

Worry, Boredom, and Embarrassment: GXNU Chinese Students' Emotions in BIPA Learning at Universitas Negeri Malang

Iwa Sobara^{*1}, Didan Nurfadillah², Savira Putri Destiani³, Regina Nadya Gading Kurniawan⁴

¹ Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia, iwa.sobara.fs@um.ac.id

² Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia, didan.nurfadillah.2402416@students.um.ac.id

³ Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia, savira.putri.2402416@students.um.ac.id

⁴ Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia, regina.nadya.2402416@students.um.ac.id

**Corresponding author:*

E-mail:

iwa.sobara.fs@um.ac.id

Abstract

Foreign language learning involves not only linguistic aspects but also emotional factors that affect learning effectiveness. This study explores the emotional experiences of Guangxi Normal University (GXNU) students in the 3+1 program at Universitas Negeri Malang (UM) during their BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) learning. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach using questionnaires and writing tasks. Data were collected from 17 students (13 female, 4 male). The results show that most students felt comfortable, with a low level of anxiety (64.7% reported no anxiety) and minimal boredom (average score of 1.35). However, a small proportion (5.9%) still experienced anxiety, particularly during exams and academic tasks. A total of 82.4% found the teaching methods engaging, although boredom occasionally occurred when activities felt monotonous. Emotions such as worry, boredom, and embarrassment are a natural part of the learning process, but if not well-managed, they can hinder language development. Mild anxiety, on the other hand, can serve as a motivator. Therefore, it is important for BIPA instructors to apply strategies that support students' emotional well-being, such as scaffolded speaking, small group work, pair practice, context-based tasks, roleplays, and interactive media like videos, Kahoot, and Quizizz. Based on previous findings by Sobara et al. (2024), GXNU students expressed high satisfaction with the teaching methods, relevance of learning materials, teacher-student interaction, and the supportive learning environment during the 3+1 program at UM. These findings suggest that the approaches used are adequate and have the potential to meet the growing interest of Chinese students in pursuing deeper and more sustainable Indonesian Studies.

Keywords: *Negative Emotions, BIPA Learning, GXNU Students, 3+1 Program*

Introduction

Foreign language learning does not only involve linguistic aspects but also psychological aspects that influence the learning process, including negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, tension, shame, fatigue, anger, and boredom (Teimouri, 2018; Li, 2020; Kruk, 2022).

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These emotions can hinder optimal learning and often weaken learners' language competence (Yu, 2022). In the context of international students, emotional challenges often emerge as obstacles in developing language skills.

This study aims to investigate various emotions, particularly worry, boredom, and shame, experienced by 3+1 program students from Guangxi Normal University (GXNU), China. The GXNU-UM 3+1 program allows students to complete three years of study at their home university and one year at a partner institution in order to gain international experience, improve language skills, and broaden their cultural and global educational perspectives (Sobara et al., 2024). GXNU students participating in the 3+1 program at Universitas Negeri Malang (UM) experience various emotional challenges in learning Indonesian as a Foreign Language (BIPA). These challenges may include speaking anxiety, academic frustration, feelings of inferiority when communicating with native speakers, as well as culture shock, all of which affect their motivation and learning success. In their home country, China, they are accustomed to a memorization-based learning method. This is not surprising, as language learners from Asian backgrounds such as China, Japan, and Korea have long been labeled as memorizers (Mathias et al., 2013; Mok et al., 2001). This means they tend to rely on memorization as their primary strategy in language learning (Wang, 2023). Therefore, they must adapt to the interactive learning system at UM, which emphasizes discussion and problem-solving. This difference often leads to confusion and academic pressure, as they are required to change their learning strategies within a short period. In addition, they also experience anxiety when speaking Indonesian, particularly when participating in activities such as role plays, interviews, presentations, or classroom discussions. The fear of making mistakes in grammar and pronunciation often reduces their confidence in speaking.

Since emotions play an important role in the effectiveness of language learning, it is essential to understand what kinds of negative emotions are experienced by GXNU students when learning Indonesian. Recent studies (Tyng et al., 2017; Shao et al., 2020; Zheng and Zhou, 2022; Plonsky et al., 2022; Al-Jarrah et al., 2024) indicate that emotions play a crucial role in language learning, particularly in memory, motivation, and communication (Al-Jarrah et al., 2024). From a linguistic perspective, understanding the influence of emotions on Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA) can provide important insights into the cognitive and emotional mechanisms that support learning a new language (Esfandiari et al., 2021).

