

# Understanding Student-Teacher Emotions in Language Education: An Extramural English Intervention

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Received: September 16, 2025

Accepted: December 18, 2025

Online Published: March 31, 2026

doi:10.5430/wjel.v16n4p196

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v16n4p196>

## Abstract

Emotions play a critical role in language education, influencing both student engagement and teaching efficacy. The emotions of the student and teacher, as well as the emotional dynamics between them, are critical in bringing learning outcomes, particularly in an L2 situation. This study investigates the efficiency of a teacher-assisted extramural English (EE) course in creating a positive emotional environment for the students, by exploring the affective factors contributing to this and the emotional dynamics between students and teachers. The researcher conducted a five-week EE course on postgraduate students and used qualitative analysis to evaluate the course effects on students' emotions using NVivo software, and a mixed analysis for language skills. Data were collected using teacher observation, student feedback and student interviews conducted at the end of the course. The results highlighted two themes emphasising the emotional and relational aspects of the course and the affective impact of the course design and pedagogy on the students. The study shows how positive emotional interactions between students and teachers foster L2 learning and other learner variables. The findings demonstrate that language learning is not just a cognitive factor but is deeply interlinked with affective factors.

**Keywords:** Student engagement, Learner-centred method, ELT, Behavioural factor, Extramural English

## 1. Introduction

Language teaching and learning extend beyond memorising grammar rules and vocabulary to include cognitive, emotional and social dimensions. All of this contributes to the making of learners' outcomes and experiences. The studies on the emotional dimension emphasise the importance of the factor in influencing the second language acquisition of an individual (Dewaele, 2015; Swain, 2013). The emotions of teachers and students play a pivotal role in shaping the classroom experiences. It contributes to ensuring students' engagement and motivation, ultimately resulting in students' language learning (Wu & Kabilan, 2025). Though emotions in language learning have been in discussion for a few decades, the emotional significance of a teacher's work is often ignored (Hargreaves, 1998; Nath & Pandey, 2025; Purper et al., 2023). This article explores the intricate relationship between student-teacher emotions in an Extramural English (EE) language learning space, using the theory of self-determination, social cognitive theory and emotional labour.

EE refers to learning English outside formal educational settings or classrooms (Sundqvist, 2009). Studies on EE have established the importance of creating an affinity space for the participants that ensures learners' willingness to communicate in the target language (Han, 2022). One of the important principles of an affinity space is that the participants, despite their differences in age, class, religion or social position, share the same status in the affinity community (Gee, 2017). This challenges the position of a traditional teacher in an EE course and demands a careful reworking of the idea of a teacher in an EE interventional space. However, the role of a teacher in an EE course is instrumental and has manifested its benefits over EE engagement without a teacher's assistance (Liu et al., 2024). This suggests that the teacher's role should be carefully executed to prevent it from hindering the full participation of the students. Though studies have explored the linguistic, affective and cognitive merits of EE, the emotional student-teacher dynamics of EE remain underexplored. This study seeks to explore this gap by addressing the emotional experiences of students and teachers in the EE interventional course conducted by the researcher. It will address the following question:

Q1. What are the factors influencing the emotional and affective state of participants in a teacher-assisted EE course?

Q2. How are these factors connected to building the emotional dynamics between students and teachers?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Emotion in Language Learning

Studies on emotion in language learning date back to the 1970s, with hundreds of studies after that (Shao et al., 2019). Emotions play an influential role that could support and undermine the learning process. Research identifies 'interest, curiosity, wonder, passion, creativity, engagement and joy' as positive emotions and 'anxiety, stress, sadness, disinterest, disengagement, worry and fear' as negative emotions (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). Previous research has used a range of terms to address the role of emotions in SLA, including "attitudes,

motivation, personality, self-efficacy, affect, interests, goal orientations, beliefs, cognitive styles, and learning strategies” (Shao et al., 2019). Furthermore, anxiety and enjoyment were identified by Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014) as the two significant emotions related to L2 learning (Sung, 2024). Another determining factor of learning is the student-teacher relationship. It is defined as “the primary method through which teachers and students share information, ideas, and emotions in the classroom” and has a significant positive effect on students’ self-efficacy (An et al., 2024).

Emotional support provided by teachers is another significant factor in determining students’ language learning. Expressing genuine interest and concern in students’ language learning through collecting feedback and suggestions, and inquiring about their feelings, is one way to do this (Gkonou & Miller, 2019; Ruzek et al., 2016). A study conducted by Ruzek et al. (2016) on adolescent students confirmed that they were more engaged in classrooms when teachers gave them higher emotional support. The students also reported feeling “more motivated toward competence in such classrooms” (Ruzek et al., 2016). The study also suggests that providing more opportunities for the students to act autonomously and build positive peer relations through emotionally supportive classrooms contributes to improving students’ motivation and behavioural engagement. Another study conducted by Sampson (2020) found that the emotions of students can be associated with their “perceptions of classroom activities, other students and the language teacher” (Sung, 2024). Teaching is an emotional practice and a form of emotional labour (Hargreaves, 1998; Miller & Gkonou, 2018). The process of teaching and learning requires emotional understanding, underlining the interrelation between emotions and the teaching and learning of L2 (Saito et al., 2018). The emotional connection between students and teachers benefits students’ L2 acquisition and contributes to their emotional and social growth (An et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2023).

