

EFL university teachers' perceptions on students' boredom and its impact on their emotions and teaching practices

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Abstract

Purpose – Research on boredom in English as a foreign language (EFL) settings remains limited. While existing studies have examined the impact of teacher-related factors on student boredom, how student boredom influences teachers remains underexplored. This study, therefore, aims to investigate how EFL university teachers are affected by student boredom, with a specific focus on its impact on teacher's emotions and teaching practices.

Design/methodology/approach – The study employed a qualitative descriptive design, collecting data through written open-ended questionnaires from 21 EFL university teachers.

Findings – Teachers reported that boredom is prevalent among Saudi EFL university students, primarily due to the adopted instructional strategies and the nature of the course. Teachers also declared that experiencing student boredom triggered unpleasant emotions, such as frustration and self-doubt. A unique finding was that despite experiencing negative emotional responses, teachers noted that their teaching practices had not been impacted.

Research limitations/implications – The study has several implications. For instance, the identification of boredom as a prevalent emotion in EFL classrooms highlights the need for English teachers to adopt emotionally sound teaching approaches that foster positive emotions and alleviate negative ones. Additionally, the recognition of student boredom as a trigger for negative emotions in teachers suggests the necessity of providing teachers with training in cognitive reappraisal strategies to support their emotional well-being.

Originality/value – The study explores how EFL university teachers' emotions are influenced by student boredom. In so doing, it contributes to teacher emotions research, which has been widely neglected in the ESL/EFL contexts, specifically in Arabian Gulf countries (Chen, 2019b). Furthermore, the study explores how EFL university teachers' teaching practices are shaped when experiencing student boredom. Until recently, the connection between teachers' emotions and their approaches to teaching has been unexplored in higher education (Trigwell, 2012), especially in EFL contexts. Therefore, the current study helps explain university teachers' decisions related to teaching practices, raising awareness of the direct and indirect impact of student boredom.

Keywords Student boredom, Teaching practices, Saudi higher education, Teacher emotion, Foreign language learning boredom

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Over the past thirty years, exploring the role of emotions in second language learning has drawn increasing attention (Dewaele and Li, 2021), reflecting a growing recognition of the impact of emotions on cognitive processes (Lantolf and Swain, 2019; Richards, 2020). Research has shown that emotions play a pivotal role in the success of second language learning. Specifically, positive emotions have been identified as strong predictors of English language achievement, whereas negative emotions have been found to hinder achievement (Ismail, 2015; Li and Wei, 2023). In line with the growing body of research on emotions, there has been a surge of interest in boredom, as one of the most experienced negative emotions in



educational contexts (Li and Wei, 2023). However, research on boredom in second and foreign language learning remains limited (Li and Dewaele, 2020; Zawodniak *et al.*, 2021).

Firstly, existing studies have focused on investigating the role of teacher emotions in student boredom, concluding that teacher emotions play a critical role (Dewaele and Li, 2021; Frenzel *et al.*, 2021; Qin, 2022). These studies suggest that when teachers express positive emotions, students are less likely to experience boredom whereas teachers' negative emotions such as anger, anxiety and boredom increase students' likelihood of experiencing boredom. However, how student boredom influences ESL/EFL teacher emotions is still limited, which necessitates conducting this study.

Moreover, the impact of teaching approaches on ESL/EFL learner achievement has been extensively studied. Studies consistently show that student-centered approaches are associated with higher levels of English proficiency and achievement, while teacher-centered approaches are often linked to lower outcomes. Considerable attention has also been given to exploring the factors that lead teachers to adopt teacher-centered approaches or to avoid implementing student-centered ones (Du, 2021; Kassem, 2018; Pastini and Lilasari, 2023). However, the role that teacher emotions might play in choosing how to teach remains underexplored. Therefore, there is a compelling need to examine how teachers' emotional responses to student boredom influence their teaching practices.

Lastly, research on boredom in EFL educational settings has not received its due attention in the context of Saudi Arabia, meaning critical relevant knowledge is lacking. Of the few studies found, the majority either explored the antecedents of boredom among university students (e.g. Alrajhi, 2024; Deen, 2023) or examined the connection between negative academic emotions such as boredom and English achievement (Ismail, 2015). Given that each instructed foreign language learning context is unique, conducting this study helps bridge this gap in knowledge.

