

EFL STUDENTS' SELF-REGULATION, ENJOYMENT, AND BOREDOM: THE ROLE OF GENDER DIFFERENCES

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Abstrak

This study aims to profile the level of self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom in students' learning experience in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Focusing on gender differences, it was also to determine students' level of self-regulation and emotions and measure the significant differences in self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom. Using a quantitative approach with descriptive and ex post facto designs, this study involved 46 students from an equivalency education program in Tanjung Sepat, Selangor, Malaysia. The data were obtained through three validated paper-based questionnaires which were analyzed using descriptive statistics as well as an independent sample t-test. The results showed that male and female students both had high levels of self-regulation and enjoyment, while they also experienced moderate levels of boredom. No significant differences were found between genders in students' self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom. However, male students tended to feel more comfortable in a supportive learning environment, while female students enjoyed interactive and fun learning more. Monotonous teaching methods and lack of variety in learning media generally cause boredom. This research highlights the importance of self-regulation in helping students manage their emotions during the learning process. In addition, the results show that gender is not the main determinant of students' emotion in learning.

Keywords: Equivalent Education, Self-Regulation, Emotion, Gender

INTRODUCTION

Self-regulation is an essential skill (Montalvo and Torres, 2004) especially for students in academic settings. Self-regulation is an individual's ability to control emotions, behaviour, and thoughts to achieve specific goals (Zimmerman, 2000a), by utilizing both cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Mammadov & Schroeder, 2023). Students can monitor their progress and adjust their learning approach by developing self-regulation. Self-regulation plays an essential role in language learning and managing students' emotions. It can influence emotional factors that support learning (Zhang & Zou, 2024). Self-regulation and emotions are strongly related to language learning in order to create effective and affective learning. Emotions are an inseparable part of the learning process and play an essential role in influencing student performance when learning. Emotions have a direct impact on motivating and influencing human behavior when learning (Li et al., 2020). It can enhance and reduce interest in learning depending on what emotion affects (Pekrun, 1992). Emotions have positive and negative categories (Reeja et al., 2021). Positive emotions include enjoyment, hope, and pride (Yin, 2021a), which can increase engagement and

motivate deeper involvement (Pekrun, 2006). Conversely, negative emotions, including boredom, anxiety, and fear, can hinder learning, demotivate students, and affect student achievement (Kim & Pekrun, 2014).

Enjoyment has been identified as a crucial factor in the language-learning process that can enhance and contribute to improving students' performance in learning language (Li et al., 2022a). Enjoyment can facilitate language learning (Pavelescu & Petrić, 2018), so it can support the success of the learning process. Creating a supportive and fun learning environment is a significant factor in increasing students' enjoyment of learning English as a foreign language (Dewaele & Proietti Ergün, 2020). In addition to enjoyment, boredom also often occurs during the English learning process. Boredom is an emotion that frequently arises when learning English (Pawlak et al., 2021). It occurs due to students' lack of engagement with learning and the monotony of English learning activities. Boredom can harm student academic performance. As a result, students may find it challenging to focus and be motivated when learning English. However, boredom is situational and can be influenced by specific learning contexts or situations (Aziz, 2023). Therefore, it needs to establish a supportive classroom environment to foster active student participation and enhance the learning experience (Pawlak et al., 2021).

Enjoyment and boredom have a robust relationship in influencing learning. Therefore, self-regulation is needed to manage these two emotions to achieve optimal learning. The interaction between enjoyment and self-regulation is crucial in fostering positive emotional experiences within English learning (Sun & Yanyan Wang, 2024). Self-regulation also affects students' boredom. Students who have good self-regulation skills tend to enjoy the learning process and experience less boredom (Marca et al., 2017). Therefore, self-regulation is important to reduce students' boredom during the learning process. Self-regulation mediates enjoyment and boredom, allowing students to manage their emotions and adjust their learning strategies based on their feelings. Students with good self-regulation skills can effectively adjust their learning approach so that they can feel satisfaction in the English learning process (Zimmerman, 2002).