### 2.2 EE Language Learning and Emotions

EE language learning is a concept developed to include the learning of English that happens outside of a formal classroom setting (Sundqvist, 2009). It includes both intentional and accidental learning of English (Sundqvist & Sylván, 2016). Studies have established the role of EE in improving the overall language proficiency of the students, particularly their vocabulary, grammar, listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Henry et al., 2018; Holth, 2024; Kaatari et al., 2023; Schurz & Coumel, 2023; Sundqvist, 2009; Thi & Thinh, 2023). People who engage in EE activities more have shown better communicative skills in English (Sylván & Sundqvist, 2012). Moreover, the emotional benefits of EE include enhancing the affective factors of students by improving their motivation and reducing anxiety (Han, 2022). The recent trend in EE includes experimental research with EE courses and their effect on language learning and affective factors (Ebadi et al., 2023; Han, 2022; Liu et al., 2024).

Studies have proved that the EE courses improve the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of students to learn and engage with the language and the related activities (Liu et al., 2024). It also improves the Willingness to Communicate (WTC) of a person in English by providing them with topics that are relatable and a non-judgmental atmosphere (Han, 2022; Liu et al., 2024). Furthermore, the EE courses are based on the interests of the learners, allowing them the liberty to choose their topics and learning strategies. This provides them autonomy, improving their confidence and increasing student involvement in the course (Han, 2022). Additionally, the learning environment built on the principles of affinity space provides them a sense of security and equality and acts as a haven to experiment with their language (Han, 2022). The role of teachers in the EE course was recognised by Liu et al. (2024) and identified its benefits over the EE course without teacher intervention through a comparative analysis. The study shows that the EE engagement and WTC of students in the EE course with teacher assistance were much higher than in the course without it (Liu et al., 2024). Similarly, the emotions of the teacher also play a significant role in influencing students’ L2 learning. Studies show that careful management of emotions and their execution by teachers can bring many desirable outcomes in language learning (Song, 2018).

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The study utilises the theory of self-determination (SDT), social cognitive theory and emotional labour to analyse the findings and provide insights into the emotional dimension of an EE course. The SDT emphasises the importance of three basic psychological needs that drive human motivation: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000). When the learners are given the freedom to choose the topic, activities and make other decisions regarding their language learning, they feel more control over their studies, motivating them to perform better. The study uses this theory to design the course and explain the nuances of emotional and performance advantages brought by the intervention. Meanwhile, the social cognitive theory tries to explain human emotions as a combination of personal factors, behaviours and environmental influences (Bandura, 2001). It integrates social, cognitive and emotional factors to understand human behaviours. This study uses three major constructs of this theory to understand the EE course and its emotional dimensions better: self-efficacy, observational learning and reciprocal determinism. The learners’ beliefs about their ability to succeed in their learning tasks constitute their self-efficacy. The course ensures this by providing them with better opportunities to communicate in English in a non-judgmental and friendly atmosphere where the learners have the opportunity to make their own rules. It also provides a safe platform for observational learning with its authentic audio-visual materials, along with mutual learning from peers and teachers. The interconnection between a person's behaviour, personal factors, and external environment indicates reciprocal determinism. The study uses this concept to analyse the interrelation between how the teachers' support and guidance improve student motivation and engagement, and how the students' suggestions influence the instructional strategies. Finally, the concept of emotional labour in this study applies to the emotional or affective responsibilities of the teachers towards the students in their EE environment. The construct was originally coined by Hochschild (1979) to describe the management of public display of observable bodily and facial emotions. This theory is used in the study to help the teacher regulate their negative emotions to build a positive and inviting environment

for the students. The teachers' ability to constantly support and encourage the students by displaying empathy or suppressing feelings is necessary to establish students' trust and to overcome their fears and anxiety (Benesch, 2017; Hochschild, 1979, 2012).

#### **4. Methodology**

##### *4.1 The EE Course*

An EE course for five weeks, with ten discussion sessions, was designed by the researcher following the rules of an affinity space (Gee, 2005, 2017). The central theme of the course was designed based on the interests of the people, collected from them through personal interactions before the course. The primary aim of the course was to improve the communicative skills of the students. To achieve this, the researcher focused on the subskills of speaking as the outcomes of each discussion session. The syllabus and outcomes for the entire course were shared initially with the students, enabling them to focus on the expected skills while engaging in the EE activities. The materials for each session, along with additional support materials, were also shared with the students before each session to ensure the smooth conduct of discussions. The discussion sessions were divided into four stages: 1) Introduction/Material reviewing, 2) Imitating scripted conversation, 3) Generating using AI prompts, and 4) Practising unscripted conversation. Furthermore, a mini-quiz was shared at the end of each session to analyse students' understanding of the concept and the impact of the course on their language (Appendix A). Additionally, feedback was also collected from the students after each session to know their opinions and suggestions about the course. This was further reviewed by the researcher to take necessary actions for the next session, allowing flexibility in the course structure. A student interview was also conducted at the end of the course to understand students' views on the course and its effects on their emotional and language variables. The participant-selected materials and their inevitable involvement throughout the course design, through feedback and suggestions, aimed flexibility and comfort during learning.