That said, understanding the impact of student boredom on university teacher's emotions and teaching practices within the Saudi EFL context is of considerable theoretical and practical importance. Primarily, it contributes to the research on language teacher emotion, a domain that has not received adequate attention, both within the context of this study and the broader EFL field. Furthermore, by exploring the impact of teacher emotion on teaching practices, the study advances the theoretical understanding of a connection that has been largely overlooked in prior research. In addition to addressing key gaps in the literature, the study explores the prevalence and manifestations of boredom among EFL university students. In so doing, this study offers insights to FL researchers, shedding light on the dynamic interplay between student affect, teacher emotion and pedagogical decision-making.

As such, the overarching aim of this study is to investigate the phenomenon of foreign language learning boredom among university students, with a particular focus on its perceived impact on EFL university teachers. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1. How do EFL university teachers perceive students' boredom in the classroom?

RQ2. How does students' boredom influence EFL university teachers' emotions?

RQ3. How does students' boredom influence EFL university teachers' teaching practices?

Literature review

Foreign language learning boredom

Pertinent literature presents numerous conceptualizations of boredom emotion. For example, boredom has been perceived as both trait-like and state-like. Trait boredom refers to one's inclination to experience boredom regardless of the surroundings, while state boredom refers to one's experience of boredom when they perceive the environment as dull and lacking in

challenge (Macklem, 2015). Within achievement settings, boredom has been described in relation to three dimensions: valence, activation and object focus. Regarding valence, academic emotions are classified as positive (e.g. enjoyment) or negative (e.g. hopelessness). In terms of activation, academic emotions can be activating (e.g. pride) or deactivating (e.g. anxiety). Concerning object focus, some academic emotions are activity-related (e.g. boredom) and others are outcome-related (e.g. anxiety). Considering these dimensions, boredom is defined as a negative, deactivating, activity-related emotion (Pekrun *et al.*, 2007). It is also seen as a low-arousal experience (Vogel-Walcutt *et al.*, 2012).

Recently, the academic emotion of boredom has been receiving growing attention in the field of second and foreign language education (Pawlak *et al.*, 2020) (Li, 2021; Li and Dewaele, 2020; Pawlak *et al.*, 2020). Research has shown that boredom is experienced by most students in most foreign language learning classrooms. For instance, analyzing the diaries of 30 Polish graduates majoring in English, Zawodniak *et al.* (2017) found that all participants experienced boredom in English language classes. Furthermore, Research has also shown that FL boredom, as a negative emotion, is negatively correlated with FL achievement. For instance, among Saudi university students, Ismail (2015) investigated the correlation between positive academic emotions (e.g. hope, pride and enjoyment) and negative academic emotions (e.g. anger, boredom and anger) and English academic achievement in a sample of 315 Saudi university students. The study revealed a connection between students' academic emotions and English achievement, in which positive emotions predicted high achievement level and likewise negative emotions predicted low achievement level, which empirically reflected control-value theory.

One of the main frameworks for investigating foreign language boredom is control-value theory of Achievement Emotions proposed by Pekrun (2006). Control-value theory posits that students' cognitive appraisals of an activity or achievement-related outcome directly influence emotions experienced while involved in the activity. For instance, in an EFL classroom, students are more likely to feel bored if they do not perceive the value of the assigned tasks or the value of attaining English language proficiency, and if they perceive themselves as incapable of achievement. This assumption has been supported by empirical evidence from several studies (e.g. Chen *et al.*, 2025; Goetz *et al.*, 2006; Li and Wei, 2023; Shao *et al.*, 2023). These studies indicated the effect of foreign language boredom on language achievement and highlighted the role of several factors in mediating this effect.

Many studies have also been concerned with examining the role of various variables in mediating this relationship. For instance, Li *et al.* (2022) established that engagement partially mediated the relationship between boredom and achievement among 535 Chinese EFL secondary school students, indicating the direct and indirect effect of academic boredom on EFL achievement. In a similar vein, Wu and Kang's (2023) study of 505 Chinese EFL secondary school students revealed that FL boredom was negatively correlated with FL proficiency and that elaboration strategies have partially mediated this relationship.

