

Exploring the Hierarchy of Foreign Language Enjoyment and Boredom in English Language Learners

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Abstract

The growing body of research on foreign language emotion (FLEM) suggests a need for further studies on the sources and hierarchy of FLEM, particularly through the lens of positive psychology. This insight would enable instructors to prioritize their interventions more effectively, thereby enhancing the emotional experiences of foreign language (FL) learners in the classroom. To this end, the current study used a mixed-method research design to investigate the sources of enjoyment (FLE) and boredom (FLB) among 248 Bhutanese foreign language learners, as well as the hierarchies of reported FLEM. The data was gathered using a survey questionnaire and open-ended questions. The descriptive and thematic analyses of quantitative and qualitative data, respectively, revealed numerous sources of FLE and FLB. These emotions particularly stemmed from factors related to teachers, course content, personal issues, tasks, homework, the classroom environment, and peers. The hierarchical analysis of the sources of FLEM suggests that teacher-related factors have a significant impact on FLE, whereas peer-related factors have the least influence among FL learners. Likewise, FL learners' boredom level is likely to be highly influenced by content and task-related factors, but only marginally by peer-related and learners' learning traits. The study concludes with recommendations and practical implications for curriculum developers, teachers, and students.

Keywords: Foreign language emotion, hierarchy of foreign language emotion, foreign language enjoyment, foreign language boredom, Bhutanese learners

Emotions play a crucial role in the field of foreign language (FL) teaching and learning. FL learners, regardless of their age, individual, social, cultural, and linguistic differences, experience both positive (enjoyment, joy, and happiness) and negative (boredom, anger, and anxiety) emotions during the process of learning (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Wangdi & Zimik, 2024). Positive emotions help learners improve their cognitive abilities, memory power, and academic outcomes (Pekrun, 2006). They also aid learners in increasing their motivation

to learn and elevate learning engagement. For this reason, positive emotions are often regarded as the key contributor to enhanced learning outcomes, emotional state, and well-being of learners (Shao et al., 2020). Conversely, negative emotions are not only thought to impede learners' cognitive abilities, learning outcomes, and overall learning experiences (Shimray & Wangdi, 2023) but also to increase their stress levels. In this regard, research emphasizes the need to understand both positive and negative FL emotions (FLEM, hereafter) as an essential aspect of FL teaching and learning (Botes et al., 2022; Dewaele, 2022).

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), emotions such as foreign language enjoyment (FLE, hereafter) (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Li et al., 2018) and foreign language boredom (FLB, hereafter) (Li et al., 2023; Shimray & Wangdi, 2023) have gained a traction among FL researchers. FLE, as defined by Botes et al. (2022) is a positive emotion felt by FL learners in the process of learning. Likewise, FLB is often understood as a negative academic emotion that arises when learners find FL activities to be too challenging, uninteresting, irrelevant, or tedious (Li et al., 2023). These two emotions have received enormous interest from SLA researchers because they play major roles in shaping learners' learning experiences, academic achievement, and well-being at large (Shao et al., 2020). Researchers have investigated numerous aspects linked with these two emotions across diverse linguistic and educational settings, such as those contributing to FLE (Dewaele & Li, 2021; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Li et al., 2018) and FLB (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Nakamura et al., 2021; Li, 2021; Shimray & Wangdi, 2023).

The literature demonstrates that FLE and FLB have become topics of interest, especially since the introduction of positive psychology (PP) (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014; Wangdi & Zimik, 2024), a growing body of research on FLEM indicates that more research is required from different educational settings to thoroughly understand what triggers FLE and FLB among FL learners (Dewaele et al., 2023). More importantly, the literature lacks a clear distinction in the hierarchy of sources that cause FL learners to experience FLE and FLB in classrooms. Understanding the hierarchy of sources of FLE and FLB is essential for second/foreign language educators, as it will help them strategically prioritize their interventions to improve learners' emotions in the classroom (see Dewaele et al., 2023). In response to this significance, guided by the PP theory, which emphasizes flourishing positive emotions among individuals by mitigating negative emotions (Dewaele, 2022), this study explores sources contributing to FLE and FLB and their corresponding hierarchy, using Bhutanese English learners as a study case. Bhutan was found suitable for this study because it is one of the least explored contexts (Wangdi & Dhendup, 2024), and there was a scarcity of studies on FLE and FLB in Bhutan. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to 'kill two birds with one stone'. First, to fill the literature gap, and then help Bhutanese educators gain insight into learners' FLEM. To this end, the current study seeks to answer the following research question.

Research Question

- 1) How do Bhutanese English as a second language learners rank their sources of FLE and FLB emotions?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Guided by positive psychology theoretical framework, an emerging theoretical framework in the field of SLA, the present study explores sources of FLE and FLB among Bhutanese higher secondary FL (English) learners. PP, believed to be introduced by MacIntyre and Mercer (2014) to SLA revolves around three primary areas: the comprehension of positive emotional experiences, the examination of an individual's positive qualities such as well-being, and

studying institutions that contribute to an individual's growth. In other words, PP emphasizes improving an individual's well-being through strengthening positive emotions and weakening negative emotions (Dewaele, 2022). PP has historically been based on the broaden-and-build theory proposed by Fredrickson (2004) and Pekrun's (2006) control-value theory of achievement emotions. While the former theory suggests that positive emotions broaden individual thoughts and actions, the latter contends that academic emotions influence learners' learning experiences and academic achievements. PP is unique in that it focuses on both positive and negative emotions in individuals. Unlike previous theoretical frameworks, PP does not neglect the existence of negative emotions (Dewaele, 2022). For this study, PP emerged as the most appropriate theoretical framework because it focuses on exploring both positive FLE and negative FLB emotional aspects experienced by individual Bhutanese learners in English classrooms. By understanding both positive and negative aspects of learners' emotions, the findings of this study are expected to offer valuable information to teachers on how to enhance FL learning experiences, increase learning engagement, manage learners' emotions in classrooms, improve learning outcomes and most importantly the well-being of learners, all of which are key components of the theory of positive psychology (see MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014).

