

The Impact of the Emotions of Happiness, Enjoyment, Anxiety and Disappointment on Language  
Learners' Acquisition of a Second Language

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### **Abstract**

The present research studied the impact of the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment and the negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment on adult English language learners in a second language classroom. The reason behind observing and studying these emotions and their effect on the language learning process was to highlight the importance of the emotions of students in language classrooms, and to help language learners and language teachers in better understanding the role of their emotions when learning a second language. The research methods used to obtain data involved the observation of students (classroom observation) and questionnaires regarding the occurrence and impact of the positive and negative emotions being studied in this research. It was found that happiness and enjoyment had a positive and beneficial impact on the language learning process as these emotions made the learners feel motivated, determined, and enthusiastic towards achieving their learning objectives in the language classroom. On the other hand, anxiety and disappointment had a negative impact as they hindered the learning progress of learners and adversely impacted their self-confidence by discouraging and demotivating them to learn English. Some new findings were also revealed during the research. Both positive and negative emotions seemed to coexist for each language class that were part of this research, and participants experienced both types of emotions within the same language class. Moreover, it was found that negative emotions were much harder to observe by the researcher as compared to positive emotions. Both these findings, in my opinion, highlight the complexity of emotions. Since language learners are likely to experience a wide array of emotions in a language classroom, it is important that more research be conducted on different types of positive and negative emotions, along with their impact on the language learning process of students, in an SLA classroom.

Key words: emotions, positive emotions, negative emotions, language learning, SLA

## Résumé

La présente recherche s'est penchée sur les impacts des émotions positives comme la joie et la satisfaction, ainsi que des émotions négatives telles l'anxiété et le désenchantement, chez les adultes apprenant l'anglais comme langue seconde (ALS). Le but de cette étude était d'observer l'effet qu'a l'apprentissage d'une langue sur la compréhension des émotions afin de mieux intégrer celles-ci dans le vocabulaire appris.

Les méthodes de recherche utilisées comprenaient l'observation des étudiants et le remplissage de questionnaires ayant comme thèmes l'occurrence et l'impact des émotions positives et négatives. Il fut constaté que la joie et la satisfaction avaient un impact bénéfique sur le processus d'apprentissage des langues vu la motivation, la détermination et l'enthousiasme que celles-ci procurent. Par ailleurs, l'anxiété et le désenchantement eurent un impact négatif sur l'apprentissage des participants. Ces émotions négatives eurent un effet incident sur la confiance en soi et fut un facteur démotivant face à l'apprentissage de l'anglais.

De nouvelles découvertes firent surface lors de cette recherche. Les émotions positives et négatives semblèrent coexister dans chaque classe. Les participants rapportaient ressentir les deux types d'émotions lors d'un même cours. Qui plus est, les émotions négatives furent plus difficiles à observer par la chercheure. Ces deux trouvailles soulignent, à notre avis, la complexité des émotions positives et négatives. Vu la susceptibilité des étudiants de ressentir une myriade d'émotions lors d'un cours de langue, il serait important de mener davantage de recherches sur les différents types d'émotions positives et négatives, ainsi que leur impact sur le processus d'apprentissage des étudiants dans une classe d'ALS.

Mots clés: émotions, émotions positives, émotions négatives, apprentissage langue, ALS.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SLL	Second Language Learning
FLL	Foreign Language Learning
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
L2	Second language
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AEQ	Achievement Emotions Questionnaire
FL	Foreign language
FLE	Foreign language enjoyment
FLA	Foreign language anxiety
FLCAS	Foreign language classroom anxiety scale



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## **CHAPTER 1: Introduction**

As a language instructor, I realized how important the role of emotions was in a language classroom when I was teaching my native language (Urdu, a South Asian language) to American students at a university in Miami, Florida. My students displayed a wide variety of emotions in the language classroom, and I observed how these emotions impacted their process of learning a new language. I also witnessed how the emotions of my students changed from positive to negative and vice versa, as they studied different features and characteristics of a new language. This led me to ponder the importance of emotions in a language learning classroom and how crucial their role might be in acquiring a second or foreign language.

Emotions are an integral part of the language learning process and are “intrinsic to our language attitudes and linguistic interactions” (Pavlenko, 2012, p. 409). When learners engage with the process of learning a second or foreign language, they are most likely to experience a wide variety of emotions which can be both positive and negative in nature (Shao et al., 2019). The positive emotions experienced by learners can include emotions like hope, enthusiasm, happiness, joy, admiration, and gratitude to name a few, and the negative emotions experienced may assume the form of discouragement, sadness, anger, envy, anxiety, anger, hopelessness, sadness, shame, guilt, disappointment, boredom etc. (Rawal & De Costa 2019; Sayadian & Lashkarian, 2015; Shao et al., 2020; Teimouri et al., 2019). These emotions projected by the learners are important to the process of second language learning (SLL) (Shao et al., 2019). This thesis therefore emphasizes the relevance of emotions to the language learning process and reiterates the need for more research on the positive and negative emotions experienced by language learners as they interact with and learn a new language.

When researching the role and importance of emotions in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), I quickly realized the limited amount of research on the relevance of emotions to the language learning process during the acquisition of a second language (L2). Emotions have very much remained in

the background with regards to the field of SLA (Prior, 2019), with less attention given to emotions and more focus on the role of cognition in L2 acquisition research, except for the emotion of anxiety (Li et al., 2018; Yu, 2022). Emotions are considered secondary in contrast to cognition when it comes to research surrounding the role of emotions in language acquisition and “researchers often pay more attention to cognitive and social perspectives, rather than emotional ones” (Dewaele, 2015, p. 13). Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) emphasize the need for more research on emotions in the learning domain of SLA, stating that although emotions play an important role in our lives, they have generally been “shunned” by SLA academics (p. 9). One possible reason for this can be attributed to the dynamic and fluid nature of emotions which makes it hard to assess and analyze their full impact on the language acquisition process in a second or foreign language classroom (De Costa, 2016; Pavlenko, 2013). More recent research on emotions occurring in the language acquisition process has commented on this dynamic nature of emotions as opposed to viewing them as a “static phenomenon or an individual trait” (Shao et al., 2019). Therefore, emotions occurring in language classrooms can be challenging to study and research (Plonsky et al., 2022) and their dynamic nature can make it hard for the researcher to capture their full impact, both on the learners’ persona and on the learning process of the learners (Oxford & Gkonou, 2021).

Unfortunately, research on the role of emotions in the process of learning a new language has been limited and restricted to only a few emotions such as enjoyment, anxiety, joy, frustration, disappointment and fear to name a few emotions (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017; Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2020; Shao et al., 2020). Furthermore, emotions are complex in nature and dynamic in their occurrence (Oxford & Gkonou, 2021; Pishghadam et al., 2016; Yu, 2022). This adds to the difficulty of observing and studying emotions in their entirety. As a researcher observing emotions in a classroom setting, it was quite difficult for me to accurately observe the actual emotions being displayed by the participants. My assumptions, or any other researcher’s assumptions, about the emotions being manifested by individuals based on their facial expressions or bodily language may be deceiving, especially when observing people from different cultures. It is important for researchers to be cognizant of different cultural contexts and settings to better access and

analyze behaviors in different settings. Researchers also need a deep understanding of cultural contexts to interpret behaviors accurately. This will ensure the reliability and validity of data collected during studies on emotions, particularly in cross-cultural settings.

As I analyzed research and case studies studying the role of emotions in SLL, I found that much of the research on emotions seems to have been conducted in the field of foreign language learning. There is a dire need for more research to be conducted on different types of positive and negative emotions that language learners exhibit and experience during the process of learning a second language in different classroom settings. The distinction between second language and foreign language first appeared in the 1950s in the domain of EFL (English as a foreign language) teaching (Howatt, 1984) and a clear difference between these two language learning areas was introduced by Klein (1986):

... “foreign language” is used to denote a language acquired in a milieu where it is normally not in use ... A “second language” on the other hand, is one that becomes another tool of communication alongside the first language; it is typically acquired in a social environment in which it is actually spoken (p. 19).

My research contends that the focus of researchers has primarily been foreign language learning contexts with less attention being given to SLL classrooms and the learners’ emotions arising in these classrooms; this contention is further discussed in my literature review chapter. The reason behind this remains unclear because I was unable to find any research study or academic article shedding light on the reason(s) behind the difference in the amount of research between both types of language learning environments. As a novice researcher in SLA, I observed this difference when examining and studying the exiting literature on the role of emotions in different language learning contexts. The majority of the research studies focused on analyzing the positive and negative effects of emotions experienced by students in foreign language learning classrooms (e.g. Aragão, 2011; Dewaele, 2015; Méndez López, 2011; Yu, 2022) and there was a visibly less amount of research, in my opinion, on the emotions felt by L2 learners, along with

the impact of these emotions on the SLL process. My research therefore focuses on the role and impact of emotions of language learners in an L2 learning environment, an area which, in my opinion, needs more attention by SLA researchers. It is important that more research be conducted on the role of emotions in SLL and that more emotions, including both positive and negative, be examined in order to study the effect of each type of emotion (e.g. happiness, sadness, anxiety, disappointment) that could possibly be experienced by students in a certain language classroom.

Although there has been an increase in the study of emotions and emotional experiences of students and teachers, for the most part, literature on emotions with regards to the process of language learning, remains limited and the primary focus of researchers seems to have been on negative emotions and on “debilitating behaviors such as stress, anxiety, burnout, and more recently, ADHD (Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) and self-harming” (Kushkiev, 2019). Research on the study of negative emotions studies their adverse effects on the academic and emotional wellbeing of language learners, with the primary focus being on the negative emotion of anxiety (Teimouri et al., 2019; Yu, 2022). As I perused through academic articles and research studies analyzing the impact of anxiety on language learners during their language learning process, I found the primary focus of this body of research to be foreign language anxiety. I found limited research analyzing the occurrence and impact of anxiety in SLL classrooms and even less was the amount of research on the emotion of disappointment experienced by language learners during the acquisition of a new language.

Existing research on the emotion of disappointment during the process of learning a second language generalizes the negative impact of disappointment on language learning, or studies disappointment in relation to other negative emotions and feelings such as anxiety, fear, and demotivation (e.g. Bown & White, 2010; Mahfoodh, 2017; Richards, 2022; Tang & Hu, 2022). Therefore, as a researcher, I feel that there is a dire need to study the role of disappointment in different L2 contexts and classrooms, including both the harmful and (if existing) beneficial consequences of this emotion during the process of learning a

second/foreign language. As a researcher, I could not find relevant research focused on examining the reasons for the emotion of disappointment among learners in SLL classrooms. I also had difficulty finding academic research and articles studying the different impacts and influences of this emotion on the language learning process of learners during their acquisition of a new language. My research attempts to address this gap in the research. Consequently, my research focuses on just two negative emotions (anxiety and disappointment) and does not generalize the effects of different types of negative emotions felt by language learners, as has been addressed in previous research studies analyzing the occurrence and impact of negative emotions experienced by students in different language learning contexts (e.g. Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Richards, 2022).

The same holds true for the existing literature on the role and impact of positive emotions on language learners during their acquisition of a second language. As I studied the existing literature on positive emotions in the field of SLA, the majority of the research articles focused on the general impact of positive emotions on the language learning process of language learners (e.g. Kushkiev, 2019; MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017; Rahimi & Bigdeli, 2014). Only a few studies have analyzed and assessed the individual impact of each positive emotion that a language learner can possibly feel in a certain language class setting. My research attempts to address this gap in the research on positive emotions. Although there does exist limited research on foreign language enjoyment (see Boudreau et al., 2018; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewey et al., 2018), research on the positive emotion of happiness seems to be almost nonexistent in the field of SLA, with few academic studies focusing on the role of happiness during the acquisition of a second or foreign language (see Aragão, 2011; Ivanova & Dimova-Severinova, 2021; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

This research study provides insights regarding the role of two positive emotions (happiness and enjoyment) and two negative emotions (anxiety and disappointment) during the process of learning a second language in an ESL classroom at a large urban university in Montreal, Canada. The main objective behind

observing these four emotions is to analyze their impact, whether positive or negative, of these emotions on the language learning process of students. This would in turn highlight the need for language teachers to address the emotions and emotional needs of their students as they interact with a new language and exhibit different types of emotions. An understanding of the emotions and emotional needs of language learners is important because it can contribute to successful language learning as in SLL learning environments, emotions play an important role in both “contributing to and impeding learning and communication processes” (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017, p.78).

As a language teacher, I have felt that for different reasons, the emotional health and emotional needs of students are either ignored or sidelined in a certain classroom ecology. Addressing the emotions felt by the students might lead to a better understanding of the intellectual and emotional well-being of language learners while learning a new language (Swain, 2013). Acknowledging the emotions being felt by students, as they interact with a new language, can help them in “dealing with feelings that are intrinsic to language learning experiences and can lead to the cultivation of an optimistic outlook towards themselves as language learners” (Méndez López, 2011, p. 52).

If the emotional needs of the students are empathetically considered, then language teachers teaching different second and foreign languages can redesign or restructure their lessons in ways that are most conducive to the emotional wellbeing of their students. Such an initiative would not only help the students in engaging more productively with the learning process but would also make them more comfortable with the classroom ambience in which they are studying and interacting with other students. Teachers have the potential to create a variety of strategies for creating emotionally supportive classrooms, where there is a climate of cooperation and interaction, and where the class itself can be seen as a learning community (Plonsky et al., 2022). More research on emotions can lead to a deeper understanding of the individual effects of each emotion and would aid the language learners in becoming more aware of the outcomes, and possibly consequences, that their individual emotions can have their language learning process. In addition,



more discussions and debates on the role of emotions in the language learning process might also prove helpful in generating important questions regarding connections between emotions and L2 learning and teaching in language learning classrooms (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020).

In the next chapter, 'Literature Review', I provide an overview of the existing literature on the role and importance of positive and negative emotions in the field of SLA, and end by identifying the gaps in the existing literature on emotions in the SLL domain. The chapter is followed by a 'Methods and Methodology' chapter highlighting the methods used to collect data along with the methodology followed to carry out the study. Following this, the results of the data collection methods and the findings obtained are presented and analyzed in the 'Findings and Analysis' chapter. A 'Discussion' chapter follows, providing a detailed discussion of my research study's findings. The last chapter, 'Conclusion' summarizes the main discussions along with the new findings of my research study. The conclusion chapter also presents the limitations of this research and briefly elaborates on the future implications for this research study.

## **CHAPTER 2: Literature Review**

During the process of learning a second or foreign language, language learners experience a wide variety of emotions. These emotions can be both positive and negative in nature and can have a considerable impact on the process of learning a new language. These emotions need to be acknowledged and valued both inside and outside the classroom, and they need to be examined in relation to the discourses circulating between the learners and school personnel (e.g., teachers, counselors) (Sayadian & Lashkarian, 2015).

### **2.1 Overview**

In this literature review, I give an overview of the existing literature on the role and importance of positive and negative emotions in SLA. I start by discussing the growing interest of SLA researchers in conducting more research on positive emotions, much of which can be attributed to the theoretical domain of positive psychology which is gaining momentum and popularity in the field of SLA (MacIntyre et al., 2019; Shao et al., 2020). This is followed by a review of different research studies and academic articles which have analyzed the impact of different emotions, both positive and negative, on language learners' process of acquiring a second language. Research studies conducted in both foreign language and second language classrooms have been reviewed. For my research, my main objective is to analyze these studies for the different types of effects of positive and negative emotions, that they have examined and discussed, on the language learners during their acquisition of a new language.

The areas explored in these research studies are discussed in detail below. Existing literature on the different effects of emotions on the language learning process is also presented with the aim of supporting my research contention that emotions are integral to the language learning process of students and can considerably influence the language learners' interaction with a new language. Researchers tend to give more importance to the cognitive and social domains of language learning instead of emotional aspects of language learning (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Research studies such as those conducted those by

Benesch (2013), Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012), Saito et al. (2018), and Shao et al. (2020) favor my contention and emphasize the crucial role of emotions during the process of language learning as learning a language is a complex process during which learners are likely to exhibit a plethora of emotions.

I end the literature review by highlighting the gap present in the existing literature on emotions in SLL.

## **2.2 The study of positive emotions in SLA**

Considering the recent trend in research on emotions, there seems to have been a shift of interest towards the study of positive emotions (Dewaele et al., 2018), along with the positive effects of negative emotions (Swain, 2013) in the field of SLA (Shao et al., 2020). However, a brief overview of the existing literature on the occurrence and role of positive emotions during the process of learning a new language reveals that the amount of research conducted on positive emotions and their effects is still scarce and limited in nature, especially when compared to the research on negative emotions that occur during the process of learning a second or new language (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Lu & Liu, 2011). There seems to exist a more extensive body of research on the adverse effects of negative emotions on the academic and emotional wellbeing of language learners (Teimouri et al., 2019; Yu, 2022). Positive emotions appear to have been 'largely neglected' in comparison to existing research on negative emotions (Resnik & Dewaele, 2020) with positive emotions such as happiness, pride, gratitude, joy, hope, and admiration receiving limited attention from researchers (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

The research areas that I reviewed within the academic sphere of SLA included research studies and academic articles assessing the general impact of positive emotions (e.g. the positive and beneficial impact of hope, enthusiasm, happiness, joy, admiration, enjoyment, and gratitude) experienced by language learners during their language acquisition process. Although there does exist research on the role and impact of positive emotions on the language acquisition process of language learners, these research studies are few

and limited in nature. Additionally, they are also limited in their approach of studying the different types of positive emotions that might be experienced by language learners in a language classroom.

