Towards conceptualizing boredom as an emotion in the EFL academic context

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Abstract

Boredom is one of the few learner factors that have not yet received due attention in foreign language pedagogy, although for decades it has been widely discussed from a psychological perspective. The main reason for underestimating boredom in language learning environments is that teachers usually associate it with laziness, anxiety or depression. Consequently, the present study aims at offering reflection on the concept of boredom grounded in applied linguistics with reference to its multidimensional character, cause-and-effect mechanisms as well as its context-dependent background. The authors intend to discuss the data obtained from qualitatively and quantitatively examined English philology students' diaries revealing the participants' judgments about situations in which they experienced involvement, self-encouragement or reluctance to do a particular task during different classes including the practical English language course and content subjects. Finally, general comments on the consequences of boredom for the quality of students' work will be made and opportunities for adroitly tackling rather than combating this intriguing phenomenon will be considered.

Keywords: boredom; proneness to boredom; advanced learners of English

1. Introduction

Boredom is an emotional or psychological state that, though frequently experienced in schools (Pekrun, Goetz, Daniels, Stupinsky, & Perry, 2010), remains neglected and is therefore poorly understood by second language acquisition (SLA) researchers and teachers. The former are mainly focused on anxiety in the L2 classroom, whereas the latter tend to attribute boredom to learner laziness, anxiety or personality factors (Chapman, 2013). Foreign language teachers have their own ideas of what should be done to maintain their students' interest, involvement and enthusiasm which usually derive from their beliefs about effective teaching. In contrast to the field of SLA, boredom has long been subject of study in psychology, educational psychology and education, the emphasis being laid on investigating its definitions and symptoms as well as on examining whether it should be diagnosed as a trait or as an environmentally determined process (Belton & Priyadharshini, 2007; Farmer & Sundberg, 1986; Fogelman, 1976; Watt & Vodanovich, 1992). Different authors (e.g., Daschmann, Goetz, & Stupinsky, 2011; Goetz, Frenzel, Pekrun, & Hall, 2006; Mann & Robinson, 2009) have shown the pervasiveness of boredom among students, which inspired the present authors to investigate this phenomenon from a second/foreign language (L2) classroom perspective. Consequently, an attempt will be made to define the still underappreciated concept of boredom, highlight its possible causes and point out its two basic typologies. Following the theoretical background, the authors seek to gain both a qualitative and quantitative insight into a group of English philology students' perceptions of boredom and ways of coping with it. Finally, pedagogical implications of the study will briefly be discussed.

2. Literature review

2.1. Defining boredom and specifying its causes

Boredom is a notion which irrevocably evokes negative connotations referring to an inner sense of emptiness, apathy and lack of purpose. Speaking in more scholarly terms, boredom can be defined as an emotion, state, drive or psychological experience (Fahlman, 2009) that can be mild, unpleasant or even painful, and that occurs when one's surroundings are perceived as dull, tedious and lacking in challenge (Macklem, 2015). Boredom experience entails an amalgam of dissatisfaction, disengagement, disappointment, inattention, impaired vitality and lowered motivation for goal pursuit (Fahlman, 2009). Consequently, students who are bored have no purpose in learning and thus they find it difficult to generate interest and focus on what is going on around them; their inability

to make an effort cognitively contributes to the unwillingness to perform (Preckel, Götz, & Frenzel, 2010). Boredom is an academic emotion that is silent for while it pertains to and affects students' learning process and achievements (Pekrun, Elliot, & Maier, 2009), it does not contribute to classroom indiscipline as intensely as anger (Fahlman, 2009). Although boredom is considered to be a distinct emotion, it clearly has an affinity with apathy and anhedonia since bored students find it difficult to engage in and derive pleasure from activities usually regarded as satisfying. Boredom is also sometimes compared to depression as they both involve decreased arousal and a lack of life meaning (Macklem, 2015). However, although both boredom and depression may act as causal agents having much in common with student inattention, a sense of purposelessness and lapses of memory, researchers refer to them as distinct states (Goldberg, Eastwood, LaGuardia, & Danckert, 2011).

