

Unpacking Boredom in Saudi EFL Classrooms: The Role of Instructional Delivery in Shaping Learner Engagement

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Abstract—Despite growing interest in boredom as a critical affective factor in language learning, limited attention has been given to its manifestation in blended and online learning contexts—particularly among Saudi EFL learners. Grounded in the control-value theory of academic emotions, this study employs a mixed-methods design to examine how different instructional modes (face-to-face, online, and blended) influence learners' experiences of boredom. Quantitative data were collected via a 35-item Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 356 undergraduate students, while qualitative insights were drawn from semi-structured interviews with 20 participants. The findings indicate that boredom was significantly more prevalent in face-to-face settings, with a noticeable peak during the mid-point of class sessions. In contrast, students reported higher engagement and flexibility in online learning, though challenges such as reduced interpersonal interaction and technical issues were noted. The study underscores the potential of digital tools to reduce boredom and enhance emotional engagement, offering practical implications for instructional design, teacher training, and learner support in Saudi higher education EFL programs.

Index Terms—boredom, Saudi EFL learners, instructional delivery, online learning, affective factors in language learning

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the emotional dimension of language learning has garnered increasing attention within the field of applied linguistics. Among the various negative academic emotions, boredom has emerged as a particularly disruptive factor in the learning process (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Dewaele et al., 2023; Kruk et al., 2022; Pawlak et al., 2020). In the Saudi EFL context, where conventional, teacher-centered instruction remains dominant, students frequently report feelings of disengagement and emotional exhaustion during English classes (Ali El Deen, 2023; Alrajhi, 2024). Observable behaviors—such as checking mobile phones, feigning participation, or requesting to leave the classroom—often reflect deeper emotional disengagement.

Boredom in language classrooms is not merely a fleeting emotion but a complex psychological state rooted in learners' perceptions of control and value in relation to academic tasks (Pekrun, 2006). According to the control-value theory of academic emotions, boredom tends to arise when students feel they have little control over learning outcomes and assign low value to the tasks at hand. This framework has increasingly been applied in second language acquisition (SLA) research to explain emotional variability in classroom contexts (Li, 2021; Yuan, 2020).

Blended learning (BL), which integrates traditional face-to-face (F2F) instruction with online or digital components (Bonk & Graham, 2005), has become a widely adopted instructional model in modern education. In such environments, EFL learners engage in both in-person classroom activities and online learning experiences (Ellis, 2014). However, BL is not a standardized or one-size-fits-all approach; rather, it must be adapted to suit learners' proficiency levels, instructional goals, and educational contexts (Feng et al., 2018). While it offers increased flexibility and autonomy, BL also poses challenges, requiring significant self-regulation, time management, and pre-class preparation—skills that many students may lack (Van Laer & Elen, 2017).

Affective engagement in blended learning environments encompasses both positive emotions (e.g., enjoyment, confidence, satisfaction) and negative ones (e.g., boredom, anxiety, frustration) (Halverson & Graham, 2019). Although the F2F component of BL can support students' social and emotional needs (Velasquez et al., 2013), some studies suggest that F2F instruction does not always enhance emotional engagement. Its benefits may be limited more to cognitive, rather than emotional, domains (Manwaring et al., 2017).

Despite the growing body of research on academic emotions, little is known about how boredom is specifically experienced within blended learning environments—particularly in EFL contexts that merge digital tools with traditional instruction. Although prior studies have examined the intersection of boredom and language learning emotions (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Tsang & Dewaele, 2023), boredom in the hybrid space of BL remains underexplored. As Xie (2021) emphasizes, the mode of instruction itself can be a key mediating factor shaping the intensity and nature of boredom.

To address this gap, the present study investigates how Saudi EFL learners experience boredom across different instructional modes—face-to-face (F2F), online, and blended—and identifies the specific stages of English courses during which boredom is most pronounced. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do Saudi EFL learners experience boredom in face-to-face (F2F), online, and blended learning modes?
2. At which stage of English classes (e.g., beginning, middle, or end) do Saudi EFL learners report the highest levels of boredom?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Boredom in Language Learning

Boredom is commonly defined as an aversive emotional state characterized by low arousal, diminished attention, and a lack of intrinsic motivation (Pekrun et al., 2010). In educational settings, it often arises when learners perceive tasks as monotonous, overly simplistic, or irrelevant to their goals. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, boredom can significantly hinder student performance by limiting vocabulary acquisition, reducing willingness to communicate, and impeding long-term language development (Lee & Lee, 2020; Dewaele et al., 2023).

