

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussions derived from interviews and narrative frames with six fifth-grade students regarding their first-time experiences in formal English learning. The results are thematically organized based on two main aspects: emotional experiences and affective factors, including self-esteem and motivation. Each section presents student narratives and is followed by interpretation and discussion in connection with relevant theories and previous research. The aim of this chapter is to answer the research questions and to explore the deeper meaning behind the students' lived experiences.

A. Findings

The findings in this study were gathered through semi-structured interviews and narrative frames with six fifth-grade students. The data provides insight into students' first-time experiences in formal English learning, with particular attention to their emotional responses and affective factors. Each student responded to a set of guiding questions and was invited to share their personal stories through a narrative frame.

The findings are organized thematically into two main categories based on the research questions: (1) emotional experiences during the first-time formal English learning, and (2) the role of affective factors,

including self-esteem and motivation, in shaping these experiences. Each theme is presented using direct student responses followed by interpretation and discussion in connection with relevant theories,

1. Emotional Experience Young Learners during The First-time with Formal English Learning

Based on the interview responses and narrative frames, students expressed a wide range of emotional reactions during their first encounters with formal English learning. These reactions were not only spontaneous, but also deeply tied to the classroom environment, the way English was introduced, and how students perceived their own capabilities.

The emotional experiences reported by the six fifth-grade participants reflect both positive and negative feelings, which often shifted depending on the learning activity. These emotions are categorized into three types, following Pekrun's (2006) classification of academic emotions: positive activating emotions (e.g., excitement, enjoyment), negative activating emotions (e.g., fear, anxiety) and negative deactivating emotions (e.g., boredom, helplessness)

In the following sections, each type of emotion is discussed with reference to the students' narratives and responses. Their words offer insight into how emotions shape early attitudes toward learning a new language.

a. Positive Activating Emotions

Positive activating emotions refer to feelings such as enjoyment, curiosity, and excitement that encourage students to actively engage in

learning (Pekrun, 2006). These emotions are often triggered by stimulating learning environments, interesting activities, or supportive teaching methods. In this study, students from all achievement categories expressed moments of joy and enthusiasm during their first English lessons, with different preferences depending on their individual learning styles.

1) High Achiever

P1 reported feeling highly engaged and enthusiastic during classroom activities that involved interactive vocabulary discussions. They particularly enjoyed moments where they could ask the meaning and context of English words and then receive detailed explanations.

“I really enjoyed the activity where we asked about the meaning and purpose of English vocabulary, then it was translated and explained with context.”

This statement suggests that intellectual curiosity and meaningful explanation contributed to P1’s emotional engagement. According to Pekrun (2006), such enjoyment based on understanding and interaction reflects a positive activating emotion that supports deep learning.

Meanwhile, P2 expressed enjoyment during classroom games.

“I felt very happy when playing games, like the hangman game we did before”

This shows that even high-achieving students responded well to playful elements in learning, indicating that fun and challenge together

can enhance emotional involvement regardless of academic performance.

2) Medium Achievers

P3 and P4 also highlighted moments of joy during classroom games like Hangman, stating that these activities made the lesson more enjoyable. P4 mentioned a preference for dynamic learning.

“I prefer various learning activities rather than just writing the material”

This reflects a learning style that thrives on movement, interaction, and variety. Such positive emotions—arising from lively, engaging activities—help sustain attention and motivation in young learners (Pekrun, 2006).

3) Low Achievers

Both P5 and P6 expressed joy during game-based learning activities, showing that structured yet playful classroom moments can evoke positive emotions even in students who may struggle academically.

“I felt very happy when playing games, like the hangman game we played.”

“It was fun when we played games too, so the lesson didn’t feel boring.”

These responses suggest that carefully designed, low-pressure activities can help low-achieving students feel more included, motivated, and emotionally connected to the learning process. Such

experiences may contribute to greater classroom participation and confidence in the long term.

The emotional narratives gathered from the six participants reveal that positive activating emotions played a meaningful role in shaping their first experiences with formal English learning. Joy, curiosity, excitement, and a sense of fun were consistently present in their reflections, regardless of their achievement levels. Interestingly, while each student responded to different types of stimuli, the common thread was the presence of interactive and enjoyable activities.

High-achieving students often found excitement in cognitively engaging moments, such as exploring vocabulary through questioning and contextual explanation. Their positive emotions appeared to stem from intellectual curiosity and the satisfaction of understanding. Meanwhile, mid-level achievers expressed joy during group-based, energetic classroom activities, particularly games that allowed for movement and laughter. For lower-achieving students, positive emotions emerged when they felt included and when the learning pace matched their needs, especially through playful and visually rich materials.