Moreover, I also reviewed research studies focusing specifically on the role of the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment on the SLL process of students. It was seen from the findings of the existing research on positive emotions that these emotions had a positive effect on the language learning process of students. These emotions promoted student learning and facilitated the language learning process (Benesch, 2013; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Faryadi, 2012; MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012; Saito et al., 2018; Shao et al., 2020). However, it is important to note here, that during my examination and analysis of research literature on positive emotions in SLA, I found that the research on the positive emotion of happiness was limited in the field of SLA, with few academic studies concentrating solely on the role of happiness during the acquisition of a second or foreign language. With regards to the emotion of enjoyment, much of the existing literature in the field of SLA highlights the beneficial and positive effect of enjoyment on foreign language learning (Boudreau et al., 2018; Dewaele, 2022; Pishghadam et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2021). Such findings highlight the need for more research on the role and impact of the emotions of happiness and enjoyment on the SLL process of students, in the domain of SLA.

Moreover, research focusing on the relationship between emotions and learning a new language has often emphasized the need for evoking positive emotions in second and foreign language learners, reiterating that positive emotions help in reducing learning barriers caused by negative emotions such as fear and anxiety. For instance, one such academic article authored by Faryadi (2012) talks about the need for promoting positive emotions in language classrooms by highlighting the importance of positive emotions in stimulating motivation in language learners in a language classroom. Faryadi's (2012) paper assumes the form of a critical appraisal in which he conducted a meta-analysis of existing research studies on the role of positive emotions in language learning classrooms to assess the impacts of these emotions on the language learners in such classrooms. This paper highlights the importance of emotions in helping the students to

learn a new language and suggests the use of “emotional intervention” as a method to facilitate the process of language learning (p. 37). These emotional interventions can support the learning process by making the students feel safe and less intimidated by the learning environment created within the classroom. The article also further reiterates the need for language teachers to understand the learners’ emotions in a language classroom and offers instructional strategies such as “game-based learning” and providing “emotionally suitable challenges” to motivate students during the learning of a new language (p. 38).

In one of their studies Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) studied the relationship between the emotions of “enjoyment” and “classroom anxiety” among 1746 foreign language learners from all over the world. The methods used in the study to assess the impact of emotions involved the use of web-based questionnaires related to the frequency and impact of the emotions of foreign language enjoyment and foreign language anxiety in language classrooms attended by the participants. The questions were related to the different aspects of foreign language enjoyment (such as creativity, pride, interest, fun) and the display of physical manifestations of anxiety, nervousness, and lack of confidence in language learning classrooms. Twenty items on the questionnaire were borrowed from Likert scale ratings of 21 items as outlined by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), and 8 items were taken from the foreign language classroom anxiety scale provided in Horwitz et al. (1986) study of physical manifestations of emotions by language learners. The first 21 items on the questionnaire were borrowed from a new scale that the researchers, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), themselves created to assess enjoyment in foreign language (FL) lessons. This new scale was derived from the research conducted by Ryan et al.’s (1990) on enjoyment, fun, interest, and boredom. The question provided in Ryan et al.’s (1990) research to assess the afore mentioned emotions were modified by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) to better suit the objectives of their research study.

The result of the study witnessed higher levels of foreign language enjoyment as compared to foreign language anxiety, with the former being “moderately negatively correlated with foreign language anxiety” (p. 261). This means that more students reported feeling the emotion of enjoyment, and enjoying the learning

process made the students feel empowered and motivated towards the acquisition of a new language. Both types of emotions (enjoyment and anxiety) were also dependent on socio-cultural factors such as age, gender, level of language proficiency etc.

Another study of similar nature was conducted by Saito et al. (2018) who examined the relationship between language proficiency and the language learners' emotion and motivation among 108 EFL and ESL Japanese high school students. The data collection methods involved the use of questionnaires and surveys, spanning two academic semesters, to determine the impact of “emotions, motivation and experiences on the L2 oral proficiency” of language learners. (p. 716). The questionnaires used in the study analyzed different aspects of the learners' emotional ‘self’ through questions focusing on participants' self-esteem, self-confidence, and the general display of positive emotions stemming through the participants' interaction with their L2 learning context (including interactions with their teachers and their class fellows). Data from the study revealed that the frequency of the participants' positive feelings about their learning process, which the study referred to as “private enjoyment” (p. 734), played an important in determining L2 learners use and practice of the target language. In other words, enjoyment and motivation had a positive and beneficial impact on the learner's use of the L2 language throughout their L2 learning process. Highly motivated students not only enjoyed the learning process but were also less anxious in their practice of L2 in the classroom. This study complements the findings of similar studies done on how L2 learning may be influenced by positive and negative emotions in different ways (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016).

### **2.2.1 The theoretical framework of positive psychology and its integration in SLA**

Existing research on positive emotions in the field of SLA has also witnessed a growing interest in the theoretical framework of positive psychology (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). In fact, the need to produce more research on positive emotions in second and foreign language acquisition, in order to better understand the processes involved in them, can be attributed to developments in the field of positive

psychology (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Peterson, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Academic disciplines, such as psychology, seem to harbor more research on the role and impact of positive emotions, especially towards the development and wellbeing of human beings. Much of the research in this field seems to be tied to the relatively new domain of positive psychology (MacIntyre et al., 2019). According to positive psychology, positive emotions play an important role in gaining access to psychological growth, intellectual development, and improved wellbeing of human beings (Fredrickson, 2001). The foundational structure of Positive Psychology is built on the belief that positive qualities are inherent in human beings and human beings are “driven by the passion to seek a happy, engaged, and meaningful life” (Shao et al., 2020, p.2). This means that human beings strive for positivity by utilizing positive emotions in their engagement and interaction with the world around them. Positive psychology does not sideline negative emotions. Instead, it creates a more “optimistic outlook of human beings and human life by focusing studying topics such as character strengths, love, happiness, well-being, and wisdom...” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p.5). There does exist a small body of research connecting positive psychology to the field of SLA; however, these connections are still new and therefore limited in their approach for studying the usefulness of positive psychology in the process of learning a second/foreign language (Boudreau et al., 2018). The most notable example is the research study by Shao et al., (2020) which is reviewed later in this section.

Positive emotions act as one of the pillars of positive psychology and play an important role in facilitating “psychological growth, intellectual development, and improved well-being over time” (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 220). Therefore, positive emotions, due to their significance in a human being’s life, can also contribute to the process of second language acquisition as language learning itself is a long and tedious process which requires optimism, motivation and similar attributes which can be studied and analyzed through the integration of positive psychology in the field (MacIntyre et al., 2019). The formal introduction of positive emotions through the theoretical framework of positive psychology in the field of SLA can be attributed to Dewaele (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) and MacIntyre (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012) whose works highlight the significance of positive emotions for language learners in terms of

enhancing mental acuity, reducing negative emotions, encouraging resilience, and facilitating well-being and academic progress of learners (Dewaele et al., 2019a; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). The relevance of positive psychology to the field of SLA is also highlighted by Khajavy et al. (2018) and Parkinson (2019). According to both authors, positive traits and characteristics can facilitate the flow of positive emotions in L2 learners in classroom setting which encourage the development and growth of such traits. Consequently, these emotions may then be felt by peers and teachers through processes like “emotion contagion and social appraisal” (Parkinson, 2019). This may result in the development of learning settings that support students' emotional needs while also promoting language acquisition for them (Khajavy et al., 2018).

Shao et al. (2020) present a more balanced approach towards studying positive emotions occurring during a language learning process, through the theoretical framework of positive psychology. These researchers have opened a whole new dimension of research on emotions by trying to combine different theories and research belonging to the academic disciplines of psychology, education, and SLA, on the role and importance of emotions. Their research introduces a new model, the L2 emotions and positive psychology (L2EPP) model, which “merges the three pillars of Positive Psychology (positive institutions, positive characteristics, and positive emotions) with the antecedents, outcomes, and interventions of L2 emotions” (p. 5). This model emphasizes the role of academic institutions and classroom settings in influencing the learning process of students, which affects their emotions and emotional well-being. Positive learning environments created by compassionate teachers and cooperative peers can boost students' confidence and self-esteem, resulting in the generation of positive emotions such as pride, hope, enjoyment etc. (p. 6). In turn, these emotions can impact the cognitive and motivational processes associated with language learning and related academic achievement, which then affects psychological well-being of language learners. Therefore, according to the researchers proposing this model, it is necessary that SLA researchers study emotions and language learning through a different lens, by placing them within the field of positive psychology and studying the factors and L2 contexts spawning positive emotions in SLA classroom settings.



### **2.3 The study of negative emotions in SLA**

As compared to positive emotions, negative emotions seem to have garnered more interest by researchers in the field of SLA, and the main focus of research studies in Second Language Education seems to be on negative emotions (anxiety, stress, etc.) or “debilitating behaviours such as burnout, attention ADHD and self-harm” (Kushkiev, 2019). Negative emotions in second and foreign language learning have often been described as a barrier to language learning (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). These emotions are bound to interfere with the learning process, making students experience frustration as their mind begins to form negative associations, which can in turn reduce their self-confidence and make learning seem more difficult (Beseghi, 2018). In addition, negative emotions also tend to have a considerable impact on the learning ability of language learners, and in most cases, it hinders the learning pace of language learners (Yu, 2022). However, language learners can also demonstrate the ability to transform their negative emotions into a source of motivation (Méndez López & Fabela Cárdenas, 2014). This means that language learners can consider their negative emotions as a challenge through which they can transform the adverse effects of their negative emotions into motivational energy, thereby helping them to better learn the target language (Méndez López & Fabela Cárdenas, 2014).

In their “Emotion-based case study of two South Asian English Language Learners (ELL), Rawal & De Costa (2019) explore what type of emotions occur, along with the reasons behind the occurrence of such emotions, in two ELL learners during the process of learning English in a SLL classroom. Through the qualitative method of conducting in-depth interviews with two South Asian high school graduates in the United States, this research found that only negative emotions such as “such as worry, discouragement, indignation, envy, confusion, and intimidation etc.” (p. 209) were felt by the two students, in relation to their identity as English Language Learners, as they tried to learn English language and accommodate themselves in a different socio-economic setting. The authors explore how these negative emotions experienced by the two students impacted their language learning process by making them feel frustrated

and agitated as they tried to learn English in a new academic setting. This article therefore highlights the adverse effects of negative emotions when experienced by learners during the language learning process and emphasizes the need for a better understanding of the emotional and financial problems faced by language learners in a SLL classroom. According to the authors, a better understanding of language learners' emotions could help English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers to teach and interact with the learners in a better and more productive way.

There exists a substantial amount of research on the emotion of anxiety. Research on the role and impact of anxiety on the process of a SLL has been conducted by SLA researchers for more than half a century now (Gkonou et al., 2017; Horwitz, 2001, 2017; MacIntyre, 1999; 2017). Research focusing directly on the role of emotions in the field of SLA has mainly targeted anxiety which appears to be the most researched and studied emotion in this field of language (Dewaele, 2012; Horwitz, 2010; MacIntyre, 2017). Research on anxiety in L2 learning emphasizes how anxiety hinders the achievement level of students, hampers cognitive processing, demotivates learners and challenges their capacity to converse in a L2 (e.g., Aida, 1994; 1994b; Hashimoto, 2002; Horwitz, 2017; Khajavy et al., 2018; MacIntyre, 2017; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994a; Papi, 2010; Papi & Teimouri, 2014; Teimouri, 2017,). For example, in their research on the construct of 'Second Language Anxiety', Papi & Khajavy (2023) study the effects of anxiety in SLL classrooms. Their research presents a concise summary, along with an insightful analysis of the existing research literature on the emotion of anxiety in SLL classrooms. The literature reviewed by the authors voices the negative role of anxiety in hindering learners' motivation and making them feel hesitant in practicing and making use of the target language in the classroom. Moreover, this research also explores the adverse impacts of anxiety on the learning outcomes of the L2 acquisition process by discussing the findings of different research studies on, predominantly, foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCAS). Much of the literature presents a negative relationship between anxiety and L2 outcomes (e.g., Horwitz, 2017; MacIntyre, 2017; Teimouri et al. 2019) meaning that anxiety hampers the language learning process and negatively impacts the learners' self-esteem and motivation during the acquisition of a new language. However, Papi

& Khajavy (2023) reiterate the need for further exploring the effects of anxiety on students' learning processes in different language learning classrooms. Their contention is against restricting anxiety to a specific framework, such as studying anxiety as an emotion that occurs because of the obstacles being faced by learners in L2 learning. Instead, they emphasize the need to restudy different sources and effects of anxiety emanating from differing L2 learning contexts.

Research on anxiety has also described the emotion's negative impact on language learning in the form of disruption in the learning process and creation of impediments deterring the motivational energy of students (Gardner, 1985; Gregersen et al., 2014). Consequently, if the student's motivational energy is targeted, then low motivational energy might "lower willingness to communicate in the target language" (MacIntyre et al., 2003). In their research study providing a meta-analysis of existing literature on L2 anxiety and achievement, Teimouri et al., (2019) present substantial evidence, based on this meta-analysis, regarding the negative influence of L2 anxiety on L2 learning. Their research study extensively examines the existing body of literature on L2 anxiety, including both published studies (89 journal articles) and unpublished studies (8 unpublished dissertations). The 97 reports on L2 anxiety thus analyzed from 23 countries revealed that there existed a "moderate negative relationship between anxiety and achievement" (p. 381). Moreover, the study also concluded by stating that the adverse effects of anxiety are also affected by and differ depending on the language learning contexts, the academic status of students and the language being learned.

The second negative emotion reviewed for its impact on the language learning process of language learners is the emotion of disappointment. Existing literature on the emotion of disappointment describes how disappointment occurring during the language acquisition process may lead learners to experience negative feelings, such as demotivation, which can affect their expectations of the language learning process and hinder their academic progress in a certain language classroom such as an EFL classroom (Pishghadam et al., 2016). In a language learning classroom, feeling disappointed may also make the learners demotivated

in achieving their goals, making them hesitant in believing that they can succeed and preventing them from 'spending further time and energy in the language learning process' (Richards, 2022). In his extensive research on exploring different types of emotions in language teaching, Richards (2022) presents a survey article which reviews studies on the different types of positive and negative emotions, along with their sources and effects on the learning process, that teachers and language learners experience in language learning classrooms. The article formulates its discussions based on the findings of existing research on emotions and provides examples of actual classroom scenarios where participants discuss the impacts of different emotions on their self-esteem, motivation, and their ability to learn a new language. For example, in a study conducted by Woodrow (2012), which Richards (2022) analyzes in his survey article, one learner in a language classroom commented on how anxiety made them feel hesitant in asking questions of the teacher, especially in front of other students, thereby making the learner experience low self-esteem and confidence. Another language learner in a different language setting in a study conducted by Méndez López (2011) commented on how communicating in the target language with native speakers proved to be emotionally challenging; the learner would converse in the target language only with international students. Eventually, with the passage of time, the learner felt more comfortable initiating conversations with native speakers of the target language. According to Plonsky et al. (2022), different types of positive and negative emotions (such as fear, worry, happiness, calmness, joy, guilt, confidence etc.) are experienced by language learners in different learning situations such as when learners doubt their communication skills, when they make comparisons with their peer's learning progress, their language instructor's attitudes and the different kinds of learning activities being carried out in the language classroom. With regards to the emotion of disappointment itself, there is still a significant lack of research specifically studying the impact of this emotion on the learning and academic progress of students in language learning classrooms. In the light of the literature studied regarding the impact of negative emotions on the language learning process, Richards (2022) views disappointment as an emotion stemming from the learners' inability to accomplish their learning goals. This failure leads to the accumulation of feelings of low self-esteem and low self-confidence,

which hampers the learners' academic progress and makes them feel demotivated during the language learning process.

## **2.4 Gaps in the literature**

The reviewed research studies and academic articles on the role of positive and negative emotions in the field of SLA and different language learning contexts highlight the positive effects of positive emotions on the language learning process of students in the form of facilitating academic progress and motivating the students to learn the target language (Teimouri, 2017). However, this literature does not individually study the effect of one or more of these positive emotions and therefore it is difficult to find research studies focusing specifically on the role and impact of just the positive emotion of happiness and enjoyment on the language learning process of learners in a SLL classroom. For instance, Faryadi's (2012) review of positive emotions and positive emotional interventions in a language classroom generalizes the effects of positive emotions in a learning environment. Different types of positive emotions that can be possibly experienced by language learners, are not examined or analyzed individually for their impact on either the learners or their language learning process. A more detailed study of each of the emotions that language learners can possibly feel, or manifest, in a language classroom could help the instructors in better identifying the effects of each emotion that their students experience in a language classroom. Similarly, Dewaele and MacIntyre's 2014 case study provides information regarding the manifestation of two important emotions, anxiety and enjoyment, in language learning. However, the study stops short of describing the individual impacts of the positive emotion of enjoyment and the negative emotion of anxiety on the language learners. Moreover, this research study examines and analyzes these two emotions predominantly with respect to foreign language classrooms. Towards the end of the study, the researchers themselves acknowledge that their "results are part of an emerging series of studies on positive emotion in SLA" (p. 265), thereby highlighting the need for more studies on the positive emotions in the field of SLA.

