



INSIGHTS INTO CHANGING EMOTIONS IN ENGLISH ORAL COMMUNICATION FROM EFL STUDENTS' ACCOUNTS

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Abstract. In applied linguistics, the scope of emotion research has broadened from the simple linear cause and effect paradigm of anxiety to multiple facets of emotions and their interaction with various aspects of language learning. This paper is part of the study employing a qualitatively-driven mixed methods research design, including self-designed questionnaires, followed by semi-structured interviews and reflective journals. It explores tertiary EFL student's perceptions of their changing emotions in oral communication and the effects of emotions on their English speaking. The accounts collected from ten students from the qualitative phase, revealed the changing emotions experienced by the participants across the different contexts of language learning, including school, out-of-school, and tertiary contexts. The findings also show the rich sources of their emotions emerging from their social interaction with others, and the influences of emotions on their oral communication. The results also provide theoretical and practical implications for emotion research and pedagogies of EFL teaching and learning.

Keywords: language anxiety, changing emotions, oral communication, interaction

1. Introduction

Although a great deal of effort has been invested in language education as a result of the ambitious aims of the Vietnamese government to strengthen English language teaching and learning, most secondary school graduates still cannot use the English language they have studied for seven years or more for basic communication (Le, 2011; Le, 2007; To, 2010). One reason is that English language teaching methods continue to use traditional methods which prioritise learning about the written language rather than how to use it (Do & Cai, 2010; Le, 2000, 2002, November, 2011; Le & Barnard, 2009; Tomlinson & Bao, 2004). Although workshops have been held to introduce and popularise the concept of the communicative approach with Vietnamese language teachers and persuade them to apply the approach in the classroom, many English teachers at secondary schools do not wish to change (Pham, 2005). From

researchers' observations, Vietnamese teachers are reluctant to implement the communicative language teaching approach. In a case study exploring how teachers implemented the new communication-oriented English curriculum in a Vietnamese secondary school, Le and Barnard (2009) found that the teachers spent most of the lesson time explaining grammar rules in the students' first language and guiding their students in choral reading. They also emphasised the reproduction of knowledge rather than creating opportunities for students to use the target language for communication. These researchers have recognised that traditional pedagogies emphasising the mastery of grammar and vocabulary rather than communicative competence have failed to satisfy various communicative needs in an era of modernisation, industrialisation, integration and globalisation.

Although many factors have been identified as hindrances to students' language learning and use, the role of emotion in learning English and oral communication in Vietnam, potentially one of the causes, has not yet received serious attention, as in much Western English language teaching. The aim of this paper is to provide an insight into EFL students' perceptions of their changing emotions in language learning and use and the effects of emotions on their oral communication. Thus, the present study will contribute to enriching the literature of the field with a fuller picture of emotions which emerged from the learners' social interaction with others in a wide range of contexts in their long-lasting process of learning and using the English language.

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What emotions do Vietnamese EFL university students report experiencing when speaking English?
2. What are the sources of their emotions in oral communication?

2. Literature review

This section provides a review of the literature on the development of emotion research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) from a predominance of language anxiety to an expansion to other emotions in language learning. It then explores the role of emotion in Vietnamese communication.

2.1. *Language anxiety as a dominant emotion in SLA research*

Although emotions, first known in SLA as 'affect', have long attracted the attention of SLA researchers, SLA research on emotions is still in its infancy. The dominant emotion that has been paid great attention in the SLA field is anxiety. A great number of researchers in the field

have identified various sources of anxiety and the interaction of these sources in affecting English language communication. They have also recognised the negative influences of anxiety on the process of language learning in general and oral communication in particular in relation to learners' levels of language proficiency.

