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MOTIVATIONAL AND AFFECTIVE FACTORS IN FUNCTIONAL ENGLISH COURSES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract
The present study examined the relationships between satisfaction, motivation, boredom, anxiety and learning expectations in Functional English courses with 197 undergraduate students of a university in Pakistan. The study employed a 30-item Likert questionnaire and descriptive, correlational, regression, and group-comparison analysis techniques based on the control-value theory and recent studies on foreign language learner emotions. The results indicated that satisfaction, motivation, and learning expectations were highly positively correlated, and boredom and anxiety were negatively correlated with these variables. There was also a positive relationship between preference for interactive, career-oriented, and technology-supported activities and more positive learner experiences. Male students reported higher boredom and anxiety than female students, and perceived proficiency gains were correlated with higher satisfaction, motivation, and expectations. The findings of this study recommends that pedagogies that are emotionally supportive, interactive and career relevant should be the focus of Functional English instruction in higher education.

Keywords: Motivation, Affective Factors, Functional English, English Language Learning , University Students

Introduction

English remains the language of higher education, employability and international mobility in South Asia, and Pakistani universities regularly mandate that all undergraduate students, regardless of their field of study, take mandatory courses in Functional English or Communication Skills (Alam and Bashir Uddin 2013; Jebbour 2021). These courses are designed to combine general

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English language instruction with English for Specific Purposes (ESP): they aim to develop general communicative competence and to equip learners with the language skills required for their own professional and academic disciplines, including report writing, presentations, and interview skills (Basturkmen 2010; Dou 2024; Mao et al. 2024).

In the last era, L2 research has shifted from cognition and aptitude to the importance of learner emotions in influencing engagement, persistence and achievement (Dewaele and MacIntyre 2014; Li and Xing 2024; Mercer and MacIntyre 2014). Positive emotions like enjoyment and peace of mind, as well as negative emotions like classroom anxiety and boredom, have been found to have independent, and sometimes counterintuitive, relationships with learners' attitudes and motivation (Dewaele and Botes 2025). The moderated-mediation study by Dewaele and Botes (2025) with 502 Moroccan English Foreign Language (EFL) learners indicates that Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and Foreign Language Peace of Mind (FLPOM) are positive predictors of Attitude/Motivation, whereas Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) and Foreign Language Boredom (FLB) are negative predictors, with skill level, academic achievement, and age serving as partial mediators and moderators of these relationships.

However, most of this emotion-oriented literature has been produced in general EFL classrooms in China, Europe and North Africa (Dewaele et al. 2025; Li 2022; Wang et al. 2025), and little is known about the interaction between satisfaction, motivation, boredom, anxiety and learning expectations in compulsory, ESP-oriented Functional English courses in South Asian higher education, where the content of the courses is supposed to be directly related to students' professional paths (Kovačević 2023; Sasabone et al. 2024). This gap is important because the satisfaction of ESP courses is influenced not only by the general emotions in the classroom but also by the perceived relevance of the content to the students' academic and career objectives, which is not directly measured by general FLE/FLCA instruments (Basturkmen 2010; Mao et al. 2024).

Aim of the Study

The present study aims to fill this gap by surveying 197 undergraduate students from various disciplines (business, computer science, accounting and finance, mass communication and others) studying Functional English courses at a university in Pakistan. It is based on the logic of the emotion and motivation research tradition of Dewaele and colleagues, but uses a locally developed instrument that measures five interrelated constructs: course satisfaction, motivation, classroom boredom, classroom anxiety, and learning expectations, as well as isolating learners' preference for interactive, technology-supported, and professionally relevant activities. The study also addresses recent calls to explore the intersection of technology integration and the broader sustainability and quality-education agendas with everyday language-classroom practice.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the relationship between Satisfaction, Motivation, Boredom, Anxiety and Learning Expectations of Undergraduate level students of Functional English courses in Pakistan.
2. To examine the impact of students' preferences for interactive learning, career orientation, and the use of technology on motivational and affective outcomes.
3. To identify the pedagogical implications in relation to improving Functional English teaching at higher education level.

Research Questions

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1. Are there any relationships between satisfaction, motivation, boredom, anxiety and learning expectations in functional English course among the students of undergraduate level in Pakistan?