What becomes evident from these experiences is that positive emotional responses were not dependent on a student's academic standing, but rather on how the learning environment acknowledged and responded to their interests and capacities. This reinforces the idea

presented by Pekrun (2006), which highlights that activating positive emotions such as enjoyment can significantly enhance attention, intrinsic motivation, and engagement in learning tasks.

Therefore, fostering emotionally supportive and stimulating early learning environments appears not only beneficial but essential, especially in the context of introducing a foreign language. When students' first impressions of English are tied to feelings of enjoyment, participation, and curiosity, they are more likely to carry a positive outlook toward the subject in the future. These small yet meaningful moments of joy whether sparked by a vocabulary question or a classroom game have the potential to become the foundation of a student's lifelong attitude toward language learning.

b. Negative Activating Emotions

Negative activating emotions refer to feelings such as nervousness, fear, or anxiety. These emotions, while unpleasant, are still activating because they stimulate internal mental processes—often leading to heightened attention, hesitation, or pressure. According to Pekrun (2006), such emotions may emerge when students perceive the task as challenging or themselves as underprepared. In this study, several participants shared instances when they felt uncomfortable or unsure during their first encounters with formal English learning.

1) High Achievers

Interestingly, participants in the high-achieving group reported little to no strong negative activating emotions. P1 admitted feeling slightly uneasy, but not because of the subject matter itself. Rather, it stemmed from unfamiliarity with the new teacher.

“There was a little [nervousness], because at that time you were also a new teacher, so it felt unfamiliar.”

Meanwhile, P2 stated that the presence of a new teacher and a new subject was actually exciting, rather than intimidating:

“No, because for me, having someone new, especially teaching something new like English, made me happy with new things.”

These responses suggest that students who feel confident in learning or have a naturally open attitude toward change may experience less anxiety, even in unfamiliar settings.

2) Medium Achievers

Participants in the medium-achieving group showed clearer signs of nervousness and anxiety. P3 revealed a deeper emotional layer related to self-perception and social comparison:

“Yes, I felt afraid I wouldn’t understand, especially because English feels like a ‘rich people’s subject’ like, can I really understand it?”

This response reflects an internalized belief that English is associated with a higher status, which can be intimidating for students from less privileged backgrounds. P4 also expressed fear upon being introduced to English:

“Yes, because it was like—wow, English! It feels difficult.”

These reactions show that early emotional responses are tied not only to the subject itself, but to social meanings attached to it, and the student's perceived capability.

3) Low Achievers

Among the lower-achieving students, emotional responses varied. P5 described feeling neutral:

“Honestly, I felt normal because for me, it was just another subject. I’m just average at other subjects too.”

This suggests a resigned acceptance rather than fear but still a significant emotional stance, reflecting lower academic self-expectations.

P6, however, experienced clear anxiety:

“Yes, at the beginning of the lesson, because it was my first time learning English, and I didn’t understand some words while the other students could understand them quickly.”

This quote highlights the role of peer comparison in triggering anxiety, a common theme in early learning where gaps in comprehension quickly influence self-confidence.

While not all students reported intense fear or nervousness, the emotional tone of “not knowing,” “not belonging,” or “not being able” emerged in various ways. Medium and low achievers in

particular expressed anxiety connected to perceived difficulty, social pressure, or self-doubt. These findings affirm that even at an early age, emotional experiences are influenced by internal beliefs, social perceptions, and comparative classroom dynamics. Educators must be sensitive to these subtle but significant feelings when introducing foreign language learning for the first time.

c. Negative Deactivating Emotion

Negative deactivating emotions are emotional responses such as boredom, hopelessness, or the urge to give up. According to Pekrun (2006), these emotions tend to lower engagement and reduce students' cognitive and behavioral investment in learning tasks. While they may not be as emotionally intense as anxiety, their long-term impact can quietly undermine motivation and persistence. In the context of this study, most participants reported little to no experience of these emotions indicating a generally positive emotional climate. However, one participant described moments of disengagement due to external stress.

1) High Achievers

Both high achievers did not report strong deactivating emotions. P1 acknowledged the possibility of boredom but noted that it only arises when materials become repetitive:

“Never. Unless the vocabulary and learning materials are always the same, then yes, I would get bored.”

This reflects the importance of variety and challenge, even for students with high performance. Meanwhile, P2 described the English class as enjoyable and different from other subjects:

“No, because English is fun. Also, the atmosphere felt different from other subjects.”

