

When we Speak and Listen, We Feel it: A Preliminary Study on Emotions in Learning English as Second Language

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Abstract

Emotions and learning are inseparable. Emotions can enhance and interfere with learning depending on which ones are driving or colouring the experience. This study aims to assess students' positive and negative emotions in learning, particularly in the listening and speaking proficiencies in the English language. The Achievement Emotion Questionnaire (AEQ) was used to collect data to identify positive emotions (pleasure, hope, pride, relief, stratified) and negative emotions (anger, anxiety, boredom and shame). The study sample consisted of 174 secondary school students learning English. Statistical data analysis showed that the students exhibited positive emotions in their speaking skills, predominantly hope ($M = 4.04$, $SP = 1.061$), whereas anxiety ($M = 3.33$, $SP = 1.219$) emerged as the prevailing negative emotion. Similarly, in listening skills, hope ($M = 3.97$, $SP = 1.180$) dominates as the primary positive emotion, while negative emotions ($M = 2.76$, $SP = 1.368$) manifest at a low level concerning the English learning process. These findings unequivocally underscore the significant impact of both positive and negative emotions on students' achievements in English subjects. Consequently, educators must ensure that their teaching methodologies and the classroom environment actively support students' emotional development without serving as hindrances. It becomes imperative for educators to cultivate a safe and open environment, fostering an atmosphere where students feel encouraged to express both positive and negative emotions, thereby facilitating a more practical approach to learning English.

Keywords: Positive Emotions, Negative Emotions, English Language, Hope, Anxiety

Introduction

Emotions emerge as the linchpin in the intricate web of learning dynamics and academic triumphs within the realm of the English language, profoundly shaping students' conduct, motivation, and involvement. The enthusiasm and contentment experienced by students during English language acquisition become transformative, propelling them into active

participation within the learning milieu. Positive emotions, like joy and satisfaction, serve as catalysts, honing students' focus and creativity and facilitating a more profound mastery of speaking and listening skills (Perry, 2002). Conversely, the discernment and acknowledgment of negative emotions, such as fear and boredom, become imperative as they possess a learning trajectory. Elevated anxiety levels might impinge upon students' English-speaking proficiency, while boredom could usher in waning enthusiasm and focus in the English learning process (Chang, 2008). Through a nuanced understanding of students' emotional states, educators can craft an enriched learning environment, thus wielding a positive influence on academic strides.

The Ministry of Education Malaysia is an ardent protagonist in fostering cognitive acumen and emotional adeptness in learning English. Initiatives encompass teacher training modules meticulously designed to seamlessly integrate emotional intelligence into pedagogy, coupled with professional development programmes such as seminars and workshops underscoring heightened awareness in the learning process. Research substantiates a robust correlation between students' emotional acuity, self-regulation, and their triumphant odyssey in mastering English (Pekrun, Goetz 2002). The strategic integration of emotional growth into teaching methodologies and co-curricular activities, including curriculum synergies, as described in the Malaysia Education Development Plan 2013–2025, emphasizes the importance of emotional development alongside linguistic proficiency. Evidence-based findings highlight the positive impact of emotional management on academic performance, emphasizing the critical role of emotional maturity in English acquisition as a transformative factor in raising educational standards.

Furthermore, the emotional tapestry woven while learning English intricately interlaces with students' academic accomplishments. As a conduit for expression, knowledge acquisition, and opinion articulation, English becomes instrumental in shaping the student's cognitive landscape. However, a paucity of direct evidence establishing a causal relationship between students' emotional states and the learning process necessitates further empirical validation. Muhammad Syawal Amran's characterization of English as a national identity adds a layer of complexity to the nuanced interplay of emotional involvement and academic performance in the subject, calling for a more granular exploration. In learning English as a second language, students' emotional states during teaching, learning, and assessment emerge as pivotal determinants of success. Positive emotional dimensions, like joy and hope, carve the path for engagement, while negative emotions, such as fear and shame, cast shadows on both interest and academic achievements (Wan et al., 2023). The imperative lies in comprehending and responding to students' emotional states to augment their academic prowess.

