



Emotionality in the Foreign Language Classroom: First Year Students' Negative Emotions Towards Learning Phonetics at the Department of English of "Frères Mentouri" Constantine 1 University



Received: 22/02/2024; Accepted: 21/03/2024

Habiba TOUALBIA^{1*}, Prof. Nacif LABED²

¹Department of Letters and English, Frères Mentouri Constantine 1 University, Algeria, habiba.toualbia@umc.edu.dz

²Department of Letters and English, Frères Mentouri Constantine 1 University, Algeria, nacif.labeled@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study sought to uncover the root of the negative feelings first-year students experienced while studying Phonetics at the Department of English, University of Frère Mentouri, Constantine1. Maintaining positive perceptions about the teaching-learning process is influential in paving the way for effective foreign language learning. The present paper attempts to find the correlation between different learning elements: Classroom conditions, peers' influence, methods and strategies used in Phonetics teaching with first-year classes, and the learners' preconceived negative thoughts. A questionnaire was employed as the primary data collection tool. The findings revealed that students' lack of motivation to learn was caused by multiple factors, including the opinion of former students regarding the subject matter, classroom conditions, and the techniques and pedagogical tools used by teachers. These findings confirm the correlation between the learners' preconceived negative thoughts and the mentioned factors.

Keywords

Apathy;
Phonetics;
Learning;
Motivation.

الكلمات المفتاحية

اللامبالاة؛
الصوتيات؛
التعلم؛
التحفيز.

العاطفة في صف اللغة الأجنبية: المشاعر السلبية لدى طلبة السنة الأولى نحو تعلم الصوتيات في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة الاخوة منتوري قسنطينة 1 ملخص

سعت هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن جذور المشاعر السلبية التي تنتاب طلبة السنة الأولى أثناء دراستهم لعلم الصوتيات في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة الاخوة منتوري بقسنطينة 1. إن الحفاظ على التصورات الإيجابية حول عملية التعليم-التعلم أمر مؤثر في تمهيد الطريق لتعلم اللغة الأجنبية بشكل فعال. تحاول هذه الورقة البحثية إيجاد العلاقة بين عناصر التعلم المختلفة: ظروف الفصل الدراسي، وتأثير الأقران، والأساليب والاستراتيجيات المستخدمة في تدريس الصوتيات مع فصول السنة الأولى، والأفكار السلبية المسبقة لدى المتعلمين. وقد تم استخدام استبيان كأداة أساسية لجمع البيانات. وكشفت النتائج أن عدم تحفيز الدارسين للتعلم كان سببه عوامل متعددة، بما في ذلك رأي الطلاب السابقين في المادة الدراسية، وظروف الفصل الدراسي، والأساليب والأدوات التربوية المستخدمة من قبل المعلمين. تؤكد هذه النتائج العلاقة بين الأفكار السلبية المسبقة لدى المتعلمين والعوامل المذكورة.

* Corresponding author. E-mail: habiba.toualbia@umc.edu.dz

Doi:

I-Introduction

Teaching a foreign language is a complex endeavour that elicits a broad spectrum of emotions within teachers and learners, including cognitive, affective, and social processes. However, the emotional experience of both actors in the learning process has garnered less attention. Swain (2013) points out that "emotions are the elephants in the room -poorly studied, poorly understood, seen as inferior to rational thought" (p. 205). The theoretical background linking emotions and language learning has been dominated by anxiety, which has been considered for decades (MacIntyre, 2016). Examining positive emotions and their effects such as enjoyment, and studying the impact of negative emotions on learning is highly important in the research field (Dewaele et al., 2018). In this context, Oxford (2015) argues that examining both positive and negative emotions permits insights into how language freshmen can fine-tune their emotions, eventually leading them to success in the long run of foreign language learning.

In Algeria, nearly all baccalaureate exam holders aspire to get into the university and are motivated to learn and achieve. This aspiration is proved through some studies that have found that language learners have high levels of enjoyment before learning compared to their joy during and after learning (Yukselir, 2014). Feelings and emotions are said to be the results of students' evaluation of a particular situation while learning (Pekrun, 2000). Apart from their intrinsic desire to learn and obtain diplomas, students like to learn in a motivating atmosphere and express higher interest in their learning process in general and one subject matter in particular. First-year students learning a foreign language come to the university hoping and wanting to find a new world inside the university premises. They imagine highly sophisticated language laboratories and equipped learning rooms. They also think that connections with repeaters will help them understand the challenges they will encounter during their first academic year.

However, having been a teacher of phonetics for more than ten years, the researcher thought it was crucial to undergo a phase of observation of freshmen's behaviour and attitudes towards the phonetics class. Unluckily, the observation phase revealed that the students impressively developed a negative perception of the overall climate and conditions. They also generated apathy towards certain subjects, mainly Phonetics, just because their former university mates or repetitive students expressed negative comments and opinions about some modules and some teachers' behaviour. Many first-year students at the Department of English, Frère Mentouri, Constantine1 University, expressed serious deception about their new academic life. They displayed careless attitudes and strong demotivation to learn.

For this reason, we submitted a questionnaire to first-year students to investigate the factors behind their negative behaviour. It goes against the belief that the more motivated students are, the better they will learn and achieve, particularly freshmen. Hence, many factors matter while learning a foreign language at a higher level. These factors may be internal or external, but they both seriously impact students' motivation and achievement.

