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de les Illes Balears

MASTER'S THESIS

IMPACT OF COVID-19: THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS' WELL-BEING AND EMOTIONS TO IMPROVE THEIR MOTIVATION TOWARDS REMOTE LEARNING

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Centre for Postgraduate Studies

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Keywords:

emotions, feelings, remote learning, COVID-19, motivation

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Abstract

Emotions are essential elements in our lives. As social beings as we are, we think, we feel, we perceive and at the same time we want to express our thoughts, ideas, emotions, feelings and perceptions, mainly because we want to share them with other people (Ozanska-Ponikw, 2012). Treating emotions and feelings in the classroom has recently become important among researchers. Studying the feelings experienced by students, play an important role in understanding students' motivation, learning, performance, identity development, health as well as effective teaching (Meyer and Turner, 2006; Pekrun et al., 2011; Schutz and Pekrun, 2007). Unfortunately, in many schools sometimes this is not really considered. Furthermore, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, this is even becoming a more complicated task.

Amid this context of uncertainty, the 2020–2021 academic year has adopted several measures such as online learning for a return to the classroom. Although many countries have introduced different platforms for distance learning, this solution has not been very successful—not only because many families do not have access to the Internet or to a computer, but also because many teachers are encountering the difficulty of developing high-quality online teaching (Mirahmadizadeh et al., 2020). The shift to remote learning/teaching is very complicated since teachers have to find a way to be connected with their students while also maintaining a work-motivation balance.

This Master thesis focuses on the importance of taking care of the emotions of our students with the aim to stir up motivation and enthusiasm while remote learning. Despite the shift to remote learning as well as keeping our students' motivation is a challenging one (Mirahmadizadeh et al., 2020); this thesis speculates that supporting and taking care of our students' emotions thereby building a sense of security, empathy and a strong relationship between student and teacher, might boost interest and motivation towards remote learning.

keywords: emotions, feelings, remote learning, COVID-19, motivation

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1 Introduction

Emotions are essential elements in our lives. As social beings as we are, we think, we feel, we perceive and at the same time we want to express our thoughts, ideas, emotions, feelings and perceptions, mainly because we want to share them with other people (Ozanska-Ponikw, 2012). Treating emotions and feelings in the classroom has recently become important among researchers. Studying the feelings experienced by students, play an important role in understanding students' motivation, learning, performance, identity development, health as well as effective teaching (Meyer and Turner, 2006; Pekrun et al., 2011; Schutz and Pekrun, 2007).

Numerous studies (Alali and Fatema, 2009; Buenrostro-Guerrero et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2004) confirm the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance. On the one hand, the research of Buenrostro-Guerrero, A. et al (2012) shows clearly the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance in adolescents. The results they obtained are significant since the students who obtained better qualifications were more capable of interpersonal relationships, stress management and regulation, problem solving and coping. These results are similar to those obtained by Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan and Majeski (2004), whose study analyses the positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance in secondary school students, and found that academic performance was strongly linked to the subscales of intrapersonal skills, adaptability and stress management. Finally, the study performed by Alali and Fatema (2009) also demonstrates that emotional intelligence is significantly correlated with motivation of academic performance. In other words, and as one might conclude, it is very important to educate adolescents through emotional education programs and classes. Unfortunately, in many schools sometimes this is not really considered. Furthermore, after the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, this is even becoming a more complicated task.

First of all, last year, educational institutions had to move from in class to remote learning within a few days (Tamarit et al., 2020). Now, with the new academic year, students can come back to school on alternate days (half of a group is taught online and the other half offline), they must wear masks, use hand sanitizers all the time, follow very strict instructions, etc. Although we are trying to normalise this situation, we are not considering that these current events can affect the students' emotions towards education, motivation and school attendance (Mahmood, 2021; Mirahmadizadeh et al., 2020). Despite teachers are seeing the negative social and emotional impact that the pandemic has on their students well-being, it is being very difficult to manage this type of crisis when they are also suffering from it (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). While our focus is on students, we recognise that the challenges also apply to teachers and instructors. One should take into account that teachers have also accumulated a high level of stress, confusion and anxiety since the beginning of the pandemic (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al.,

2021)¹. This, in turn, is having a huge effect on adolescents: teachers are ignoring the fact that many students are experiencing a trauma at this moment and thereby, not being able to provide them affective support (Mirahmadizadeh et al., 2020; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021).

Amid this context of uncertainty, the 2020-2021 academic year has adopted several measures such as online learning for a return to the classroom (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). Although many countries have introduced different platforms for distance learning, this solution has not been very successful (Mirahmadizadeh et al., 2020). In Spain, for instance, these measures implemented with the resources available to the schools emerged as a challenge. In this way, the new measures the educational community has had to adopt, have been very difficult to carry out due to the lack of support in the form of material and human resources (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). Furthermore, this situation has revealed that many families do not have access to the Internet or to a computer, as a consequence, making it difficult or impossible to connect. Finally, many teachers are encountering the difficulty of developing high-quality online teaching due to the lack of teacher training programmes (Mirahmadizadeh et al., 2020). The shift to remote learning/teaching is indeed very complicated since teachers have to find a way to be connected with their students while also maintaining a work-motivation balance (Mirahmadizadeh et al., 2020).

This is why, this Master thesis focuses on the importance of taking care of the emotions of our students with the aim to stir up motivation and enthusiasm while remote learning. Despite the shift to remote learning as well as keeping our students' motivation is a challenging one (Mirahmadizadeh et al., 2020); this thesis speculates that supporting and taking care of our students' emotions thereby building a sense of security, empathy and a strong relationship between student and teacher, might boost interest and motivation towards remote learning.

This can be put in practice in our English classes. The English subject (in our case), as well as any other foreign language subject, is a perfect medium to know our students in many ways. It is in the foreign language classroom where our students talk more about themselves: we get to know our students' hobbies, feelings, families, routines, life opinions, ideas, among many others. This needs to be exploited for our purpose. Our focus lies mainly on the written expression as it is the visible form of our ideas, emotions, sensations, desires, problems, expressed in words. By putting them down on paper we release them, free them and allow our mind to rest. Writing is considered a tool that can help us to express and channel our emotions when we feel blocked or overwhelmed (Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker and Smyth, 2016; Smyth, 1998).

For this, a previous study has had to be conducted based on a bimodal study with the aim to firstly, identify how the pandemic has affected our students emotionally. Secondly, to acknowledge the quality of remote learning during the year 2020-2021. Thirdly, to examine the

¹For more information about the psychological state of teachers during the COVID-19 crisis, see: (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021).

students' attitudes towards their remote learning experience. Fourthly, their relation with their teachers. And, finally, to acknowledge the level of English as well as the students' confidence in using English. In the light of the results, a didactic proposal will be suggested and based on writing skills. We focus on the written expression as it is a vehicle that helps to channel emotions and manifest them in a more accurate and true way.

The participants have been students of 1st and 2nd of Baccalaureate² (Batxillerat) from two different high-schools in Palma. This is why the proposal will be designed for these two classes. However, the proposal can be worked on any stage of compulsory secondary education (ESO) and it can be adapted to the required curricular level as well as to NESE students, that is, to those students with special educational needs.

The purpose of this thesis is to acknowledge the importance of our students emotions by identifying, managing, reflecting and discussing them in class to obtain a triple objective: to learn English; to reflect on particular feelings that might help to overcome problems and to strengthen the relationship between student and teacher so that the students are subsequently motivated to follow online classes.

This thesis presents 4 main specific purposes on the basis of what has been mentioned above:

- To acknowledge the impact of the COVID-19 in the classroom in terms of emotions and learning quality, focused on the students of 1st and 2nd of Baccalaureate.
- To acknowledge the importance of positive emotions in order to prompt and encourage academic performance during onsite and online classes;
- To promote writing as a way to express emotions and personal circumstances;
- To design a proposal focused mostly on writing skills in order to motivate students and, thereby, bonding with them. In order to achieve these aims, it is important to develop a proposal with different activities such as games, stories, narratives, letters, etc. that might face-to-face classes with online classes. It is essential that while learning English, students are also interacting with their peers as well as with their teachers. For this, a private journal, epistolary texts and playing with a game called *Dixit*, are activities that will be developed to work from class and from home. Further details of this can be found in section 7.