Recognizing the detrimental effects of FL boredom, research has primarily focused on exploring its antecedents. However, most of the literature has been conducted in Chinese EFL contexts. For example, Li *et al.* (2021) identified seven factors contributing to the FLB of Chinese university students, including under-challenging and over-challenging tasks, PowerPoint presentation style, assignments, teacher-related factors and a general trait of boredom. Using the FLLB scale developed by Li *et al.* (2021) and semi-structured interviews, Amiri *et al.* (2022) identified several proximal reasons for FLB among 190 Moroccan university students encompassing homework, under-challenging and/or over-challenging or meaningless task, teacher-dislike and PowerPoint presentations. Among Saudi university students, Deen (2023) determined that demotivation, low language learning ability, type of skills-based courses and over-challenging tasks, unfamiliar instructional techniques, teacher feedback areas, under-challenging tasks and classroom mode, permanent correction, and redundancy-induced Saudi EFL university students' boredom. The study also revealed that

students experienced higher levels of boredom during skills classes in grammar and writing, which empirically supported the domain-specificity of emotions (Pekrun, 2006).

The reciprocal relation between teacher and student emotions

Research indicates that students who perceive their teachers as emotionally positive are more likely to report experiencing positive emotions, whereas those who view their teachers as emotionally negative tend to report more negative emotional experiences. For example, Tam *et al.* (2020) investigated the relationship between teachers' boredom and students' motivation and boredom among 437 students and 17 of their teachers. The study revealed that when a teacher is bored or perceived by students as bored, students themselves feel bored and less motivated. Less attention, however, has been given to investigating the effect of student emotions on teacher emotions. For instance, using intraindividual approach with 39 teachers and their 9th- or 10th-grade mathematics classes, Becker *et al.* (2015) identified students' motivation and discipline as antecedents of teacher emotions. The study also revealed that this effect was partially mediated by teachers' subjective appraisals of goal conduciveness and coping potential. Similarly, using self-report questionnaires with 132 secondary teachers, Hagenauer *et al.* (2015) found that students' motivation, in-class discipline and relational behavior are strong predictors of teachers' emotions of joy and anxiety.

However, only a handful of studies investigated this effect within the field of second and foreign language education. Most research has been conducted in the Chinese English learning context. For instance, using mixed-methods investigation with 2,002 EFL learners across 11 Chinese universities, Dewaele and Li (2021) established a significant association between teacher enthusiasm, student's emotional experiences (enjoyment and boredom) and levels of social-behavioral engagement. Given the domain specificity of FL emotions, further studies from different EFL contexts are needed.

Teacher emotions and teaching practices

While the relationship between teacher emotions and student emotions is well acknowledged, evidence of how teacher emotions may influence teachers' instruction-related decisions remains limited (Chen, 2019b). For example, Trigwell's (2012) study was the first to examine this connection in a higher education context. Using two self-report questionnaires with 175 Australian higher education teachers, the study highlighted a significant relation between teachers' emotions and the way they teach. In a general education context, Chen (2019a) used two self-report instruments with 1,830 Chinese teachers to examine how teacher emotions influence teachers' approaches to teaching. One of the major findings of the study showed that teachers experiencing positive emotions tend to adopt student-centered teaching approaches, whereas negative emotions are associated with teacher-centered approaches. A similar study has been conducted by Jiang *et al.* (2021) examining the relationship between teacher emotions and classroom instruction among 221 Chinese secondary teachers. The study revealed that direct instruction was positively correlated with negative teacher emotions such as anger and anxiety, whereas inquiry-based instruction was positively correlated with teachers' positive emotions of enjoyment and satisfaction.

However, only a handful of studies investigated this relationship within the field of foreign language education. Among the few are Kirmızı and Sarıçoban (2020), which investigated the influence of teacher emotions on their beliefs about teaching approaches. Using questionnaires with 70 EFL teachers, the study revealed, among other findings, a strong connection between teachers' negative emotions of sadness and preference for a transmission-based teaching approach. More recently, Jiang *et al.* (2024) investigated the relationship between teacher emotions and teaching quality among 77 EFL middle school teachers and their students ($n = 1,861$), establishing a significant relationship. The study found that teachers experiencing positive emotions such as enjoyment tend to offer quality teaching, while teacher anxiety and anger negatively influence teaching effectiveness.

