EDUCATIONE

Perception of Boredom in Young Learners' English Language Classes

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the boredom perceptions in a Turkish public school providing intensive English classes for the 5th grade. From the perspectives of both students and teachers, the study examines whether young English as a foreign language (EFL) learners get bored in the classroom, the causes and signs of their boredom in addition to the perceived solutions to reduce their boredom perceptions. In accordance with these objectives, six 5th grade students and four English teachers took part in semi-structured interviews. As a result of the analysis of the findings, it was discovered that boredom is a common phenomenon for the students, and it is generally associated with certain causes such as grammar instruction. Additionally, it was found that boredom manifests itself by typical behaviors such as doodling. Finally, some solutions such as more active involvement of the students into the lessons by means of engaging activities were offered by the participants to minimize boredom. Some practical recommendations are presented at the end of the study in line with the findings and the relevant literature.

Keywords: *Perception, Boredom, Young EFL Learners*

INTRODUCTION

In the classroom, various negative emotions are experienced in the process of learning which is often stimulated by several factors such as how students perceive themselves, their teachers, the classroom atmosphere, and the subject (Efklides & Volet, 2005). One of the most commonplace negative emotions that should be avoided in the classroom is known to be boredom (Daschmann, 2013). Described as a plague in today's modern society (Spacks, 1995), boredom is reported to affect 90% of the students to some extent (Harris, 2000). Considered both a permanent personality trait and a temporary condition influenced by certain situational factors, boredom is regarded by the field of psychology as a negative emotion resulting in the inhibition of the learning process (Daniels et al., 2015).

Boredom is defined as an emerging indicator of failure in the involvement of activities in line with a goal (Westgate & Wilson, 2018). It is also described as an affective temporary condition of lack of stimulation, arousal, momentum or psychological engagement in the targeted situation (Shaw, 1996). Bored individuals generally disengage from a satisfying activity and have perceptions related to the slow passage of time and hardships regarding concentration on tasks (Macklem, 2015). Westgate and Wilson (2018) claim that boredom may also transform into something deeper, such as attentional and meaningless boredom, the former of which means that bored individuals might have issues related to their attention (e.g., mind wandering). On the other hand, these researchers hold the idea that some individuals can experience meaningless boredom and cannot find meaning in the situation leading to the urge of disengaging from the activity.

More specifically, it is argued that bored students are not very willing or successful in revealing their cognitive potentials in the classroom (Daschmann, 2013). In addition, boredom is discussed as a multi-faceted, complex emotion which is associated with lower levels of arousal, other feelings which are not pleasant and the desire to do another activity, or to avoid the learning situation completely (Nett et al., 2010). As a psychological construct, boredom generally appears in the classroom when students are under- or over-challenged (Lohrmann, 2008). Other possible causes of boredom in the classroom are activities that are not very meaningful, teachers who are unpopular with some students, monotonous classroom environment, lack of engagement in classroom tasks as well as students' general tendency to get bored easily (Daschmann et al., 2011). Nett et al. (2016) also argue that the subjects covered in the lesson, the instruction style of the teacher, students' perception of the subjects, the materials used

in the lesson and even the personality of the teachers as well as the students can give rise to academic boredom. Sometimes, the perception of the nature of school life as monotonous in general can induce boredom (Robinson, 1975), and in some cases, such social factors as family and friends can trigger boredom in the classroom (Goetz & Hall, 2014).