There are a number of models and theories of boredom providing explanations why students are unable to engage in school activities and elaborating on the factors that may be viewed as underlying the negative emotion of boredom (Eastwood, Frischen, Fenske, & Smilek, 2012). The ones deserving special attention and reflection are listed below.

- *The under-stimulation model*, which highlights situations when learners' work is limited to practicing the material in a repetitive and predictable manner (Larson & Richards, 1991). The reason for boredom can be, therefore, understood as the paucity of new stimuli likely to instigate students to search for, discover and explore new facts, phenomena and/or ideas.

- *The forced-effort model*, which sees boredom as a consequence of being forced to invest mental energy in performing a task perceived by an individual either as monotonous or too complex (Hill & Perkins, 1985). The said model refers to teacher-directed situations in which the level of students' frustration rises because they are in no position to control and take responsibility for their own learning.

- *The control-value theory of achievement emotions*, which draws on students' appraisals of control and value they attribute to a particular activity or subject (Pekrun, 2006; Tulis & Fulmer, 2013). If they find it uninteresting, unchallenging or unrewarding, their concentration decreases leading to avoidance and passivity, while their eagerness to look for something else to do (e.g., talking to a friend, daydreaming) increases.

- *The attentional theory of boredom proneness*, which conceptualizes boredom as resulting from distractibility and attention deficit (Harris, 2000; LePera, 2011). In other words, boredom is likely to be experienced by individuals who exhibit poor attentional control and inability to engage, and whose awareness of attention is low. Inattention often culminates in

memory lapses and mind-wandering, or interest-decreasing thoughts which generate boredom, thus making it impossible for students to enjoy performed tasks (Cheyne, Carriere, & Smilek, 2006). In this way, attention can be treated not only as part of the definition of boredom, but also as one of its causes.

- *The emotion theory*, which is based on the assumption that boredom-related problems might be attributed to an individual's difficulty in accessing and understanding his or her own emotions (Eastwood, Cavaliere, Fahlman, & Eastwood, 2007; Eastwood et al., 2012). Bored students can be characterized in terms of externally-oriented thinking, which is an obstacle to identifying and communicating their own feelings. Students suffering from alexithymia, that is finding it impossible or extremely hard to process emotions, exhibit much greater boredom proneness compared to their peers (Parker, Prkachin, & Prkachin, 2005).

2.2. Types of boredom

There are two basic classifications of boredom, the first dividing it into two types, and the other drawing a distinction among its five subtypes.

2.2.1. State boredom vs. trait boredom

The main difference between these two faces of boredom is that *state boredom* is connected with a student's reaction to a stimulus that he or she has been exposed to and *trait boredom* is associated with their increased susceptibility to this negative emotion (Macklem, 2015). State boredom is the most meticulously examined type of boredom which takes place when a student perceives what is going on around him or her as insufficiently exciting (e.g., teacher control is excessive, resources for the task are inadequate, goals have been neither clearly stated nor focused, the task does not match the student's proficiency level, or it has no meaning for learners or the lesson is devoted to a disliked topic/task). This type of boredom is, therefore, a temporary experience that fluctuates, depending on arousal levels; if they are low, a student will feel dissatisfied, disinterested and/or frustrated (Fahlman, 2009; Vogel-Walcutt, Fiorell, Carper, & Schatz, 2012). By contrast, trait boredom, usually referred to as *boredom proneness*, is typical of individuals who are more apt to be affected by negative emotions than by their positive counterparts (Barnett & Klitzing, 2006). High boredom proneness very often concerns extraverted students who fail to control anger and aggression. When boredom prone individuals experience too little stimulation from the environment, they are more likely to behave in an impulsive

way, have lower learning achievements, play truant, abuse drugs and alcohol, or struggle with eating disorders (Sommers & Vodanovich, 2000).