Regarding negative emotions, the literature reviewed takes a more generic approach to examining the effects of negative emotions that L2 learners feel in a language classroom and therefore provides a more general overview of the different types of negative emotions that learners experience in a language classroom. Similar to the literature on positive emotions, this literature does not individually analyze the effects of each of the different types of negative emotions that language learners can feel in a language classroom, nor does it highlight the various effects that each negative emotion can have on language learners' ability to learn the language. This holds true specifically for the emotion of disappointment. With regards to the emotion of disappointment itself, there is still a significant lack of research specifically studying the impact of this emotion on the language learning process of students. Existing research on the emotion of disappointment during the process of learning a L2 generalizes the negative impact of disappointment on language learning or focuses on disappointment in relation to other negative emotions and feelings such as anxiety, fear, and demotivation (e.g. Bown & White, 2010; Mahfoodh, 2017; Richards, 2022; Tang & Hu, 2022). In this context, what begs importance is the lack of research on the emotion of disappointment itself which projects the need for more research studying the occurrence, frequency, and impact of disappointment on the language learning process, especially the L2 acquisition process in L2 classrooms. Therefore, as a researcher, I feel that there is a dire need to study the role of disappointment in different L2 contexts and classrooms, including both the harmful and (if existing) beneficial impacts of this emotion during the process of learning a second/foreign language.

Although there exists a substantial amount of research on the emotion of anxiety, as was witnessed from the literature reviewed for the emotion of anxiety in SLA, it is important to note that more research was available on foreign language classroom anxiety and foreign language anxiety, as compared to L2 anxiety. Among the research articles studied for this research, the majority of the research was found to be focusing on foreign language anxiety (FLA), with a visibly less amount of research existing on the role and impact of anxiety in the process of learning an L2 (Teimouri et al., 2019). In their research study providing a meta-analysis of L2 anxiety and achievement, Teimouri et al., 2019 describe how the effects of the emotion

of anxiety can differ in both second and foreign language learning environments. However, similar research exploring the impact or effects of L2 anxiety on language learners or on their learning processes in L2 classroom is significantly less and therefore it is important that more research be conducted on the occurrence of L2 anxiety as well its effects on language learners in different L2 classroom settings. The emotion of anxiety too can have different types of effects on the learning process of learners depending on the learning context or the language being learned (Papi & Khajavy, 2023). Papi and Khajavy (2023) contend against the restriction of anxiety to a specific framework, such as studying anxiety as an emotion that occurs because of the obstacles being faced by learners in L2 learning. Instead, they emphasize the need for restudying different sources and effects of anxiety emanating from differing L2 learning contexts.

## **2.5 The present study**

My research will study the occurrence and impacts of two positive emotions (happiness and enjoyment) and two negative emotions (anxiety and disappointment) on the language learning process of learners in an L2 setting (an English Language classroom at an urban university). The occurrence of each emotion will be observed during each language class being studied for this research, along with its impact on the learner's interaction with, and learning of English in the language classroom. The positive and negative impact of these emotions will be examined and analyzed in my research study and will be compared with the findings of the existing literature on the role of positive and negative emotions experienced by learners in a language classroom. By doing so, my research study will also add to the existing body of literature studying the effects of emotions on language learners in different language learning contexts.

The main objective behind this observation and analysis of emotions is to highlight the need for language teachers to address the emotional needs of their students and to take into account the psychological and emotional wellbeing of their students. Moreover, the effects of the negative emotions (anxiety and disappointment), in this research will be studied in relation to the effects of positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment. This means that this research will compare the impact of the positive and negative emotions

and by doing so, may be able to reiterate the need for the creation of a positive classroom environment where students can experience positive emotions which help them in feeling safe and comfortable in learning a new/second language.



## **Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology**

### **3.1 Objectives and Research Questions**

This study investigates the occurrence and impact of the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment and the negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment on the language learning process of five learners in an ESL classroom. These emotions were analyzed to assess their impact on the language learning process of students. The research questions guiding this research are as follows:

- What is the impact of the second language learners' positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment on their second language learning process?
- What is the impact of the second language learners' negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment on their second language learning process?
- What implications could an analysis of the impact of emotions on the language learning process have on the teaching and learning of a second language?

### **3.2 Information about the study**

#### **3.2.1 Setting**

The setting for this research was an ESL classroom at a large urban university in Montreal, Canada. This classroom was part of an English Language program that was offered by the university for students seeking to learn and develop their English language skills.

#### **3.2.2 Participants**

The participant population was adult English Language Learners who were expected to have good (intermediate level) understanding of English Language (spoken and written skills) as measured by the English Language Placement test taken prior to enrollment in the course being observed for this research study. External factors such as age, nationality, ethnicity, degree, and program of students were not

considered for this study. The existing literature on the role and significance of emotions has either considered these factors (e.g. Faryadi, 2012; MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017; Peterson, 2006) or has given them less importance (e.g. Boudreau et al., 2018; Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2020). However, most of the studies and previous literature have recognized the important role of different socioeconomic factors and cultural backgrounds associated with language learners (e.g. MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994b; Teimouri et al., 2019; Zhang & Tsung, 2021). Although it would have been ideal to investigate the effect of each of these socio-cultural factors, given the scope of my master's thesis this was not considered. I choose not to include these factors in order to not distract from the main objective of my research study, i.e., to focus just on the impact of emotions, without the influence of any social factors. In hindsight, it would have been a good idea to include one or more of these social factors in my research, and this constitutes a limitation which I have further addressed in the Limitation section in chapter 6 below.

### **3.2.3 Participant recruitment**

Adult English language learners enrolled in an English Language Program for one academic semester served as the participant population for this research. The first step in participant recruitment involved getting an approval from the university's research ethics board after which the program director for the English Language program was contacted. Once the approval of the program director was obtained, the director emailed different language instructors in the department to seek approval for observation of their classes. For this research, only one language instructor's approval, to observe their class, was required. The instructor agreeing to have their classes observed notified the program director, and the notification was forwarded to me along with approval from them. The next step was gathering a research sample in the class approved for my research study. This involved presenting (via a power point presentation) the purpose, goal, expectation, and relevance of my research to language learning in the class. After the presentation, consent forms for the research were distributed among the whole class. Five participants consented to being part of the research. This complied with the main objectives of my research as my study aimed at selecting five

participants for observation and analysis of positive and negative emotions. If there had been more students consenting to be part of the research, then random selection would have been employed to select only five participants.

### **3.2.4 Duration**

Data collection for the study spanned a one-month period, with classes meeting once a week in the evenings (4 classes total). Although the total course duration was nine weeks, I observed only the last four classes at the end of the nine weeks. The main reason behind this timing of the observation was the delay in the granting of permission to observe the classes. The language instructor consenting to having their classes observed agreed to the observation for the last two hours of the class, although the entire duration of the class was three hours. This can be considered as a limitation and has been further addressed in the 'Limitation' section of this thesis. The data collection methods, discussed in detail in the ensuing sections, were used in all four classes being observed for this research.

### **3.2.5 Details of the Program**

The program offered a variety of courses designed to help students gain the oral and written English Language communication skills necessary for functioning effectively in professional and academic settings. The English Language program that I observed was focused on English for Professional Communication. The course that I observed was focused on developing Functional English Language grammar and writing skills needed in professional settings. It was offered in the summer semester for a duration of nine weeks. It was a mid-intermediate course at the CEFR B1+<sup>1</sup> level, offered to English language learners who were in

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<sup>1</sup> CEFR refers to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The CEFR places language proficiency in six levels, A1 to C2, each level corresponding to a certain level of language ability. These levels can be further divided into three main categories: Basic User, Independent User, and Proficient User. B1+ level of CEFR, situated within the Independent User category, urges the speaker to use language at a far more advanced level, by increasing their style of expression and equipping them with the necessary skills to have difficult and complex conversations (Arnott et al., 2017; Little, 2011; North, 2014).

the intermediate stage of their language learning process. This was important for my study because it aimed at observing students who had a certain command over the English Language.

The main objective of the course, as stated by the university's website, was to help students in enhancing their English language skills and in attaining a certain (intermediate) level of proficiency in both written and spoken English Language skills. Although the instructor and their teaching strategies were not being observed for this course (so that they felt more comfortable with their classes being observed), it can be stated that the course had an exercise book which the students were required to have and from which different activities and exercises were done during each lesson. Each class started with a recap of the homework assigned to students or a quick revision of the English language content taught in the previous class. Following this, students were assigned a learning task from the course book. They had the option of completing the task either individually or in groups; this preference differed from participant to participant. A certain amount of time was assigned for the task, after which the instructor would proceed with a detailed discussion of the task along with taking students responses regarding the assigned task. This pattern was consistent for all the four classes that were observed for this study.

### **3.2.6. Classroom setting and context:**

The classroom itself was situated within one of the university's buildings and was a lecture-style classroom furnished with the latest technological tools and equipment such as a multimedia projector and interactive whiteboard. Lessons were delivered both using white board and the multimedia projector. The seating arrangement involved table groups in which students were separated into groups of three and four. Occasionally students would also work in pairs. Students had the choice of choosing their seats and partners during each class and even during a certain class activity.

### **3.3 Data collection methods**

This research employed a qualitative approach using classroom observation and questionnaires to collect and record data. The methods involved in this research consisted of two techniques to collect and analyze data. The first was a) classroom observation and the second was b) questionnaires. Both these methods are discussed in detail below.

It is important to note here that as a researcher observing emotions of language learners in a classroom, it was not always easy for me to distinguish between the emotions of happiness and enjoyment in practice. The same applies to the distinction between the emotions of anxiety and disappointment. For example, students who appear to be happy during a certain lesson could also be said to be enjoying the lesson. Similarly, students seen to be discouraged during an in-class activity might experience either disappointment or anxiety. Since happiness and disappointment haven't been clearly defined in the relevant literature and lack reliable measurement tools in existing research, I recognize that including them in my research was risky and it might have been safer to focus exclusively on enjoyment and anxiety, both of which are amply represented in the relevant literature. However, I chose this focus as because both happiness and disappointment are emotions which are not yet fully explored for their impact on the second language learning process of learners. The existing literature on both these emotions is limited and through my research, I aim to raise more awareness regarding the occurrence of these emotions and their impact on the language learning process of students in an L2 setting.

#### **3.3.1 Classroom observation**

For my study, the observation of the emotions of happiness, enjoyment, anxiety and disappointment among participants and their classification into positive and negative categories was based on the works of researchers and theorists who have conducted specialized research on human emotions. Solomon (1993) provides a simple and basic categorization of emotions into positive (pleasant) and negative (aversive) emotions. This distinction between positive and negative emotions has also been endorsed by positive

psychologists (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Moreover, Izard's (2007) Differential Emotions Theory was also considered for the identification and occurrence of positive and negative emotions among the participants for my study. Differential Emotions Theory studies the manifestation of more human emotions such as interest, joy/happiness, sadness, anger, disgust etc. This theory analyzes the complexity of emotions and their differing effects during different stages of human life, which can be attributed to factors such as social context, cultural forces, and cognitive schemas of human beings (Panksepp, 2015).

Classroom observation, which constitutes a data collection method for qualitative research, is a way to "gather data in naturalistic settings by either observing or participating in common and uncommon activities of the subjects being studied" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010). This method facilitates observation of the participants in their natural settings thereby allowing for a "better understanding and interpretation of the modes and actions of the participants being observed" (p. 15). As my study focused on the occurrence and impact of positive (happiness and enjoyment) and negative emotions (anxiety and disappointment), on the language learning process of students, it was important that the language learners were observed in the relevant natural setting (a language classroom in this scenario).

During the observation, I, the researcher, was positioned at the front of the classroom to have a better view of all five participants. I viewed the facial expressions of the participants, especially the display of emotions as well as their body language, as the participants solved exercises related to the acquisition of English Language. The indicators for facial expressions and body language for positive emotions included smiling, open and straight posture, nodding in agreement, occasional laughter, and a cheery tone. The indicators for facial expressions and body language for negative emotions included closed body posture (such as crossed arms), eyebrows lowered and knitted together, lip biting and pursed lips, and looking away (revealing discomfort or distraction) during in-class assignments and activities. The choice of these indicators was drawn from the works of researchers (see Biehl et al., 1997; Cowen et al., 2021; Eisenbarth & Alpers, 2011; Halberstadt et al., 2013; Schwarz & Strack, 1988) who have conducted research studies

exploring nonverbal modes of communication such as facial expressions and physical gestures in different social (including academic) settings. These nonverbal modes of communication are prompted by different emotions being experienced by a person and therefore signify a certain emotional state or feeling such as fear, surprise, disgust, joy, happiness, or sadness among other emotions.

These observations for manifestation of positive and negative emotions were recorded in longhand by me, the researcher. I had a separate sheet of paper for each participant which had the emotions, happiness, enjoyment, anxiety and disappointment listed. I would put a check mark in front of the emotions every time I saw a participant appearing to manifest it through their facial expressions and body language. Other positive and negative emotions apart from the four being studied in this research were also noted down, including the number of times that they occurred, by me for every lesson that I observed. While these emotions were not initially being studied in this research, I recorded them in longhand because as an observer, I felt the need to note down the possible emotions being manifested by the participants.

While observing the participants, I took turns to observe each participant and note down the instances of the four emotions (happiness, enjoyment, anxiety and disappointment). While taking turns to observe the participants, I took one whole minute to observe a participant before moving on to the next participant. My observation started from Participant A and ended on Participant E, after which I again observed Participant A and moved on to the next participant in the same order. During my observation, as mentioned earlier, I also took the opportunity to take note of other different kinds of positive and negative appearing to be exhibited by the participants. These emotions, however, were not the main focus of my research and they have not been further analyzed in the 'Findings and Analysis' chapter of my research. The main objective of my observation remained to observe the instances of the four emotions being studied in this research, and to record their occurrences in longhand.

### **3.3.2 Questionnaires**

The second research method for data collection in this research consisted of pencil-and-paper questionnaires which participants filled in at the end of each class observed. The questionnaires were a structured set of questions about the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment and the negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment. See Appendix A for the complete questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (AEQ) which is a self-reporting instrument commonly used in educational psychology to measure emotions in achievement and academic settings (Shao et al., 2019).

AEQ borrows from control value theory which is built on the belief that emotions comprise psychological processes that are multifaceted, with affective, cognitive, motivational, expressive, and peripheral physiological components (Pekrun et al., 2011). This theory examines the background context and consequences of emotions experienced in various academic settings and achievement situations, and this examination serves as the foundational structure for AEQ (Simonton & Garn, 2020). The items on AEQ assess emotional experiences either before, during, or after the corresponding achievement setting or learning context, and they measure the “affective, cognitive, motivational, and physiological components of each emotion” (Bieleke et al., 2021). This wide range makes it possible for researchers to examine a broad variety of emotional experiences in academic contexts. Emotions that are assessed through this questionnaire include enjoyment, pride, anger, anxiety, shame, hope, hopelessness, and boredom (p. 704).

For my research, the items used to measure the emotions of enjoyment and anxiety on the AEQ were considered. The remaining items for the rest of the emotions stated above were not analyzed as they were not being examined in my research. The items on the AEQ to measure the emotions of enjoyment and anxiety served as guide and as a reference and model to develop original questions for my own research-questionnaire. However, the AEQ did not have items which could be used to assess the occurrence and impact of the emotions of happiness and disappointment among students. Therefore, regarding these two



emotions, the statements for the questions created to assess their occurrence and impact were modeled from the questions about other emotions on the AEQ scale. It is important to note here that these additional questions that were created were not validated which means that they had not been used in previous studies. They were exploratory in nature and followed the same grammatical pattern and structure as the questions for the emotions of enjoyment and anxiety. The questions for the emotions of enjoyment and anxiety had been validated and used in previous research. They were based on the AEQ described above.

The questions on the questionnaires were related to the occurrence of the emotions of happiness, enjoyment, anxiety, and disappointment (if they were felt by the students) during each class, along with the positive or negative impact that these emotions had on the students' acquisition of the second language. The same questionnaire was used for each class, and the questionnaire was filled by the participants following each of the four classes that were part of this research. The questionnaire was designed to be completed in no more than 15 minutes, although most participants completed it in 10 minutes. The questionnaire consisted of eight compulsory Likert-scale type questions and one optional open-ended question. Each Likert-type question had five options (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) and allowed participants to choose one option depending on the occurrence and impact of positive and negative emotions on their learning process. The questions on the questionnaire were as follows:

**Positive emotions questions (Q1- 4):**

The first four Likert-type questions of the questionnaire were related to the occurrence and role of the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment and were as follows:

Q1. I felt happy being in today's English Language class.

Q2. Feeling happy helped me to learn English language better.

Q3. I enjoyed learning English in class today.

Q4. Because I enjoyed learning English today, I look forward to going to the next class:

**Negative emotions questions (Q5-8):**

The next four questions (Q5-8) of the questionnaire were related to the occurrence and role of the negative emotions of ‘anxiety’ and disappointment.’ Anxiety and disappointment can be felt for different reasons. As a researcher, I felt that it was important to design questions in such a way that they addressed either the reason or the consequence of these negative emotions. Therefore, on the questionnaire, the next four questions related to anxiety and disappointment were structured to address the reason for which the learners could possibly feel anxious or disappointed in the class. These questions were as follow:

- Q5. I felt anxious while learning English in today’s class because I thought I may say something wrong.
- Q6. Even before the class, I become anxious about being able to understand what will be taught.
- Q7. During the lesson, I felt disappointed because I thought I did not perform well.
- Q8. Feeling disappointed made me feel that I didn’t want to learn English.