This study aims to describe the emotional experiences of GXNU students during their participation in the 3+1 program at UM, particularly the negative emotions they experience. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights for BIPA instructors in designing learning strategies that better support international students both emotionally and academically.

Method

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative approach was conducted using a Likert scale to measure the emotions experienced by the respondents, while the qualitative approach was carried out by asking respondents to provide open-ended responses regarding their emotional experiences in the process of learning Indonesian.

The respondents in this study consisted of 17 students from Guangxi Normal University (GXNU), China, including 14 females and 3 males. The majority of respondents were 21 years

old, with an age range between 20 and 22 years. They were students who had been learning Indonesian for one semester at Universitas Negeri Malang (UM).

Data collection in this study was conducted through questionnaires and a writing task. The questionnaire was designed in both Indonesian and Mandarin to ensure that respondents clearly understood the questions. This instrument contained several items measuring the negative emotions experienced by the respondents while learning Indonesian, particularly in speaking classes.

In addition to completing the questionnaire, respondents were assigned a writing task in Indonesian to describe the various emotions they experienced during their Indonesian language classes at UM. The respondents' answers were analyzed using coding procedures and thematic analysis to identify patterns of emotional experiences that emerged during the learning process.

Results

The questionnaire results indicate that the majority of respondents felt fairly comfortable during Indonesian language classes, with an average anxiety score of 2.12. This suggests that they were not overly worried when using Indonesian while interacting in class. In terms of boredom with the learning methods, the score obtained was 1.35, which is the lowest among all categories. This indicates that most respondents found the teaching methods used in BIPA classes to be engaging and not boring.

Regarding pronunciation correction, most respondents did not feel embarrassed when lecturers or classmates corrected them, with an average score of 1.71. This reflects a positive attitude toward learning, as they are willing to accept feedback to improve their language skills.

From these results, it can be concluded that GXNU students generally feel comfortable learning Indonesian at UM, with low levels of boredom and embarrassment, and relatively low levels of anxiety. Nevertheless, more intensive support from instructors is still needed, particularly for students who continue to experience anxiety when speaking.

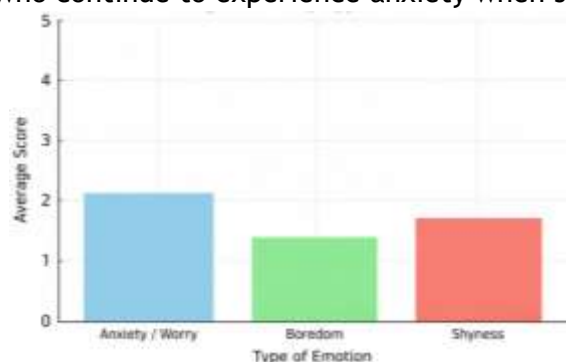


Figure 1. Average Levels of Respondents' Emotions

Discussion

Worry (Anxiety)

Anxiety is considered a natural human emotion that may arise from internal or external changes, unfamiliar situations, or a sense of uncertainty (Shen, 2022). Since the 1970s, anxiety in foreign language learning has been a major focus of research (Horwitz et al.,

1986). Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) refers to the feelings of tension, nervousness, and worry experienced by learners when studying or using a foreign language. Dewaele and Dewaele (2017) found that FLA is negatively correlated with students' motivation and academic performance in language learning. Meanwhile, Liu (2006) demonstrated that Chinese students with high levels of anxiety tend to have lower speaking proficiency in English.

According to Liu et al. (2024), FLA is caused by several factors, including lack of confidence in using a foreign language, fear of making mistakes and receiving negative evaluation from peers or teachers, as well as overly competitive classroom environments or high academic pressure. These factors may hinder the learning process and reduce students' motivation and engagement in foreign language learning. Furthermore, Teimouri (2018) and Kruk (2022) emphasize that foreign language anxiety encompasses various dimensions, including anxiety related to speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

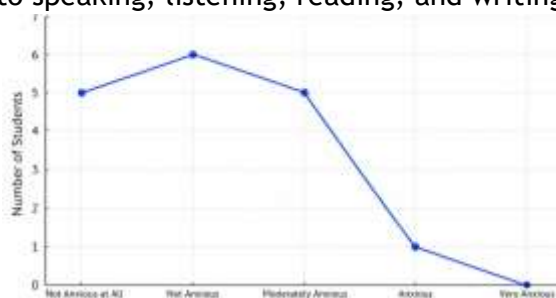


Figure 2. Students' Anxiety Levels in Speaking Indonesian

Based on the diagram above, the majority of respondents (64.7%) reported that they did not experience anxiety when required to speak Indonesian in class, while 29.4% expressed a neutral stance. Only 5.9% of respondents reported experiencing anxiety, and none indicated strong agreement with the statement. These findings suggest that, overall, the respondents demonstrate a relatively high level of confidence in classroom communication.

