

Can Text-Based Reading Diminish Boredom in English Language Classroom?

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Abstract

Boredom is one of the most common emotions in educational environments. It is important to understand that teachers typically dismiss boredom by attributing it to their students' laziness, anxiety, sadness, or personality traits. Boredom in the foreign language classroom continues to be an underappreciated topic that has garnered little attention from instructors and academics. The purpose of this study is to describe the participants' feeling toward their text-based reading activity, namely their boredom. This study used a narrative inquiry method and relied on WhatsApp for written communication as well as recorded semi-structured interviews. The interviews were written down and subjected to theme analysis. The results of the qualitative analysis of the data revealed that the subjects occasionally experienced boredom while engaging in reading activities, both in and outside of class. Besides, the subjects have their own preferences in choosing reading text in order to reduce their boredom. In conclusion, we suggest that boredom needs to be understood as a complex emotions and thus appropriate text choice can increase positive emotion of the students toward reading activities.

Keywords: text-based, boredom, reading activity

Introduction

Boredom is characterized by disengagement from one's environment and a range of negative emotions (Komorowska, 2016), such as discontent, letdown, irritation, lack of focus, lack of motivation (Pawlak et al., 2020) to work toward pre-established goals, and decreased energy (Danckert & Allman, 2005; Fisher, 1993). According to Acee et al. (2010) and Pekrun & Stephens (2010), boredom is characterized as a mild to painful affective state, drive, or psychological experience that makes a person detach from their environment. Boredom is commonly referred to as a silent emotion and can have a slight or substantial impact on learning outcomes, mainly because it does not lead to as many disciplinary difficulties as other emotions, such as fury (Pekrun et al., 2009).

Even though boredom in foreign language classrooms has been thoroughly studied for a long time in fields such as psychology, educational psychology (Belton & Priyadharshini, 2007; Farmer & Sundberg, 1986), and education (Eren, 2013; Finkielstein, 2020; Pekrun, 2006; Shehzad et al., 2020), it is still an underappreciated subject that has received little attention from educators and scholars. It is crucial to realize that boredom is one of the most prevalent emotions in educational settings, even if teachers frequently brush it off by attributing it to their pupils' laziness, anxiety, melancholy, or personality qualities (Macklem, 2015). (Pekrun et al., 2010).

Emotion also affect students reading activity (Taboada Barber et al., 2022; Zaccoletti et al., 2020). Coordination of intricate linguistic, cognitive, and socioemotional processes within a specific ecological setting is necessary for reading success (Aaron et al., 2008). The selection of text-based activity intrigue students for their comprehension of the literature (Fountas et al., 2012) where they are possible to choose books according to their interests and spend large amounts of time engaged with texts of their choice. In Addition, students will be able to identify the vocabulary in those engaging texts and recollect their prior knowledge of it. Additionally, the pupils will regard reading as a worthwhile pastime.

Literature Review

Boredom is frequently linked to unexciting or repetitive tasks. According to experts in the field of educational psychology, boredom is associated with a number of problems that hinder learning, such as a higher frequency of attention-related cognitive mistakes (Malkovsky et al., 2012). The existence of boredom can also be used to predict one's success (Putwain et al., 2018), decreases motivation to learn (D'Angiulli & LeBeau, 2002), and also contributes to inadequate information processing (Sharp et al., 2019; Tze et al., 2016).

Theoretically, boredom is directly associated to school activities and outcomes (Pekrun et al., 2014), it originates owing to individual or habitual disposition (Sharp et al., 2016) and proneness to boredom and adds to the presence of negative impacts in learning activities (Farmer & Sundberg, 1986). Contrary to popular belief, boredom can also happen when the learning environment is inadequate for the students' skills (Acee et al., 2010; Pekrun & Stephens, 2010). For instance, when an activity is considered as repetitive or monotonous because it is under-challenging, as well as when an activity is perceived as meaningless or irritating because it is beyond one's skills because it is over-challenging, both of these situations can lead to boredom. A lack of cognitive engagement may also contribute to boredom, according to several earlier studies (Eren, 2016; Hamedi et al., 2020).

Numerous studies in numerous locations conducted empirical study on learning ennui. A quantitative study on boredom was carried out in Canada by Malkovsky et al. (2012). They looked examined the connection between sustained attention, boredom propensity, and adult symptoms of ADHD in 48 Canadian undergraduate students. The findings showed that boredom propensity negatively connected with attentional control, and that agitated boredom propensity negatively correlated with sensitivity to errors and favorably correlated with symptoms of ADHD.