**Scale and coding**

The scale for assessing the intensity and impact of each emotion for each question was as follows:

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly disagree	Disagree
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For all the eight questions, the participants could choose between strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree, as shown in the scale above. Each of these options on the scale was then given a number as a code to further evaluate and assess the findings of the questionnaire given to the participants.

Since five participants were observed for four ESL classes, a total of 160 responses were collected which served as the data for the questionnaire. This data was then analyzed to determine the frequency (the number of times the emotions were felt for each class being studied) and impact of both the positive and

negative emotions being studied in this research. The scale for the negative emotion questions was different from the positive emotion questions. The scale 5-1 was reversed with 5 representing ‘strongly disagree’ whereas on positive emotions’ scale, 5 corresponded to ‘strongly agree’. Similarly, ‘4’ on the negative emotions’ scale was tied to ‘disagree’ whereas on the positive emotions’ scale, it referred to the option of ‘agree’. The same holds true for ‘2’ and ‘1’ options for both sets of scales. The option of ‘neutral’ however had the same code, number 3, for both scales.

The participants were told of the reversal of the scales when information about the questionnaire was given before the research study started. The researcher altered the scales merely for the purpose of easier coding of the data, along with an easier interpretation of the data obtained through the questionnaires. Reversing the scale allowed for an easier analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaire. To further illustrate this difference, a comparison table has been drawn below.

Coding for positive emotions’ questions (Q1-4)	Coding for negative emotions’ questions (Q5-8)																				
<table><tr><td>Strongly <u>disagree</u></td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>Disagree</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td>Neutral</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>Agree</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>Strongly <u>agree</u></td><td>1</td></tr></table>	Strongly <u>disagree</u>	5	Disagree	4	Neutral	3	Agree	2	Strongly <u>agree</u>	1	<table><tr><td>Strongly <u>agree</u></td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>Agree</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td>Neutral</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>Disagree</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>Strongly <u>disagree</u></td><td>1</td></tr></table>	Strongly <u>agree</u>	5	Agree	4	Neutral	3	Disagree	2	Strongly <u>disagree</u>	1
Strongly <u>disagree</u>	5																				
Disagree	4																				
Neutral	3																				
Agree	2																				
Strongly <u>agree</u>	1																				
Strongly <u>agree</u>	5																				
Agree	4																				
Neutral	3																				
Disagree	2																				
Strongly <u>disagree</u>	1																				

Table 3.1 Questionnaire Coding

Lastly, participants were also gently reminded to refrain from commenting on or critiquing the language instructor's teaching strategies or teaching process, as this was not the purpose of this research. This was done to ensure that the instructor was comfortable with having their class being observed. For privacy and confidentiality purposes, participants’ names were changed to participant A, participant B and

so on. Participants' pronouns were also changed for privacy and confidentiality reasons when the data obtained was explained in the 'Findings and Analysis of Findings' section, which is the next chapter of this research study.

The next chapter will present the findings for this research study along with detailed analyses.

## **Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis**

This chapter presents a detailed overview of the key findings of my research study followed by an analysis of these findings, framed by my research questions. The two data collection methods used in my research study were a) observation of participants in ESL classrooms and b) participant questionnaires. The results for observation of positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment and the negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment are presented and discussed first, followed by a presentation and discussion of the findings and analysis of the questionnaires, in light of the research questions for this research study.

### **4.1 Findings for Classroom Observation**

Classroom observation, as a data collection method in my research, facilitated the observation of the participants in their natural settings (an ESL classroom) (Parr & Hawe, 2016). In language classrooms, students may experience different emotions as they interact with teachers, peers, and learning materials. These emotional experiences can lead to feelings, physiological responses, and observable behavior in response to these interactions with the classroom ecology. Through observation, I endeavored to see how such feelings, in the form of positive and negative emotions, were expressed through participants' body language and facial expressions as they interacted with the language learning process.

#### **4.1.1 Indicators for positive and negative emotions**

The choice of indicators was drawn from the works of researchers (see Beatrice De Gelder, 2016; Castellano et al., 2007; Dael et al., 2012; Matsumoto et al., 2016) who have conducted research studies exploring nonverbal modes of communication such as facial expressions and physical gestures in different social (including academic) settings. The indicators for positive emotions included facial expressions, such as smiling, and body language, such as open and straight posture, nodding in agreement, occasional laughter, and a cheery tone when speaking. The indicators for negative emotions included facial expressions lowered and knitted together eyebrows, lip biting and pursed lips, looking away (revealing discomfort or distraction)

and body language such as closed body posture (such as crossed arms), during in-class assignments and activities.

Individuals tend to express themselves through their body language and facial expressions, which constitute non-verbal forms, cues or signals (Argyle, 2013). These non-verbal modes of communication can describe the way a person is feeling and are therefore useful in interpreting the emotions being experienced by an individual (Sooriya, 2017). During my research, I attempted to deduce the type of emotions being felt by the participant based on the non-verbal cues and signals that they appeared to be projecting during the time span of the lesson. These non-verbal cues and signals served as the indicators of the positive and negative emotions observed among the participants. Based on the indicators, I inferred whether the participants were experiencing the positive emotions of happiness and/or enjoyment or the negative emotions of anxiety and/or disappointment. As mentioned earlier, the main focus of my observation was to view the possible occurrences of the emotions of happiness, enjoyment, anxiety and disappointment among the participants. However, I also recorded other emotions that appeared to be exhibited by the participants during each lesson.

It is important to note here that this process of observation and inference is necessarily subjective, given that interpreting facial expressions and body language can be influenced by personal perceptions and biases (Ekman, 2005; Keltner et al., 2000). My interpretation of the participants' body language and opinion of their facial expressions, corresponding to a certain emotion, might have been influenced by personal, inherent biases. Thus, as there may have been instances when what I observed did not accurately match with what the participants actually felt, therefore, it is necessary to analyze and interpret the findings of the observational data of participants' emotions with caution. It is also important to understand the danger of depending on observational data alone (Hess & Bourgeois, 2010; Zaki & Ochsner, 2011), thus the reason for having a second source of data - questionnaires - for my study.

4.1.2 Classroom observations of positive and negative emotions

In this section, I start by giving a brief overview of the organization of the data, derived through my classroom observational notes. The next section presents the Findings for positive emotions, including the emotions of happiness and enjoyment and the following section presents the Findings for negative emotions, including the emotion of anxiety and disappointment. The sections analyzing the findings for both positive and negative emotions follow.

I reiterate here that it is important to note the existence of subjectivity in the findings for the observation of emotions. As a researcher, I tried to practice utmost objectivity and maintained a neutral stance (McKinley, 2016; Ratner, 2002; van Dongen & Sikorski, 2021) as much as was possible during my observation of the five participants. However, I recognize that there may have been occasions when my understanding of participants' body language did not correspond with their true emotions.

The results discussed in the Findings sections for both types of emotions are derived from the data gathered through my observational notes which are placed in Appendix C of this research study. This data documents the instances and occurrences of all positive and negative emotions, including the emotions of happiness, enjoyment, anxiety and disappointment, observed among participants based on my observation of their facial expressions and body language for all four language lessons. The findings derived from this observational data, related to the emotions' occurrences are summarized in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, and the results are graphically displayed as percentage-based bar charts in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. The tables for both positive and negative emotions present the instances (the number of times the emotions appeared to be manifested by the participants) of the emotions across the four language lessons and these occurrences are directly derived from the data (situated in Appendix C) obtained from observation of the participants. The four emotions being studied in this research have been highlighted in yellow in the corresponding tables for positive and negative emotions. The respective figures visually represent the distribution of these emotions over the course of four classes. Each emotion's occurrence percentage is calculated by dividing the number

of times the emotion was observed by the total number of instances of either (all) positive or negative emotions observed during the study.

Based on the observation recorded on my field notes, I saw that for the majority of the classes, all the five participants appeared to be actively engaged in the learning process as reflected through their ability to complete the activities assigned to them, along with participating in the classroom discussions that followed each activity. Class-related emotions often arise from direct engagement with class activities (Simonton & Garn, 2019) and this was visible through participants' direct involvement with the learning tasks. The participants' facial expressions displayed satisfaction and the participants appeared to be comfortable with the learning environment of the language classroom, as was observed through their body language. This meant that participants were observed to be attentive, asking questions, participating in classroom discussions, and suggesting a keen attitude towards learning new skills and exploring new concepts related to English language learning (Deslauriers et al., 2019). All five participants answered questions asked by the instructor in almost all the classes observed and occasionally raised their hands to answer questions that the instructor posed to the entire class.

Here, I would like to restate that the instructor and their teaching strategies were not observed for this course (so that they felt more comfortable with their classes being observed and did not feel that they were being evaluated in any way). Therefore, I have refrained from commenting on the positive or negative effects of the teaching strategies or learning activities being employed by the instructor in the classroom. However, it is safe to state that the course had an exercise book from which the students completed different exercises for each lesson. Some of these exercises were done in groups while the others were done individually. If it was a group activity, the instructor still provided students the option of completing it individually, if the students wished to work alone. During the observation, it was seen that sometimes the participants preferred working on their own, instead of in pairs or groups, for the learning exercise assigned to them. Preferring to work alone or in groups could be due to a variety of reasons. Understanding why and



how students exhibit such preferences is a complex phenomenon because it depends on the social setting, personal traits and characteristics, academic settings, and classroom environment, among many other factors (Calver et al., 2022; Calver et al., 2023; Kanevsky, 2015).

At this point, I would like to mention that observing and analyzing both positive and negative emotions proved challenging for me as an observer. When observing the participants for the occurrence of the emotions of happiness and enjoyment through indicators for these emotions (mentioned in the previous section), I saw other, different types of positive emotional states (such as contentment, motivation, satisfaction) which were not initially part of this research. I attempted to record the emotions and emotional states in my classroom observational notes because I felt it was important to document the different types of emotions appearing to be displayed by the participants. Just observing the instances when participants appeared to be happy or seemed to be enjoying the learning process proved to be challenging. It was challenging to observe positive emotions because as an observer, it proved difficult for me to differentiate between different types of positive emotions appearing to be exhibited by the participants. For example, it was hard to differentiate between happiness and enjoyment. Both emotions shared indicators that often overlapped (for e.g. smiling, a relaxed posture, cheerful tone, occasional bursts of laughter, calm demeanor). Furthermore, I also did not expect to view other positive emotions, but participants appeared to be motivated and determined for the majority of the observational time during all four lessons. This was primarily evident through their active engagement with the learning process. They appeared to readily solve the exercises given to them and appeared to enthusiastically participate in classroom discussions being conducted during each lesson.

Similar to the observation of positive emotions, observing and analyzing negative emotions also proved more challenging for me as an observer. The negative emotions appeared more challenging to observe than positive emotions primarily because I did not view the emotion of disappointment to be observed by the participants. While participants occasionally appeared anxious, instances of disappointment

were not observed to be manifested by the participants. The following behaviors were indicative of disappointment: slouching or hunching over, breathing heavily or sighing, making no eye contact at all during instructions or when the teacher posed a question, frowning, raised eyebrows, or puckered lips (Carroll & Russell, 1996; Ip et al., 2021; Kanner, 1931; Oosterwijk et al., 2009; Van Doorn et al., 2012). Therefore, the instances of the emotion of disappointment remain zero in the ‘Findings for negative emotion’ of this chapter. This, in my opinion, highlights the challenge of perceiving and analyzing this emotion as an observer. This idea is further discussed later in this chapter, in the ‘Analysis of classroom observational findings for negative emotions’ section. Moreover, certain emotions exhibited by the participants, such as confusion, puzzlement, and seriousness, were not part of this research study. Observing these emotions was not originally the objective of this research, but as I viewed their occurrence during the observation of the emotions of disappointment and anxiety, I recorded these occurrences in longhand. The main focus of this research study, however, remained to observe emotions of anxiety and disappointment, along with the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment.

**4.1.3 Findings for classroom observations of positive emotions**

Table 4.1 below provides a summary of the positive emotions observed among the participants. The table represents the occurrences of each emotion for each lesson, along with their totals, and is derived from the data obtained from my classroom observational notes. The total number of occurrences of emotions observed is also shown in the table. It is important to note here that the findings illustrated below are prone to subjectivity. This means that findings in Table 4.1 might not accurately depict the exact manifestation of each emotion observed among the participants by me. These findings are not an indication of how often these emotions were felt but more of how often I observed these emotions to be apparently displayed by the participants. It represents my inferences, not what the participants may have actually felt during all four lessons.

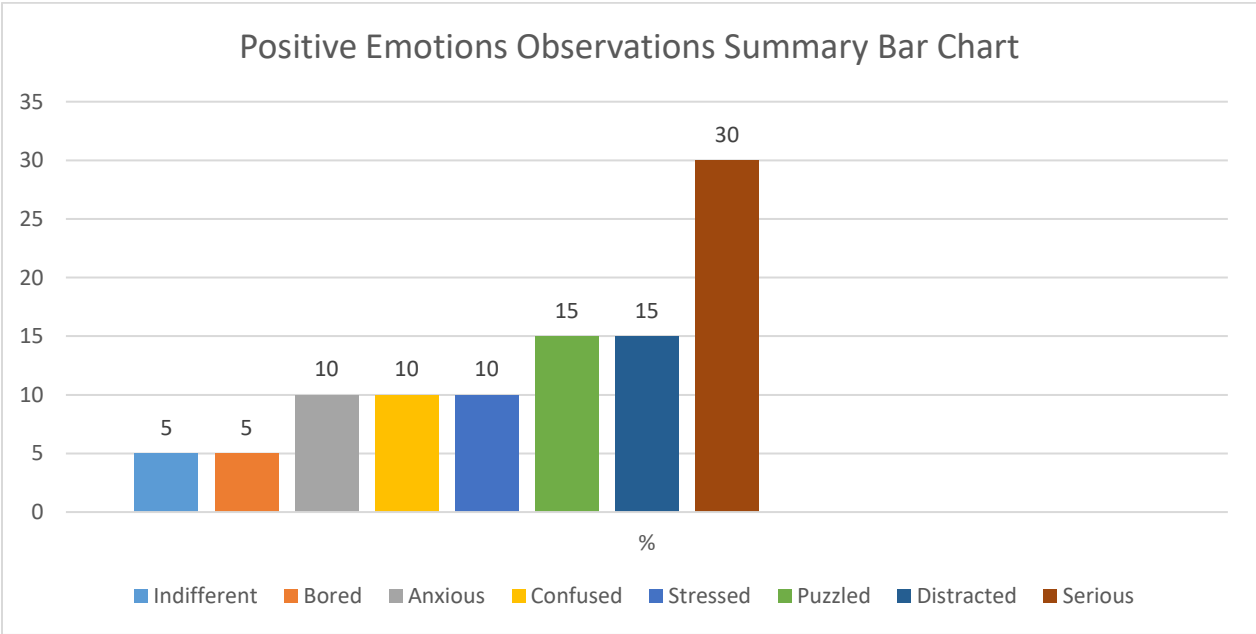
Emotions and emotional states	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Total
They appeared to exhibit <u>enjoyment</u>	0	0	1	0	1
They appeared to be <u>satisfied</u>	1	0	1	1	3
They appeared to be <u>content</u>	1	1	0	1	3
They appeared to be <u>relaxed</u>	0	1	2	1	4
They appeared to be <u>happy</u>	2	1	3	3	9
They appeared to be <u>confident</u>	2	2	3	3	10
They appeared to be <u>determined</u>	5	4	4	4	17
They appeared to be <u>motivated</u>	4	4	4	5	17
Total	15	13	18	18	64

**Table 4.1: Summary of Positive Emotions Observations**

The findings represented in Table 4.1 also reveal that on Day 1 (class 1), all five participants were observed to be happy, content, motivated, determined and satisfied during the two hours for which they were observed for this research. This was demonstrated through their facial expressions and their physical gestures such as smiling, open and straight posture, nodding in agreement, occasional laughter, and a cheery tone. Day 2 followed a similar pattern, and it was seen that the participants were again happy, motivated, and determined during the class. Day 3 and Day 4 also revealed similar findings and all five participants, through their facial expressions and body language, displayed happiness, satisfaction, contentment, determination, and motivation. This was also confirmed by the indicators for positive emotions seen through participants' facial expressions and physical gestures. All five participants, at some point during each of the lesson, were observed to be enjoying the learning process, which was reflected in their readiness to participate in classroom discussions (all participants responded to the questions asked by the instructor as well as queries raised by other students regarding the English language), along with their ability to complete the written work assigned to them. This led me to infer that they might have enjoyed the language learning

process but again this assumption is subjective in nature and might have been influenced by my personal beliefs and prior experiences as a second language teacher.

In the figure given below (Figure 4.1), the percentage of each positive emotion for all four language classes observed is displayed. These percentages have been computed by dividing the total number of instances of that emotion during the four days by the total number of occurrences (64). Based on the findings, happiness and enjoyment were not the dominant emotions observed among the participants by me.



**Figure 4.1: Positive Emotions Observations Summary Bar Chart**

The bar chart above (Figure 4.1) shows the most frequent emotions and emotional states to be 'determination' and 'motivation'. For the majority of the lessons, the participants appeared to be, based on my inferences from my observation, mainly ‘determined’ and ‘motivated’, as both emotional states comprised about 26.6% of the total observations. The second most dominant emotional state was ‘confidence’ (15.6% for all four lessons observed) which signifies that the participants also appeared to be significantly confident during their lessons when doing their course work and in-class activities. This was assessed through indicators for this emotional state which included characteristics such as straight/upright posture, smiling, relaxed appearance, calmness, direct eye contact with the instructor and classmates etc.