Factors Contributing to Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE)

In light of PP, and to help learners enhance their learning experiences by improving their enjoyment in language classrooms, previous studies have extensively explored factors contributing to FLE. The investigation revealed that most of the contributing factors of FLE were associated with the teacher, the content of the course, personal-related, classroom tasks, and classmates (Dewaele & Li, 2021; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Li et al., 2018; Wangdi & Zimik, 2024). For instance, in terms of teachers as a factor contributing to FL learners' enjoyment level, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) asserted that the degree of FLE experience by FL learners depends on how teachers design classroom activities and teacher personality traits. Furthermore, teachers' positive attributes such as joyfulness, positivity, enthusiasm, empathy, support, humour, and respect for learners were identified as sources of learners' FLE (Dewaele et al., 2019). Teachers' motivational techniques and their promotion of learner's autonomy were also found to contribute to learners' enjoyment (Botes et al., 2022; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

In another study, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) found that increasing interactions between teachers and students, as well as between students and their peers, can also improve FLE among learners. Moreover, studies suggest that peer support, friendship, and the quality of interactions significantly impact learners' overall enjoyment and motivation in the FL learning process (Zhao, 2023). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) further divulged that learners enjoy learning FL if it brings laughter in the classroom and when learners share common interests with their peers, and develop a sense of pride and accomplishment. In addition, the classroom atmosphere (positive engagement and a conducive environment) was noted as a crucial factor in improving the FLE of FL learners (Li et al., 2018). Besides, research has found various content-related variables that influence learners' FLE, such as material relevance and the appropriateness of topics (Shen, 2021). Moreover, the perceived germane and engagement level of tasks assigned by teachers in the classroom were considered pivotal factors influencing FLE (Dewaele et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, a survey study conducted by Li et al. (2018) in China identified teacher-related factors as the most significant contributing factors of FLE, followed by private-related and atmosphere-related. Likewise, a mixed-method study conducted by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2019) with a diverse group of foreign language (FL) learners from multiple countries, studying

English, French, Spanish, German, and Japanese revealed that the majority of FL learners reported experiencing FLE due to their teacher, followed by self-related factors, the teacher and peers. Next, Dewaele et al. (2019), who conducted a quantitative relationship study also found that teachers' personality traits, such as their friendliness, were the strongest positive predictors of FLE among Spanish FL learners. Again, examining the uniqueness of FLE and anxiety among Chinese FL learners, Jiang and Dewaele's (2019) mixed-method study discovered that teachers were the most significant predictors of FLE, followed by learners' language abilities and peers. However, their qualitative findings revealed a slightly different pattern, with peer-related factors coming in second, followed by personal-related factors. This finding differed slightly from the findings highlighted by Li et al. (2018) and Dewaele and MacIntyre (2019) in terms of the order of ranking between self/personal-related, peer-related, and atmosphere-related.

Another mixed-method study conducted by Yeşilçınar and Erdemir (2023) in Turkey that investigated the source of enjoyment among Turkish FL learners found that teachers play a significant role in FLE for Turkish FL learners. Teachers' teaching methodology was identified as the second most significant contributor to FLE, followed by personal and peer-related factors. According to their findings, institutions, such as their locations and social activities within the institution, have the least impact on FLE. The findings of Wang and Jiang's (2022) mixed-method study in the Chinese context concluded that teacher-related factors as the most significant predictor of FLE among others. Their study also discovered that Chinese language learners enjoy learning foreign language particularly because of the teacher, followed by the learners' private and atmosphere-related factors.

Factors Contributing to Foreign Language Classroom Boredom (FLB)

It should be noted that PP does not deny the existence of negative emotions, but rather seeks to understand their role in the well-being of individuals (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014). For this reason, the current study also investigated sources of FLB and their potential hierarchy. A cursory review of the literature revealed that FLB has received scant attention from SLA researchers during the initial phase of investigations on FLEM (Shimray & Wangdi, 2023). Nonetheless, some recent studies that delved into the investigation of factors that contribute to learners' FLB in both onsite and online classroom settings (Li, 2021; Shimray & Wangdi, 2023) found that learners' boredom is frequently caused by the factors related to course content, classroom tasks, teachers, students themselves, and peers. Regarding course content and classroom tasks, the selection and delivery of course material appear to influence learners' FLB, with elements such as difficulty levels, poorly prepared lessons, and reliance on repetitive textbook activities (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Nakamura et al., 2021; Shimray & Wangdi, 2023). Task-related factors that influence learners' boredom include the usefulness, difficulty, relevance, and novelty of assigned tasks (Li, 2021). Li (2021) discovered that boredom arises when learners perceive tasks as difficult or too easy, and when they find activities uninteresting, meaningless, irrelevant, or futile for academic success.

