

RESEARCH TITLE**The Effect of The Montessori Education on Preschoolers' Boredom, Anxiety, and Enjoyment in EFL Classes in Turkey****Ghina Almshantaf¹ Assist. Prof. Mehdi Solhi¹**¹ İSTANBUL SABAHATTİN ZAİM ÜNİVERSİTESİHNSJ, 2024, 5(1); <https://doi.org/10.53796/hnsj51/36>**Published at 01/01/2024****Accepted at 23/12/2023****Abstract**

This study aimed to examine the emotional effects of Montessori Education on preschoolers aged 3-6. The study was conducted on a group of 80 preschoolers (50 girls and 30 boys). The same group of children was tested twice; while administering a conventional method and then while administering the Montessori Method. Information for the study was collected through a questionnaire where three affective factors were measured: anxiety, boredom, and enjoyment. Demographic information like age, gender and native language was obtained from the school's registration files in addition to the teachers' notebooks. The study results yielded a considerable difference in favor of the Montessori Method. The results also showed a significant difference in the levels of boredom and anxiety whereas the analysis indicated no significant difference in the level of enjoyment in both educational methods.

Key Words: The Montessori Method, preschoolers, affective factors, boredom, anxiety, enjoyment.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The first day at school is crucial in the life of every child; a child either loves or hates school. Therefore, there has been an increasing need to make this day a memorable one. Children's emotions have been recognized to affect their attitude towards learning in general and in acquiring a second/foreign language in particular. If learners have a high level of self-esteem and enjoyment, they are more likely to learn (Krashen 1981). On the other hand, failing to learn for preschoolers is mainly attributed to having debilitating affects such as anxiety and boredom (Young, 1999). One of the key factors to having an enjoyable learning experience is being taught by caring and motivating teachers in the early stages of the learning process. Teachers have an undeniable role in encouraging children to learn especially when it comes to learning a foreign language. The teacher is seen as a mentor and a role model by many young children. In fact, the most successful teachers are those who have emotional influence on their learners through showing interest in their learners' issues; they are compassionate, helpful and dedicated. This role of the teacher is highlighted in the Montessori Method (MM).

The Montessori Method, named after Dr. Maria Montessori, is a child-centered method in which the learners' affects towards learning is addressed and the teacher's role is directed towards creating a comfortable and natural atmosphere for children to learn (Lillard, 2005). Having a preset atmosphere allows children to interact naturally and learn through discovering things with their teachers monitoring them and offering help when needed.

Therefore, investigating the effect of applying the Montessori Method on preschoolers whose mother tongue is Arabic appears to be a fruitful research avenue. This study derives its specialty from the fact that those children and their parents are mainly Arabs who left their original countries and finally settled down in Turkey. The age of the children ranges from 3-6, as this period of their lives is highlighted by many psycholinguists as being a 'sensitive period' in childhood for acquiring a language (Montessori, 1995). So the children are ideal candidates to reliably measure the effectiveness of MM on their emotions regarding EFL classes. It is also worth mentioning that early childhood education is of a high priority as it has a positive impact on a child's future. The UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) has seen the importance of early childhood education.

Childhood period has also been given special attention by researchers in the field of second/foreign language acquisition. Children are more likely to learn as they are seen as having 'absorbent minds' particularly in the first six years of their lives (Montessori, 1995). This period is filled with enormous physical, emotional, and psychological growth and development. Besides, children are born with an innate desire to learn, and this desire starts to decline throughout schooling (Wang & Eccles, 2012). To avoid such a decline, educational programs have searched for alternative and more effective methods to present a foreign language to young children in an interesting and engaging way rather than the conventional methods of teaching which focus on teaching vocabulary and grammar, drilling and testing in an artificial environment. Thus, in the search for alternative methods, the Montessori Method has emerged to be an effective Method especially for young children. This Method uses the communicative approach which focuses on listening and speaking and encourages children to communicate in the target language (TL). Maria Montessori developed her educational method depending on her observations of children. She believed that they have an innate potential to learn. Dr. Montessori recognized two periods in which children follow: the 'Sensitive Period' and the 'Absorbent Mind' (Montessori, 1995). Those periods are similar to Piaget's development stages that all children go through. Both views emphasized the biological basis of development and that children construct knowledge for themselves and they actively participate in the learning process. Dr. Montessori believed that children have Absorbent minds from 0-6 which permits them to absorb Languages. Therefore, Dr. Montessori emphasized the importance of exposing children to English during the Sensitive Period. According to Lillard (2005), the Montessori philosophy is composed of a trinity: the child, the teacher and the prepared environment. Montessori considers the child as an

active being rather than a receptive one. Thus, this method differs from the conventional Methods in which the teacher is not the center of the process. According to Montessori, the teacher is responsible for preparing the environment according to the children's needs without interfering. Teachers are mere observers and they introduce the materials for children in the right time to keep them interested (Montessori, 1949/1974). As a result, the Montessori Method allows children to learn in an enjoyable atmosphere in which they have free choice and hands-on experiments.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The importance of learning a foreign language or two has been seen to be advantageous for children especially with regard to their metalinguistic awareness (Swain, 2000). It is mandatory to learn English as it is considered the language of new science and technology. One major objective of the new educational systems is to enable students to effectively communicate in English and develop their proficiency in the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Thus, there has been a constant search for effective methods to apply in teaching EFL as the conventional methods proved to be insufficient. According to a survey carried out by the British Council in collaboration with TEPAV (Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı), it has been concluded that very few students are able to achieve even basic communicative competency even after a long time of giving English lessons.

As a result, it has been recommended to move from the grammar-based teaching approach to the communicative one; the thing which supports the use of communicative approaches such as the Montessori Method.

Moreover, researchers have worked hard in the field of language acquisition to identify the key factors in making EFL classes a success. There have been great efforts in determining the factors which have the greatest influence on learners; particularly preschoolers aged 3-6. Maria Montessori recognized the gap between what children need and what conventional methods offer. She believed that the conventional methods were responsible for the delay in their educational achievement as they were teacher-centered and focused on memorization and test-based curricula. Negative feelings were associated with schooling; children felt bored and demotivated increasingly (Wang & Eccles, 2012).

On the other hand, some recent researches in neuroscience have supported Dr. Montessori's ideas and observation concerning the child's natural development (Bransford et al., 1999). Dr. Montessori recognized the importance of learning for children during their sensitive period (Montessori, 1995). This period was also recognized by Krashen as (Critical Period Hypothesis CPH), during which children can best learn a second/foreign language (Krashen, 1981). The Montessori Method fosters emotional motivation in children by surrounding them with suitable environment which involved them in communicative activities in the Target Language. From here comes the importance of testing the influence of applying the Montessori Method on preschoolers' emotions. One of the affective orientations that have been taken into closer scrutiny in language education is anxiety. Anxiety is mostly considered as a negative factor in EFL. It has been defined as a feeling of tension, apprehension and nervousness associated with the situation of the respective language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986). Another negative emotion that recently gained attention in L2 education is boredom. A study by Chapman in 2013 has shown that boredom results from under-challenging activities, course book-based activities and under stimulation.

The emotional status of preschoolers affects their reaction and attitude towards learning English. This is because at such age 3-6, children interact with what they love and enjoy, and avoid what they see as boring and strange. "Indeed, a positive emotional climate within a classroom has been shown to be the most powerful predictor of students' motivation to learn." (Lillard, 2005, p. 2). Therefore, if they enjoy learning English, they are sure to achieve progress in acquiring the language. In contrast, if they don't like a certain subject, they will show no interest in learning it.