Recent research highlights the multidimensional nature of boredom, emphasizing both internal (e.g., motivation, attention span) and external (e.g., task design, teacher behavior) antecedents. For instance, Nakamura et al. (2021) identified repetitive instruction, slow teacher pacing, and limited learner autonomy as key triggers of boredom in language classrooms. Similarly, Pawlak et al. (2020) found that advanced EFL learners in Poland reported higher levels of boredom when classroom activities lacked novelty or failed to provide sufficient cognitive challenge.

In the Saudi EFL context, boredom appears to be a widespread issue, frequently attributed to outdated pedagogical approaches and limited student engagement. Ali El Deen (2023) identified seven major contributors to classroom boredom among Saudi university students, including demotivation, ineffective teaching practices, inadequate assessment methods, and underchallenging tasks. These findings underscore the need to address both the cognitive and emotional dimensions of language learning in curriculum design and instructional delivery.

Boredom Across Instructional Modes

While boredom has been widely examined in conventional classroom settings, its variation across different instructional modes—namely face-to-face (F2F), online, and blended learning—remains underexplored in the applied linguistics literature. Although existing research has addressed emotional engagement in digital learning environments, boredom is often overlooked as a distinct emotional construct (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Tsang & Dewaele, 2023).

Face-to-face instruction, while conducive to real-time interaction and immediate feedback, has been associated with higher levels of boredom—particularly in teacher-centered environments characterized by repetitive tasks and limited student agency (Pawlak et al., 2020; Nakamura et al., 2021). In contrast, online learning environments offer greater autonomy, flexible pacing, and access to multimedia tools, which can promote interest and engagement. However, they also introduce challenges such as reduced social presence, technical difficulties, and unstructured learning, all of which may contribute to emotional disengagement and boredom (Al Shammari, 2021; Dewaele et al., 2023).

Blended learning (BL)—which combines F2F and online components—has been proposed as a pedagogically flexible model capable of mitigating boredom by increasing instructional variety and learner control (Halverson & Graham, 2019; Jehoul et al., 2025). Nevertheless, evidence regarding its emotional benefits remains mixed. While some studies report that the hybrid format enhances engagement by integrating diverse learning tools and strategies, others caution that its effectiveness depends heavily on task relevance, instructional quality, and learners' capacity for self-regulation (Van Laer & Elen, 2017; Feng et al., 2018).

Despite these developments, few studies have systematically compared levels of boredom across instructional modes within EFL contexts, particularly in Saudi higher education. This study aims to address that gap by examining how Saudi EFL learners experience boredom in F2F, online, and blended learning environments, with a particular focus on when and why boredom tends to occur during English language instruction.

Instructional Modes and Emotional Engagement

The global shift toward digital and hybrid learning models—accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic—has fundamentally transformed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Online learning platforms offer increased flexibility, enabling learners to progress at their own pace while engaging with diverse multimedia content (Mahmoud, 2024a, 2024b; Dhawan, 2020). These affordances can enhance emotional engagement by accommodating different learning styles and increasing perceived autonomy. However, they also present challenges such as limited social interaction, potential distractions, and technical issues, all of which can hinder affective engagement (Al Shammari, 2021). In the Saudi context, Mahmoud (2024a, 2024b) found that engineering students enrolled in an online English writing course reported mixed attitudes toward virtual learning. While students cited advantages such as convenience and flexibility, they also expressed concerns regarding technological barriers, insufficient instructional support, and increased workload—factors that may contribute to emotional disengagement, including boredom. Similarly, Ali El Deen and Mahmoud (2025) observed that although Learning Management Systems (LMSs), such as Blackboard, enhanced the teaching–learning process in EFL classrooms, their effectiveness was contingent on students' digital literacy, prior experience, and the instructional design of online materials.