Teacher-related factors include aspects such as monotony, lack of feedback, enthusiasm for teaching, and undesirable teaching styles (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Dewaele & Li., 2021; Shimray & Wangdi, 2023). Further, according to Dewaele and Li (2021), the teachers' eagerness to teach has an impact on the emotional experiences of FL learners. They found that teachers' enthusiasm for teaching was positively associated with learners' enjoyment and negatively related to learners' boredom levels. Teachers' unprofessional conduct in the classroom, including unplanned practices and the inability to maintain interaction with learners, has been identified yet other factors contributing to learners' boredom (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Shimray & Wangdi, 2023; Zawodniak et al., 2021). Moreover, lengthy lectures, inadequate

explanations of activities, and a lack of variety in teaching materials are believed to contribute to learners' boredom (Shimray & Wangdi, 2023; Zawodniak et al., 2021). Personal-related factors that contribute to learners' boredom encompass individual interests, needs, autonomy in learning, and physical condition (Zawodniak et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, Derakhshan et al. (2021) qualitatively identified similar sources of boredom in online class settings. The study however identified four potential sources/factors of boredom that are likely to influence Iranian FL learners: teacher-related factors, followed by IT/computer-related factors, task-related factors, and student-related ones. In a qualitative study, investigating antecedents of Thai EFL learners, Nakamura et al. (2021) pointed out several sources of FLB. It included (in descending orders of the significance of contributing to boredom) unfavourable appraisal of the task, lack of comprehension, insufficient L2, physical fatigue, negative behaviours of classmates, task difficulty, activity mismatch, lack of ideas, and input overload. In the same context, Shimray and Wangdi (2023) explored the roots of boredom in online learning settings using qualitative research design. Their findings differed slightly from those of Nakamura et al. (2021) in terms of both sources and order of ranking. In this study, monotonous teaching was ranked the most significant contributor to boredom, followed by difficult content and tasks, a lack of interaction, screen fatigue, mode of learning, the teacher's personality trait, input overload, technical issues, and class timing. Meantime, the factors contributing to boredom among Polish university English majors were ranked as indicated. The language tasks were rated highest by participants, followed by the teacher. It was followed by modes of class organization, class components, and others (Zawodniak et al., 2021).

Methods

Research Design and Participants

The current study used a mixed-method research design to better understand how Bhutanese foreign language learners rank their sources of FLE and FLB by combining quantitative and qualitative data (Dawadi et al., 2021). This study particularly used a convergent parallel mixed-method approach, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and then analyzed separately. The convergent parallel mixed-method was considered over other mixed-method designs in this study because it is regarded as one of the robust methodologies that help researchers and readers have clear pictures of problems being explored (Dawadi et al., 2021). Because the purpose of this study was to provide educators with a clearer picture of the sources of FLE and FLB, and their hierarchy, the methodology described above was deemed most appropriate. To achieve this, a total of 248 participants, comprising 112 males, 134 females, and 2 others who opted not to disclose their gender were recruited using a convenience sampling method from Wangbama Central School in Thimphu, Bhutan. The participants' ages ranged from 14 to 26 and all of them were Bhutanese natives. These participants were students from classes (standards) 10, 11, and 12. The participants represented diverse academic streams, including science, commerce, and arts for classes 11 and 12. Participants from class 10 studied general and inclusive subjects. The participants not only studied English as a compulsory subject but other subjects were also taught in English medium. All participants had at least a decade of exposure to the English language. Before data collection, informed consent was obtained from the school principal, parents, and students themselves. While teachers' and parents' consent were documented through emails, students provided their consent on the survey. Students were asked to check a box that states 'I am willingly and voluntarily participating in this study' if they wish to participate. They were also instructed not to respond to the survey if they did not wish to participate both verbally and through (written) Google Form. To maintain the participants' anonymity, information such as

their names and ID numbers were not collected. The data were gathered during the academic year 2023-2024.

Research Instruments

In line with Ross and Rivers' (2018) suggestion that self-reported instruments are the most appropriate for investigating individual emotions, this study also used self-reported instruments to collect data, such as a survey questionnaire and open-ended questions. The first section of the survey incorporated a concise introduction to the current study, consent options for participants, demographic details (such as gender, age, and others), and 38 modified 5-point Likert scale items, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The survey questionnaire investigated the emotional aspects of Bhutanese FL learners, such as their FLE and FLB. To this end, researchers adapted the Shortened Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (S-FLES), which was developed and validated by Botes et al. (2021). The S-FLES comprises 9 items, specifically designed to assess three key dimensions of FLE: enjoyment related to the teacher, personal, and social (see Appendix A). Each of these dimensions was represented by a set of three items in the survey. Another 29 items, adapted from Li et al. (2023), focused on examining participants' FLB. The instrument was however slightly modified for this study and it was reduced to five factors from seven in the original instrument (see Appendix B). In this study, we combined 'under-challenging' and 'over-challenging' task boredom into a single category called 'task-related boredom because both gauge task-related boredom. Additionally, 'PowerPoint presentation boredom' was excluded since not all classrooms in the selected school had projectors. The final five factors of boredom included foreign language class boredom (8 items), task-related boredom (8 items), homework boredom (4 items), teacher-dislike boredom (4 items), and general learning trait boredom (5 items). This modified survey questionnaire was then validated by two Bhutanese scholars to ensure its suitability for the Bhutanese context. Subsequently, the FLE and FLB measurement instruments were tested for reliability using data from 20 randomly selected students from the same school. The Cronbach's alpha values were found to be $\alpha = .85$ for FLE and $\alpha = .89$ for FLB, indicating that the instruments used in this study were reliable.

The second section of the survey explored perceived sources of FLE and FLB from 248 participants, who willingly responded to the two open-ended questions. The two questions were: 1) What contributes to your enjoyment during English language classes? Explain your feelings in detail. 2) What contributes to your boredom during English language classes? Describe your feelings in detail. Before these two open-ended questions were used for this study, the questions were evaluated by an expert who has been actively involved in qualitative research and publication. Furthermore, a pilot test was conducted with two random participants to ensure their accuracy. Both the survey questionnaire and the open-ended questions were written in English, and participants had the option of responding (open-ended questions) in Dzongkha or English.