##### *4.2 Participants*

The study used a purposive sampling method to select first-year post-graduate students in English Literature from a National Institute in India. The course was publicised through the section heads, and interested students were asked to attend the Cambridge B2 proficiency tests. The students who fell below the B2 proficiency levels were taken as participants for the study. 18 students were selected, of whom 17 participants (3 boys and 14 girls) completed the course. The participants belonged to the age group of 21-23 with different native languages: Tamil (n=1), Malayalam (n=15) and Assamese (n=1). One student withdrew prior to the intervention due to time constraints. The students were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation. Furthermore, informed consent was also collected from all the participants before the beginning of data collection.

##### *4.3 Instruments Used*

The study used qualitative analysis to evaluate the effects of the course on the emotional dimension between students and teachers, and how it complements the same for better language production. This was done by analysing the student engagement and the effects of the course using teacher observations, student feedback and student interviews conducted at the end of the course. The teacher's observation notes tracked a typical 60-minute session, addressing the four stages with a timestamp (Table 4). It included descriptive notes, reflective notes and additional notes to capture session development, group progress, and teacher reflections. Feedback from the students was collected at the end of each session through private or group chats on WhatsApp. The students were encouraged to send their reflections on the sessions, preferably the same day, to mitigate recall bias. Similarly, the post-intervention interviews followed the questionnaire designed by Han (2022). Additionally, to complement the qualitative findings on students' oral proficiency, a Cambridge B2 analysis of individual student performance in the initial and final sessions was conducted.

##### *4.4 Ethical Considerations*

The study chose several methods to ensure the ethical standards of the research. Permissions were collected from all participants before their involvement in the study. Participants were provided with awareness of the research purpose, the nature of the study and their right to withdraw at any stage of the research. The primary researcher occupied a dual role as the facilitator and lead analyst of the collected data. This was essential to capture the authentic emotional responses of the students, as it helped build rapport within the group of participants. The EE intervention necessitates the personal interest of each participant, and the role of the facilitator is more of a participant rather than that of a traditional teacher. However, this poses the risk of bias in confirmation and expectancy. To reduce this, the study implemented several 'trustworthiness' measures, including maintaining a reflexive journal and analytic triangulation. The reflexive journal documented the personal biases and emotions of the researcher, separating them from participants' data. A third party was employed for the analytic triangulation to code a portion of the data and ensure consistency of the themes. Similarly, two independent raters were appointed to score the speaking skills of the students. The process was blinded by anonymising the participants and providing the recording of both sessions (first and last) in randomised order.

The study met the academic and ethical standards of scholarly research following the Declaration of Helsinki, and was formally approved by the Authors' Institution. To ensure anonymity, all participants' names were replaced with alphabetic numerals immediately after the completion of data collection. The collected data are stored physically and digitally, in the Institute's restricted-access office and password-protected, encrypted university server, respectively. In accordance with the Institute's data retention policy, the stored data will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

4.5 Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected, including student feedback, teacher observation and student interviews, were analysed following a thematic approach using NVivo 15. The analysis followed a systematic process by inserting data, initial coding and generation of themes. The initial coding included reading the collected data and highlighting key phrases. The similar phrases were then grouped and refined into codes. These refined codes were further clustered to include in the overarching themes related to the research questions. To ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, analytical triangulation was employed by appointing an independent coder, unaware of the research hypothesis, to code the student feedback data. The independent coder, along with the researcher, then engaged in a collaborative decision-making process through a consensus-building model until reaching a 100 per cent agreement. This ensured that the codes and themes were grounded in participants’ original voice and not according to the researcher’s expectancy. Similarly, the collected data were verified by employing respondent validation by sharing the interview transcripts with participants to confirm that the data accurately reflected their perspectives. A ‘disagreement log’ was also used during the consensus session to keep track of the changes made. Additionally, the researcher used a reflective journal throughout the process of data collection and analysis. This was to document the researcher’s emotions and to separate them from the students’ reported experiences.

The quantitative data collected to evaluate the speaking skills of the students were rated by two independent reviewers through a blind rating process. To ensure the consistency of these independent ratings, a reliability test was conducted to calculate the inter-rater reliability using a two-way mixed Intraclass Correlation test using SPSS. A paired-sample *t*-test was also conducted between the average scores of the initial and final sessions using SPSS. This allowed the study to correlate the oral proficiency improvements with the emotional development of the students.

5. Results

The qualitative analysis of student engagement in the course using teacher observations, student feedback and student interviews generated codes and themes aligning with the research topic. This was generated using the NVivo application to ensure a systematic analysis of the obtained data. The results produce two themes highlighting the emotional impact of the EE course and the pedagogy: 1) Emotional and relational aspects of the EE course, and 2) Affective impact of the course design and pedagogy (Table 1).

Table 1. Themes and codes generated using NVivo

Themes	Codes
Emotional and relational aspects of the EE course	Affinity with the L2 learning environment Comfortable with making mistakes
Affective impact of the course design and pedagogy	Instructor support and guidance Improved student engagement Increased emotional investment Student-initiated suggestions Error-driven learning through assessment Improved L2 oral communication

Description: Table 1 represents the themes and their corresponding codes identified with the help of NVivo 15.

The quantitative data collected by the two raters on students’ oral proficiency scores were subjected to a reliability test to check the inter-rater reliability. The two-way mixed Intraclass Correlation test between the scores of the two raters for baseline (ICC = .948) and final session (ICC = .929) showed excellent reliability (Table 2). Moreover, the paired sample *t*-test of the average scores highlighted a significant increase in students’ speaking performance by 9.76 (SD = 1.64) points on a 20-point Cambridge B2 scale ( $t(16) = -24.401, p < .001$ ) (Table 3).