Blended learning (BL) has emerged as a pedagogical compromise that integrates the strengths of both face-to-face and online modes. It fosters structured classroom interaction while incorporating digital components that support personalized learning and instructional variety (Halverson & Graham, 2019). Several studies suggest that blended environments may help mitigate boredom by offering pedagogical diversity and promoting a sense of learner agency (Jehoul et al., 2025). However, the success of blended instruction in fostering emotional engagement largely depends on thoughtful course design, alignment of content with learners' interests, and the development of self-regulation and time-management skills (Feng et al., 2018; Van Laer & Elen, 2017).

Although affective engagement in blended and online learning has received increasing scholarly attention, boredom—as a distinct and influential academic emotion—remains under-investigated in relation to instructional mode. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining how different instructional formats influence emotional engagement among Saudi EFL learners, with a specific focus on boredom.

Control-Value Theory of Academic Emotions

This study is grounded in Pekrun's (2006) Control-Value Theory (CVT) of academic emotions, a widely recognized framework for understanding students' emotional experiences in educational contexts. According to CVT, two core cognitive appraisals—perceived control over learning and perceived value of the task—jointly determine learners' emotional responses. Boredom is most likely to occur when both control and value are perceived as low, leading to disengagement and reduced motivation.

In EFL settings, low perceived control may arise from difficulties in comprehension, limited language proficiency, or inconsistent feedback. At the same time, learners may assign low value to tasks that are repetitive, lack relevance, or appear disconnected from real-world communication (Yuan, 2020; Li, 2021). The combination of low control and low value can trigger negative academic emotions such as boredom, which in turn may undermine cognitive engagement, reduce participation, and hinder academic achievement.

By applying CVT, this study seeks to uncover the cognitive-emotional mechanisms underlying boredom in face-to-face, online, and blended instructional settings. The theory provides a valuable lens for analyzing how instructional design affects learners' emotional states and, subsequently, their language learning outcomes. A deeper understanding of how perceptions of control and value shape boredom can inform the development of pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing emotional engagement in Saudi EFL classrooms.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of boredom in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning context (Creswell & Poth, 2021). This design was chosen to allow the interpretation of quantitative results to be deepened and contextualized through qualitative insights.

The research was conducted in two phases. The quantitative phase involved administering a structured 35-item Likert-scale questionnaire to measure students' boredom levels across three instructional modes: face-to-face (F2F), online, and blended learning. This was followed by the qualitative phase, which employed semi-structured interviews to further explore students' perceptions of the causes and patterns of boredom identified in the survey data.

Participants

A total of 356 undergraduate EFL students (279 male, 77 female) participated in the study. They were enrolled in intermediate and advanced English courses at four Saudi universities: Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Majmaah University, Shaqra University, and Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 24 years and represented a variety of academic disciplines within university-level English language programs.

For the qualitative phase, a purposive sample of 20 students was selected based on their survey responses to ensure variation in reported boredom levels and instructional mode experiences. This sampling strategy facilitated a deeper exploration of emotional dynamics and individual perceptions associated with different learning environments.

Instruments

This study employed two main instruments: a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

1. Questionnaire

A 35-item inventory, adapted from Pawlak et al. (2020) and Zawodniak et al. (2017), was used to measure students' academic boredom in EFL contexts. The questionnaire included both general and instructional mode-specific items, focusing on learners' experiences in face-to-face (F2F), online, and blended learning environments. Two core items addressing the study's primary variables were:

“I feel bored in English classes when engaging in face-to-face learning activities.”

“I feel bored in English classes during online learning activities.”

Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). The first section of the questionnaire collected demographic information, including age, gender, and self-reported English proficiency level.

Content validity was established by adapting items from previously validated scales and modifying them to reflect the Saudi EFL context. Reliability was confirmed through internal consistency analysis using Cronbach's alpha.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews

To gain deeper insight into students' emotional experiences and instructional preferences, semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom. These interviews explored participants' perceptions of boredom, the influence of instructional modes on emotional engagement, and their suggestions for pedagogical improvement.

Sample interview questions included:

"What factors contribute to your feelings of boredom during English classes?"

"How do you compare online and face-to-face learning in terms of engagement?"