1.3. Significance of the Research

This research highlighted the significance of giving more attention to the emotional effect of applying a certain method in EFL classes. It also showed how the Montessori Method encouraged the child's intrinsic desire to learn through involving them in thinking, problem-solving and choosing according

to their own preferences. In addition, this study threw the light on the relationship between emotions and the demographic variables such as gender and linguistic background. Besides, it would be valuable for people who are directly or indirectly involved in teaching English as a foreign language. It would be particularly important for those who are interested in using Montessori Method to teach EFL.

In the field of EFL, it would be fruitful to examine the effectiveness of teaching English in an atmosphere of enjoyment, interest and support where the young learners feel happy, secure and loved.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of applying the Montessori Method on preschoolers' emotions in achieving better results in EFL classes and its role in developing their education in comparison with the conventional methods.

As emotions can't be separated from learning, it is vital to measure to what extent the Montessori Method can trigger positive emotions such as interest, enjoyment and happiness in EFL classes. This study also showed the undeniable positive effect of the intervention on preschoolers. Applying the Montessori Method caused changes to the way preschoolers perceive schooling in general and learning English in particular.

1.5. Organization of the Study

This thesis study consists of four chapters. The first chapter includes a statement of the problem, the significance of the research, the research objective, and the research purpose. The second chapter discusses the literature review related to the Montessori Method: its emergence, principles, and emotional effect. There is also an overview of the employment of the findings of a selection of psychological and biological researches by this Method in EFL classes in preschools and KGs.

In the third chapter, there is a detailed report of the research done in preschool premises in Istanbul. The study group is composed of a total of 80 children, 30 boys and 50 girls, in the "3-6 age" group with normal development who received education in an EFL Montessori class of a school in Istanbul in the academic years of 2022-2023 and 2023-2024.

As a data collection tool, a set of questionnaires were administered twice to the same group with an interval of time allowing the same group to be exposed to two different educational methods: one conventional and the other one is a Montessori. To evaluate the children's emotional status in an EFL class, three affective orientations were investigated (i.e. boredom, anxiety, and enjoyment) using three scales. An adjusted form of the Boredom Proneness Scale (BPS), developed by Farmer and Sundberg (1986), was used to measure preschoolers' boredom levels in EFL classes. To measure anxiety levels, a shortened form of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) was applied to suit the young age of the learners. As for enjoyment, an adjusted form of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES), developed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), was administered.

Besides, interviews were performed by two English language teachers to provide their observational information throughout the study period. Information was obtained quantitatively and qualitatively.

In the fourth chapter, the results of the study were discussed and evaluated. Recommendations were suggested and limitations to the study were presented paving the way to furthering the research to new frontiers.

1.6. Basic Questions of the Research

This study added to the previous ones on the Montessori Method by focusing on the emotional effect of applying this method and its relation to the quality of EFL classes for preschoolers.

This research sought to answer the following questions:

Q1: What is the effect of applying the Montessori Method on boredom levels of EFL preschoolers?

Q2: What is the effect of applying the Montessori Method on anxiety level of EFL preschoolers?

Q3: What is the effect of applying the Montessori Method on enjoyment level of EFL preschoolers?

Q4: Is there any difference between male and female participants' affective orientations?

1.7. Objectives of the Research

The main objective of the study was to investigate the impact of applying the Montessori Method on the emotions of preschoolers and its role in improving their attitude and involvement in EFL classes. It also aims to measure the levels of enjoyment, anxiety and boredom in children during English classes and its relation to the improvement of their foreign language skills. In addition, this study intends to explore the influence of prearranged setting, courses and used techniques (games, a variety of choices) in encouraging children to use the target language. It shows to what extent such a comfortable and supporting environment encourages weaker children to be actively involved in learning.

All in all, this study provides a new insight about the key factors to achieve better results in EFL classes for mixed ability children, the relation between applying Montessori Method and arousing positive emotions about learning English. It also benefits EFL teachers and other interested personnel by offering them empirical evidence on the role of positive emotions in achieving English proficiency.

1.8. Thesis Subject and Participants

This study shows how the preschoolers' emotional status has positively changed in EFL classes conducted according to the Montessori Method rather than the conventional methods. Learning English in Montessori schools has increased positive emotions in preschoolers such as enjoyment and interest, and decreased negative (debilitative) emotions like anxiety and boredom. As a result, the children's acquisition of EFL has improved. Moreover, the study has investigated differences in the level of acquiring English in relation to other demographical factors such as gender and linguistic background as the tested children are Arabic speakers. This study has showed a clear-cut evidence of the benefits of employing the Montessori Method due to the peculiarity of the tested group. That is, learning English is considered quite a challenge to Arabic speakers as the two languages have completely different systems such as: the alphabet, the writing style, phonology, pronunciation and grammar.

The study was conducted in a school in Istanbul in the academic years of 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. A group of total 80 preschoolers were examined through two stages: before and after applying the Montessori Method. The sample involved children of both genders: 50 girls and 30 boys. They answered a questionnaire in which three areas were measured: boredom, anxiety and enjoyment in the EFL classes. The questionnaire followed a scale of three responses: 'Yes', 'I am not sure' and 'No'. The same questionnaire was applied before and after applying the Montessori Method. Besides, information was collected about each child's parents, and interviews were held with the assistance of the English teachers of the tested group to provide the findings of their own observation lists.

To address the research questions, data was collected and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Besides, the quantitative data was analyzed and interpreted using the SPSS statistical method which guaranteed reliable and error-free results. The overall aim of the study is to highlight the favorable effect of MM in triggering positive emotions and eliminating anxiety and boredom on preschoolers' acquiring EFL.

Chapter II

Literature Review

2.1. A Method and an Approach

Learning a second or foreign language has always been a matter of great interest for teachers and researchers. Many programs have been introduced to equip teachers all over the world with an extensive range of choices for teaching languages. In the 20th and 21st centuries, language teaching has been enriched by the emergence of many types of approaches and methods that have the greatest impact on the development in the field of teaching.

In *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* by Richards and Rogers(2001), an approach has been described as a set of beliefs and principles that can be used as the basis for teaching a language. According to the previous definition, Communicative Language Teaching and the Natural Approach are of wider range than other methods and can include many methods in teaching. Those two approaches have in common a set of theories and beliefs about the nature of language, of language learning and a derived set of principles for teaching a language. Although none of them leads to a specific set of techniques to be used in teaching a language, they are flexible and can hold a variety of interpretations. Those approaches can be modified through time to adjust the requirements of each phase and the different needs of learners.

On the other hand, a method refers to a specific instructional design or system based on a particular theory of learning and of language learning. It contained detailed specifications of content, roles of teachers and learners, and teaching procedures and techniques. It is relatively fixed in time and there is little space for individual interpretations. The teacher's role is to follow the method and apply it precisely according to the rules. Examples of these methods are: Audiolingualism, Situational Language Teaching, the Silent Way, Suggestopedia and Total Physical Response. The drawbacks of these methods have led to continue searching for more practical methods which guarantee better learning outcomes such as the Montessori Method.

2.2. An Overview of Language Teaching Methods

To reach to the main concern of this thesis, there would be a brief overview of a number of language teaching methods such as: the Grammar Translation method (GTM), the Direct Method, the Audio-lingual method (ALM), the Total Physical Response method (TPR), Suggestopedia, and the Silent Way. These methods need to be taken into account due to their current contributions in education.

2.3. The Grammar Translation Method

This is a traditional teaching style that originated in the late 19th century. Students analyse the grammatical rules of English and then practice translating discourse from their mother tongue into English and vice versa. To achieve this, students are expected to memorize long vocabulary lists and complex grammatical paradigms.