Phonetics, specifically, which is about teaching and learning pronunciation, stress, and other related sub-skills, is unfairly considered a problematic area of the language and is typically undervalued in programmes and pushed to the sidelines in favour of other areas of development, primarily the four skills. However, studying Phonetics at the university level can present its own set of challenges. From mastering new sounds and pronunciation to overcoming negative emotions that may arise, learners can lose their drive to do better (M. Lopez. & P. Aguilar, 2013). Since language pronunciation is a cognitive skill for which some people may have a natural aptitude or interest and motivation that others do not, some learners laze around and develop passiveness towards the module.

In the English as a Foreign Language classroom (EFL), at the Department of English, Frère Mentouri, Constantine1 University, the factors that were deduced from the observation phase served as the background source to prove the hypothesis of this research paper and answer the following research questions:

- 1- What makes many first-year students feel disappointed about the tertiary learning atmosphere?
- 2- What factors help nurture negative feelings and sustain students' apathy regarding Phonetics?
- 3- Were the teachers' methods and techniques unsuccessful to energise students' motivation for learning Phonetics?
- 4- Do peers play a significant role in enhancing or impeding motivation for learning?
- 5- How did different emotions relate to one another in the study between the actors (teacher-learner-atmosphere) inside the foreign language classroom?

On the basis of these questions we hypothesize that if first-year students have inspiring teaching methods, adequate peer feedback, and a suggestopedic learning environment, they will overcome their negative feelings towards studying Phonetics.

1. Factors Affecting Learning a Foreign Language

Elements such as classroom conditions, equipment, teacher attitudes, and former students' opinions play a weighing role in modeling and molding students' feelings. Such factors, which have been considered by early motivational studies (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner 1985) and many humanistic methods like Suggestopedia and Silent Way (Losanov, 1976; Cateagno, 1963-1972; Arnold, 1999), acknowledged the importance of emotions in foreign language learning, and harnessed the power of emotions to either accelerate foreign language learning, or rather to impede it. Besides, emotions and feelings are behind students' decisions to keep up with an activity or a task; they prepare people to act (Scherer, 2001;

Dornyei, 2005). Even negative emotions can be a developmental source for students (for example, when we act out of fear or anger). They are not always bad; although they can be paralysing, they may help learners to eliminate an obstacle (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2012)(p.xiv). Arnold (1999) raised the concept of affect to the surface. She emphasized the crucial role of establishing a suitable atmosphere in the classroom. In addition, Dornyei (2005) claimed that motivation and attitudes have an emotional core. However, one of the main problems of foreign language teaching is that the emotional factor is often ignored, resulting in relatively boring classes (Dewaele, 2005). To some teachers, classroom conditions such as furniture, colours, and sophisticated equipment are often neglected as being essential in fuelling students desire to learn and absorb the foreign language and its culture.

1.1. Classroom Environment

Universities often set high expectations for academic rigour and excellence. Students who struggle to meet these standards despite their best efforts can feel disillusioned and overwhelmed. A study by Johnson and Smith (2006) revealed that academic stress and unmet expectations were associated with decreased motivation and a decline in overall satisfaction with the university experience. In this vein, the classroom is mainly the primary cell where expectations are met; it is defined as the four walls within which the content of syllabi is being implemented by the teachers who are the means of implementation. It is the place of socialisation where learners from various socio-economic backgrounds meet and interact. Success in academic performance is the desire of every learner. Overcrowded classrooms, lack of resources, and inadequate facilities can lead to disengagement and frustration among students (Hargreaves, 2005). The quality of learning that takes place relies on the classroom environment. Hence, for effective teaching and learning to occur, ensuring smaller class sizes and providing adequate resources are essential (Hattie, 2009). Universities must then furnish required aids such as well-painted and clean classrooms, sufficient chairs and tables, space arrangement, and up-to-date equipment like lighting and computers, overhead projects and sophisticated labs, etc. The classroom environment must engage learners' behaviour and emotional problems. A well-maintained and perfectly equipped classroom with necessities makes students comfortable and motivated, thus encouraging active engagement and interactivity and bringing the outside that students usually miss during lessons.

1.2. Teachers' Level and Attitudes and the Pygmalion Effect

One of the demands of foreign language learning is the need for well-experienced teachers who can manage the class effectively (Harris, 2014). They must show their enthusiasm for teaching their subject by sharing their reasons for their interest in the foreign language with their students. They should not be afraid of making changes that can break the monotonous routine and establish the warmth of interaction and emotions, the fun of risk-taking, and promote co-existence and competition. Teachers should initiate students' creativity and critical thinking development and prepare them for life. Kramsch's (2009) illustrated that passion and desire are at the heart of the teaching process:

"Even if we teach a syllabus that is not of our choice and texts we have not selected, we need to find something about them that we either love or hate, but we are not indifferent to; if we are, our indifference will become our students' boredom" (p.208).

A study by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) demonstrated the Pygmalion effect, highlighting how teachers' expectations of their students can significantly impact their academic performance. If teachers hold low expectations or lack enthusiasm for a subject, students may internalize these attitudes, leading to diminished interest and engagement. In addition, teachers teach and preach affection and fairness. They can act in various roles, depending on the context. In addition to being teachers, they can either be parents, managers, captains, or authorities. It is crucial to know the learners' psychology and act accordingly. Research has shown that students use good learning strategies and respond positively to instruction if supported by their teachers and encouraged to be autonomous (Ryan & Patrick, 2003).

In this vein, it is worth mentioning that teachers also have emotions, generally expressed through facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, and body postures. Much of their behaviour is contagious and positively or negatively affects students (Sutton & Wheatley, 2019). Yet empirical evidence regarding the impact of teachers' emotions on students' behaviour in class is still modest. Teachers thus have, through experience, to regulate their emotions and know which emotion, when, and how they express those (Gross, 1998. P.275; Borg, 2015), which is seen through the teachers' role as moderators. They behave as bridges across backgrounds, teaching language and culture and offering windows into foreign worlds where all feel understood.