Many participants were also seen to be 'happy' (this emotion accounting for 14.1% of the total observations). While these percentages are lower compared to determination and motivation, they still indicate (again my inference as an observer) that a considerable portion of participants appeared to experience happiness during the study. The emotion of enjoyment constitutes only 1.6 of the total observations. Other emotions and emotional states seen during my observation (e.g. the participants appeared to be satisfied, relaxed, content) represent around 6% or less of the total observations in the bar chart drawn above. In conclusion, the findings suggest that most participants seemed to experience positive emotions during the four days of observation, including emotions such as determination, motivation, confidence, and happiness. This suggests that the participants, for most of the lessons, appeared to be engaged in the classroom assignments and had a positive attitude toward their learning activities.

**4.1.4 Findings for classroom observation of negative emotions**

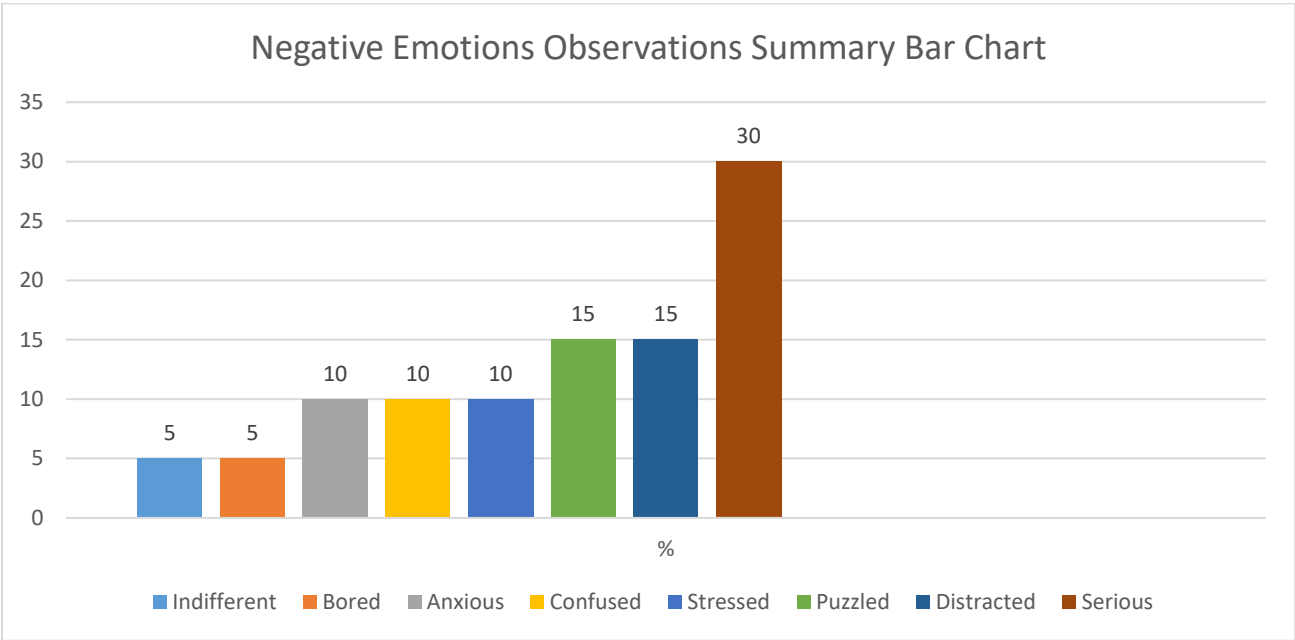
Table 4.2 below offers a concise summary of the findings on negative emotions observed among the participants. The table represents the occurrences of each emotion for each lesson, along with their totals, and is derived from the data obtained from my classroom observational notes. The total number of occurrences of negative emotions observed is 20 which is considerably less than the total number of occurrences for positive emotions (64). Again, it is crucial to mention that the findings for negative emotions are based on my interpretation of the emotions appearing to be manifested by the participants. Therefore, these findings might not accurately represent the type of negative emotions possibly felt by the participants during each class. Interestingly, as can be seen from Table 4.2 below, and as discussed earlier in this Chapter (see section 4.1.2 Classroom observations of positive and negative emotions), the occurrences of disappointment are zero for each lesson observed.

Emotions	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Total
<b>They appeared to be disappointed</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
They appeared to be bored	1	0	0	0	1
They appeared to be indifferent	0	1	0	0	1
They appeared to be confused	1	0	0	1	2
<b>They appeared to be anxious</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
They appeared to be stressed	0	0	1	1	2
They appeared to be puzzled	1	0	1	1	3
They appeared to be distracted	1	1	0	1	3
They appeared to be serious	1	2	1	2	6
Total	5	5	4	6	20

**Table 4.2: Summary of Negative Emotions Observations**

The findings represented in Table 4.2 also show that on Day 1 (class 1), participants appeared to exhibit different types of negative emotions (such as seriousness, boredom, puzzlement, distraction, confusion etc.) except anxiety and disappointment. The indicators for facial expressions and body language for these emotions included closed body posture (such as crossed arms), eyebrows lowered and knitted together, lip biting and pursed lips, and looking away (revealing discomfort or distraction) during in-class assignments and activities. The occurrences of these emotions were, however, low (one occurrence overall for each of these negative emotions, during the entire lesson). For Day 2, the dominant emotion remained to be seriousness (two instances of this emotion). There was also one occurrence of the emotion of anxiety during the same lesson. Day 3 also appeared to witness the occurrences of anxiety (one occurrence) along with the occurrences of other types of negative emotions. On Day 4, the emotion of anxiety was not seen to be manifested by the participants and the dominant negative emotion observed was seriousness, among the participants.

In the figure below (Figure 4.2), the negative emotions observed are listed below along with their corresponding percentages. Here again, each percentage has been calculated by dividing the total occurrences of that emotion (across all four lessons) by the overall total (20). Based on the findings, anxiety and disappointment were not the dominant emotions observed among the participants by me.



**Figure 4.2 Negative Emotions Observations Summary Bar Chart**

The observational findings for negative emotions analysis reveal that the most common emotional state was seriousness. The majority of the participants, at some point during the observation, appeared to be serious while performing different learning tasks or written assignments during each lesson. This emotional state observed among participants accounted for over a quarter of the total observations. Focusing on the emotions of anxiety, the total number of occurrences for the emotion of anxiety constituted only 10 % of the total observations. This means that for all the four lessons, participants were very rarely seen exhibiting anxiety. Interestingly I did not view any participant to exhibit or manifest disappointment which led me to infer that the emotion of disappointment was the hardest to view among all the four emotions being studied in this research. This has been further discussed in the latter part of this section.

Participants were also observed to be distracted and puzzled, with each emotional state accounting for 15% of the total occurrences of emotions. Similar frequencies of the emotions of confusion and stress were noted; together, they accounted for around 10% of the observations. The emotional states of boredom and indifference appeared to be less commonly observed among the participants, each making up approximately 5% of the total occurrences of the observation. These results disclose significant information about the participants' emotions during the lessons and highlight the wide range of emotions that they seemed to experience over the course of the study.

## **4.2 Analysis of Classroom Observations**

### **4.2.1 Analysis of classroom observational findings for positive emotions**

These classroom observational findings for positive emotions led me to the assumption that positive emotions, as viewed through my observation of the participants, appeared to encourage and motivate participants during the language learning process, and that because of the occurrence of these emotions, they appeared to be actively engaged with the learning process. Being happy made the participants appear to be more self-assured and self-determined as learners, as they appeared to confidently take part in classroom discussions and respond to the questions asked by their instructor and fellow students. These observations regarding the effects of positive emotions on language learners synchronize with the findings of Faryadi (2012), whose research study also reiterated the importance of positive emotions in helping the language learners feel motivated during the language acquisition process, which in turn helps in producing more meaningful learning outcomes in a specific language classroom. Saito et al., (2018), in their research study on language learners' emotion and motivation, also endorse the findings of my observation for positive emotions. The study contended that enjoyment and motivation had a positive and beneficial impact on the learner's use of the L2 language throughout their L2 learning process.

In the language classes that I observed, each session typically began with either a review of the assigned homework or a brief revision of the English language skills, including both written and grammar



skills, covered in the previous class. During the revision session, questions would be asked by the teacher and the participants responded to the questions (if they knew the answer which was demonstrated through the physical gesture of raising their hands to answer or directly answering the question verbally when it was asked). One participant, Participant B, would almost always raise their hand for every question asked and would try to answer any question that was asked in the class. The same participant was also willing to read all comprehension passages that were part of a reading activity devised for each lesson, and would happily and enthusiastically read in English, not displaying any anxiety or frustration over the mistakes that they would occasionally make while reading. The Participant's willingness was observed through their physical gestures. They would always raise their hand when the instructor asked for a volunteer to read a certain passage in English. This observation led me to infer that the participant was highly motivated for all classes observed. Additionally, it was also seen that the participants' emotions influenced their behavior towards the learning tasks in the class. For instance, feeling happy and motivated resulted in Participant B's enthusiasm and willingness to actively participate in the reading activity being done in one of the classes observed. In academic settings, student emotions can stimulate behaviors, accomplishments, and abilities (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2016), along with providing clear feedback on a person's level of motivation (Bradley & Lang, 2000; Sarsar, 2014)

During my observation, it was also noted that for class activities requiring group work, all five participants enthusiastically interacted with their group members and completed the task assigned to them in groups. Group work therefore made the participants happy, and they displayed the emotion of enjoyment when they happily engaged with their group partners and actively discussed and successfully completed the group activity assigned to them. According to Cao (2011, 2014) learners are often more eager to interact and communicate in small groups as opposed to whole class activities. In my observation, it was seen that participants enjoyed communicating and solving assignments in groups, but they were also equally engaged in whole class activities preceding the group work. Students are likely to vary in their preferences for group work; some feel at ease working in small groups while others would feel more comfortable and enthusiastic

in teacher-led activities (Cao, 2011). However, in both ESL and EFL contexts, students typically like working in pairs or small groups over full class activities (Cao & Philp, 2006; de Saint Léger & Storch, 2009; Liu, 2005).

#### **4.2.2 Analysis of classroom observational findings for negative emotions**

The findings charted above (see Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2) reveal that during the classroom observation, negative emotions did emerge, and when they did, it seemed to be either because participants were confused regarding the vocabulary of the written tasks, or they were unsure about the grammatical constructions of the English sentence structure. These emotions were primarily manifested when a certain activity or learning task, assigned to the student(s) from the English language grammar book for the course, had difficult vocabulary or syntax (sentence structure and phrases) that could be interpreted in multiple ways based on the context in which the (English language) words were being used. During these scenarios, the participants' facial expressions exhibited anxiety and/or stress and the indicators for these emotions included fidgeting, restlessness, frowning, lip biting and pursed lips (Barry et al., 2011; Ghafar & Ali, 2023; Zoric et al., 2007). Since communication in L2 (including both spoken and written skills) generally involves complex and multifaceted mental processes, any activity in the L2 is a learning process or performance in L2 that will most probably challenge a learner's learning skills and capabilities. This might lead to the generation of negative emotions and feeling as learners feel their self-esteem and confidence, as an L2 learner, to be challenged (Long, 2014; McNiel-Cho, 2013). This could be a possible reason for the display of negative emotions during activities or learning tasks which were challenging for the participants and during which they manifested negative emotions.

Participants were also observed to be confused and puzzled through indicators for facial expressions such as lowered and knitted together eyebrows or looking away to indicate discomfort or distraction (Pediaditis et al., 2015) during in-class assignments or when their answer or response for a certain activity or learning task was wrong. Occasionally, while completing an exercise or writing a paragraph, one or two

of the participants appeared either distracted or bored. This was primarily manifested through their physical gestures. The indicators for these included yawning, restlessness (agitation), clicking of pen or tapping fingers on the desk, glazed look and/or their lack of participation during class discussions of a certain assigned activity (Dumančić, 2018; Huang, 2011; Pawlak et al., 2020; Zawodniak & Kruk, 2019).

Negative emotions, it was observed (especially anxiety) appeared to lead the participants to display feelings of confusion and perplexity. When participants appeared confused, puzzled or anxious, they would pause and take more time to complete the learning task assigned to them. Negative emotions therefore seemed to affect their learning pace during the acquisition of English language skills. These findings comply with the findings of the research study by Rawal and De Costa (2019) who also highlight the adverse effects of negative emotions occurring among students on the language learning process of students. These researchers found that the negative emotions experienced by language learners impacted their language learning process by making them feel frustrated and agitated as they tried to learn English (their target language) in a new academic setting. This in turn impeded their learning goals and hampered their academic progress.

Negative emotions hinder learning and well-being of learners by reducing cognition and making it difficult to concentrate (Fredrickson, 2001; Reschly et al., 2008). This was observed during my research as well. However, as an observer, I also noticed that these feelings remained for a short period of time and would diminish once the participants completed their classwork or started participating in a group/classroom discussion related to the assignment being given to complete. Additionally, I did not find the emotion of disappointment to be manifested by any participant in all the four classes that I observed. As an observer, I feel disappointment is a hard emotion to view and analyze. Perhaps this is the main reason for the existence of minimum research and literature on the effects of the emotion of disappointment on the language learning process of students, in the field of both foreign and second language. As a researcher, I was unable to find

relevant research focusing on assessing and studying the problems faced by researchers when observing the emotion of disappointment occurring among learners, in SLL classrooms.

Overall, results from the classroom observation conducted revealed that most of the time, students exhibited positive emotions, seemed to be at ease with the learning process, and were engaged with the oral and written tasks assigned to them by the instructor. Positive emotions were exhibited by the students during successful completion of the assignments or learning tasks given to them, or they occurred when students gave correct answers or participated actively in classroom discussions. Active participation meant they answered the questions the teacher asked and would also, if required, comment on their peers' response during these discussions.

#### **4.3 Findings for Participant Questionnaires**

To further explore and strengthen the results and findings of my observation (i.e. the occurrence of positive and negative emotions during the language learning process of students), I administered individual questionnaires to the same five participants who had been observed in the class through classroom observation for indicators of positive and negative emotions. The questionnaire had the same objective as the observation: to analyze the effects of the positive emotions (happiness and enjoyment) and the negative emotions (anxiety and disappointment) on the language learning process of students. The questionnaire was important because it would either confirm the results of my observation or would provide new findings regarding emotions which can be further analyzed and studied through this research. Presented below are the findings for the questionnaire which are followed by an analysis of these findings.

The questions provided in the questionnaire, along with the scale used to measure them, have been explained in depth in the Methods and Methodology chapter above. However, to briefly recap the main objective and content of the questionnaire, the questionnaire consisted of questions related to the occurrence of the positive and negative emotions felt by the students, along with the positive or negative impact that these emotions had on the students' acquisition of the L2. There were nine questions on the

questionnaire; Q1-8 were Likert-type questions and Q9 was an open-ended question. The wording of each question can be found above in the Methods and Methodology chapter.

To recap, the first four questions of the questionnaire were related to the occurrence and role of the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment experienced by the participants during the language class. The next four questions (Q5-8) of the questionnaire were related to the occurrence and role of the negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment experienced by the participants during the language class. The first eight questions had five options as answers: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The participants were required to choose one of these options based on the specific positive or negative emotion they felt, and the impact that it had on their learning process, during the class. Q9 was an optional open-ended question. Its wording gave participants the option to write about any other emotion, and its impact, that they felt during the language class.

A printed copy of the questionnaire was filled in by the participants at the end of each class, for all four classes observed. All five participants completed the questionnaires within 10 minutes. Two students answered the open-ended question too, while the remaining three answered just the Likert-type questions. Since five participants were observed for four (weekly) ESL classes, 20 questionnaires in total were collected for all four language classes observed. The findings for each question, from Q1- Q9, have been tabled and charted below.

4.3.1 Findings for positive emotions questions (Q1- 4)

			Days				Total (responses)
			DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	
No. of responses	A		2	2	2	1	7
	SA		3	3	3	4	13
Total (participants)			5	5	5	5	20

SA= Strongly agree, A=Agree

Table 4.3. Q1. I felt happy being in today’s English Language class

The findings presented in table 4.3 above indicate that for all four ESL classes, a total of 7 responses from the participants revealed that they agreed feeling happy in all four classes. For the same question, 13 responses indicated ‘strongly agreeing’ with feeling happy in the class.

		Days				Total (responses)
		DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	
No. of responses	A	2	3	1	2	8
	SA	3	2	4	3	12
Total (participants)		5	5	5	5	20

SA= Strongly agree, A=Agree

**Table 4.4. Q2. Feeling happy helped me to learn English language better**

The findings presented in table 4.4 show a similar pattern as those displayed in Table 4.3. Seven responses indicated that participants agreed that feeling happy helped them in better learning the English language. Thirteen responses showed that students strongly agreed with the positive impact of happiness in helping them learn English language better.

		Days				Total (responses)
		DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	
No. of responses	A	2	3	1	1	7
	SA	3	2	4	4	13
Total (participants)		5	5	5	5	20

SA= Strongly agree, A=Agree

**Table 4.5. Q3. I enjoyed learning English in class today**

The findings presented in Table 4.5 above present the results for the positive emotion of enjoyment; seven

responses following the four ESL classes observed showed that participants agreed with the wording of the question. Thirteen responses were linked to the 'strongly agree' option which means that the majority of the time, participants strongly agreed that they had enjoyed learning English in class that day.