2. How do students' preferences for interactive, career oriented, and technology supported activities influence their motivational and affective experiences in Functional English courses?
3. How can these motivational and affective factors be utilized for the betterment of Functional English instruction in Higher Education in Pakistan?

Literature Review

From Anxiety to a Broader Emotional Landscape

L2 emotion research has focused almost exclusively on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) which was first conceptualized by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) as a unique complex of self-perceptions and feelings associated with the uniqueness of classroom language learning. This has led to the development of positive psychology in applied linguistics, which has expanded the focus to encompass Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE; Dewaele and MacIntyre 2014), Foreign Language Peace of Mind (FLPOM; Zhou et al. 2023), and Foreign Language Boredom (FLB; Li, Dewaele, and Hu 2023), resulting in a multidimensional emotional landscape in which achievement-related activities, control appraisals, and value appraisals all contribute to the creation of discrete positive and negative emotions (Li and Xing 2024, from a control-value theory perspective).

This expanded field has consistently demonstrated that positive and negative emotions are only moderately (and sometimes not significantly) related, functioning more like two independent dimensions than two extremes of a single continuum (Dewaele and Botes 2025; Li and Xing 2024). This pattern has been further confirmed by recent large-sample studies: Wang et al. (2025) conducted a variable-centred analysis and a person-centred analysis of Chinese primary-school learners, finding that there were different enjoyment–anxiety profiles; Zhai (2025) carried out a quasi-experimental intervention study, which showed that a structured anxiety-reduction training package could reduce FLCA and other negative emotions, but not necessarily enjoyment, indicating that enjoyment and anxiety are partially independent.

Gender has been consistently found to be a correlate of these emotions, but results are not always consistent. A systematic meta-analysis by Botes, Dewaele and colleagues (n.d.) revealed that there was no robust and generalisable gender effect on FLCA when study-level moderators were considered, indicating that context-specific factors may influence any gender differences in classroom emotion (Wang et al., 2025).

The second part of the literature will focus on the experience of foreign language boredom and engagement. One of the most researched negative L2 emotions in the last five years is boredom. Li (2022) demonstrated that FL learning boredom is a result of the interaction between learner-internal variables (e.g., motivation, achievement) and teacher-centred variables (e.g., lesson variety, perceived teacher enthusiasm). Pawlak, Derakhshan, Mehdizadeh, and Kruk (2025) identified a variety of mediating variables and coping strategies that learners use to deal with boredom in online and blended settings, and Shimray and Wangdi (2025) reported the causes of boredom and potential solutions from students' perspectives in online foreign language classrooms. Dai and Wang (2024) conducted complementary research and found that the use of technology in pedagogical ways had different effects on the Chinese EFL learners' feelings of enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom, while Bensalem et al. (2024) demonstrated that the combination of grit, enjoyment,

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and boredom predicted EFL learners' willingness to communicate in the context of blended learning. This literature coalesces around a core theme: boredom is not just the lack of enjoyment, but an active, and often teacher- and task-tackled emotional state (Li 2022; Pawlak et al. 2025).

Motivation and Self-Determination Theory in L2 Classrooms

In recent years, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) has been increasingly adopted in applied linguistics as a framework to explain sustained intrinsic motivation as the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan and Deci 2020). Alrabai and Alamer (2024) applied structural equation modelling with EFL learners to reveal that teachers' motivational practices positively influence learners' L2 achievement through SDT-consistent pathways, and He (2025) found that professor–student rapport and grit together influence engagement in AI-assisted English classrooms through SDT. In an SDT-informed framework, Derakhshan and Fathi (2024) also found that grit and FLE are predictors of online engagement through online learning self-efficacy. The findings of this work indicate that motivation in Functional English and other ESP courses is not likely to be explained by a single teacher or content-related factor, but rather the combined satisfaction of the learners' needs for autonomy-supportive teaching, perceived competence gains, and socially connected classroom experiences.