The reason why children get more bored when compared to adults in the academic contexts was also emphasized in the literature. For example, Schubert (1977) suggests that younger learners have a higher potential to suffer from boredom because of the fact that they are not aware of certain leaning goals. Similarly, childhood is generally referred to as the period of uncertainty about the future which cannot be fully appreciated until the period of adulthood (Moran, 2003). Especially for young learners, boredom is often not discussed in academic contexts (Cheng, 2023; Weinerman & Kenner, 2016) despite its serious potential to have an influence on their foreign language learning process (Cameron, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Additionally, the research regarding boredom perceptions is generally labeled as underdeveloped in the literature (Merrifield & Danckert, 2014), and it is argued that if the reasons and signs of boredom could be deciphered, teachers could take necessary precautions to minimize it (Mousavian Rad et al., 2022). Likewise, the importance of reducing classroom boredom has been emphasized for effective instruction (Pekrun et al., 2010). Therefore, the present study aims to discover whether young EFL learners get bored in the EFL classroom through the eyes of teachers and students, the perceived causes and signs of boredom as well as the recommendations to alleviate boredom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some researchers positively regard boredom as a construct which can enable the individuals to pursue a new goal when the existing situation and the goal is not satisfactory and meaningful any longer (Elpidorou, 2014; Gasper & Middlewood, 2014). It was argued in another study that negative feelings such as boredom could result in positive mind wandering and outcomes when accompanied by persistence and attentiveness (Khalaf et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the perception of boredom as a negative construct is more frequently discussed in the relevant literature (Eastwood et al., 2012; Pekrun et al., 2002; Pekrun et al., 2010; Van Tilburg & Igou, 2017). Known as one of the most common emotions negatively affecting academic performance (Pekrun et al., 2009), boredom is believed to manifest itself in the classroom in the form of

yawning, resting head on hand, slouching in the seat as well as watching the clock (D'Mello & Graesser, 2009).

Boredom has been a research area in the field of foreign language learning in recent years. The majority of related research studies mainly explored the reasons for boredom and concluded that the following causes are among the factors which can bring about the emotion of boredom while learning the language: the teaching style of the teacher (Zawodniak et al., 2017), repetitiveness of the lessons (Kruk & Zawodniak, 2017), the stages of the lessons and the tasks (Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018), lesson organization (Zawodniak & Kruk, 2019) and the lack of challenge (Pawlak et al., 2020).

In a more recent study in a similar vein, Mousavian Rad et al. (2022) found that the teaching styles and factors arising from the classroom, students' proneness to boredom due to their personalities, and the curriculum are some of the reasons behind boredom in EFL classes. Among these reasons, classroom-related factors such as the educational facilities and unfriendly classroom atmosphere were among the most frequent causes of boredom. In the case of boredom in foreign language classes, some of the observed student behaviors are as follows: sitting, waiting and doing nothing, looking at the watch, drawing, sighing, yawning and preparing for other classes (Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018). Along with the causes and signs of boredom, fluctuations of boredom in EFL classes have also been the subject of some research studies. For instance, Kruk (2021) unveiled that different boredom levels were reported within reading sessions and from one reading session to another due to certain factors (e.g., the level of task, the way language materials are used and the characteristics of the students).

In recent years, marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, the focus of the research studies has shifted to the construct of boredom in online language classes. To illustrate, Pawlak et al. (2021) involving both students and teachers discovered that online English language lessons are considered more boring than face-to-face lessons, and the lecture-type instruction in online lessons results in boredom. These researchers also uncovered that students mediate boredom in online English classes by doing a number of activities (e.g., playing games), and teachers follow numerous strategies to deal with boredom in language classes (e.g., encouraging students to actively engage in the lesson and adjusting the tasks). Likewise, the teaching behavior and the use of online tools appealing to the learners as well as home-related factors were found to affect boredom in online classes (Kruk et al., 2022). In another study investigating the boredom-inducing factors and related solutions in online EFL lessons, Derakhshan et

al. (2021) concluded that teachers' monologues that are monotonous and the tasks that are repetitive and carelessly selected are only some of the reasons. Thus, they recommended that online EFL lessons should be made livelier through interaction.