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Methodology
Research design

The current study employs a qualitative descriptive design to capture EFL university teachers’ perceptions of student boredom and its impact on their emotions and teaching practices. According to [Sandelowski \(2000\)](#), qualitative descriptive design provides a comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study. This design, however, differs from other qualitative designs such as phenomenology and ground theory in that it does not require deep theorization ([Neergaard et al., 2009](#)). Instead, it provides a direct depiction of the experience as described by the participants themselves.

Sampling

The study used a combination of purposive sampling and one of its variations, which is maximum variation. So, the researcher identified and purposefully selected participants who could provide comprehensive information on the topic being studied. To maximize the variation, participants with variant age, academic rank, nationality and years of teaching experience, were selected. Thus, 21 EFL university instructors teaching in a Saudi university were recruited. The sample size is in compliance with [Creswell’s \(2012\)](#) suggestion of 3–25 participants. [Table 1](#) displays a summary of their demographic information.

Data collection

In qualitative descriptive design, data may include semi-structured, individual interviews, open-ended questionnaires and focus groups ([Sandelowski, 2000](#)). In this study, I opted to gather data through an anonymous open-ended questionnaire to mitigate potential biases rise. It was deemed that being a colleague of the participants might hinder their sharing honest responses through in-person interviews. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was granted for the study by the Ethics committee board at the institution.

Following [Brinkmann and Kvale’s \(2015, p. 157\)](#) suggestion, “the theoretical conceptions of the research topic” guided the formation of the questionnaire questions, resulting in 11 questions. These questions focused on teachers’ perceptions of students’ boredom in the English language classrooms, and how it affects their emotions and teaching practices.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of teacher participants

Characteristics	Number (N = 21)
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	10
Female	11
<i>Age group</i>	
30–40	14
40–50	5
50 and above	2
<i>Nationality</i>	
Saudi	14
Non-Saudi	7
<i>Academic rank</i>	
Lecturer	6
Assistant professor	14
Full professor	1
Source(s): Author’s own work	

The electronic questionnaire was distributed by the researcher through direct sharing with selected participants. In addition, selected participants assisted in disseminating the questionnaire to further eligible participants. This approach facilitated broader reach while maintaining the purposive sampling strategy.

Data analysis

The purpose of the study was to explore how EFL university teachers perceived students' boredom, and its impact on their emotions and teaching practices. To this end, data was analyzed inductively to capture meaningful details of the teachers' experience. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis was employed in this process: data familiarization, developing initial codes, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, naming and defining themes and writing the analytic report.

Therefore, I began by reading each transcript to gain a general understanding of the data. I then manually coded segments of the text, guided by the study's research questions (Patton, 2002). Initial codes were revised and refined through an iterative process until final codes were established. Similar codes were grouped into broader categories, which were subsequently developed into preliminary themes. For instance, the codes *use of phones*, *excuses to leave class*, *inattention* and *disengagement* were grouped under the category "manifestations of boredom." From these categories, three overarching themes emerged: (1) the prevalence and manifestations of boredom among EFL university students, (2) students' boredom as a trigger for unpleasant emotions and (3) students' boredom as a driver for improved teaching practices. The final stage involved composing the analytical report, incorporating direct participant quotes to support the interpretation of the findings.

According to Creswell (2012), a qualitative study needs to incorporate at least two strategies to ensure rigor, and Baillie (2015) noted that study design should dictate the selection of these strategies. In this study, peer review and member checks were used to enhance rigor. For peer review, a fellow academic provided their expert opinion on the research process including data analysis. Member checking was employed by presenting participants with a complete analysis of data which they believe to accurately capture their meanings.

Findings

The findings are organized around key themes derived from the analysis of participants' responses to three research questions: the prevalence of boredom in EFL classrooms, students' boredom as a trigger for unpleasant emotions, and students' boredom as a driver for improved teaching practices. Illustrative quotations were cited to support each theme.

Based on the participants' responses and the relevant literature on FL boredom a coding scheme was created. Table 2 presents an example of how participants' responses were coded and themes developed.

As seen in Table 2, teachers perceive students' boredom as a commonly experienced emotion that manifests in various behaviors. It also presents how student boredom impacts teachers' emotions and teaching practices.