However, qualitative data derived from students' written responses reveal several factors that commonly trigger feelings of anxiety during BIPA learning at Universitas Negeri Malang. Anxiety or worry tends to arise when learners perceive themselves as unprepared to face challenges or unable to meet expected standards, particularly in situations that demand high performance or successful outcomes. Such concerns are frequently associated with examinations, academic grades, and difficulties in completing specific assignments. The following section presents an analysis of the factors contributing to students' experiences of anxiety.

Anxiety Related to Examinations

- (1) "I worry if I do not review well before the exam." (SN05)
- (2) "I worry if I do not pass the exam." (YA05)
- (3) "I worry when the exam I face is too difficult." (JN05)
- (4) "I worry if I fail this test." (DA05)

Anxiety Related to Homework

- (5) "I worry that I cannot complete my homework." (CC05)
- (6) "I worry that I am not able to write my assignments." (BG05)

Anxiety Related to Grades

- (7) "I worry that my grades are not good." (LS05)
- (8) "I worry if I do not study well." (YR05)

The findings indicate that the majority of students' anxiety is primarily associated with examinations and academic tasks. Students tend to experience worry when they feel insufficiently prepared for exams, when they perceive the test materials as overly difficult, or when they anticipate unsatisfactory results. In addition, concerns related to academic responsibilities, such as the inability to complete homework assignments, also contribute to their anxiety.

These responses suggest that academic anxiety—particularly that related to examinations and coursework—constitutes a major source of stress among GXNU students in BIPA learning. Nevertheless, it is important to note that other emotional factors, including those related to students' personal lives, may also contribute to their feelings of worry. This finding highlights the importance of adopting a pedagogical approach that not only emphasizes cognitive aspects of learning but also takes into account students' emotional well-being, thereby enabling them to engage in the learning process with greater comfort and confidence.

Boredom

Boredom is defined as an emotional, motivational, or psychological state that is distressing, unpleasant, or even painful, arising when the environment is perceived as monotonous, unengaging, and insufficiently challenging (Macklem, 2015; Han, 2021; Pawlak et al., 2025). Within educational psychology, the control-value theory of academic emotions conceptualizes boredom as a multidimensional construct (Putwain et al., 2018). It is generally regarded as a detrimental emotion that reduces motivation and emerges as a result of repetitive and monotonous learning activities or tasks (Derakhshan et al., 2021).

In the context of foreign language learning, Foreign Language Classroom Boredom (FLCB) has increasingly attracted scholarly attention in recent years. Kruk and Zawodniak (2017) argue that boredom in the classroom can hinder student engagement and slow the development of language skills. Furthermore, Li and Han (2024) found that FLCB is negatively associated with both academic achievement and motivation in language learning. Similar findings were reported by Dewaele and Li (2021), who demonstrated that students experiencing higher levels of boredom tend to be more passive in class, less motivated, and more likely to encounter difficulties in retaining previously learned material. These findings underscore that boredom is not merely a temporary discomfort but a significant factor that can adversely affect the effectiveness of foreign language learning.

Boredom in language classrooms may arise from a range of factors that limit students' engagement and motivation. Monotonous and insufficiently interactive teaching methods may lead to a loss of interest in the learning process. In addition, an excessive focus on examinations and grammatical rules can create a rigid and less stimulating learning environment. Another contributing factor is the mismatch between the level of task difficulty and students' abilities; materials that are too easy may fail to provide adequate challenge, while overly difficult materials may induce frustration and diminish learners' confidence.

Therefore, the implementation of varied, interactive, and learner-centered instructional approaches is essential to mitigate boredom in language classrooms. One of the questions included in the questionnaire aimed to examine whether respondents experienced boredom with the teaching methods employed in class. The results are presented in the following diagram.

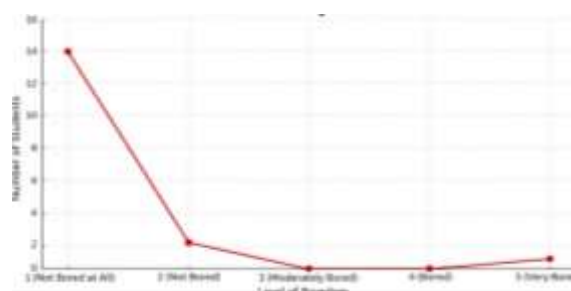


Figure 3. Students' Boredom Levels in BIPA Learning

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents (82.4%) did not experience boredom with the teaching methods employed in BIPA classes, while 11.8% reported a neutral stance. Only 5.9% of respondents indicated that they felt very bored. These results suggest that, overall, the instructional methods used in BIPA classes are generally perceived as engaging by the students.