This distinction may stem from the fact that English was taught by a subject-specific teacher rather than their regular homeroom teacher, providing a sense of novelty.

2) Medium Achievers

P3 was the only participant who clearly reported feelings of wanting to give up during English class. However, the cause was not the subject itself, but external academic pressure:

“Yes, especially when there are other assignments and homework. My head feels full, like I have too much to think about, and it’s hard to focus.”

This highlights how emotional overload from multiple subjects can spill over and affect engagement in English learning. P4, in contrast, expressed curiosity rather than boredom:

“No, I like English now because I still don’t know much about it, so I feel eager to learn more.”

3) Low Achievers

Neither P5 nor P6 reported deactivating emotions. P5 even showed a strong motivational vision tied to personal goals:

“No, I became interested in English because one day I want to go abroad.”

P6 also emphasized enjoyment and fun in the classroom:

“No, because the class is fun.”

These statements suggest that even students who may struggle academically can maintain engagement if their learning experiences feel relevant and enjoyable.

The data shows that deactivating emotions such as boredom and disengagement were rare among the participants. Only one student expressed such feelings, and even then, the source was external academic overload rather than the English lesson itself. Overall, positive teacher-student interactions, varied class activities, and meaningful personal connections to the subject appear to serve as protective factors against emotional withdrawal. This suggests that when early learning experiences are both stimulating and supportive, students are less likely to feel overwhelmed or unmotivated, even in the face of broader academic stress.

2. Affective Factors that Influence Their First-Time Experience with Formal English Learning

Affective factors refer to internal emotional and psychological conditions that influence a learner’s ability and willingness to engage with

academic content. In the context of second language acquisition, these factors often determine how students respond to language input, process information, and persevere through learning challenges. According to Brown (2000), affective variables such as self-esteem, motivation, anxiety, attitude, and empathy are deeply intertwined with learning success, particularly for young language learners.

However, this study focuses specifically on two affective components: self-esteem and motivation. The decision to highlight these two aspects stems from both their strong influence on students' engagement and their relevance to the emotional narratives expressed by the participants.

Self-esteem, especially in young learners, affects how children view their own ability to learn and succeed. It plays a significant role in shaping their classroom behavior, willingness to participate, and resilience when facing difficulty. Meanwhile, motivation—both intrinsic and extrinsic—drives the learner's decision to invest effort in learning, even when tasks feel challenging or unfamiliar. These two factors were consistently evident in students' responses, either directly or indirectly, as they talked about their fears, enthusiasm, curiosity, and future goals.

Other affective variables such as anxiety and attitude are undeniably important, but they have been addressed indirectly within the discussion of emotional experiences (Section 1). By narrowing the scope to self-esteem and motivation, this study aims to provide a more focused exploration of

how internal emotional states shape students' first-time experiences in formal English learning.

a. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to how much a person values and believes in themselves. In language learning, it plays a big role in how students react to challenges, try new things, and stay motivated when things feel difficult. When students believe they are capable, they are more likely to participate, take risks, and enjoy the learning process. On the other hand, low self-esteem can cause students to hesitate, avoid tasks, or feel discouraged even before they try.

According to Brown (2000), self-esteem is not just one fixed feeling, but can be seen in three levels:

- 1) Global self-esteem, which is a general feeling of self-worth in life.
- 2) Situational self-esteem, which refers to how students feel in a specific situation, like in school or while learning a certain subject.
- 3) Task-based self-esteem, which is how students feel about doing a particular task, such as reading out loud or answering a question in English.

In this study, these three levels of self-esteem were used as lenses to better understand how students experienced their first formal English learning. Through the interviews, students shared different kinds of thoughts and feelings that reflected how confident they were—not just about English, but about learning in general. Their responses also

showed how the classroom environment, their previous school experiences, and their own mindset influenced the way they viewed themselves.

1) Global Self-Esteem

Global self-esteem refers to a student's overall perception of themselves, beyond any single subject or task. It represents how students generally feel about their ability to learn and succeed across different areas. According to Brown (2000), global self-esteem is one of the most stable forms of affective influence, often shaping how learners approach new experiences, including the introduction of a foreign language.

In this study, participants were asked how they see themselves as students in general, not limited to English learning, reflected low to moderate global self-esteem.

a) High Achievers

Despite being categorized as high performers, both P1 and P2 displayed modest or even uncertain views of their own abilities.

P1 questioned how others viewed them, indicating an internal conflict between external perceptions and self-belief:

“Maybe just a little, because I’m not sure. Some people think I’m smart, others think I’m just average, or not smart at all.”