A usual approach with regard to a classroom activity would be to provide a student with an item of grammar, show how it is used in a text and then practice using the item through writing paragraphs, essays or summaries in the target language.

The method emphasizes accuracy over fluency. Learners develop reading and writing skills, with little opportunity to practice listening and speaking. This means that students learning English through the Grammar Translation method often have trouble communicating in the real world.

2.3.1. The Direct Method

The Direct Method emerged as a strong reaction against the grammar translation method and also as an answer to the limitations of the earlier method. It focuses more on phonetics and speaking skills. It draws more on structural approach of language teaching and its theories. Classroom interactions are directly into L2 with no intervention of L1. Drills form pedagogy. Thus, to communicate meaning, more focus is laid on audio and visuals. Unlike the previous method, this one focuses more on Listening and speaking. Grammar is more discovered than taught.

2.3.2. The Audio-lingual Method

Unlike the previous two methods, Audiolingualism drew on Skinner's Behaviorism theory that asserts that anything can be learned through conditioning. It is also based on Pavlov principles of behavior known as stimulus-response theory of psychology. Regarding the use of L1 in the classroom, it is closer to the Direct Method. However, unlike drills, it characterizes creativity in sentence learning. Grammar goes with dialogues and sentences. Structural linguistics aspect of the Method proclaims that language is a set of habits. There is more speech than writing. A teacher should teach language and not about language. The Method led to the establishments of Language Labs in Academic organizations.

2.3.3. Total Physical Response

James Asher, a known psychologist, proposed Total Physical Response (TPR) in 1974. It's a method built around the coordination of speech and action where teachers give commands in the target language and students respond with physical movement. Asher believed that lessons with physical activity may help students perform better. The base has been the same theory of learning a language – LSRW. The baseline is to follow the commands of the teachers without speaking. On a later stage, students themselves give command to other fellow students.

2.3.4. Suggestopedia

Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian psychologist and teacher proposed Suggestopedia, or Desuggestopedia in 1982. The Method has been based on the belief that the process of language learning can be much accelerated if the psychological barriers like performance anxiety and the fear of failure are removed. One needs to be in a relaxed mood in order to concentrate and learn effectively. All the four skills of listening, speaking, Reading and writing are focused on through art like songs, drama and games and exercises. Even the classroom atmosphere changes with light music in the background.

2.3.5. The Silent Way

Like TPR, Silent Way was created in the 1960s by one specific educator, Caleb Gattegno. He believed that the best way for a student to learn a language was for a teacher to remain silent for a large portion of the lesson. At the time, Silent Way was viewed as an unconventional or alternative method by mainstream experts.

Interestingly, while the method has its critics, there is no question that it was the catalyst for a paradigm changing shift in the way we view the role of the teacher and the student. Silent Way was the first method to really emphasize student learning rather than the teacher's teaching. Students take an active role in the learning process and are encouraged to participate as much as possible. This focus on developing student autonomy with the teacher acting as a facilitator is now completely accepted as a valid and effective teaching philosophy.

2.4. The Montessori Method: Emergence, Principles, and Emotional Effect

Maria Montessori (1870-1952), an Italian physician and educator, was best known for her innovative educational method, now known as the Montessori Method. In 1907 she established her first "Children's House" where she observed the children and developed what has become known to Montessori educators as the prepared environment (Lillard, 2005). Dr. Montessori developed her approach scientifically by thoroughly observing the children's natural psychological, physical, and social development. Based on her observation of children, she developed her new philosophy of education. Montessori education is designed to meet the natural development of the child. In this method, children have freedom of choice. But freedom here doesn't mean chaos. Freedom is accompanied with discipline in a way that they are responsible for their learning. Children are encouraged to make choices about what they want to learn and how. They are allowed to move around the classroom and work at their own pace without being interrupted by others.

Montessori identified two periods: the Sensitive Periods and the Absorbent Mind (Montessori, 1949). Dr. Montessori recognized the peculiarity of the age from birth to 6 as the time for optimal learning.

During the sensitive period, children tend to discover and learn new things. She believed that children had the ability to absorb everything like a sponge. They are naturally curious and capable of learning.

In relation to learning languages, Dr. Montessori believed that the only language that humans speak perfectly is the one that they learn in this period when nobody can teach it to them (Montessori, 1949). Besides, Lillard (2005) stated that the sensitive period for learning languages is from 0 to 6 years old. For those reasons, children should be exposed to a foreign language during this period or they would not learn. In Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook she said, "Early childhood is, in fact, the age in which language is formed, and in which the sounds of a foreign language can be perfectly learned" (Lillard, 2005, p. 334).

Moreover, Johnson (2017) has stated that there are three main aspects for a child to acquire another language in a classroom setting: input, output, and interaction. Thus, EFL classes in Montessori schools are arranged in a way that permits natural exposure to an FL. In Montessori's classes "the environment must speak", and the teacher helps provide the material and facilitates interaction in the Target language (TL). To express basic needs for communication in their daily situations, children would spontaneously start to produce a variety of simple words and short phrases in response to comprehensible input. Young children of 3 years old listen most of the time but do not necessarily speak. By the age of 5 and 6 children who have been taught using the Montessori Method for quite a considerable time, start to communicate with their other peers. When the teacher communicates with children in English it is about their everyday needs and it has to be comprehensible and important for learners. From the very first days in the Montessori classroom, children are given the opportunity to listen to true stories, about known subjects, told with great expression (Haines, 2018). According to Lillard (2005) in a Montessori environment, the books must be about reality and nature, never about fantasy. The child at this age is interested in the real world around him. These are considered helping factors in enabling learners to get involved in the learning process and consequently achieving better learning outcomes.

2.5. Eight Principles of Montessori Education

Montessori philosophy suggests that for education to touch a child's heart and mind, the child must be learning because he/she is curious and interested. Montessori strives to make learning an enjoyable experience that stimulates the desire to discover even more. To appeal to each child in this way, the curriculum is individualized according to the following principles:

1. Movement and cognition are closely entwined, and movement can enhance thinking and learning.
2. Learning and well-being are improved when people have a sense of control over their lives.
3. People learn better when they are interested in what they are learning.
4. Tying extrinsic rewards to an activity, like money for reading or high grades for tests, negatively impacts motivation to engage in that activity when the reward is withdrawn.
5. Collaborative arrangements can be very conducive to learning.
6. Learning situated in meaningful contexts is often deeper and richer than learning in abstract contexts.
7. Particular forms of adult interaction are associated with more optimal child outcomes.
8. Order in the environment is beneficial to children. (Lillard, 2005)

2.6. Previous Researches on the Montessori Method

Since its emergence, the Montessori approach has been a fruitful research field for many researchers who seek to figure out the effectiveness of applying such a method in comparison with other conventional methods.

Applying the Montessori Method in preschool settings has shown positive influence on the emotional development of children. The Montessori Method, developed by Maria Montessori, emphasizes a child-centered approach that promotes independence, self-directed learning, and holistic

development (Lillard, 2016). Research suggests that the Montessori Method helps preschoolers develop emotional competence and self-regulation skills. The carefully designed learning environment and materials in Montessori classrooms provide opportunities for children to explore and engage in activities that match their interests and abilities. This leads to a sense of accomplishment and boosts self-esteem, fostering positive emotions (Lillard, 2011).

Montessori classrooms also prioritize mixed-age groupings, allowing younger children to observe and learn from the older ones, and vice versa. This promotes empathy, social understanding, and emotional intelligence as children learn to navigate and interact with peers of different ages and developmental stages (Puzio & Colby, 2013). Teachers in Montessori settings play a supportive role by fostering an atmosphere of respect, empathy, and understanding. They encourage children to express their emotions, validate their feelings, and provide guidance in resolving conflicts peacefully. This nurturing environment helps children to develop a positive emotional outlook and build healthy relationships (Montessori, 2015).