1.3. Peers Influence

At a university stage and among first-year students, peer influence is immeasurable. Adolescents, in particular, are highly influenced by their peers (Brown, 2004). Students who are developing as a person often try to follow other people and ask for help or seek answers from them instead of themselves, and this is not all time healthy just because most people do not make good decisions at every situation (Skaalvik, 2003). However, there are two types of peer influence: positive and negative. On the positive side, peers create confidence and encourage behaviour promotion, like participating in debates or popular events. They can engage in meaningful conversations, practice language skills, and offer constructive feedback. They also help in fostering a collaborative and immersive learning environment. They contribute to cultural

understanding by sharing diverse perspectives and experiences. They promote social interaction and enhance fluency, which leads to success.

On the negative side, however, peer influence causes damage and leads students to disengagement and drop out of classes, projects, or events. This negative model of students, generally portrayed by some repetitive students, plays a dramatic role in deceiving predisposed younger peers or freshpersons. Giving them a negative comment about a subject or a teacher will deceive students of first-year classes who will carry a negative perception about their studies and thus lead to failure in one module or to deception with one particular teacher. If some repetitive students consistently display a lack of interest in learning the foreign language, it can have a negative impact on others, even those who were initially enthusiastic about the subject. This phenomenon can be explained through social learning theory, which suggests that individuals learn by observing the behaviour of others and adapting their attitudes accordingly (Bandura, 1977). This threat has long-term outcomes upon students' ambition, performance, and achievement. To avoid such impacts and bad consequences, students must be encouraged to surround themselves with positive people and rely on their decisions that must be built on credibility and logical thinking rather than following negative peers who drag them to the bottom. For this study and in line with the observation phase undertaken, many of students usually express some apathy towards phonetics just because some students from upper classes or repetitive ones have employed negative ideas about the phonetics class. Moreover, encouraging positive peer influence, through study groups and collaborative learning, can also help in changing negative perceptions (Wentzel, 1998). Hence, teachers and educators must cultivate a positive and inclusive environment that maximizes the benefits of peers' interactions while mitigating potential challenges by establishing a classroom atmosphere that promotes debates and opinion-sharing sessions, to break prejudice and negative perception down. They have to find ways to catch students' attention towards the subject-matter, create rewards that energise students' intrinsic motivation for success, and most importantly bring innovations to melt the icing boredom in the classroom.

II- Methodology

II.1. Context and Participants

Data for the present research were collected in the department of English at Frère Mentouri, Constantine1 university. Baccalaureate exam holders from different streams in the secondary school (scientific, literally, and technical streams) constitute the population of the first year license level, who have been studying English since the first grade in the middle school, which makes the total of seven years English learning experience. The sample of the data collection, chosen from first year license level twelve groups, consisted of 72 students(N=72) forming two groups out of the six groups assigned to the teacher researcher and study phonetics for one hour and half per week.

II.2. Instruments

The research instrument that provided data for the present study was a detailed paper-and-pencil questionnaire made of twenty eight (28) items. These items were divided into five sections every one of which addressed one particular factor of investigation. The questions varied between auxiliary questions, WH questions, and multiple choice questions.

II.3. Description of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is divided into five sections, each focusing on different aspects of the students' experience and their language learning journey. Section One entitled Students Current Emotional State aims to delve in the students' emotional well-being and motivation in relation to their language learning experience. The questions explore students' initial emotional state: Their happiness as being students, and tackle their personal choice of studying English. The section also investigated how students manage their negative emotions in the classroom which provides insights into students' emotional engagement in their language learning journey.

Section Two, named Classroom Environment, focuses on the students' perception of the classroom atmosphere. It explores the general academic milieu at the department of the English language at Frères Mentouri, Constantine1University. It tests students' level of comfort and the existence of any supportive space for expressing emotions and discussing personal experiences affecting motivation to learn like: lighting, temperature, seating arrangement, classroom resources, cleanliness, organisation and visual aids.

Section three however, delves into students' perception of their teachers' behaviour and attitudes. It explores whether teachers invest time to know there students, or tailor teaching to students' preferences by using specific teaching methods or activities to engage them. The questions investigate the importance of establishing a positive relationship with the teacher, and the impact of the teacher's enthusiasm, style, and energy on students' positivity and desire for success.

Section Four is primarily devoted to the social dynamics within the classroom, and the role played by some repetitive peers in the foreign language learning process. It focuses on the students interactions with their peers, and explores the presence of close friends, their frequency of interaction and the existence of positive relationships. This section also questions the extent to which peers motivate active participation in discussions, the comfort level in seeking help or clarification from peers, and the quality of their feedback. It also examines the role of some repetitive peers in discouraging students from participating and acting in the foreign language classroom.

The last section entitled: Objectives and Emotions tackles the students' personal objectives related to their studies and experience in some specific subjects. It asks about students' plans for success, and their willingness to complete the instruction and get diplomas; it explores students' favourite subject matters and less interesting ones, the frequency of negative emotions in the Phonetics class, and the triggers of apathy towards studying Phonetics.

The questionnaire was designed to cover various dimensions of students' emotional experiences, motivations, and perceptions of their learning environment. The responses can help identify areas of improvement, tailor teaching approaches, and create a more supportive and engaging learning environment for students.

II.3. Procedures

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents at the end of the academic year. This was done on purpose to test the students upon their feelings after experiencing all the phases of instruction: Lectures, tests, exams and evaluations. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher herself to make sure that the students understood all the questions during a Phonetics class because respondents generally tend to ignore and skip some questions they feel ambiguous or difficult.