However, achieving this necessitates a more refined definition and precise criteria for gauging the intricacies encapsulated in the term "emotional states," thereby providing a more holistic understanding of the English language learning process. Contemporary studies underpin the intimate nexus between emotions and the journey of learning English as a second language. Akhmad Mansur's study (2023) accentuates the centrality of effective communication in the educational milieu, asserting that directionless pedagogical guidance in learning a second language impedes mastery. Negative emotions, spanning anger, anxiety, boredom, worry, and shame, prove formidable obstacles in the English language learning odyssey. Norfadzillah Chin's exploration (2022) attests to students' palpable recognition of joy as an emotional

cornerstone in learning English as a second language. These insights underscore the overarching influence of emotions on the multifaceted process of learning English.

Consequently, the imperative for in-depth research addressing students' emotions in the context of learning English as a second language becomes both pivotal and urgent. This research endeavours to provide a rigorous and profound examination of students' emotional landscapes during the English learning process, encompassing emotions during pedagogy, didactics, professionalism, and communication (PDPC) in class, learning, and the crucible of academic assessment. This investigation not only reaffirms the profound impact of emotional engagement but also discerns its role as a motivational catalyst influencing students' academic achievements in learning English as a second language.

Research Problem

Mastering the English language assumes paramount importance within Malaysia's education system, particularly for students. Proficient speaking skills are indispensable for effective communication with teachers and peers. Nevertheless, pronunciation poses a challenge for some students, impeding their fluency. Fluency in English necessitates a robust vocabulary; however, language proficiency can be influenced by the student's upbringing environment. Noor Marina Yunus's study (2023) revealed that the use of the mother tongue at home may impede students' fluency in English, leading to speech errors.

Moreover, students often grapple with the inclination to use inappropriate English terms during conversation. This poses a concern as the Malaysian government strives to foster a distinctive Malaysian identity, with English serving as a pivotal component. Hence, there is a pressing need to prioritise English language education to enhance speaking skills, particularly among high school students in remote areas. By emphasising the significance of speaking and listening skills, students can cultivate the communication prowess necessary for both academic and personal success.

Addressing the challenges encountered by non-native English speakers in attaining fluency is imperative to ensure their contribution to shaping a unique Malaysian identity (Nor Azwahanum (Shaid, 2023). Furthermore, English teachers should pay heed to students' emotional well-being to facilitate outstanding academic performance. This study underscores the pivotal role emotions play in the academic success of rural school attendees. Thus, teachers must diligently monitor students' emotional states, emphasising both positive and negative emotions, particularly in English learning and examinations.

Enjoyment and hope emerge as predominant positive emotions associated with learning and academic achievement, whereas worry and shame prevail as dominant negative emotions. Consequently, teachers should earnestly attend to students struggling with English, offering guidance and motivation to help them navigate their negative emotions effectively.

Objectives

The Objectives of this Study are Delineated as Follows:

1. To assess positive and negative emotions in speaking English among school students.
2. To assess positive and negative emotions in listening English among school students.

Literature Review

At the secondary school level, the emotional disposition of students plays a pivotal role in the development of their speaking and listening abilities in English. A comprehensive examination of the research literature on this subject reveals several noteworthy studies.

"Emotion in the Context of Language Learning" by Pekrun et al. (2011) delves into the intricate interplay between emotions and language acquisition. The study elucidates how emotions such as anxiety, enthusiasm, and hope impact the performance of students in their speaking and listening abilities.

"Influence of Emotions in Learning English as a Second Language" by Dewi (2018) focuses on the specific role emotions play in the acquisition of a second language, particularly English. It elucidates how positive emotions like pride and enjoyment can augment students' proficiency in speaking and listening.

"Impact on English Speaking and Listening Performance among Secondary School Students" by Tan (2020) seeks to unravel the relationship between emotions and achievement in speaking and listening skills among secondary school students. The study underscores the significance of emotions such as anxiety and enthusiasm in shaping students' performance.

"Emotion and English Language Teaching" by Ellis (2018) examines the pivotal role of English teachers in influencing students' emotions during the learning process. It underscores the importance of cultivating a learning environment that fosters positive emotions to enhance students' speaking and listening abilities.