In the last decade, many researchers have been interested in discussing enjoyment and boredom in English language learning. While much research has addressed self-regulation (Nikoopour & Khosroudi, 2021), enjoyment (Liu et al., 2022; Jiang, 2023), and boredom in English language learning (Luo & Wang, 2023; Munfaridah et al., 2024), limited research examines self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom in the context of gender differences. Most previous studies only focus on one aspect without examining these three variable. Most of the previous studies involved participants from high school and university students, so this study will provide a new perspective by involving participants from Indonesian equivalent education in Malaysia, which consists of Indonesian students enrolled in an equivalent education program.

It is important to know the level of self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom in the context of gender differences. Previous research has shown that male and female students have different experiences in managing emotions and self-regulation, which may affect their learning process (Tseng et al., 2017). Male and female students have different levels of enjoyment and ways of self-regulation when learning English (Liu et al., 2022). This also occurs in students' emotions of boredom, and male students tend to have higher levels of boredom than female students (Wang et al., 2022). Previous research shows that female students often dominate language learning than male students (Jiang, 2023). In addition, these differences in the experience of enjoyment and

boredom may impact how students handle learning challenges. Female students tend to have higher self-regulation strategies, allowing them to better cope with boredom and stay engaged in learning. In contrast, male students need more external motivation and better self-regulation in English learning activities to maintain their enjoyment and reduce boredom. By understanding students' emotional differences and their self-regulation, teachers can create more balanced and inclusive teaching methods that meet their learning needs, thus promoting better language learning outcomes.

Comment [Yi1]: Research gap

This study aims to identify the level and the significance of self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom in gender differences. This research is expected to provide new and deeper insights into the different self-regulation and emotions experienced by male and female students in their English learning experience, especially in equivalent education. This research is expected to contribute to teachers in designing teaching strategies that are more inclusive, effective, and innovative to the needs of students, especially in equivalent education so that learners can be expected to achieve better English language learning outcomes. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the levels of male and female EFL students' self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom?
2. Are there significant gender differences in EFL students' self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom in learning English?

METHOD

Comment [Yi2]: Participants?
Details ttg questionnaire +
validity/reliability

This study employed a quantitative research approach. A descriptive quantitative design was used to measure male and female students' level of self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom in learning English. Besides, this study also utilized ex post facto design to investigate gender differences in EFL students' self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom. This research involved 46 students from one of the equivalent schools in Tanjung Sepat, Malaysia. Participants consisted of 20 males and 26 females. They were children of immigrant workers in Indonesia, aged 11 - 17 years old.

Paper-based questionnaires were used as the data collection instruments. The self-regulation questionnaire was adopted from Tsuchiya (2019). There are 48 items, and six covering dimensions such as self-efficiency, planning, effort, self-monitoring, evaluation, and reflection. This questionnaire was developed based on Zimmerman's theory (2000b). For the enjoyment instrument, the researcher used a questionnaire developed by Aydin et al. (2023). The researcher only used 11 items from 12 items. Additionally, for boredom questionnaires the researcher adapted from Li et al (2023). A total of 32 items were developed, but the researcher selected only 12 items. the deletion of these items was done based on the validator's suggestion, which stated that the items in the boredom questionnaire should be the same or more or less similar to the items in the enjoyment questionnaire and to avoid repetition and get more accurate results. The questionnaires were translated into Bahasa Indonesia and Malay to ensure participants' comprehension and to avoid misunderstanding in answering questionnaire items. The questionnaires have been validated by the expert of self-regulation and emotion has been tested for validation and reliability in SPSS 20.

The researcher implemented three steps in the data collection process. On the first day, the researcher distributed the enjoyment and boredom questionnaires and gave participants 10 minutes to complete them. On the second day, the self-regulation questionnaire was distributed to female students, while on the third day, it was given to male students. This step-by-step distribution allowed the researcher to provide better assistance to participants who found certain items confusing, especially considering that the self-regulation questionnaire contained the largest number of items. After that, the data was analyzed using SPSS 20. For the first research question, the researcher used descriptive statistics to asses the level of self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom of male and female students. Then, the second research question, the researcher used an independent sample t-test to determine whether there are significant gender differences between gender. The result of the data was interpreted according to guidelines set by Oxford & Burry-Stock (1995). It is divided into three levels: high (3.5-5.0), medium (2.5-3.4), and low (1.0-2.4).