Furthermore, because Montessori education values individualized learning, children are given the freedom to choose activities that align with their interests and passions. This autonomy and sense of agency contribute to a sense of happiness and fulfillment, fostering positive emotional well-being in preschoolers. Overall, implementing the Montessori Method in preschool settings has been associated with enhancing children's emotional development, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills (Lillard, 2012). By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, the Montessori approach nurtures positive emotions and prepares preschoolers for future social and emotional success.

One of the most prominent researchers is Angelina Stoll Lillard, who has been conducting continuous research in neurobiology and cognitive psychology related to Montessori pedagogy for over 20 years. In her book: *The Science Behind the Genius* (2016), she discusses the Montessori principles and confirms most of them. Lillard investigated the actual Montessori practice and compared its outcomes with other conventional educational outcomes.

Another relatively new valuable study was that by Badiei, M., & Sulaiman, T. (2014) this study's aim was to examine Montessori early childhood education effectiveness in Malaysia. The researchers used a comparative research design to examine developmental skills of two groups of preschoolers: one taught using the Montessori, one taught under the Malaysia National Curriculum. Results indicated that Montessori students performed better in language skills; there were no differences on physical development. Montessori develops children's skills through activities that promote self-awareness, self-regulation and self-reflection.

Nowadays, the number of Montessori schools teaching the English language integrated with life experiences is increasing. Therefore, an overview of the key factors to such a success leads to focusing on the importance of emotions on learning.

2.7. Affective Orientations in English Language Education

Researchers have worked hard in the field of second/foreign language acquisition. There were great efforts in determining the factors which have the greatest influence on language learners. Researchers have highlighted several affective factors in an attempt to promote language learning potentials. Anxiety, boredom and enjoyment have been considered as the most effective factors in the process of learning.

2.7.1. ELT Anxiety

In language learning, anxiety has been defined as a feeling of tension, apprehension and nervousness associated with the situation of the respective language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986). Foreign language anxiety is also defined as the "worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or utilizing a second language" (Young, 1999). Many researchers have been conducting studies to explore the relationship between anxiety and second/foreign language achievement. Second/foreign Language Anxiety (SLA/FLA) researchers have adapted two types of anxiety. The first one is trait anxiety in which learners may have an inbuilt tendency to feel anxious. And the second one is called situational anxiety in which learners may also, irrespective of their personalities, experience anxiety in particular contexts. Foreign language classroom constitutes a particular kind of

situational anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner 1991). It is closely connected with the language class and differentiated from other contexts (Horwitz 2017). MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) proposes that language anxiety occurs at each of the principal stages of the language acquisition process: the input stage, the central processing and the output stage.

To measure foreign language anxiety in classrooms, Horwitz et al. (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The FLCAS has been recognized as a reliable tool to examine foreign language anxiety in classrooms. They pointed out three performance anxieties: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Examples of communication apprehension include not only difficulty in speaking in groups, or in public but also in listening to or learning oral messages. According to Horwitz, if individuals have difficulty speaking or listening to foreign languages in front of people, their communication apprehension will be high. When considering the trait of shyness, it seems that communication apprehension is a result of linguistic deficiency. It is also thought that social and interpersonal aspects are related to communication apprehension.

The second type of performance anxiety refers to fear of negative evaluation. According to Horwitz (1994), the person who has a strong fear of negative evaluation may be very sensitive to the views of others in the classroom such as teachers, native speakers, fluent L2 speakers, and peers. This type of anxiety is shown in evaluation situations such as interviews, oral presentations or speaking contests. The third type of performance anxiety is test anxiety. This arises from a fear of failure. Test anxiety makes students worry about taking a foreign language test. It is thought that a person with high test anxiety is typically a perfectionist. It is also thought that low levels of test anxiety are helpful and considered to be facilitative. In contrast, high levels of anxiety, lasting for a long time, are seen as harmful or debilitating. Horwitz et al. (1986) have introduced a 33-item scale to measure foreign language classroom anxiety. Students are asked to choose one of five answers which most appeals to them: (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree).

For the purpose of this research, Horwitz scale was adapted to suit the young age of the tested group where only four items were used. Learners were asked to choose one of three answers: (yes, I am not sure, no).

2.7.2. ELT Boredom

Although boredom is one of the most common emotions in second/ foreign classrooms, it has just recently gained recognition as an important debilitating affective factor. The lateness in such recognition is attributed to the misconception of boredom to being anxious, depressed or demotivated and sometimes to the difficulty in recognizing it (Nett et al, 2010).

Boredom in psychology can be regarded as a permanent trait and temporary state affective experience by which the learning process is severely inhibited and lack of interest in the class activities occur ([Daniels et al., 2015](#)). Boredom results in feeling disengaged, therefore leading to avoidance behaviors. Consequently, there is a cause-and-effect link between lack of interest and boredom in which the former may lead to the latter (Pekrun et al., 2011). According to Harris (2000), a sense of low arousal and dissatisfaction when feeling bored ascribes to an environment that is not sufficiently stimulating. Besides, many researchers have explored the causes of boredom in L2 learning. Findings suggest that boredom in L2 can stem from various sources such as lack of challenge, repetition of tasks, low interest in the subject matter, uninspiring teaching methods, and insufficient engagement with learning materials (Davies and Fortney, 2012). Learners who lack intrinsic motivation, perceive the learning process as monotonous, or face external pressures are more likely to experience boredom during L2 learning.

The effects of boredom on L2 learners have also been examined. It has been found that boredom can negatively impact motivation, attention, engagement, and ultimately, learning outcomes. Boredom can lead to decreased interest in the target language, lower participation levels, reduced engagement in language activities, and even dropout rates. Moreover, boredom can cultivate negative emotions, such as frustration and anxiety, which further hinder language acquisition.

In terms of interventions, researchers have proposed various strategies to address boredom in L2 learning. These include promoting autonomy, providing meaningful and challenging tasks, incorporating interactive and dynamic teaching methods, utilizing technology, and creating an engaging learning environment. Additionally, individual learner characteristics and preferences should be taken into account when designing interventions to address boredom.

However, it is important to note that the existing literature on boredom in L2 learning is still relatively limited. Many studies have focused on specific learner populations or specific contexts, making it difficult to generalize findings. Furthermore, there is a need for more empirical studies that investigate the effectiveness of different interventions and their impact on L2 learners' boredom levels and language proficiency.

In conclusion, boredom is an important phenomenon to consider in the field of L2 acquisition. It can have significant implications for learners' motivation, engagement, and ultimately, language learning outcomes. The literature review highlights the causes, effects, and potential interventions for boredom in L2 learning, emphasizing the importance of designing engaging and meaningful language learning experiences for learners. Further research in this area can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of boredom in L2 and help inform instructional practices in language education.

For the purpose of this research, an adjusted form of the Boredom Proneness Scale (BPS), developed by Farmer and Sundberg (1986), was used to measure preschoolers' boredom levels in EFL classes.

2.7.3. ELT Enjoyment

The introduction of positive psychology (PP) can contribute to leading people towards success in their lives. MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) claimed that PP should be implemented in SLA/ EFL because it is necessary to affect learners' emotions to be able to achieve success. Recently, there has been a movement towards PP in language teaching and learning (Lake, 2013). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) aimed to explore the correlation between enjoyment and anxiety in the language learning process. They developed a scale to measure FLE by observing positive emotions regarding the teachers, peers and the learning experience.