In line with the importance of this research, it is relevant to recall once again what our goals are for the development of this thesis. On the one hand, it is essential to analyse the

²The Spanish education system is based on the Ley Orgánica de Educación (Education Act), which makes education free but compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 16. It includes primary education from 6 to 12 years and compulsory secondary education (ESO) until the age of 16, at the end of which a Certificate of Education is received. From the age of 16, pupils can decide whether or not to continue school. The highest school qualification is *Batxillerat* or Spanish Baccalaureate (also comparable to the German *Abitur*). After achieving *Batxillerat*, students can take entrance exams (*selectivitat*) at the university they wish to study at.

emotional changes of our students following COVID-19, which is constantly highlighted in the media for other social sectors (workers, women, vulnerable people, etc.). On the other hand, it is important to evaluate the quality of the existing infrastructures for online teaching. The COVID-19 crisis has revealed that there is a lack of infrastructures, both private and public, to develop online teaching in positive conditions. This involves the need for a closer relationship between teachers and students in a learning process that is mutual, given the difficult circumstances of this pandemic. Likewise, emotional expression in the English language needs to be encouraged. In this respect, strong feelings of anxiety, negative attitudes to a new reality, even pre-depressive states, can be the subject of more sincere and open reflections when using a new language. Teacher's aloofness from students may contribute not only to aggravate these states of alienation but also to unmotivate students to carry on with both online and onsite classes; and that is precisely why it is very important to build and establish constant and regular bridges of communication between teachers and students: to maximise learning; invigorating motivation while facilitating language learning (Méndez López, 2011).

This Master dissertation is structured in 8 sections. First, I will provide a background information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in general, as well as in the context of the Balearic Islands. Section 2 will analyse emotions related to SLA. Section 3 deals with the aims and hypothesis of the thesis as well as the study. Section 4 develops the methodology of the research, the method, procedure, the type of investigation and the materials needed. The fifth and sixth sections bring the analysis of data and discussion. The seventh section describes the proposal. The limitations of the research and conclusions close the thesis.

1.1 Background

The COVID-19 outbreak has brought about far-reaching changes in all spheres of life. Our economy, our social behaviour, culture, politics and family and friends relationships have all been shaken by the pandemic. Before March 2020, there was no serious foreshadowing that a crisis like the one we are now experiencing could occur. At the end of 2019, all the international organisations had predicted a calm new year, with no significant ups and downs.

However, in December 2019, Wuhan (Hubei province, China) was the origin of this virus (Rahman et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020a). Considering the intensity and seriousness of the epidemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the COVID-19 outbreak an international public health emergency on 12 March 2020 (WHO, 2020). One year later, and despite of the vaccination programs, the world is still struggling to control the spread of the virus. Lockdowns and strict curfews are still in force in many countries, which have changed our lives completely. In line with Rahman, et al. (2021) "the world is now facing a new reality, including changes to our education, health, politics, business, and economy" (Rahman et al., 2021, 1). Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many countries to be in lockdown, to

close business activities and almost all the universities and schools throughout the world have been closed (Gautam and Gautam, 2021).

The main drivers and the speed of the spread of the virus are listed below:

- Globalisation, i.e. the intense connection between all geographical areas due to the development of trade relations;
- Tourism and international private and professional travelling have been an important trigger: the first COVID cases in Spain were in fact, located in the Canary Islands and Mallorca (i.e. tourist destinations);
- The economic and social effects of the COVID-19 epidemic, which have accelerated profound changes in our society.

The peculiarity of this crisis can be explained by its origins. Never in the last hundred years has a deep crisis been caused by a biological agent. The causes of recessions have always been economic. The so-called Spanish flu of 1918 can be considered the last great global pandemic, and it occurred during a fragile context: at the end of the First World War when the countries were economically recovering. The death toll was terrible: more than fifty million people died worldwide, a figure that exceeds the death and loss toll of the Great War (estimated at around 25 million) (Shangguan et al., 2020).

The rampant spread of the COVID-19 virus has posed and is posing a set of challenges: it has markedly disrupted our health system, the global economic system, our social relations and daily life (Besser et al., 2020; Cao et al., 2020; Liang et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2021).

Regarding the social challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic has completely changed the nature of our social interactions. We have to bear in mind that historically, pandemics have been fought through isolation measures. This was the case, for instance, of the Spanish flu, of the so-called bubonic plagues or other lethal epidemics such as the cholera and the yellow fever. Lockdowns, safe-distance maintenance or the importance of hygiene are some examples of the guidelines that have been applied for such cases. Measures that now, are not considered as unfamiliar. This has naturally led to forced isolation among the population, thereby changing the ways of socialising and relating to each other.

The uptake of new preventive behaviour towards the spread of COVID-19 like quarantines, curfews or restrictions on large gatherings (outdoors and indoors) are some of the factors that have had an emotional and psychological impact on all of us, which are leading to an increase in depressive symptoms, low self-esteem and suicidal attempts (Tamarit et al., 2020). Although there is still little evidence, some studies assert that young people are particularly at risk in the current pandemic situation (Espada et al., 2011; Liang et al., 2020; Tamarit et al., 2020). In general, adolescence is a challenging period in life because of the variety of physical, emotional

and social transformations, which increases the vulnerability to develop mental health problems and maladaptation (Tamarit et al., 2020). This is something that we need to take into account for our research.

Recovering these links is an undeniable challenge for everyone, since we want to return to our previous normality. The situation we are experiencing is unusual, and is characterised by two clear elements:

- **Uncertainty:** no one can predict the immediate future, as it is conditioned by the evolution of the virus and, now, by the development of vaccination processes. In this sense, the lack of certainty causes a greater insecurity among the population, as well as among economic, social and political actors themselves. Epidemiologists, rather than social scientists, can more accurately determine the possible future developments.
- **Improvisation:** the unusual nature of the situation generates a “swinging pendulum” in the behaviour of political leaders and administrations, including the health sector. This is important to bear in mind, because it means that the changes that take place (e.g. immunisation schedules changes) are not fanciful, as long as they are based on scientific accuracy: they obey the changes in the environment itself.

These elements lead to a central concern, which has already been noted: the impact of the pandemic on people’s psychological state and well-being.

1.2 COVID-19 and the educational sector in the Balearic Islands

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a largest disruption of the education systems and has had important consequences on students, teachers, schools and families. The closure of schools and thus, the suspension of face-to-face classes made it necessary to develop new ways of guaranteeing the right to education at all levels. This effort involves education authorities, schools, families and students. It requires innovative solutions, resources and time, but also patience and goodwill (UNICEF, 2020). These ideas are set out in different Unicef documents and have inspired many governments to carry out education-reopening plans that embrace new adaptative education formulas.

In the case of the Balearic Islands, the Ministry of Education has relied on these premises in order to carry out its strategies.

From the first cases of the virus across the islands, the concern that arose in the educational field was understandable:

- Although it was believed that COVID-19 was less severe among young people³, there was a great fear of spread of the virus in the classrooms.

³The disease seemed to target the elderly, that is to say, the severity and outcome of the virus depended largely on a patient’s age.

- The fear and anxiety triggered by COVID-19 has been counteracted through severe control measures, starting with the closure of schools and the introduction of remote learning. This is a challenge for teachers, students and families. And, of course, for the management of schools and colleges.

The measures which have been taken so far, have had very positive results in the Balearic Islands:

- Very few cases of COVID-19 have been detected among students and teachers: there has been low rates among a student population of 190.000 people. The educational community as a whole has complied correctly with the rules that have been communicated. This has involved discipline, rigour, commitment and patience - as Unicef itself points out.
- The vaccination campaign among teachers in the Balearic Islands is progressing. By the end of March 2021, vaccines were administered to five thousand nursery and special education teachers (around a 68% of the total teaching staff in these groups). In the case of primary and secondary education, vaccination has reached more than 8.000 teachers: around 46% of the total population in these educational areas (Planells, 2021).

The challenges inherent in the educational world have focused on several aspects. Firstly, the need for coordination between education authorities and schools, a highly complex process as it involves many people, from the teaching staff to the student body and parents' associations. Here, governance has been crucial: the ability to bring together different groups, despite their differences and conflicting ideas. The results we have outlined above confirm that, despite all the difficulties, the outcome is favourable for the moment.

The report available on the Ministry of Education website on the incidence of the pandemic on non-university education⁴ presents very interesting data (information from September 2020 to the 16th of April 2021):

Figures 1, 2 and 3 corroborate the relatively low incidence in the field of education, with clear reversals from December onwards, as it can be seen in the figure number 1. Figures 2 and 3 show the incidence of positive cases among students and teachers, with cumulative data representing low percentages: less than 4% in the first case. It should be pointed out that there are missing variables, which the report does not contain, such as those corresponding to the student population over 16 years, which are computed for the case of Mallorca: this would therefore relativise the numbers available so far. All in all, the results are eloquent of what was indicated above: low impact on both the student and teaching population, a success that should be attributed to civic engagement between parents, faculty, students, trade unions and education authorities.