FINDINGS

The first research question was asked about the level of students' self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom among male and female students, and the second research question is asked about the significances of the differences among male and female students in their self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom in learning English.

Research question 1: What are the levels of male and female EFL students’ self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom?

The descriptive results for self-regulation based on gender are presented in Table 1, showing the mean and standard deviation for male and female students.

Table 1 The Descriptive Result of Self-Regulation

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Regulation	Male	20	3.49	.40
	Female	26	3.53	.33

Table 1 showed the results of descriptive analysis on self-regulation between male and female students, showing insignificant differences. The mean of self-regulation for male students is (3.49) with a standard deviation of (0.40). In contrast, female students have a slightly higher level of self-regulation, which is (3.53) with a standard deviation of (0.33). Although the mean difference is very small, this finding indicates that male and female students have similar levels of self-regulation.

Table 2 provides an interpretation of self-regulation levels by categorizing students into different proficiency levels based on their scores.

Table 2 The Interpretation of Self-Regulation Level

EFL male and female students' self-regulation (Binned)						
		Mean	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Level
Valid	Female	3.53	5	19.2	19.2	2.5 - 3.4 (Moderate)
		3.53	21	80.8	80.8	3.5 - 5.0 (High)
		Total	26	100.0	100.0	
	Male	3.49	8	30.8	40.0	2.5 - 3.4 (Moderate)
		3.49	12	46.2	60.0	3.5 - 5.0 (High)
		Total	20	76.9	100.0	

Table 2 shows 21 female and 12 male students have a high level of self-regulation with a mean of 3.53 for females and 3.49 for males. However, there were 5 female students and 8 male students experiencing moderate levels of self-regulation, with the same mean of 3.53 for females and 3.49 for males. This confirms that although most male and female students can manage their learning process effectively, some still need support in developing better self-regulation skills during the learning process.

The descriptive results for enjoyment based on gender are presented in Table 3, showing the mean and standard deviation for male and female students.

Table 3 The Descriptive Result of Enjoyment

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Enjoyment	Male	20	3.55	.46
	Female	26	3.61	.44

Table 3 shows the result of the descriptive analysis, which showed negligible differences between male and female students. The mean score of enjoyment for male students is (3.55) with a standard deviation of (0.46), while the mean score for female students is (3.61) with a standard deviation of (0.44). It shows that female students have a higher enjoyment than male students, and it indicates male and female students have similar levels of enjoyment even though they have restricted mean differences.

Table 4 provides an interpretation of enjoyment levels by categorizing students into different proficiency levels based on their scores.

Table 4 The Interpretation of Enjoyment Level

EFL Male and Female Students' Enjoyment (Binned)						
		Mean	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Level
Valid	Male	3.55	5	19.2	25.0	2.5 - 3.4 (Moderate)
		3.55	15	57.7	75.0	3.5 - 5.0 (High)
	Female	3.61	7	26.9	26.9	2.5 - 3.4 (Moderate)
		3.61	19	73.1	73.1	3.5 - 5.0 (High)
	Total		46		100.0	

Table 4 presents 15 male students and 19 female students having a high level of enjoyment with a mean = 3.55 for males and 3.61 for females. However, 5 male students and 7 female students have moderate enjoyment, with a mean of 3.55 for males and 3.61 for females. The descriptive results for boredom based on gender are presented in Table 5, showing the mean and standard deviation for male and female students.

Table 5 The Descriptive Result of Boredom

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Boredom	Male	20	2.58	.51
	Female	26	2.52	.48

Table 5 presents the results of the descriptive analysis of boredom between male and female students, indicating no significant differences. The mean score of boredom for male students is (2.58), with a standard deviation of (0.51), while the mean score for female students is (2.52), with a standard deviation of (0.48). This reveals that male and female students have a moderate level of boredom even though their mean scores have low differences.