Enjoyment is a positive emotional state that has been found to play a significant role in motivation, engagement, and language learning outcomes. Numerous studies have investigated the sources and factors that contribute to enjoyment in L2 learning. Findings suggest that enjoyment can stem from various sources such as interesting and relevant materials, engaging and interactive teaching methods, positive teacher-student interactions, supportive learning environments, and opportunities for social interaction with speakers of the target language (Dewaele, Magdalena-Franco & Saito 2019). Additionally, individual learner characteristics and preferences, including motivation, personality, and learning styles, can influence the experience of enjoyment in L2 learning.

The effects of enjoyment on L2 learners have also been examined. It has been found that enjoyment can enhance motivation, attention, and engagement in language learning tasks. Learners who experience enjoyment are more likely to persist in their learning efforts, invest more time and effort into language activities, and achieve higher levels of language proficiency. Moreover, enjoyment can foster positive attitudes towards the target language and cultural aspects associated with it.

Based on the existing literature, several recommendations have been made to promote enjoyment in L2 learning. These include creating a positive and supportive learning atmosphere, incorporating varied and stimulating materials and activities, emphasizing learner autonomy, providing meaningful and relevant language tasks, fostering social interaction and collaboration, and acknowledging learners' achievements and progress.

However, it is important to note that the concept of enjoyment in L2 learning is multifaceted and can be influenced by a range of individual and contextual factors. Further research is needed to deepen our understanding of the specific mechanisms through which enjoyment impacts language learning and to develop practical strategies for fostering enjoyment in diverse L2 learning contexts.

In conclusion, enjoyment is a crucial factor in L2 learning that can positively influence motivation, engagement, and language learning outcomes. The literature review highlights the sources and effects of enjoyment in L2 learning and provides recommendations for creating enjoyable language learning experiences. Continued research in this area can contribute to the development of effective pedagogical practices that promote enjoyment and enhance L2 learning outcomes.

In this research, an adjusted form of the Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES), developed by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), has been administered to suit the peculiarity of the tested group.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This study aimed to investigate the influence of the Montessori Method on the emotions of preschoolers in EFL classes and its effect on the overall acquisition of English. For the purpose of this research, information was collected quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative method allowed objective measurement of the levels of affects and used numerical analysis of data through questionnaires. In addition, information was obtained from the school records and the teachers' lists of observation. The numerical data collection tool added to the reliability and validity of the study as it is based on factual reliable responses of the children.

This chapter includes information about the data collection method, the examined group, the instrument used, data analysis, results, discussion of the study.

3.2. Participants

The participants of this study were EFL preschoolers whose first language is Arabic and they came from a number of Arab countries. A total of 80 preschoolers (30 boys and 50 girls), aging 3-6, were tested through two stages: The first stage took place during the second term of the academic year 2022-2023. The tested group received a conventional method in English teaching where the teacher was the only source of information and the course was based on learning vocabulary, writing and drilling. In the conventional method, children were divided into three groups according to their ages where each group attended a different class; KG1 class included all children aging 3- 4, KG2 class: 4-year-olds, and KG3: 5-year-olds. Those classes were characterized by the relatively large number of children (30-45). Besides, desks were arranged in straight lines to allow the best use of the space available. The same instructional material was administered to all children of the level. The questionnaire was administered with the help of the available teachers after obtaining approval from the school's management. An empty room was provided to ensure confidentiality of the information given. Children were encouraged to give their answers as many of them didn't seem interested in giving an answer. Some toys and colorful posters were supplied to give a good and relaxing atmosphere for the children. The start of the questionnaire was with the older group of children; that is with KG3. A total number of 29 children: 18 girls and 11 boys were asked to answer the questions. The procedure was conducted after around 45 days of starting taking observation of the children's development and performance. It took around 4 days to finish with the first group. The second group of children in KG2 class was about 37 children (24 girls and 13 boys). Conducting the questionnaire with this group took a relatively longer time (2 weeks) due to the larger number and some difficulty in expressing their opinions due to their young age. The third group of KG1 children were the most challenging as some of the children were substituted with others due to frequent absences for health reasons. At last, the questionnaire was administered to 14 children (8 girls and 6 boys).

The second stage occurred during the first term of the academic year 2023-2024. The same group received a Montessori Method of teaching English by trained teachers. Montessori preschools receive children aging 3-6; the thing which enabled testing the same group of children. Montessori classrooms are multi-aged which correspond to the child's developmental stages and includes between 25-35 children. At a first glance, such a number might seem large when considering the belief that the smaller the number of children is in a class, the better. Larger classrooms for the ages 3-6 function better than smaller class sizes (Lillard, 2012). The larger group size in the Montessori class

encourages peer learning among children. The questionnaire was carried out after about 47 days of administering the Montessori teaching program. Weekly plans were administered according to the children's developmental stages. The English language instructional material included practical life situations and the use of the target language in communication. Children answered the questionnaire in the natural environment of their classes. The process took about two weeks.

In addition, children's overall performance was reported on weekly basis in both conventional and Montessori Methods. This was done through using the available teacher's checklist. Each child's evaluation checklist included four main areas; performance, social skills, problem-solving abilities and independence. The checklists of both programs were compared. This process of documenting the progress of children in both curricula enabled considering other effective variables that directly influenced the results of the study. For example: the human factor exemplified by the great efforts exerted by the EFL teachers applying the conventional method which had a strong influence on children's emotions.

3.3. Data Collection

A questionnaire was administered to the learners with the help of the EFL teachers, where three affective factors were investigated (i.e., anxiety, boredom and enjoyment). Those factors were measured on a scale from 1-3. To measure each of the three affects, four closed-ending questions were asked. The questions were adjusted to enable preschoolers answer them without difficulty. In addition, demographic information about the preschoolers' background was collected from the school's registration files including: age, gender and first language. At first, an approval was obtained from the school administration and the participation of the children was voluntary. An empty room was allocated to do the questionnaire in person for each child and the present EFL teachers helped throughout the process. The children were informed that their information would be kept confidential.

3.4. Instrument

The study used a questionnaire of three parts measuring three affective factors to collect the necessary data. Each part investigated one affective factor where four closed-ending questions were asked using a reduced form of the Likert scale where a three-point scale was used instead of five to suit the very young age of the children. The Likert scale is named after the American social scientist Rensis Likert, who devised the approach in 1932. The scale is a rating system used in questionnaires and designed to measure people's attitudes, opinions or perceptions. In this study, children chose from a range of three possible responses (yes, unsure, no), instead of the usual five responses: "strongly agree", "agree", "neutral", "disagree" and "strongly disagree". The responses of the children were numerically coded with number 1 representing the lowest value, 2 representing the neutral value and 3 representing the highest value. This enabled analyzing and interpreting data using SPSS statistical method and drawing conclusions.

The first part of the questionnaire investigated the level of boredom. An adjusted form of the Boredom Proneness Scale (BPS), developed by Farmer and Sundberg (1986), was used to measure preschoolers' boredom levels in EFL classes. The original scale includes a 28 item questionnaire that assessed the person's predisposition to feeling bored. It was first developed using a true-false format, but many authors (e.g. Vodanovich & Kass, 1990) have adapted the scale to Likert format. For the purpose of this research, and to suit the young age of children, only four items were used in the questionnaire. The items used are: "The English class bores me.", "I start yawning in English class because I'm so bored.", "It is difficult for me to concentrate in the English class." and "My mind begins to wander in the English class."

To measure the level of anxiety, a simplified form of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), was used. The original design of the scale includes 33 items. In this research, only four items were adapted; "I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my FL class.", "It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my FL class", "Even if I am well prepared for FL class, I feel anxious about it." and "I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in FL class."