Prevalence and manifestations of boredom among EFL university students

The teachers were asked to answer questions such as: "Have you perceived students' boredom in class? If so, could you give any example of why and when they would get bored" and "What are some common signs that students are bored during your lessons". The results indicated that all teachers experienced students' boredom in class. In their viewpoint, this emotion manifests in various behaviors such as students playing with their phones, excusing themselves from the class and lack of engagement. For example, teacher 3 and Teacher 8, respectively, responded: ". . . when students are distracted by mobile phones or lack of participation."

Table 2. Coding scheme of EFL university teachers’ perception of students’ boredom and its impact on teachers’ emotions and teaching practices

Theme	Codes	Representative excerpts
Prevalence and manifestations of boredom	Use of phones Excuses to leave class Inattention disengagement	<i>“Sleepiness, tendency to go washroom, requesting to finish the class early etc”</i> <i>“Listlessness, playing with phones, asking to leave the room”</i> <i>“In my experience, common signs of student boredom include a lack of engagement and attention. For instance, students might avoid eye contact, look at their phones, or frequently glance at the clock. Some may appear distracted, doodling on their notebooks or whispering to each other”</i>
Trigger for unpleasant emotions	Questioning self-competence Loss of motivation Difficulty in maintaining enthusiasm	<i>“When I notice that students are bored in class, it can be quite disheartening and frustrating”</i> <i>“It can lead to a sense of self-doubt and concern about whether I’m meeting their needs as learners”</i> <i>“I resist for a while, then put off”</i>
Driver for improved teaching practices	Trigger for change Incorporating new strategies Constant adaptation	<i>“I accept challenge. I rise up to the occasion. I can change the teaching habit as well”</i> <i>“Experiencing students’ boredom encourages me to be more flexible and innovative in my teaching ...”</i>

Source(s): Author’s own work

Teacher 8: In my experience, common signs of student boredom include a lack of engagement and attention. For instance, students might avoid eye contact, look at their phones, or frequently glance at the clock. Some may appear distracted, doodling on their notebooks or whispering to each other. Their body language can also be a clear indicator—slouching in their seats, resting their heads on their hands, or appearing visibly tired. Additionally, participation drops significantly; they may hesitate to answer questions, show less enthusiasm for group activities, or stop asking questions altogether.

In addition, teachers identified the perceived reasons for students’ boredom in the class. Out of 12 teachers, 10 believed that students get bored for several external factors, mainly, the language domain and teaching strategies. This is reflected in the words of Teacher 11: *“I think they would get bored because of the nature of some courses – reading - writing – vocabulary”* and Teacher 5: *“When the lesson involves complex grammar rules or dense theoretical content. For example, during lessons that require detailed explanations of syntax or morphology, students often lose focus, especially if the topic feels abstract or irrelevant to their everyday use of English.”*

Few believed that lack of language proficiency and unwillingness to learn are key reasons for why students feel bored in classes.

Students’ boredom as a trigger for unpleasant emotions

Apart from the teachers’ perceptions of students’ boredom, the study also explored how students’ boredom might influence teachers’ emotions. To this end, teachers answered questions such as “How does it make you feel when you notice that students are bored in class” and “How does experiencing repeated instances of boredom from your students shape your emotions?” The results indicated that experiencing students’ boredom has induced negative emotions in teachers such as demotivation, frustration, anger and self-doubt.

The excerpts of Teacher 8 and Teacher 6 reflect this:

Teacher 8: When I notice that students are bored in class, it can be quite disheartening and frustrating. As a lecturer, I aim to create a stimulating and engaging learning environment, so seeing disengagement makes me question whether my teaching methods are effective or if the material is too

challenging or irrelevant for them. It can lead to a sense of self-doubt and concern about whether I'm meeting their needs as learners.

Teacher 6: I get anxious and sometimes it makes me angry affecting my overall teaching attitude.

These excerpts illustrate how teachers may internalize student boredom, leading to complex emotional reactions that not only affect their emotions but could also influence their pedagogical decisions and quality of teaching.