Boredom among BIPA learners reflects a sense of disengagement that arises from monotonous conditions, lack of variation, or limited interest in specific learning activities. The following excerpts illustrate additional factors contributing to students' boredom during BIPA learning at Universitas Negeri Malang:

- (9) "I feel bored if the class consists solely of theoretical instruction." (SN06)
- (10) "I feel bored when I have to memorize vocabulary." (YR06)
- (11) "I feel bored when I do not understand the teacher's explanation." (BG06)
- (12) "I feel bored when I have to do homework." (WY06)

The data suggest that boredom in BIPA learning at UM emerges from several interrelated factors that reduce students' engagement and motivation. One of the primary causes is the use of overly theoretical teaching approaches, as reflected in response (9), where students reported boredom when classes are dominated by abstract explanations without practical application. In addition, vocabulary memorization, as indicated in (10), contributes to boredom, suggesting that reliance on rote learning strategies may diminish students' interest in the learning process.

Furthermore, a lack of comprehension of instructional material, as expressed in (11), also leads to boredom, highlighting the need for more accessible and comprehensible teaching approaches. Boredom is also associated with homework tasks, as seen in (12), which may be perceived as unengaging or overly repetitive.

Overall, these findings indicate that boredom among BIPA learners is primarily influenced by limited variation in instructional methods, insufficient active student engagement, and difficulties in understanding the material. Therefore, it is essential to implement more interactive, varied, and application-oriented teaching strategies to sustain students' motivation and enhance their learning experience.

Embarrassment

According to Lewis (1971), embarrassment is an emotion that arises when individuals perceive that a negative behavior reflects a fundamental deficiency within themselves. A deeper sense of embarrassment occurs when individuals evaluate themselves negatively and interpret their mistakes as representative of their overall self-worth (Tangney et al., 1996). Embarrassment belongs to the category of self-conscious emotions—such as shame, guilt, awkwardness, and pride—which are distinct from basic emotions such as anger, fear,

sadness, happiness, disgust, and surprise (Izard, 1991; Ekman, 2003; Tracy et al., 2007). Self-conscious emotions are often referred to as social emotions, as they are closely related to how individuals perceive themselves in relation to others (Tracy et al., 2007).

In the present study, the sense of embarrassment experienced by respondents is frequently associated with their perceived inability to meet personal or external expectations, both in social and academic contexts. This emotion tends to emerge when learners feel incapable of performing tasks perfectly, fear making mistakes, or become self-conscious about being observed due to perceived shortcomings.

Nevertheless, Swain (2013) suggests that, as a negative achievement-related emotion, embarrassment may also have a facilitative role in foreign language learning, as learners may be motivated to avoid experiencing embarrassment in front of their peers. The following diagram illustrates whether respondents felt embarrassed when their spoken or expressed language in class was corrected by either the instructor or their classmates.



Figure 4. Embarrassment When Pronunciation Is Corrected

Meanwhile, based on the respondents' statements, several factors were identified as contributing to feelings of embarrassment, including fear of making mistakes or experiencing failure, discomfort in social situations, a sense of inadequacy due to lack of preparation, and difficulties in expressing oneself.

Embarrassment in Classroom Participation

(13) "I feel embarrassed when I have to give a presentation." (CC04)

(14) "I feel embarrassed when I answer a question and do not know how to respond." (JN04)

(15) "I feel embarrassed because I am the only one in the class who forgot to submit the homework." (LT04)

(16) "I feel embarrassed if my presentation assignment is not completed properly." (SN04)

(17) "I feel embarrassed when I cannot answer the teacher's question." (LD04)

(18) "I feel embarrassed if my answer is incorrect in class." (DA04)

Discomfort in Social Situations

(19) "I feel embarrassed if I forget a classmate's name." (YA04)

(20) "I feel embarrassed when I speak Indonesian with the lecturer." (YR04)

Embarrassment Due to Lack of Preparation

(21) "I feel embarrassed if my presentation homework is not completed properly." (SN04)

Embarrassment Due to Inability to Express Oneself

(22) "I feel embarrassed if I mispronounce sentences in Indonesian." (TK04)

The respondents reported a variety of situations that triggered feelings of embarrassment during Indonesian language learning. Most respondents experienced

embarrassment when required to speak in front of the class, particularly during presentations or when they did not receive a response from the audience. Embarrassment also emerged when they made mistakes, such as providing incorrect answers, mispronouncing words or sentences, or being unable to respond to the teacher's questions.