III. Results and Discussion

Section One: Students Emotional State

Question 1: Are you happy being a student at the university?

Total	YES	NO
72	65	07
100%	90.27%	9.72%

Table01. Students Current Emotional State

The aim behind this question was to explore the level of happiness being a student at the university with all what it holds as motivational spirit and thirst for accomplishment. As the results indicated, the majority of students expressed positive vibes in favour of studying at the university. Only 07 students expressed their indifference towards being a student at the university; although it was not asked to justify the response, five among the seven students who answered NO added that they enrolled for their parents' sake and that they preferred to be military agents or turn to trade rather than wasting time studying. The results confirm the idea that the majority of the baccalaureate exam holders aspire to get to the university and fulfill their dreams of success and accomplishment.

Question 2: Was the choice of studying English a personal one or was it imposed by parents and /or BAC exam average?

Total	YES	NO
72	48	24
100%	66.66%	33.33%

Table02. Students Choice for Studying English

This question aimed to know whether the choice of studying English at the university was a personal choice or was imposed by some external factors like parents, and /or baccalaureate exam average. As it is stated, the results were in favour of the first option and once again confirm the idea that the students like what they have chosen and feel happy with it.

Question 3: What was your emotional state when you attended classes for the first time?

Total	A	B	C	D	E
72	23	15	08	07	14
100%	31.94%	20.83%	11.11%	09.72%	19.44%

Table 03.Students Feeling the First Time Attending University

The aim behind this question was to delve inside students' first impressions when attending university classes for the first time. The answers were suggested from the analysis of the observation phase, undertaken before the study. The tabulation showed 100% of the respondents expressed at least one particular emotion either a positive or a negative one. This validates the notion of the existence of emotions in foreign language classroom and their impact on the learning process.

Question 4: do you feel excited to learn English?

A- YES B- NO C- Would like to re-sit the Baccalaureate exam

Total	A	B	C
72	59	08	05
100%	81.94%	11.11%	06.94%

Table04. Students Feelings towards Learning English

Linking this question to question two one notice that there is a correlation in the results indicating that the majority of the students feel happy and excited to learn English which was their personal choice. However, the students who responded with NO represent 13.8% added that they would like to re-sit the BAC exam and choose another specialty.

Question 5: Do you believe that emotions and feelings play a role in language learning?

Total	A	B
72	72	00
100%	100%	00%

Table05. Role of Emotions in the Foreign Language Classroom

The answers to this question strengthen the viewpoint that emotions are pivotal to foreign language learning, with 100% of the population who said yes.

Question 6: Are there any specific emotions you believe hinder your language learning progress?

Total	Shyness	Fear	Disappointment	Hatred	Helplessness
114	50	41	03	09	11
100%	43.86%	35.97%	02.63%	07.90%	09.64%

Table06. Emotions Hindering Foreign Language Learning

The results obtained from the tabulation of this question's answers lend credence to the idea advocated in the previous question, that emotions do exist in the foreign language classroom and play an essential role in either improving, or paralysing students in their learning journey. No matter what the percentages were, all students expressed at least a negative emotion about learning in general or learning one subject matter in particular.

Question 7: How do you manage overcoming negative emotions like fear, anxiety, disappointment, and boredom in the classroom? Solutions suggested by the respondents:

- a- Keep silent b- stay outside with friends c- stay at home d-read more
e- Talk to teachers f- play games g- sleep in the classroom

Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
120	31	13	08	15	41	06	06
100%	25.83%	10.83%	06.66%	12.5%	34.16%	05%	05%

Table07. Students Solutions to Negative Feelings

The results obtained represent more than the total number of the respondents. Students were invited to provide one solution only, but the majority of the population (66.66%) responded with more than one option. Again the results reinforce the idea of the different hurdles students face and the various emotions these hurdles generate during the learning process.

Section Two: Classroom Environment

Question 8: How do you perceive the studying atmosphere in the department of the English language at Frères Mentouri, Constantine1 University?

Total	Good	Bad
72	72	00
100%	100%	00%

Table08. Students' Opinion about the General Atmosphere in the Department of English

There was a dire need to ask this question within this section investigating the role of classroom conditions, knowing in advance that these conditions play an imperative role in the success or the failure of any learning method. Unfortunately, the results were in favour of a plain ordinary atmosphere with 100% of the respondents. This is explained by the fact that there was no captivating or catching setting that would impress the students in their new experience.

Question 9: Do you feel comfortable in the classroom?

Total	yes	no	Not all the time
72	23	31	18
100%	31.94%	40.05%	25%

Table09. Students' Feeling inside the Classroom

The objective of this question was to dig deeper in the students' emotional state and drill up the potential causes of the disappointment they felt once they entered the university. 68.05% of the respondents opted for the negative options, showing their dissatisfaction with the overall classroom climate.

Question 10: Do you think the foreign language classrooms should be a safe and a supportive space for expressing emotions and discussing personal experiences? Why OR Why not?

Students suggested answers:

a - We need to talk and express ourselves freely and safely in the classroom.

b - We are here to study not to talk.

Total	A	B
72	63	09
100%	87.5%	12.5%

Table10. Classrooms as a Supportive Place for Discussion

The majority of the responses (87.5%) were in favour of the safe and supportive classroom atmosphere to express emotions and discuss personal matters that may impede any development in the foreign language success and vice versa. However, the percentage of the respondents who answered that the classroom is a place to study not to talk is 12.5%, and it is by no means the confirmation of their true opinion, because the author researcher confirmed the involvement of all the respondents during the submission of the questionnaire

Question 11: Please rate the following statements based on your agreement or disagreement:

- a- The lighting, temperature, seating arrangement impacts my emotions to learn.
- b- The classroom resources (books, audiovisual materials, technology) provided by the teacher influence my motivation to learn.
- c- My emotions and feelings fluctuate between positivity and negativity because of the overall cleanliness and organisation of the classroom.
- d- The presence of the visual aids (posters, charts, maps) in the classroom enhances my motivation.