The course design for ESP is a crucial component of the course. The design of ESP courses is an important part of the course. Learner satisfaction in ESP and Functional English courses is closely related to the perceived relevance of the course content to learners' professional and academic paths, as these courses are explicitly justified by their relevance. The results of the needs-analysis studies consistently show that ESP learners prefer authentic and discipline-relevant tasks, such as accounting students preferring accounting-related speaking tasks and professional-register writing tasks (Mao et al. 2024; Sasabone, Irman, Taufiq, and Hasbi 2024). In the same way, Dou (2024) demonstrates that the satisfaction of ESP students is a two-way process between students' academic objectives and career aspirations, and teachers' ability to adjust methods and materials. In Pakistan, in particular, needs-analysis studies of engineering and other disciplinary groups have long pointed to a mismatch between the content of the generic English course and students' professional English needs, which Functional English courses are explicitly designed to address, but not always effectively (Alam and Bashir Uddin 2013).

Technology-Enhanced Language Learning

The motivational and engagement advantages of technology use in EFL classrooms have been well documented in the literature. In a study of 357 Chinese EFL students, Zhang and Miao (2025) employed structural equation modelling to determine the significant predictors of engagement and motivation, which were literacy in artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented/virtual reality (AR/VR) tools, respectively. The results indicated that the more technologically literate students, the more they reported being engaged and motivated. Likewise, Yuan et al. (2025) demonstrated that mobile-assisted collaborative language learning affects the engagement of college students in blended English learning, and Yang and Tan (2025) revealed that various factors have different impacts on the active engagement of college students in blended learning, with some differences between genders. Derakhshan (2025) also found that EFL students' attitudes toward generative-AI-mediated instruction influence their emotional involvement and goal setting. The findings from the reviewed studies on the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in EFL classrooms are consistent in highlighting that ICTs like mobile-assisted language learning, learning-management systems, and AI-based applications have the potential to boost learner motivation, autonomy, and engagement, while also presenting infrastructural and training-related challenges, particularly in resource-limited settings (Ahmed and Al-Kadi 2025; Kessler 2024).

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This literature is directly applicable to the Functional English courses, which are often criticized for their repetitive and dull nature in student feedback (Pawlak, Kruk, and Zawodniak 2024). Based on the above research, the deliberate use of mobile applications, AI-based feedback tools, and blended or flipped teaching methods provides a tangible and evidence-based approach to enhancing the quality of Functional English courses (Yuan et al. 2025; Zhang and Miao 2025).

Language Education and the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) calls on signatory states to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030, including by ensuring access to and equitable access to and participation in quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, through an adequate and equitable digital education infrastructure (United Nations 2026). While SDG4 was developed with the primary focus on basic and secondary education, the principles of equitable access, quality of instruction, digital inclusion, and relevance to learners' life and career trajectories are directly applicable to higher-education language provision (Cordova 2024). Cordova (2024) illustrated how SDGs can be effectively incorporated into English language and literature classrooms to sensitise students to global issues and enhance their language learning, while Yaccob, Yunus, and Hashim (2022) demonstrated how the integration of global competence in English-as-a-Second-Language classrooms in Malaysia directly operationalises SDG4's quality-education mandate. The pedagogical recommendations that follow in this article have a coherent policy rationale for Functional English courses, as they are linked to the students' professional fields (SDG4's emphasis on relevance and quality) and the digital infrastructure and teacher training for technology-enhanced delivery (SDG4's targets on digital access and qualified teachers).

Method

Participants

The study involved 197 undergraduate students studying compulsory Functional English courses in a Pakistani university. The sample consisted of 116 female students (58.9%), and 75 male students (38.1%). The participants were from the 3rd semester (n = 75), 4th semester (n = 44) and 5th semester (n = 77, one respondent indicated both 3rd and 4th semester), and included a wide range of disciplines such as Computer Science/Information Technology (29.4%), Business Administration (23.9%), Accounting and Finance (5.1%) and smaller numbers from Mass Communication/Media, English, International Relations and Clinical Psychology. The majority of the participants had already taken two or three of the sequential English I–III course levels (82 students had taken all three), and self-rated their overall progress in English since entering university as Good (n = 101, 51.3%), Excellent (n = 61, 31.0%), Fair (n = 28, 14.2%), or Poor (n = 7, 3.6%).