Table 2. Intraclass correlation coefficient

Session	n	Single Measures ICC	95% Confidence Interval		Sig.
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Session 1	17	.948	.862	.981	.000
Session 10	17	.929	.819	.974	.000

Description: Table 2 provides the inter-rater reliability of the speaking scores given by the two independent raters for sessions 1 and 10.

Table 3. Paired sample *t*-test

Variable	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	df	Sig.
Session 1- Session10	-9.76	1.64	-24.401	16	.000

Description: Table 3 shows the paired sample *t*-test results between session 1 and session 10.

6. Discussion

The role of emotion in L2 learning has been widely recognised as a crucial factor in determining student engagement, motivation and learning outcomes. This study analyses the emotional dynamics between the students and teachers, particularly in an EE environment. The results highlight how the learning environment, teacher influence and EE course with its student-chosen topics contribute to facilitating a better emotional experience for the students. To address the first research question on the factors influencing the emotional

and affective state of participants in a teacher-assisted EE course, the study generates two specific themes: ‘emotional and relational aspects of the EE course’, and ‘affective impact of the course design and pedagogy’. Moreover, the analysis suggests that these factors are associated with the teacher’s influence, which will answer the second research question. This section will have a detailed analysis of the themes and the constituting codes to understand their influence on facilitating better learning outcomes. It will further explain how these factors are related to the emotional dynamics between students and teachers in a teacher-assisted EE environment.

6.1 Emotional and Relational Aspects of the EE Course

This theme highlights how the designed course positively affects students’ emotions. It further analyses the influence of course strategies in developing the relational aspects by creating an affinity between the students and teachers in the EE environment. Table 4 provides a session-wise mapping of students’ emotional affordances along with the observed indicators.

Table 4. Emotional affordances across sessions

Session No	Activities employed	Target Skill	Language	Emotional Affordances	Observed Indicator
1	Role Play, Improvised Conversation, Conversation Cycle, Dialogue Writing	Initiating & Closing Conversation		Affinity Building inside respective groups,	Students engaged in intragroup conversations, discussing their favourite EE activities. Students shied away from the camera recording the sessions as they kept looking at it and laughing.
2	Read and Recreate, Improvised Conversation, Conversation Cycle, Guided Writing	Describing Experiences and Events		Identity Building, Sense-of-Belonging	Students showcased better engagement in group activities rather than individual tasks.
3	Finding Reason, Background Analysis, Discussion, Opinion Writing	Connecting Words, Expressing Cause and Effect, Contrast and Concession		Enjoyment, Developing Comfort, Overcoming Shyness	Some students started singing along as EE songs were played, while others just hummed to the tune, showing cues of entertainment.
4	Character Justification, Improvised Scenarios, Debate, Opinion Writing	Expressing Opinions and Justification		Enjoyment, Improved Confidence, Reduced Anxiety	Students showed signs of enjoyment, like laughing out loud. Most of the students actively participated in the debates, exhibiting improved confidence.
5	Scene Description, Creative Scenario, Group Discussion, Diary Writing	Past Continuous, Past Perfect and Past Simple Tenses		Focusing on Winning rather than Grammar, increased WTC	Every student came up with more than one right answer. The students find group activities engaging, as evidenced by the laughter and happy howls.
6	Character Reflection, Creative Scenario and Role Play, Group Discussion, Letter Writing	Second and Third Conditionals and Modals		Increased Enthusiasm, Shared fun	Students leaned forward to the screen during the identifying game, reflecting their enthusiasm and spirit in winning ‘the game’.
7	Collocation Hunt, Creative Scenario and Role Play, Song Writing, Script Writing	Collocation		Lack of stress, Psychological Safety, Strong Rapport	Students leisurely sang, hummed and moved to the songs throughout the session.
8	Contextual Understanding, Song Writing, Script Writing, Group Quiz	Colloquial Language		Peer Cohesion, Inclusive Climate, Social-Emotional Scaffolding	When one student entered the session late, the group members cheered and expressed joy by hugging and including the newcomer with open arms.
9	Analyse, Generating Stress, Imitating Stress, Experimenting	Stress		Comfortable Making Mistakes	The students experimented with word pronunciation, laughing when they got things wrong or right, since the right pronunciation “feels foreign” in their tongues.
10	Analyse, Script Writing, Role Play, Dialogue Practice	Intonation		Overcoming Affective Barriers, High WTC	They included witty dialogues and showcased a bold delivery, showing an improvement in their self-confidence and shyness.

Description: Table 4 maps the emotional affordances of students across each session with the observed indicators, along with the target skill and employed activities.

6.1.1 Affinity with the L2 Learning Environment

Affinity with the learning environment creates a positive influence on language learning and the emotional well-being of both students and teachers, ensuring sustained engagement. When students feel a sense of belonging, they are more likely to showcase active participation,

leaving room for more communication and less anxiety. This affinity is associated with the supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere, comprised of like-minded people with similar target interests (Gee, 2017). The designed EE course provides the students with such an environment, where the students, despite their individuality, share similar interests in language learning and jointly agree on the topic of discussion. The researcher then develops this into a language learning platform, providing the participants with potential materials aiming to improve their L2 English. The qualitative analysis of the EE intervention highlights that the students felt more comfortable in the atmosphere, enabling them to interact in English better and participate in activities more actively than they normally do in their traditional classrooms. One of the students commented, “The course was very good because normally when we have classes, we interact with our professors. We don't usually have classes where we interact with our classmates. But, in this course, we were free to interact with our classmates, facilitating our communication in English.” This sense of freedom they experience despite teacher presence highlights the role of the teacher as a participant and not a superior authority. They also exhibited signs of enjoyment, increased comfort, and overcoming shyness by signing along with the songs played during the session (Table 4). The teacher’s observation notes traced the students’ development by noticing their involvement in more activities with each discussion session (Table 5). The students also confirmed this observation by admitting how the course helped them to overcome their fears and take up more character roles in role plays. They reported feeling less concerned about making mistakes as they are more interested in creating experiences and having fun, engaging in these activities.