Data Collection

The first author, who was also a teacher at the selected school, shared the Google Forms link with the students through Gmail, in the classroom, WeChat, and other means of communication. In so doing, although the link to the survey was shared with more than 263 students of classes 10,11, and 12 in the selected school, 248 of them provided consent to participate and responded. Based on their Gmail ID, these 248 participants were treated as unique responses. The data for repeated Gmail IDs was removed. Students were given a week to complete the survey after sharing the survey with them and the entire data collection took the researchers close to one month. During this stage, participants were informed that their responses would be published. However, they were assured that their identity would not be

revealed anywhere in the paper. Furthermore, they were informed that the data collection is solely for research purposes and will not have an impact on their academic grades. Also, they were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time by not responding to the survey.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analyses such as mean and standard deviation were calculated for FLE and FLB. In doing so, the average mean scores of FLE among participants was ($M = 4.16$, $SD = .70$) slightly higher than FLB ($M = 2.81$, $SD = .94$). Subsequently, to corroborate the quantitative data, a thematic analysis was performed for the qualitative data. Thematic analysis was done following the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The steps included familiarising data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing the theme, defining and naming the theme, and the final report. Data familiarisation was done by reading and reviewing responses to the open-ended questions several times. All responses were in English, and no one responded in Dzongkha. This was followed by the initial coding, where researchers independently collated and categorized emotions reported by participants based on their similarities in patterns. If participants had mentioned that “teacher makes my English class enjoyable/boring,” the “teacher” was treated as a single unit of code or as a factor that contributes to FL enjoyment/boredom, and all those who have reported the teacher as a source of their FLEM were clustered together under teacher-related factors. Next, under the main theme of teacher-related factors, sub-themes related to teachers such as their teaching method, teachers’ personality traits, etc. were also recorded. It is however important to note that each emotion that participants had mentioned was considered as a whole unit of code or factor that contributes to FLEM. For example, if participants had written that “teacher and my friend make my English enjoyable/boring,” both “teacher” and “friend” were treated as a single but separate unit of code (cf. Shimray & Wangdi, 2023). The researchers agreed to carry out the entire initial coding process independently so that we could later compare and determine the reliability of the generated codes. It is noted that a minimum of two coders are required to establish inter-coder reliability (O’Connor & Joffe, 2020). The inter-rater agreement was further confirmed by calculating the value of Cohen’s Kappa (Warrens, 2015). Cohen's Kappa values for FLE and FLB were 0.88 and 0.8, respectively, indicating that the codes are reliable. Once initial coding was done, the researchers worked on naming and reviewing themes by reading the generated codes and open-ended transcriptions repeatedly. After defining and naming themes, to ensure the trustworthiness, credibility, and confirmability of the findings before reporting them, the themes and the original data were audit trailed (Carcary, 2009) by a colleague, an established scholar. Next, member checking (Candela, 2019) was carried out by requesting 20 random participants to review the data for its accuracy. None of the participants raised any issues. After that, the final report was prepared. Throughout the study, the researchers took both an insider and an outsider perspective (Bourke, 2014).

Results

Quantitative Findings

The first finding of the quantitative data (See Table 1) revealed that participants in this study regard teacher-related factors ($M=4.51$, $SD = 0.61$) as the most significant contributor to their FLE. Personal-related factors had the second highest average mean value ($M=4.13$, $SD = 0.68$), followed by social-related factors ($M = 3.83$, $SD=0.79$). The findings showed that teachers play an important role in shaping students' FLE in foreign language classrooms. Social-related factors, such as social engagement in the classroom, appear to contribute less to learners' FLE than the other two factors examined in this study.

Table 1. Factors of FLE (n=248)

| Factors | Mean | SD | Rank |
|------------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1. Teacher-related | 4.51 | 0.61 | 1 |
| 2. Personal-related | 4.13 | 0.68 | 2 |
| 3. Social/peer-related | 3.83 | 0.79 | 3 |

Table 2 shows that current participants experience low levels of boredom in general. The detailed analysis revealed that task-related factors were the most significant contributors to boredom among current participants. The average mean value for task-related factors was 2.95, SD = 0.89. The next most significant reported factor was teacher-related boredom (M = 2.92, SD = 1.04). It appears that learners feel bored learning with teachers who possess negative personality traits. Homework was next (M=2.91, SD = 0.82). Foreign language classroom (M = 2.78, SD = 1.01) was identified as the second lowest contributor to boredom among current participants, indicating a lack of concentration while learning English as well as a lack of interest in learning the language, followed by general learning traits of learners (M = 2.40, SD = 0.97).

Table 2. Factors of FLB (n=248)

| Factors | Mean | SD | Rank |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1. Task-related boredom | 2.95 | 0.89 | 1 |
| 2. Teacher-related boredom | 2.92 | 1.04 | 2 |
| 3. Homework-related boredom | 2.91 | 0.82 | 3 |
| 4. Foreign language class boredom | 2.78 | 1.01 | 4 |
| 5. General learning trait boredom | 2.40 | 0.97 | 5 |

Qualitative Findings

To complement quantitative findings, qualitative data (responses to open-ended questions) was thematically analyzed. The analysis of sources and rank order of FLE and FLB are presented below in tables (see Tables 3 and 4) with frequency counts (the number of participants who reported the same emotions in descending order), sub-factors, and a few examples of representative codes. Concerning factors contributing to participants' FLE, five main themes/factors emerged (see Table 3). Among the five major themes, the teacher-related factor was ranked highest, with 121 participants identifying teachers as the source of their FLE. Participants reported having fun in the English classroom when their teachers used teaching methods that were appealing to students and exhibited positive personality traits (e.g., encouraging, motivating, funny, humorous, and supportive). With 101 references, content-related factors ranked second in the order of FLE sources. Participants pointed out that they enjoyed English classrooms when the contents were new, interesting, and easy to understand. Personal and task-related factors followed, with 36 and 33 participants reporting them, respectively. Personal-related factors involve individuals' interest in learning the language since English is an international language. As for task-related factors, participants mentioned enjoying in English classroom when they had group discussions, drama, games, and group work. Peer-related factors were mentioned by only 18 participants, placing them last in the list of FLE sources. Participants enjoyed when their peers were humorous and when they shared common interests with friends.