In addition to boredom in online and face-to-face environments, special emphasis has been placed on out-of-class boredom in the relevant literature in recent years. For example, Pawlak et al. (2022) focused on English majors' experiences out of the classroom wall while carrying out tasks assigned by the teacher or the language-related activities they were engaged in. They collected data from students who were susceptible to boredom at varying levels as well as from those at different achievement levels. They detected such factors associated with after-class boredom as monotony, lack of involvement, underused linguistic abilities, being unwilling to learn the English language and being unable to find tasks that are interesting.

On the other hand, studies related to boredom in the Turkish EFL context (e.g., Eryılmaz & Ergünay, 2018; Han et al., 2020) mainly center around the concept of flow originated by Csikszentmihalyi (2014) who approached boredom as a dimension of the flow experience. As can be understood from the above literature, boredom-related studies are few and far between; furthermore, although boredom has been studied at the tertiary level around the world, no studies included young EFL learners who are known to get bored more frequently than adult learners (Begnaud et al., 2020; Cameron, 2001; Cheng, 2023). Therefore, in accordance with the aim of the current study to analyze the causes and signs of boredom as well as suggested solutions to cope with boredom from the perspectives of young EFL learners and teachers, the following research questions were explored:

1. Do young learners get bored in EFL classes?

2. What are the reasons for boredom among young EFL learners?

3. What are the signs of boredom among young EFL learners?

4. What are the suggestions to minimize boredom in young EFL classes?

METHODOLOGY

Context of the Study and Participants

The study was carried out in the context of an intensive English program for 5th grade Turkish students at a state secondary school in a small city. The program is currently implemented by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) at pilot state schools. The

targeted level of proficiency in such schools was described in the curriculum as 'beginning of B1' that can also be referred to as B1.1, and it is expected that in grades 6, 7 and 8, students will progress through B1.2 by the time they graduate from the lower secondary school; furthermore, the curriculum adopted a communicative and thematic approach enabling students to interact using the English language based on certain themes centered around topics, such as geography and science (MoNE, 2017).

Six 5th grade students and four English teachers in the school who volunteered to take part in the interviews were the participants of the study. The reason why this school was selected was that it was a pilot school where an intensive English program was followed. The students were at the age of 10 or 11, and four of them were female while the remaining two were male. On the other hand, all the teachers were female, and their teaching experience ranged from 8 to 21 years. Their age range was between 33 and 44. In the school, each class was taught by two English teachers, one of whom was mainly teaching grammar while the focus of the other teacher was on four basic language skills.

Data Collection and Analysis

The present study investigating the perceptions of boredom in a young EFL classroom by means of semi-structured interviews is qualitative in nature. The purpose of using the semi-structured interview format in the study is to gather more in-depth data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moreover, to have more reliable data, both students' and teachers' opinions were collected regarding whether students get bored in the class, the causes and signs of their boredom as well as possible solutions to reduce students' boredom perceptions. To seek answers to the research questions, interview questions were prepared in line with the relevant literature (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Dumančić, 2018; Jean & Simard, 2011; Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018; Mousavian Rad et al., 2022; Nakamura et al., 2021) in Turkish to enable participants to express themselves more effectively. The interview questions formulated separately for the students and teachers were worded slightly differently to delve into the perception of boredom and were checked by an English teacher and a 5th grader who were excluded from the study to make sure whether the questions were clear enough. Some modifications were made based on their suggestions. The interview questions respectively dealt with the following issues: whether students get bored in English classes, why they get bored in general, whether and why they get bored in activities with emphasis on different skills and sub-skills (i.e., grammar, reading, writing, listening and speaking), what they do when they get bored and what should be done to minimize boredom.

Each participant referred to in the current study with a number to maintain anonymity (e.g., T1 for Teacher 1, S1 for Student 1) was interviewed in person depending on their availability, and the interviews were audio-recorded. While analyzing the data by means of content analysis, relevant parts of the data were transcribed (Dörnyei, 2007). The transcribed parts were read several times and when similar issues were mentioned by the participants, the frequencies of these issues were counted by the researcher and representative comments were illustrated (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

FINDINGS

The first research question examines whether young EFL learners experience boredom. The relevant interview question was answered similarly by the students and teachers. Four of the students responded to the first question in the interview by stating that they "sometimes" get bored in English language classes, and two of them answered to the question with a definitive "yes". Likewise, three of the teachers said that in certain conditions, students get bored while the other teacher gave the answer "yes" to the question.