The third part of the questionnaire measured the level of enjoyment. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) developed a Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale (FLES) of 21 items. Only four items were used to measure preschoolers' enjoyment in EFL classes; they are: "I enjoy it.", "The teacher is friendly.", "We laugh a lot", and "I've learned interesting things."

3.5. Data Analysis

In this research, quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS program. First, data collected from questionnaire was coded and entered to SPSS. Besides, information from the school registered files was obtained regarding the demographic information of the participants.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In this section, data analysis and results are discussed. At the outset, the reliability and validity of the measuring tools were examined. Then, research questions were addressed. After that, recommendations were given and limitations to the study were discussed.

4.1. Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are among the most important criteria that a research tool need to meet.

4.1.1. Validity

refers to the ability of the questionnaire to measure what it was designed to measure. In other words, do the questions posed in the questionnaire accurately reflect the variables or constructs that they aim to measure? Validity can be evaluated through several methods; including content validity (i.e. Do the questions cover all aspects of the concept being measured?), and convergent validity (i.e. Do the questions measure the same concept to the same degree). (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008)

4.1.2. Reliability

refers to the stability and consistency of the questionnaire's results over time or participants (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). Would the questionnaire give consistent results if applied to the same group of participants at a later time, or to a different group of participants with similar characteristics? Reliability can be measured using several methods, including:

4.1.3. Internal Consistency:

This is often measured using correlation test, which assesses how closely related a set of items are as a group. A high value of Correlation coefficient, close to 1, indicates higher internal consistency.

Correlation coefficients are one of the most important ways to measure the validity and reliability of scales. Therefore, Spearman correlation coefficients is relied upon to measure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, and the results are shown in the following tables.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of Spearman correlation coefficient of the questionnaire.

question number	correlation coefficient	question number	correlation coefficient	question number	correlation coefficient
1	0.6**	5	-0.22*	9	0.19
2	0.72**	6	-0.03	10	-0.3**
3	0.39*	7	0.6**	11	0.43**
4	0.88**	8	0.5**	12	0.55**

Cronbach's alpha and Split-half are measures of internal consistency for statistical tests such as questionnaires and indicates the extent to which a group of items relate to each other as a consistent group. The Cronbach alpha value is limited to between zero and one, and a value of 0.6 is considered acceptable for judging the reliability of the questionnaire. The closer the alpha value is to one, the higher the reliability is. The following table shows Cronbach Alpha coefficient:

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Cronbach's alpha and split-half coefficient of internal consistency.

	N of Items	Split-half	Cronbach's Alpha
Boredom	4	0.79	0.799
Anxiety	4	0.76	0.49
Enjoyment	4	0.52	0.59

4.2. Addressing Research Questions

H1: There is statically significant difference between preschoolers' boredom level, before and after applying Montessori Method.

Before testing the hypothesis utilizing t-test, we needed to check the normality and distribution of data using such indices as Kurtosis and Skewness. Then, independent sample t-test was performed.

Table 3. T-test results of the normality and distribution of data.

	Curricula	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	T	Sig
Boredom	Conventional	80	6.69	2.126	79	4.5	0.001
	Montessori	80	5.46	1.272			

Table3 shows that the level of significance is $0.001 < 0.05$ which means that the data significantly deviate from a normal distribution. Therefore, the test is statistically significant and the hypothesis is accepted. That is, there is a statistically significant difference between the level of boredom before and after applying the Montessori Method. As it is observed in the table above, the level of boredom was higher before the application of Montessori than after the application. The table above shows a significant difference in the pretest mean score and standard deviation for boredom; $M=6.69$, $SD=2.126$, and that of the posttest; $M=5.46$, $SD=1.272$. Therefore, the Montessori Method appears to be effective in reducing the level of boredom among preschoolers.

H2: There is statically significant difference between preschoolers' anxiety level, before and after applying Montessori Method.

To test the hypothesis, paired sample t-test was conducted and the following table shows the results.

Table 4. T-test results of the anxiety level of preschoolers.

	Curricula	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	T	Sig
Anxiety	Traditional	80	7.35	1.639	79	5.38	0.001
	Montessori	80	6.09	1.070			

Table4 shows that the level of significance is $0.001 < 0.05$ and therefore the test is statistically significant. The hypothesis is accepted. That is, there is a statistically significant difference between the level of anxiety before and after applying the Montessori Method. As the table above shows, the level of anxiety was higher before the application of Montessori than after the application. There is a significant difference in the pretest mean score and standard deviation for anxiety; $M=7.35$, $SD=1.639$, and that of the posttest; $M=6.09$, $SD=1.070$. Therefore, the Montessori Method has reduced the level of boredom among preschoolers.

H3: There is statically significant difference between preschoolers' enjoyment level, before and after applying Montessori method.

To test the hypothesis, paired sample t-test was conducted and the following table shows the results.

Table 5. T-test results of the enjoyment level of preschoolers.

	Curricula	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	T	Sig
Enjoyment	Traditional	80	9.59	1.270	79	4.05	0.001
	Montessori	80	10.41	1.280			

Table5 shows a slight difference in the pretest mean score and standard deviation for enjoyment; $M=9.59$, $SD=1.270$, and that of the posttest; $M=10.41$, $SD=1.280$. Therefore, the Montessori Method appears to be of little influence on the level of enjoyment.

The level of significance is $0.001 < 0.05$ and therefore the test is still statistically significant. That is, there is a statistically significant difference between the level of enjoyment before and after applying the Montessori Method. As the table shows, the level of enjoyment was lower before the application of Montessori than after the application. Therefore, the Montessori Method slightly increased the level of enjoyment among preschoolers.

H4: There is statically significant difference between preschoolers' boredom, anxiety and enjoyment levels after applying Montessori method based on their gender

To test the hypothesis, an independent sample t-test is used and the following table shows the results.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for gender.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	T	Sig
Boredom	Male	30	5.9	1.5	78	2.45	0.016
	Female	50	5.2	1.03			
Anxiety	Male	30	5.5	0.82	78	4.18	0.001
	Female	50	6.44	1.05			
Enjoyment	Male	30	10.06	1.22	78	1.9	0.061
	Female	50	10.62	1.27			

As it is evident in table 6, the significance level in boredom is 0.016 smaller than 0.05, which indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between males and females in the level of boredom after applying the Montessori Method. As shown in table 6, the level of boredom among males is higher than that among females. That is, the Montessori Method helped females more than males in alleviating boredom.

In addition, the significance level in anxiety is 0.001 smaller than 0.05, which indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between males and females in the level of anxiety after applying the Montessori Method. It is also shown in table 6 that the level of anxiety among males is lower than that among females. That is, the Montessori Method helped males more than females in alleviating anxiety.

Finally, the significant level in enjoyment is 0.06 more than 0.05, so there is no statically significant difference between males and females in the level of enjoyment after applying Montessori methods.

4.3. Discussion

4.3.1. Discussion of Q1: What is the effect of applying the Montessori Method on boredom levels of EFL preschoolers?

The results of the study that aimed to investigate the effects of the Montessori Method on boredom levels of preschoolers indicated a significant difference in posttest mean scores for boredom level in favor of the Montessori Method (Table 3). The findings demonstrated the positive impact of applying the Montessori Method on decreasing the level of boredom compared to the conventional method. Thus, the study results indicated that the research hypothesis was confirmed.