Instrument

A five-point Likert-type questionnaire (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was used to gather data, with 30 core items organized into five conceptual blocks, along with items related to department, semester, gender, and completed course levels, an overall self-rated progress item, and four open-ended items on beneficial topics, suggested improvements, career alignment, and preferred activities.

Procedure

The questionnaire was sent to students who were already taking Functional English courses in mid-2025 through Google Forms. The survey was anonymous, voluntary, and uncompensated, and it began with a description of the purpose of the study and a consent checkbox, following standard ethical guidelines for low-risk educational survey research (Dörnyei and Dewaele 2023).

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Data Analysis

Likert responses were numerically recoded (Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 5) and then averaged within each conceptual block to create composite scores for Satisfaction, Motivation, Boredom, Engagement Preference, Anxiety, and Expectations. Cronbach's alpha was used to test internal consistency. All six composites were correlated with each other using Pearson correlations. Two multiple linear regression models were tested to determine if Boredom, Anxiety, Engagement Preference, and Expectations predicted Motivation and Satisfaction, respectively. Independent-samples t-tests (gender) and one-way ANOVAs (self-rated progress; semester) tested group differences on all six composites.

Finally, based on the moderation logic of recent moderated-mediation models of L2 emotions (Dewaele and Botes 2025), two moderation models were tested to determine whether the relationship between Boredom and Motivation, and the relationship between Engagement Preference and Motivation were moderated by mean-centred predictors and interaction terms, respectively, representing self-rated proficiency progress (a proxy for perceived skill level, coded Poor = 1 to Excellent = 4).

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for all six composites are shown in Table 1. The internal consistency of all subscales was good to excellent (α = .74 to .91), similar to the reliability of the corresponding scales in the FLE/FLCA/FLB tradition (Botes et al. 2022; Zhou et al. 2023). Motivation (M = 3.97, SD = 0.80) and Engagement Preference (M = 3.99, SD = 0.83) were the highest-rated composites, followed closely by Satisfaction (M = 3.90, SD = 0.84) and Expectations (M = 3.90, SD = 0.70). The experienced Boredom composite was rated at a moderate level (M = 3.54, SD = 0.92), and the Anxiety composite was the lowest rated and most variable composite (M = 3.06, SD = 1.13).

Construct	Items	M	SD	α
Satisfaction	5	3.90	0.84	.908
Motivation	5	3.97	0.80	.902
Boredom (experienced)	3	3.54	0.92	.741
Engagement Preference	2	3.99	0.83	.796
Anxiety	5	3.06	1.13	.907
Expectations	5	3.90	0.70	.826

Correlations Among Constructs

The Pearson correlation matrix is shown in Table 2. Satisfaction and Motivation were very strongly positively correlated ($r = .80$, $p < .001$), and both were strongly correlated with Expectations ($r = .61$ and .71, respectively, both $p < .001$), suggesting that satisfied, motivated learners were also learners whose expectations for the course had been met — a pattern broadly consistent with the entangled but conceptually distinct relationship between emotions/attitudes and motivation described in the wider L2 literature (Dewaele and Botes 2025; Dörnyei 2020). Engagement Preference was moderately and positively related to Satisfaction ($r = .31$), Motivation ($r = .44$), and Expectations ($r = .57$), which directly supports the pedagogical value of interactive, technology-supported activities.

Bivariate correlations between experienced Boredom and the classic FLB literature were quite different: there was essentially no correlation with Satisfaction ($r = -.02$) or Motivation ($r = .05$),

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a weak correlation with Expectations (r = .18), and a moderate correlation with Anxiety (r = .29) and, importantly, Engagement Preference (r = .47). Nearly zero bivariate correlations were found between anxiety and Satisfaction (r = .13), Motivation (r = .08), and Expectations (r = −.01). This is in contrast to the studies by Dewaele and Botes (2025), where FLCA and FLB were significant negative direct predictors of Attitude/Motivation, which is discussed further in the regression analyses below and in the Discussion.