"What changes do you believe could reduce boredom in your English classes?"

Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was conducted in [English/Arabic] (specify). Participants were purposively selected based on their questionnaire responses to ensure diversity in reported boredom levels and learning mode experiences.

Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms to facilitate broad accessibility. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated to assess overall boredom levels. To compare boredom across the three instructional modes (F2F, online, and blended), paired-sample t-tests were conducted using [specify software, e.g., SPSS version XX]. Assumptions of normality and sphericity were examined and met.

Qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. Coding was performed independently by [one/two] researcher(s), and emerging themes were reviewed collaboratively to ensure consistency and trustworthiness. Patterns related to boredom triggers, instructional preferences, and emotional responses were identified.

For clarity in presenting qualitative findings, the following coding system was applied:

Q = Questionnaire item

S1, S2, etc. = Student participant number

SSI = Semi-Structured Interview

OEQ = Open-Ended Question

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To establish content validity, the 35-item questionnaire—structured around four conceptual dimensions—was reviewed by a panel of six experts, including four specialists in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and two in educational psychology. The panel assessed item clarity, relevance, and coverage of academic boredom within EFL contexts. Minor revisions were made based on their feedback to enhance wording and theoretical alignment.

The questionnaire was then translated into Arabic to accommodate participants' native language and minimize comprehension issues. A back-translation procedure was employed to ensure semantic accuracy. Two professors specializing in Translation Studies and Pedagogy reviewed the Arabic version for linguistic fidelity and cultural appropriateness, and their feedback was incorporated into the final version.

The finalized questionnaire comprised four dimensions:

Monotony and classroom disengagement (Items 1–8)

Task-related boredom (Items 9–23)

Teacher-related boredom (Items 24–31)

Language learning ability-related boredom (Items 32–35)

Internal consistency, measured using Cronbach's alpha, yielded a coefficient of 0.915 based on a pilot study, indicating excellent reliability (Taber, 2018). This exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, confirming the instrument's suitability for assessing academic boredom among Saudi EFL learners.

TABLE 1
CRONBACH'S ALPHA COEFFICIENT FOR BOREDOM QUESTIONNAIRE

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
0.915	35

These results confirm that the questionnaire is both a valid and reliable instrument for assessing boredom across different instructional modes within the target population.

IV. RESULTS

Quantitative Findings

Comparison of Boredom in Face-to-Face and Online Learning

To address the first research question—To what extent do Saudi EFL learners experience boredom in face-to-face (F2F) compared to online instruction?—two key items from the boredom questionnaire were analyzed:

Item 13: "I feel bored in English classes when doing face-to-face learning activities."

Item 12: "I feel bored in English classes during online learning activities."

These items were identified through an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), which revealed two relevant factors associated with instructional mode and boredom:

The first factor, labeled Demotivation ($\alpha = 0.867$), comprised eight items reflecting emotional disengagement—such as lack of enthusiasm, distraction, lethargy, frustration, and low perseverance. Item 13 was the strongest indicator of boredom in face-to-face contexts.

The seventh factor, termed Classroom Mode, Permanent Correction, and Redundancy ($\alpha = 0.723$), included Item 12 alongside other items related to repetitive correction practices and monotonous tasks. These findings align with previous research highlighting frequent boredom triggers in Saudi EFL classrooms (Ali El Deen, 2023).

Descriptive statistics showed that participants reported higher levels of boredom in face-to-face classes ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.26$) compared to online classes ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 1.41$). While both means fall below the midpoint of the Likert scale (3 = Occasionally), the difference suggests that traditional classroom settings may impose a relatively greater emotional burden on learners.

