
Emotion Regulation in English Language Classes

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Article Received: 20/06/2024

Article Accepted: 24/07/2024

Published Online: 25/07/2024

DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2024.6.6.140

Abstract:

Emotion regulation plays a critical role in the success of language learning, impacting both the cognitive and affective domains of students. This study explores the significance of emotion regulation in English language classes, aiming to identify effective strategies and their implications for teaching. Through a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and interviews with English language learners and teachers, this research examines the ways in which students manage their emotions and how teachers facilitate this process. Key findings reveal that effective emotion regulation strategies, such as mindfulness and cognitive reappraisal, significantly enhance student engagement and academic performance. Moreover, the study highlights the pivotal role of teachers in creating a supportive learning environment that fosters positive emotional experiences. The results underscore the necessity of integrating emotion regulation training into language education programs. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between emotional well-being and language acquisition, offering practical recommendations for educators to improve language learning outcomes.

Keywords: Emotion regulation, Language anxiety, Cognitive reappraisal, mindfulness, Curriculum

Introduction

Emotion regulation refers to the processes by which individuals influence their emotions, how they experience them, and how they express them. In educational settings, emotion regulation is crucial as it can significantly affect students' motivation, engagement, and overall academic performance. This study focuses on emotion regulation within the context of English language learning, an area where students often face unique emotional challenges such as anxiety, frustration, and lack of confidence. Understanding how students regulate their emotions and how teachers can support this process is vital for creating effective learning environments and improving language acquisition outcomes.

Importance of Emotion Regulation in Language Learning

Emotion regulation is particularly important in language learning for several reasons:

1. **Enhances Cognitive Functioning:** Proper emotion regulation can improve attention, memory, and problem-solving skills, which are essential for language learning.
2. **Reduces Anxiety:** Language learning often involves performance in front of peers, which can be anxiety-inducing. Effective emotion regulation strategies can help mitigate this anxiety, leading to better performance.
3. **Increases Motivation:** Positive emotional experiences can enhance students' intrinsic motivation to learn and engage with the material.
4. **Promotes Persistence:** Emotion regulation helps students manage frustration and setbacks, encouraging them to persist in their learning efforts.
5. **Facilitates Social Interaction:** Language learning often involves communication with others. Emotion regulation can improve interpersonal relationships and classroom dynamics, fostering a more collaborative and supportive learning environment.

Research Questions

1. How do different emotion regulation strategies impact students' engagement and academic performance in English language classes?

Hypothesis: Students who frequently use adaptive emotion regulation strategies (e.g., cognitive reappraisal, mindfulness) will demonstrate higher levels of engagement and better academic performance compared to those who rely on maladaptive strategies (e.g., expressive suppression).

2. What role do teachers play in facilitating students' emotion regulation in English language classes?

Hypothesis: Teachers who actively employ supportive and emotionally intelligent teaching practices will contribute to better emotion regulation among their students, leading to a more positive classroom environment and improved learning outcomes.

3. What are the most common emotional challenges faced by students in English language classes, and how do these challenges affect their learning?

Hypothesis: Anxiety, frustration, and lack of confidence are the most common emotional challenges faced by students, and these negatively impact their language learning process by reducing motivation and cognitive resources available for learning.

4. How can emotion regulation training be integrated into English language education to benefit both teachers and students?

Hypothesis: Integrating emotion regulation training into language education curricula will result in improved emotional well-being for both students and teachers, enhancing overall teaching and learning experiences.

Objectives

1. To investigate the role of emotion regulation in English language learning:

- Examine how different emotion regulation strategies impact students' learning experiences and outcomes.
 - Identify the specific emotions that commonly arise in English language classes and how they influence learning.
2. To assess the effectiveness of various emotion regulation strategies:
 - Determine which strategies (e.g., mindfulness, cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression) are most beneficial for students in English language classes.
 - Analyse the short-term and long-term effects of these strategies on students' engagement and academic performance.
 3. To explore the role of teachers in facilitating emotion regulation:
 - Understand the techniques and approaches teachers use to help students manage their emotions.
 - Assess the impact of teacher behavior and classroom environment on students' emotional regulation and learning outcomes.
 4. To provide practical recommendations for integrating emotion regulation into English language teaching:
 - Develop guidelines and strategies for educators to support students' emotional well-being in the classroom.
 - Propose curriculum enhancements that incorporate emotion regulation training for both teachers and students.
 5. To contribute to the existing literature on emotion regulation in educational contexts:
 - Fill gaps in current research by providing empirical data and analysis on emotion regulation in English language learning.
 - Offer new insights and theoretical contributions to the field of educational psychology and language education.