P2's self-view was also shaped by comparison with peers, showing hesitation despite good performance:

"I'm not sure, because others are smarter than me. Like [another student], who understands lessons more quickly."

These responses suggest that even high-achieving students may struggle with self-recognition and are affected by social comparison, which can impact their confidence when encountering new subjects.

b) Medium Achievers

P3 and P4 both described their confidence as unstable. P3 associated their self-worth with academic performance, noting fluctuating grades:

"A little, because my grades go up and down. Sometimes high, sometimes low—not like [pointing to P1]."

P4 also expressed self-doubt, acknowledging personal habits as a cause:

"Sometimes I feel smart, sometimes I don't, because I rarely study at home."

These answers reflect conditional confidence—their self-esteem depends on recent outcomes or effort, rather than a stable internal belief.

c) Low Achievers

P5 showed clear signs of low global self-esteem, stating that low grades shaped how they saw themselves:

“No, because my scores often drop and are below average.”

P6, though also uncertain, expressed a hopeful mindset:

“I’m not sure, because I rarely study, but I want to be smart.”

While P6’s response reflected limited self-confidence, it also contained a desire to improve — a valuable emotional opening that can be supported by affirming and responsive teaching.

Across all achievement levels, students’ global self-esteem varied but generally leaned toward the modest or low range. Many viewed intelligence through academic performance or peer comparison, which may hinder confidence in unfamiliar subjects like English. Notably, high-achieving students were not always the most self-assured. These findings suggest that helping students build global self-esteem through encouragement, recognizing diverse strengths, and minimizing excessive comparison can contribute to more positive first-time learning experiences.

2) Situational Self-Esteem

Situational self-esteem refers to how students perceive their ability and confidence in a particular context. In this case, while learning English in the classroom. According to Brown (2000), this

type of self-esteem is more fluid than global self-esteem, and can shift based on recent experiences, classroom environment, or the type of tasks being given.

To understand this, students were asked how they usually feel about themselves when learning English whether they feel confident, confused, or somewhere in between. The responses revealed that many students struggled with unfamiliar words and grammar rules, which affected their confidence in class.

a) High Achievers

P1 gave a balanced answer, stating that sometimes they understood the material quickly, but sometimes also felt confused when faced with unfamiliar words:

“Both. I sometimes understand quickly, but sometimes I feel confused because there are still strange words or terms that I don’t know yet.”

This indicates moderate situational self-esteem — not entirely confident, but not overwhelmed either. P1’s response shows a realistic self-assessment and a willingness to admit confusion without losing interest.

In contrast, P2 seemed more unsure and anxious about their English performance:

“I often feel confused, because there are still many unfamiliar words. Sometimes I even leave out letters or write them wrong — it’s hard.”

Even though P2 is a high achiever academically, this quote reveals that performance in other subjects doesn't always translate to confidence in English, especially when students encounter unfamiliar vocabulary and writing rules.

b) Medium Achievers

Both P3 and P4 expressed clear difficulty in understanding English in the classroom, especially when it comes to reading, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

P3 highlighted the inconsistency between spelling and pronunciation in English as a source of confusion:

“I often feel confused. It’s hard to understand, especially when the words are written one way but read another. And sometimes the same word can mean different things.”

P4 echoed this, emphasizing the complexity of unfamiliar terms:

“I’m often confused because there are many words and terms that feel strange and hard to understand.”

These responses suggest low situational self-esteem, where students feel overwhelmed by the structure of the language, despite being motivated to learn.

c) Low Achievers

P5 had a more varied answer, showing that their confidence depends on the teacher's explanation:

"Sometimes I understand, sometimes I feel confused — it depends on how the teacher explains it."

This response shows that teacher scaffolding plays a big role in shaping student confidence for low achievers.

P6 showed frequent confusion, mainly due to vocabulary gaps:

"I often feel confused because there are many words I don't know the meaning of."

Although P6 did not explicitly say they felt "incapable," their repeated confusion suggests low situational self-esteem that may hinder deeper engagement if not supported.

Situational self-esteem among students varied, but most participants reported frequent confusion during English lessons, especially with vocabulary and pronunciation. Even high achievers like P2 expressed significant difficulty, showing that language unfamiliarity can challenge confidence across performance levels. This suggests that first-time language learning experiences are deeply affected by how "strange" or "unfamiliar" the material feels, and that teachers play a vital role in building students' confidence through explanation, repetition,

and encouragement. Understanding situational self-esteem can help educators better to design learning experiences that reduce anxiety and foster greater engagement.

