

### Book Review

#### *Teachers reflecting on boredom in the language classroom*

Authors:

Mirostaw Pawlak, Mariusz Kruk, Joanna Zawodniak

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There is a widespread agreement that individual differences (IDs), including emotions, significantly influence both the process and outcomes of second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) learning (Pawlak, 2020; Pawlak & Kruk, 2022). With the influence of positive psychology, research on emotions has been expanded beyond anxiety to a wider spectrum of emotional reactions in language learning and teaching (MacIntyre, 2017). Among these emotions, boredom has been identified as a prevalent and potentially highly detrimental phenomenon in L2 learning environments, which impacts both learners and teachers (Gkonou et al., 2020; Kruk & Pawlak, 2022). Studies on students' L2 boredom have been proliferating in recent years, exploring its conceptualization, measurement, sources, solutions and its relation with other IDs and language attainment (e.g., Kruk et al., 2022; Kruk & Zawodniak, 2018; Li et al., 2024; Li & Wei, 2023; Pawlak et al., 2021). However, most of these research endeavors have focused on boredom manifested by learners, while limited attention has been given to teachers' perceptions and experiences

of this negative emotion as well as strategies for managing it (e.g., Dumančić, 2018). Addressing this gap, Mirosław Pawlak, Mariusz Kruk, and Joanna Zawodniak put together the volume *Teachers Reflecting on Boredom in the Language Classroom*, offering a timely and insightful resource for teacher educators, teachers, researchers and postgraduates seeking to delve into the complexities of boredom in language learning and teaching from the teacher's perspective.

The book commences with the introduction that lays the foundation for the subsequent chapters by providing the background, motivation, and objectives of the volume. Following the introduction, the narrative unfolds through seven core chapters. Chapter 1, *Emotions in the Language Classroom*, provides the theoretical insight into the role of emotions in L2 learning and teaching. It provides a concise overview of existing empirical studies on positive and negative emotions in the L2 classroom, setting the stage for the discussion of boredom in subsequent chapters.

In Chapter 2, *Conceptualizing Boredom*, the authors provide a detailed exploration of boredom as an aversive emotion, noting that its perceived pleasantness or unpleasantness can vary significantly based on valence and arousal levels. The chapter opens with a definition of boredom, highlighting its complex and multidimensional nature. It then explores boredom from a typological perspective, introducing distinctions between state and trait boredom and the varying degrees of boredom intensity. The authors also discuss the concept of after-class boredom, which has been largely ignored in second language acquisition (SLA; Pawlak et al., 2022). Additionally, it investigates the relationship between boredom and other ID factors such as disengagement, demotivation, and lack of interest, as well as L2 teachers' well-being and experiences of burnout.

Chapter 3 explores the experience of boredom from various theoretical perspectives, focusing on its causes and potential solutions. It outlines both external and internal causes of boredom within the framework of several theories and discusses coping strategies that L2 teachers can employ to address boredom effectively. Drawing on theories such as the under-stimulation model (Larson & Richards, 1991), the forced-effort model (Perkins & Hill, 1985), the attentional theory of boredom proneness (Eastwood et al., 2012), and the control-value theory (Pekrun, 2006), the chapter identifies major causes of boredom. These include repetitive tasks, a lack of challenge, uninteresting but demanding assignments, poor attentional control, difficulties in emotion management, and low control-value appraisals. It also outlines boredom-coping strategies, emphasizing the importance of raising awareness of boredom, identifying individual coping profiles, and implementing diverse strategies to overcome it.