2.2.2. Five subtypes of boredom

This typology of boredom draws on various degrees of intensity with which it is experienced by individuals. Since there are a number of specific types of boredom and a wide range of intensity with which it occurs, researchers (e.g., Goetz & Frenzel, 2006; Goetz et al., 2014) have proposed to address this construct as *multiple boredoms,* all of them being enumerated and described below:

- *Indifferent boredom*, which is experienced in a cheerful, relaxing way. It relates to students who are pleasantly fatigued and/or withdrawn.
- *Calibrating boredom*, which is experienced in a moderately unpleasant way. It concerns students with a high level of uncertainty who are at a loss for what to do and want to change this situation, though they confine themselves to wandering, off-topic thoughts rather than actively looking for something more interesting or challenging.
- *Searching boredom*, which is an unpleasant emotion associated with creativity. It makes an individual restless and aware that he or she needs something more involving to do which is, however, seldom connected with the lesson and its content.
- *Reactant boredom*, which is a definitely unpleasant and aversive state experienced by students who are strongly determined to find a way out. Individuals prone to reactant boredom can be characterized as affected by anger and aggression. They are restless and uncomfortable, and they try to put the blame for being bored on different external factors, such as the teacher, the topic, the materials or the syllabus.
- *Apathetic boredom*, which is experienced in an extremely unpleasant way as it pertains to dissatisfied and helpless students whose levels of positive and negative emotions are equally low (Goetz et al., 2014).

Researchers have highlighted the reactant and apathetic boredom subtypes as most frequently occurring in school settings, whereas indifferent boredom has been reported as accompanying students in their leisure time (Goetz et al., 2014).

3. An overview of boredom-related research

In Larson and Richards' (1991) study boredom levels turned out to be higher in social studies, foreign languages and science, while music and PE were reported more enjoyable and involving for students. In another research project, undertaken by

Tulis and Fulmer (2013) in American schools, the learners displayed negative feelings towards mathematics more often than towards other subjects, which resulted from fear of failure in the performance of a challenging task and awareness of limited competence.

Young (2009, as cited in Chapman, 2013, pp. 14-15) singled out PowerPoint presentations as the main reason for boredom experienced by students in lecture-type classes. Technological equipment appeared to act as a crutch rather than as an effective and inspiring tool like group discussions or debates. The researchers also indicated tasks lacking meaning, that is having no relationship with one's own life, as a precursor to boredom and an enemy of learner autonomy. They showed that the students with a stronger purpose for learning tended to persist in doing boring tasks and succeeded in transferring from other-regulation to self-regulation (Hulleman & Harackiewicz, 2009; Yeager et al., 2014, as cited in Macklem, 2015, p. 60). In yet another study it was pointed out that preparation for the test was very likely to generate boredom and make students complain that they would rather do hands-on activities (Mora, 2011, as cited in Macklem, 2015, p. 6).

As has been already mentioned, so far not a single study has been conducted that would primarily deal with boredom in the L2 classroom. There have been, however, a few studies referring to boredom as a secondary object of interest, which is undoubtedly worth noting and discussing. Peacock's (1997) study of the effect of authentic materials on the in-class motivation of the Korean EFL learners yielded intriguing results for while the said materials contributed to the increase in the observed on-task behavior, the participants were of the opinion that they were significantly more boring than non-authentic materials. The discrepancy between the researcher's impressions and the learners' self-reports hinted that boredom can be successfully disguised by observable on-task behavior. Beerman and Cornjäger (2011) examined the teenage German learners' of French as a L2 perceptions of French language instruction in relation to experienced joy, boredom and anxiety. As a result, they discovered that there was a significant, positive correlation between L2 instruction and joy, and a significant but negative correlation between the said instruction and boredom. Another conclusion was that joy and boredom developed in opposite directions. More precisely, the longer the subjects were exposed to French language instruction, the less joyful and the more bored they felt. Interestingly, the researchers did not report a significant correlation between French language instruction and anxiety. Jean and Simard (2011) investigated a group of Québécois high school learners' of English as a L2 and French as a L2, and also their teachers' views on the importance of various forms of grammar instruction. The findings showed that the participants did not like learning grammar, though at the same time they valued it. This made Jean and Simard (2011) speculate whether

effective and *boring* are to be considered as mutually inclusive qualifiers of grammar instruction practices.