Table 3. Sources of FLE

| | Rank | Main themes/factors (frequency counts) | Sub-themes/factors | Representative codes (examples) |
|------------|-------------|---|---|---|
| FLE | 1 | Teacher-related (121) | teaching methods and personality traits | The <u>way the teacher teaches</u> makes learning enjoyable. I enjoy learning when my <u>teacher is encouraging</u> . |
| | 2 | Content-related (101) | new and interesting content, and easy to understand | I enjoy it when I learn <u>new English vocabulary</u> . I enjoy learning when the <u>content is easy to understand</u> . |
| | 3 | Personal-related (36) | interest in learning the language | I enjoy learning because it is <u>my favourite subject</u> |
| | 4 | Task-related (33) | group discussion, drama, games, and group work | I enjoy learning when we have <u>group discussions</u> . I enjoy learning <u>when we play games</u> . |
| | 5 | Peer-related (18) | humorous and share a common interest | My <u>humorous friends</u> make my English class enjoyable. I enjoy learning because of my <u>best friends</u> . |

The thematic analysis of factors contributing to participants' FLB is presented in Table 4. Four themes and several sub-themes emerged. The participants in this study ranked content and task-related factors as the highest contributors to their boredom with 91 references. They reported feeling bored when the content was difficult, too easy, redundant, and excessive. Furthermore, participants did not enjoy the presentation and self-study in the context. Teacher-related factors such as teachers' personality traits, teaching methods, and long lectures were the second most reported factors that induced boredom in learners. The next rank order of sources of FLB was personal-related factors with 11 references. In this context, participants reported feeling bored due to a lack of interest in learning English, and also when they were emotionally unstable and tired. Peer-related factors were the lowest-ranked and least-reported sources of FLB. Seven participants stated that they get bored in the classroom when their friends exhibit disruptive behaviours.

Table 4. Sources of FLB

| | Rank | Main themes/factors (frequency counts) | Sub-themes/factors | Representative codes (examples) |
|------------|-------------|---|---|--|
| FLB | 1 | Content and task-related (91) | difficult to understand, too easy to understand, redundant content, too much content, presentation and self-study | I feel bored when I <u>do not understand</u> to story. I feel bored when the teacher gives me a <u>self-study</u> . |
| | 2 | Teacher-related (62) | teachers' personality traits, teaching methods, and a long lecture | I feel bored when <u>teaching is monotonous</u> . I feel bored when <u>lectures are long</u> . |
| | 3 | Personal-related (11) | disinterest in learning the language, bad mood, and fatigue | I feel bored because I <u>do not like</u> English subject. I feel bored because I <u>am moody</u> sometimes. |
| | 4 | Peer-related (7) | friends exhibit disruptive behaviours | I feel bored when my <u>friends make noise</u> in the classroom. |

Discussion

This mixed-method study explored the factors likely to influence learners' FLE and FLB, and their hierarchies in English classrooms in light of PP (Dewaele, 2022). The discussion is organized in two sections: the first covers the sources of FLE and their respective rankings, and the second focuses on FLB. Understanding the sources of FLE and FLB and their hierarchy is essential for educators because it allows them to develop targeted interventions that enhance positive emotions and reduce negative ones in FL learners, ultimately improving their learning experiences, outcomes, and well-being (Shao et al., 2020).

Sources of FLE

To begin, the study identified several potential sources of FLE. It comprised teacher-related, personal-related, peer-related, content-related, and task-related factors. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis revealed teacher-related factors as the most significant contributors to FLE. Previous studies in China (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Li et al., 2018; Wang & Jiang, 2022), Europe (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019), Spain (Dewaele et al., 2019), and Turkey (Yeşilçınar & Erdemir, 2023) have found similar findings. The pattern of findings that identified and placed teacher-related factors on the topmost hierarchy and as the most significant contributors to FLE in various FL contexts, including the current study, leads us to the conclusion that teachers could be the primary contributors to FLE in FL teaching and learning contexts. Regarding teachers as a source of FLE, the current participants said that they enjoyed learning English

when their teachers were well-prepared and used a variety of teaching methods (see Dewaele et al., 2019). This finding suggests teachers prepare well and implement a variety of teaching strategies in the classroom to enhance learners' FLE. A similar suggestion was highlighted elsewhere by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014). Next, teachers' personality traits seem to play a significant role in learners' FLE levels. English learners in this study noted that they enjoyed more when their teachers possessed qualities of effective foreign language instructors, such as being encouraging, motivating, humorous, and supportive (cf. Wangdi & Shimray, 2022). This finding encourages FL teachers to cultivate personality traits highlighted in this study that help students enjoy learning English.