The literature review on boredom in second language acquisition (L2) aims to provide an overview of existing research and scholarly works related to this topic. Boredom is a complex psychological state often experienced by L2 learners during the language learning process. Understanding the causes, effects, and potential interventions for boredom in L2 can be crucial in enhancing language acquisition and overall learning experience. Many researchers have explored the causes of boredom in L2 learning. Findings suggest that boredom in L2 can stem from various sources such as lack of challenge, repetition of tasks, low interest in the subject matter, uninspiring teaching methods, and insufficient engagement with learning materials.

According to Pekrun's (2006) control-value theory, the perceived control (control appraisal) that students experience in a learning situation and their perceived importance (value appraisal) for an activity and for success in that activity underlie their achievement emotions. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the control-value appraisal antecedents of achievement emotions as they influence the development of students' emotions and, as a consequence, their performance and achievement in learning activities.

Aligned with Pekrun theory, the Montessori Method allows learners more control over their learning process. Therefore, learners are more likely to feel a lower level of boredom. The Montessori Method gives learners more freedom of choice in doing a variety of activities and games which will result in more engagement in the learning process.

In terms of interventions, researchers have proposed various strategies to address boredom in L2 learning. These include promoting autonomy, providing meaningful and challenging tasks, incorporating interactive and dynamic teaching methods, utilizing technology, and creating an engaging learning environment. Additionally, individual learner characteristics and preferences should be taken into account when designing interventions to address boredom. By examining the application of the Montessori Method, learners are responsible for their own learning. Montessori classrooms are designed to accommodate children's different abilities and interests. The materials and activities provided in the Montessori environment are tailored to meet the developmental needs of each child. Teachers observe and guide individual students to ensure they are challenged appropriately and receive personalized instruction. Consequently, this will save learners from falling prey to boredom.

4.3.2. Discussion of Q2: What is the effect of applying the Montessori Method on anxiety level of EFL preschoolers?

As for the second research question about the examining the level of anxiety of EFL preschoolers, comparing the pretest and posttest mean scores of the tested group showed a significant decrease in the level of anxiety after applying MM (table 4). These findings emphasized the effectiveness of the Montessori Method on decreasing the children's anxiety in EFL classes. So, the hypothesis was proved.

One of the five hypotheses that forms Krashen's theory of SLA is the Affective Filter hypothesis. This hypothesis embodies Krashen's view that a number of 'affective variables' play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in second language acquisition. These variables include: motivation, self-confidence, anxiety and personality traits. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, a low level of anxiety and extroversion are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, anxiety, introversion and inhibition can raise the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, when the filter is 'up' it impedes language acquisition. On the other hand, positive affect is necessary, but not sufficient on its own, for acquisition to take place.

By considering Krashen's Affective filter, the intervention of the Montessori Method ensures a lower level of anxiety which, in turn, leads to higher levels of the learners' acquisition of L2.

Certain practices in Montessori contribute to aviating the learner's anxiety such as: Error correction technique which provides constructive feedback on learners' language errors, but in a positive and supportive manner. It also encourages learners to take risks with their language use and create a safe environment where mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning and growth. Besides, learners are supported and guided throughout their progress. Having such a supportive atmosphere gives a sense of relief to learners and enables them to acquire the language without fear of being criticized.

4.3.3. Discussion of Q3: What is the effect of applying the Montessori Method on enjoyment level of EFL preschoolers?

Answering the third research question, findings show a slight increase in the enjoyment level after applying MM. Therefore, the administration of the Montessori Method appeared to have little effect on enjoyment levels. In this context, the study results indicated the hypothesis was confirmed for the enjoyment variable.

By examining the educational theories, the findings aligned with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan's, 1985). This theory posits that individuals are more likely to experience enjoyment when they have a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their learning environment. Researchers have developed self-report questionnaires, such as the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (IMI), to measure enjoyment and other psychological needs in EFL classrooms. In agreement with this theory, the Montessori Method supports immersion environment where students are consistently exposed to the target language. This can include using authentic materials, such as books, movies, and songs in the target language, and encouraging communication in the classroom predominantly in the L2. Montessori also follows the communicative approach, which focuses on meaningful communication rather than just grammar drills or vocabulary memorization. Moreover, this method provides ample opportunities for students to engage in authentic conversations, discussions, and role-plays to practice using the language in real-life contexts. Presenting such engaging atmosphere increases the level of enjoyment for learners.

Although the findings related to learners' enjoyment in this particular study seem to be of little significance, it is still worth mentioning as other factors related to different variables need to be taken into consideration such as: having a super teacher in the conventional method in addition to evaluating the interference of the demographical variables, particularly, first language; Arabic.

4.3.4. Discussion of Q4: Is there any difference between male and female participants' affective orientations?

In response to the fourth research question, a significant difference between males and females was detected in the level of boredom after applying MM. The results of the questionnaire found that the level of boredom in males was higher than in females. This means that MM has helped females more than males in alleviating boredom. While there was a lower level of anxiety among males than in females. This means that MM has helped males more than females in alleviating anxiety. Moreover, there was no significant difference in the level of enjoyment between males and females after applying MM. This means that MM has affected both genders almost equally regarding enjoyment in EFL classes.

Looking back at the related literature, the relationships between gender and L2 performance, attainment and motivation have been well-documented over the years. Previous research has, for example, shown that boys do not do as well in foreign language (FL) learning, are less motivated (Clark and Trafford, 1995), are less accepting of the necessity to learn a foreign language (Powell and Batters, 1985) and, irrespective of the FL studied, demonstrate less overall commitment than girls (Dörnyei et al., 2006). This explains the greater influence of Montessori on girls than on boys in alleviating boredom. On the other hand, detecting a lower level of anxiety in boys doesn't necessarily imply a good effect of the intervention as a low level of anxiety is helpful. Have a low level of anxiety, 'Facilitating anxiety', motivates the learner to 'fight' the new learning task; it gears the learner emotionally for approach behavior.

All in all, the findings of this study are in line with previous studies regarding the positive effects of applying MM on preschoolers, such as Lillard's independent study of Montessori students compared to non-Montessori (Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius, 2005) which supports the Montessori Approach and explains why it works. An interesting finding about this study is the significant difference in emotional orientations between males and females which is supported by some research (Bahrami & Yousefi, 2011), where females tend to have higher anxiety levels due to their control strategies and metacognitive beliefs, which in turn, lead them to emotional and neurotic problems. Moreover, a meta-analysis conducted by Lillard in 2012 found that Montessori-educated children exhibit higher levels of social and emotional development compared to their peers in traditional settings. The emphasis on cooperation, communication, and conflict resolution within the Montessori environment not only contributes to a positive classroom atmosphere but also lays a solid foundation for academic success by fostering emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills. The results also show that more enjoyment is typically linked with less anxiety but that both can co-occur (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016; Dewaele et al., 2016). On the other hand, the literature indicates various researches investigating anxiety and boredom as debilitating factors for children learning EFL (Horwitz, 2010; MacIntyre, 1999), and the important role of education programs in alleviating negative emotions (Schlip, 1949). Therefore, Montessori Method appeared to have privilege over conventional Methods.

This study adds to the research body related to supporting the application of the Montessori Method and highlights the importance of addressing the differences related to gender in EFL classes by addressing the different needs of learners.

One thing to admit is that this study is limited because results may bias towards a particular direction due to the specialty of the tested group (i.e., demographic factors). Therefore, future researches may cover a variety of older age groups in different schools and of different linguistic backgrounds.

4.4. Pedagogical Implementations:

The findings of this study hold significant implications for the instructors and program developer, particularly in preschool language instruction, with a specific emphasis on English as a foreign language. These findings shed light on the effectiveness of the Montessori Method in creating a positive learning atmosphere for preschoolers. Applying the Montessori Method in preschool settings has shown positive influence on the emotional development of children. The Montessori Method,

developed by Maria Montessori, emphasizes a child-centered approach that promotes independence, self-directed learning, and holistic development.