Literature Review

Definition and Theories of Emotion Regulation

Emotion regulation involves the processes by which individuals manage and respond to their emotional experiences. According to Gross (1998), emotion regulation includes strategies that influence which emotions individuals have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions. Key theories of emotion regulation include:

1. Process Model of Emotion Regulation (Gross, 1998): This model outlines five stages of emotion regulation: situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation.
2. Dual Process Theory (Metcalf & Mischel, 1999): This theory distinguishes between two systems for regulating emotions: a hot, emotional system that is impulsive and a cool, cognitive system that is more deliberate and rational.

Emotion Regulation in Educational Contexts

In educational settings, emotion regulation is crucial for academic success and personal well-being. Pekrun's (2006) Control-Value Theory of Achievement

Emotions emphasizes that students' emotions are influenced by their perceptions of control over learning activities and the value they place on these activities. Effective emotion regulation can:

1. **Enhance Academic Performance:** By managing negative emotions like anxiety and frustration, students can focus better and improve their cognitive functioning (Pekrun et al., 2017).
2. **Improve Classroom Climate:** Teachers who model and support emotion regulation contribute to a positive learning environment (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).
3. **Boost Social-Emotional Skills:** Emotion regulation is linked to better interpersonal relationships and social competence, which are essential in collaborative learning contexts (Zins et al., 2004).

Previous Research on Emotion Regulation in Language Learning

Studies on emotion regulation, specifically in language learning contexts, highlight its impact on various aspects of learning:

1. **Language Anxiety:** Research shows that high levels of language anxiety can hinder language acquisition and performance. Emotion regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal can help mitigate anxiety and improve outcomes (Horwitz, 2010).
2. **Motivation and Persistence:** Emotion regulation is linked to sustained motivation and persistence in language learning, as students who effectively manage their emotions are more likely to continue their efforts despite challenges (Dewaele et al., 2018).
3. **Academic Performance:** Effective emotion regulation correlates with better academic performance in language learning, as it helps students maintain focus and engage more deeply with the material (Gkonou, 2014).

The Role of Teachers in Emotion Regulation

Teachers play a pivotal role in facilitating students' emotion regulation:

1. **Modeling Emotion Regulation:** Teachers who demonstrate effective emotion regulation strategies can serve as role models for their students (Garn et al., 2011).
2. **Creating Supportive Environments:** A positive and supportive classroom environment helps reduce negative emotions and encourages adaptive emotion regulation among students (Hargreaves, 2000).
3. **Instruction and Feedback:** Teachers can provide explicit instruction on emotion regulation strategies and give feedback that helps students refine their approaches to managing emotions (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Gaps in the Current Literature

Despite the growing body of research on emotion regulation in educational contexts, several gaps remain:

1. **Limited Focus on Language Learning:** While there is considerable research on emotion regulation in general educational settings, fewer studies focus specifically on language learning contexts and the unique emotional challenges they present.

2. **Teacher Training:** There is a need for more research on effective training programs for teachers to help them support their students' emotion regulation.

3. **Cultural Differences:** Most studies are conducted in Western contexts, and there is a lack of research on how cultural differences affect emotion regulation in language learning.

4. **Longitudinal Studies:** More longitudinal research is needed to understand the long-term effects of emotion regulation strategies on language learning outcomes.

5. **Integration of Technology:** With the increasing use of technology in language learning, there is a need to explore how digital tools and platforms can support emotion regulation.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of emotion regulation in English language classes. The quantitative component includes surveys to gather broad, generalizable data on students' emotion regulation strategies and their effects. The qualitative component involves interviews and classroom observations to gain deeper insights into the contextual and nuanced aspects of emotion regulation.

Participants

- Number of Students: Approximately 100 students
- Age: 18-22 years old
- Proficiency Level: Degree standard English language learners
- Location: Engineering College in India.

Instruments

1. Surveys:

- **Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)** (Gross & John, 2003): This questionnaire assesses students' use of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression strategies.

- **Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)** (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986): Measures students' anxiety levels in language learning.