Total	A	B	C	D
72	72	72	72	72
100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table11. Classroom Conditions

The aim of this question was to know the degree of agreement among students about the various classroom conditions and equipment. All students agreed upon the vitality of the elements mentioned. Thus, there is a consensus between theory and reality about the paramount role of the equipments and the overall conditions in the foreign language classroom.

Section Three: Teachers' Behaviour and Attitudes

Question 12: Are your teachers willing to invest the beginning of the academic year to know more about their students?

Total	YES	NO	NOT ALL OF THEM
72	49	11	12
100%	68.05	15.27	16.66

Table12. Teachers' Attitude

The aim behind the question is to know more about teacher's readiness to allocate time to explore students' feelings, moods, and perceptions from a learner's perspective right from the beginning of the academic year. The answers however, revealed that 68.05% of the respondents affirmed that the teachers are willing to manage time to know more about their students. Besides, 15.27% of the respondents said that there are teachers who furnish null efforts to explore their needs and prefer jumping to the implementation of the programmes without giving attention to the psychology of the learner.

Question 13: Do the teachers make efforts to tailor teaching to what suits their students' preferences for learning?

Total	Yes	No
72	00	72
100%	00%	100%

Table13. Teachers Readiness to Improve their Methods

*32 of the students added: Only in the oral expression session.

The results showed that all the teachers are not willing to take any initiative to bring what interests their students to the classroom. This is may be because many teachers may have been trained in traditional, one-size-fits-all teaching methods, and do not like venturing to tailor their teaching method to what suits their students' preferences. Only the teacher of oral expression gained some opinion confirming his/her willingness to bring change to the class.

Question 14: Are there any specific teaching methods or activities that make you feel more engaged and interested in learning English at the department? Suggest some.

Total	Yes	No
72	72	00
100%	100%	00%

Table14. Motivating Methods and Activities

As mentioned above the full population of the study opted for the YES option and suggested solutions they consider vital in the foreign language class like furnishing language labs and audiovisual aids, elaborated exercises, and language games, videos, films, and documentaries in the target language providing valuable exposure to native accents, cultural aspects, and real-life language use.

Question 15: Is it important for you to establish a positive relationship with your language teacher?

Total	Yes	No
72	72	00
100%	100%	00%

Table15. Importance of Establishing Positive Relationships with Teachers

All the respondents answered *yes*. This means that they all consider establishing a positive relationship with the teacher as paramount. This is linked to the feeling of safety and guidance the teacher has to display. Students feel more at ease approaching a teacher they trust. A positive relationship encourages open communication. Students feel more comfortable expressing their doubts, questions, or concerns, hence leading to clearer explanations, and personalised assistance from the teacher.

Question 16: Do the teacher's enthusiasm, style, and energy in the classroom contribute to students feeling positive and energized for success?

Total	Yes	No
72	72	00
100%	100%	00%

Table16. Teachers as Motivators

*19 students mentioned names of their coolest teachers.

Students unanimously agreed over the role of teacher's enthusiasm, style and energy in fuelling the classroom with motivation. High-energy teachers exude a positive and optimistic atmosphere in the classroom. Their energy is contagious and can motivate students to stay focused, participate actively, and strive for excellence. When teachers demonstrate their passion for teaching, students are more likely to view the learning process as an exciting journey rather than a mundane task.

Section Four: Peers' Influence

Question 17: Do you have close friends at the university?

Total	Yes	No	No answer
72	66	05	01
100%	91.66%	06.94%	01.38%

Table17. Friendship at the University

As the table displays, 91.66% of the respondents answered *yes*; 06.94% said *no*; against 01.38% who abstained. However, it is essential for students to strike a balance between academic and social life. While focusing on studies is crucial, forming meaningful friendships can greatly enrich the university experience and contribute to personal growth and development. However, it is also important to remember that the quality of friendships matters more than the quantity; having close and supportive friends is often more beneficial than having a large but superficial and negative social circle.

Question 18: Do you feel comfortable amongst your peers?

Total	Yes	No	No Answer
72	37	31	04
100%	51.38%	43.05%	05.55%

Table18. Feelings among Peers

The objective behind this question was to know whether the students are at ease with their friends and feel comfortable being with them in class. The results were tight and approximately divided into even sub groups. This can be explained by the different negative emotions students generate when studying like fear, anxiety, and helplessness. Many students find that they naturally form connections and feel more comfortable with their peers as they progress through studies. On the contrary, other students develop a kind of uneasiness even with close friends which push the student to refrain from participating in class.

Question 19: How often do you interact with peers in the foreign language classroom and maintain positive relationships with them?

Total	Always	Sometimes	Motivate myself
72	11	52	09
100%	15.27%	72.22%	12.5%

Table19. Peers' Interaction Frequency

In terms of frequency of interaction between classmates, the results showed that much of their interaction is guided by subjectivity and mood. Only 15.27% answered with *always*, whereas 72.22% of the respondents replied with *sometimes*. However, 12.5% added that they prefer motivating themselves.

Question 20: Do you feel comfortable asking your peers for help or clarification when you have difficulty understanding the foreign language inside or outside the classroom?

Total	Group Work	Individual Work	No	No Answer
72	31	10	28	03
100%	43.05%	13.88%	38.88%	04.16%

Table20. Work with Peers Frequency

The findings of this question are the confirmation of the results of the previous question. 43.05% of the respondents prefer preparing lessons with their mates in sub groups; 38.88% said that they do not like to work with their class mates; 13.88% said they prefer working alone; however, 4.16% of the sample abstained.