The collective findings of these studies substantiate the premise that emotions wield considerable influence over the development of English language and listening skills in secondary schools. Moreover, emotions constitute an integral facet of the learning environment, profoundly impacting students' educational experiences. Research conducted by Talib (2023) and Amran (2023), involving a cohort of 1298 primary school students, corroborates the notion that emotions significantly shape students' achievement emotions, encompassing sensations of enjoyment, boredom, and anxiety. Positive emotions are found to bolster students' engagement and retention of subject matter, whereas negative emotions impede their progress towards academic goals.

In essence, these scholarly investigations underscore the indispensable role of emotions in moulding students' communication skills within the English language domain. The nexus between positive emotions and proficiency in language communication constitutes a pivotal consideration in the realm of pedagogy and instructional design.

Methodology

This study uses a quantitative design which is survey method to collect data. The sample in this study involved 174 students that are 15 years. The selection of these respondents is important to provide feedback on the aspect of the study that will be conducted. The research instrument used was a questionnaire to measure students' emotions when learning speaking and listening in English language. The instruments of this study are adapted and modified from Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (AEQ), Pekrun, Goetz and Perry (2005) In this study positive emotions consist pleasure, hope, pride, relief, satisfied while negative emotions consists anger, anxiety, boredom and shame

The questionnaire was a Likert scale. A pilot study showed that the Cronbach's alpha for positive and negative emotions exceeds 0.70. This value indicates that the instrument of this study has high reliable. This survey have employ the five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree,' the questionnaire was meticulously partitioned into six sections. Each section comprehensively encapsulated 10 items meticulously tailored to gauge the levels of positive and negative emotions across various dimensions of the learning context, teaching, learning, and assessment for learning (TLA) within the classroom milieu, and academic accomplishments during English language examinations, with a

particular emphasis on speaking and listening proficiencies. Data analysis was conducted utilising IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 software, deploying descriptive analysis tests to meticulously compute the mean and standard deviation values of the study dataset.

Results of Research and Discussion

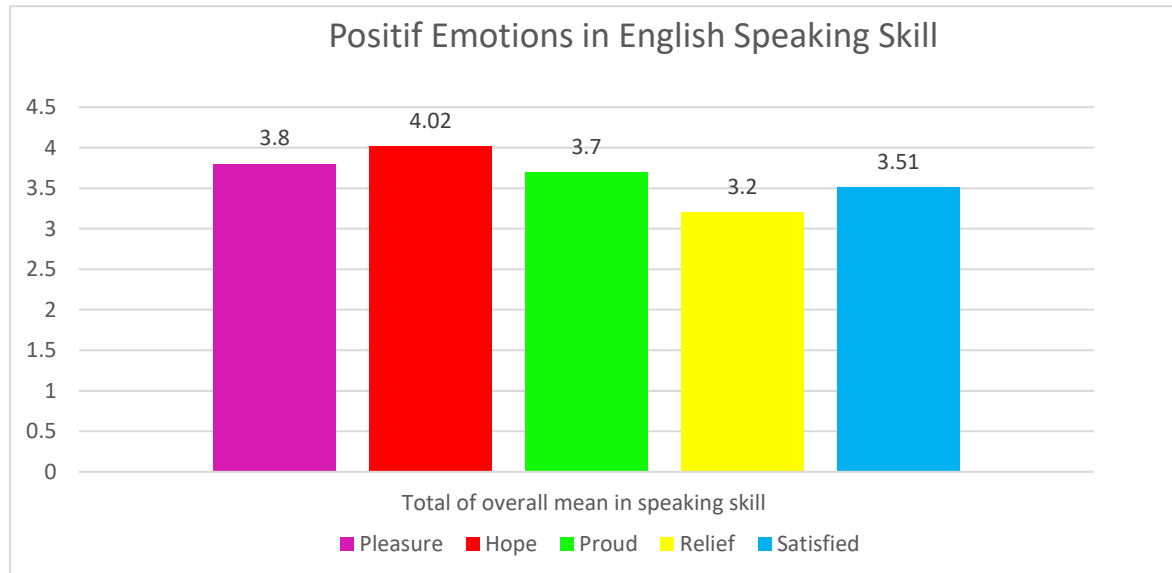


Table 1

Positive Emotions in the Context of English-Speaking Skills

Emotions	Pleasure	Hope	Proud	Relief	Satisfied
English Class	3.95	4.04	3.88	2.67	3.69
Learning English	3.93	4.03	3.67	3.2	3.22
Speaking skills exam	3.75	3.98	3.57	3.71	3.62
Total of overall Mean	3.8	4.02	3.7	3.2	3.51