Chapter 4 offers a comprehensive overview of empirical research on various facets of boredom in L2 learning. At the outset, the authors eloquently underscore the relevance of researching L2 boredom to classroom teachers. Subsequently, the

chapter reviews the primary areas of empirical inquiry in L2 boredom, highlighting identified research gaps to be investigated, such as links between L2 boredom and target language (TL) attainment (e.g., Pawlak et al., 2022) and boredom related to particular TL skills and subsystems (e.g., reading or writing). Furthermore, the chapter reviews research designs and tools used to investigate L2 boredom, showcasing a range of studies focused on both learners and teachers. It organizes these studies into distinct categories based on their research objectives, detailing their primary goals, methodologies, and key findings. The chapter also addresses the evolution of boredom research, noting extensions into areas such as boredom beyond the classroom environment (e.g., Pawlak et al., 2022), coping strategies (e.g., Pawlak et al., 2021) and teacher boredom (Dumančić, 2018). It concludes by discussing the limitations of the existing studies, particularly the scant attention that has been given to pedagogical interventions aimed at mitigating boredom.

Chapter 5 reports on a study aimed at exploring boredom in L2 classroom settings from teachers' perspective. Conducted with 106 Polish teachers of English as a foreign language using a mixed method research design, the study investigates how L2 teachers perceive both their students' and their own experiences of boredom, the strategies they employ to ameliorate boredom during their lessons, and the relationship between teacher and student boredom. Quantitative analysis revealed a low tendency for L2 teachers to experience boredom, while qualitative analysis uncovered various triggers and indicators of boredom for both teachers and students, as well as the coping strategies employed. The study revealed some significant findings. For example, to ameliorate students' boredom, L2 teachers tend to adopt a reactive approach, that is, to prioritize concrete steps such as using additional resources, diversification, making changes or using humor when they see symptoms of boredom among students. No evidence was found for a more proactive approach, such as endeavors to identify boredom-coping profiles in advance. Regarding teachers' perception of the relationship between teacher and student boredom, only half of the teachers recognized such a link. Moreover, with additional data provided by two volunteer participants, the study also provided a detailed report of teachers' perceptions of students' and their own boredom fluctuations during class, which indicated similar patterns. These findings provide valuable insights for the pedagogical implications discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 6, *Integrating Theory and Practice: Reflective Practice with Respect to Boredom*, delves into issues surrounding reflective practice in L2 teaching, focusing on the framework for reflective on practice developed by Farrell (2014), which encompasses five interconnected levels of reflection: philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice. The chapter explores possibilities for stimulating reflection with respect to boredom for both L2 students and

teachers across these five stages. Drawing from theoretical insights and the empirical evidence discussed in earlier chapters, it offers guidelines for preventing and reducing boredom in L2 classroom. For example, L2 teachers can adopt proactive strategies like diagnosing proneness to boredom and reactive strategies such as introducing changes and improvising. These guidelines are intended to be followed by L2 teachers at different educational levels through conscious reflection, taking into consideration the realities of specific instructional settings.

Chapter 7 shifts the focus of attention to specific awareness-raising tasks and activities designed to stimulate teachers' reflection on L2 boredom, in accordance with the framework for reflective on practice (Farrell, 2014). It outlines various activities aimed at fostering reflection on identifying causes and symptoms, measuring, preventing and combating learner and teacher boredom. These activities include, for example, discussing boredom with learners and reflecting on critical incidents in relation to boredom. Additionally, the chapter proposes awareness-raising activities focused on teacher boredom, such as engaging in retrospective reflection, writing reflective journals, conducting peer observation, and participating in collaborative problem-solving. By encouraging teachers to proactively reflect on different aspects of boredom, these activities strive to deepen their understanding of boredom and to effectively prevent or reduce its impact.

The conclusion restates the main aim of the book, which is to examine teachers' perspective on boredom in the L2 classroom and to highlight the need for teachers' reflective practice with respect to boredom. Then it highlights several important issues arising from the overview of the literature in the theoretical part of the volume (Chapters 1 to 4), and several important observations based on the empirical findings reported in Chapter 5, as well as the significance of the concrete guidelines and awareness-raising activities included in Chapters 6 and 7. Future research directions concerning L2 teacher boredom are also proposed. Among others, the key challenges involve developing a scale that would tap into the intensity of teacher boredom and allow investigating its relationship with other ID factors (e.g., motivation, personality, burnout, and well-being). In addition, the efficacy of employing boredom-coping strategies and techniques for encouraging teacher reflection on L2 boredom, especially across different contexts, warrants further empirical exploration. Finally, the authors reemphasize the importance of studies on L2 teacher boredom, advocating for research with representative samples and varied data sources. They argue that, with more concrete evidence that pedagogical interventions on L2 boredom can benefit teachers and their learners, more teachers are likely to be willing to reflect upon and address this prevalent emotion.