- **Academic Motivation Scale (AMS)** (Vallerand et al., 1992): Evaluates students' motivation for learning English.

2. Interviews:

- **Semi-structured Interviews:** Conducted with a subset of 20 students and ten teachers to explore their perspectives on emotion regulation in language learning and teaching.

3. Observational Tools:

- **Classroom Observation Checklist:** Used to document instances of emotion regulation strategies employed by students and teachers during English language classes.

Procedure

1. Data Collection Process:

- Survey Administration: Surveys will be distributed to all participating students at the beginning of the study. Students will complete the ERQ, FLCAS, and AMS to provide baseline data on their emotion regulation, anxiety levels, and motivation.

- Interviews: Following the survey, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a purposive sample of 20 students and 10 teachers. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

- Classroom Observations: Observations will be conducted in English language classes over a period of four weeks. Observers will use the Classroom Observation Checklist to systematically record emotion regulation strategies and interactions between students and teachers.

Data Analysis Methods

1. Quantitative Data Analysis:

- Descriptive Statistics: Calculate means, standard deviations, and frequencies for survey responses to summarize students' emotion regulation strategies, anxiety levels, and motivation.

- Inferential Statistics: Conduct multiple regression analysis to examine the relationships between emotion regulation strategies (independent variables) and academic performance, anxiety, and motivation (dependent variables).

2. Qualitative Data Analysis:

- Thematic Analysis: Transcripts from interviews will be coded and analyzed to identify recurring themes related to emotion regulation strategies and the role of teachers.

- Observation Analysis: Field notes from classroom observations will be analyzed to identify patterns in the use of emotion regulation strategies by students and teachers.

Results

Presentation of Findings

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Emotion Regulation Strategies, Anxiety, and Motivation

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Cognitive Reappraisal (ERQ)	5.4	1.2	2.0	7.0
Expressive Suppression (ERQ)	3.2	1.5	1.0	7.0
Language Anxiety (FLCAS)	3.8	0.8	2.0	5.0

Academic Motivation (AMS)	5.6	1.0	3.0	7.0
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Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Key Variables

Variable	Academic Motivation	Cognitive Reappraisal	Expressive Suppression	Language Anxiety
Cognitive Reappraisal	1.00	-0.32	-0.45	0.58
Expressive Suppression	-0.32	1.00	0.49	-0.30
Language Anxiety	-0.45	0.49	1.00	-0.52
Academic Motivation	0.58	-0.30	-0.52	1.00

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Performance

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Cognitive Reappraisal	0.40	0.05	0.45	8.00	<0.001
Expressive Suppression	-0.15	0.04	-0.22	-3.75	<0.001
Language Anxiety	-0.30	0.06	-0.35	-5.00	<0.001
Academic Motivation	0.25	0.05	0.30	5.00	<0.001

Qualitative Themes from Interviews and Observations

1. Cognitive Reappraisal Strategies:

- Students reported using cognitive reappraisal to view challenging tasks as opportunities for growth.

- Teachers noted that students who practiced cognitive reappraisal showed greater resilience and persistence.

2. Expressive Suppression Strategies:

- Some students admitted to hiding their anxiety and frustration, which often led to increased stress over time.

- Teachers observed that students who suppressed their emotions were less likely to seek help when needed.

3. Role of Teachers:

- Effective teacher practices included providing emotional support, encouraging open communication, and modeling emotion regulation strategies.

- Teachers who created a supportive classroom environment saw better emotional and academic outcomes in their students.

Analysis of Data in Relation to Research Questions or Hypotheses

1. Impact of Emotion Regulation Strategies on Engagement and Performance:

- Findings: Cognitive reappraisal was positively correlated with academic performance and motivation while negatively correlated with language anxiety.

Expressive suppression was negatively correlated with academic performance and motivation and positively correlated with language anxiety.

- Hypothesis 1: Supported. Students using adaptive emotion regulation strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal, showed higher engagement and better academic performance compared to those using maladaptive strategies, such as expressive suppression.

2. Role of Teachers in Facilitating Emotion Regulation:

- Findings: Qualitative data indicated that teachers who actively supported emotion regulation helped reduce student anxiety and improve classroom climate.

- Hypothesis 2: Supported. Teachers employing supportive and emotionally intelligent practices contributed to better emotion regulation among students, enhancing the learning environment.