⁴See: [GOIB, 2021, "Situació de la COVID-19 als centres educatius no universitaris de les Illes Balears."](#)

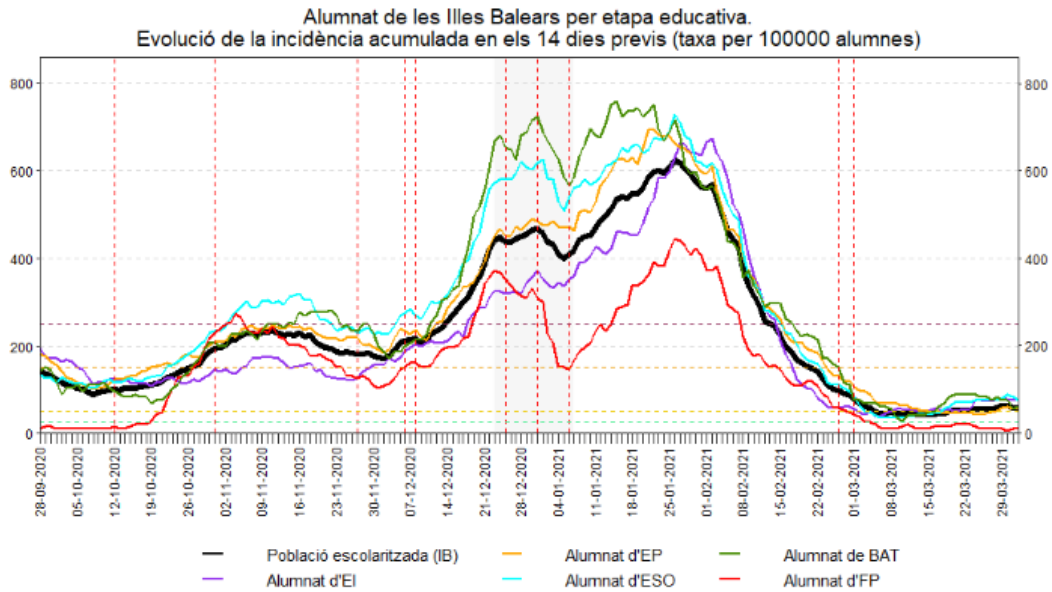


Figure 1: Incidence of COVID-19, by educational stage
Source: EDUCOVID

Alumnat	Mallorca	Menorca	Eivissa	Formentera	Illes Balears
Acumulat fins al 01/04/2021	5256	135	1536	52	6979

Figure 2: Positive cases among students
Source: EDUCOVID

Professorat	Mallorca	Menorca	Eivissa	Formentera	Illes Balears
Acumulat fins al 01/04/2021	144	4	78	1	227

Figure 3: Positive cases among teachers
Source: Servei de Prevenció de Riscos Laborals -CAIB- and -DIE-

However, these numbers have been possible, as we said, by the strategy followed: a strict confinement thereby, allowing the possibility to remote teaching/learning. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to make a great digital leap not only in our everyday life and practices but also in education. Under this situation, strategic turns have had to be taken in order to offer educational opportunities while mitigating the risk of infection spread (Castro-Castro et al., 2020). In this sense, educational methodologies and approaches have had to be adapted with the aim to provide a hybrid teaching (onsite and online) without compromising student learning:

1. Online platforms (like Google Classroom) used for teaching and learning;
2. Supplying laptops (Chromebooks) to all classrooms;

3. Providing appropriate whiteboards connected to teachers' computers;
4. Searching new up-to-date pedagogical teaching methodologies involving the use of technologies (transmitting content, knowledge and values through the application of ICT).

To some extent, the three first points have been carried out in all the classrooms of public and charter educational centres in the Balearic Islands. Regarding, the last element, although the technological tools are there, many teachers are not properly trained in using them; fact that hampers student learning skills in both face-to-face and online classes. Moreover, and undoubtedly, a corollary of this complex process, which has been summarised in the previous pages, is the sudden and extreme changes in student and teacher behaviour and emotions. Indeed, within the past year, understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the general population and that of students and teachers has become the focus of research (Camacho-Zuñiga et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2020; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021; Tamarit et al., 2020; Zhai and Du, 2020). Regarding those whose attention lies on education, their aims are not only to raise awareness of the psychological repercussions of this biological disaster but also to provide solutions and demands: to improve the quality of teaching; to build awareness around students and teachers' feelings and to empower them to regulate effectively their emotions (Camacho-Zuñiga et al., 2021; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). Feelings of tiredness, depression, anxiety, hopelessness, fear, distraction or boredom are some of the elements that are present in educators and their students (Mirahmadizadeh et al., 2020). Teachers have accumulated a high level of stress and anxiety that is having a huge effect on adolescents since the former is ignoring the fact that many students are experiencing a trauma at this moment and thus, not being able to provide them affective support (Mirahmadizadeh et al., 2020; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021).

For this reason, it is important that teachers try to work with educational resources and methodologies that have an impact on these more sensitive and emotional problems: specific practices that facilitate understanding what is happening, which can be very difficult for teenagers, who are full of health and who are constantly warned of the dangers emanating from the Coronavirus.

In order to understand how this situation has affected the psychological well-being of our students and their motivation, we need to delve into the question of emotions and how positive or negative feelings are correlated with motivation and academic achievement.

2 Emotions and SLA

Scientific interest in emotions has become very obvious over the last years. Studying the feelings experienced by students, play an important role in understanding students' motivation,

learning, performance, identity development, health as well as effective teaching (Meyer and Turner, 2006; Pekrun et al., 2011; Schutz and Pekrun, 2007).

Despite its common use, there is a certain difficulty in defining exactly the term “emotion⁵”. Its definition will depend upon the researcher’s perspective “whether it be biological, cognitive, cultural, or behavioral” (Tomas et al., 2016, p. 236). Researchers state that, surprising as it may seem, there is not a clear definition or even a concept for “emotion” that is accepted by all (Cantero et al., 2002, p. 109). Notwithstanding these limitations and conceptual difficulties, in a general sense, emotions are feelings caused in response to a certain life experience: “they are spontaneous human reactions to a situation one is in or to the people one is with” (Paik, 2010, p. 98). Indeed, one can state that emotions are individuals’ reactions to a certain stimuli, accompanied by their judgments on the circumstances surrounding the stimuli (Valiente et al., 2012).

Even though the meaning of the term emotion may be debatable, one can assert that an emotion is constituted by the following elements (Paik, 2010; Vivas et al., 2007):

1. A situation or stimulus that has certain characteristics, or certain potential, to generate such an emotion.
2. A subject capable of perceiving that situation, processing it correctly and reacting to it.
3. A subjective sensation which allows one to distinguish many kinds of emotion like joy, fear, sadness, anger, etc.
4. The emotional experience that the subject feels in light of that situation.
5. Developing bodily manifestations, that is to say, physiological reactions and involuntary responses: blood pressure, muscle tension, dry mouth, sweating, etc.
6. Observable behavioural reactions: gestures (facial expressions of joy, fear, anger...), postures, body movements, actions (crying), even verbal manifestations.

Taking all this into account, one can state that the COVID-19 crisis, represents a stimulus with certain characteristics that apart from the physical health complications, has a great potential to generate an emotion, in this case, an emotional and a mental challenge to our lives. These emotions that we are experiencing are mostly negative. Recent evidence shows that anxiety, stress, fear, tiredness are some of the emotions that are growing world-wide due to the pandemic (Tamarit et al., 2020; Terry et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020b). The classrooms are not an exception. The severe restrictions in education imposed in many countries such

⁵In education literature, emotions and feelings are considered close in meaning and thus, they are used interchangeably (Méndez López, 2011). In this thesis, we will also use these two concepts interchangeably considering the difficulty to separate the two concepts.

as Spain had the potential to significantly influence the psychological well-being of the youth, which in turn is seriously affecting their learning progress and achievement (Terry et al., 2020).

For instance, safety concerns have become very relevant due to the potential risk to health, not only for their individual self but also for their family members and friends (Besser et al., 2020). Moreover, many students have felt isolated and lonely, feelings that come hand-in-hand with physical and social isolation and distancing. Stress and anxiety are also prompted by the disruptions of their daily routines. Regarding the school and classroom, although students try to maintain their concentration on learning, it is being difficult to do so. In this sense, and in line with Besser et al. (2012), it is not easy to maintain a focus and to achieve one's goals when life issues have become more important. Another challenge is the move from face-to-face teaching to online teaching. Now, students must engage in online distance learning, fact that has not only altered their daily routines but also their student life. For example, they cannot be in contact with their friends and classmates or they are not directly connected to the educational environment that face-to-face classes imply. All these factors represent a huge negative emotional impact on our students affecting their academic performance (Camacho-Zuñiga et al., 2021).

2.1 Emotions and learning achievement

Research has shown that children's and adolescents' emotions are linked to their academic achievement (Buenrostro-Guerrero et al., 2012; Goetz and Hall, 2013; Pekrun, 2008; Pekrun et al., 2017; Stephan et al., 2019). As teachers it is important to pay attention to our students' feelings since "when we educators fail to appreciate the importance of students' emotions, we fail to appreciate a critical force in students' learning" (Immordino-Yang and Damasio qtd. in Méndez López, 2011, p. 44). For instance, the research of Buenrostro-Guerrero, A. et al (2012) shows clearly the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance in adolescents. The results they obtained are significant since the students who obtained better qualifications were more capable of interpersonal relationships, stress management and regulation, problem solving and coping. These results are similar to those obtained by Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan and Majeski (2004), whose study analyses the positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance in secondary school students, and found that academic performance was strongly linked to the subscales of intrapersonal skills, adaptability and stress management. Finally, the study performed by Alali and Fatema (2009) also demonstrates that emotional intelligence is significantly correlated with motivation of academic performance. All of them, confirm the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance, thus showing the importance to educate adolescents through emotional education programs and classes.