Table 6 provides an interpretation of boredom levels by categorizing students into different proficiency levels based on their scores.

Table 6 The Interpretation of Boredom Level

Total EFL Male and Female Students' Boredom (Binned)						
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Level	
Valid	Male	2.58	5	19.2	25.0	1.0 - 2.4 (Low)
		2.58	15	57.7	75.0	2.5 - 3.4 (Moderate)
		Total	20	76.9	100.0	
	Female	2.52	12	46.2	46.2	1.0 - 2.4 (Low)
		2.52	12	46.2	46.2	2.5 - 3.4 (Moderate)
		2.52	2	7.7	7.7	3.5 – 5.0 (High)
	Total	26	100.0	100.0		

Table 6 shows 15 males students and 12 females students experience moderate levels of boredom with a mean of 2.58 for males and 2.52 for females. Meanwhile, 5 male students and 12 female students have a low level of boredom, with the same mean of 2.58 for males and 2.52 for females. In contrast, 2 female students experience a high level of boredom, with a mean of 2.52.

Research Question 2: Are there significant gender differences in EFL students’ self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom in learning English?

Table 7 presents the t-test results for gender differences in self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom, showing whether the differences are statistically significant.

Table 5 The Result of T-Test Analysis on Self-regulation, Enjoyment, and Boredom

Independent Samples Test			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Self-Regulation	-0.41	44	0.68
Enjoyment	-0.51	44	0.60
Boredom	0.37	44	0.71

Table 7 shows there’s no significant differences between male and female students’ self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom. This is evidenced by the Sig. value that exceeds 0.05. This implies that gender has no significant influence on students’ level of self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom.

DISCUSSION

Based on the statistical analysis, it is interesting that both male and female students have the same levels of self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom. More specifically, male and female students have high levels of self-regulation and enjoyment, while for boredom, male and female students have a moderate level. This finding aligns with the findings of Luo and Wang (2023) found that EFL students have a high level of self-regulation and enjoyment, while for boredom, EFL students showed a moderate level. It shows they have good self-regulation and can manage their emotions when learning English. It is in line with the findings of Umamah et al. (2022) who found that EFL students are fully aware of the importance of self-regulation in learning. This is due to the environment and background of the participants. The participants come from equivalent education programs, they get a flexible learning environment that can support their self-regulation and enjoyment.

Based on the researcher's observation during the research, good teacher-student relationships also help to meet their emotional needs, especially as many of them are children of migrant workers. However, moderate levels of boredom may be due to limited resources or monotonous teaching methods. This suggests the importance of using more creative teaching strategies and technology to enhance their learning experience (Ahmadi, 2018). This underscores Zimmerman's (2000b) theory, proving that self-regulation affects students’ ability to manage their learning activities. This can impact more optimal learning outcomes, including enjoying learning or overcoming boredom in learning English.

According to the findings of this research, most students enjoy the learning process due to several influencing factors. Both male and female students feel that a supportive environment can foster a sense of comfort in learning English, so they can focus on learning without feeling judged or pressured. Moreover, based on the researcher's observation, students who participate in fun activities such as games or group discussions help them stay engaged and motivated and actively

participate in the lesson, so the learning process becomes more enjoyable and less monotonous. Ali et al. (2020) stated that supportive learning can have a positive impact on gaining students' interest in learning English. There are three aspects to forming a learning environment: supporting peer groups, saving and caring for the learning environment, building an enjoyable and interactive classroom environment, and teacher-student relations (Ali et al., 2020). Supporting the learning environment can foster students' enjoyment of learning English. Most male students feel bored when the teacher is unmotivated to teach them. The teacher's presence and emotions also play an important role in influencing students' enjoyment (Abu-Rmaileh, 2020).