In the survey results, personal-related factors were ranked second in their contribution to FLE. However, in the qualitative findings, personal-related factors ranked third, with content-related factors emerging as the second most important contributor to FLE. Personal-related factors as the second most significant contributors to FLE in this study support the findings presented by Li et al. (2018) and Wang and Jiang (2022) in Chinese contexts. However, the current finding contradicted Jiang and Dewaele's (2019) qualitative findings, which identified peer-related factors as the second most significant contributor to FLE among Chinese FL learners, and Yeşilçınar and Erdemir's (2023) findings, which ranked teaching methodology second in terms of contribution to FLE among Turkish learners, implying that more research is needed to confirm these results within the current setting. This study found that participants enjoyed learning English because they intended to learn the language and were aware that English is a useful, important, and internationally recognized language. Participants' views of English as an important language may be attributed to the role of the English language in Bhutan, which serves as a medium of instruction for all educational levels, a language of career and opportunities, a language of offices, business, tourism, and development, among others (Wangdi & Dhendup, 2024).

Next, although language content-related as a source of FLE was highlighted (Dewaele & Li, 2021; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Li et al., 2018; Shen, 2021), none of the studies reviewed for this study addressed the rank order of content-related as a source of FLE. Therefore, it was unclear where content-related factors of FLE fit within the hierarchy of FLEM. However, in this study, the content-related factor was identified as the second-highest contributor to FLE. Participants in this study reported enjoying English classrooms when the contents were new and interesting. This finding partially aligns with Dewaele et al. (2019) and Shen (2021), who also reported that FL learners enjoy the classroom when the content is relevant and applicable to their daily lives. These studies, however, said nothing about the hierarchy of content-related sources of FLE. In addition to new and interesting content, current participants said they enjoyed learning when the material was simple to understand. The overall findings regarding content as a source of FLE, and its ranking as the second most significant contributor to learners' FLE, indicate that educators should ensure the content is new, interesting, and comprehensible to students. Educators are therefore encouraged to regularly assess the content of English courses based on student feedback and revise it accordingly to meet learners' needs.

The task-related factor was ranked fourth in the qualitative findings of this study. English learners of the context of the study reported that group discussions, drama, games, and group work in class helped them improve their FLE. This could be associated with their task engagement level. Dewaele et al. (2019) noted that learners' level of task engagement is one factor that influences their FLE levels. Group discussion, drama, games, and group work are learner-centered activities and this may have boosted their engagement levels and eventually improved their enjoyment levels in classrooms. Teachers are thus encouraged to adopt gamification, collaborative, and cooperative learning strategies to increase students' enjoyment. In other words, teachers should think of classroom activities that increase learners'

engagement and participation to improve their FLE. It should be noted that learners' enjoyment is strongly linked to their improved cognitive abilities, memory power, and overall academic outcomes (Pekrun, 2006).

Both quantitative and qualitative data revealed that peer-related factors contribute the least to FLE among current participants. The discovery that peer-related factors are among the least influential contributors to FLE aligns with the findings of several previous studies (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Li et al., 2018; Wang & Jiang, 2022; Yeşilçınar & Erdemir, 2023), affirming their minimal impact on FL learners' FLE. This study found that students are more likely to enjoy learning English when they study with humorous peers and friends with whom they share common interests. This finding is partly consistent with Zhao's (2023) study, which found that peer support, friendship, and the quality of interactions among learners influence their levels of FLE. Overall, this study expands upon the research conducted by Li et al. (2018) regarding the origin of FLE. In addition to the factors identified in their study—teacher-related, private-related, and atmosphere-related—our research identifies two additional sources: content and task-related factors. Most importantly, the findings of this study offer a comprehensive understanding of the significance of different sources of FLE by ranking them in order. This insight can be valuable for educators in prioritizing their intervention strategies to enhance learners' FLEM.

Sources of FLB

Boredom among FL learners is likely to be caused by content and task-related factors, teacher-related factors, personal-related factors, peer-related factors, homework-related factors, classroom-related factors, and learners' learning traits. Among these, the most prominent and significant contributors to FLB appeared to be content and task-related factors. The quantitative results showed the highest mean value for task-related boredom, and qualitative findings revealed that the majority of participants reported content and task-related boredom. The findings of content and task-related factors as the top most significant contributors of FLB in FL classrooms confirm the findings of Nakamura et al. (2021) in the Thai context and Zawodniak et al. (2021) in the Polish context, where they pointed out task-related to language as the most significant contributors of FLB among their participants. This finding suggests that regardless of context, content and task-related factors are likely to play the most significant role in shaping learners' FLB levels.

As for the content-related factors, consistent with the findings of previous studies (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Nakamura et al., 2021; Shimray & Wangdi, 2023), the present participants highlighted that they experienced boredom in English classrooms when they had to study either too difficult, too easy, redundant, and an excessive amount of content. This finding suggests that textbooks/contents of the course should be analyzed and revised regularly based on the linguistic and content needs of the students. Although textbook revision would be taxing for educational stakeholders, conducting a yearly if not biannual analysis of contents and revising those that appear too difficult, too easy, redundant, and, most importantly, reducing content can benefit students. Next, participants reported experiencing boredom due to task-related factors (cf. Li, 2021). In this study, participants disliked learning English when they had presentations and were assigned self-study. The possible explanation of students' disinterest in presenting in the classroom can be attributed to individual fear of public speaking, lack of confidence, lack of language skills, and lack of preparation amongst others. Likewise, disliking self-study can be ascribed to a lack of interest in learning language, time management, and above all to lack of resources such as library and internet facilities. Furthermore, learners may lack awareness of self-regulated learning strategies. Therefore, teachers should work on

helping learners become aware of the benefits of self-study and the strategies involved may increase their enjoyment when assigned self-study or autonomous learning.