Finally, it is worth making a few comments on bored students' behaviors which, as reported in Chapman's (2013) study, might range from passive to active. The most frequently occurring active behaviors reported by her student interviewees included consulting one's planner, writing a list of things to do, planning one's weekend and reading ahead in the textbook, whereas the most common passive reactions comprised zoning out and doodling. As regards less frequent behaviors, they were exclusively passive and encompassed looking at the clock, playing with the cell phone and nail biting.

4. The study

4.1. Aims and research questions

The study aimed to investigate boredom that English philology students may experience in different classes including the practical English language course and content subjects, and to find out its possible sources. The following research questions were addressed:
1. Do the study participants experience boredom in different content subjects and language classes?
2. What are the main factors causing boredom?

4.2. Participants

The participants of the study were 30 Polish university students of English philology who were in their final year of studies on a two-year MA program. All of them chose to become teachers of English. Of the 30 participants 15 (13 females and 2 males) were regular and 15 (all females) were part-time students. The mean age for the whole group was 26.93 (min. 23, max. 47). On average, all the students had been learning English for 13.10 years (min. 8, max. 25). The proficiency level represented by the participants of the study could be described as somewhere between B2 and C1, as specified in the levels laid out in the *Common European framework of reference for languages*. The aim of the MA program is to prepare students for writing their theses and thus its main focus was on seminars; however, it also offered an intensive course in English and other courses such as linguistics, didactics, pedagogy, psychology and electives (e.g., introduction to linguistics, cognitive linguistics, developmental psychology, processes of globalization, soft power in foreign policy, political elites in modern societies, 21st-century challenges and threats, stylistics of the Polish language). It should also be added

that the regular students had classes during the week and the part-time students attended classes on Friday, Saturday and Sunday every other week.

4.3. Data collection and analysis

In order to collect the necessary data concerning the experience of boredom and its possible sources, the students were requested to keep a diary. They were asked to think about target language learning situations which they found them-selves particularly involved in or discouraged while doing tasks proposed by their teachers. The students were asked to try and make six to ten dated comments in English extended over a two-month period while focusing on the reasons for their interest, engagement and enjoyment as opposed to states of disappointment, frustration and distraction that they might have also experienced.

The collected data were mainly subjected to qualitative analysis, which consisted in identifying recurring patterns in the comments the participants placed in their diaries. Following the guidelines offered by Miles and Huberman (1994), the procedures included: data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification. The students' entries were read and reread as well as coded and recoded. All unclear and/or inconsistent cases were discussed by the researchers and categorized. In addition, the gathered data were subjected to quantitative analysis, which encompassed calculating the number of diary entries and references the subjects made to situations when they felt discouraged and bored.

5. Results

The quantitative analysis of the data which originated from the students' diaries revealed that the study participants produced a total of 184 entries, 98 of which concerned the area of their involvement in doing tasks proposed by their academic teachers and 86 were related to the subjects' reluctance to do such tasks. What follows are categories and relevant extracts obtained from the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data related to the latter area. This is because this area involves states of disappointment, frustration and distraction, that is, feelings related to the experience of boredom (Fahlman, 2009; Vogel-Walcutt et al., 2012) which are of particular interest to the present study. The presentation of the findings begins with a category which received the largest number of references.[1] Table 1 outlines the categories as well as the number of references they received.

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[1] It should be noted, however, that the number of entries does not equal the number of references due to the fact that some entries sometimes contained more than one reference.