Table 5. Class observation – session 10

Timestamp	Descriptive notes	Reflective notes	Additional notes
11:00 AM	The session started by repeating the concept of intonation and its importance in conveying meaning.	Students sounded more confident during the skits than before. They included witty dialogues and showcased a bold delivery, showing an improvement in their self-confidence and shyness.	
11:05 AM	Then the movie Enola Holmes was played in the class and was paused in between to explain the concept better.		
11:15 AM	Then, a re-enactment of specific scenes was done in groups, and the students imitated the characters.		
11:30 AM	A fun game was conducted similar to dumb charades, where students formed groups and said dialogues, and the opposite group had to identify the meaning correctly.		
11:40 AM	A skit was played by the students in groups, giving attention to their tone and intonation.		

Description: Table 5 represents a sample of the teacher observation notes from session 10.

### 6.1.2 Comfortable with Making Mistakes

The ability to make mistakes without the fear of judgment is one of the essentials of language learning (Daud et al., 2022). Like anything, language learning is also a trial-and-error process that demands intense practice to make it perfect. One of the troubles of a second language learner is the lack of a natural environment or a less formal environment that allows them to communicate and use language in its broken form (Kim, 2023). Their language use is limited to formal situations, depriving them of the liberty to make mistakes. The EE course offers a solution to this scenario by providing the learners with a student-friendly environment that makes them less of a student and more of a member of the community. It guarantees them equal power to decide the topic of discussion and the type of activities, giving them more control of their learning process. This can reassure their confidence and enable them to utilise their opportunities by participating without the fear of making mistakes, being judged or losing scores. In this course, students were seen experimenting with ‘word stress’ and ‘intonation’, laughing despite their pronunciation mistakes. This reflects their comfort level within the space to make mistakes without embarrassment. A student shared, “Even though I make mistakes, now I can freely explain and say my opinion to my friends and with the teacher, and I can correct myself as I'm free to do that.” Here, the student seems not to view the teacher as an authority figure, but rather holds them to the same personal esteem as a friend, allowing them the freedom to make mistakes and not feel anxious about it.

### 6.1.3 Instructor Support and Guidance

Teachers play a significant role in affecting students’ emotional experiences (Alrabai & Algazzaz, 2025). Unlike the traditional classroom, where teachers are the sole decision makers and enjoy autonomous power over the course and the students, the EE course proposes a different outline for teachers. Here, the power hierarchy between the teachers and students is non-existent, as both parties enjoy equal position in their environment, contributing in their own way to the knowledge-making process (Han, 2022). This appears to have shifted the traditional concept of a teacher in the minds of the students, allowing them to interact freely and engage better in the EE course. It further allows the teacher to engage with the students beyond formal instruction by providing personalised feedback and encouraging participation. This contributed to the students feeling an increased sense of EE encouragement and better language production, which was also observed by the teacher throughout the course period and reflected in the quantitative analysis. The novelty of the intervention, which

used EE activities to create a course to learn English, initially attracted the participants to the program. However, the analysis identifies that the sustained emotional engagement is more related to the rapport between the students and the teacher. The students reported feeling more motivated as the teacher expressed genuine interest in their language improvement: “You made sure that we all got enough appreciation and inspiration to do things more.”

The success of a teacher-assisted EE course relies on finding the balance between the autonomous engagement offered by the EE’s affinity space and the semi-structured pedagogical presence of the teacher factor. A disturbance to this balance can disturb the emotional engagement of the students in EE, potentially hindering the learning process. To model this relationship, Figure 1 proposes a framework for teacher intervention in EE anchored by the three core constructs of SDT: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Here, the teacher serves as a facilitator by enhancing competence in the students. However, the model identifies a risk of formalisation when the EE activities are controlled by the teacher, disturbing student motivation, as an unbalanced amount of intervention can hinder student autonomy. Hence, a mediating path of ‘optimal scaffolding’ is suggested, which can be achieved by focusing on the relatedness aspect of the SDT, which allows the teacher to enter the students’ affinity space, without tampering with its essence. Now, instead of imposing structure, the teacher would focus on enhancing competence by preserving student autonomy.

Knowing the students on a personal level and developing individual connections with them appears to strengthen the rapport between the students and the teacher. This appears to decrease students’ anxiety and improve their WTC. Similarly, indulging in friendly conversations with the students inside and outside the affinity space was perceived to strengthen their bonds and develop trust. This allows teachers to share informational and choice-based feedback rather than controlling or mandatory corrections. Instead of negative or destructive feedback, the teachers should be scrupulous in providing constructive feedback delivered in a manner that doesn’t hurt the feelings of the student. This intervention ensures this by following a method of conveying feedback privately through one-on-one communications or friendly WhatsApp chats. The teacher’s observation noted students expressing interest in correcting their mistakes and trying to improve their language when approached privately. This method also develops trust between the student and the teacher, motivating them to approach the teacher to clarify their doubts. The students also acknowledge such informal conversations as a reason for them to feel comfortable around the teacher, cultivating a stimulating learning process. One of the students stated, “I’m really glad that you corrected my mistakes privately. Otherwise, I would feel shy to talk again in front of my friends.”