3) Task-Based Self-Esteem

Task-based self-esteem refers to students' perceived ability and confidence when performing specific classroom tasks, such as reading aloud, writing sentences, or speaking in English. According to Brown (2000), this is the most dynamic and task-dependent level of self-esteem, as students may feel confident in one skill but unsure in another, even within the same subject.

Students were asked how they feel when completing basic English tasks like reading, writing, and speaking. The responses provided insight into what tasks felt more approachable, and which ones triggered discomfort or hesitation—particularly during their first experiences with these tasks.

a) High Achievers

P1 expressed relative confidence in reading and writing, but admitted that speaking was more difficult due to fear of making mistakes. They stated:

“I can read and write, though sometimes I get confused with the structure. Speaking is hard for me, but I can find and arrange the words—I just don't feel confident speaking them out loud.”

This response reflects moderate task-based self-esteem: the ability is there, but speaking in public is blocked by hesitation and social pressure, which is common in early language learning.

P2 shared similar concerns, especially about pronunciation in reading tasks:

“I can do it, but reading is still a bit hard because I feel embarrassed if I say something wrong.”

Although both participants showed understanding of the tasks, their confidence was limited by emotional filters, particularly fear of judgment.

b) Medium Achievers

P3 displayed very low task-based self-esteem, stating that all tasks felt difficult:

“I can’t do it. Everything is hard, especially since I just started learning English.”

This kind of response reflects the heaviness of unfamiliarity during first exposure, and shows that students like P3 may benefit from extra scaffolding and emotional support. P4 was more optimistic, showing belief in their ability but acknowledging that challenges still exist:

“I think I can do it, but I still need guidance because some parts are difficult.”

This suggests developing confidence, with a growth-oriented mindset. P4 is aware of their gaps, but not discouraged.

c) Low Achievers

Both P5 and P6 expressed strong hesitation and uncertainty about English tasks. P5's concern stemmed from unfamiliarity and emotional discomfort:

"I can't do it, because I'm still not used to it, and I feel shy."

P6, although slightly more open, still found many parts of English difficult:

"I don't think I can. Maybe it would be hard, especially reading and speaking—it's very hard to say the words."

These answers show low task-based self-esteem, especially in productive skills like speaking. The use of words like "shy," "difficult," and "don't think I can" highlights a lack of belief in ability, rather than total lack of understanding.

Across all achievement levels, students' task-based self-esteem was most frequently challenged by speaking and pronunciation tasks. Even students who showed strength in reading or writing expressed hesitation about saying things aloud. These patterns highlight how performance anxiety, lack of familiarity, and early-stage discomfort affect task confidence, especially during first encounters with formal English learning. Teachers may need to provide gradual exposure to performance

tasks, allow space for mistakes, and foster a safe environment where students can try without fear.

The exploration of self-esteem across three dimensions—global, situational, and task-based—revealed that students’ self-perceptions played a critical role in shaping how they experienced English for the first time in a formal classroom setting.

At the global level, many students evaluated themselves based on academic comparison, fluctuating grades, or the opinions of others. Even high achievers did not always demonstrate strong global self-esteem, often expressing doubt about their intelligence when measured against their peers. This shows that before they even begin learning English, students may carry internalized beliefs that influence how open or hesitant they are to engage with the new subject.

At the situational level, students’ confidence when specifically learning English varied significantly. Although some students mentioned moments of clarity and understanding, most expressed frequent confusion, particularly due to unfamiliar vocabulary and structures. This situational uncertainty was present across all achievement levels and often tied to how “foreign” or “different” the English language felt. This suggests that first-time

encounters with English can trigger insecurity, even in otherwise capable learners.

At the task-based level, students reflected on their perceived ability to perform specific classroom activities, such as reading, writing, or speaking in English. Speaking was consistently identified as the most challenging task, often linked to fear of making mistakes or mispronunciation. Even those who felt confident in writing or understanding vocabulary still showed hesitancy when asked to verbalize their thoughts. These responses reflect the complex emotional dynamics that arise when students are asked to perform unfamiliar tasks in front of others.

Together, these three forms of self-esteem how students see themselves generally, in context, and in specific actions converge to shape their first-time learning experience. A student who feels inadequate or unsure at any of these levels may withdraw, hesitate, or disengage, even if they possess the ability to succeed. Conversely, students with moderate to high self-esteem often show resilience and curiosity, even when faced with difficulty.