Along the same lines, recent literature highlights the nature of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001; MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012; Pekrun et al., 2011). Fredrickson proposes the "broaden

and build” theory of positive emotion which analyses the functions of positive and negative emotions (Fredrickson, 2001, 3):

[The broaden and build] theory states that certain discrete positive emotions - including joy, interest, contentment, pride, and love - although phenomenologically distinct, all share the ability to broaden people’s momentary thought-action repertoires and build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 219).

Thus, according to the author and her theory, positive emotions...:

1. help to broaden people’s attention and thinking, triggering curiosity and exploration towards new experiences and new learning.
2. help to reverse the persisting effects of negative feelings.
3. promote resilience by provoking reactions against anxious and stressful events. In this sense, people learn ways to cope with adversity.
4. promote building personal resources such as social bonds and attachments through smiles
5. are part of an “upward spiral” toward greater well-being in the future. By facilitating the acquisition of resources to react against a negative emotional situation, individuals are more ready to cope against adversity because their positive emotions produce health and well-being.

Furthermore, Pekrun et al. (2011) analysed achievement emotions, showing that positive emotions can boost creative thinking and reflecting, thereby prompting and encouraging academic performance, whereas negative emotions are more related and associated with lower levels of performance . In other words, positive emotions like enjoyment, hope, and pride were positively associated with student effort, intrinsic motivation, elaboration of materials, self-regulation of learning and more elaborated learning strategies; while anger, shame, anxiety and boredom were linked with lower performances and more external regulation (Pekrun et al., 2011).

All this suggests that negative emotions within academic environments are adverse and unfavorable vis-a-vis motivation, learning and performance in many situations (Rowe and Fitness, 2018). In fact, findings show that anxiety (the most studied emotion in education) effects negatively on both academic achievement and motivation (Zeidner, 2014). Along similar lines, boredom, anger and fear are starting to be studied and analysed and they have been found to undermine motivation and prioritising information processing (Rowe and Fitness, 2018).

In other words: “negative emotions are held to be detrimental to the pursuit of achievement goals, investment of effort, cognitive processes (such as attention and memory), motivation, self-regulation and self-efficacy” (Rowe and Fitness, 2018, p. 2). However, one should take into account that under some circumstances, negative emotions can be potentially used to adapt and overcome problems. In this sense, depending on the individual, they can boost motivation among our students to attain goals, reduce error making or recover from a negative performance evaluation (Rowe and Fitness, 2018).

In any case, and as one might have seen, evidence has shown that negative emotions in the classroom might be detrimental. As previously said, the COVID-19 crisis has raised more negativity among our students fact that has influenced their learning achievement. For this reason, it is imperative for schools and high-schools to build awareness around students’ feelings not only to encourage motivation and a better learning performance but also to empower them to effectively regulate their feelings with the objective to cope with this biological disaster (Camacho-Zuñiga et al., 2021; Zeidner, 2014). This can perfectly be done during our English classes (or any foreign language class). Thus, it is useful to analyse the relation between emotions and L2.

2.2 Emotions and L2

2.2.1 Students’ emotions and L2 learning

If we bear in mind what has been stated so far, emotions play an essential role in the process of learning. And language learning is not an exception. Although studies involving emotions in foreign language learning are still very limited (Méndez López, 2011), numerous researchers have acknowledged that foreign language learning motivation is also emotionally driven (Aki, 2006; MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012; Méndez López, 2011; Shao et al., 2019; Teimouri, 2017).

Usually, there is an important rejection among students towards learning a second language like English. This might be due to different causes: fear when it comes to talk and express themselves with a language that is not well mastered; embarrassment to commit mistakes and even shame to articulate words whose pronunciation might be completely different from their L1 (Melis Mir, 2019). These aspects and thoughts often hinder our job when learning English. Besides, fear and anger are negative feelings that have been found to risk foreign language learners’ motivation (Benesch, 2012; Méndez López, 2016). Thus, “it is important to pay attention to language learners’ emotions in order to help them overcome demotivation” (Méndez López, 2016, p. 29). For these reasons it is necessary to create an optimal environment in the classroom, promote positive emotions and encourage teacher and peer support to maximise learning and reenergise motivation while facilitating language learning among students (Méndez López, 2011, 2016). If these principles are fulfilled, it will be

easier to have students motivated and eager to express themselves in language classrooms (Méndez López, 2016). Indeed, and in line with Meyer and Turner (2006):

[...] engaging students in learning requires consistently positive emotional experiences, which contribute to a classroom climate that forms the foundation for teacher-student relationships and interactions necessary for motivation to learn (Meyer and Turner, 2006, 377).

While many studies before COVID-19 emphasised the need to care for the emotions of our students (MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012; Méndez López, 2011), now more than ever, after this health crisis, it should be an essential procedure. Teachers are a key element of influence on students emotions and motivations (Méndez López, 2016). In fact, there are several study reports that stress the high value learners give to those teachers who care, listen to them, understand their needs and necessities, respect them as individuals, and are open, honest and sensitive to their personal problems (Bown and White, 2010; Hascher, 2007; Qin, 2007).

Students spend many hours of their lives in classrooms and positive human relationships help them to develop positive self-concepts. It is very important to make students feel valued since it encourages cooperation among learners which in turn creates a non-threatening environment in which learning is facilitated (Méndez López, 2016). We have to keep in mind that in language classrooms, teachers are not exclusively teaching English, but they are also “forming human beings who will be interacting with many people and impacting on them, thus the need to help students develop in an integral way is paramount” (Méndez López, 2016, p. 39-40).

2.2.2 Emotional expression in a L2

Another aspect that has to be taken into account is the emotional expression in a foreign language like English. One may assert that expressing emotions in a foreign language among students of ESO or Baccalaureate might be difficult since dealing with the emotional part with a language that is not well-mastered costs twice the effort than expressing our emotions in our L1. Notwithstanding many researchers defend that emotions differ across languages and cultures and thus, bilinguals and L2 learners always choose their L1 for emotional expression (Athanasiadou and Tabakowska, 1998; Wierzbicka, 1999); the study undergone by Ozanska (2012) reveals that bilingual individuals and L2 learners are indeed able to express their emotions in different languages.

Her research analyses different factors (length of stay, immersion, L2 use, context of acquisition, L2 proficiency, frequency of L2, education, gender and age), which might influence the usage of emotion words in a foreign language. By administering an online questionnaire comprising of several sub-questionnaires to 102 participants (Polish-English bilinguals and Polish L2 users of English) with different levels of education and levels of English, she found out that the ability to express ourselves in a foreign language and the choice of doing so is related to:

- Use of L2 on daily basis in any context (school, work, home, etc.);
- Proficiency (level of L2);
- Frequent contact to L2 (the exposure to this language through different paths: media, reading books, magazines, exchanging emails, surfing online, films, TV series etc.).

From her results, she speculates that a frequent exposure to L2 and the use of L2 on daily basis boosts L2 proficiency and, in turn, emotional expression in that language.

Taking all her results into account and relating them to our purpose, one might state that if our students have a relatively good English level, and have a constant contact with the English language, it will become easier and easier for them to express their emotions in that language. If the school places the necessary emphasis on the use of English as a vehicular language in the classroom, this can encourage students to be more in contact with English and consequently, increase their level of English. It is a circular cycle that feeds on these three phases or outcomes.

3 Aims and Hypothesis

Based on the above discussion of the related theories and studies, the following hypothesis has been developed: it is speculated that taking care of our students' emotions by helping them to express their feelings through writing processes might motivate and encourage students to remote learning. Amid this current uncertain situation, this thesis asserts that normalising and expressing one's emotions might help to create not only a sense of security in a space that may feel unknown and scary but also to make students motivated and to make them feel that they are important with the objective for them to stay connected.

The absence from educational environment that online classes imply as well as the whole pandemic situation, can affect the students' emotions towards education, motivation and school attendance. Thus, the main objectives of this study is to evaluate (1) how the emotional state of students has changed (before and after COVID-19); (2) remote learning quality; (3) teacher-student relationship; (4) English and expressing emotions.

We expected to observe that (1) indeed students are feeling more anxious and negative due to the pandemic; (2) remote learning is difficult to follow and not very likeable; (3) for students it is very important the relationship between teacher and student.

4 Methodology

In line with the literature review discussed above, a bimodal study has been developed. On the one hand, a quantitative method has been developed with the form of an online questionnaire with the purpose to measure the students' reflections, opinions and experiences regarding the

current situation as well as their positioning vis-a-vis English and expressing emotions. On the other hand, a qualitative research approach with the form of interviews has been applied in order to have more exhaustive answers and results and thereby, complementing the data collected through the questionnaire.

4.1 Participants

The present study has been based on data collected from on the one hand, 26 students of 1st of Baccalaureate. And, on the other hand, from 22 students of 2nd of Baccalaureate.