Furthermore, 50.2% of participants indicated that they rarely felt bored during face-to-face instruction, while 43.0% reported the same for online learning. These findings point to subtle yet meaningful differences in boredom levels across instructional modes, warranting further pedagogical consideration.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR BOREDOM ACROSS INSTRUCTIONAL MODES

Factor	Item	Mean	SD	Percentage (Scarcely)	Level
1st Demotivation ($\alpha = 0.867$)	Factor: 13. I feel bored in English classes when doing face-to-face learning activities	2.51	1.26	50.20%	Scarcely
7th Classroom Mode, Permanent Correction, and Redundancy ($\alpha = 0.723$)	Factor: 12. I feel bored in English classes during online learning activities	2.15	1.41	43.00%	Scarcely

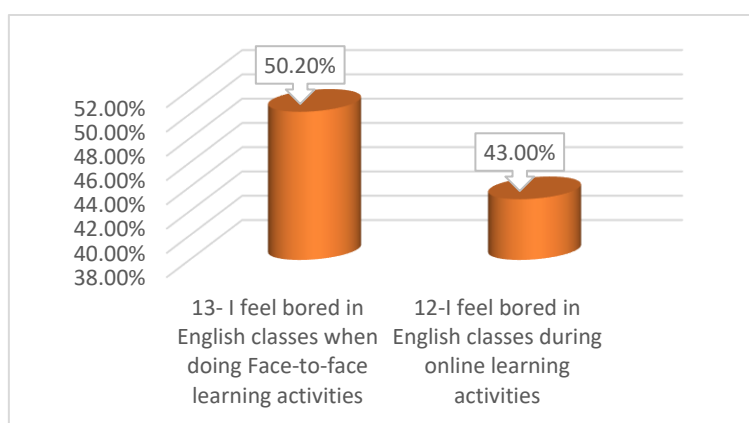


Figure 1. The Percentages of the Responses to the Mode of Instruction

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of participants' responses, further emphasizing that face-to-face (F2F) instruction elicited higher levels of boredom compared to online instruction. To determine whether this difference was statistically significant, a paired-samples t-test was performed.

As shown in Table 3, the analysis yielded a significant result: $t(355) = 4.37$, $p < .01$. This indicates that participants experienced significantly greater boredom in face-to-face classes than in online classes, with F2F instruction associated with higher mean boredom scores. These findings support the notion that traditional classroom settings may be more emotionally taxing for Saudi EFL learners than online environments.

TABLE 3
PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS FOR BOREDOM IN FACE-TO-FACE VS. ONLINE LEARNING

Pair	Mean Difference	Std. Error Mean	t	df	p-value
Item 13 (F2F) – Item 12 (Online)	0.36	0.082	4.37	355	< .01

These findings suggest that instructional mode plays a significant role in shaping learners' emotional experiences, with online learning associated with lower levels of boredom. This may be attributed to several factors, including greater flexibility, reduced social pressure, and the use of multimedia tools that enhance engagement and autonomy (Dhawan, 2020).

To statistically confirm this difference, a paired-samples t-test was conducted based on students' responses to two key questionnaire items:

Item 12: "I feel bored in English classes during online learning activities."

Item 13: "I feel bored in English classes when doing face-to-face learning activities."

As shown in Table 4, the results revealed a statistically significant difference in reported boredom levels between the two instructional modes: $t(355) = 3.416$, $p = .001$. The mean boredom score for face-to-face instruction ($M = 2.51$, $SD =$

1.26) was significantly higher than that for online instruction ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 1.41$). These findings reinforce the conclusion that Saudi EFL learners experienced greater boredom during face-to-face classes compared to online ones.

TABLE 4
 PAIRED SAMPLES T-TEST COMPARING BOREDOM IN FACE-TO-FACE AND ONLINE LEARNING

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
I feel bored during online learning activities (Item 12)	2.15	356	1.41	355	3.416	.001
I feel bored during face-to-face learning activities (Item 13)	2.51	356	1.26	—	—	—

These results reinforce the conclusion that instructional mode significantly shapes students' emotional experiences, with face-to-face settings more strongly associated with boredom. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that traditional, teacher-centered classrooms may limit student autonomy and active participation, thereby increasing the risk of disengagement and boredom (Ali El Deen, 2023; Pawlak et al., 2020). In contrast, online learning environments, characterized by greater flexibility, self-paced progression, and the use of digital tools, appear to mitigate boredom, despite presenting challenges such as reduced social interaction and occasional technical issues.

Qualitative Findings

Phases of Boredom in English Classes

To address the second research question—at what point during English classes do Saudi EFL learners experience the highest levels of boredom?—this study employed a mixed-methods approach that integrated both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative insights were derived from closed-ended questionnaire items, while qualitative data were gathered through open-ended survey responses and semi-structured interviews. This methodological integration offered a comprehensive understanding of the temporal patterns of boredom across the beginning, middle, and end stages of English lessons.