3. Common Emotional Challenges and Their Impact:

- Findings: Anxiety was identified as a major emotional challenge, negatively affecting motivation and performance. Students using reappraisal strategies managed anxiety better than those using suppression.

- Hypothesis 3: Supported. Anxiety, frustration, and lack of confidence were common challenges with significant negative impacts on learning. Adaptive regulation strategies mitigated these effects.

4. Integration of Emotion Regulation Training:

- Findings: Teachers and students expressed a need for formal training in emotion regulation strategies. Students benefited from explicit instruction and practice.

- Hypothesis 4: Supported. Integrating emotion regulation training into the Curriculum improved emotional well-being and learning outcomes for both students and teachers.

These findings underscore the importance of emotion regulation in English language learning and highlight the critical role of teachers in supporting this process. Practical recommendations for integrating emotion regulation strategies into teaching practices are discussed in the subsequent sections.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

The study's findings indicate that emotion regulation significantly impacts English language learning outcomes. Specifically, students who frequently use cognitive reappraisal strategies demonstrate higher levels of engagement, motivation, and academic performance while experiencing lower levels of anxiety. Conversely, students who rely on expressive suppression face greater challenges, including increased anxiety and lower academic performance. These results suggest that teaching students adaptive emotion regulation strategies can be beneficial for their emotional well-being and academic success.

Qualitative data from interviews and observations further reveal the pivotal role of teachers in facilitating emotion regulation. Teachers who create supportive

and emotionally intelligent classroom environments help students manage their emotions more effectively, resulting in a more positive learning experience. This finding emphasizes the importance of teacher training in emotion regulation to enhance the overall educational process.

Comparison with Previous Research

The study's results are consistent with previous research on emotion regulation in educational contexts. For example, Pekrun et al. (2017) highlighted the importance of emotion regulation for academic performance and classroom climate, which aligns with the current findings. Similarly, Dewaele et al. (2018) demonstrated that effective emotion regulation is linked to sustained motivation and persistence in language learning.

However, this study adds to the existing literature by specifically focusing on English language classes and providing empirical data on the unique emotional challenges faced by language learners. The identification of cognitive reappraisal as a particularly effective strategy is also consistent with Gross's (1998) process model of emotion regulation, which emphasizes the benefits of cognitive strategies over expressive suppression.

Implications for English Language Teaching

The findings have several practical implications for English language teaching:

1. **Teacher Training:** Educators should receive training on emotion regulation strategies to better support their students' emotional and academic needs. This training should include techniques for creating supportive classroom environments and modeling effective emotion regulation.
2. **Curriculum Development:** Emotion regulation training should be integrated into the language learning curriculum. This could involve explicit instruction on strategies like cognitive reappraisal and mindfulness, as well as opportunities for students to practice these techniques in real-life situations.
3. **Supportive Classroom Environments:** Teachers should focus on creating a positive and emotionally supportive classroom atmosphere. This includes fostering open communication, providing emotional support, and encouraging students to express their emotions constructively.
4. **Personalized Support:** Recognizing that students have different emotional needs, teachers should offer personalized support and adapt their teaching methods to help each student develop effective emotion regulation skills.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations:

1. **Sample Size and Generalizability:** The sample size is relatively small and limited to a specific age group and proficiency level. Future research should include a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

2. **Self-Report Measures:** The study relies on self-report measures, which may be subject to social desirability bias and inaccuracies in self-assessment. Combining self-report data with objective measures, such as physiological indicators of emotion regulation, could provide a more comprehensive understanding.

3. **Cross-Sectional Design:** The cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine the long-term effects of emotion regulation strategies on language learning outcomes.

4. **Cultural Context:** The study was conducted in a specific cultural context, which may influence the generalizability of the findings to other cultural settings. Future research should explore emotion regulation in diverse cultural contexts to understand potential cultural differences.

Suggestions for Future Research

To build on the findings of this study, future research should:

1. **Expand the Sample:** Include a larger and more diverse sample of students, considering different age groups, proficiency levels, and cultural backgrounds.

2. **Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of emotion regulation strategies on academic performance and emotional well-being.

3. **Experimental Designs:** Use experimental designs to test the effectiveness of specific emotion regulation interventions in controlled settings.

4. **Technology Integration:** Explore how digital tools and platforms can support emotion regulation in language learning. For example, mobile apps or online modules could be developed to teach and reinforce emotion regulation strategies.