The former are students at a public school in Palma who have been studying English since primary school. Thus, they have been in contact with English most of their school years. The questionnaire and the interview were performed during my practicum at the school and carried out during a normal class of 55 minutes. At the time they took the questionnaire and interview, the class was dealing with the unit "relationships" which led to the introduction of feelings as well as (and among many kind of relationships) the relation between student and teacher, which in turn helped to bring off the questionnaire and the interviews. The students' ages ranged from 16-17 years old. The group consisted of 13 female participants and 13 male participants.

The latter are students at a charter school in Palma and who have been studying English since primary school. Thus, they have been in contact with English most of their school years. At the time they took the questionnaire and interview, the students were preparing the B2 Oxford Test of English (OTE). The OTE lessons last 90 minutes. The students' ages ranged from 17-18 years old. The group consisted of 13 female participants and 9 male participants. The imbalance between males and females is due to the students' interest in enrolling to the OTE test preparation course.

Both groups are taking hybrid classes, that is to say, the classes are carry out combining remote and in classroom learning. In this sense, one day a half of the group is doing remote learning while the others are physically in class; and the other day, they exchange their positions. The students in both groups and who were online undertook the questionnaire, while the other half were interviewed face-to-face. The same procedure was taken the next day of class when the group who was online came to class.

4.2 Procedure

It took two days to carry out this bimodal study: two lessons of 55 minutes for the group of participants of 1st of Baccalaureate; and two lessons of 90 minutes for 2nd of Baccalaureate. Both groups are taking blended classes (half of the class online and the other half offline). The students who were online undertook the questionnaire while the other half were interviewed face-to-face. The same procedure was taken the next day of class but viceversa: the group that was interviewed undertook the questionnaire and the others who filled in the questionnaire

were interviewed.

One thing that needs to be pointed out: in order to be faithful and embrace the originality of the students' answers, their responses will be written down exactly as they were pronounced and written down with their English and Spanish/Catalan grammar mistakes.

4.3 Materials

The detailed description of the questionnaire and interview items, which have been analysed, as well as the participants' characteristics and the results in this paper are presented in the following sections.

4.4 Questionnaire

An online questionnaire was developed based on a scientific article called "Emotional Expression in a Foreign Language. What factors influence the choice of a non-native language while expressing emotions?" written by Katarzyna Ozanska-Ponikw in 2012. However, extra questions were added to cover our present aim.

It was important for me to keep the students' information and data private. I did not want to use any survey forms such as Google Forms. Thus, I resorted to an online platform called Nextcloud where data remained secure on the Nextcloud server and the privacy of respondents was respected.

The questionnaire was written in English, but students could use either English or their mother tongue (Spanish or Catalan) to answer it, since the interesting part of the questionnaire was not the grammar or the English use, but the content. Thus, it was important that the participants could express themselves as better and as honest as possible. 20 students wrote their answers in their L1 and 28 wrote them in English. The participants completed the questionnaire on their phones or other technological devices like computers or tablets.

A 30-item questionnaire was prepared which consisted of 16 multiple-choice questions and 14 short/long answer questions. Overall, it took approximately 55 minutes to fill out the questionnaire.

The detailed description of the procedure and questionnaire is explained below:

1. For the 2nd of Baccalaureate class, the questionnaire had to be carried out during class, this is why, a short introductory speaking activity was put into practice with the objective to lead in the students to the topic in question. The question "how do you feel in relation to our current situation (COVID-19)?" was asked. Besides, an emotion wheel (see figure 8 on page 51) was given to them to help them to express themselves better. Many negative feelings arose during this activity, the following are the ones which were most recurrent: sad, scared, anxious, depressed, angry, lonely, stressed, feeling of being lost without

perspectives, bored, irritated, furious, mad, tired, frustrated, miserable, insignificant, helpless, and unheard by adults.

2. For the class of 1st of Bacalaureate, the questionnaire had to be carried out during class as well. In the previous class we talked about the relationship between teachers and students, which gave me way to ask about their feelings towards them and if the students have ever felt unheard by their teachers. I could introduce the questionnaire the next day after this class.
3. Before administering the questionnaires, the students were given some general information about the purpose of the study and how to respond to the questionnaire items.
4. Questions:
 - Personal background questionnaire: measuring such variables as age, gender, self-perceived L2 proficiency, expression of emotions in L2 and experience in a L2 country.
 - Remote learning questions: measuring students' perspective and reflections on their experiences of remote learning in contrast to face-to-face learning.
 - Relation between teachers and students (emotionally): comprised of questions on the following topic - teacher and student's relations: emotional support.
 - Capacity to express emotions and personal information in English and feelings towards the English language.
 - Emotions and feelings during the lockdown and its aftermath questions: comprised of questions on how students were and are dealing with feelings about COVID-19 in the lockdown and its aftermath.

4.5 Interviews

The interviews as I already explained, were carried out face-to-face. In this case, both, questions and answers were in Catalan or Spanish. Apart from the questions in the questionnaire, some questions were added or modified and were also based on a very recent scientific article called "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' feelings at high school, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels" written by C.Camacho-Zúñiga, L. Pego, J. Escamilla and S. Hosseini in 2021. The extra questions that were added revolved around feelings during a week as well as their relationships with their teachers. The idea behind the interviews was to have more accurate and precise answers from the ones I had on the questionnaire. In this sense, they helped to probed participants' perceptions, experiences, opinions and emotions in a more personal and rigorous way. Moreover, some students replied the questions from the questionnaire very vaguely or did not answer at all, which also limited the results.

The interviews for the the group of 1st of Baccalaureate had to be done in 55 minutes, thus the interviews were kept short (5 minutes each student) and some questions had to be deleted. Regarding the students of 2nd of Baccalaureate, the class usually lasts 90 minutes so, I could have 10 minutes for each student, fact that let me acquiring more information. Time was definitely a limitation for the study. The extra questions, which were developed, delved into the opinions of the participants about their experiences regarding this school year and their emotions. This was asked together with the following questions:

- Personal background: self-perceived L2 proficiency, expression of emotions in L2 and experience in a L2 country.
- Remote learning questions: measuring students' perspective and reflections on their experiences of remote learning in contrast to face-to-face learning.
- Relation between teachers and students (emotionally): comprised of questions on the following topic - teacher and student's relations: emotional support.
- Capacity to express emotions and personal information in English and feelings towards the English language.
- Emotions and feelings during the lockdown and its aftermath questions: comprised of questions on how students were and are dealing with feelings about COVID-19 in the lockdown and its aftermath.

One has to bear into account that for both, interviews and questionnaire, the questions regarding English proficiency, the experience of being abroad and how confident they express their emotions in another language were very important for our purpose. Our proposal is based on the English classroom and for this, we need to know whether students feel comfortable talking and writing in English, otherwise it would be counter-productive. We need to know how familiarise (English exposure) they are in English to be able to carry out different activities with this language.

5 Results

5.1 Attitudes towards remote learning

The remote learning questions results are presented in Table 1. On average, the participants reported an important scepticism about the efficacy of online learning and unconformity regarding online classes. A closer inspection of the data in Table 1 shows that most of the students (91.7%) prefer on-site classes because they understand better the contents as well as being more focused on class. In this sense, since they might pay more attention, they can follow the teacher's lesson, which in turn enables them to acquire better the knowledge, reason why

most of the informants answered that their remote learning experience is poorer than the usual (64.6 %).

Students	%	Items
44	91.7	Preference for onsite classes
2	4.2	Preference for online classes
2	4.2	No preference
43	89.6	I better understand the contents when I am in the classroom
3	6.2	I better understand the contents when I take online classes
1	2.1	I understand the contents with both possibilities
1	2.1	I don't understand anything in general
31	64.6	I learn less than usual during remote learning
13	27.0	I learn the same as usual during remote learning
4	8.4	I learn more than usual during remote learning
30	63.0	Online classes are not rewarding/dynamic
18	37.8	Online classes are rewarding/dynamic

Table 1: Results for remote learning experience

Positive aspects	
<i>Superficial aspects</i>	<i>Related to learning</i>
Being able to eat	Rapid access information
Wearing pyjamas	Being able to work on other subjects
Resting	
Comfort	
Nothing positive in online classes	
Negative aspects	
<i>Health aspects</i>	<i>Related to learning</i>
Headache	distractions
Itchy eyes	boredom
	bad Internet connection
	lack of attention/concentration
	loneliness
	difficult to focus
	difficult to follow
	slow learning process
	being ignored by the teacher

Table 2: Positive and negative aspects of remote learning

Students were asked to write down positive aspects and negative aspects of online classes (Table 2). Regarding the former, the answers were divided into “superficial” and “related to learning”. With respect to the latter, they were grouped into “health aspects” and “related to learning” (Table 2). This classification was carried out like this because the answers were distributed by the mostly repeated aspects. It was interesting to see that most of the recurring positive aspects were superficial: informants can wear their pyjamas, are able to eat at any time

or rest. They also stated that it is more comfortable to work from home. One positive aspect that constantly appeared is that students can work on other subjects. This suggests that since they cannot follow the class properly, they decide to work on other things, which also might justify some of the students' responses of "I learn more than usual during remote learning"; "I learn the same as usual during remote learning"; "online classes are rewarding/dynamic" and the "preference for both ways" (reported in Table 1). However, some students (16.8%) replied "nothing", meaning that there is not any positive aspect to learn from home.