In line with Zawodniak et al. (2021), teacher-related factors were reported as the second most contributor to boredom in both quantitative and qualitative findings. This finding, however, contested the assumptions made by several studies (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Shimray & Wangdi, 2023), which stressed teachers as the most (first in rank) contributing factors likely to influence FL learners' FLB. Nevertheless, it should be noted that teachers are one of the sources of FLB. Participants in this study divulged being bored in the English classrooms when teachers exhibited negative personality traits, a lack of creativity in teaching methods, and due to lengthy lectures. A similar case was reported in previous studies conducted in various contexts (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Dewaele & Li., 2021; Shimray & Wangdi, 2023). Teachers are therefore suggested to work on improving personality traits and classroom conduct, as mentioned before. Likewise, the Ministry of Education and other concerned agencies can help teachers become literate in teaching methods and pedagogical practices based on student needs by holding frequent professional development programs such as workshops, seminars, and training, as well as providing regular newsletters.

Personal-related factors (qualitative) and homework (quantitative) were identified as the third most important factors likely to influence FLB in this study. Personal-related factors in quantitative were, however, found as the least (fifth) contributors to learners' FLB. The qualitative finding did not support the quantitative result, implying that participants may not have taken either seriously when responding to the survey. This suggests that more research is needed to confirm the order of rank of FLB sources based on their level of contribution. While the quantitative findings of the current study supported the findings of Derakhshan et al. (2021), who identified personal-related factors as the least contributors to FLB, our qualitative findings contradicted them. Meanwhile, concerning personal-related factors, the participants reported feeling bored because of their disinterest in learning the English language, bad mood, and fatigue derived from external factors such as class timing, lack of sleep, and sickness. Zawodniak et al. (2021) highlighted a similar finding that learners' interest in learning the language, needs, autonomy in learning, physical condition, personality traits, and attitude toward subjects all contributed to their boredom. Homework, on the other hand, was not ranked in the literature; it was simply reported as a source of FLB. This study places homework as the third most significant factor that is likely to shape FL learners' FLB. Teachers are therefore advised not to overburden students with homework. Furthermore, the advantages and disadvantages of giving homework should be considered before assigning it.

In the qualitative findings, the final (fourth in the hierarchy) factors that participants identified as sources of their boredom in English classes were related to their classmates/peers. Students reported that they experienced boredom when their friends exhibited disruptive behaviour in the classroom. Foreign language teachers may want to keep this in mind and work to improve the classroom environment. It would be beneficial if teachers could keep students engaged so that they have fewer opportunities to exhibit disruptive behaviour. Moreover, it should be noted that the more students exhibit disruptive behaviours, the more students will get bored. As a result, we suggest that student's disruptive behaviour should be regarded as an academic threat and should be taken seriously and worked on reducing it through coping strategies. Taken together, this study identifies peer-related factors and the foreign language classroom environment as the fourth most significant contributor to FLB.

Conclusion, Limitations, and Implications

The introduction of PP into the field of SLA (MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014) has resulted in an expanding body of research on FLE in the context of second/foreign language teaching and

learning (Wangdi & Zimik, 2024). The literature to this end, however, demonstrated that more research studies on FLEM in the field of ESL/EFL are required to fully realize the sources and their corresponding hierarchy of FLEM, both negative and positive. Hence, guided by PP, which emphasizes flourishing individuals by enhancing positive emotions and mitigating negative emotions (Dewaele, 2022), this study delved into understanding factors that are likely to influence Bhutanese English learners' FLE (positive) and FLB (negative). The study was needed in the Bhutanese setting because Bhutanese educators and teachers must recognize the relevance of FLEM, which have a substantial impact on learners' learning, learning outcomes, and well-being (Shao et al., 2020). However, a cursory review of the literature on FLEM in the Bhutanese context revealed a scarcity of research studies addressing FLEM, particularly FLE and FLB. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) asserted that FL learners, regardless of age, individual, social, cultural, and linguistic differences, experience both positive and negative emotions during the learning process. This shows that Bhutanese learners are no exception, and they confront emotional challenges in the language classroom. This was an added reason for conducting this study. Further, offering Bhutanese educators a clear understanding of which sources of FLE and FLB are most prominent and influential among FL learners in the context will allow them to put emphasis on emotional aspects and develop innovative interventions to improve students' emotions. This, in turn, may help Bhutanese English learners learn and acquire the target FL language more effectively.

In doing so, the first finding of this study revealed several factors that are likely to influence FLEM, both positive and negative. For instance, FLE is likely to be influenced by factors related to teacher, content, personal, task, and peer factors, whereas FLB tends to be influenced by factors related to content and task, teacher-related, personal-related, homework-related, classroom-related, peer-related factors and learners' learning traits. In this study, teacher-related factors were found to be the most significant (topmost in the hierarchy.) contributors to FLE, followed by content and task-related factors for FLB. While the rank order of some factors differed in the middle, the least contributors to FLE were found to be social/peer-related factors, while the least (lowest in the hierarchy) contributors to FLB were peer-related factors and learners' learning traits.

