subscale (FLLBS)

The FLLBS provides a conceptualization and measurement in the potential area of emotion research. [24]. FLCBS is the Subscale of FLLBS. This scale consists of 32 items assembled under 8 factors and is a 5-level Likert scale as well. In this study, the author picked the 1, 3, 5, 6, 9,12, 15, 18, 22, 25, 30, and 32 to measure the tendency of boredom or repeated boring experiences in an English online learning environment during the COVID-19.

4.2.4   Foreign Language Learning Shame Scale (FLLSS)

Due to the lack of a confirmed scale for this emotion, the present study sought to fill this gap through the reflection on the role of shame in second language learning and use it to further understand the psychology of language learners. It was hypothesized that such emotions may interfere with L2 learning, and affect students' cognitive processes and academic achievement in online classroom. In the stage of quantitative research, the writer set up 8-item scale for further study. "I can realize that I am afraid of being humiliating in the online FL class."; "Compared with the face-to-face communication, online talking brings me more feelings of embarrassment."; "There's a lot of pressure to make mistakes in front of your classmates and teachers. For example, you have such a strong Chinese accent. It's really embarrassing."; "When you feel shame, you think about him all the time, and you're afraid it might happen again."; "In class, I'm alert for any signs of discomfort to make sure it doesn't cause additional humiliation."; "When I feel ashamed, my face burns and my heart races."; "When I feel ashamed, I have nightmares at night and even more serious psychosomatic disorders, such as not being able to breathe, stomach pain, heart problems, etc.".

4.3   Procedure

Because they were thorough and produced particularly intriguing insights into the subject of language emotions in online English classes, I decided to focus on the data from

5 of the 10 interviews in this post and talk about the connections with English performances. But additional information from the other participants also produced useful data. The undergraduate participants in the questionnaires were invited by the author. Prior to beginning the interview or questionnaire, the researchers notify participants of the survey's basic goals and rights to privacy protection and withdrawal before beginning the interview or questionnaire. 226 valid questionnaires were submitted for the quantitative study, and 5 participants were invited to an audio interview.

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

This paper use SPSS 26.0 and Amos 24.0 to test the reliability and structural validity of the four measurement tools. Corresponding to the four research questions, this study conducted descriptive statistics (including normal distribution test), reliability test, and Pearson correlation test for the obtained data with the help of SPSS 26.0.

In this study, The Cronbach's Alphas for the CFLES and its subscales were 0.844, 0.862, 0.874, 0.673, the Cronbach's Alphas for the FLCAS, FLLBS and language shame questions is 0.751, 0.749 and 0.751, which both indicating high reliability and ideal validity.

5   Results

It can be seen that the mean standard deviation distribution of all variables of foreign language emotion is shown in Table 3 and the absolute value of skewness and kurtosis of all variables is less than 1, proving that the four foreign language emotion variables follow normal distribution (Table 4).

The English score is the final exam score of the students in this semester, where the minimum value is 65 and the maximum value is 89. The absolute values of kurtosis and

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variate	Min	Max	Single Average	Average	Standard Deviation	Deviation	Experiment
FL Anxiety	8	38	2.626	21.004	5.051	0.000	0.123
FL Enjoyment	17	52	3.354	36.889	6.811	-0.260	0.289
FL Boredom	8	38	2.643	21.146	5.709	0.316	-0.215
FL Shame	8	36	2.598	20.783	5.873	0.160	-0.377

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of English Scores

	Min	Max	Average	Standard Deviation	Deviation	Experiment
English performance	65	89	78.25	4.84	-0.198	-0.057

Table 5. Correlation Analysis

Variate	FLA	FLE	FLB	FLS	Performance in English
FL Anxiety	1				-.160*
FL Enjoyment	0.035	1			.347***
FL Boredom	.198**	0.096	1		-.170*
FL Shame	0.05	0.02	.134*	1	0.078

Note: *** was significantly correlated at 0.01 level ** was significantly correlated at 0.01 level, * was significantly correlated at 0.05 level.

Table 6. Interview Code Records

Keywords	Times	Key words	Times
Mother tongue	1	At ease	10
Enjoyment	16	No emotion	3
Anxiety	19	Boring	15
Nervous	11	Complex	7
Embarrassment	2	Achievement	9
Happy	7	Frustration	1
Interesting	6	Confidence	2
Homework	10	Feedback	10
Fear of failure	3	Device	2
Network	1	Communication	13
Encouragement	2	Teacher boredom	9
CET-4	1	CET-6	2
IELTS	4		

skewness are both less than 1, proving that the English score variables obey the normal distribution (Table 5).