In examining language learners' anxiety, most research has framed the sources as cognitive and individualistic. They are mainly related to the learners, their personalities, and their beliefs about language learning. Although language anxiety research has been conducted in different contexts of language learning, researchers have linked anxiety to at least four most common sources including communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, self-perception of low language proficiency, and language testing (Ayuningtyas, Mauludin, & Prasetyo, 2022; Ewald, 2007; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Kitano, 2001; Ohata, 2005; Rantala & Greenier, 2020; Subasi, 2010; Woodrow, 2006; Yan & Horwitz, 2008; Young, 1991). Several of these researchers have also appointed learners' anxiety to other people, such as friends or peers and their parents or family, and particularly to their teachers (Lucas, Miraflores, & Go, 2011; Williams & Andrade, 2008; Yan & Horwitz, 2008; Young 1991). They have highlighted the teachers' attitude towards the learners' pronunciation and performance, characteristics, manner of error correction, and teaching strategies as contributing to their stress. Such sources as fear of negative evaluation, competitive situations in social interaction, and social judgments by others in oral participation could be seen as potentially social but these researchers did not theorise them as social. In addition, cultural factors are considered as sources of language learners' anxiety by a few researchers. One of the Japanese participants in Ohata's (2005) study of Japanese ESL learners' perspectives of the influence of Japanese cultural norms on the nature of language anxiety reported that his culturally fixed beliefs about learning prevented him from asking the teacher or his peers to explain the topic again when everyone in the class seemed to understand it because of the fear of "break[ing] the class atmosphere and stick[ing] out from others" (p. 11).

In the context of Vietnam, a study on the development of foreign language anxiety (FLA) among Vietnamese non-English major students has been conducted by Tran, Baldauf, and Moni (2013). The students' FLA was found to be affected by four major factors consisting of pedagogy, assessment, student-teacher relationships and curriculum structure. Though FLA can be a reason for the students not to continue learning the language, their awareness of the importance of learning English for their future job has changed their motivation from intrinsic to extrinsic. This study offers evidence of growing interest in emotion in the Vietnamese context; however, it links to a more traditional view of anxiety. This paper may contribute to broadening the literature in SLA on the role of emotion in language learning and use in the Vietnamese context.

2.2. *Emotions other than anxiety*

Because of the prevalence of language anxiety research in the literature on emotions, Weiner (2007) claims that researchers having narrowly focused their studies on examining language anxiety have overlooked other emotions. Imai's (2010) study has made a great contribution to opening the theoretical door to the existence of a range of emotions in language learning as social participation. In recent research on affect in SLA, Bown and White (2010) have proposed an approach to understanding the learners' emotional reactions and their strategies to cope with those reactions through a self-regulatory framework. Conducting case studies with three university students in an individualized instruction programme, these researchers found that the students experienced a range of emotions in the language course, including more negative emotions such as frustration, shame, anxiety, and despair than positive ones such as enjoyment, hope and pride. These negative emotions had powerful impacts that "cancel[ed] out any ability to focus on the language, to remember target language forms or to process the language in productive ways" (Bown & White, 2010, p. 441). The study showed that the students' emotions emerged and changed according to particular settings and learning opportunities. These recent studies have contributed to our understanding of the existence of a range of emotions including both positive and negative ones simultaneously in the process of language learning and language learning as participation.

2.3. *The role of emotion in Vietnamese communication*

Throughout Western history, emotion has been thought to be in conflict with reason. According to Socrates, who considered emotion a weakness that needed to be controlled, emotion was seen as a threat to reason and a danger to philosophy and philosophers (Solomon, 2010). Moreover, a traditional linguistic view has regarded emotion as subjective and non-scientific (Kębłowska, 2012) and has dismissed the importance of emotion in favour of cognitive, behavioural paradigms (Swain, 2013). As a result, emotion has been placed in an inferior position by Western linguists.

In Vietnam traditionally, by contrast, emotion may be placed in a higher position than reasoning in the culture of communication (Pham, 2018). Vietnamese people tend to see themselves as controlled by emotion when they try to solve a problem or make a decision. There is a popular belief that when two people are in conflict and even take each other to court, they still believe in a Vietnamese saying that *Bên ngoài là lí, bên trong là tình* (literally, *outside is reason, but inside is emotion*). This means that people rely on their emotion to behave appropriately in interaction with others. Such observations are an indication that emotion has been recognized as a legitimate part of thinking and problem solving in Vietnam and needs a further investigation.