		Days				Total (responses)
		DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	
No. of responses	A	2	1	0	1	4
	SA	3	4	5	4	16
Total (participants)		5	5	5	5	20

SA= Strongly agree, A=Agree

**Table 4.6. Q4. Because I enjoyed learning English today, I look forward to going to the next class**

The findings presented in table 4.6 display that the participants 'strongly agreed' (there were 16 responses) that enjoying learning English, made them look forward to the next ESL class. For Day 3 alone, for instance, it can be seen that all participants strongly agreed with the question's wording.

#### 4.3.2 Findings for negative emotions' questions (Q5- 8)

		Days				Total (responses)
		DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	
No. of responses	SA	0	0	1	0	1
	A	2	2	0	0	4
	D	1	0	0	1	2
	SD	2	3	4	4	13
Total (participants)		5	5	5	5	20

SA= Strongly agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

**Table 4.7. Q5. I felt anxious while learning English in today's class because I thought I may say something wrong**

The findings presented in Table 4.7 above reveal that although two participants agreed with feeling anxious during two classes, the majority of the participants strongly disagreed (13 responses) that they had experienced anxiety during the language learning English process in class. One of the participants on Day 3 (third class) strongly agreed that they felt anxious in class. The participants who agreed with feeling anxious also further elaborated on the source or impact of anxiety on their learning progress in the class, through their responses to the optional question, Q9. One of the participants stated that their anxiety, which they experienced because of their friend not feeling well, made them “struggle to maintain focus in the class”. Another participant stated that they sometimes felt “anxious and sometimes motivated and happy to keep going on”.

		Days				Total (responses)
		DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	
No. of responses	A	1	1	0	0	2
	N	1	0	1	0	2
	D	1	1	0	1	3
	SD	2	3	4	4	13
Total (participants)		5	5	5	5	20

SA= Strongly agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

**Table 4.8. Q6. Even before the class, I become anxious about being able to understand what will be taught**

The findings presented in Table 4.8 above exhibit a similar pattern to Table 4.7 for the responses related to the second question statement about the negative emotion of anxiety. The majority of the participants (13 responses), as seen from the table, strongly disagree that they had experienced anxiety before the start of the class. This question was designed with the aim of identifying if learners came to the class feeling anxious about the language learning process. This would in turn highlight the negative impact of anxiety in making



the learners apprehensive of their abilities to understand the language learning process, even before they come to the class (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Teimouri et al., 2019).

Although the majority of the responses indicated strong disagreement with the statement of feeling anxious before coming to the class, for Day 1 and Day 2, one participant (for each of these days) agreed about the negative role of anxiety in making them feel anxious about being able to understand what will be taught in the class.

		Days				Total (responses)
		DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	
No. of responses	A	0	0	1	0	1
	N	1	1	0	2	4
	D	3	2	1	1	7
	SD	1	2	3	2	8
Total (participants)		5	5	5	5	20

SA= Strongly agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

**Table 4.9. Q7. During the lesson, I felt disappointed because I thought I did not perform well**

The findings presented in Table 4.9 reveal a very different distribution of responses. Although the majority of the responses for this question favored the SD (Strongly disagree) option and D (Disagree) options, indicating that participants did not feel disappointment in the classes, there were four responses for three classes that indicated the option of 'neutral'. This means that one or two participants, as can be seen in the table above, chose to neither agree nor disagree with the feeling of disappointment for some classes. This could be either because the participants thought that they did perform well, hence they did not feel disappointed or because not performing well did not make them feel disappointed and maybe led them to experience some other emotions or feelings.

		Days				Total
		DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	
neq4	A	1	0	0	0	1
	N	0	0	1	1	2
	D	0	1	1	1	3
	SD	4	4	3	3	14
Total		5	5	5	5	20

SA= Strongly agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

**Table 4.10. Q8. Feeling disappointed made me feel that I didn't want to learn English**

The results for findings presented in Table 4.10 above are clear and straight-forward. As seen from the findings for this question, most responses (14) indicate that participants disagreed with feeling disappointed or perceiving the emotion of disappointment as a barrier to language learning. Moreover, it can also be observed that one participant did agree that feeling disappointed made them not want to learn English. However, the same participant did not agree with experiencing disappointment, or with the role of disappointment in making them feel that they didn't want to learn English, for the remaining three classes.

### 4.3.3 Responses to the optional long question, Q9

Q9 was a long answer question and was phrased as follows:

*"If there is anything else you would like to add about how you felt during the class today, please add this below. This could even be a word or a sentence describing how you felt during today's class."*

This question was optional to answer. Two participants, Participant C and Participant E responded to the question during three out of four lessons.

Participant C answered this question for two out of four classes. Their responses are as follows:

Day 1: "motivated"
Day 3: "Sometimes, I felt anxious and sometimes motivated and happy to keep going on".

Participant E answered this question for three out of four classes. Their responses are given below:

Day 1: “I feel amazed at sharing knowledge”.
Day 3: “I felt disappointed to not do my homework, and anxious about a friend not feeling well despite that I effort to keep focus”.
Day 4: “Because of my busy life, I was very anxious because I was not able to finish my homework but also because I did not give priority to them”.

4.4 Analysis of Questionnaire Findings

4.4.1 Analysis of findings for positive emotions

Looking at the results and findings derived above from the questionnaires, it can be said that all participants agreed with the positive impact of the emotions of happiness and enjoyment on their English language learning process. All five participants agreed and strongly agreed with both experiencing happiness and with the positive impact of happiness in helping them learn English better. The emotion of enjoyment displayed a similar pattern to the emotion of happiness. Participants agreed and strongly agreed with enjoying learning English in the class, along with the positive impact of enjoyment in making them look forward to the next English language class. From these findings, it appears that positive emotions felt by the participants in the language classes observed had a positive impact on the learning process of participants. These findings complement the findings of Dewaele and MacIntyre’s (2014) research study which revealed that enjoying the learning process made the students feel empowered and motivated towards the acquisition of a new language. In my research, positive emotions not only helped the participants in learning English better, but it also made them enthusiastic about the next class. Positive emotions therefore have a significant impact on the language learners in terms of enhancing mental acuity, reducing negative emotions, encouraging resilience, and facilitating well-being and academic progress of learners (Dewaele et al., 2019a; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

#### **4.4.2 Analysis of findings for negative emotions**

The pattern exhibited by the negative emotions was more complex to analyze because the participants responses were more varied. For the negative emotions questions participants used all five options (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree) demonstrating that each day, one or more participants would experience the negative emotion of anxiety or disappointment and they would also agree with the negative impact of these emotions on their learning process. Since the questions were structured in a way that they directly addressed the reason and impact of both anxiety and disappointment, it was seen that different participants during different lessons, availed all five options (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree) with regards to the negative impact of anxiety and disappointment on their language learning process. This means that for every class observed, there would be participants both agreeing, disagreeing and remaining neutral about the negative impact of anxiety and disappointment on their language learning process. For example, with regards to the emotion of anxiety, for three out of four lessons observed, there was always one participant for every lesson who agreed or strongly agreed with feeling anxious because they might say something wrong in the class, as can be seen in the section, 'Findings for negative emotions' questions (Q5- 8)'.

Although most participants strongly disagreed with experiencing anxiety in the class, two participants agreed that they experienced anxiety during two different classes. Considering the statement of one of these questions, *I felt anxious while learning English in today's class because I thought I may say something wrong*, this means that two participants, for two classes out of four, linked their anxiety to the fear of *saying something wrong in the class*. This is an important point to consider because anxiety can be felt by the language learners for different reasons and identifying the root cause of anxiety can help the teachers in effectively addressing the causes for which anxiety is being felt in the specific language classroom. Research on anxiety in language classrooms describes the emotion's negative impact on language learning in the form of disruption of the learning process and creating impediments deterring the motivational energy of students (Gregersen et al., 2014). In my research study, based on the findings of the

questionnaires, participants who did agree to feeling anxiety in the language lessons observed also agreed with the negative impact of anxiety on their language learning process. Results from the negative emotions' questions revealed that these participants agreed with the negative impact of anxiety in making them *apprehensive about being able to understand what will be taught* (this was the wording of one of the questions related to the emotion of anxiety). The emotion of anxiety was seen to hamper the learning process of participants by creating obstructions, such as doubting their abilities to understand what will be taught in the language class or fear of saying something wrong in the class.

The findings relating to the emotion of disappointment revealed that for every lesson, there was one participant who agreed that they had felt disappointed during the lesson because they thought they did not perform well in the class. This shows that the negative emotion of disappointment was felt by the participants, and almost every participant experienced it during at least one of the lessons observed. This finding also reveals a source for the occurrence of the emotion of disappointment: the belief that one did not perform well during the class. According to Richards (2022) language learners experience disappointment when they are unable to accomplish their goals set regarding the acquisition of a new language. This demotivates them, leading them to doubt their abilities, and might even make them feel discouraged from putting any further effort into the language learning process. Students may therefore feel disappointed if they have low self-efficacy and doubt their ability to succeed academically. An interesting observation in my research was that for three out of four lessons observed, one participant selected the 'neutral' option for the question related to the emotion of disappointment. This means that for three different classes, there was always one participant who chose to remain neutral regarding the negative impact of disappointment on their language learning process. This could also be due to the wording of the question (*During the lesson, I felt disappointed because I thought I did not perform well*). This would mean that participants neither agreed nor disagreed with the wording of the question. Their performance in the English language learning class was not linked to the emotion of disappointment, or maybe the inability to not perform well in the English class did not result in the emotion of disappointment.

As the questionnaire was not structured to determine or inquire about the reasons for which a particular (positive or negative) emotion was felt, a limitation that has been addressed in the limitations section, I was unable to find the exact reason for the participants' choice of the option of neutral for this question. However, after consulting the existing research on the reasons behind the experiencing of the emotion of disappointment in SLL classrooms, I feel that more research should be conducted on identifying and understanding learners' negative emotions in a language classroom, and most importantly why these emotions occur and how they affect students' behavior in the classrooms. Such an understanding can result in a better interpretation of the role of both positive and negative emotions in influencing students' behaviors in classroom. Emotions affect students' behavior in a classroom setting (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2016) and understanding emotions may help in providing useful opportunities to influence the reasons for which emotions are occurring in a certain classroom ecology (Simonton & Garn, 2019). Similarly, regarding the negative impact of disappointment (*Feeling disappointed made me feel that I didn't want to learn English*) one participant agreed with this statement for one lesson while majority of the participants strongly disagreed with this statement. Two participants remained neutral regarding this statement for two different lessons. From these findings, and from my observation of the emotion of disappointment, I have inferred that feeling disappointed and accepting its negative role on the process of language learning could either be the result of personal reasons for participants (which are not evident through my observation or through questionnaires), or it could be that the learning activities or tasks for that specific class could have possibly made the participant experience the negative emotion of disappointment. There could be other reasons, and I want to reiterate the need for more research on emotions occurring in a language classroom to better examine and analyze the reasons for their occurrence.

#### **4.4.3 Observer Effect**

During data collection, it also appeared that participants did not disclose their real emotions and the emotions they displayed were affected by my presence in the classroom. The main reason for which I make

this assertion is because the results of the questionnaires given to the participants after the observation were slightly different from my observation of the students. For example, I was unable to view the emotion of disappointment among the participants during classroom observation. However, on the questionnaire, one or more participants agreed to feeling disappointed during one or more of the classes. This type of behavior exhibited by participants in my classroom can be best explained through the concept of 'observer effect' often demonstrated in research studies. Observer effect means that observing a "certain situation or a specific phenomenon essentially changes it" (Baclawski, 2018). This means that the presence of an observer in the setting being observed has a considerable effect on the setting itself or on the participants being observed in it. People might act differently if they are aware that they are being observed in a social setting (Lofland et al., 2022). Placing this concept within my research's context, although my research setting was an academic one, I felt that my presence in the classroom had a significant effect on the participants and the positive and negative emotions they displayed.

With regards to the emotion of disappointment, I would also like to comment that, as a researcher, it was challenging to observe disappointment in research settings because certain emotions, such as disappointment, are closely tied to individuals' expectations (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2014). Individuals tend to face disappointment or feel disappointed when their expectations are not met, their goals are not fulfilled, or their outcomes are not achieved. This reveals the subjectivity linked with this emotion (Boekaerts & Pekrun, 2015). However, these constitute merely a few reasons for which disappointment might be felt by an individual. In observational settings, assessing the occurrence of disappointment is therefore difficult because this requires being cognizant of the individuals' internal expectations. Therefore, understanding individuals' personal experiences and the contextual factors surrounding emotional responses is important in research endeavors (Aldao, 2013; Krueger, 2016). Without a detailed understanding of individuals' internal states and expectations, accurately interpreting emotions like disappointment remains a challenging task in observational studies within academic research settings (Boehner et al., 2007; Reeve, 2018).

#### **4.4.4 Analysis of findings for optional open-ended question**

The last question on the questionnaire was optional. The participants who responded gave reasons for how they felt during the language class or for the emotions they experienced during the classes. Two participants responded to this question for three out of four classes observed for this research. The responses of the two participants who responded to this optional question in two out of the four classes observed further substantiate the findings for both the observation and the previous questions of the questionnaire. For instance, Participant C wrote, “motivated” for one of the English language classes. The same participant, for the preceding questions of the questionnaire, agreed and strongly agreed with feeling the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment and disagreed with feeling anxiety and disappointment for that lesson. This confirms the finding regarding the role of positive emotions in making the learners feel motivated in the class during the language learning process.

Interestingly, the same participant for another class wrote “Sometimes, I felt anxious and sometimes motivated and happy to keep going on”. This response highlights the coexistence of both positive and negative emotions, which was also witnessed during my observation of the participants for the positive and negative emotions occurring among them. Similarly, the findings suggest that, although the participants agreed with feeling happy and enjoying the learning process, they also agreed with experiencing anxiety and feeling disappointed during the English language learning process. Therefore, they were experiencing both positive and negative emotions during the language lesson. This, in my opinion, highlights the dynamic and fluid nature of emotions. More recent research (e.g., De Costa, 2016; Pavlenko, 2013; Prior, 2015) on emotions occurring in the language acquisition process has commented on the dynamic nature of emotions as opposed to viewing them as “static phenomenon or an individual trait” (Shao et al., 2019). What is more important is that students are made aware of the impact of their emotions on their language learning process. This can be done by conducting more research studies which aim at spreading awareness, among language learners, regarding the necessity of understanding their emotions in their language learning process.



The second participant, participant E's first response, was "I feel amazed at sharing knowledge". This response provides information about another emotion, "amazement" which can possibly stem from (as seen from the participant's response) the ability to share knowledge in the language classrooms. Since the participant did not further elaborate on this response, it cannot be exactly inferred what type of knowledge and what ways of sharing can result in the emotion of amazement in a SLL classroom. However, this response can serve as a future area of research for SLA researchers researching the sources and impact of the emotion of amazement being experienced by learners in SLL classrooms.

The next two responses of participant E, for two different lessons, highlight not just the negative impact of negative emotions on the language learning process but also the role of social contexts and cultural settings in influencing the emotions that learners bring to a language class. Participant E admitted to feeling disappointed because of their inability to do their homework. This corresponds to the findings of Richards (2022), that disappointment is felt by learners when they are unable to achieve their learning goals. Participant E's inability to complete a learning goal (homework) made them experience disappointment. Secondly, Participant E stated, "Because of my busy life, I was very anxious because I was not able to finish my homework but also because I did not give priority to them". This response of participant E highlights the role of personal beliefs, values and most importantly the personal social context surrounding the learners that can have a significant impact on the way they feel in a classroom. Since socio-cultural contexts were not being studied in this research, this response could not be further explored. However, from participant E's statement, it is important to note that the social context encompassing a learner has a powerful impact on the kinds of emotions they are bringing to a classroom. Therefore, this constitutes an important area of research for future SLA researchers.

#### **4.5 Summary**

The findings for the classroom observation and the questionnaires reveal that participants experienced both the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment and the negative emotions of anxiety

and disappointment in all the four classes that were part of this research study. The positive emotions appeared to have a positive effect on the learners' acquisition of English language in the ESL classroom. This finding is congruent with the findings of previous research studies (see Faryadi (2012); MacIntyre & Dewaele, 2014; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012) on the effects of positive emotions on the language learning process of learners in a language classroom. The positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment seemed to make the participants feel more determined and motivated in solving the language assignments given to them in the class. According to Benesch (2013) positive emotions facilitate the language learning process and stimulate student learning. This holds true for my study, as during observation, I found that when a participant displayed happiness through their facial expressions or body language, they appeared to be more engaged with the learning process and would participate more enthusiastically in the classroom discussions.

The negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment had a negative effect on the learners' English language learning process. These findings align with the findings of earlier research on the adverse effects of negative emotions on the learners' acquisition of a new language. Negative emotions made students feel puzzled, confused, perplexed, and resulted in impeding their learning pace during the English language learning process. Negative emotions hinder learning and well-being of learners by reducing cognition and making it difficult to concentrate (Fredrickson, 2001; Reschly et al., 2008). They also interfere with the learning process and affect students' learning progress (Beseghi, 2018). In my research, the emotion of disappointment was hard to observe, however, and it appeared that participants experienced it when they themselves admitted to feeling it in the questionnaire given to them after their observation by the researcher. This highlights the complexity of emotions and in my opinion, reveals how the emotions being felt by students are not necessarily manifested through facial expressions or body language. In my research, participants did not appear to be disappointed, but they confirmed feeling disappointed when asked about this emotion in the questionnaire. This finding has been further elaborated in the Discussion chapter, which follows.