Table 1 Categories and number of references

Category	Number of references
Language activities	45
Content subjects and language classes	19
Teacher behavior	14
Class preparation and management	8

5.1. Language activities

The largest source of boredom (45 references) comprised language activities. The students experienced boredom when they were asked to perform too difficult or too easy exercises. They were not involved in doing tasks they regarded as unrelated or unnecessary. Some students considered making and/or listening to presentations as particularly boring, they pointed to the lack of variety of language activities during classes or the students were simply reluctant to do particular types of exercises. The following excerpts from the students' diaries illustrate some of these points:

(…) Beforehand the level of difficulty of the texts was simply too high and it discouraged me from actively participating in the class (…).

(…) The teacher spoke Polish in the lessons and the tasks were too simple so it caused boredom. The most irritating task was to listen to a song "Maya the bee" in German (…).

In the next learning situation I found myself discouraged from learning. We had to prepare the presentation about some events in the history of Great Britain. (…) The topic of my presentation was too difficult and I was completely discouraged from doing this task (…).

(…) fill in the gaps with one suitable word/preposition/verb in correct form. I feel like I am doing homework in the class every week. I would rather do it by myself and then check it with the group and teacher. It is frustrating and boring.

(…) students had to prepare presentations but some of them I found useless and boring (the topics were given by the teacher). I think that a whole class about the mental development of a child was not necessary.

Another learning situation was an activity that required describing one of the states in America. Unfortunately, my knowledge about the USA was not enriched in a significant way. I was involved in gathering information of no meaningful value. Learning about one state in America was, to say the least, unsatisfying. Moreover, I felt overwhelmed by the accumulation of unnecessary information. As a result of gaining knowledge only in one particular area, my attitude became negative which badly affected my performance.

5.2. Content subjects and language classes

An important boredom-related factor refers to the very classes the participants were obliged to attend (19 references). The analysis of the data revealed that some of the classes were perceived by the students as too difficult and over-loaded with information. Such a state of affairs made a few of them feel anxious, disappointed and bored as well as not willing to participate and attend lessons. In addition, some students were not satisfied with the way teachers planned their courses or parts of those courses. Some students did not like the fact that they were not presented with the opportunity to choose a course they wanted to attend. Such situations may have led some students to experience boredom during classes. The following examples illustrate some of these points:

> Our group was given homework after every classes and we had to read a lot of pages. In fact, after reading the theory, I could not remember most of the information the following day. The group was told to bring the copies of the pages to the classes and talk about it with the teacher. Most of the people did not feel encouraged to speak. My disappointment discouraged me from coming to the classes.

> Over the next three or four meetings I was very stressed out during the classes (...) Only after a few classes did I realise that many other students felt the same as me. Some of them were skipping the classes just to avoid stress.

> The next situation which I want to describe are practical classes, namely reading and writing. I was totally disappointed, because I thought that we would practice reading. Then it turned out that we had to conduct classes by preparing some article and invent some questions according to the text. I was very discouraged from coming to the classes and actively participating, because it was very boring and each lesson was the same (...).

> To be frankly, this last term turned out to be highly disappointing for me. We were forced to take part in 2 optional courses which were completely irrelevant with our studies. Not only were they conducted in Polish but were also not my cup of tea. (...) I didn't get what I had expected. This last term didn't live up to my expectations.