Question 21: Do repetitive students discourage other students from actively participating in classroom discussions or activities? If yes, say in which way?

Total	Yes	No
72	51	21
100%	70.83%	29.17%

Table21. Repetitive Students Influence

It is crystal clear that 70.83% of the respondents said they agree on the negative role some repetitive students play in discouraging them from actively participating in class discussions, or activities. This fosters the idea that the students negative perception about studying in general and learning some subject matters in particular is highly shaped by the influence of peers especially the repetitive ones.

As for the way some repetitive students discourage other students from actively participating in classroom discussions, students who previously confirmed their negative influence provided the following statements:

-They dominate conversations - They limit perspectives and waste time - They can be disrespectful -They provide negative feedback about both the teacher and the subject matter

Question 22: Can the presence of repetitive students contribute to a decline in overall class morale and enthusiasm for learning the foreign language?

Total	Yes	No	No Answer
72	53	12	07
100%	73.61%	16.66%	09.72%

Table22. Repetitive Students Impact on the class Morale

As the results show, 73.61% of the students admitted that some repetitive students usually contribute to a decline in overall class morale and enthusiasm for learning. Indeed some students might feel compelled to follow the behaviour of repetitive students due to peer pressure or a desire to fit in. If repetitive students exhibit a lack of interest in learning the foreign language for one reason, it may influence others to adopt a similar attitude, even if they were initially enthusiastic about learning.

Section Five: Objectives and Emotions

Question 23: What will success look like for you?

Total	Get diplomas and find a job	Find a job	Succeed the first year first
72	63	03	06
100%	87.5%	04.16%	08.83%

Table23. Students Long Term Objectives

As stated in the table above, 87.5% stated that finishing studies successfully means having diplomas and being able to find a job; against 8.83% who said that they aim at succeeding the first year because they are repetitive students. The objective behind asking this question will continuously help educators improve their teaching methods and curricula. Regularly seeking feedback from students can lead to a more effective and student-centred learning environment. They can be able to create a more personalised and meaningful educational experience.

Question 24: Are you planning to major in your studies?

Total	Yes	No	No Answer
72	12	57	03
100%	16.66%	79.16%	04.16%

Table24. Students Plans for their Studies

The aim behind this question is fostering the belief that when students have a say in defining success for themselves, they feel a greater sense of ownership over their learning journey. As the table indicates, 79.17% of the students said they only aim at succeeding no matter the average is; 16.66 said yes, and 04.16 % of the population did not answer the question. This autonomy can increase intrinsic motivation, making them more engaged and committed to their language studies. In addition, every student may have unique aspirations and motivations for learning a foreign language. By asking this question, educators can understand what individual students hope to achieve. Some may be interested in improving conversational skills for travel, while others may want to excel academically or professionally. Understanding their goals helps teachers tailor instruction to meet their needs.

Question 25: State your favourite subject matters and your less interesting ones by classifying them from 1 to 9: (1 stands for the most interesting- 9 stands for the least interesting)

Subject-matter	N	%	Rank
Written Expression	41	56.94%	3
Oral Expression	53	73.61%	1
Grammar	50	69.44%	2
Phonetics	17	23.61%	8
Linguistics	23	31.94%	6
Culture	12	16.66%	9
Literary Texts	19	26.38%	7
Social Sciences and Humanities	28	38.88%	5
Methodology	39	54.16%	4

Table 25. Students Favourite and less Favourite Subjects

As mentioned in the table above, Oral Expression subject matter received the highest degree of interest with 73.6%, Grammar at the second rank with 69.44%; Writing got 56.94% and Methodology got 54.16%; Social Sciences and Humanities received 38.88%; Linguistics got 31.94%, Literary Texts got 26.38%, and both Phonetics and Culture received the lowest percentages of interest: 23.61% and 16.66% respectively. Hence, by asking about favourite subjects, educators can gain insight into what topics or subjects' students are naturally drawn to. This information can be used to tailor teaching methods and classroom activities to align with students' interests, making the learning process more engaging and enjoyable.

Question 26: How often do you experience negative emotions in the Phonetics class?

Total	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
72	10	19	16	17	10
100%	13.88%	26.38%	22.22%	23.61%	13.88%

Table26. Negative Feelings Frequency in the Phonetics Class

With this question we reached the core of our study based on the inquiry behind students' apathetic attitude towards studying particular subject matters. The questionnaire was designed around Phonetics that the author teaches. Students were asked to measure the frequency of their negative emotion towards studying Phonetics in class. The table above reveals that 62.5% of the students experienced some feelings of disinterest, lukewarmness, boredom, and demotivation (always, often, or sometimes); 23.61% mentioned they rarely felt negative emotions; against 13.88% who asserted never felt negative emotions in the Phonetics class. The aim behind asking about negative emotions is to help educators uncover potential obstacles that students may be facing while studying phonetics. These difficulties could be related to the subject's complexity, the teaching methods used, or individual learning styles. Moreover, understanding students' emotional responses can help educators tailor their teaching methods and strategies to better engage and support their students ; for example if many students express frustration with certain Phonetic concepts or symbols, teachers may adapt their explanations or incorporate more interactive activities.

Question 27: Which of the following negative emotions have you already experienced in the Phonetics class? Choose only one option.

Options: a-anxiety b-frustration c-boredom d-disappointment e- apathy f-lack of motivation
g-embarrassment h-overwhelm

Total	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
72	15	07	08	09	14	11	08	00
100%	20.83%	09.72%	11.11%	12.5%	19.44%	15.27%	11.11%	00%

Table27. Experienced Negative Emotions

*12 Respondents answered with multi choices.