The above correlation analysis shows that foreign language anxiety is significantly negatively linked with English performance ($r = -0.160, p < 0.05$), and foreign language pleasure is significantly positively correlated with English performance ($r = -0.347, p < 0.001$). There was a significant negative association between foreign language boredom and English scores ($r = -0.170, p < 0.05$), while there was no significant correlation between foreign language shame and English scores ($r = 0.078, p > 0.05$) (Table 6).

This result supports the view of MacIntyre and Gregersen that positive and negative emotions may alternate or parallel in language learning [13]. But its coexistence mode needs to be further explored. On the whole, the situation students feel anxiety more than enjoyment in the online teaching mode, which shows a totally different result in 2020 [9]. It is shown that 4 of 10 interviewees express their positive emotions in the

web-based English classroom, which provides them more confidence to communicate. However, 8 of the 10 interviews reflect the situation of boredom and attribute this kind of boring feedback to the unchangeable teaching model, and the continuous activity limitation. Furthermore, the continuous inefficiency of language learning patterns and the lack of practical experiences bring them more anxiety about their plans for overseas study. In addition to this, one participant mentioned the feeling of embarrassment related to language learning shame.

6   Discussion

According to the quantitative research, the standard deviation, maximum and minimum values of the four emotional levels also reflect that the subjects have significant individual differences in emotional experience. In other words, the emotional responses of foreign language learners under the online course model vary from person to person.

The participants' overall foreign language pleasure level, foreign language anxiety level and FL boredom level are above average. Although there was no significant correlation between foreign language shame and English scores, the level of language shame is close to the three emotions above. Their negative emotion level is higher than the positive emotion level in general.

As shown in Table 2, this study discovered a negative link between foreign language pleasure and anxiety, which supported the previous research by Dewaele and MacIntyre [19] and Li et al. [9]. On the one hand, this study found a positive correlation between boredom, shame and anxiety, which supported the qualitative results of Li et al. [24]. On the other hand, this study demonstrates that boredom has a strong negative association with enjoyment. In other words, the more pleasurable emotions learners get from online foreign language courses, the less anxiety and boredom learners suffer.

In the interview, participants recalled situations of different emotions and their final performances either in online FL classes or after classes (homework). The learners with rich experience of positive emotions are more confident in academic achievement. C (F, 19) and D (F, 22) mentioned that the online classes save a lot of time on unnecessary commuting and makeup, thus they can own more spare time to do more meaningful things, like preparing for the IELTS and TOFEL examination for further study (F, F, 20). In addition to this, overlooking their appearance in front of the camera, they feel more at ease and confident to answer questions. The benign circle creates more efficiency and makes great progress in their final performances (H, M, 18). With higher self-confidence in academic performance are more likely to experience the pleasure of foreign language learning and less likely to feel anxious bored or shame. One aspect mentioned once is that the devices and network can affect the experiment of enjoyment and feel a little bit anxious and embarrassed. It is worth mentioning that language boredom, anxiety and teachers' feedback interrelate and influence each other (G, M, 21; H, M, 18).

However, on the contrary, learners who frequently suffer from negative emotions, like anxiety, boredom and shame, tend to negatively get ideal performance in the final examination. B (M, 22) expressed that, due to the increase in homework, he felt extremely boring in his language subjects. E (M, 22) mentioned that the embarrassment accompanied by low-quality devices and network makes him unwilling to express and focus on the class, which bring him a strong sense of anxiety and fear of failure.

7   Conclusion

The present study investigated the different emotions and their relations to English performance in an online classroom environment during covid-19 in 2022. In this study, the author mainly discussed four language emotions, which are FL anxiety, enjoyment, boredom and shame. The following conclusions resulted from the study: 1) The cause of online and traditional classroom differences in foreign language learners' emotional levels remains to be explored; 2) The teaching practice of online courses which easy induce anxiety, boredom or shame will affect the happiness of teachers and students and is not conducive to creating an open, friendly and active classroom atmosphere; 3) The negative correlations between enjoyment and boredom, shame, anxiety reflect the fact that the more pleasurable emotions learners get from online foreign language courses, the less nervous and embarrassment learners suffer. Compared with the very beginning of COVID-19, the continuous and inconvenient teaching mode brings more negative influence than the freshness conveyed by the web-based technology.

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