Another important point was that participants experienced positive and negative emotions during the same lesson. While agreeing with feeling happy and enjoying the learning process, the participants also agreed to experiencing anxiety or facing disappointment during one or more of the language classes. Both type of emotions (positive and negative), despite having different effects on the learners' SLL process, were felt in the same language class by the participants, thereby highlighting the coexistence of both positive and negative emotions in the same lesson.

## **CHAPTER 5: Discussion**

This study observed the occurrence and the impact of the positive emotion of happiness and enjoyment and the negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment on the language learning process of adult English language learners in ESL classes. The study's findings revealed that learners felt these positive and negative emotions during the classes observed for this research. Interestingly, participants agreed with feeling both positive and negative emotions within the same lesson. For every language class observed, there was one or more participants who would agree with feeling either anxious or disappointed, despite having agreed with experiencing happiness and enjoyment within the same lesson. This indicates the coexistence of both positive and negative emotions among participants and therefore points towards the complex and dynamic nature of emotions in language learning classrooms. Moreover, it was also found that the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment appeared to have a positive and beneficial impact on the English language learning process of students. The negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment, on the other hand, appeared to hinder the language learning process.

Some interesting observations were made regarding the role of emotions and new findings were revealed regarding the functioning and role of emotions in an ESL classroom. The former, as stated above, was the coexistence of positive and negative emotions within the same lesson, as participants experienced both types of emotions, along with simultaneously experiencing their positive and negative effects on their language learning process. Through this research study it was also seen that emotions were hard to observe, and it was difficult to analyze their full impact on the language learning process. The hardest emotion to observe out of the four emotions studied for this research was disappointment. During observations, although none of the participants appeared to manifest disappointment through the indicators of facial expressions or body language, on the questionnaires they agreed to feeling disappointed during at least one of the classes observed for this research. This research finding then also

reveals how the emotions being felt by students are not necessarily manifested through indicators of facial expressions or body language. All these findings are discussed in detail below.

### **5.1 Positive role of ‘happiness’ and ‘enjoyment’ on the language learning process**

During the research, participants exhibited positive emotions and they were observed to be happy, motivated, confident, and determined in completing the written tasks provided to them. This was confirmed through their indicators for positive emotions (displayed through the indicators of facial expressions and body language) which included smiling, occasionally nodding in agreement, straight and open posture, cheery tone, and spontaneous laughter, for example. In my research study, I found that the impact of the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment, when observed among the participants, was beneficial and conducive to the English language learning process of the participants. Whenever participants exhibited these emotions, they also, side by side, displayed consistent engagement with the learning process, active participation in the classroom discussion and enthusiasm while responding to questions asked by the instructors. This holds true for other positive emotions as well (e.g. motivation, determination, confidence) which were not initially part of this research but appeared to be manifested by the participants during my observation. This led me to infer that positive emotions encouraged and motivated participants to perform better in the class and made them more eager to learn English, because the occurrence of these emotions appeared to contribute to participants' active engagement with the learning process. This was witnessed through observation of their eager participation in classroom discussions and their enthusiastic responses and positive feedback to the questions asked by their fellow students. The participants' willingness to participate in the learning process was also demonstrated through their physical gestures. They raised their hand when the instructor asked a specific question or requested answers for a certain class activity, thereby indicating their willingness to answer the questions asked by the professor.

Moreover, the participants agreed to feel the positive effects of happiness and enjoyment in the questions related to the positive emotions on the questionnaire administered during each language class. On

the questionnaire, participants agreed and strongly agreed that feeling happy made them learn English better for each of the four class. They also agreed that enjoying learning English in one class made them look forward to the next class. The emotions of happiness and enjoyment therefore can be seen as positive emotions which make language learners more engaged towards learning a new language. These positive emotions facilitate the learning of a new language and make the learners feel motivated and encouraged to learn a new language. This finding aligns with the conclusions drawn by Faryadi (2012) on the impacts of positive emotions and positive emotional interventions (e.g. game-based learning, collective learning, engaged classrooms) on the language learning process of learners. The author highlights the importance of positive emotions in stimulating motivation in language learners and reiterates the need for arousing positive emotions in classrooms to help learners learn better and enjoy the learning process.

Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) and Saito et al. (2018) also analyzed the effects of positive and negative emotions of language learners. Both kinds of research concluded that the positive emotions had a beneficial and positive impact on the language acquisition process of language learners and both studies confirmed that enjoying the learning process made the students feel more motivated and determined towards the acquisition of the new language being learned. In my research study, positive emotions, as viewed through my observation of the participants and the findings of the questionnaire, appeared to encourage and motivate participants during the language learning process and because of the occurrence of these emotions, they actively engaged with the learning process. Positive emotions therefore appeared to positively affect the language learning process of students. This is in keeping with Benesch (2013) that these positive emotions promote student learning and facilitate the language learning process.

The positive impact of positive emotions like happiness, joy, and enjoyment has also been emphasized by positive psychology. Positive psychology contends that human beings strive for positivity by utilizing positive emotions in their engagement and interaction with the world around them (Fredrickson, 2001). As one of the cornerstones of positive psychology, positive emotions are crucial for promoting

"mental development, cognitive growth, and enhanced well-being over time" (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2018). Integrating this into the findings of my research, I can say that considering the positive effects of happiness and enjoyment on the English language learning process of students, ESL teachers should strive to create learning environments that make students happy and allow them to enjoy the acquisition of a new language. This should in turn make the students feel focused, motivated, and determined to acquire an L2. Faryadi (2012) also emphasize the need for creation of positive learning environments which evoke positive emotions among language learners and facilitate positive emotional encounters within the classroom ecology, including interactions with teacher and peers.

Similarly, the L2EPP model proposed by Shao et al. (2020) also emphasizes the importance of classroom environments that are positive in nature, with supportive relationships between peers and teachers. Shao et al. (2020) reiterate that positive classroom environments can facilitate the production of positive emotions which can affect cognitive schemas and motivational level of students. This can eventually lead to improved academic progress of students in an L2 classroom setting. For example, one of the ways through which language teachers can create learning environments that encourage the flow of positive emotions among students is through the use of "emotional intervention" (Faryadi, 2012, p. 40) which involves an awareness and understanding of the learners' emotions in a language classroom to create emotionally suitable learning tasks and activities to motivate students to learn a new language.

## **5.2 Negative role of 'anxiety' and 'disappointment' on the language learning process**

The negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment, although having fewer occurrences and instances than the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment, were seen to have a negative impact on the language learning process of participants. Anxiety and disappointment, coupled with other negative emotions (such as frustration, restlessness, indifference, boredom which were also not initially part of the research study but were observed among the participants) seemed to lead the students to display feelings of confusion and perplexity. When participants appeared confused, puzzled, or anxious, they would pause and

take more time to complete the learning task assigned to them. Negative emotions therefore seemed to affect their learning pace during the acquisition of English language skills. Negative emotions hinder learning and well-being of learners by reducing cognition and making it difficult to concentrate (Fredrickson, 2001; Reschly et al., 2008). This was, as stated above, also observed during my research.

The findings from the questionnaire also revealed the negative role of disappointment in hindering learning progress and making learners feel demotivated. Disappointment can result in low self-esteem because it can lead someone to believe that they are not capable of doing anything constructive (i.e., in my research, learning English). This can cause someone to avoid an event or refrain from exhibiting any kind of behavior (simply not wanting to act at all), during the time they feel disappointed (Zeelenberg et al., 2002). The results of the questionnaire suggest that participants felt disappointed when they thought they did not perform well in the English class and this feeling made them not want to learn English. Therefore, the emotion of disappointment can discourage the language learners from learning a new language and can impede their academic progress during the class. These findings correspond with the findings of Richards (2022) who, in his survey research article, analyzes the different types of positive and negative emotions, along with their sources and effects on the learning process, that teachers and language learners experience in language learning classrooms. Regarding the emotion of disappointment, Richards views disappointment as one stemming from the learners' inability or failure to accomplish their learning goals. This failure leads to the accumulation of feelings of low self-esteem and low self-confidence, which hampers the learners' academic progress and makes them feel demotivated during the language learning process. These findings synchronize with my research's findings where participants experienced disappointment in the language lessons.

In my research, it was also seen that the negative emotion of anxiety had a similar impact, as the emotion of disappointment, on the learner's learning pace and academic progress in the English language classroom. The emotion of anxiety seemed to create obstacles in the path of learning L2 by affecting the participants' self-esteem and their belief in their skills to learn a new language. This finding is in keeping



with Gregersen et al.'s (2014) research study, which also describes anxiety's negative impact on language learning in the form of disruption of the learning process and the creation of impediments that deter the motivational energy of students. Previous research on anxiety in L2 learning also emphasizes how anxiety hinders the achievement level of students, hampers cognitive processing, demotivates learners and challenges their capacity to converse in L2 (Hashimoto, 2002; Horwitz, 2017; Khajavy et al., 2018; MacIntyre, 2017; Papi, 2010; Papi & Teimouri, 2014; Teimouri, 2017). The impact of negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment, in my research, were almost similar. Both emotions hindered the learning progress of learners and adversely impacted the self-confidence of learners by discouraging and demotivating them to learn English.

### **5.3 The complexity of emotions; emotions are hard to observe and analyze for their impact on the language learning process**

I would like to add here that as a researcher, I felt that negative emotions, based on my observation of the participants, were difficult to view and analyze. For example, I did not find that any of the participants exhibited disappointment through their facial expressions or their body language. However, on the questionnaire, one participant agreed that they felt disappointed because they thought they did not perform well in the class. Another participant for another lesson also agreed with the negative impact of disappointment in making them not want to learn English. According to MacIntyre and Vincze (2017) emotions are difficult to assess and even harder to observe and describe in a clear, explicit way. Therefore, it can be difficult to observe and measure the full impact of emotions on the learning process and I found this to be true for the negative emotions being studied in my research, especially the emotion of disappointment. I did not find the emotion of disappointment to be manifested by any participant in all the four classes that I observed. As an observer, I felt that the emotion of disappointment was hard to view and its effects on the language learning process were hard to analyze among the participants. Perhaps this is the main reason for the existence of minimal research and literature on the effects of the emotion of

disappointment on the language learning process of students, in the field of both SLA and FLL. Furthermore, as a researcher, I was unable to find relevant research focusing on assessing and studying the problems faced by researchers when observing the emotion of disappointment occurring among learners in SLL classrooms.

In this context, it would also be relevant to discuss another finding regarding the negative emotions being observed in my research. It might be significant to note how my observations, as a researcher for this study, did not exactly correspond with the findings of the questionnaire. While the results of the questionnaires and my observations were similar for positive emotions, the results of these two data collection methods differed slightly when it came to negative emotions. This was true only for the negative emotions observed in this research. For example, I observed the emotion of anxiety to occur in participants when during their engagement with the learning process they would encounter some difficulty solving the assignment. However, in the questionnaire, one of the participants mentioned that their anxiety in the classroom stemmed from their 'busy life and their personal thoughts'. This highlights how an observer cannot always predict the true state or condition of the people being observed. Secondly, during my observation, I barely saw participants expressing disappointment in the language class. However, two participants on the questionnaire (on Day 1 and Day 3) agreed with feeling disappointed because they thought *they did not perform well* and accepted that *feeling disappointed made them feel they didn't want to learn English*. A similar contention regarding the emotion of disappointment has been made above. The findings of the questionnaire show that participants seem to experience negative emotions, despite having agreed that they felt positive emotions in the same questionnaire. This suggests that on the questionnaire, participants can feel both positive emotions and one negative emotion (either anxiety or disappointment in the class) for each language lesson.

This finding in my opinion highlights the complexity of emotions and how emotions cannot always be predicted to follow a consistent pattern (Rawal & De Costa, 2019). It also reveals how the emotions being felt by students are not necessarily manifested through facial expressions or body language. Language

classrooms are emotionally charged classrooms which are likely to witness an influx of emotions in the form of both positive and negative emotions (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). Emotions occurring in these classrooms can be challenging to study and research (Plonsky et al., 2022) as in language classrooms, emotions being felt by learners are rarely static, and their dynamic nature can make it hard for the researcher to capture their full impact, both on the learners' persona and the learning process of the learners (Oxford & Gkonou, 2021). Another possible explanation for the difference between the findings for the negative emotions on the questionnaire and observation can be attributed to the researcher's presence in the classroom. As a researcher, I had the impression that participants were acting in a certain way and not disclosing their real emotions because of my presence in the classroom. The main reason for which I make this contention is because the results of the questionnaires differed slightly from my observations of students' positive and negative emotions. My presence in the classroom might have led to the difference in the results of the classroom observation and the findings from the questionnaire. This phenomenon is best known in research settings as "the observer effect" which means that "people can change or alter their normal behavior based on the knowledge that they are being watched or studied by a participant observer" (Oswald et al., 2014). People might act differently if they are aware that they are being observed in a social setting (Lofland et al., 2022). This means that my presence as an observer in the classroom setting being observed may have had a considerable effect on the participants being observed in it, therefore they chose to respond in a certain way. Therefore, during the observation of participants, I only witnessed positive emotions whereas on the questionnaires, participants were more vocal about their emotions and agreed to feeling at least one negative emotion, either anxiety or disappointment, in each class being studied for this research.

#### **5.4 The coexistence of positive and negative emotions among participants**

Lastly, for every class, the participants experienced both positive and negative emotions. Sometimes the two types of emotions seemed to coexist with each other. This was revealed from the findings of both the data collection methods, observation and questionnaire, primarily from the results of the questionnaires

where the participants agreed to feeling both types of emotions for each language class in the same questionnaire administered during each class. The SLA and FLL literature on emotions that I reviewed to substantiate my findings for the coexistence of both positive and negative emotions, focuses on the relationship between these two types of emotions felt by participants in language classrooms (e.g. Dewaele et al., 2019; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Rawal & De Costa 2019; Sayadian & Lashkarian, 2015; Shao et al., 2020; Teimouri et al., 2019). It does not specifically study how, or for what reasons, participants can feel different types of positive and negative emotions in the same language class. The study that perhaps most coincides with my research results is the study by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) which explores the relationship between foreign language enjoyment (FLE) and foreign language anxiety (FLA), demonstrating a (somewhat) moderate negative relationship between both these emotions occurring language learners. The main findings of this research revealed that more participants felt the emotion of enjoyment as compared to the emotion of anxiety in their respective language classrooms. As the learners progressed in their acquisition of the target language, their enjoyment level increased, and their anxiety decreased. In my research, positive and negative emotions were seen to coexist, and the participants agreed to feeling both positive and negative emotions for each language class. As a researcher, I feel another possible explanation for this could be related to the written assignments and exercises assigned to the students. Writing tasks that required participants to write sentences or short paragraphs were found to elicit negative emotions. Inability to answer a specific question being asked or providing a wrong answer seemed to make the participants confused, anxious, puzzled, or perplexed. This was manifested through either their facial expressions or their body language (e.g. frowning, restlessness, having trouble answering questions or appearing distracted during class participation etc.). Since communication in L2 (including both spoken and written skills) generally involves complex and multifaceted mental processes (Alghali, 2016), any activity in the L2 learning process or performance in L2 will most probably challenge a learner's learning skills and capabilities. This might lead to the generation of negative emotions and feeling their self-esteem and confidence, as an L2 learner, to be challenged (Long, 2014; McNiel-Cho, 2013). This could be a possible

reason for the display of negative emotions during activities or learning tasks which were challenging for the participants and during which they manifested negative emotions. This may be the reason why participants exhibited (as observed by the researcher) negative emotions during difficult activities or learning tasks which were challenging for the participants. In contrast, positive emotions were manifested by students when they successfully completed assignments or learning tasks, or when students gave correct answers or enthusiastically participated in classroom discussions.

## **5.5 Summary**

This study examined and analyzed the impact of two positive and two negative emotions on the language learning process of students in an ESL classroom. It reiterated the need for the creation of positive learning environments in language classrooms which facilitate the flow of positive emotions and address the negative emotions being experienced by students in a language classroom. Findings of the study revealed that the participants experienced both positive and negative emotions within the same lesson, highlighting the complex nature of emotions. Positive emotions appeared to facilitate learning, as agreed by participants on the questionnaires. Negative emotions, on the other hand, when felt by the participants, appeared to hinder learning and create learning obstacles for participants in the L2 classroom. However, considering the diverse and complex nature of emotions, it is difficult to interpret the full impact and exact role of emotions experienced by language learners during their acquisition of a second or new language. Therefore, it is important that more research is conducted on the impact of different kinds of positive and negative emotions on the language learning process of students in different ESL contexts. Language teachers also need to be more cognizant of the emotions being felt by students in their language classes and the positive or negative impact that these emotions can have on the language learning process of students.

The ensuing chapter, Conclusion, summarizes the discussion of my findings for my research and recaps the research questions. Furthermore, it also addresses the limitations of my research and provides future implications for SLA researchers studying the relevance of emotions to the SLL process.