General Causes of Boredom

The second research question pertaining to the general reasons for boredom among young EFL learners yielded the specific conditions leading to boredom in the classroom. A number of boredom-generating factors were indicated by the participating students. They voiced issues such as the repetition and perceived difficulty of some subjects, the noise made by peers, having English classes in the last hour of the day, lengthy lecturing by the teachers, too much writing from the board, not being noticed by the teacher and finishing the activities earlier than other classmates.

Two students mentioned that the repetition of subjects is the major reason for boredom. A representative excerpt is as follows: (S2: "*When teachers repeat the same subject, I get bored.*"). As can also be seen in the following quotation, similar to S2, S4 touched upon the repetition of some subjects as the cause of boredom as well as challenging subjects such as expressing the time:

S4: "*When the teacher repeats the same subject over and over again, I say 'why are we dealing with the same subject again'. Instead, I want to learn new things. And, sometimes, for example, I get bored while learning about clocks because I have trouble reading clocks.*"

On the other hand, some students' disruptive behaviors in the classroom, and thus teachers' anger with those students were reported by S6 to hinder concentration on the lesson, which in turn causes boredom as illustrated in this excerpt: (S6: "*Our classmates disrupt the lesson. For example, my friends sitting at the back of the class talk to each other. Then, the teacher gets angry with them. I'm bored because I can't listen to the teacher.*"). Another student (S5) maintained that the feeling of boredom emerges when the English lesson is the last lesson of the day, which sometimes accompanies tiredness (S5: "*I get bored especially when I'm tired in the last lessons. In the last lessons of the day, I sometimes get tired.*").

Moreover, the lengthy teacher lecturing time, too much copying from the board and textbook-dependent grammar lessons are other causes of boredom as can be realized from the following comment made by S3:

S3: "*Teachers lecture too long. It also gets boring when I copy a lot from the board. Sometimes, in skill lessons, the teacher makes us listen to songs, which is more fun than grammar lessons. We do listening, speaking and writing in skill lessons. Listening is not very common in grammar lessons, we follow the book.*"

Finally, S1 stated that sometimes the teacher does not notice him when he raises his hand, and at other times, he completes the activities earlier than his classmates, which result in boredom (S1: "*I want permission to speak in some lessons, but the teacher doesn't let me speak. Sometimes, if I finish the activity earlier than by my friends, I get bored while waiting for them.*").

In addition to students, four teachers commented on the general reasons for boredom among students in English classes. Teachers mentioned issues such as the lack of English exposure in real life, negative effects of the exams, the intensity of the curriculum, uninteresting and challenging lesson contents, the teaching of grammar and students' writing down the grammar rules, lack of interest in the lesson, teachers' inability to enrich the lesson and low English background as well as confidence of some students.

More specifically, as can be understood from the following excerpt, T1 touched upon the issue that English is not used by the students in real life and drew attention to other concerns ranging from the preparation of students for some exams to catching up with the curriculum:

T1: "*The information they receive is of no use to their lives. They can't go and talk to a stranger somewhere. There is also an exam. There is a mock test every month. The child does not learn a*

language when we teach them like 'if you see this word, you will mark this answer'. And, I seriously think that the curriculum is intense. The child does not learn by himself, you give everything. All of these cause boredom."