Additionally, male students feel bored when the teacher delivers the material using PPT slides (Power Share) and monotonous teaching. According to Pawlak et al. (2020), a monotonous learning method can negatively impact students' emotions due to the delivery of material that is too monotonous and task repetitiveness, which is the main reason students feel bored in learning English. Furthermore, using interactive media and ICT in classroom learning can increase students' enjoyment of English language learning. ICT has proven to be very helpful for students in their English learning activities, such as watching videos on YouTube and games in English learning (Anggraini et al., 2022). Interactive media can help students understand the material and improve their learning motivation (Prabawati et al., 2021). EFL students consider using ICT in English language learning as something practical, helpful in understanding the material presented and can improve students' English language skills (Hashemi et al., 2022). According to Purmama et al. (2019), teachers who deliver learning materials using interactive and creative media can increase student motivation to participate in learning activities. EFL students with a high level of motivation can follow the learning process to the end and encourage them to try harder to understand the material provided to improve their learning outcomes (Vijchulata & Lee, 1985). Therefore, teachers must be able to deliver material to students interestingly to maintain their learning motivation. By applying varied teaching methods and using interactive and creative learning methods and relevant technology, students are more comfortable and motivated to follow the English learning process.

Moreover, this study stated that there is no significant difference between male and female students in their self-regulated learning. It shows that male and female students have the same way of regulating themselves when learning English. This is due to the learning environment in an equal education program that provides equal access to educational resources, so students' learning strategies tend to be similar. Secondly, the same teaching methods, tasks, and interactions with teachers can develop similar patterns of self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom. In addition, as children of migrant workers, they are encouraged to rely more on self-regulation in learning. This finding was also found by Nikoopour and Koshroudi (2021), who found that male and female students have the same self-regulation, and there is no interaction between gender and self-regulation. This outcome emphasizes that EFL students have similar ways of organizing their learning, such as setting goals, monitoring progress, and managing their learning strategies independently and effectively.

Additionally, the research findings also stated that there is no significant difference between students' enjoyment and boredom. Male and female students have the same enjoyment and boredom when learning English; there is no difference between the two. Conversely, the findings of Liu et al. (2021) stated that female students showed higher enjoyment than male students. This reveals that female students tend to enjoy and manage their boredom when learning English and can

follow the learning process until the end compared to male students. According to Jiang (2023), the research findings show no relationship between emotions and gender in English language learning. Furthermore, students can regulate their emotions during learning without gender interference and gender is not a significant factor in differentiating student learning experiences. However, this study highlights the importance of individual learning differences rather than gender in understanding students' emotional processes and self-regulation during English language learning.

Teachers should be able to adapt their teaching methods to suit the personalities of their students. They must have the skills and willingness to help students utilize these differences for their success in teaching English (Zafar & Meenakshi, 2012). There are no significant gender differences in self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom, indicating that male and female students have similar emotional and learning processes in English language learning. These results emphasize the need for teachers to prioritize teaching methods, use creative and interactive media, and provide motivational support to accommodate diverse students' needs and optimize learning outcomes. In order to better support students' self-regulation, enjoyment, and engagement in the classroom, effective strategies should be implemented.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that male and female students have similar levels of self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom in learning English. This highlights that gender differences have no significant effect on English learning. Students demonstrate a high level of self-regulation and enjoyment, while their boredom level is moderated. This implies that students are generally engaged and motivated in learning English, which may contribute to their ability to organize their learning English effectively. A moderate level of boredom implies that although students enjoy learning English, there are still moments of disengagement that may arise due to a variety of factors. While gender is not the main factor influencing students' self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom in learning English, other studies have revealed that the learning environment and teaching approaches play a more significant role in shaping students' engagement and enjoyment.

This study has some limitations, including a relatively small sample size of 46 participants (20 males and 26 females) due to the limited available population, making the findings less representative of the broader EFL learner population. Additionally, the use of paper-based questionnaires required manual data entry, increasing the risk of errors that could affect data accuracy and validity. For future researchers, expanding the sample size and exploring different research approaches can enhance data accuracy and provide more comprehensive findings. Additionally, investigating factors influencing self-regulation, enjoyment, and boredom can offer deeper insights into improving students' motivation and engagement.

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