In similar vein, it was reported that most of the students (73.5%) felt less motivated this academic year. The reasons they gave are classified as the most repeated ones: (1) Social distancing (not being able to see/meet friends); (2) Uncertainty about COVID-19; (3) Less concentrated; (4) Being away from the educational environment (hybrid education).

Nonetheless, 26.5% stated that they were motivated due to the following reasons: (1) Commodity to be at home; (2) Accustomed to the situation; (3) Due to the complexity of the situation, decision to work efficiently throughout the whole year.

Regarding the question "Do you like taking one day online classes and another day offline classes? Why?", the answers were quite diverged: 48.3% of the students asserted that they liked it because (1) Feeling that you go to class; (2) Having time to relax when you are online (3) Good alternative to face this situation and (4) More time to study for the exams. 50.4% stated that they did not like it because: (1) Confusion; (2) Sense of learning loss; (3) Inability to follow.

Similarly, they were asked how they felt doing remote learning during the lockdown. The great majority stated that they felt overwhelmed, isolated, unproductive, disoriented and anxious because the classes were poorly organised and explained (33 students). Some students in the interview asserted:

- *las sentí como inútiles porque no recibía las clases correctamente por la organización del profesorado;*
- *era todo muy nuevo y como ahora muy difícil enterarse bien de lo que te enseñaban;*
- *fueron difíciles, nos costó a todos adaptarnos mucho.*

Interestingly enough, many students expressed how unproductive they felt during this period. This might be, as some of them expressed in the questionnaire, because there were few online classes taking place. Yet, 15 students claimed that the few online classes that took place during the lockdown were good in the sense that they helped them to break away from the routine of doing nothing:

- *durante el confinamiento las clases online eran para mi personalmente algo bueno porque te sacaban de la rutina;*
- *I felt good, it was nice to talk to the teachers and tell them how you felt;*

- *creo que me fue bien para mantener una rutina y hacer cosas, aunque también un poco de agobio porque mondaban mucha tarea.*

One interesting fact that appeared was that and even though students were not happy with the online classes during the lockdown and they are still dissatisfied with them during this academic year, some of them assured that comparing the online classes during the lockdown to the ones during this school year, they have improved a bit. Besides, they stated that they got used to them and thus, they are more “bearable”. Let’s have a look some of the answers students mentioned when they were asked “How do you feel doing online classes now?”:

- *Ya lo he normalizado pero me sigue sin gustar.*
- *Han millorat bastant, però crec que encara poden ser molt millors.*
- *A día de hoy me siento muy cómoda ya que llevamos practicamente un año haciéndolo y ya nos hemos acostumbrado.*
- *Bien, cada vez se hacen más amenas y es más sencillo poder entender la explicación.*
- *Me da confianza en no perder el curso.*
- *Están mejor preparadas y entiendo más cosas.*
- *No igual que en confinamiento pero bastante pesadas.*
- *Ahora las clases online están más adaptadas, entiendo mejor los conceptos pero es mejor con las clases presenciales.*

The fact that remote classes have improved a bit, coincides with the different and extensive discussions of the advantages and disadvantages of online learning (Besser et al., 2020, 2). For instance, many studies assert that students usually enjoy taking online courses (Martin et al., 2017; Olt, 2018). However, “such learning is best when it is planned in advance (or involves a gradual transition) and combined with other forms of learning” (Besser et al., 2020, p. 2). In this sense, comparing the online classes during the lockdown, which were taken abruptly and without experience, and the ones from this academic year 2020-2021, which at least they have been “more prepared”, there has been an improvement. Yet, we cannot forget that these measures are still raw and in need to adapt and develop. Students continue to complain about them. This is the reason why they were asked how their ideal online class would be. This indeed was a very tricky question, which unsurprisingly was not answer by all of the students because “they did not know”. In any case, 17 students asserted that the ideal online class would be one where both, the people in class and the people at home are involved through dynamic activities and classes that can be done online and face-to-face:

- *An online class where I feel part of the classroom and I am not left behind.*

- *Yo creo que lo más importante es no olvidarse que también hay gente en casa y hacer las clases para ambos.*
- *Lo más importante es que el profe se asegure de que le escuchamos bien y entendemos lo que dice. Muchas veces no es así pero para no enfadarle no decimos nada porque ya se pone a la defensiva.*
- *Simplemente haciendo algo que pudieran hacer tanto los de clase como los de casa y prestando atención a todos*
- *Per jo serien unes classes en les que poguem estar participant basant, o sinó fer alguna tasca del classroom que sigui més dinàmica*
- *Las mejores clases son las que el profesor te hace colaborar para que sea dinámico, ya que al estar en tu casa si no haces nada más que escuchar la explicación se hace muy aburrido.*
- *Para mi, la clase online ideal seria que tuviese la misma atención para los alumnos de casa como para los alumnos de clase pero eso es muy complicado, y una de las cosas mas importantes de tener en cuenta es la atencion.*
- *Mi clase online ideal seria una clase donde se tuviera en cuenta en la misma proporción tanto a la gente de casa como los de clase. El profesor debería obligar a los alumnos a poner las cámaras y también intentar tener un buen micro así la información llegaría de forma más clara*
- *I think if we do dynamic exercises like the jamboard.*
- *The most important thing is that the teacher have to speak with all of us.*
- *Mi clase ideal sería una en la que participásemos todos y que al profe se le entendiera bien. El profesor tiene que considerar para bien que la gente se une cada día y hace los deberes.*
- *I would say that the teacher is paying attention to the children that are at home, not only to the ones that are in class.*
- *La clase online que parezca o que tengas las mismas posibilidades que los que estan presencialmente.*
- *Pay attention to online student it's the most important thing in online classes. Sometimes students have a lot of doubts that nobody answer and this is so frustrating. I think that making some fun clases could help to improve the students attention and motivation.*
- *In my opinion, online classes should be more dynamic or with a little more interaction. Students needs something to help them focus on class. Teachers shold ask more or interact more with online students.*

These are some of the few answers that students mentioned in the questionnaire. When this question was asked during the interview, some of the students replied the same thing; more than the other half answered that they did not know. And 7 students replied several other things related like: patience, cameras and doing other activities (see Table 3).

Students	Items
17	Online classes involving people who in class and at home + dynamic classes
4	Do other things instead of online classes (exercises, recording the classes and watching them later)
2	Technology: compulsory to put cameras on
1	Patience (teachers should be understanding with the fact that online classes are not easy for students)
24	NR/DK

Table 3: Ideal online classes

5.2 Relation between teachers and students

The participants were asked several questions regarding teacher-student relations. All students concurred that it is very important for them that their teachers know their mood and emotions since they believe that emotions might influence their marks and thus, emotions correlate with their academic self-efficacy and overall achievement. They were asked whether they felt unheard by their teachers: 47% of the students feel considered by their teachers; 28% feel unheard but they do not really mind and 17% of the participants also feel unheard and do not feel comfortable with it. The first group coincided that teachers take care of them and their emotions (or at least they see an attempt). Nevertheless, the second group agreed that in the COVID-19 current situation, teachers keep with their classes pretending that nothing is happening, ignoring the students' personal circumstances. They even mention that some teachers say contemptuous comments that demoralise students. Notwithstanding what the former group asserts, most of them also agreed that *"I think they listen to us and they are willing to help us, but only if you tell them. If you are a quiet person and you eat your bunch of problems they won't even notice"*. This perfectly suggests:

1. Teachers indeed pretend that nothing is happening, continuing with their classes -what actually the second group assures-;
2. Teachers are only focused on the class performance and efficiency;
3. Schools have not developed programs and activities in the classroom to help students to handle and cope with this pandemic and its consequences.

5.3 Emotions and feelings during the lockdown and its aftermath

Students were asked about their emotions and feelings in general and during the lockdown and its aftermath (together with mechanisms to cope negative feelings). During the beginning of the lockdown, all students felt fine and relaxed, this started to change with the lockdown extension and negative feelings started to arise—they felt trapped, anxious, worried and depressed. Moreover, the online classes, during this period, aggravated these feelings—all participants felt

unproductive, overwhelmed and disoriented. At the interviews, most of the students reinforced what they wrote in the questionnaire:

- *Una montaña rusa de emociones negativas y positivas; me sentí muy desubicado y con muchas preguntas;*
- *fue un momento bastante raro, para todos era nuevo y había mucha incertidumbre al no saber que iba a pasar. Las clases en cuarentena eran raras y poco dinámicas ya que nadie sabía como reaccionar;*
- *al principio no noté ningún cambio muy problemático en mi vida. Pero ya ha pasado un año y sí es verdad que las emociones están un poco descontroladas;*
- *ara soc més propens a sentir agobi i angustia;*
- *antes del confinamiento era alegre y divertido y ahora después de todo el confinamiento siento que me he apagado emocionalmente;*
- *siento que somos dos personas totalmente distintas, he cambiado en muchas cosas.*

These are some of the few examples that students of 1st and 2nd of Baccalaureate mentioned during the interviews. These confessions are pretty hard to hear and they really show what has been mentioned so far: due to the COVID-19 crisis, there is have been a sharp peak in prevalence of depressive and anxious symptomatology among students (Camacho-Zuñiga et al., 2021).