Additionally, the impact on learning behavior of the boredom coping profiles of 446 Canadian university students was quantitatively evaluated by (Daniels et al., 2015). The distinction between the three boredom coping profiles—evaders, criticizers, and reappraisers—was revealed in the data. In Asia, Tanaka & Murayama (2014) conducted research on the subject of boredom in Japan and looked into how accomplishment goals affected the prediction of interpersonal relationships. Tam et al. (2020) in Hong Kong also looked at how weariness in teachers affected boredom in students. The researchers from the Philippines (Baker, D'Mello, Rodrigo, & Graesser, 2010) also conducted another investigation. According to the survey, students emphasized the importance of looking for ways to avoid boredom in the first place because they found it difficult to get rid of the feeling once they had given in to it.

The factor that might influence students' reading activity has received a great deal of research attention. It's important to include psychological domain in reading activities for students. Due to the fact that the aforementioned studies were carried out outside of Indonesian context, there is currently no evidence about the causes of and remedies for reading ennui in Indonesian context. Since the literacy level of Indonesian students is low, reading activities are seen as an emerging topic for Indonesian EFL. Therefore, present writers decided to explore this construct in the setting of real English language lessons because boredom is a common academic feeling and there is a dearth of research findings relevant to the L2 classroom. Thus, the following research questions are formulated:

1. What types of text-based reading comprehension activities experienced by EFL university students?
2. How does text-based reading activities decrease their boredom?

Method

This study used a narrative inquiry method and relied on WhatsApp for written communication as well as recorded semi-structured interviews. As "human beings both live and tell narratives about their lives," narrative inquiry is used to elicit the most private thoughts and sentiments of people (Clandinin, 2006). The current study looked at university EFL students' types of text-based reading comprehension activities and how students carry out the text-based reading activities in relation to increase boredom. Semi-structured interviews were recorded in order to collect the data. Informal conversation over WhatsApp was used to explain the information provided by the participants.

Participants

In this study, five male EFL students from Indonesian private and public universities took part. Taking into account that they had been studying English for six years, volunteers between the ages of 18 and 19 were chosen. The students are recognized to be quite accustomed to reading textbooks and to controlling their learning boredom. The purpose of this study is to describe the participants' feelings toward their text-based reading activity, namely their boredom.

Data Collection

The researchers gathered the individuals' individual reading activity experiences through a semi-structured interview. The selected participants were initially informed of the interview's goal and asked if they would be willing to participate in the interview section. The participants' consent was communicated to them via WhatsApp in order to maintain ethical standards in this study. The study's goals, advantages, and any problems that others may have noticed were discussed. P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5 were used as pseudonyms for their real names, where P stands for participant. Additionally, the information gleaned from their voices was kept private and was never displayed. Additionally, the researchers decided on the interview plan with the participants. the opening question of the interview was "Have you ever been bored while reading?" The next inquiries were "What type of reading text do you find boring?" and "What kinds of reading materials do you enjoy the most?" Further, the researchers came up with additional questions like "Which section of text that make you feel bored?" and "Does the existence of boredom in your reading activity make you do something?" after learning more about the different sorts of text that could increase or decrease boredom. Regarding the prepared inquiries, the interview portion was carried out online using Zoom meeting, with participants speaking Indonesian as their primary language. The individuals were then questioned one by one and recorded. Besides, the researchers also used WhatsApp to collect data in order to get redundant information and clarify the data. The interviews were afterwards written down and subjected to theme analysis. As a result, the information was organized into three themes: the experience of boredom, types of text contribute an lessen boredom, and how to deal with boredom.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data were translated from the participants' first language to English. The data were analyzed using thematic encryption. The aim of thematic analysis is familiarizing with the data, generating codes, constructing themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Terry et al., 2017).