3. Research Methodology

This section will provide a rationale for the research design, describe the research participants, data collection tools and discuss the process of data analysis for this paper.

3.1. Research design

With the aim of investigating and providing insights into Vietnamese EFL students' changing emotions in their English oral communication, the current study, part of a larger research employing a qualitatively-driven mixed methods research design, fits in a qualitative approach, including semi-structured interviews and reflective journals. The aim of the individual interviews is to hear the participants' own views on how they describe the range of emotions accompanying their English speaking and how those emotions have influenced their language learning as participation since their first experiences speaking English. Moreover, the participants can reflect better on the incidents that have recently happened to them. Thus, their reflective journals contribute to completing the whole picture of their perceptions of the changing emotions and the role emotions play in their oral communication.

3.2. Research participants

The research was conducted with ten participants in the final year of their Bachelor of Arts Programme of the English faculty at a university in Vietnam. They were recruited from questionnaire participants who volunteered to further participate in individual interviews and reflective journals. These students have had about 10 years of English learning experience. They started learning English as a compulsory subject from grade 3, passed the university entrance exam and became English majors. At the time of data collection, they had been studying English at university for almost 3 years and would become translators or interpreters after graduation. This group of research participants were selected with the desire to eliminate the speakers' limited language ability as a major hindrance to their communication as generally believed. Moreover, the experience of learning and using English inside and outside the classroom of this group may provide a more complete picture of the diversity and changing of emotions in different communication contexts and different interlocutors.

3.3. Data collection tools

3.3.1. Interview

The individual interview is a primary data collection tool of the study. Each participant was interviewed twice in the study. The first interviews occurred after the questionnaire was completed and before the first reflective journals were written or recorded. The second interviews were conducted after the last entry of reflective journals. The main focus of the first

interview was to elicit the students' perceptions of the sources of the emotions experienced in English language communication. The second interview was carried out to request the participants clarify or elaborate on the information from the first interviews and in their reflective journals. The interviews were arranged at a time that was convenient for the participants and were recorded with their permission. Vietnamese was the language used by every participant in the interviews.

3.3.2. *Reflective Journal*

A focus on emotions in immediate communicative events allowed me to build a picture of participants' immediate emotional reactions in their oral communication rather than through their memory over time. Reflective journals fit this research design. The participants were asked to keep at least one reflective journal per week for six weeks, focusing on their emotions when speaking English. This source of data provided clues to possible interpretations of the participants' immediate emotions and helped gain greater depth of knowledge about their emotions over time (Jacelon & Imperio, 2005).

The participants were invited to either use their cell phones to record their reflections or write each reflection in their computer and email them to the researcher. The journal prompts were delivered to each participant via email or as hard copy after the first interview. They were encouraged to send the researcher their entry at the end of the day after they finished one.

3.4. *Data Analysis*

The qualitative data from the interviews and reflective journals were analysed simultaneously with the process of data collection. The researcher first followed a recursive process, that is the *notice, collect, think* process in a non-linear way (Seidel, 1998, p. 2) because it enabled her to go through the process, review, rethink and refine. The researcher reflected upon the data, added notes, comments and insights, and looked for emerging themes (Richards, 2003). After finishing the process of data collection, the recorded interviews and reflective journals were transcribed verbatim. Then six steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) were adopted to guide qualitative data analysis in this study. These steps involved transcribing, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas, producing the initial codes from the data, and combining codes to form themes. Finally, a story focusing on the students' changing emotions in their journey of learning and speaking English at school, university and out-of-classroom contexts was created.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings are based on ten students' interviews and reflective journals. These two data sources indicate that the students' emotions changed in different settings where they learned and used the English language.

Learning English at primary and secondary schools

Most of the participants admitted that they experienced an uncertainty and negativity when they began to learn English as a compulsory subject at school due to a lack of guidance from their teachers.