Similar to T1, T4 also underlined the lack of relationship between the English lessons and the real life; additionally, T4 made the following comment highlighting boredom inducing reasons such as the uninteresting and challenging lesson contents, the teaching of grammar and writing down what is written on the board:

T4: *"If they don't have something in the lesson related to themselves, they get bored. For example, when they watch a funny video in class, even students who are not interested in the lesson turn their head and look at it. And, they may not want to approach a subject that they don't understand at all. That's why it can be boring. Also, they get bored with grammar and writing down the things on the board all the time."*

Along the lines of other teachers, T2 voiced concerns over students' lack of interest in the lesson, teachers' inability to embellish the lesson because of the curricular concerns and heavy focus on grammar as boredom-inducing factors:

T2: *"The boredom is due to students' lack of interest. And, I think we can't color the lesson very much. We can't include too many games and activities because we don't want to lag behind in the curriculum. In grammar lessons, I focus entirely on teaching the subject. This also bores the student."*

Furthermore, low English background of some students, and thus their low confidence bring about boredom from the perspective of T3 (T3: *"Children who do not come from primary schools with a good English background are bored because they have self-confidence problems."*).

Skill-specific Causes of Boredom

This study also explored students and teachers' perceptions of whether and why students feel bored during activities with a focus on specific skills and sub-skills, such as grammar, reading, writing, listening and speaking.

In terms of grammar activities, four students expressed their boredom by emphasizing a number of factors: the lengthy grammar presentations by the teachers (S6: *"I sometimes get bored because the teacher teaches very long. I would be happier if she taught more briefly."*), unfamiliar grammar rules (S4: *"Grammar lessons should be fewer than skills lessons because skills lessons are more fun, and in grammar lessons there are a lot of things I don't know."*), too much writing from the board (S3: *"I like grammar, but I feel bored while writing the rules on the board in my notebook."*), and repetitive revisions of grammar

subjects (S2: "*The teacher revises the grammar subjects she taught earlier. This is boring.*"). In contrast, two students indicated that they do not get bored with grammar activities. On the other hand, the teachers unanimously agreed with S6 on the point that students get bored while learning grammar due to reasons such as too much teacher talking time while teaching grammar, and thus lack of student engagement. One of these comments is as follows: (T1: "*They get bored because I do the talking and children don't do anything. It is like spoon-feeding because the curriculum is intense and we should do it this way.*").

When it comes to reading, while three students underscored that they do not get bored during reading activities, the other three students pointed out that boredom happens because of the following: the fear of being ridiculed by other classmates while reading aloud (S6: "*While reading something out loud, my friends sometimes laugh at me. I feel sad and bored when they do this.*"), finishing reading earlier than friends (S1: "*I sometimes finish the reading texts earlier than my friends, and I get bored.*") and the length of the reading texts (S3: "*When the text is long, I get bored.*"). Likewise, despite one teacher who commented that the students are motivated to read in English, all the other teachers stated that students get bored while reading on account of the following: unknown words (T1: "*If there are unknown words, they get bored and stop reading. It is like learned helplessness.*"), the fear of being ridiculed by friends while reading aloud (T3: "*They get bored while reading aloud because of the anxiety of making mistakes and being laughed at by friends.*"), the length of the text and looking up new words while reading (T4: "*Sometimes they get bored. For example, last week, I gave my students a reading text. They were anxious about it because the text was long. Looking up the dictionary while reading a text also bores them.*").

As for listening, four students said that they had fun listening to texts in English, but two students maintained that they get bored if the listening text is fast and long (S6: "*I can't do listening because the texts are very fast and long, so I get bored.*"). On the other hand, all the teachers reported that students get bored in listening activities if the text is difficult and fast. One representative excerpt is as follows:

T4: "*Students think that the listening texts are very fast and they cannot understand them. They also get bored and stop listening by saying that foreigners speak English very quickly, swallow their words, and American and British English are different. Sometimes they don't know the words in the texts, which makes them bored and avoid listening.*"

As far as boredom in writing activities is concerned, four students indicated that they get bored while writing down what the teacher wrote on the board (S2: "*The teacher*

writes a lot on the board. I don't want to write down a lot in my notebook."), whereas two students pointed out that they do not get bored while writing. From the perspectives of two teachers, students do not feel so bored while writing in English (T4: "*They feel less bored because they want to express themselves by spending effort and do things such as looking up the words, asking words to their friends or the teacher*."); nevertheless, the other two teachers believed that students get bored because of the amount of guidance they need while writing something in English (T1: "*They get bored a lot while writing in English. Actually, they hate writing in general. They need a lot of guidance for writing activities*.").