Although this study sheds new light on the hierarchy of FLEM based on their potential contribution levels, it does have some limitations. The first limitation of this study was the data collection method. The data was gathered using a survey and open-ended questions, and we believe that if we had collected data from other sources such as in-depth interviews, observations, and field notes, the findings would have been more robust. The second limitation pertains to the sampling method, samples, and participants. Because we used a convenience sampling method, we collected data from students at one school located in the semi-urban area of Bhutan. We assume that the FLEM felt by students in urban and rural areas may differ. As a result, the findings would not be generalizable to students of the entire Bhutan. Third, although it was assumed that participants had enough exposure to understand the English used in the instruments, given that most had a decade of exposure to the English language, some might not have fully understood the questions and may have responded just to complete the survey forms. Future researchers are advised to use simpler English and, if possible, translate the survey into the participants' first language. Next, this study failed to consider some important specific variables of participants, such as their age, maturity levels, and motivation levels, which may have influenced their responses to the questions in the instruments. To address these limitations, future researchers are encouraged to look into the potential relationship between the participants' variables highlighted here and their FLE and FLB. Also, it would be interesting to investigate whether participants of different ages, maturity levels, and motivational levels rank FLEM differently. Finally, due to the context-dependent nature of the

study, findings may differ between contexts due to factors such as cultural, individual, linguistic, and social differences. Therefore, the current findings may not be comparable to other educational settings outside of Bhutan. As a result, we advise caution when applying the current findings in practice.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study are expected to benefit researchers, curriculum developers, teachers, and students who are learning English as a second or foreign language. Researchers may benefit from this study in that they can validate the findings presented in this study on factors that are likely to influence FL learners FLE and FLB using quantitative methods. Additionally, using factors highlighted in this study, researchers can develop an instrument to measure the levels of FLE and FLB, particularly for English language learners in the context of the study and beyond a similar context. More importantly, this study would benefit Bhutanese researchers because it provides baseline data for an emerging field of research: FLEM. It appears that educational researchers have ignored FLEM in the context of the study. Next, English language curriculum developers can use the current findings to redesign course contents based on learners' needs. It is recommended that the difficulty, quantity, and relevance of the contents be investigated, as these were mentioned by participants as sources of FLEM.

Furthermore, the current study can benefit teachers because its findings provide insight into the sources of FLEM along with their significance levels for both enjoyment and boredom. Teachers can take a closer look at the sources of FLE and FLB and their contribution levels, and they can then incorporate different and interesting teaching methods and classroom tasks to increase learners' enjoyment levels in their classrooms while also reducing boredom. As this study has offered a ranking of sources of FLEM based on the significance of its contribution levels of FLE and FLB, teachers can prioritize resolving higher levels first and then gradually progressing to lower levels. Such a strategic approach may help achieve the goal faster in improving the enjoyment levels of FL learners. This, in turn, may result in better learning experiences and outcomes among learners. Moreover, this study discovered that teachers are the most important factor of FLE and that learners prefer to learn and enjoy learning with teachers who possess the qualities of effective language teachers such as those who are encouraging, motivating, friendly, supportive, and many more, teachers can work towards improving their personality traits accordingly. In short, the findings of this study could serve as a guidebook for teachers, more specifically on how to reduce negative emotions and increase positive emotions among FL learners, and to decide on their priorities to address specific sources of emotions. Finally, FL learners may be able to understand from this study that the source of FLEM is also themselves and that their personal goals, interests, emotions, attitudes, and so on all play a role in how they and their classmates experience language classrooms. As a result, FL learners can focus on improving their personality traits to have a better experience in the language classroom.

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Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire for FLE

1. The English teacher is encouraging in the class.
2. The English teacher is friendly in the class.
3. The English teacher is supportive in the class.
4. I enjoy learning English in the class.
5. I have learned interesting things in English classrooms.
6. In English class, I feel proud of my accomplishments.
7. My friends and I get along very well in the English classroom.
8. My friends and I share common “interests” and sometimes make jokes in the classroom.
9. My friends and I laugh a lot in the English classroom.

Appendix B

Survey Questionnaire for FLB

Factor 1 Foreign Language Class Boredom

The English class bores me.

1. I start yawning in English class because I’m so bored.
2. My mind begins to wander in the English class
3. I am only physically in the classroom, while my mind is wandering outside the English class.
4. It is difficult for me to concentrate in the English class.
5. Time is dragging on in English class.
6. I get restless and can’t wait for the English class to end.
7. I always think about what else I might be doing to kill the time rather than sitting in this English class.

Factor 2 Under-challenging Task Boredom (*merged with factor 7*)

1. I believe an analysis of long text in English is really dreary.
2. It is really boring to repeat the (English) text after the modeling audio.
3. So many similar types of (English) exercises make me lose interest.
4. So much practice on a same (English-related) subject matter makes me restless.
5. The (English-related) exercise or a subject matter lasts too long, and I feel bored.

Factor 3 PowerPoint Presentation Boredom (*removed*)

1. It would have been more interested if other multimedia resources were utilized in class rather than PPT slides loaded with text.
2. PPT slides filled up with solely script but without interactions make me bored.

3. Reading from script in the PPT slides bores me.

Factor 4 Homework Boredom

1. Just thinking of my English homework makes me feel bored.
2. I get bored of too much English homework.
3. English homework is over-challenging and I don't want to do it.
4. Doing homework is a dull activity

Factor 5 Teacher-dislike boredom

1. I am not interested in English class, because the English teacher isn't likable (e.g., tone, pitch or facial appearance).
2. The English teachers' teaching is uninteresting, so the English class is dull.
3. I really dislike the English teacher spending so much time making personal comments.
4. I feel agitated because the English teacher spends too much time saying things that are irrelevant to the teaching material.

Factor 6: General Learning Trait Boredom

1. I'm always bored when I study.
2. I'm somebody who is not interested in study.
3. Not only learning English, studying is dull in general
4. Other subjects are similarly boring and dull like English.
5. I'm forced to learn all the subjects including English.

Factor 7 Over-challenging or Meaningless Task Boredom (*merged with factor 2*)

1. I don't care about teaching and learning activities that the English teacher does not value.
2. When the English teacher seems unmotivated to teach, I lose my motivation to listen to him/her as well.
3. If I cannot understand classmates' presentations, I become really bored.

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