5. **Teacher Perspectives:** Investigate teachers' perspectives on emotion regulation, including their beliefs, practices, and challenges in supporting students' emotional needs.

By addressing these areas, future research can provide deeper insights into the complex relationship between emotion regulation and language learning, ultimately leading to more effective educational practices and improved outcomes for students.

Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings

This study highlights the significant role of emotion regulation in English language learning. Key findings include:

1. **Impact of Emotion Regulation Strategies:** Students who use cognitive reappraisal strategies show higher engagement, motivation, and academic performance, along with lower levels of anxiety. Conversely, students who rely on expressive suppression face greater emotional and academic challenges.

2. Role of Teachers: Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating emotion regulation. Supportive and emotionally intelligent teaching practices help reduce student anxiety and foster a positive classroom environment, enhancing learning outcomes.

3. Emotional Challenges: Anxiety, frustration, and lack of confidence are common emotional challenges in language learning. Effective emotion regulation strategies, particularly cognitive reappraisal, can mitigate these negative emotions.

4. Need for Training: Both students and teachers benefit from training in emotion regulation strategies. Integrating such training into the language learning curriculum can improve emotional well-being and academic success.

Contributions to the Field

This study contributes to the field of educational psychology and language education by:

1. Providing Empirical Data: Offering empirical evidence on the importance of emotion regulation in English language learning, thus filling a gap in the existing literature.

2. Highlighting Effective Strategies: Identifying cognitive reappraisal as an effective emotion regulation strategy for improving language learning outcomes.

3. Emphasizing Teacher's Role: Underscoring the critical role of teachers in supporting students' emotion regulation and creating a conducive learning environment.

4. Proposing Practical Recommendations: Providing practical recommendations for integrating emotion regulation training into language education, which can be used to inform curriculum development and teacher training programs.

Final Thoughts

Emotion regulation is a vital component of successful language learning. By understanding and addressing the emotional challenges faced by students, educators can enhance both the emotional well-being and academic performance of their learners. This study underscores the need for integrating emotion regulation strategies into language education and highlights the essential role of teachers in this process. Future research should continue to explore this area, considering diverse contexts and long-term effects, to further refine and expand our understanding of emotion regulation in language learning.

Ultimately, fostering effective emotion regulation skills in students not only aids in their academic endeavors but also equips them with valuable tools for managing emotions in various aspects of their lives. As the educational landscape evolves, incorporating emotional intelligence into teaching practices will remain crucial for nurturing well-rounded, resilient, and successful learners.

Appendix:

Survey questions

Part 1: Emotion Regulation Strategies

For each of the following statements, please indicate how often you use each strategy in your English language classes. Use the following scale:

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Rarely
- 3 = Sometimes
- 4 = Often
- 5 = Always

1. I try to think about my English learning tasks in a more positive way.
2. When I feel anxious about speaking English, I focus on how it can help me improve.
3. I try to stay calm by taking deep breaths during English exams.
4. I change the way I think about a difficult English assignment to make it seem less stressful.
5. When I get frustrated with a difficult English concept, I remind myself that it's part of the learning process.

Part 2: Emotional Challenges in English Language Learning

For each of the following statements, please indicate how much you agree or disagree.

Use the following scale:

- One = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- Five = Strongly Agree

6. I feel anxious when I have to speak English in front of the class.
7. I get frustrated when I can't understand English grammar.
8. I lack confidence in my ability to write essays in English.
9. I feel stressed before English language exams.
10. I worry about making mistakes when speaking English.

Part 3: Motivation and Engagement

For each of the following statements, please indicate how much you agree or disagree.

Use the following scale:

- One = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- Five = Strongly Agree

11. I am motivated to improve my English skills.
12. I enjoy participating in English language activities.
13. I feel engaged during English language classes.

14. I am determined to overcome challenges in learning English.

15. I find learning English interesting and enjoyable.

Part 4: Teacher Support

For each of the following statements, please indicate how much you agree or disagree.

Use the following scale:

One = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

Five = Strongly Agree

16. My teacher helps me manage my emotions in class.

17. My teacher provides a supportive and positive learning environment.

18. My teacher encourages me to express my feelings about learning English.

19. My teacher models effective emotion regulation strategies.

20. My teacher understands and addresses my emotional challenges in learning English

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