Although all students agree on stating that the lockdown has represented a turning point in their lives in which they have more negative feelings, half of the group expressed that the lockdown has taught them to overcome difficult situations as well as value things that they previously took for granted. Besides, during the interviews some of them even began to learn new hobbies. One student stated that *“Me sentía tan ansioso que hasta empecé a componer música para controlar mis emociones. De hecho, es un mecanismo que me ayuda para controlarlas”*.

Table 4 (see p. 26) shows the results of the methods students have to channel and manage their emotions.

Hobbies	44 %
sports	
playing instruments	
playing videogames	
listen to music	
composing	
watching films/TV shows talking to friends	
Repressing them	50 %
NR/DK	10 %

Table 4: Mechanisms to cope negative feelings

These strategies were learned by themselves. All students stated that no one has ever taught them or help them to manage their emotions.

5.4 Attitude towards English and capacity to express oneself in English

These results are important for the purpose of the thesis. Our proposal is based on the English classroom and for this, we need to know whether students feel comfortable talking and writing in English, otherwise it would be counter-productive. We need to know how familiarise (English exposure) they are in English to be able to carry out different activities with this language.

Firstly, most of the students acknowledged the importance of the English language around the world. This is a relevant data because knowing that English is not merely a subject but a “vehicle” to new cultures, possibilities, jobs, etc. might awaken the curiosity and interest to learn it.

Secondly, they were asked their own perspective regarding their English proficiency. 18 students reported that their English was “very good”. This implied that they were capable to take part in conversations on a range of topics and to understand almost everything, to express themselves and give opinions and reasons orally and in a written way. 20 students answered “Good”. This comprised that students were able to understand the main points when someone speaks; to take part in “small talk” and express simple opinions and to write simple facts and events. 7 students reported that their English level was “Low”, which encompassed that they could recognise familiar words when someone talks; interact in a simple way; use simple phrases and sentences and write simple texts. Only 3 students considered that their English was proficient, that is to say, they did not have any difficulties to understand any kind of spoken language and text and they were able to write perfectly well. Table 5 represents all this in a more visual way:

Students	Items
3	Proficient: I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language and text. I can write perfectly well without problems
18	Very good: I can take part in conversations on a range of topics. I can understand almost everything. I can express myself and give opinions and reasons orally and in a written way
20	Good: I can understand the main points when someone speaks. I can take part in “small talk” and express simple opinions. I can write simple facts and events
7	Low: I can recognise familiar words when someone talks. I can interact in a simple way. I can use simple phrases and sentences. I can write simple texts.

Table 5: English proficiency

This suggests that in general, students do feel comfortable using English and they manage to “defend” themselves with it. In fact, the question “Have you ever been in an English speaking country?”: 25 students answered that when they have been abroad they have used their English to communicate with people; 20 students reported that they have never been abroad and 8

students answered that despite being abroad, they never used their English. Even though many students have never been abroad, those who have, have used their English, which means that they feel confident and fearless to use it when needed it.

Of the 48 students who responded to the question “Do you like English?”: 81.1 % of the students reported that they like it and are very motivated to learn it and, 18.9 % of the students reported that they do not like English because of its difficulty. With this information one can assert that the majority are motivated to learn English, which might (1) help to acquire the language easily and (2) prompt and encourage academic performance in that particular subject.

Figures 4, 5, 6, 7 represent the relation between expressing emotions with their L1 and L2 (English) as well as how comfortable they feel using English in class. If we have a look to figure 4, one might see that, in general, students do not have difficulties to express emotions or feelings in their own language. There is just a small percentage that asserts to have problems. This is already an important fact since if they had difficulties to express themselves in their own language, it would be even more difficult to do it with another language.

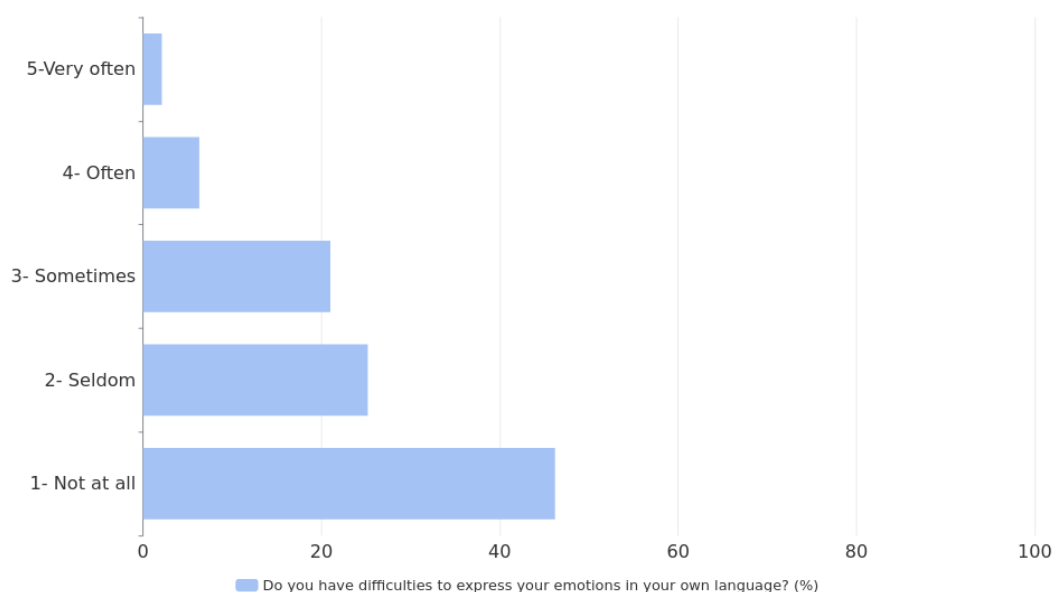


Figure 4: "Do you have difficulties to express your emotions in your own language? "

With regard to expressing their emotions and situations in English as well as their confidence to speak English (figures 5, 6 and 7), differences emerged and the results are quiet varied. As far as figure 5 is concerned, difficulties, of course, increase when the linguistic register is changed. In this case, one might see the percentages in having difficulties when expressing emotions in English are higher: 36 % of the participants reported that they *often/very often* encounter problems to express their emotions in English. Yet, students are still capable to do so: 35 % of the students reported that they *sometimes* have difficulties to express their feelings

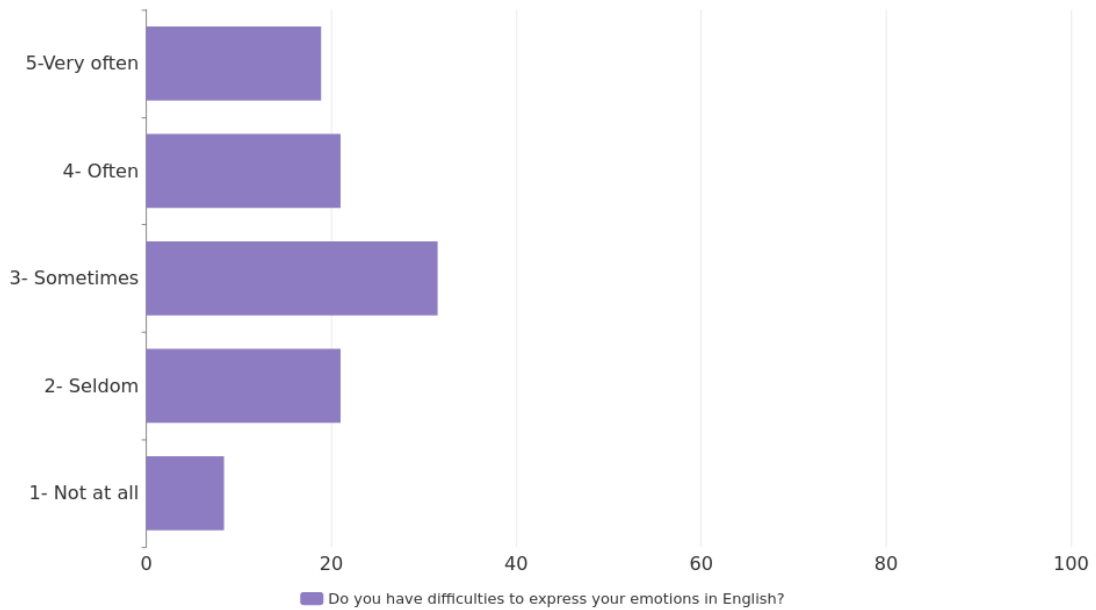


Figure 5: "Do you have difficulties to express your emotions in English?"