5.3. Teacher behavior

Teachers constitute yet another source of boredom (14 references). The analysis of the data showed that the lack of teacher engagement in the teaching process, the teacher's attitude to his or her students or the lack of explicit instruction may have a very demotivating as well as boredom-provoking impact on students. What is more, the feelings of boredom and demotivation might also been evoked by inconsistent teachers, not caring about being supportive and helpful and their negative, unpleasantly conveyed comments. Finally, the lack of feedback

might also have resulted in inhibiting students' involvement. Illustrative examples of some of the students' comments are provided below:

> *After some time I decided to try even harder and learn more than the rest of the group. The results of the tests were higher and I started to be more confident while speaking. Unfortunately, the teacher did not comment on my progress positively. At the end of the semester, he said I should be more engaged during the classes. The final grade was lower than I had expected (...).*

> *(...) Usually, each student was given a sheet of paper with grammar tasks to do. Then the teacher asked if we had any problems, if not, the tasks were not even checked. To me those classes were a waste of time.*

> *(...) First of all, from the beginning the attitude of the teacher was not proper, because he favoured students who he already knew (...).*

5.4. Class preparation and management

The last but not least source of boredom-evoking feelings among the participants of the study was related to the ways teachers organize their language classes (8 references). The analysis of the data revealed that boredom might be caused by classes which are chaotic and not well-organized as well as when a class is conducted in a way that is different from what had been planned. In addition, the students experienced boredom during lessons conducted in a similar manner and also when asked to perform tasks lacking in variety and originality. The gathered data also demonstrated that boredom might have been caused by teachers who were not prepared for their classes. Representative excerpts from the students' responses are as follows:

> *Interestingly enough, I would include a native speaker in this group. The classes conducted by Teacher 5 tended to lack organization. we used to spend quite a lot of time reading words written on flashcards and working in pairs, but the classes tended to devolve in disarray after a short while (...).*

> *(...) Even though she was an experienced teacher her lessons were not well-organized. She often forgot what we had done recently and covered the same material twice. That was very frustrating (...).*

> *(...) we were asked to prepare short presentations about famous women but the teacher constantly went 'off-topic' and I didn't even manage to present my presentation twice (...) and I wasn't given a chance to perform the task given by the teacher – it was disappointing.*

> *(...) I was really fed up by the tasks proposed by our teacher who asked us to write a paper on a given subject. We had to write an essay once a week, thus I did not put a lot of effort into those essays because it was monotonous and I just wanted to get it over with and forget about it (...).*

A role-play which was prepared in groups. The people were complete strangers to me (...) the disappointment came when nothing happened as planned. Everything turned out to be harder than I thought at the beginning. Moreover, the group could not come to any agreement and it all didn't end well during our performance.

6. Discussion and boredom-coping solutions

As a result of the quantitatively and qualitatively oriented study described above, the authors managed to identify and examine the reasons for boredom as experienced by 30 students of English philology. The participants' comments could be grouped into four categories, namely: (1) language activities, (2) content subjects and language classes, (3) teacher behavior, and (4) class preparation and management, revealing areas of their expectations and disappointments alike. The analysis of the gathered data leads to the conclusion that the students need a proactive intervention on the part of the teacher as the one acquainted with their L2 learning strengths and weaknesses and thus ready to dynamically respond to a variety of situations they find themselves in.

Some of the students complained about too low or too high a level of difficulty of certain tasks, which brought about their discouragement and frustration. It seems reasonable to suggest that it is connected with the lack of sequencing on the part of the teacher, that is failure to progressively and logically proceed from easier to more complex aspects of the language. The ability to appropriately sequence lesson activities heavily relies upon the teacher's awareness of the importance of creating an appropriate balance between pupils' new and prior knowledge as stated in Ausubel's (1968) meaningful learning and retention theory. The teacher's familiarity with their students' degrees of knowing the language is a prerequisite for getting the level of challenge right and thus for motivating class members to participate in proposed activities. The teacher's reliance on the concept of meaningful learning might also prevent situations where they are inconsistent or where some students are favored at the cost of others for the former's profound knowledge about the latter's language competence and achievements is likely to culminate in taking a more objective and comprehensive perspective on what previously used to be overlooked, neglected or underestimated.