Table 1 delineates the levels of positive emotions within the sphere of speaking. The research delves into emotions prevalent in the classroom environment, encompassing sentiments such as excitement, hope, satisfaction, pride, and relief. These emotions are scrutinised across three key facets of English language utilisation in speaking among high school students: during classroom interactions, learning endeavours, and examination settings. The preeminent percentage level discerned in assessing positive emotions is attributed to hope, attaining a notable 4.04 (1.061) in the classroom setting. Conversely, the lowest emotional quotient is ascribed to relief, registering a modest 2.67 (1.273) per cent. Furthermore, the apex level of emotion detected during learning activities is once again hoped to soar to a commendable 4.03 (1.075) per cent. Conversely, the average emotional

level during learning is encapsulated by satisfaction, measuring at a comparatively modest 3.22 (1.111) per cent.

Turning to the speaking examination scenario, hope emerges as the predominant emotion, recording a noteworthy 3.98 (1.086) per cent. Additionally, the secondary highest emotional echelon is occupied by pleasure, standing at 3.75 (1.049) per cent. Consequently, students' emotional inclinations across all three dimensions unequivocally manifest a propensity towards harbouring high expectations concerning proficiency in English-speaking skills.

However, particular attention must be directed towards the positive emotion of relief to ensure students' adeptness in mastering English-speaking skills. With a modest 3.2 (1.128) per cent, relief's moderate level underscores the necessity for targeted interventions to bolster students' proficiency in this domain.

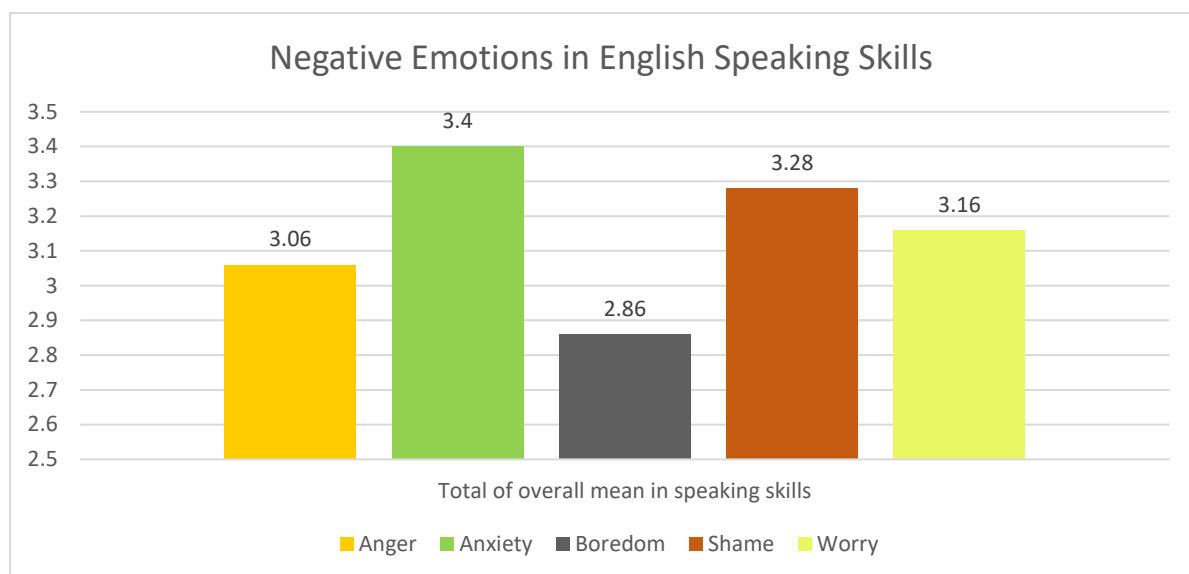


Table 2

Negative Emotions in the Context of English-Speaking Skills

Emotions	Anger	Anxiety	Boredom	Shame	Worry
English Class	3.02	3.33	2.74	3.21	3.26
Learning English	2.83	3.39	2.95	3.24	3.2
Speaking skills exam	3.32	3.34	2.89	3.38	3.02
Total of overall Mean	3.06	3.4	2.86	3.28	3.16

Table 2 elucidates the levels of negative emotions within the realm of speaking. The research explores emotions prevalent in the classroom environment, encompassing sentiments such as anger, anxiety, boredom, shame, and worry. These emotions are analysed across three key facets of English language utilisation in speaking among high school students: during classroom interactions, learning endeavours, and examination settings.