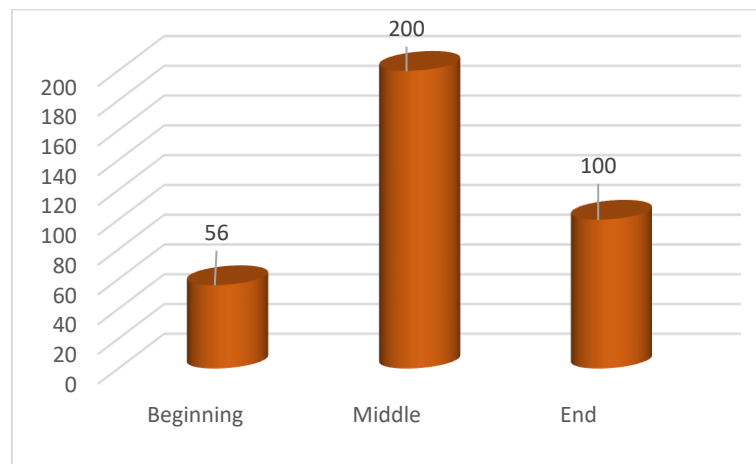


Figure 2. The Phases of Boredom in English Classes

As illustrated in Figure 2, of the 356 participants, 200 students (56.2%) reported experiencing peak boredom during the middle phase of the lesson. An additional 100 participants (28.1%) identified the end of the class as boredom-prone, whereas only 56 students (15.7%) reported the beginning as the most boring part.

The qualitative data supported and enriched these findings. Many students described the middle of the class as a period marked by declining attention and motivation. One participant shared:

“About 15 to 20 minutes before the end of the lecture, I start feeling bored. I become distracted and can no longer concentrate on the content” (OEQ 311).

Another student commented:

“At the beginning, I’m usually focused, but after the first 20 minutes, the lesson feels repetitive and slow. That’s when I lose interest” (SSI 07).

These responses suggest that cognitive fatigue, repetitive tasks, and monotonous teaching methods contribute to a decline in engagement during the middle portion of the class. This is consistent with findings in educational psychology indicating that university students’ attention spans tend to wane after approximately 15–20 minutes of continuous input (Macklem, 2015).

Boredom toward the end of class was frequently attributed to anticipation of dismissal or a perception that learning tasks had concluded. As one learner noted:

“Even if the teacher is still explaining, I feel like the class is over. I start checking my phone or thinking about what’s next” (SSI 14).

In contrast, the lower incidence of boredom at the beginning of the lesson suggests that students generally start with initial motivation and focus, which gradually decline as the session progresses.

These findings are in line with those of Mahmoudi-Gahrouei et al. (2024), who also found that the middle phase of lessons tends to be the most boredom-inducing among EFL learners. The consistency across studies highlights the need for instructional strategies that sustain engagement throughout the class duration.

Thematic analysis of interviews revealed three primary themes:

Most participants associated boredom with teacher-centered instruction and delayed or generic feedback. As one student explained,

“When the teacher just lectures and doesn’t ask us questions, I lose focus. And if I don’t get feedback on my writing, I feel like it doesn’t matter.”

This suggests that limited student interaction and insufficient personalized feedback contribute to disengagement.

Lack of Challenge and Variety

Repetitive grammar drills and textbook-based activities were commonly reported as key boredom triggers. One participant remarked,

“We do the same exercises every week. It feels like we’re not progressing.”

Such monotony appears to reduce learners’ sense of advancement and motivation.

Preference for Online Learning

Despite occasional technical difficulties, students expressed a preference for online learning due to its flexibility and use of multimedia resources. As one learner noted,

“I can watch videos, do quizzes, and submit work anytime. It’s more interesting than just sitting and listening.”

However, some participants acknowledged that online classes could feel isolating, with one commenting,

“Sometimes I feel isolated. I miss discussing with classmates.”