A number of paticipants perceived the predictable mode(s) of conducting classes as discouraging them from active involvement. They reported they had been expected to prepare presentations on topics that were of little interest to them, read about facts that had *no meaningful value* or do conventional gap-fill exercises they would rather do at home. The students' feelings of disappointment and disengagement can be explained with regard to two previously discussed models of boredom, namely the under-stimulation model (Larson &

Richards, 1991), as they evidently lacked exposure to fresh stimuli likely to kindle their curiosity, and the forced-effort model (Hill & Perkins, 1985), for they experienced excessive teacher control which moved them away from autonomy and, what comes with it, the opportunity to make their own choices and decisions.

A good deterrent to boredom caused by having to do routine activities and work on imposed topics can be interactive learning which draws on a combination of meaningful, hands-on techniques encouraging research skill development rather than linear information gathering, improving information-processing ability and facilitating the understanding of new concepts by introducing them in relation to prior knowledge. Interactive learning respects students' attitudes and values, and engages them in small group discussions, debates, write-pair-share activities, role-play, games or brainstorming (Prince, 2004; Smith & Cardaciotto, 2011).

Another important way to lower the degree of students' boredom is fostering their autonomy as language learners and thus encouraging self-regulated strategies, such as goal setting, choice making and self-assessment, which is likely to enhance students' belief in their own abilities and enthusiasm about proposed tasks. It is worthwhile to recommend that teachers promote mastery goals and emphasize the role of hard work in successful learning, which might be conducive to the increase of on-task behaviors and the decrease of off-task ones. Creating the conditions favorable to question asking might also become a contributor to reduced boredom levels in school settings (Furner & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2011). Since some of the subjects participating in the present study criticized the insufficient amount of teacher-provided explicit instruction, it might be a good solution to train them in socio-affective strategies with a special regard to question for clarification so that they could feel free to address the teacher and ask for the explanation, example or repetition (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, & Russo, 1985).

Another attention-getting factor that was pointed out in the diaries under investigation and that might be regarded as one of the reasons for the students' dissatisfaction and disengagement is no or very little feedback provision. For instance, one of the subjects claimed to have worked more than before and to have made progress, which passed unnoticed resulting in the said student's discouragement. It is, therefore, essential that teachers supply conclusive remarks not only about the problematic areas of their students' work but also about their competencies so as to positively affect their confidence and persistence. Feedback is an effective, dialogic tool for molding students' appraisals and making them realize that any kind of failure can be identified with an opportunity to improve upon and broaden intellectual horizons. Knowing that a given problem or inability to do something is not fixed pushes individuals into eagerly performing a task and enriching existing knowledge (Goetz, Cornjäger, Frenzel, Lüdtke,

& Hall, 2010). This is why a combination of linguistically oriented negative cognitive feedback and extralinguistically underpinned positive affective feedback deserves to be recommended; it is then that a gentle indication of students' weaknesses in L2 learning is intertwined with a motivating appreciation of their effort and diligence (Brown, 2007).

One more significant option for coping with students' boredom and language learning obstacles it causes is focus on the development of their emotional awareness, thus indicating compliance with the emotion theory (Eastwood et al., 2007; Eastwood et al., 2012). Using emotion words in the L2 classroom is conducive to one's meaningful perception of emotions and social efficacy. Learners who understand both their own and their classmates' feelings, are more ready to face the problem and seek engagement-friendly solutions (Beck, Kumschick, Eid, & Klann-Delius, 2012; Gendron, Lindquist, Barsalou, & Barrett, 2012).

The research findings outlined above lead to the conceptualization of boredom in the L2 classroom as a complex, multidimensional, situation-dependent phenomenon that has different faces (i.e., discouragement, irritation, frustration, dissatisfaction) and reasons (performed tasks, teacher behavior, organizational factors). Although, due to a relatively small number of subjects that took part in the present research, it is difficult to make any general statements, obtained data show that boredom calls for more attention from L2 teachers and researchers. Given that in coping with boredom in the L2 learning environment all possible methodological solutions need to be in complete accord with learner autonomy and the self-concepts it entails, such as self-awareness and self-assessment, it seems quite an undertaking.

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