S10 specified, "at that time, we didn't know anything. We considered English as normal as any other subjects. We repeated and jotted down whatever words the teacher told us. No one showed us how to learn English effectively" (S10, Interview 1).

Describing her English learning experience at primary school, S5 noted her lack of interest linked with an almost mechanical approach to learning.

What we learned for three years at primary school was some vocabulary such as *apple, orange, banana*, and some other simple words. Our English classes were often observed by other teachers. Thus, our teacher often repeated what she had taught in the previous lessons. We had already known the answers to all of her questions. So there was nothing interesting. What I can remember about learning English then is we were given a kind of fruit as a prize when we could pronounce the name of the fruit correctly". (S5, Interview 1 & 2)

Similar to S5, S1 revealed her negativity: "After three years learning English at primary school, I still did not know anything about English" (S1, Interview 1).

With the same uncertainty about the language, S2 explained:

In grade 6, when I started learning English everything seemed to be very vague. I learned it without any application or purpose. Generally speaking, I was unable to "absorb" any English in Grade 6. I was one of the weakest students in terms of English in my class then. (S2, Interview 1)

In addition, the participants still reported negativity when they learned English at secondary school. S3's disappointment was apparent in her description of her English class:

Although the structure of a lesson in an English textbook was composed of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, our teacher omitted speaking, listening and writing. She only picked up reading, though very superficially. She often asked us if there was any

new vocabulary in the text. When we pointed the words out, she gave us their meanings in Vietnamese without any further explanation. She mainly focused on grammar points. All of her teaching and explanations were carried out in Vietnamese and we also answered her questions in Vietnamese. She never paid attention to speaking. (S3, Interview 1)

Despite some negative feelings the participants experienced, some of them shared their passion for English and were decisive to learn more outside the classroom.

S1 explained her story of when her strength in English was recognised and how she fell in love with the language.

I thought I was very weak at English. So during the summer vacation of grade 8, my parents hired a final-year EFL student, like me now, to tutor me. She encouraged me by saying, "When I was at your age, I was much weaker than you. But now I can become your teacher. If you try your best, I believe that you'll be successful." I made gradual improvement in English after being taught by her and perhaps that began to shape my love for English. One year later, I attended an English class at a foreign language centre where I was taught by a recently-graduated teacher who knew everything and could express herself in English very fluently. I enjoyed learning with her and gradually saw my progress. Within two years I was able to finish my English certificate – level C. (S1, Interview 1)

S2 reported her love for English turned up once she happened to hear an English song when she was in Grade 3. She explained:

My uncle used to listen to the music by Westlife [an Irish boy band]. I didn't know any English then, but I sang along and my incorrect pronunciation of some words in the song *My love* has accompanied me until the present time. Though now I know how to pronounce those words correctly, I still uttered similar sounds but not those exact words. It is due to this imitation that my listening skill has improved. (S2, Interview 1)

It was S2's passion for English that encouraged her to study harder and harder and made much progress. She proudly explained her achievement:

I was selected as the last of the ten winners in the oratory contest. Among the ten I was the only student who came from the outskirts of the city where English was very strange then. I was certainly not as good as my urban friends in terms of speaking. It was fortunate that I was taken as one of the ten key members of the English club and had many opportunities to speak to English speakers. I became an amateur tourist guide when I was in grade 9, and sometimes worked as an interpreter for volunteer doctors and

the Red Cross organization that had established a relationship with my school. (S2, Interview 1)

Although S2 came from a rural area where people are less likely to be provided favourable conditions to approach modern learning facilities, her achievement stimulated her to study hard to find a position for herself. She clarified:

We were just little girls then, so we were very envious. I was slightly discriminated against by my urban friends because of my village background. I had the feeling that I needed to prove that I would be able to speak English equally well as them in the long run. On the one hand, I felt inferior because I was not as good as others. On the other hand, my self – ego felt the need to prove that although I lived in a remote area, I could also speak English. The conflicts in my thinking pushed me forward, not preventing me. (S2, Interview 1)