	Sat.	Mot.	Bor.	EngPref	Anx.	Exp.
1. Satisfaction	—					
2. Motivation	.795**	—				
3. Boredom	−.016	.046	—			
4. Engagement Pref.	.306**	.443**	.469**	—		
5. Anxiety	.131	.078	.289**	−.024	—	
6. Expectations	.607**	.707**	.182*	.566**	−.012	—

Regression Models Predicting Motivation and Satisfaction

Two multiple linear regression models were used to test the unique contribution of Boredom, Anxiety, Engagement Preference, and Expectations to Motivation and Satisfaction (Table 3). The model predicting Motivation was significant, $F(4, 192) = 55.62$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .54$, adjusted $R^2 = .53$. Expectations was the strongest unique predictor ($\beta = .65$, $p < .001$), followed by Engagement Preference ($\beta = .17$, $p = .012$) and Boredom, which was a significant negative predictor after controlling for the other variables ($\beta = -.20$, $p = .001$), consistent with the negative role of FLB reported elsewhere (Dewaele and Botes 2025; Li 2022). Even though the bivariate correlation between Anxiety and Motivation was near zero (r = .04, p = .83), it was a small but significant positive predictor when the other three variables were controlled ($\beta = .15$, $p = .006$), a pattern typical of a statistical suppression effect, in which the unique contribution of a predictor changes sign after variance shared with other, more strongly related predictors (here, primarily Expectations) is removed (see Discussion).

The model predicting Satisfaction was also significant, $F(4, 192) = 34.93$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .42$, adjusted $R^2 = .41$. Again, Expectations was the dominant predictor ($\beta = .61$, $p < .001$), Boredom was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.22$, $p = .001$), Anxiety was a small positive suppressor-type predictor ($\beta = .20$, $p = .001$), and Engagement Preference did not reach significance once Expectations was controlled ($\beta = .07$, $p = .374$), suggesting that its bivariate association with Satisfaction operates substantially through its shared variance with Expectations.

Predictor	B (Motivation)	β	p	B (Satisfaction)	β	p
Boredom	−0.17	−.20	.001	−0.20	−.22	.001
Anxiety	0.10	.15	.006	0.15	.20	.001
Engagement Pref.	0.17	.17	.012	0.07	.07	.374
Expectations	0.74	.65	<.001	0.74	.61	<.001

Group Differences

Independent-samples t-tests revealed that male students reported significantly higher Boredom (M = 3.74, SD = 0.86) than female students (M = 3.46, SD = 0.92), $t(159) = 2.14$, $p = .034$, and

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significantly higher Anxiety (M = 3.29, SD = 1.13, versus M = 2.92, SD = 1.10 for females), t(160) = 2.22, p = .028. There were no significant gender differences for Satisfaction, Motivation Preference, Engagement Preference, or Expectations (all p > .26).

Each of these constructs showed large, highly significant differences between the groups, with each construct increasing monotonically from the Poor to the Excellent progress groups: Satisfaction, F(3, 193) = 31.25, p < .001; Motivation, F(3, 193) = 27.52, p < .001; Engagement Preference, F(3, 193) = 10.81, p < .001; and Expectations, F(3, 193) = 23.41, p < .001. Boredom also varied significantly by progress level, F(3, 193) = 6.07, p = .001, but not monotonically (the Fair group reported the highest Boredom, not the Poor group). There was no significant difference in anxiety as a function of self-rated progress, F(3, 193) = 1.13, p = .338.

The one-way ANOVAs by semester (3rd, 4th, 5th) revealed significant differences for Satisfaction, F(2, 193) = 9.17, p < .001; Motivation, F(2, 193) = 15.96, p < .001; Engagement Preference, F(2, 193) = 3.43, p = .035; and Expectations, F(2, 193) = 5.29, p = .006, with 4th-semester students reporting the lowest scores on each of these constructs compared to their 3rd- and 5th-semester counterparts, but not necessarily a linear trend across semesters. There was no significant difference between Boredom and Anxiety across the semesters (both p > .60).

The student is able to moderate their own progress. The student can moderate their own progress (5.5).