Research suggests that the Montessori Method helps preschoolers develop emotional competence and self-regulation skills. The carefully designed learning environment and materials in Montessori classrooms provide opportunities for children to explore and engage in activities that match their interests and abilities. This leads to a sense of accomplishment and boosts self-esteem, fostering positive emotions. Montessori classrooms also prioritize mixed-age groupings, allowing younger children to observe and learn from the older ones, and vice versa. This promotes empathy, social understanding, and emotional intelligence as children learn to navigate and interact with peers of different ages and developmental stages.

Teachers in Montessori settings play a supportive role by fostering an atmosphere of respect, empathy, and understanding. They encourage children to express their emotions, validate their feelings, and provide guidance in resolving conflicts peacefully. This nurturing environment helps children to develop a positive emotional outlook and build healthy relationships.

Furthermore, because Montessori education values individualized learning, children are given the freedom to choose activities that align with their interests and passions. This autonomy and sense of agency contribute to a sense of happiness and fulfillment, fostering positive emotional well-being in preschoolers.

Overall, implementing the Montessori Method in preschool settings has been associated with enhancing children's emotional development, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, the Montessori approach nurtures positive emotions and prepares preschoolers for future social and emotional success.

For the future of language education, some recommendations for educational practices include:

1. **Immersion:** Create an immersive environment where students are consistently exposed to the target language. This can include using authentic materials, such as books, movies, and songs in the target language, and encouraging communication in the classroom predominantly in the L2.
2. **Communicative approach:** Focus on meaningful communication rather than just grammar drills or vocabulary memorization. Provide ample opportunities for students to engage in authentic conversations, discussions, and role-plays to practice using the language in real-life contexts.
3. **Individualized instruction:** Recognize that each student may have different learning styles and needs. Provide opportunities for individualized instruction, such as one-on-one sessions or personalized activities, which allow students to learn at their own pace and focus on their specific areas of improvement.
4. **Scaffolded instruction:** Gradually increase the difficulty level of tasks and provide adequate support and guidance as students progress. Use instructional techniques such as modeling, providing examples, and graphic organizers to help students understand and retain new language concepts.
5. **Error correction:** Provide constructive feedback on students' language errors, but in a positive and supportive manner. Encourage students to take risks with their language use and create a safe environment where mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning and growth. As L2 learning is a dynamic and individual process. It's important to adapt and adjust instructional practices based on the specific needs and abilities of the learners.

4.5. Limitations and Recommendations

This study has a number of limitations. First, the tested group was limited to a number of 80 children learning at the same school. So, other variables might have affected the results such as having a super EFL teacher in the conventional school, being of a certain linguistic background (e.g., the children are Arabic speakers.) and being at a considerably young age. At such an age, for many children, learning more than one language is simply a matter of routine (Tricker, 1981). At this stage,

children need to learn in order to communicate with their surroundings. They tend to take things as they come along. They don't necessarily understand the way we, grown-up, do. This may affect the way they perceive learning English. Their feelings may vibrate as they had little experience to truly evaluate their EFL classes. Therefore, it is recommended that another study be conducted using other testing tools like interviews and case study, on a different age group from different schools where the learners would be of a variety of linguistic and national background.

4.6. Conclusion

It is important to understand the significant impact of the affective factor on language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), and based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that applying the Montessori Method is recommended to ensure a better learning outcome. It has also been noticed that there is a difference in emotional reaction according to gender. Therefore, EFL teachers need to take into consideration learners' emotions and consider other factors that can affect and improve learners' acquisition of English. This can be done by encouraging learners to express their feelings and talk about their worries while carrying out certain tasks and activities. EFL teachers who apply Montessori Method usually follow certain training courses that enable them to create an interesting and friendly atmosphere in which there is a low affective filter for learning (Krashen, 1986). That is, learners have a low level of anxiety and a high level of self-esteem.

References:

1. Carmines, E. G., & Zeller, R. A. (1979). Reliability and validity assessment. Sage Publications.
2. Daniels, L. M., Tze, M. C., and Goetz, T. (2015). Examining boredom: different causes for different coping profiles. *Learn. Individ. Differ.* 37, 255–261. doi: 10.1016/j.lindif.2014.11.004
3. Davies, J., and Fortney, M. (2012). "The menton theory of boredom and engagement," in *First Annual Conference on Cognitive Systems*, ed P. Langley (Palo Alto, CA), 131–143.
4. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.
5. DEWAELE, J.-M.; MACINTYRE, P.D. The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Learning Teaching*, 4, p. 237-274, 2014.
6. Dewaele, Jean-Marc, Andrea Magdalena-Franco & Kazuya Saito. 2019. The effect of perception of teacher characteristics on Spanish EFL Learners' anxiety and enjoyment. *The Modern Language Journal* 103(2). 1–40.
7. Farmer, R., & Sundberg, N.D. (1986). Boredom proneness: The development and correlates of a new scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 50, 4-17
8. Horwitz, E., Horwitz, M., & Cope, J. (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*.
9. Krashen, S. (1981) *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
10. Lillard, A S. (2005). *Montessori: the science behind the genius*. New York: Oxford University Press.
11. Lillard, A.S. (2012). Preschool children's development in classic Montessori, supplemented Montessori, and conventional programs. *Journal of School Psychology*, 50(3), 379-401.
12. Montessori, M. (1949/ 1974). *Childhood education*. Chicago: Henry Regnery.
13. Montessori, M. (1995). *The absorbent mind* (C. A. Claremont, Trans.). New York: Henry Holt.
14. Nett, U.E., Goetz, T. and Daniels, L.M. (2010). What to do when feeling bored? Students' strategies for coping with boredom.
15. Pekrun, R. (2006). The control-value theory of achievement emotions: Assumptions, corollaries, and implications for educational research and practice. *Educ. Psychol. Rev.* 18, 315–341. doi: 10.1007/s10648-006-9029-9
16. Pekrun, R., Goetz, T., Frenzel, A. C., Barchfeld, P., and Perry, R. P. (2011). Measuring emotions in students' learning and performance: The Achievement Emotions Questionnaire (AEQ). *Contemp. Educ. Psychol.* 36, 36–48. doi: 10.1016/j.cedpsych.2010.10.002

17. Puzio, K., & Colby, G. T. (2013). Cooperative learning and literacy: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 6, 339–360. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2013.775683>
18. Richards JC, Rodgers TS. A brief history of language teaching. In: Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. 2nd ed. Cambridge Language Teaching Library. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2001:3-17. doi:[10.1017/CBO9780511667305.003](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667305.003)
19. Rosanova, M. (1998). Early Childhood Bilingualism in the Montessori Children's House: Guessable context and the planned environment. Spotlight: Montessori--multilingual, multicultural. *Montessori Life*, 10(2), 37-48.
20. Swain, M. (2000). The output Hypothesis and beyond: Mediating Acquisition through Collaborative Dialogue. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed), *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning* (pp.97-114). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
21. Trochim, W. M., & Donnelly, J. P. (2008). *The research methods knowledge base*. Cengage Learning.
22. Wang, M.- T., & Eccles, J. S. (2012). Social support matters: Longitudinal effects of social support on three dimensions of school engagement from middle to high school. *Child Development*, 83, 877– 95.
23. Young, .D.J (1999). Giving Priority to the Language Learner First. In D. J. Young (ED) *Affect in foreign language and second language learning*. Boston: McGraw-Hill College.
24. <http://www.britishcouncil.org.tr/en/programmes/education/research>