Moreover, S2's determination was also expressed in the way she described her first experience being exposed to English:

At first, I spoke [in English] alone at home. I had a desire to speak and practise English. I spoke anywhere and any time when I was cleaning the floor, washing the dishes, or in the bathroom. I spoke so loudly that my mother asked me to stop because she was afraid that our neighbours might think that I had mental problems. I didn't mind. I was very happy when I was able to open my mouth to speak English. I knew that I made mistakes, but I didn't care. I spoke out what I thought in my mind. What I did was connecting words together and producing the language to convey my message. I wasn't worried about grammatical mistakes, sentence structures or anything else. (S2, Interview 1)

In addition to her passion for English and her determination to learn and use the language, S2 admitted that her carefree approach to making mistakes also contributed to her success in speaking English.

Exposure to English inside the classroom at university

In the classroom contexts at tertiary level, the students reported constantly interacting with their teachers and peers in their process of learning English. Different emotions were generated by the way the teachers and friends treated them in particular situations.

The transition from secondary schools to the university setting drove the students to experience mainly anxiety when they were in interaction with their lecturers.

S1 stated, "at university, when the lecturers talked and asked me questions in English, I felt a bit scared and anxious" (S1, Interview 1).

Similarly, S6 told of her anxiety in the first interview:

I felt very anxious for the first few days. I was scared of being looked at by my teachers. Also, I was afraid that they wouldn't understand what I said. I was so worried that I didn't say anything. I always hid myself whenever I saw them. (S6, Interview 1)

S5 attributed her anxiety to the distance between teachers and students. She explained:

At upper secondary school, an English teacher taught us for the whole year, so we had a great deal of time - from four to five periods per week - to work with the teacher. At university, we meet with each teacher once a week, for a shorter time - two periods. Moreover, a class is so crowded and the teachers have to teach so many classes that they can't remember who is who. Thus, there is hardly a closeness between teachers and students at university. Upper secondary teachers are very close to students, so we feel less anxious. (S5, Interview 2)

However, the students' anxiety would be replaced by excitement and enjoyment due to their teachers' friendliness and encouragement. S3 reflected her changing emotions in a journal:

Today my teacher was so happy and friendly. She encouraged us to learn with her sweet words and a lot of smiles. I felt eager to come up with some interesting ideas and felt at ease to contribute to the lesson several times. I liked the way the teacher gave compliments and her smiling. I had more courage and happiness to contribute in the class and I spoke quite loudly, clearly and exactly. (S3, Reflection 6)

Similarly, S5, in her fifth reflection, reported comfort associated with her "friendly" teacher. She wrote:

The teacher was very cheerful and flexible. She always encouraged us to raise our ideas without criticising the mistakes. All ideas were welcomed. Her gentle smile always spread while she was listening to students' answers. She also asked more questions in a gentle way to help us express all we thought about the problem. Her teaching style made me feel comfortable when studying as well as offering the ideas. Therefore, I felt free to speak and wanted to speak more in her class. (S5, Reflection 5)

The teachers' criticism in the class, by contrast, generated negative influences on the students' emotions and hence their performance as well. S1 showed a sense of resentment in her voice when she discussed her teacher's criticism during a presentation, even though it occurred one year earlier. After pronouncing the word *analysis* incorrectly, whenever she made the same mistake, the teacher shouted from the back of the class to correct her immediately, which S1 struggled to immediately correct. "This made me lose confidence and also lose face," she stated.

S1 reported feeling so “disappointed and angry” that she could not speak as well as usual and omitted several parts from her script in order to finish her presentation as soon as possible. She emphasised that this experience exerted negative influences not only on her English speaking at that time but also on later events. S1 said that she tended to avoid speaking in other classes because she was afraid that other teachers might treat her in the same way.

S3 shared her bitterness at receiving criticism from her teacher when she incorrectly pronounced a word.