In the context of first-time formal English learning, self-esteem is not merely a background trait. It is a central lens through which students interpret, engage with, and respond to their initial exposure. Supporting learners' self-esteem, especially in the early

stages, can foster more positive, inclusive, and confident beginnings in their language learning journey.

b. Motivation

Motivation plays a significant role in shaping how students approach a new subject, especially during their initial encounters. In the context of first-time formal English learning, motivation can either encourage students to explore and engage with the language, or cause them to hesitate and withdraw when faced with difficulties.

According to Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985), motivation can be classified into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal desire to learn for the sake of curiosity, enjoyment, or personal satisfaction. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards or expectations, such as grades, approval from teachers, or future goals. In language learning, Brown (2000) applied these categories to show how learners may be driven by internal interest or external rewards.

In this study, students were asked why they study English and what makes them interested in learning the language. Their responses revealed a spectrum of reasons, some internal and emotional, others more practical or externally driven. These answers provided insight into how motivation operates during first-time learning experiences and how it intersects with emotional and cognitive factors.

The findings show that motivation is often mixed and layered, especially for young learners who are just beginning to form their attitudes toward English. While some students expressed genuine curiosity and interest in learning something new, others were motivated by external factors such as the teacher's behavior, the learning environment, or their aspirations for the future. Regardless of the type, motivation shaped how students perceived their abilities, responded to challenges, and interpreted the classroom experience.

By examining students' early motivations, this study seeks to understand not just what drives students to learn, but how those motivations are formed and influenced during their first meaningful contact with English. This insight is especially important for teachers, as it emphasizes the need to nurture motivation gently and responsively, especially in environments where students are encountering a subject for the first time.

1) Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to a learner's internal desire to engage in a task for the enjoyment, curiosity, or satisfaction it brings, rather than for external rewards. In the context of first-time English learning, intrinsic motivation can be a powerful driver for engagement, especially for young learners who are still forming their attitudes toward the subject.

When asked whether they enjoy learning English and why, students gave varied yet honest responses that reflected their personal feelings about the learning process. Several students expressed genuine interest and excitement toward learning the language, highlighting factors such as novelty, fun activities, and the classroom atmosphere.

a) High Achievers

P1 demonstrated strong intrinsic motivation, describing English as fun, easy, and exploratory:

“I love English! Because it’s fun, easy, and I get to explore a new language.”

This response indicates that P1 sees language learning as an adventure, not just a school subject. The use of the word “explore” is particularly telling. It reflects curiosity and a positive emotional connection.

P2 also stated enjoyment, with a unique addition that linked motivation to the interpersonal dynamic in the classroom:

“I like it. The lesson is fun... and the teacher is kind.”

While the “teacher is kind” might lean slightly into external influence, the focus on enjoyment and comfort within the classroom reflects an internalized sense of safety and enjoyment, which is still part of intrinsic motivation for younger learners.

b) Medium Achievers

P3 showed a more neutral form of intrinsic motivation:

“I just like it... because the subject feels unique.”

Although the response is brief, the word “unique” suggests that P3 finds the content interesting in its own way. While not strongly enthusiastic, this reflects a mild internal interest rooted in the novelty of the subject rather than external pressure.

P4, on the other hand, showed a much clearer form of intrinsic motivation:

“I like it because the class is fun and I enjoy the English subject.”

This answer shows both emotional connection to the learning environment and genuine appreciation for the subject itself. It reflects a healthy internal drive to participate in English learning not because of external rewards, but because the experience is enjoyable and meaningful.

c) Low Achievers

P5 gave a neutral answer, showing neither strong dislike nor clear enthusiasm:

“It’s just normal. It feels the same as other subjects. I prefer Math.”

This reflects low intrinsic motivation. While P5 is not opposed to learning English, there is no emotional or personal connection with the subject.

In contrast, P6 was enthusiastic but linked their interest to classroom activities:

“I like it, because the games are fun.”

Although games are external stimuli, the enjoyment derived from participating shows that the learning process itself sparks joy, which is valid for defining intrinsic motivation in young learners.

The data gathered from students' reflections on their enjoyment of English lessons reveals that intrinsic motivation plays a meaningful role in shaping their first-time learning experiences. Most students expressed a genuine interest in learning English not because of grades or obligations, but because the subject felt fun, exciting, or different from their usual classes.

High-achieving students tended to describe learning English as a chance to explore new things, associating the experience with curiosity and enjoyment. Their motivation was not only tied to the content but also to the classroom atmosphere, with positive impressions of the teacher contributing to a sense of safety and comfort.

Medium-achieving students showed a mix of strong and neutral intrinsic motivation. While one student found the subject unique but gave a brief, neutral response, another described the class

as enjoyable and the subject as likable, indicating that the environment itself plays a large role in shaping how students feel about the subject.