The paramount percentage level discerned in assessing negative emotions is attributed to shame, surging to a considerable 3.33 (1.219) in the classroom setting. Conversely, the lowest emotional quotient is ascribed to boredom, registering a modest 2.74 (1.393) per cent. Furthermore, the apex level of emotion detected during learning activities is anxiety, soaring to a notable 3.39 (1.233) per cent. Conversely, the mean emotional level during learning is encapsulated by shame, measuring at a comparatively modest 3.24 (1.396) per cent.

Turning to the speaking examination scenario, shame emerges as the predominant negative emotion, recording a noteworthy 3.38 (1.375) per cent. Additionally, the secondary highest emotional echelon is occupied by anxiety, standing at 3.34 (1.238) per cent. Consequently, students' emotional inclinations across all three dimensions unequivocally manifest a propensity towards experiencing heightened levels of anxiety concerning proficiency in English-speaking skills.

However, particular attention must be directed towards the negative emotion of shame to ensure students' adeptness in mastering English-speaking skills. A moderate 3.28, relief level underscores the necessity for targeted interventions to mitigate students' anxieties and foster a conducive environment for mastering speaking skills in English.

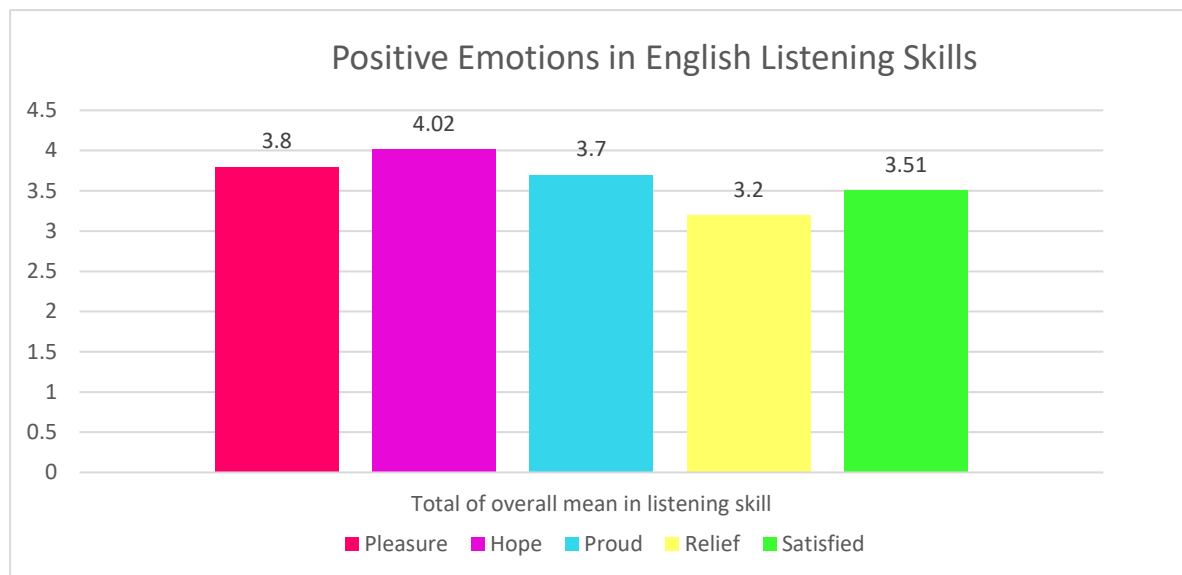


Table 3
Positive Emotions in the Context of English Listening Skills

Emotions	Pleasure	Hope	Proud	Relief	Satisfied
English Class	3.71	3.93	3.70	3.80	2.61
Learning English	3.78	3.90	3.98	3.92	3.75
Listening skills exam	3.87	3.97	3.90	3.70	3.71
Total of overall Mean	3.8	3.9	3.86	3.8	3.36

Table 3 delineates the levels of positive emotions within the domain of listening. The research examines emotions prevalent in the classroom environment, encompassing sentiments such as excitement, hope, satisfaction, pride, and relief. These emotions are scrutinized across three pivotal dimensions of English language usage in listening among high school students: during classroom interactions, learning endeavours, and examination settings.