Unfortunately, my teacher asked some students a question but they couldn’t answer it. She called me suddenly. I was always afraid of being suddenly called. I could answer this question but I made a mistake in pronouncing the word *pearl*. I knew this word but I by chance pronounced it in a wrong way. My teacher uttered, “I’m so shocked at your pronunciation. I can never imagine you don’t know this word”. She spoke in a negative way that made me feel discouraged. I was so sad that I couldn’t think of any other ideas for the next questions. I was obsessed by that mistake and my teacher’s words. I felt at a loss speaking English then. (S3, Interview 2)

In S10’s case, the teacher’s criticism upset her so much that she lost her courage to volunteer her ideas even though the answers were already given in the textbook (S10, Reflection 1).

Emotional experiences in interaction with highly proficient students

Anxiety was mainly reported by most of the participants when they worked in pairs or groups with highly proficient students. S4 stated:

I felt anxious when working in a discussion group with good students. I tended to agree with all of their opinions. Although I had had my opinions, I was afraid that I didn’t speak English correctly, so I didn’t dare to say them out. We took their opinions as the whole group’s. We’d rather not argue against them.” (S4, Interview 1).

In our second interview, S4 elaborated on how anxious she felt when speaking to highly proficient students.

I think teachers may tolerate the mistakes we make, but not our friends. They are so good and still young. They are not like our teachers who have the obligation to listen to us and correct our mistakes. They [students] mainly evaluate our way of speaking when we communicate with them. Therefore, if we don’t speak well, they’ll have a different view on us. (S4, Interview 2)

However, several of them acknowledged that they shifted their emotions from anxiety to enjoyment when they could learn from better students. S5 told of the advantages she could take from talking to highly proficient students.

They [Good students] used up the discussion time in the group very effectively. Sometimes they encouraged me and created favourable conditions for me to speak. I could think of many ideas to answer their questions and speak better. I tried my best to understand them and make them understand me. One day, we had a speaking period with the topic 'family'. The teacher asked us to go around the classroom to interview our classmates. After collecting the information I only remembered or was impressed by the conversations with the highly proficient students because I thought carefully and tried to understand them and talk to them in such a way that they could understand me. I was interested in talking to them so I could remember. (S5, Interview 2)

Exposure to English outside the classroom

In order to seek opportunities to practise speaking more, these participants got out of the classroom to meet foreigners at tourist spots and join English speaking clubs. They reported experiencing changing emotions from scare to excitement and occasionally frustration. S4 and S3 clarified in our interviews:

At first, I felt scared when seeing English speakers. After the first semester of the first year, whenever I saw them I always rushed forward to talk to them. I didn't know why I suddenly felt excited and interested in talking to them. (S4, Interview 2)

My friends and I sometimes went to Trang Tien Bridge [where tourists often walk] or the park to meet and talk to English speaking tourists. Unfortunately, some of them were not very friendly. We could exchange some simple information about our names and nationality, and then said goodbye. (S3, Interview 1)

Joining English speaking clubs and chat rooms

S7 expressed his enjoyment and comfort speaking English in an English club he created with his friends as follows:

Today I had a talk with my friends in our English club. We intended to meet to discuss our presentation for tomorrow only. But after our discussion, we all felt excited at speaking English. So we started talking. Each of us presented the topic of our interest. Everyone spoke at ease. Perhaps like my friends, I didn't have any pressure, so I could speak very fluently and comfortably. (S7, Reflection 6)

S2, who had many opportunities to use English after she won a prize in an oratory contest, also acknowledged her feelings of enjoyment in joining an English club. S2 stated:

I started joining an English club established by people who needed to practise English for IELTS exams. We met with each other once a week to talk [speak English] over a cup of coffee. We all actively took part in the discussions. They were so interesting that I hardly missed any. Since then, I gradually participated in more social activities and practised speaking English more. (S2, interview 1)

In summary, the findings from the qualitative data show that the students reported experiencing a wide range of emotions and a picture of change throughout their journey of English learning and use.