## **CHAPTER 6: Conclusion and recommendations**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

The present study has examined the occurrence and impact of the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment and the negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment on the language learning process of learners in an English language classroom. By doing so, this research strives to add to the existing body of research on the importance of emotions involved in SLL. By examining both positive and negative emotions, along with their beneficial and adverse effects on the learners' acquisition of a new language, this research would open a new area of interest for future research studying changes in the language learner emotional mind of the learner (Smith, 2017) and their impact on the learners' language learning process.

An important finding of my research study was the coexistence of both positive and negative emotions for each language class observed. While agreeing with feeling happy and enjoying the learning process, the participants also experienced anxiety or facing disappointment during one or more of the language classes. This finding reveals the difficulty of analyzing the full impact of emotions on the learning process mainly because of the complex nature of emotions. Emotions are rarely static, and their dynamic nature can make it hard for the researcher to capture their full impact, both on the learners' persona and on the learning process of the learners (Oxford & Gkonou, 2021). The coexistence of both types of emotions, side by side during the acquisition of a new language, was also a challenging and new concept for me to grasp as a researcher who is new to the field of SLA.

The findings of this research study also addressed the research questions. The first question inquired into the impact of the second language learners' positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment on their SLL process. This study supports the positive role of the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment in making the students feel more confident and motivated in learning an L2 (in this case English). According to Benesch (2013) positive emotions facilitate the language learning process and stimulate student learning. Findings from the observation conducted by myself as the researcher, combined with results from the

questionnaires, revealed that being happy seemed to make the participants complete the learning activities enthusiastically and motivated them to actively participate in classroom discussions. Similarly, enjoying the learning process also appeared to make the participants feel more motivated towards learning English.

The second research question inquired into the impact of the second language learners' negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment on their SLL process. It was seen that participants also agreed with experiencing anxiety and feeling disappointed during the language learning process; these negative emotions appeared to demotivate the learners and discourage them from achieving their learning goals. Existing research on negative emotions also reveals similar results and how these emotions can influence students' expectations of the language acquisition process and hinder their academic advancement (Dewaele, 2020; MacIntyre & McGillivray, 2023; MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017).

The third research question inquired into the implications that my study's findings for positive and negative emotions can have on the teaching of an L2. By studying these two types of emotions occurring during the process of SLL, this study aims at benefiting both language learners and teachers. For language learners, a deeper insight into the functioning of their emotions—how their emotions impact their language-learning process—can help in a better understanding of the ways in which they engage with the second or a new language being learned. Learners should be encouraged and motivated to form a more meaningful relationship with the language being learned (Bown & White, 2010). This is because during the acquisition of a new language, emotions play a critical role in determining how learners monitor and channel their learning processes to explore and assimilate new information regarding the language being learned (Richards, 2022). Similarly, for language teachers, although the teaching methodologies of the language teacher were not observed in my research, a better understanding of their students' emotions might help them reshape their teaching strategies as well instructional tools such as tests, assignments, quizzes etc., in ways that are conducive to the emotional needs of language learners. For example, presenting music, games, and interesting classroom activities that are applicable to students' daily lives are great ways to encourage

the flow of positive emotions in the classroom (Allen & Wood, 2012; Shernoff, 2013). Such classroom environments provide opportunities for students to participate and work together which in turn generate feelings of safety and belongingness which are essential for students (Faryadi, 2012).

Altogether, my research findings reiterate the importance of the role of emotions in the language learning process, along with the need for more research on the occurrence and impact of both positive and negative emotions on the acquisition of an L2. Making language learners more cognizant of the role of their emotions, through more research on the significance of different types of emotions to the field of SLA, can help them in better monitoring and evaluating their “individual trajectories” as language learners (Bown & White, 2010, p.440). Additionally, if the emotional needs of the students are acknowledged and addressed, then language teachers can restructure or shape their lessons in ways that are most conducive to the emotional wellbeing of their students. Utilizing activities that encourage learners to reflect on the role emotions play in their own language learning and in their responses to the emotional demands of learning and using English, emotions can be brought to the forefront for language learners, rather than being a hidden dimension of successful learning (Richards, 2022). Such an initiative would not only help the language learners in engaging more productively with the learning process but would also make them more comfortable with the classroom ambience in which they are studying and interacting with other language learners.

## **6.2 Limitations and Future Implications**

Language learning cannot be restricted to the study of four emotions. The process of learning a new language can be very emotional (Plonsky et al., 2022) during which learners can experience emotions which “vary widely in both type and intensity” (Mulligan & Scherer, 2012, p. 346). Therefore, it is important that more emotions, both positive and negative, are examined for their role and impact on students during their acquisition of an L2. As a researcher and as an observer of emotions occurring during the SLL process, I felt that despite having two data collection methods for observing and examining emotions, it was still



difficult for me to capture the full impact of emotions on the language learning process. Emotions are rarely static, and their dynamic nature can make it hard for the researcher to capture their full impact, both on the learners' persona and the learning process of the learners (Oxford & Gkonou, 2021). Therefore, it was difficult to observe and measure the full impact of emotions on the learning process mainly because of the diverse nature of emotions. Moreover, the coexistence of negative and positive emotions, as revealed through my research study, was also a challenging and new concept for me to grasp as a new researcher.

The data collection method of observation had its disadvantages in the form of the influence of observer effect on the data and the difficulty in observing participants' emotions. Emotions not evident during observation by the researcher were revealed in the questionnaire's findings, in which the participants admitted to feeling certain emotions not witnessed by the researcher. As a researcher, I felt that the questionnaire was a more valid and reliable source of data collection than classroom observation because it appeared to directly confirm the emotions being felt by the participants. For example, on the questionnaires, the participants agreed to feeling both positive and negative emotions during each language class whereas during the observation, I found it hard to observe the negative emotions, especially disappointment. Moreover, having more open-ended, long questions on the questionnaires would have been a better option because two participants who responded expressed, in detail, the impact of their emotions on their language learning process. Therefore, having mainly Likert-type questions on the questionnaires emerged as a limitation when analyzing the impact of emotions on the participants' L2 learning process. For this research, the questionnaires could have been designed in such a way that they addressed the reasons of the emotions being felt by the participants, along with the impact of these emotions on the English language learning process, through long reflective questions instead of just Likert-type questions.

Lastly, my research also did not consider the socio-cultural forces surrounding and influencing learners' academic progress in the language classroom. The socio-cultural contexts in which the language is being taught, along with a learner's social identity, also play a major role in the learner's acquisition of a

second or foreign language (Izard, 2007). For example, in the questionnaire one of the participants wrote in answer to the open-ended question, “Because of my busy life, I was very anxious because I was not able to finish my homework but also because I did not give priority to them”. This participant's response highlights the role of personal beliefs, values and most importantly the personal social context surrounding the learners that can significantly impact how they feel in a language classroom. As the socio-cultural contexts were not being studied in this research, this response could not be further explored. However, from the participant's statement, it is important to note that the social context encompassing a learner has a powerful impact on the kinds of emotions they are bringing to a classroom. Therefore, this constitutes an important area of research for future SLA researchers.

This present study investigated how positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment, as well as negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment, influenced the language learning process in an English classroom. By exploring both positive and negative emotions and their effects on the language acquisition process, this research aims to contribute to the existing literature on the role of emotions in SLA. Additionally, it seeks to pave the way for future research examining changes in learners' emotional states during the acquisition of a second or new language. Moreover, this study also highlighted the coexistence of both types of emotions in language classes, revealing the complexity of emotions in language learning. Understanding emotions can therefore benefit both learners and teachers, aiding learners in navigating their language acquisition journey and guiding teachers in creating conducive classroom environments.

The purpose of studying both types of emotions (two positive and two negative) was to attain a better understanding of the significant impact that emotions can have on the acquisition of a new or second language. Alongside, this research also strives to add to the current research on the role of different types of emotions in the field of SLA. It is hoped that future SLA researchers will benefit from the findings of this research and will move towards exploring emotions more deeply, particularly emotions such as disappointment. Lastly, this study also highlights the coexistence of positive and negative emotions in

language classes. This coexistence of emotions illustrates not only the intricacy of emotions but also the need for a deeper and more perceptive examination of how emotions function in various language-learning environments. Finally, it may be said that both language teachers and language learners can benefit from an awareness of the role of emotions in SLA. Such an understanding of emotions can help language learners in better monitoring their emotions as they become aware of the impact their emotions can have on their language learning process. It can also help the language teachers in comprehending the emotional needs of their students and creating conducive classroom environments.

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## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE

McGill University

Department of Integrated Studies

Name of the researcher: Sanaa Abbasi

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. Through my study, I am investigating the effects of positive and negative emotions on your learning process of learning a second language. The purpose behind this is to analyze how our emotions might help or hinder our learning of a second language.

In answering the questions below, I am asking you to think about how, or what, you felt while learning English in the class that you just finished. I will be giving out this questionnaire after every class which will be taking place this month.

Please answer these questions:

#### **Part I (Positive emotions)**

Q1. I felt happy being in today's English Language class:

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Q2. Feeling happy helped me to learn English language better:

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I didn't feel happy learning the English language

Q3. I enjoyed learning English in class today:

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Q4. Because I enjoyed learning English today, I look forward to going to the next class:

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I didn't enjoy learning English in today's class

**Part II: (Negative emotions)**

Q5. I felt anxious while learning English in today's class because I thought I may say something wrong:

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I felt anxious for a different reason

Q6. Even before the class, I become anxious about being able to understand what will be taught:

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

Q7. During the lesson, I felt disappointed because I thought I did not perform well:

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐
- ☐ I didn't feel disappointed

Q8. Feeling disappointed made me feel that I didn't want to learn English:

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ I didn't feel disappointed

Q9. (Optional) You can either choose to answer or not answer this question



If there is anything else you would like to add about how you felt during the class today, please add this below. This could even be a word or a sentence describing how you felt during today's class:

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## APPENDIX B

### CONSENT FORMS



#### Participant Consent Form

**Researcher:** Sanaa Mehmuda Abbasi (Ms, pronouns: she/her)/ Master's second year student/ DISE (Department of Integrated Studies), Faculty of Education, McGill University. Telephone number: 5148038845.

**Supervisor:** Dr. Caroline Riches/ Associate Professor/ Department of Integrated Studies in Education/ Education Room, (514) 398-4527 Ext. 00539 / Email: caroline.riches@mcgill.ca

**Title of Project:** The impact of the emotions: happiness, enjoyment, anxiety and disappointment on language learners' acquisition of a second language.

#### Purpose of the Study:

In my research, I want to investigate how language learners' emotions affect their learning of a second language. Through my research, I want to study if the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment and the negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment help or hinder this learning process. This research seeks to highlight the importance of students' emotions in language classrooms, and to help the language teachers in better understanding the role of their students' emotions when learning a second language.

#### Study Procedures:

My study procedures will involve two methods: First I plan to observe students in an ESL (English as a second language) class at McGill's School of Continuing Studies. In addition to general interactions, I will be paying attention to expressions of the positive emotions of happiness and enjoyment and the negative emotions of anxiety and disappointment of participating students. These observations will be recorded as field notes in a notebook that I will take to each lesson that I will observe. The second method will be a questionnaire, in a hard copy format, that will be given to participants right after each lesson has finished. The questionnaire will be comprised of questions related to students' emotions felt and perceptions of their effect on the participants' learning process.

I will be observing each English class which meets once a week in the evening, for an entire month. The questionnaire will be provided to participants at the end of each class and should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

Participants are asked to refrain from commenting on or critiquing the language instructor's teaching strategies or teaching process. This is so that the instructors are comfortable with having their classes being observed.

**Compensation:** If you choose to be part of this research, you will be given a CAD \$20 gift card as a compensation for your participation in the research. The gift card will be given to you, in person, by the researcher at the end of the last class observation and/or questionnaire completion. Each participant will receive a gift card.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You can choose to be both observed and to complete the questionnaires. You can also choose to participate in just one of these options (i.e., either to being observed or to filling out the questionnaire). You can also choose to withdraw your participation at any time during the study. Whether you choose to participate or not will not result in any loss of benefit to which you are otherwise entitled (e.g., grades will not be affected in any way). If you decide to withdraw once information has been gathered, that information would be destroyed unless you give permission to the researcher to use your data for the research. Moreover, there are no limitations to withdrawal of research materials by you, the participant, as you have the option of withdrawing from the research at any point, during or after the research. Even after your withdrawal, you will still be entitled to the gift card.

**Potential Risks:** There are no anticipated risks to you in this research. No physical, legal, economic or political harm of any sort would result from this research as this research does not focus on any aspect of your personal or social life. This research is also not, in any way, related to the political or religious views or socio-economic status of the participants. The only possibility could be psychological or emotional discomfort, which would be at its minimum, when you are questioned about your emotions as you learn a second language. To further reduce this risk, when you are given the questionnaire to be filled, you would be given some time to read it and discuss it with the researcher, if you wish to, before filling it out. You also have the option of not answering any question that you are not comfortable answering.

**Potential Benefits:** Through this research, the researcher hopes to learn about the positive and negative effects of the emotions of language learners (like you) on their process of learning a second language. Awareness regarding such effects might better help you as a language learner, as well as your language teachers, in understanding the emotional and psychological needs of language learners. This research will also be useful for you as it will help you understand how your emotions function during the learning of a second or new language. Moreover, this research will also be helpful for your language teachers as it will help them in reshaping or redesigning their teaching strategies and instructional tools such as tests, assignments, quizzes etc., in a way that best fulfill your emotional needs.

**Confidentiality:** Data for this research consist of field notes and questionnaires in the form of paper copies. These paper copies will remain with the researcher and will be kept safe in a locked cabinet in the researcher's apartment, therefore only the researcher will have access to them. After each class, these paper copies will be transported to the researcher's apartment by using uber as a means of transport. Field notes will also be later transcribed electronically by the researcher in a password protected document on the researcher's password protected laptop computer.

You will be required to write your actual name both on the consent form and on the questionnaire. Your names will remain confidential, and a code will be assigned to replace your names. This code will be in the form of an alphabet and will be used in any reports of data, to preserve anonymity. Each participant will be assigned an alphabet starting from A and ending on E as this study requires five participants only. This alphabet assigned to you will be destroyed after the final version of the thesis is submitted for examination, passed and program requirements fulfilled.

If you choose to withdraw and this occurs prior to publication, all of your identifiable study materials will be destroyed to the extent possible. If data have been combined in analysis, it may not be possible to withdraw this content. Once publication has occurred, data may only be destroyed 7 years from first publication, as per McGill University policy. It will, however, be immediately withdrawn from any further analysis or further publications.

*Study participation options:*

*Q1) During this lesson, the researcher will be observing your emotions and taking field notes related to your emotions, as you learn the second language. Are you comfortable with being observed for one lesson taking place each week for this entire month? Please tick one answer*

- Yes
- No

*Q2) A questionnaire survey asking questions about the emotions of happiness, enjoyment, anxiety and stress and their impact on your language learning process has been designed by the researcher. This questionnaire will be given at the end of each language class (for a total of four classes), and you will be given 15 minutes to complete it. Do you agree to completing these questionnaires? Please tick one answer.*

- Yes
- No

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**Dissemination of Results:** The results would be disseminated through academic and/or professional presentations and publications. The researcher also plans on conducting workshops and giving presentations in different language learning classes regarding the importance of emotions, and how changes in them impact the overall process of learning a second language.

**Questions:** Please contact Dr. Caroline Riches if you any further questions of if you require more clarification about the project:

**Email:** caroline.riches@mcgill.ca

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at 514-398-6831 or [lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca](mailto:lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca) citing REB file number \_\_22-05-035\_\_

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***For written consent***

Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. To ensure the study is being conducted properly, authorized individuals, such as a member of the Research Ethics Board, may have access to your information. A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

### Observational notes of positive and negative emotions and emotional states occurring among participants

POSITIVE EMOTIONS				
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Participant A	Satisfied happy	Confident determined motivated	determined motivated	pleased happy
Participant B	Content indifferent	Determined Motivated	Satisfied	content relaxed
Participant C	Confident determined happy	Happy confident motivated enjoyment	Confident relaxed happy determined	confident happy
Participant D	determined motivated	Happy	determined motivated	motivated happy confident
Participant E	motivated happy confident	happy motivated determined	determined motivated happy confident	motivated happy confident

NEGATIVE EMOTIONS				
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Participant A	puzzled confused At times, distracted.	Stressed (sometimes)	Appeared to be challenged by the assignment to complete; neither anxious nor disappointment but slightly stressed by the task. It was as if they wanted to	(sometimes) puzzled, Mainly when doing a written activity or a task that involved writing in English language

			excel in the assignment and to get all the answers correct.	
Participant B	Sometimes, appeared to be distracted. At times, less focused and would easily lose interest.	Serious while doing an assignment.	A little anxious, especially when doing the learning task assigned to the class	Serious, Sometimes, would appear less focused
Participant C	bored (sometimes)	none were noticed	none were noticed	none were noticed.
Participant D	serious Showing minimum expressions Appeared to be more conscious of their speaking skills and was sometimes, hesitant in responding to activities as if unsure of their English language spoken skills	sometimes, confused. most of the time, quiet in class.	Appeared to be challenged by the assignment to complete; neither anxious nor disappointment but slightly stressed by the task. It was as if they wanted to excel in the assignment and to get all the answers correct.	Serious Confused while doing activity
Participant E	Sometimes, serious	none were noticed	A little anxious (for a short period of time)	none were noticed