Among low-achieving students, some responses still reflected enjoyment, especially when the learning process involved games or interactive elements. Although their academic performance might be lower, the presence of fun and engaging classroom activities encouraged their willingness to learn, showing that intrinsic motivation is not always tied to achievement levels.

Overall, these findings highlight that students' first experiences with formal English learning are significantly influenced by their internal feelings of interest, comfort, and enjoyment. When the learning process is made engaging, playful, and emotionally safe, intrinsic motivation is more likely to emerge even for students who are still struggling with basic skills. This suggests that the way English is introduced matters greatly in shaping whether students grow curious or hesitant in their learning journey.

2) Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation refers to learning behaviors that are driven by external factors, such as expectations from teachers or parents, school requirements, or the desire to gain rewards or avoid punishment. In the context of students' first-time experience

learning English, extrinsic motivation can emerge through institutional structures like school schedules, tasks, or exams as well as through social influences and future aspirations.

When students were asked if they studied English due to their own will or because someone else told them to, their answers revealed a spectrum. Some students clearly identified external structures as their reason, while others expressed blended motivation, where external contexts sparked internal curiosity.

a) High Achievers

P1 responded with a future-oriented extrinsic goal:

“Yes, I’m motivated to learn English for myself because I want to work abroad someday.”

Although P1 says "for myself," the reasoning is linked to a career goal, which qualifies as extrinsic motivation. The student is aware of English as a tool for external opportunity, and that awareness fuels their learning.

P2, similarly, mentions liking English, but also acknowledges that it is a school subject:

“Yes, I want to learn it on my own because English is a cool and fun subject even though it’s also a school subject.”

This quote shows blended motivation: an internal enjoyment coexists with the recognition that English is part of school

structure. The acknowledgment of school as a factor gives this response an extrinsic layer.

b) Medium Achievers

P3 gave a very balanced answer:

“Both. First, because English was introduced in school, but then I felt the urge to explore it more by myself.”

This response shows how external introduction (school) can lead to personal engagement. The student’s journey from extrinsic to intrinsic interest highlights how classroom exposure can spark self-driven curiosity.

P4’s behavior reflects sustained motivation that is supported by external support:

“I want to learn more about English, that’s why I often ask the teacher for word meanings outside the class.”

Although this could be seen as internal desire, the learning still happens within the school structure, and through a social interaction (with teacher), showing how extrinsic contexts can reinforce deeper interest.

c) Low Achievers

P5 gave a simple and clear response:

“I just follow what’s in the school lesson.”

This is a classic example of pure extrinsic motivation: no expressed interest or emotional connection. It is just a passive

compliance to school requirements. However, it's still valuable, because it shows that external structure keeps the learner in the loop.

P6 gave a slightly more nuanced response:

“Actually, I do have a bit of my own interest, but for now I just follow what’s taught at school because there’s still a lot I don’t know.”

This answer reflects fragile intrinsic motivation being held in place by extrinsic systems. Although the student shows potential curiosity, it hasn't developed fully due to limited confidence or exposure.

Students' extrinsic motivation to learn English appears closely tied to their environment, structure, and future goals. For high achievers, external motivation is often paired with future aspirations or recognition of English as a valuable skill. Among mid-achieving students, school-related exposure often leads to deeper personal engagement, suggesting that structured learning environments can act as a springboard for developing interest. Low achievers, meanwhile, tend to rely more heavily on school routines and teacher direction to stay engaged.

These findings highlight that extrinsic motivation is not inherently negative. It can stabilize learners, introduce them to new

concepts, and sometimes lead to genuine internal interest. By understanding this teachers could design early learning experiences that not only support students through structure but also nurture curiosity over time.

B. Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research questions and relevant literature. The discussion is organized based on the two research questions: 1) What are the students' emotional experiences during their first-time formal English learning? 2) How do affective factors influence students' first-time experience with formal English learning?

The findings are interpreted by comparing them with previous studies and theoretical frameworks presented in Chapter II, including the classification of emotions by Pekrun (2006), Brown's (2000) model of self-esteem, and Deci & Ryan's (1985) motivation theory. Through this discussion, the study aims to offer a deeper understanding of how young learners respond emotionally and affectively to their first formal encounter with English in the classroom.

1. Emotional Experiences of Young Learners during The First-time with Formal English Learning

The emotional responses experienced by students during their first-time formal English learning varied across participants, yet shared key patterns. Emotions such as excitement, nervousness, confusion, and occasional boredom were frequently expressed. These responses align with Pekrun's (2006) control-value theory of achievement emotions, which classifies emotions in learning into activating/deactivating and positive/negative dimensions.