Based on the moderated-mediation logic of recent L2 emotion research (Dewaele and Botes 2025), two moderation models were tested to determine whether the Boredom–Motivation and Engagement Preference–Motivation relationships were moderated by the progress in self-rated proficiency. Progress was a significant and strong predictor of Motivation in both models (β ≈ .46–.57, both p < .001), and neither interaction term was significant (Boredom × Progress: p = .634; Engagement Preference × Progress: p = .162). This suggests that, in the current sample, the direct effect of self-rated proficiency progress on motivation is strong, while the moderation effect of self-rated proficiency progress on the boredom–motivation and engagement–motivation relationships are not significant, which is similar to Dewaele and Botes' (2025) results that not all moderation pathways in their model were significant (e.g., the moderation effect of age on the FLB–Attitude/Motivation relationship was not significant in their study).

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the relationship between satisfaction, motivation, boredom, anxiety, and learning expectations in the context of Functional English courses in a Pakistani university, building on the research tradition that has been established in general EFL classrooms in other contexts (Dewaele and Botes 2025; Li and Xing 2024). There are three general trends.

First, satisfaction, motivation and expectations were found to be tightly interlocking, as Dörnyei (2020) noted that L2 emotions and motivation, although conceptually different, are highly tangled in practice, and in line with Dewaele and Botes' (2025) finding that positive emotional states and Attitude/Motivation have significant common variance. This entanglement is likely to be mediated by perceived relevance, as the ESP needs-analysis literature has suggested that perceived relevance is one of the most important factors that can lead to learner buy-in (Dou 2024; Mao et al. 2024; Sasabone et al. 2024), and in an ESP-oriented course such as Functional English, the course content is likely to be perceived as relevant when it meets the learners' expectations of practical, career-oriented skill development (e.g., interview practice, report writing, major-tailored examples).

Second, and more surprisingly, the bivariate correlation between experienced boredom and experienced anxiety in the classroom and satisfaction and motivation was weak or negligible, as compared to Dewaele and Botes (2025), who found that FLCA and FLB were significant negative

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direct predictors of Attitude/Motivation among general EFL learners. Once shared variance with Expectations and Engagement Preference was controlled in multiple regression, however, Boredom re-emerged as a significant negative predictor of both Motivation and Satisfaction, while Anxiety unexpectedly became a small positive predictor , a textbook statistical suppression pattern in which a variable's unique contribution changes sign because it correlates with other predictors more strongly than with the outcome itself (here, Anxiety's positive correlation with Boredom, r = .29, likely absorbed anxiety-related variance that would otherwise have suppressed motivation). This finding is a helpful methodological reminder, in line with the emotion literature as a whole, which has focused on the need to interpret emotions in relation to each other, rather than in isolation (Feldman Barrett 2017; Li and Xing 2024), that bivariate correlations can underestimate or even obscure the unique contribution of a particular classroom emotion once other co-occurring emotions are taken into account.

Third, the Engagement Preference composite (endorsement of interactive activities and professionally relevant topics as ways to counteract boredom) was positively and substantially correlated with Motivation, Satisfaction, and Expectations, and was moderately correlated with experienced Boredom (r = .47), indicating that students who most desire more interactive, technology-supported, career-relevant instruction are disproportionately those who currently feel most bored. This aligns well with the growing body of literature that demonstrates how AI, AR/VR, and mobile learning tools can boost EFL learners' engagement and motivation (Yuan et al. 2025; Zhang and Miao 2025), and how boredom, in particular, is positively affected by variety, challenge, and perceived relevance in classroom tasks (Li 2022; Pawlak et al. 2025).

Group comparisons also revealed that male students experienced significantly more boredom and anxiety than female students, which is contrary to some recent findings (e.g., Wang et al. 2025, who found higher FLE and FLCA among female primary-school learners) but not inconsistent with the meta-analytic evidence that gender effects on classroom anxiety are inconsistent across contexts and likely moderated by unmeasured cultural or institutional variables. Self-rated proficiency progress, on the other hand, was consistently and strongly related to satisfaction, motivation, engagement preference, and expectations, and this relationship was similar to that found in the broader L2 literature (Dewaele and Botes 2025; Li et al. 2020), but did not significantly moderate the relationships between boredom and motivation or between engagement and motivation in this sample, perhaps because the measure of progress was self-reported and coarse-grained (four categories) compared to the objective measures of proficiency and academic achievement used in larger-scale studies (Dewaele and Botes 2025).