The preeminent percentage level identified in gauging positive emotions is attributed to hope, soaring to a commendable 3.93 (1.009) in the classroom setting. Conversely, the lowest emotional quotient is ascribed to relief, registering a relatively modest 2.61 (1.284) per cent. Furthermore, the zenithal percentage level during learning activities is satisfaction, ascending to a noteworthy 3.98 (1.072) per cent. Conversely, the mean emotional level during learning is encapsulated by relief, measuring at a comparably subdued 3.75 (1.050) per cent.

Transitioning to the listening examination scenario, hope emerges as the paramount positive emotion, recording an impressive 3.97 (1.180) per cent. Additionally, the secondary highest emotional echelon is occupied by satisfaction, standing at 3.90 (1.156) per cent. Hence, students' emotional proclivities across all three dimensions unequivocally manifest a predisposition towards harbouring heightened expectations regarding proficiency in English listening skills.

However, specific attention must be directed towards the positive emotion of relief to ensure students' adeptness in mastering English listening skills. With a moderately low 3.6, the level of relief underscores the imperative for targeted interventions to enhance students' mastery of listening skills in English.

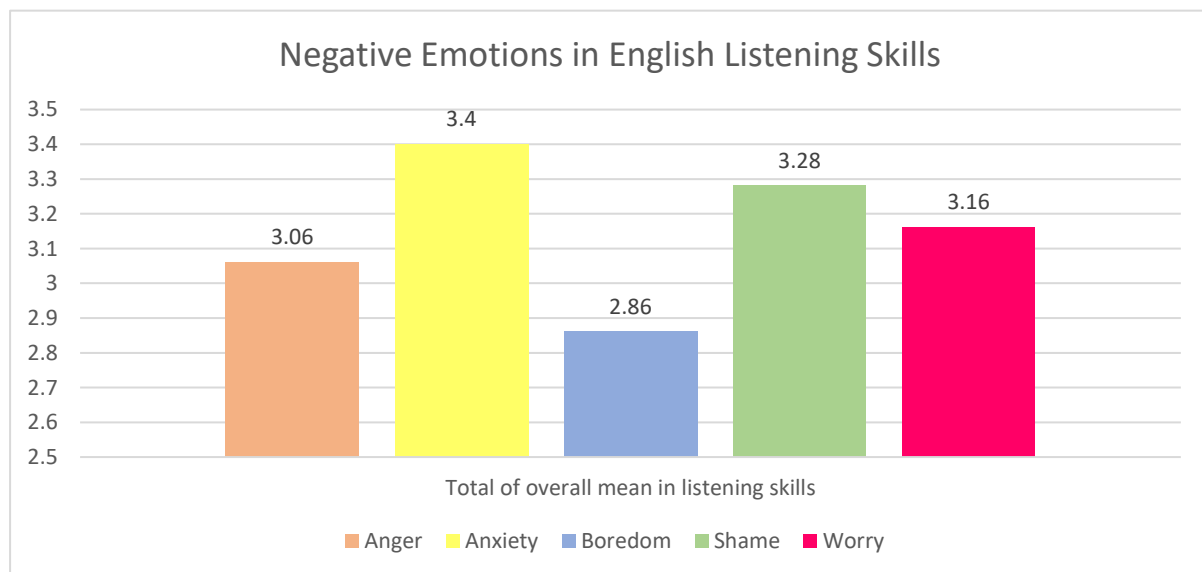


Table 4

Negative Emotions in the Context of English Listening Skills

Emotions	Anger	Anxiety	Boredom	Shame	Worry
English Class	3.32	3.18	3.06	2.98	3.34
Learning English	3.16	3.11	3.10	2.76	3.25
Speaking skills exam	3.14	3.28	3.05	2.81	3.36
Total of overall Mean	3	3	3.07	2.85	3.32

Table 4 provides insights into the levels of negative emotions pertinent to the realm of listening. The examination of emotions within the classroom milieu encompasses sentiments such as anger, anxiety, boredom, shame, and worry. These emotional states are scrutinised across three pivotal dimensions of English language utilisation in listening among high school students: during classroom engagements, learning endeavours, and examination settings.