5. Discussion

The data of this study shows how emotions were generated and changed over time in relation to the nature of examination-oriented language learning and teaching, and the sense of belonging, of value and of acceptance in the relational context with teachers, peers and English speakers.

The participants reported negative emotions towards traditional English study at school, which may be linked to their perceptions of English as a school subject rather than a world of social engagement. For most of the participants, English was perceived as a subject to learn that involved memorization of grammar rules, preparation for examinations and being tested, which was not different from learning other subjects. There was minimal interaction or communication between teachers and students despite the national directive to use communicative language teaching techniques in Vietnamese schools. The way English has been traditionally taught, involving learning skills, grammar points, and a system of rules, has been widely criticised in favour of communicative language learning approaches (Le, 2011; Le & Barnard, 2009; Tomlinson & Bao, 2004). In second language teaching circles, learning an additional language should be different from learning other subjects because of its social nature and cultural factors in relation to learners' self-image, identity, and attitudes toward the language (Dörnyei, 2005; Williams, 1994; Yoon, 2008). The social nature of the study participants not only as language learners but also as real persons in the classroom contexts (Ushioda, 2009) was not taken into consideration in these traditional classrooms, which may have negatively affected their language learning and generated negative emotions.

The relational context with teachers and peers led to a fluctuation of emotions – a tension between exclusion and inclusion. The feeling of anxiety, for example, was closely linked with

the students' threatened sense of belonging. Originating from the countryside with a relative lack of resources and relatively lower standards of living than urban areas, they at first did not feel they belonged to the university community. In those rural areas, they had little exposure to English outside of school. Anxiety was reported along with their transition to a new environment with new and strange teachers and friends whom they considered completely different from their teachers and friends at school. Some reported feeling "scared" when asked questions and looked at by their university teachers.

Throughout the university years, the students' emotions regarding English altered along with a change in their sense of value in the classroom context along with their teachers' criticism and encouragement. Half of the students reported stress, frustration and resentment arising from feeling inadequate and unworthy in the group they belonged to, particularly one teacher's criticism in front of the class, which threatened S3's sense of value and consequently paralysed her speaking ability at the time. By contrast, teachers' recognition and encouragement changed the students' emotion to a positive one. S3's emotions, for example, changed from anxiety to happiness, excitement and comfort associated with the teacher's compliments and acceptance. Overall, teachers' smiles, encouragement, tolerance of students' mistakes and welcoming their ideas brought about a sense of value and belonging, which caused them to become more engaged in the university-based English world.

English clubs and work as tour guides were other contexts with purposeful communicative events in which the students interacted with both English speakers and peers. These settings led to a range of emotions associated with their sense of acceptance, and belonging in interaction with others. To a large extent, emotion in these contexts confirms the findings of previous studies (e.g., Bown & White, 2010; Imai, 2010). That is, emotion, for many language learners, is not internally fixed, but is closely tied to shifting relational contexts over time.

To this point, the interpretation of the relationship of the participants' emotion and language learning apparently aligns with the earlier research in looking at the positive and negative effects of emotion on language learning and use. Moreover, the current study is also supported by previous researchers (Tran et al., 2013; Williams & Andrade, 2008; Yan & Horwitz, 2008; Young, 1991) who highlight the teachers' attitude towards the learners' pronunciation and performance, characteristics, and manner of error correction as contributing to their stress. However, this study provides a deeper understanding of the dynamic relationship between the participants' emotions and their sense of value and face in changing contexts. Importantly, like Bown and White's (2010) study found, it shows how emotion is not solely a fixed cognitive trait but integral to relational contexts.

6. Conclusions

The discussion of the key findings in this paper has indicated that in the shifting contexts of the participants' journey of language learning, a number of factors figured importantly in their emotion regarding the English language and learning. Their shifting emotions were associated with their sense of belonging and acceptance in seeking opportunities to practise English and affirm their speaking ability. The relationship between teachers, students and peers in the classroom and the importance of teachers' and peers' favourable responses may have encouraged them to perform better and participate more in a broader English speaking world and to confirm their position as competent English learners and English users.