In terms of boredom during speaking activities, four students indicated that they do not get bored while two students commented on the fear of speaking English due to their mispronunciation (S3: "*I mispronounce words and sometimes feel scared of speaking and get bored*."). In the same way, even though two teachers agreed that students do not get bored during speaking activities, the other two teachers attracted attention to students' fear of mispronunciation as the cause of boredom and stated that some students are concerned about their teachers or friends' reactions in the case of a mispronunciation while speaking English. One representative comment is as follows:

 T4: "*They are afraid that their friends will make fun of them when they make a pronunciation mistake. They also have concerns such as whether the teacher will be angry with them if they make a pronunciation mistake. That's why they get bored*."

Signs of Boredom

In relation to the third research question aiming to reveal how boredom manifests itself in a young learner EFL classroom, it was found that doodling was underscored by three students in response to what they do when they get bored (S2: "*I draw random pictures on the book. And, I am interested in other things*."). On the other hand, as can be seen in the following representative comment, two students specified that they yawn when they get bored, especially while doing grammar activities:

S1: "*I sometimes yawn, especially while writing the things on the board. It takes a long time and I don't want to write. First, we study the grammar topics in the book and write information on the board about these topics*."

Along with doodling and yawning, one student asserted that she talks to her friends, and students sitting at the back fidget and make noise in the case of boredom (S6: "*I talk with my friends quietly. Sometimes my friends in the back talk. They are doing mischief. They make a lot of noise*.").

The teachers interpreted the signs of boredom in the classroom in a similar manner. Three teachers denoted that students doodle; moreover, one teacher remarked that students would like to go to the toilet and talk to each other when they feel bored (T3: "*The first thing they would do is to go to the toilet. Then, another student wants to go to the toilet. And, it continues like that. They may also be trying to talk to each other.*"). Additionally, other indications of boredom mentioned by the teachers are daydreaming (T2: "*They become interested in other activities, such as daydreaming.*"), playing with toys in the pencil cases (T1: "*They play with their toys in their pencil cases.*") and students' huffing and puffing (T4: "*They huff and puff. They say that they don't understand.*").

Solutions to Alleviate Boredom

The fourth research question seeks an answer to what should be done to reduce boredom. All the students agreed on the fact that when activities that are more engaging are done in the classroom, boredom will be reduced. Among these activities, games were mentioned by all the students as a means of alleviating boredom. One representative excerpt is as follows: (S3: "*It would be better to have more games. Doing activities is also very good. For example, my primary school teacher used to do a lot of activities every lesson, such as letting us cut, paint and paste things.*"). One of the students gave the following example of a game: (S4: "*When the teacher prepares something we can play with, such as a spinning wheel, it is better.*"). Expressing concern about the intensive grammar instruction as the cause of boredom, one student also implied the necessity to write less from the board (S1: "*I get more bored in the grammar lessons because we write a lot in these lessons.*").

In a similar vein, all the teachers discussed the importance of engaging students in the classroom tasks to reduce boredom. One of these excerpts is as follows:

T2: "*Classroom environments where students can physically get involved in the activities should be created in foreign language classes. For example, students love doing activities on the board but how many of them can I call to the board? There are times when I can't give right to everyone. There are also mock exams during the term in line with the curriculum and if you fall behind the curriculum, parents may react negatively. We should also have time to enrich our lessons with activities, such as drama activities.*"

Another teacher commented on the role of students' active involvement into the lesson as a means of minimizing boredom and gave the following activity example as an engaging task:

T3: "*If all the students are engaged in the activity by giving them responsibilities, they will be less bored. For example, last year I did an activity about the subject 'giving directions'. Everybody worked together to make models of places, such as a restaurant and a cinema. We had some instructions like 'turn right, turn left and go straight on'. We did the activity in the garden. We drew a 'street' in the garden with chalk. One of the children gave the instruction and the other went to the address described. All the class took active part in this activity.*"

Similar to S1, one of the teachers made the following remark to suggest less writing of the grammar rules from the board: (T4: "*If we ask them to write less from the board in grammar-focused lessons, they would be less bored. If we incorporated more activities into the lesson, they would feel less bored.*").

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study aimed at revealing the reasons for boredom, its signs and the solutions to it as perceived by participating students and teachers in an intensive English program for 5th grade young learners in a Turkish EFL context. As can be realized from the interview findings, students experience varying degrees of boredom stemming from different factors.

As for the general boredom-inducing factors, grammar instruction and copying down what is written on the board were deemed by some participants to bring about boredom. Another cause of boredom voiced by some participants is the challenging nature of some subjects. In the related literature, it was also discussed that boredom can emerge when students encounter not only over-challenging tasks but also under-challenging tasks (Davies & Fortney, 2012). In a more recent study in another context, it was similarly argued that over-challenging tasks are one of the reasons for classroom boredom (Ali El Deen, 2023). The following are some of the other general causes of classroom boredom found in the current study and supported by the relevant literature: the repetition of subjects (Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018; Larson & Richards, 1991; Pawlak et al., 2020), noise in the classroom (Avşar & Gönüllü, 2000), tiredness because of having the lesson in the last hour of the day (Manea et al., 2020), teachers' lengthy lecturing and students' lack of interest and background (Daschmann, 2013) as well as uninteresting contents (Yacek & Gary, 2023).

In terms of skill-specific causes of boredom, it was unveiled in the present study that regarding grammar activities, some participants accepted lengthy grammar instruction as the main cause of boredom. It was realized from their comments that

grammar teaching was mostly regarded as teacher-centered which required students to passively receive the linguistic rules written on the board. It was maintained in the same manner that too much emphasis is put on grammar instruction (Özmat & Senemoğlu, 2021), and especially teaching grammar deductively is thought to be boring in the Turkish EFL context (Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). It is a fact that grammar is perceived as boring by language learners and teachers in other contexts (Jean & Simard, 2011), and the place of teaching grammar is generally considered negatively (Ali El Deen, 2023; Huang, 2023; Loewen et al., 2009).

Related to reading activities, it was indicated by some of the participants that while reading aloud, students have the fear of being laughed at by their friends, and thus get bored. Similar findings were uncovered related to boredom in speaking activities in that the fear of making pronunciation mistakes, which may result in being ridiculed by peers, was the major antecedent of boredom. It was revealed in another study that not only the achievement in a foreign language but also the willingness to communicate are negatively related to 'gelotophobia' known as the fear of being laughed at (Barabadi et al., 2021). Additionally, a negative correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and achievement in the target language was documented (Zhang, 2019).

In addition, the length of the text was mentioned by some participants as a cause of boredom in reading activities. The unknown words and looking up these words while reading were also found to cause boredom. Likewise, Kruk (2021) claimed that when the reading part lasts too long, the activity may be considered monotonous, and thus boring by the students. Similar findings were discovered in the present study as to the reasons for boredom in listening activities. The fastness and the difficulty of the listening texts were believed by some participants to cause boredom.

On the other hand, regarding boredom in writing activities, some participants pointed out that writing down the things on the board is boring. Passively writing down the rules on the board is most likely to be one of the factors triggering boredom in this study mainly because engagement in the lesson actively is deemed to be important for young learners to enjoy the lesson due to their short attention span (Brown, 2007; McKay, 2006).