The results received in the table above show a concrete confirmation of the results received from the analysis of the previous question. The author aimed to match the frequency with the negative feelings just to prove the existence of this case in the first year Phonetics classes at the department of the English language at Frères Mentouri, Constantine 1 University.

Question 28: What triggered your negative emotions in the Phonetics class?

In this question the respondents were asked to give short answers about the causes of their negative feelings during the Phonetics class. The objective that leads this question is to gain insight into first-year students' relatively short experience in the learning environment. By understanding the specific causes of negative emotions, teachers and educators can address and mitigate those issues, creating a more positive and productive learning atmosphere. The answers the respondents gave are:

- No technology
- No labs
- Overcrowded classrooms
- Lack of hygiene
- Teacher's behaviour
- Peers influence
- Subject matter difficulty
- Insufficient time
- No Internet
- Bad classroom conditions

During the observation phase undertaken by the author, students were constantly reporting their feelings and perceptions about the classroom environment, teachers' behaviour, the influence of peers, and the complexity and difficulty of some courses. The analysis of the questionnaire, submitted to two groups of the first year license level, revealed valuable insights into the emotional state of students at the university. All the respondents reported that they were deceived by the overall university conditions, and did not expect to find the department in its present state. A positive correlation is found between the results, the dominance of emotional well being over the foreign language classroom, and the research questions asked at the outset of the study. Although a number of students reported being unsatisfied, and expressed a preference for alternative career paths, suggesting that they might be enrolled in the university for reasons other than personal interests and passion, namely being imposed either by parents or by their scores, the findings of the questionnaire highlight the positive feelings the BAC exam holders initially come with, indicating that the university is still perceived as being a motivating and an inspiring context for students to pursue their dreams and aspirations. However when asked about their opinion about the general academic atmosphere, at the department, students expressed their disappointment which aligns with the research question number one. The rest of the questionnaire analysis has provided more revelations about the underpinning causes of this disappointment. Additionally, the research question number two aimed to shed light on factors that may nurture the apathy of students towards learning in general and learning specific subject matters in particular. The findings mentioned that students perceptions of the classroom environment including factors like lighting, temperature, and seating arrangement had a significant impact on the learners' emotional state and motivation to learn.

Good classroom conditions including the presence of visual aids and engaging resources correlated with increased motivation levels. The findings emphasized also the importance of the teacher's behaviour, and its effects on students who greatly valued teachers who invest time in understanding their needs and preferences. Enthusiastic energetic and supportive teachers were associated with positive emotions, active engagement and the desire for success. In line with the literature review, which backed the results up, as stated by Dörnyei, Z., Ushioda, (2011) the findings answer the research question number three which explores the significance of the teachers behaviour and their readiness to put at the students' hands what stimulates their motivation and suits their preferences. Ineffective teaching strategies and lack of engagement in the classroom can lead to learners losing interest in a subject. A study by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) suggested that students' motivation and enthusiasm for a subject are linked to the teacher's ability to create an engaging and supportive learning environment. As far as question number four is concerned, the issue of the peers influence in foreign language classroom has been modestly addressed in the research literature and still undergoes exploration since the field of education is continuously evolving, with new research being conducted regularly. However, all the studies done so far as Neumann, (1974) confirm the double role played by peers in the learning process. The section of the questionnaire dealing with peers influence has furnished much information confirming its double ended spectrum. In one respect, peers can play a positive role by enriching debates, encouraging interactive activities and providing positive feedback. In another respect, they can hinder learning by spreading discouraging perceptions, and providing negative models particularly repetitive students to freshmen. For the research question number five the overall tabulation of the results exhibits the interrelationship existing between all the factors addressed: the teachers behaviour, the peers' influence, the class environment and material. They influence each other and display a reaction over the complex emotional web of the learners, thus one cannot exclude any of the factors if we aim at having a full high definition picture of the foreign language classroom. The teacher has emotions that need to be controlled and needs in-training services; classrooms need to be equipped with sophisticated material and elaborated methods and techniques to be enthusiastic and motivating; peers also need guidance and management to play the positive role in the classroom as engagement generators and positive feedback providers, instead of being energy drainers.

IV-Conclusion and Recommendations

The study at hands stemmed from the curiosity of the author to explore the factors which nourish students' negative feelings and emotions in the first year classes in the department of English at Frères Mentouri, Constantine1 University. These emotions were the object of an observation phase that preceded the administration of the questionnaire. Being a teacher of Phonetics since 2013, every academic year, the researcher observed the first year students who expressed a disinterest in studies in general and some subject matters in particular. We could undergo interviews with the students who asserted that they developed these feelings because of the general atmosphere in the classrooms. We decided to go deeper into the students' feelings and delve inside their expectations and interests, in order to find remedies to their demotivation and apathy. A questionnaire was designed to diagnose the true causes of these feelings. The results, in line with the literature review, proved that factors like class conditions, teachers' behaviour and attitudes, peers' influence and multimedia resources all work synergetically to either promote motivation and nurture enthusiasm and positive engagement, or hamper students from actively engage in the learning tasks and activities.

Therefore, on account of these findings we put forth the following recommendations that we consider beneficial to the whole pedagogical community at the department:

Both the ministry and the university administration have to consider all factors that make students feel uncomfortable in the classrooms and make necessary improvements, by emphasizing the importance of foreign language classrooms being safe and supportive spaces with adequate lighting, temperature, seating arrangement, classroom resources, tidiness,

and organization. The administration must also recognize the positive influence of visual aids in enhancing students' motivation and incorporate them into the classroom. On their part, teachers should recognize the role of emotions and feelings in language learning and create strategies to harness positive emotions for improved learning outcomes. They have to assess the overall emotional state of students at the beginning of the academic year, and identify any factors that may affect their happiness as university students; they should determine whether students have a personal interest in studying English or if it was imposed on them, and address the negative feelings associated with this imposition; they have to take note of students' favourite subject matter to identify areas of interest that can be incorporated into the curriculum.