Most participants reported positive activating emotions such as joy and curiosity, especially when the learning activities were dynamic or involved games. These experiences are significant, particularly for young learners, because enjoyable early encounters can shape their long-term perception of the subject (Pekrun, 2006; Piaget, 1972). For instance, students who described English as “fun” or “unique” showed a form of early emotional engagement that could evolve into lasting motivation.

However, negative activating emotions such as anxiety and fear also emerged—especially among students who felt insecure about their ability to understand new words or who perceived English as difficult. These emotions are expected in early language learning, particularly when the content is unfamiliar or when learners feel less competent compared to their peers. The presence of such emotional tension supports the idea that emotional experience is not one-dimensional, but

a dynamic interplay shaped by context, self-perception, and instructional style (Ahmed et al., 2010).

Interestingly, negative deactivating emotions like boredom were rarely expressed. Only one student mentioned the potential for boredom if the learning material became repetitive. This may indicate that novelty, teacher interaction, and engaging tasks helped maintain emotional stimulation among most students. It also shows that well-designed early learning environments can prevent disengagement, even among those with lower achievement levels.

Furthermore, the emotional narratives gathered reflect that young learners, despite their age, are capable of identifying and articulating emotional states when guided appropriately. This supports the notion from child-centered theories (e.g., Vygotsky, Bruner) that children are not passive receivers but active meaning-makers in the learning process. Their emotional feedback gives educators insight into how lessons are internalized, far beyond test scores or grades.

In summary, the emotional dimension of first-time formal English learning plays a central role in shaping how students view English as a subject. The balance between curiosity and fear, engagement and hesitation, highlights the need for emotionally responsive pedagogy. Teachers who are aware of these early emotional dynamics can create environments that validate students' feelings and encourage positive emotional associations with learning.

2. Affective Factors that Influence Their First-Time Experience with Formal English Learning

The affective side of language learning plays an essential role in shaping young learners' experiences during their initial exposure to formal English. In this study, two key affective factors were explored: self-esteem and motivation. These aspects not only influence how students perceive their abilities, but also determine the energy and willingness they bring into the learning process, especially in a new and unfamiliar subject like English.

a. Self-Esteem

Brown's (2000) model of self-esteem was used to explore three dimensions: global self-esteem, situational self-esteem, and task-based self-esteem. The students' responses revealed a mixed pattern. At the global level, many students showed uncertainty about their intelligence or abilities in general. Some said they felt "a little smart," while others doubted themselves because of inconsistent grades or comparisons with peers. This shows how deeply young learners' self-perception is influenced by external validation and academic performance.

In terms of situational self-esteem, most students expressed confusion and a lack of confidence when learning English in class. Many mentioned difficulties understanding unfamiliar words, pronunciation, or grammar structures. This aligns with the idea that

early exposure to a foreign language can create moments of self-doubt, especially when students feel they are lagging behind their classmates.

When asked about task-specific self-esteem, their confidence in reading, writing, or speaking, many participants admitted to struggling. Reading and writing were somewhat manageable for high-achievers, but speaking remained a common challenge. Fear of mispronouncing words or not knowing how to express themselves caused hesitation. This highlights the need for teachers to foster a safe environment where students can practice language without fear of being judged.

These findings emphasize that young learners are sensitive to how well they perform and how they are perceived by others. Even at an early age, they begin to internalize ideas about whether they are “good” or “bad” at a subject, which can significantly shape their learning trajectory.

b. Motivation

In exploring motivation, this study focused on two types: intrinsic and extrinsic, as defined by Deci & Ryan (1985). Most participants expressed some degree of intrinsic motivation, stating that they enjoyed learning English because it was fun, interesting, or different from other subjects. This was especially true when lessons were engaging or involved interactive elements like games. Such

experiences triggered curiosity and personal satisfaction, both hallmarks of intrinsic motivation.

However, extrinsic motivation was also clearly present. Some students admitted that they studied English mainly because it was a school subject or because they were told to by parents or teachers. Others expressed more future-oriented reasons, such as wanting to work abroad. Interestingly, several students demonstrated blended motivation, where school exposure sparked internal interest over time. This suggests that external environments such as the way English is introduced can influence and even develop students' inner drive to learn.

Overall, the findings support the idea that affective factors are deeply intertwined with first-time learning experiences. When students feel capable, supported, and emotionally engaged, they are more likely to participate actively and build a lasting interest in the subject. On the other hand, early feelings of confusion or inadequacy may lead to long-term disengagement if not properly addressed.