In addition, some students reported feeling embarrassed when they were the only ones who forgot to complete or submit assignments, as illustrated in statement (15), or when their work was not completed satisfactorily, as in (16). Feelings of embarrassment also arose in social interactions, for instance when speaking Indonesian with the lecturer (20) or when forgetting a classmate's name (19).

These findings suggest that embarrassment in BIPA learning is primarily driven by fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence in speaking, and both social and academic pressures. This is consistent with previous research indicating that the sense of embarrassment commonly experienced by second language (L2) learners is closely related to their overall self-image and how they are perceived, evaluated, and judged by others (Lewis, 1971; Tangney, 1990, 1995; Tangney & Dearing, 2003). Such feelings may influence their participation in classroom activities and interactions with native speakers. Therefore, it is essential to implement instructional strategies that help learners overcome embarrassment and enhance their confidence in using Indonesian.

Teaching Strategies to Support Students' Emotional Aspects

The findings of this study indicate that although students' levels of anxiety, boredom, and embarrassment in BIPA learning are relatively low, attention to emotional aspects remains a crucial factor in the success of language learning. A positive learning experience is not solely determined by linguistically effective teaching methods but also by instructional approaches that take into account students' psychological conditions, particularly in the context of foreign language learning.

Therefore, BIPA instructors should implement strategies that actively support students' emotional well-being, including the following:

Scaffolded Speaking

This technique enables students to develop speaking skills progressively through structured support, ranging from guided pronunciation practice to more spontaneous communication. Such an approach can help reduce feelings of embarrassment and enhance learners' confidence in speaking.

Small Group Work and Pair Practice

Interaction in small groups or pairs tends to create a safer and more supportive learning environment. Students are more likely to feel comfortable experimenting, making mistakes, and providing mutual feedback without fear of negative judgment. For example, students may be given different versions of a gap-text task and asked to dictate information to one another, thereby practicing integrated language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Context-Based Tasks

Assignments that are relevant to students' daily lives enable them to recognize the practical value of language learning. Tasks such as interviewing native Indonesian speakers

about their weekend activities or other engaging topics can stimulate interest and reduce boredom.

Role-Play

Role-playing activities allow students to express themselves in various real-life communicative situations. In addition to improving speaking skills, this method fosters confidence and reduces anxiety. For instance, students may engage in role-play scenarios set in a café, restaurant, hospital, or other everyday contexts.

Interactive Media

The use of media such as videos and interactive platforms—including Wordwall, Kahoot, LearningApps, Slido, and Quizizz—can create an enjoyable and dynamic learning environment. Such interactivity is essential for maintaining student engagement and minimizing boredom.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that GXNU students from China generally feel comfortable in BIPA learning at Universitas Negeri Malang. Their level of anxiety in speaking Indonesian is relatively low, with an average score of 2.12, suggesting that most students do not experience significant concern when communicating in class. The primary sources of anxiety identified are related to examinations, academic tasks, and grades.

Boredom in the learning process is also relatively low, with an average score of 1.35. Most students perceive the teaching methods as engaging and not monotonous. Furthermore, the level of embarrassment resulting from corrections by lecturers or peers is low (average score of 1.71), indicating a positive attitude toward improving language proficiency.

Overall, GXNU students demonstrate a generally positive learning experience at UM, with relatively low levels of anxiety, boredom, and embarrassment. However, additional attention is still required to support students who experience academic anxiety, enabling them to develop greater confidence in their learning. Negative emotions such as worry, boredom, and embarrassment may hinder the learning process of international students in BIPA programs if not properly addressed.

Therefore, it is essential to implement learning strategies that provide stronger emotional support, including communicative approaches, more interactive teaching methods, and the development of a more inclusive learning environment to reduce anxiety and enhance students' motivation.

Future research may explore positive emotions such as satisfaction, pride, and self-confidence, as well as other negative emotions such as anger, sadness, frustration, and stress in BIPA learning. In addition, more in-depth analysis of how these emotions influence learning outcomes and the strategies students use to manage them may provide more comprehensive insights into the emotional dynamics of foreign language learning.

Acknowledgements or Notes

Please collate acknowledgements or notes in a separate section at the end of the article before the references.

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