Pertaining to the signs of boredom in the classroom, some participants denoted that doodling is common in the case of boredom. In the field of psychology, unnecessary body movements such as doodling unrelated to the task are intended to change the current state in the classroom and try to reduce boredom (Andrade, 2010; Kökçam &

Satan, 2022; Mehrabian & Friedman, 1986). Other signs of boredom uncovered in the current study were yawning, fidgeting, going to the toilet, daydreaming as well as huffing and puffing. With such behaviors in the language classroom as being indifferent, avoiding eye contact and talking to other peers in class, students tend to drift away from listening to the teacher (Dumančić, 2018; Zawodniak & Kruk, 2019). It is essential for English language teachers to observe such behaviors and act accordingly; moreover, teachers should sincerely talk about their students' boredom experiences and help alleviate their boredom level in the classroom (Nakamura et al., 2021).

Finally, when asked what the participants suggest to alleviate boredom in the EFL classroom, activities such as games that could engage students in the lesson were mentioned. It was also believed by some participants that instead of asking students to listen to long monologues by the teachers or write down the rules on the board, students should be involved actively into the lesson by means of engaging and interesting activities, as also recommended by Daschmann (2013). The importance of engaging students in the classroom especially for young learners was similarly emphasized in the literature (Begnaud et al., 2020). Along the same line, it was concluded that as the engagement level of the students increases in the English language classes, their level of boredom and their perception of monotony in the classroom are expected to decrease (Xie, 2021). The relationship between boredom and engagement was found to be negative in another study as well (Zhao & Yang, 2022). Therefore, Svalberg (2009) suggested that language learners should be engaged cognitively (i.e., students are alert, their attention is focused on the lesson and they construct their own knowledge), affectively (i.e., students have a favorable attitude towards the language) and socially (i.e., students are open to interaction). Furthermore, it is advisable to use activities paving the way for young EFL learners' creativity and mindfulness in order to reduce their anxiety and boredom and to increase their engagement in the language classroom (Cheng, 2023).

Considering that the negative emotions adversely influence the academic performance of the language learners (Pishghadam et al., 2016), this study explored the causes and signs of boredom as a negative emotion as well as the suggested solutions to deal with it. Although the findings of the present study are limited to the qualitative perceptions of young 5th grade EFL learners and teachers in a specific intensive English language classroom, the findings are believed to shed light on other similar contexts. In line with the findings of the study, discussion above and the relevant literature (e.g., Barabadi et al., 2021; Begnaud et al., 2020; Brown, 2007; Cheng, 2023; Daschmann, 2013;

Derakhshan et al., 2021; Dumančić, 2018; Eastwood et al., 2012; Jean & Simard, 2011; Kruk, 2021; Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018; Kruk et al., 2022; Manea et al., 2020; Pishghadam et al., 2016; Svalberg, 2009; Tze et al., 2016; Zawodniak & Kruk, 2019), the following recommendations can be made to alleviate boredom in the context of this study:

- Students should be actively engaged in the lesson by entertaining activities.
- Grammar should be taught inductively to engage students in the lesson.
- Lengthy lecturing of the teachers should be minimized to allocate more space for student engagement.
- Teachers should observe students' behaviors such as doodling, realize the boredom in the classroom and incorporate activities to which all the students will be attentive.
- Passive activities such as writing down the rules from the board should be minimized.
- Contents that are interesting to the students should be used in the classroom.
- The tasks used in the classroom should be neither over-challenging nor under-challenging.
- The length and difficulty of the reading and listening texts should be optimized.
- Teachers should prevent students who speak English or read something aloud from being laughed at or ridiculed by other students.
- English classes should not be scheduled as the last lesson of the day.

In order to make more tangible recommendations to deal with boredom in young learners' English language classes, more research studies including a higher number of participants, classes, schools, cities and even countries should be carried out in the future. Moreover, classroom observations can be made in future studies to draw more concrete conclusions regarding the perception of boredom in young learners' English language classes.

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