This study has drawn on several applied linguists' attention to emotions from social, cultural and relational perspectives (Bown & White, 2010; Imai, 2010; Swain, 2013; Ushioda, 2009). It has contributed to providing an understanding of the complexity and dynamism of emotion in changing relational contexts throughout the participants' process of language learning and language use.

Additionally, it has broadened current investigations of the role of emotion in EFL in general and in oral communication in particular. It is important for language teachers and educators to recognize the importance of emotion and pay more attention to the emotional aspects of language learning to effectively and consistently foster learning in the long and short term. Hopefully, the current study can become a catalyst to invite further discussions on important factors as mediators of emotions which mediate language learning, which then contributes to effective learning.

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Appendixes

Interview schedule

Interview 1:

Focus: The role of emotions in EFL students' oral communication.

(Topics: Previous learning and speaking experiences, sources of anxiety / tension, kinds of emotion, cognition, social interactions, social influences, teachers, parents, peers, positive and negative feelings and experiences of English speaking, negative evaluation, self-perceived evaluation, inside and outside classroom communication, and strategies to improve English speaking skill)

- Talk about your English learning background.
- Talk about your early experiences speaking English.
- How do you feel about speaking English?

- As a final-year student, you have to make a lot of presentations in English. Are you aware of any difficulties or anxiety among your classmates or yourself when giving presentations? Could you give me some examples? What do you do?
- What are the tensions you feel before you speak? (e.g. composing sentences, figuring out what you want to say)
- Do you have any pressures in speaking English (from parents / teachers / classmates)? How do you feel if other students speak English better than you do?
- Do your feelings change according to the person you are talking to (e.g. teacher, close / casual friend, better / worse speaker of English)? How do they influence your oral communication?
- Was there a time when negative emotions affected your oral communication? Could you describe that incident? (What was in your mind? What stopped you? What happened then? What did you do afterwards? Were you concerned about what people thought about you?)
- Was there a time when positive emotions affected your oral communication? Could you describe it?
- How did it affect your oral communication in the short term and long term?
- Give an example of a time when you did very well at speaking English. What contributed to the success?
- How did you feel after that? How did that feeling relate to your oral communication?
- Do you have chance to speak English outside the class? (with friends / teachers / foreigners). Do you have more or less tension than speaking English in the class?
- I myself, as well as other EFL learners, experience a lot of tension and anxiety in speaking English. Could you share with us how you manage to deal with your negative emotions?
- What recommendations could you make to help EFL learners?

Interview 2:

Focus: A more in-depth picture of the role of emotions in EFL students' oral communication

- Explore in more depth or elaborate on points emerging from the first interviews or noticed from the reflective journals to have a more in-depth picture. (In your journal, you mentioned Please tell me more about / Could you explain?)
- General questions:
 - How do you feel about English / speaking English?
 - Is there any change?

- What would you recommend EFL learners to do to deal with negative emotions that hinder their oral communication?

Reflective journal guidelines

My research aims to investigate the role emotions play in EFL teachers' and students' oral communication.

Please think about an instance of speaking English on a day this week. It is not necessary to be at the same time every week, just whenever something comes up. I would like you to focus on your feelings when speaking English. Alternatively, if you do not experience emotions that you can reflect on, but something that reminds you of previous relevant experiences, you can add more information for clarification.

You could either use your cell phone to record your reflections or write each reflection in your computer. However, please explain why you prefer to do oral or written form.

Here are some suggestions on what you will record or write:

- What happened? Where, when, and with whom were you speaking English?
- How were you feeling at the time of speaking?
- How did your emotions influence your speaking?
- How did they affect your later communication?
- How did you feel when you spoke English well / not very well?
- What did you do to cope with the feelings that hindered your speaking?

Please send me your recording or your written entry at the end of the day through email on ptnguyenai@hueuni.edu.vn

Thank you for your reflections!