The SDGs are integrated into the curriculum, and technology is used to enhance learning.The SDGs are part of the curriculum and technology is used to support learning.

This lesson will focus on how to use classroom technology to the fullest to minimize boredom and maintain motivation.

The most obvious implication of this study is that Functional English teachers should use technology in the classroom in a purposeful and sustained way, both to directly alleviate boredom and to take advantage of students' expressed desire for interactive and engaging teaching. The results of the correlations between Engagement Preference and Motivation (r = .44), Engagement Preference and Expectations (r = .57), and Engagement Preference and experienced Boredom (r = .47) suggest that the students who are most likely to be at risk of disengagement are also the students who are most likely to benefit from a change to interactive, technology-supported teaching.

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Specifically, and based on the above literature on technology-enhanced language learning, Functional English teachers can incorporate: (a) mobile-assisted and collaborative learning tools for out-of-class practice and peer feedback; (b) AI-assisted writing and speaking feedback tools, which recent research has demonstrated can improve emotional engagement and goal orientation when appropriately mediated by the teacher (Derakhshan 2025; Zhang and Miao 2025); (c) flipped delivery formats that integrate short input videos with in-class, task-based practice, which have been shown to increase active engagement, though with some gender-related variation in uptake that instructors should monitor (Yang and Tan 2025); and (d) gamified or AR/VR-supported simulations of professional tasks that directly operationalize the career-relevant content that the Expectations items in this study indicate students strongly desire. Technological literacy was found to be a predictor of engagement and motivation, so institutions should also provide short technology orientation sessions for students and teachers, not relying on technology use alone to ensure engagement.

Linking the provision of Functional English to SDG 4

The recommendations above are also directly linked to the focus of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality, relevant and digitally inclusive education (United Nations 2026). The policy-level support for investing in technology infrastructure and teacher training in Functional English programmes, as opposed to using educational technology as an add-on, is provided by SDG4's call to substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers and its explicit target on expanding digital access in education (United Nations 2026). At the same time, Cordova's (2024) example of how SDGs can be integrated into regular English instruction and Yaccob, Yunus, and Hashim's (2022) description of how global-competence integration applies to SDG4 in ESL lessons indicate another complementary pathway for the redesign of Functional English: incorporating SDG themes (such as sustainable business practices, digital literacy, and global citizenship) as content for career-oriented reading, writing, and discussion activities. This would also meet the students' expressed need for content that is more professionally relevant and less repetitive (as measured by the Expectations and Engagement Preference constructs in this study), and would help, albeit in a small but tangible way, to fulfill the universities' broader institutional commitments to sustainable development.

Limitations of the Study

These findings are limited by a number of factors. First, the sample was obtained through convenience/snowball sampling from one Pakistani university, which restricts the generalisability of the findings to other universities and contexts in Pakistan. Second, all measures were self-reported and cross-sectional, which means that causal inferences could not be made; longitudinal or experimental designs would be required to determine, for example, whether the correlational pattern reported here is causal, such as increased technology-supported interactivity causing a decrease in boredom over time. Third, the Boredom/Engagement block included items indexing experienced boredom and items indexing endorsement of engagement strategies, which were analysed as conceptually and empirically distinct composites in the present study, but could be analysed as a single, validated boredom scale, like the Foreign Language.

Conclusion

This study is a South Asian, ESP-based case study that joins the growing body of research on learner emotions and motivation in foreign language learning. The cluster of satisfaction, motivation and learning expectations was highly interconnected, and experienced boredom and anxiety had weak direct links with these positive constructs, but became significant negative predictors when modelled together with other emotions. Students' own preference for interactive,

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technology-supported, career-relevant instruction was always correlated with more positive outcomes, providing clear, actionable direction for redesigning the Functional English course. The pedagogical and policy arguments for making technology integration and content relevance central to compulsory English courses in higher education are both pedagogical and policy-based, given the focus on quality, relevant, and digitally inclusive education in SDG 4.The pedagogical and policy arguments for making technology integration and content relevance central to compulsory English courses in higher education are both pedagogical and policy-based, given the focus on quality, relevant, and digitally inclusive education in Pakistan.

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