*Teachers Reflecting on Boredom in the Language Classroom* stands out as a pioneering effort to explore L2 boredom from the teachers' perspective. Its

merits are manifold. First, it offers a comprehensive overview of boredom, both theoretically and empirically. For example, the authors introduce various definitions, subtypes and theoretical perspectives on the causes of and solutions to boredom, alongside a detailed review of existing empirical studies in SLA. This thorough overview equips readers with a profound understanding of L2 boredom, empowering teachers and researchers to explore this promising field further. Second, the innovative study reported in Chapter 5, which investigated L2 boredom from teachers' perspective using a rich dataset and in-depth analysis, sets a compelling example for future endeavors in the realm of L2 teacher boredom. Third, the concrete guidelines in Chapter 6 and the awareness-raising activities in Chapter 7 offer practical tools for addressing boredom in language classrooms. Implementing these guidelines and strategies has the potential not only to alleviate boredom among students and teachers but also to enhance the effectiveness of language instruction and to promote practitioners' emotional well-being. For example, the recommended strategy *delegate responsibility to students* in Chapter 6 represents an important element in learner autonomy-supportive teaching, which has been shown to result in fostering student engagement and creating a positive learning environment, benefiting both students and the teacher (Reeve, 2016). Additionally, the inclusion of reflective breaks within each section and subsection is particularly praiseworthy. These breaks facilitate introspection on personal experiences of boredom and perceptions of its symptoms, effectively bridging the gap between theoretical discussions, research findings and classroom practice. For example, the reflective question at the end of section 3.2.2, "Which of the profiles presented in this section best describes your own response to boredom that you experience in your teaching?" (p. 57) prompts self-reflection, leading to valuable insights into coping strategies such as reappraisal. This process of reflection fosters deepening the understanding of the importance of goal-setting in combating boredom in both teaching and learning contexts.

It is hard to find fault with this excellent publication. One thing that might be worth mentioning is that a comparative review of studies on boredom within educational psychology and SLA in Chapter 4 could enrich the discussion of suggestions for future studies. For instance, the exploration of coping strategies (Pawlak et al., 2021) introduced in Chapter 4 could be enhanced by examining parallel findings from educational psychology research (e.g., Nett et al., 2010, 2011). Moreover, based on my own experience, there might be deeper and distant reasons behind teachers' boredom in teaching beyond the immediate causes discussed in Chapter 5. For example, research shows that factors such as teacher motivation, job satisfaction, stress levels and perceptions of the school environment are likely to affect teacher engagement or disengagement (Li, 2018), which is closely related to boredom, as illustrated in Chapter 2. Similarly, L2 teachers

might also experience boredom linked to conducting and applying research, as evidenced by studies on language teacher research engagement (Borg, 2010). Incorporating these perspectives would have broadened the scope and enhanced the comprehensiveness of the book.

In conclusion, *Teachers Reflecting on Boredom in the Language Classroom* stands as a pioneering and exceptional exploration of L2 boredom from teachers' perspective, constituting a significant contribution to the field of SLA. With its thorough review of emotions in the L2 classroom, insightful theoretical discussions on boredom, a thorough synthesis of empirical studies, an innovative research design, and practical integration of theory and practice, the book establishes itself as an indispensable resource for language educators and researchers alike. This monograph also serves as a compelling reference for researchers, language educators and pre-service teachers at all levels, shedding light on the often-overlooked issue of boredom in language learning and teaching.

Reviewed by

Banban Li ✉

University of Science and Technology Beijing, China

*libanban@ustb.edu.cn*

Yalan Zeng

University of Science and Technology Beijing, China

*yalanz3045@163.com*

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