Results

The order in which the interview questions were asked determines how the study's findings are presented in this paragraph, starting with 1)the experience of boredom, 2) types of text contribute to or lessen boredom, i.e. type of text that contribute boredom, types of text that reduce their boredom, and which part of the text that contribute to boredom, and 3) how to deal with boredom during reading. When it comes to the experience of boredom, the results of the qualitative analysis of the data revealed that the subjects occasionally experienced boredom while engaging in reading activities, both in and outside of class. This is because they are forced or assigned to read materials which were not their interest. This activity is considered as boring and monotonous activity. The

following are the representative excerpts from the interviewees' responses regarding question "Have you ever been bored while reading?":

P1: *Yes I sometimes feel bored in my reading activity.*

P2: *My reading class is boring. The lecturer keep giving us similar assignment.*

P3: *Yes I feel bored if the reading activity is always the same. I mean, the topic of the text is always similar time to time.*

Further, the answers of the question related to types of text that contribute to or lessen boredom vary. Some participants confessed that they like reading report, news, history, public speaking books, and Islamic text. Whenever they were assigned to read course book or text from lecture, they will get bored easily, even in couple of minutes. Some others stated that they prefer narrative text such as short stories, comics, and science fiction novels. All participants said claimed that reading texts that they like or suit their passion can lengthen the duration of their reading activities. In addition, they tend to avoid reading long text since it increases boredom easily. The answers related to the second topic are presented in the following scripts:

P1: *What reading text I like most is novel. Science fiction novel. I do not like reading course module actually, I have to since it is part of my study.*

P2: *I do not like reading module from courses. When I have to study the material, I only read from the note. I like reading sport news and history, like history of Islam and history of a certain country.*

P3: *I often bored easily when I have to read academic text. But, still I don't have any choice since reading academic texts is compulsory in every courses I take. Actually, I like reading news, short story, history of Islam.*

P4: *I like reading sport news, online newspapers, short stories, and sometimes comic when I have no assignments to do. I think I need to free my self sometimes from academic course materials.*

P5: *I read comics or novel in my free time. It can boost my mood again. I also like reading materials for my public speaking skill as I often be a master of ceremony in campus. I do not like reading too long text. It is boring.*

Finally, the participants claimed various ways to deal with their boredom of reading. The participants are trying to make themselves comfortable and raise their motivation to read. Here are the excerpt of their answers:

P2: *I change my reading topic. Next day, I will finish reading the previous text.*

P3: *Usually, I prepare some snacks before I read. That way I can bear the boredom a little bit longer. I read on my bed. In brief, I'm going to make myself comfortable or fine a place that is comfortable for me to read.*

P5: *Sometimes I skip my reading and play. After that, I will read again.*

Discussion

Participants in the study acknowledged that they occasionally were bored in circumstances related to learning. The main cause of this situation is the fact that there aren't many options for students in Practical English classes to choose what they want to study. They said that in-class learning contributes to boredom more frequently than learning outside of the classroom. The students believed that some of their English professors had a tendency to impose topics and language content upon them and weren't always up to par, which led to distraction, dissatisfaction, or frustration in the students. The fact that the respondents seemed prepared to describe boredom from their own point of view and rely on retrospective reflection on a variety of situations in which they experienced boredom is noteworthy. With regard to their personal needs and behaviors, they demonstrated the ability to recognize and constructively confront the problem of boredom. It should be noted, however, that the bulk of the respondents' comments were expressed in a somewhat perfunctory manner. Given these factors, it seems appropriate to include the emotion theory (Eastwood et al., 2007), which emphasizes the significance of emotional awareness in overcoming

boredom. The majority of those who participated in the interview, most likely out of boredom, did not reflect on this academic emotion. As implied by the aforementioned theory, they were therefore unsure of how to solve the issue.

A few studies reported text-based influence the students motivation to read (Allor et al., 2013; Henschel et al., 2016). Finding an appropriate texts to read can challenge students and lessen boredom (Kanevsky & Keighley, 2003), since they are not exposed to the same reading activity repetitively. The participant in this study chose narrative text most as their preference reading material to avoid boredom. This is in line with a researche conducted by (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007). Those who did not like reading did not seem to despise reading as much as they seemed to favor other pursuits (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007). This finding showed the students who experience distractions and found the information to be quite repetitious, or those who experienced high levels of distraction and consistently attributed any errors in comprehension or attention to the distractions rather than the information itself.

Reading is an activity that need an attention. By manipulating attention, it is possible to change the way boredom feels itself (Danckert & Allman, 2005). The participants chose other activities to bring their mood of reading back. When students are offered alternatives, they may feel more in charge, motivated, and optimistic (Macklem, 2015).

Conclusion and Limitation

In conclusion, we suggest that boredom needs to be understood as a complex human emotion that deserves a sophisticated, informed response, especially in the context of text choice. Appropriate text-based material can increase positive emotion of the students. And thus, it can make the students ready to continue learning. The present research is limited in terms of obtaining information from only 5 participants of EFL university students. It is suggested for further researchers to study and broaden the topic to more participants and different level of students.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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