The preeminent percentage level identified in assessing negative emotions is attributed to shame, peaking at a notable 3.34 (1.350) in the classroom environment. Conversely, the least pronounced emotional level is ascribed to boredom, registering a relatively subdued 2.98 (1.338) per cent. Furthermore, the acme of emotional manifestation during learning activities is once again encapsulated by shame, ascending to a noteworthy 3.25 (1.416) per cent. Conversely, the mean emotional level during learning is characterised by boredom, measuring at a comparably modest 3.24 (1.368) per cent.

Transitioning to the listening examination scenario, shame emerges as the predominant negative emotion, recording a notable 3.36 (1.454) per cent. Additionally, the secondary highest emotional echelon is occupied once again by shame, standing at 3.34 (1.350) per cent. Hence, students' shy emotional states across all three dimensions unequivocally underscore a predisposition towards experiencing heightened feelings of shyness concerning proficiency in English listening skills.

However, specific attention must be directed towards the negative emotion of worry to ensure students' adeptness in mastering English listening skills. With a moderately low rating of 3.07, the level of worry highlights the necessity for targeted interventions aimed at enhancing students' mastery of listening skills in English.

Discussion

This composition elucidates the emotional inclinations of students within the context of learning English, particularly in the realms of speaking and listening skills. The accompanying tables delineate the levels of positive and negative emotions across three distinct facets: classroom interactions, learning processes, and examination scenarios. Analysis of Table 1 and Table 3 reveals the prevalence of hope as the predominant positive emotion in both speaking and listening proficiencies.

The prominence of hope underscores students' confidence in their capacity to excel in acquiring and mastering English, particularly in the realm of oral communication. Conversely, examination of Table 2 and Table 4 evinces that shame emerges as the predominant negative emotion in both speaking and listening competencies. This suggests that students may

grapple with social pressures or a dearth of self-assurance when engaging in oral communication in English.

The ensuing discussion underscores the imperative of managing students' emotional states within the milieu of learning English. Positive emotions, exemplified by hope, can be nurtured through the provision of a supportive and motivational environment conducive to English communication. Concurrently, concerted efforts should be directed towards mitigating or regulating negative emotions such as shame by fostering students' self-confidence and furnishing the requisite support within the learning environment.

Effective management of students' emotional well-being holds profound implications for the efficacy of English language acquisition, particularly in the domains of speaking and listening proficiencies. This underscores the paramount importance of discerning students' emotional dispositions and their consequential impact on their attainment in learning English.

Conclusion

In conclusion, emotions significantly influence learning English as a second language. The findings gleaned from this study suggest that negative emotions do not invariably impede students' progress or academic achievements in English subjects. Furthermore, educators assume a pivotal role in facilitating effective English language education. In other words, educators are expected to ensure that students feel empowered to express both positive and negative emotions within the educational milieu. This latitude enables educators to oversee the English language learning process adeptly Reyes, & Salovey, (2013). Establishing an environment conducive to the uninhibited expression of emotions is paramount.

Students benefit from an environment where they can articulate their feelings freely, fostering a milieu that is both safe and conducive to emotional maturation. Additionally, educators should proactively endeavour to preempt students' exposure to negative emotions, such as boredom, by incorporating more engaging and stimulating teaching methodologies. Moreover, the pedagogical methodologies employed by educators wield profound significance, shaping students' self-perception and influencing emotional development. Integrating enjoyable teaching strategies, such as incorporating music into the classroom, can be instrumental. As Talib (2023) posited, activities centred around music in the learning environment, particularly singing exercises, facilitate a more comprehensive grasp of the material discussed.

Future research endeavours should encompass an expanded demographic sample, encompassing high school students exhibiting diverse emotional dispositions, to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding. Researchers should also explore supplementary factors, including gender, emotional quotient, age, and school locale, that may correlate with student emotional states. By being cognizant of students' emotional landscapes and experiences in learning English as a second language, this study is poised to assist all stakeholders in augmenting success and proficiency across various English language competencies.

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