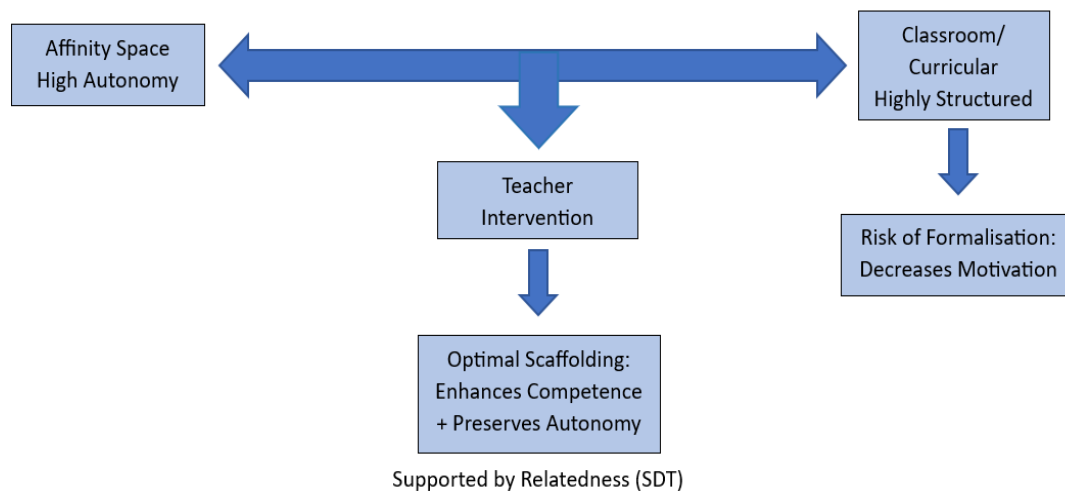


Figure 1. Conceptual diagram

Description: Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual framework for teacher intervention in an EE course. It suggests a model for optimal scaffolding by finding a balance between student autonomy and teacher assistance.

### 6.2 Affective Impact of the Course Design and Pedagogy

One of the determining factors of a course is its topic or central theme and the design of its structure. These factors affect students' interest in participating, as it can intrigue their enthusiasm (Han, 2022). The designed EE course considered this by ensuring student involvement in the course design, by understanding their interests before the course. The students participate in syllabus building and topic selection, ensuring that the subject of discussion aligns with their area of interest. The materials for the course were selected based on the students' EE interests and preferences. This ensured a minimum amount of background knowledge, easing the flow of conversation and providing better engagement. Furthermore, rather than including activities that make the students burdened, the course selected activities relating to their favourite movies and shows, piquing their interests. “This course helped us to improve our language through activities without making it boring for students, through movies and activities that include conversations,” a student reflected. Thus, the study highlights the importance of implementing effective methods by the teacher to understand student interests, such as asking them personally or by distributing questionnaires. This can help find their favourite EE activities, ensuring careful material design that aligns with the learner’s interests. The course also had a flexible design, allowing the teacher to make changes in the activities by examining student responses.

Initially, individual activities were prioritised over group activities, which generated hesitation in some students as they were facing stage fright and anxiety. This was addressed in the following sessions by including more group activities and ensuring individual involvement in small groups. The increased participation and better confidence demonstrated in the later sessions can be attributed to this change in the activity design. However, an effective implementation of this step demands that the teacher be aware of the students' interests, carefully examining their responses as they engage in different activities.

#### 6.2.1 Improved Student Engagement

The course design, material selection and the pedagogy of the EE course positively influenced the overall EE engagement of the students, particularly their engagement in this course. The students believe that the structure and design of the EE activities significantly influenced their participation and involvement. One of the contributing factors is that the course ensured the inclusion of activities that helped create an emotionally and creatively engaging atmosphere. By incorporating more interactive tasks, such as dialogue writing, delivering and enacting real-life situations, the intervention maintained the active and engaging nature of the sessions. The students also responded well to these activities with increased engagement, demonstrating that affective engagement is closely dependent on the overall structure and nature of the course. The teacher also ensured that the course design and the material selection were in the best interest of the students.

An improvement in students' WTC was marked by their increased participation in classroom activities. Students showed 'initiation' in classroom activities where they volunteered to share comments and participate in activities. Students who hesitated in individual activities at the initial sessions were excited when they got to experiment with 'word stress' individually. Increased peer interaction was also witnessed during collaborative activities like discussion and debate. Similarly, the 'role play' activity from the first and last sessions witnessed a stark difference in students' dialogue length, quantity, and language complexity. While students did a short role play in the first session, their dialogues were longer, more frequent, and they used slang words and idiomatic expressions, picked from the course materials in the last session (Sample transcript – Appendix B).