This highlights a trade-off between engagement through multimedia and the need for social interaction.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that face-to-face learning elicits significantly higher levels of boredom compared to online or blended instructional modes. This supports the argument that traditional lecture-based approaches, which remain prevalent in Saudi EFL classrooms, often fail to engage students emotionally (Ali El Deen, 2023). In contrast, online and blended formats offer greater learner autonomy, instructional variety, and interactive tools, thereby better aligning with students’ needs for perceived control and task value, as posited by Pekrun’s (2006) Control-Value Theory.

Qualitative data further highlight the critical role of teacher feedback and task design in shaping students’ emotional experiences. Specifically, when feedback is absent or lacks constructive qualities, students may perceive their efforts as undervalued, leading to disengagement. Similarly, tasks that do not provide sufficient cognitive challenge diminish learners’ sense of control, thereby increasing vulnerability to boredom (Pawlak et al., 2020).

These results correspond with international research demonstrating that digital learning environments can enhance engagement through interactivity and personalized learning experiences (Kahn et al., 2017). However, the social dimension of learning should not be neglected; qualitative findings revealed that some students experienced feelings of social isolation during online instruction, which may provoke negative emotions and reduce engagement.

The study also confirms insights on Saudi Arabia’s ongoing digital transformation in education, underscoring that the transition to online platforms encompasses not only logistical but also emotional dimensions. This shift offers valuable opportunities to redesign instructional practices to foster enhanced affective engagement among learners.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study provides compelling evidence that instructional mode significantly influences boredom levels among Saudi EFL learners. Face-to-face classes were found to elicit higher boredom compared to online and blended formats, which were generally perceived as more engaging and flexible. Key contributing factors include teaching style, the quality and timeliness of feedback, and the variety and relevance of learning tasks.

To mitigate boredom and enhance emotional engagement in EFL classrooms, educators are encouraged to:

- Incorporate interactive digital tools (e.g., quizzes, videos, and discussion forums) to foster active participation.
- Provide timely, specific, and personalized feedback that acknowledges student effort and guides improvement.
- Design learning tasks that are both cognitively challenging and personally meaningful to students.
- Combine the flexibility of online learning with structured opportunities for social interaction and collaboration.

Future research could extend this work by examining longitudinal patterns of boredom across semesters or comparing experiences across academic disciplines. Suggested areas for further investigation include:

- Boredom experiences among Saudi EFL teachers and their potential impact on classroom dynamics.
- Coping strategies employed by both students and instructors to manage academic boredom.
- The influence of individual learning styles on boredom perceptions and engagement levels.
- The role of digital assessment tools in shaping learners’ emotional responses.
- Writing-specific boredom in EFL contexts and the efficacy of targeted pedagogical interventions.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of research on academic emotions in language learning and reinforces the importance of affective engagement in instructional design. It also supports Saudi Arabia's broader digital transformation agenda by highlighting the emotional benefits of integrating technology into language education.

Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the influence of instructional mode on boredom among Saudi EFL learners, several limitations should be acknowledged:

Sample scope: Although participants were drawn from four universities, the sample was limited to undergraduate learners enrolled in skills-based English courses. This may limit the generalizability of the findings, as students in content-based, elective, or graduate-level programs were not represented.

Self-report bias: Data collection relied primarily on self-reported questionnaires and interviews, which are inherently subject to biases such as social desirability, inaccurate recall, and subjective interpretation of emotional states.

Limited qualitative sample: While the mixed-methods design enhanced data triangulation, the qualitative phase involved a relatively small, convenience-based sample ($n = 20$). This may limit the depth, diversity, and transferability of the thematic insights generated.

Learner-centered focus: The study exclusively explored learners' perspectives, omitting instructors' views, which are essential for a more comprehensive understanding of classroom emotional dynamics. Future studies should consider incorporating teachers' experiences and perceptions to enrich the analysis.

Cross-sectional design: The research employed a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationship between instructional mode and boredom. Longitudinal or intervention-based studies are recommended to assess how boredom develops or changes over time.

Despite these limitations, the study makes a meaningful contribution to the growing body of research on academic emotions in second language acquisition. It highlights the need to address affective factors—particularly boredom—in the design and implementation of EFL instruction in digitally evolving educational contexts such as Saudi Arabia.

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