Furthermore, teachers should develop strategies to help students manage fear, anxiety, disappointment, and boredom in the classroom. Additionally, they must encourage the use of coping techniques and strategies to overcome negative feelings in the classroom. They are invited to invest time in getting to know their students at the beginning of the academic year to establish a positive teacher-student relationship. They must also be encouraged to promote teaching methods and activities that cater to students' preferences for learning and increase their engagement and interest. In fact, teachers can provide diverse and engaging learning materials, such as games and interactive exercises, to generate positive perceptions about learning. They should foster opportunities for students to develop close friendships at the university to create a supportive social network, and highlight the motivational influence of peers in active participation in classroom discussions and incorporate group activities that encourage peer motivation.

The tertiary educational community has to consider students' favourite and less interesting subject matters when designing the curriculum to enhance engagement and motivation. They have to define what success looks like for students and align instructional strategies and support services accordingly in order to reinforce the importance of completing the entire course of instruction and obtaining a diploma, highlighting the long-term benefits and opportunities it brings.

Referrals and References

- [1]. Arnold, J. (1999). *Affect in Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- [2]. Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- [3]. Bong, M., Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2003). Effects of achievement goals on student motivation. *Educational Psychologist*, 38(1), 19-25.
- [4]. Borg, S. (2015). *The Emotional Experiences of Language Teachers: A Neglected Dimension of Language Teaching*. New York: Routledge.
- [5]. Brown, B. B. (2004). Adolescents' relationships with peers. *Handbook of adolescent psychology*, 2, 363-394.
- [6]. Dewaele, J.-M. (2005). Investigating the psychological and emotional dimensions in instructed language learning: Obstacles and possibilities. *Modern Language Journal*, 89(3), 367-380.
- [7]. Dewaele, J.-M., Witney, J., Saito, K. & Dewaele, L. (2018) foreign language enjoyment and anxiety in the FL classroom: the effect of teacher and learner variables. *LanguageTeaching Research* 22, 676–697.
- [8]. Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- [9]. Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and researching motivation* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- [10]. Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59-109.
- [11]. Gardner, R. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. UK: Edward Arnold.
- [12]. Gardner, R. C. & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers
- [13]. Gattegno, C. (1972). *Teaching Foreign Languages in Schools: The Silent Way*. Educational Solutions Worldwide Inc.
- [14]. Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (1998). Mapping the domain of emotional expressivity: Multi-method evidence for a hierarchical model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 170-191.
- [15]. Hargreaves, A. (2005). Educational Change and the Triumph of Hope Over Experience. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *Second International Handbook of Educational Change* (pp. 1-20). Springer Netherlands.
- [16]. Harris, D. N. (2014). The Signaling Value of a High School Diploma. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 36(2), 187–204.
- [17]. Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. Routledge.
- [18]. Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R., & Smith, K. (2006). *Active learning: Cooperation in the university classroom* (3rd ed.). Edina, MN: Interaction.

- [19]. Kramsch, C. (2009) 'Cultural perspectives on language learning and teaching', in W. Knapp and B. Seidlhofer (eds) *Handbook of Applied Linguistics* (pp. 219–46). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- [20]. Lozanov, G. (1978). *Suggestology and Outlines of Suggestopedia*. Gordon and Breach Science Publishers.
- [21]. MacIntyre, P. D. (2016). Emotions, language learning, and socialization in an international context. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 6(3), 377-396.
- [22]. MacIntyre, P. D. & Gregersen, T. (2012). Affect: The role of language anxiety and other emotions in language learning. In S. Mercer, S. Ryan & M. Williams (Eds.), *Language learning psychology: Research, theory and pedagogy* (pp. 103-118). Basingstoke: Palgrave
- [23]. Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974). The spiral of silence: A theory of public opinion. *Journal of Communication*, 24(2), 43-51.
- [24]. Oxford, R. L. (2015). Emotion as the amplifier and the primary motive: Some theories of emotion with relevance to language learning. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 5(3), 371-393.
- [25]. Pekrun, R. (2000). A social cognitive, control-value theory of achievement emotions. In J. Heckhausen (Ed.), *Motivational psychology of human development*, Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science.
- [26]. Rosenthal, R., & Jacobson, L. (1968). Pygmalion in the classroom. *The Urban Review*, 3(1), 16-20.
- [27]. Ryan, A. M., & Patrick, H. (2001). The classroom social environment and changes in adolescents' motivation and engagement during middle school. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38, 437-460.
- [28]. Scherer, K. R., Schorr, A. & Johnstone, T. (Eds.) (2001). *Appraisal processes in emotion*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- [29]. Sutton, R. E., & Wheatley, K. F. (2019). Teachers' emotions and teaching: A review of the literature and directions for future research. *Educational Psychology Review*, 31(3), 691-742.
- [30]. Swain, M. (2013). The inseparability of cognition and emotion in second language learning. *Language Teaching*, 46(2), 195- 207.
- [31]. Wentzel, K. R. (1998). Social relationships and motivation in middle school: The role of parents, teachers, and peers. *Journal of educational psychology*, 90(2), 202.
- [32]. Yükselir, C. (2014). An analysis of the perceptions on academic emotions and emotional experiences in English language teaching. *International Journal of English Language Education*, 2(2), 269-278. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijele.v2i2.6617>