Moreover, the students reported an increase in their EE engagement outside of the course and its environment. This can be attributed to their emotional investment in their course topics, causing them to explore the subject further in their free time, which simultaneously complements their language learning. The course also provided an opportunity for the students to learn about each other's favourite shows and movies, and learn more about their friends' favourite EE sources. One student shared, "I came to know about different kinds of movies or series through this course." Students also found the 'identifying activities (where students identify specific words or grammar uses as the movie plays)' challenging their intellect and demanding more focus and attention in the sessions. They claimed that the activity helped them view these audio-visual materials from a language learning point of view rather than dismissing them as a time pass.

#### 6.2.2 Increased Emotional Investment

One of the strongest indicators of emotional investment is the relevance of the topics selected for the course. The materials were selected to include the interests of students, ensuring a minimum amount of background knowledge to engage actively in the related activities. The teacher's observation notes stress the lack of emotional investment when the subject becomes unrelatable for the students. This was visible in the students' lack of attentiveness and verbal expression of feeling bored while playing the movie *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), as some of them failed to connect with the characters and plot from a different century. This was immediately addressed by playing another present-time movie, which was more modern in its making and ideologies. This highlights the importance of teachers' situational awareness to the students' responses, and their adequate reactions to ensure these prompt changes.

While the relevance and individual interest of the students to the topic sparked initial enthusiasm of the students, the teacher's emotional support and affective scaffolding appears to have left a deeper impression on the students. Students highlighted teacher's empathetic presence, frequent appreciation and inspiration, motivating them to speak more. They also expressed how they felt comfortable having casual conversations or making mistakes in the presence of teacher, reflecting the inclusion of the teacher in their affinity. By correcting the students privately and encouraging them, the teacher functioned as a 'safety net', where students can take linguistic risks without feeling anxious or embarrassed. One of the student shared, "Normally I don't speak anything in my English class, because my English is bad. But in this course everyone talks, and nobody minds if I say anything wrong. Its actually fun to be able to do that and not constantly worry about being wrong."

#### 6.2.3 Student-Initiated Suggestions

Studies found that students who felt they had a greater voice in shaping their learning experiences showcased better emotional investment, resulting in intrinsic motivation (Lo, 2024). The EE course provided room for this control by promoting and acknowledging students' suggestions by the teachers. The course religiously collected feedback from students after every session and addressed possible suggestions in the following sessions. This potentially encouraged the students to share their thoughts and opinions further, realising their voice matters. Furthermore, the researcher also collected student opinions and suggestions when selecting activities for each session. This widens the range of options and gives a variety of tasks for the students to engage in, tending to make the whole experience interesting. The teacher review also highlights how students felt comfortable sharing their experiences and traced the increasing reception of students' feedback over time.

#### 6.2.4 Error-Driven Learning Through Assessment

Assessments play a crucial role in language learning as they can help students learn from mistakes (Ghafar et al., 2025). However, they

can also create anxiety and tedium in the students, resulting in their hesitance to attend related tests (Ismail et al., 2022). Hence, maintaining a balance between assessment and student interests is necessary. The teachers should ensure that the students are not pressured to attend these but are motivated by making them fun and challenging. The EE course addressed this by creating assessments that were not advertised as evaluating measures, but rather were structured in the model of fun mini-quizzes, circulated at the end of each session. The questions were designed as MCQ, taking excerpts from the discussed EE materials (movies, books, songs, etc.) to analyse students' understanding of the respective session's target skill. This maintained the narrative flow, making it less academic and more of a 'fan quiz'. To make these 'student-friendly', the questions per quiz were limited to 5 marks, ensuring low-stakes engagement. This helped to analyse student-comprehension without making it overwhelming for the students or demanding more of their time. The Google Form links were shared at the end of each session and were untimed. Most students filled them immediately, except those facing a weak network connection, reflecting their positive attitude towards the quiz. The students also appeared to find them challenging and entertaining as they were seen discussing their scores after attending the tests and cheering each other. The students received their scores along with the right answers soon after submitting, enabling learning and self-correction without having to depend on an external source. The students addressed these tests as "friendly tests" and found them helpful as they got to "learn more things" and gave them "a lot of information". This development in the emotional resilience and growth-mindset of the students can be attributed to the informal nature of the course design. This suggests that the EE course helped the students consider their mistakes as learning opportunities rather than failures.

### 6.2.5 Improved L2 Oral Communication

One of the highlights of this course is how it provides an opportunity for students to speak in English. Unlike traditional learning methods, this course was focused on offering hands-on experience with productive language skills, particularly in oral communication. Thus, the course provided a platform for students to engage in real-life English communications through creative and engaging activities. The individual and group activities offered by the course facilitated active participation of students, improving their oral communication. Students perceived improvements in fluency, tone, intonation, grammar and vocabulary in their oral communication. They also demonstrated a progressive improvement in confidence and willingness to participate across successive sessions. The quantitative ratings also confirmed that the students' perceived improvement was reflected in their proficiency scores, particularly in the measured fields of grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation, and interactive communication. The study suggests that the affective components of the affinity space and teacher encouragement play a greater role in facilitating this.

### 6.3 Design Limitations

The study followed an observational and quasi-experimental design to understand student-teacher emotions in a real-world EE setting. The study lacks a control group, restricting the establishment of definitive causal relationships. Moreover, the EE element, along with the design structure, made it impossible to fully isolate the variables under study from possible confounding factors inherent in the individual lives and settings. Though the researcher employed a reflexive journal and analytic triangulation method, the lack of independent field observers means that the study was analysed through the researcher's lens. Hence, the findings on emotional patterns and related correlations are to be considered associative, even though the pattern is robust. The results provide valuable insight into the emotional dynamics between student-teacher emotions in an EE intervention and can be viewed as a foundation for future experimental and longitudinal research.