Students' boredom as a driver for improved teaching practices

The last research question aimed to investigate the impact of student boredom on teaching practices. These were the questions asked to illicit teachers' responses: "How does your experience of students' boredom shape your attitudes towards teaching?" and "Have there been times when you planned your lesson in certain ways but had to modify because of students' boredom?" The thematic analysis revealed that despite the unfavorable impact of student boredom on teachers' emotions, these emotions did not impact their instruction negatively. On the contrary, it had a positive impact. For instance, 11 out of the 21 teachers mentioned that sensing their students' boredom pushed them to modify and adapt. Responses of Teachers 1 and Teacher 5 illuminate this point.

Teacher 1: Experiencing students' boredom encourages me to be more flexible and innovative in my teaching. It pushes me to constantly adapt my methods, seek more engaging approaches, and prioritize creating a dynamic learning environment. While it can be challenging, it ultimately strengthens my commitment to improving as an educator. In the words of Teacher 5: I accept challenge. I rise up to the occasion. I can change the teaching habit as well.

Six of the teachers addressed how crucial cooperative and collaborative tasks are to alleviate students' boredom. For example:

Teacher 4: For example, during a lecture-heavy session on grammar, I noticed students losing interest. To re-engage them, I quickly shifted to group activities, where they applied the rules in practical exercises. Another time, I replaced a planned reading task with a more interactive discussion to spark interest and encourage participation.

In the above excerpt, the teacher's response highlights two common domains where language students often exhibit boredom: grammar and reading. Recognizing students' disengagement during these activities, the teacher adapted their instructional strategy by implementing interactive techniques to renew engagement. For instance, shifting from lecture-based grammar explanations to group activities allowed students to apply grammatical rules in a collaborative, hands-on context, potentially enhancing both comprehension and motivation. Similarly, substituting a reading task with a discussion provided an opportunity for students to actively engage with the material in a way that fosters critical thinking and personal expression, counteracting passive learning.

These adaptations demonstrate an awareness of students' reactions and a flexible approach to instructional methods that can turn potentially monotonous content into a stimulating experience. The participant's strategies reflect an understanding that addressing boredom not only helps sustain student interest but can also improve the overall learning atmosphere, encouraging a more dynamic and student-centered classroom environment. This adaptability may be a crucial factor in mitigating the negative impacts of boredom on learning outcomes and teacher motivation.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore foreign language learning boredom, with a focus on EFL university teachers' perceptions of their students' boredom. It also examined how students' boredom impacts teachers' emotions and teaching practices.

Analysis of teachers' responses regarding their perceptions of students' boredom revealed several key insights. Most notably, teachers highlighted the widespread presence of boredom among Saudi EFL university learners, aligning with the results of [Li and Wei \(2023\)](#), which indicated that around 90% of EFL students experience boredom. Similar results were also found by [Li \(2021\)](#), [Li and Dewaele \(2020\)](#), [Pawlak et al. \(2020\)](#), indicating that boredom is one of the most experienced emotions in second and foreign language classrooms. This prevalence of boredom could largely account for the low English achievement among Saudi university students, as according to [Lambert et al. \(2023, p. 83\)](#), emotions may impede "a cognitively heightened and productive state, which is conducive for task performance and language acquisition".

In addition to this finding, teachers believed that students are most likely to feel bored during grammar and writing classes, aligning with the results of [Deen \(2023\)](#) and [Jean and Simard \(2011\)](#). This result is not surprising, as according to [Alghammas and Alhuwaydi \(2020\)](#), [Alasbali et al. \(2023\)](#) Saudi university students demonstrate noticeable weaknesses in English writing. This result also corroborates control and value Theory ([Pekrun, 2006](#)), affirming the domain specificity of emotions and the subject-specific nature of FL emotions ([Goetz et al., 2006](#)).

Apart from the nature of the subject, teachers also believed that teaching practices, specifically teacher-centered approaches, significantly contribute to student boredom, which is consistent with the results in [Amiri et al. \(2022\)](#), [Li and Han \(2022\)](#). This result supports control-value theory, affirming that the adopted teaching instruction plays a pivotal role in students' emotions. It further revealed that teachers interpreted behaviors such as students' disengagement, inattention, use of phone and excusing themselves to leave the class as manifestations of student boredom, which aligns with the results reported from the Saudi EFL context ([Deen, 2023](#)), and other English learning contexts ([Li et al., 2021, 2022](#); [Yetkin and Özer-Altunkaya, 2024](#)).