## 7. Conclusion

The study analyses the role of emotions in language learning and student engagement in an EE language learning course. The study highlights the possibilities of an EE course in language learning, primarily due to its importance to the emotional and relational factors in its design. By considering student interests, the course guarantees them their autonomy, keeping the social cognitive construct in check. The findings underscore the importance of these factors by demonstrating that language learning is not just a cognitive factor but is deeply interlinked with the affective factors, influenced by their learning environment and the emotional dynamics between the students and teachers. This understanding generates two important themes on emotion and language learning: 1) Emotional and relational aspects of the EE course, and 2) Affective impact of the course design and pedagogy. This study contributes to the growing understanding that emotions are central to language learning and should be acknowledged and integrated into language learning to ensure student motivation and engagement. Moreover, it emphasises the importance of positive student-teacher interaction in fostering learning and personal growth. It can also inform holistic language learning techniques that prioritise emotional states of students along with their linguistic skills.

The participant representativeness, limited to a single institute, studying a specific program, might reflect localised institutional or discipline cultures, questioning the generalizability of the results. However, the study provided the details of the experimental procedure, allowing a replication of the study in different populations. The study also faced limitations regarding the short-term period of the intervention. Though ideal to assess retention, a delayed post-course follow-up was also avoided, as it seemed problematic in this EE context. Since participants would engage in self-directed English consumption outside their classroom, a delayed assessment could be influenced by the 'environmental noise'. Hence, to preserve the 'internal validity' of the findings, this measure was skipped. Future research can also implement large-scale interventions by including a larger number of participants from a wider proficiency stratum and an extended time period. They can also use registers to track EE exposure after the intervention, allowing a post-course follow-up.

**AI Acknowledgment**

The authors acknowledge the use of Grammarly to correct grammatical errors and improve language quality. While the authors acknowledge the usage of AI to improve the language quality, they maintain that they are the sole authors of this article and take full responsibility for the content therein, as outlined in COPE recommendations.

**Acknowledgments**

The authors extend their gratitude to all the participants who dedicated their time and effort to contribute to and shape this study.

**Authors' contributions**

Ms Rameeza V Rafeek was responsible for conceptualisation, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, project administration, visualization and writing of the article. Dr Madhumathi Pasupathi was responsible for supervision and validation. Ms Rameeza V Rafeek and Dr Madhumathi Pasupathi were responsible for funding acquisition and resources. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

**Funding**

The authors received no financial support for the research.

**Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

**Informed consent**

Obtained.

**Ethics approval**

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

**Provenance and peer review**

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

**Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

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**Appendix A****End-session Quiz**

Below is a sample of the mini-quiz questionnaire distributed by the researcher at the end of session 2.

Mini Quiz – 2

Name \*

\_\_\_\_\_

Course & Branch

\_\_\_\_\_

In the Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, how did Harry feel when he first saw the Great Hall at Hogwarts?

- Scared and nervous
- Amazed and fascinated
- Disappointed and bored
- Angry and frustrated

In Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, what did Harry experience when he first heard the voice in the walls?

- Fear and confusion
- Excitement and curiosity
- Joy and relief
- Anger and frustration

In Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, how did Harry describe his experience during his first encounter with a Dementor?

- He felt happy and strong
- He felt cold and drained of happiness
- He felt excited and full of energy
- He felt angry and frustrated

In Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, how did Harry react to being chosen as a Triwizard Champion?

- He was thrilled and confident
- He was shocked and confused
- He was angry and refused to participate
- He felt excited but knew it would be easy

In Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, how did Harry describe the experience of teaching Dumbledore's Army?

- It was easy and boring
- It was difficult and frustrating
- It was rewarding and fulfilling
- It was scary and dangerous

**Appendix B**

**Transcript of the ‘role play’ enacted by Group 3 in the first session (Session 1)**

Student A: Hi, everyone. What are your plans for this Saturday and Sunday?

Student B: I’m going to my grandparents’ house.

Student C: Shall we go somewhere together?

Student D: Where?

Student E: Lulu Mall.

Student A: That’s a good idea.

Student B: I can cancel my plans and come with you.

Student C: Alright then. See you all on Saturday!

Student D & E: Okay. Bye.

**Transcript of the ‘role play’ enacted by Group 3 in the last session (Session 10)**

Student A: Hey guys, let’s get the ball rolling. What are our plans this weekend?

Student B: How about we go to the cinema? I heard there’s a new Mohanlal movie out. Should be fun.

Student C: I checked the tickets for that one. It’s all out. There’s none available in the nearby theatres this weekend.

Student D: That’s a bummer! How about we go to that new mall in the city? Heard there’s a cool arcade on the top floor.

Student E: Oh yeah! I saw it on a reel on Instagram. It looks lit!

Student A: I don’t know, man. My cousins went there last week and said it was too cluttered. They couldn’t even get near the games.

Student B: We should probably go early then. But wait, who’s gonna drive?

Student C: I can be the D.D. I’ll take my dad’s car. He’s out of town, so it’s available

Student D: Cool! We’ll go tomorrow then. I’ll take the bus to your house. Will go from there together.

Student E: It’s on then! Anything else, text in the WhatsApp group, guys. Let’s go...