The second research question investigated the impact of EFL university student boredom on teachers' emotional experiences. Similar to previous studies ([Becker et al., 2015](#); [Hagenauer et al., 2015](#)), teachers in this study declared experiencing a range of negative emotional reactions when their students exhibit signs of boredom. Specifically, teachers find it difficult to maintain enthusiasm when students show signs of boredom, which is in line with the results of [Cui et al. \(2020\)](#). The negative impact has also been reported in different EFL contexts ([Becker et al., 2015](#); [Dewaele and Li, 2021](#); [Hagenauer et al., 2015](#)). This result corroborates emotional contagion theory ([Hatfield et al., 1994](#)), arguing that individuals experience and express the emotions of their interaction partners.

The third research question concerns the impact of EFL students' boredom on teachers' teaching practices. Most teachers declared that sensing their student's boredom did not adversely impact their teaching practices, which is different from the results in [Chen \(2019a\)](#) and [Trigwell \(2012\)](#), establishing that teachers experiencing negative emotions often shift toward teacher-centered strategies, while those with positive emotions lean toward student-centered approaches. Teachers in this study perceived student boredom as a "natural emotion" arising from external factors such as teaching methods, class duration and the nature of the subject, rather than as an indication of their own teaching competence. This result corroborates appraisal theory ([Ellsworth, 2013](#); [Moors et al., 2013](#)), positing that emotional responses are shaped by individuals' subjective interpretations of situations, rather than by the situations themselves. This result also echoed the assumptions of the reciprocal model of teacher emotions ([Frenzel, 2014](#)), postulating that teachers' personal appraisals of student emotions and behaviors shape how they react.

Conclusion

This study enhances our understanding of how EFL university teachers perceive students' boredom. In particular, it explores teachers' perceptions of this emotion and its impact on their

own emotions and teaching practices. It highlights that students' boredom is pervasive in EFL classrooms, often attributed to external factors and subject to noticeable fluctuations. Importantly, the study reveals that students' boredom adversely affects teachers' emotions, triggering unpleasant feelings such as anger, self-doubt and frustration. Interestingly, despite these negative impacts, teachers often view boredom as a catalyst for positive change in their teaching methods. They adapt by creating more engaging and interactive environments, rather than becoming discouraged. These findings underscore the significant role of students' emotions in shaping teachers' emotional well-being and instructional practices.

Implications

The present study explored how EFL university teachers perceive students' boredom and how it affects their emotions and teaching practices. The findings offer both theoretical insights into foreign language learning research and practical implications for educators.

First, the recognition of boredom as a prevalent emotion in EFL classrooms highlights the need for English teachers to adopt emotionally sound teaching approaches and practices that foster positive emotions and alleviate negative ones. Additionally, it underscores the importance of English teachers raising their awareness of academic emotions and their pivotal role in students' English academic achievement.

Second, the identification of student boredom as a trigger for negative emotions in teachers supports the assumptions of emotional contagion theory. However, despite experiencing these negative emotions, teachers were able to prevent them from disrupting their teaching practices. They achieved this by adopting a positive reinterpretation of the situation supporting assumptions of appraisal theory of emotions. From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that professional development programs should incorporate training on cognitive reappraisal strategies. Such training can help FL teachers regulate their emotions more effectively, promoting their emotional well-being and sustaining positive teaching practices.

Limitations and future research

The present study has identified several limitations, based on which future research avenues are suggested. Firstly, it relied on self-report questionnaire as the primary data collection method to unveil teachers' perspectives on the impact of students' boredom on teaching practices. The positive impact on teaching practices reported by the teachers contrasts with findings from similar studies, which may be influenced by participants' tendency to provide socially desirable responses. Future research should aim to corroborate these findings by recruiting both teachers and students, enhancing the confirmability of data.

Additionally, the study's small participant size limits the generalizability of results. Therefore, future studies should consider large sample sizes to explore this topic more broadly and ensure representative findings. Moreover, this study focused specifically on the impact of EFL students' boredom on teachers' emotions and teaching practices. Future research could expand by investigating the mediating effect of various variables proving a more comprehensive understanding of this relationship.

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