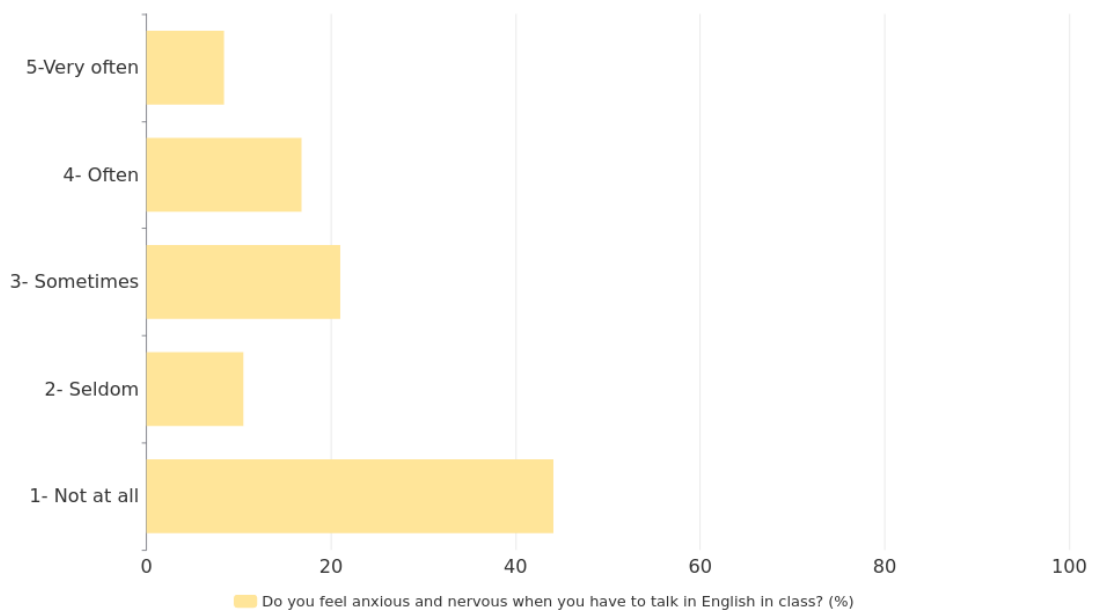


Figure 6: "Do you feel anxious and nervous when you have to talk in English in class?"

in English. And, finally, 29% of the students answered that they *seldom/never* have difficulties to express their emotions in English. This can be related to figure 6: their anxiety when they talk in English. As one may see, the great majority (more than 40%) do not feel nervous or anxious to talk in English. 21% of the participants just *sometimes* feel insecure about it. These results are quite curious as it can be seen that a high percentage of students do not feel uncomfortable

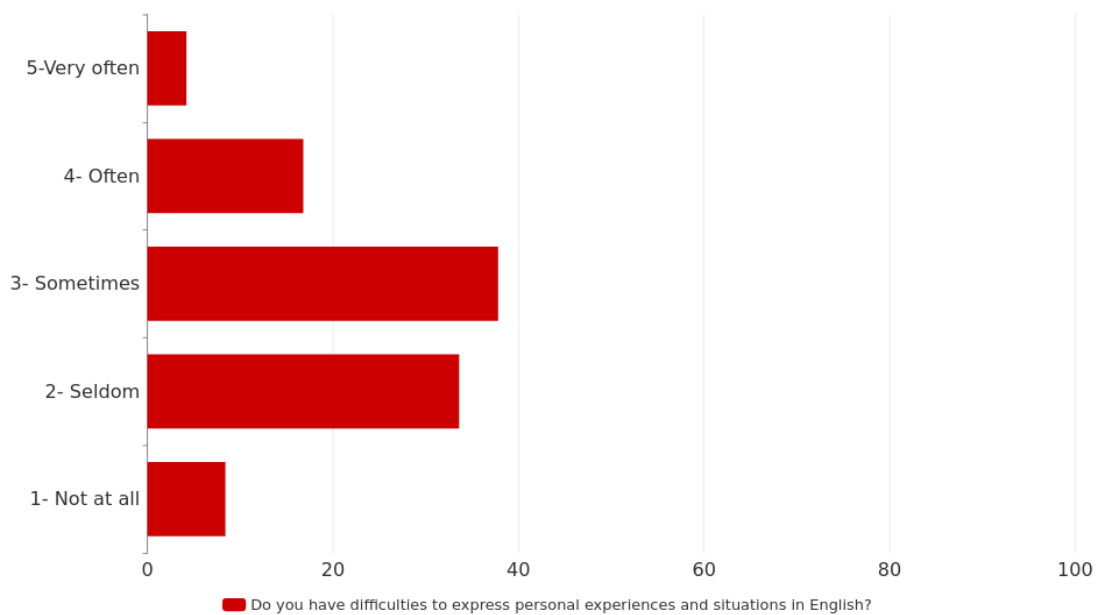


Figure 7: "Do you have difficulties to express personal experiences and situations in English?"

when they have to speak in English in class, even though they have reported to have difficulties in expressing their emotions (as shown in figure 5).

Lastly, figure 7 depicts their confidence to express situations in English. 38% of the students reported that they *sometimes* have difficulties to express situations/experiences in English; 42% of the students answered that they *seldom/never* have difficulties to express situations/experiences in English; 20% of the participants reported that they *often/very often* have difficulties to express situations/experiences in English. If we compare this figure with figure 5, one might conclude that when students express situations rather than expressing emotions, difficulties decrease (42% against 36%).

We have to bear in mind that even though students report that they might have difficulties to express their feelings or express personal experiences and situations in English, most of the participants do not feel anxious or uncomfortable to speak English, which might be a good start to learn how to do it. In this sense, in some extent, these results concur with the previous answers: they feel confident enough using English which, and in line with Ozanska-Ponikw (2012), might not only boost L2 proficiency but also emotional expression in that language.

6 General Discussion

By analysing the results of the questionnaire and the interviews, one can state that there is a huge scepticism among students towards online classes: most of them consider that remote learning is not as qualitative as face-to-face learning and thus, they lose the motivation to pay

attention in class. Moreover, the lockdown has represented a turning point in their lives since they feel more anxious, stressed and have more negative feelings than before. In other words, their feelings have changed from being more positive to be more negative.

Along the same lines, students believe that there must be an effort from teachers to connect and bond with them for their mental health as well as to have better academic achievement. Teachers have to take into consideration the fact that many of their students are experiencing a trauma; thus, it is important not to ignore the difficult situation that the pandemic has brought us and to take care and normalise the negative emotions that students might feel.

7 Proposal

7.1 Contextualisation and planification

This didactic proposal has been designed to be carried out with the 1st and 2nd year of Baccalaureate students who have English classes three hours a week. We chose the two years of Baccalaureate as our study has been conducted on this two courses. It follows the contents of the curriculum of Baccalaureate. However, the proposal can be worked on any stage of compulsory secondary education (ESO) and it can be adapted to the required curricular level as well as to NESE students, that is, to those students with special educational needs.

Our focus lies mainly on the written expression as it is the visible form of our ideas, emotions, sensations, desires, problems, expressed in words. By putting them down on paper we release them, free them and allow our mind to rest. Writing is considered a tool that can help us to express and channel our emotions when we feel blocked or overwhelmed (Pennebaker, 1997; Pennebaker and Smyth, 2016; Smyth, 1998). Besides, usually teachers accentuate the problem through teaching centred on the transmission of knowledge, concentrating the teaching of writing on the product and not on the process; thus, textual production is almost non-existent, as individual activities are assigned which consist of the total or partial copying of documents from virtual or printed media. The work submitted by students is assessed only on the formal aspects of punctuation, calligraphy, syntax and spelling; no detailed corrections are offered that would allow students to have an idea of their performance and the aspects of both form and content that need to be reinforced (Crespo and De Pinto, 2016).

Therefore, the different activities aim to improve our students' proficiency in their writing skills and to stimulate emotions through different types of activities thereby taking care of our students' emotions in order to build a teacher-student bonding, which in turn will motivate them to stay "connected" to both onsite and online classes.

The activities that are designed are the following:

- Writing a journal throughout the whole school year;
- "A letter to myself";

- Dixit game focused on writing;

The planification of this proposal deals with a whole school year; from September until the end of June. The journal will be used daily until the last day of class. Whereas the letters might be written every term, and Dixit might be used every two/three weeks, depending on what the teacher wants. The journals and the letters can be work in class, but we consider that working with them at home is the ideal option since students might feel more relaxed. In regards to Dixit, the game will be played cooperatively so, working with it in class is more than enough.

7.2 Objectives

- To write words, sentences and texts for a variety of purposes on topics previously covered in the classroom with the help, if necessary, of models;
- To acknowledge the importance of our students emotions;
- To encourage critical and creative thinking;
- To be able to manage one's emotions;
- To create a bond between teacher and student;
- To develop competence in written linguistic communication;
- To communicate and interact with others;
- To learn how to express opinions, beliefs, emotions, etc.;
- To create an atmosphere of positivity, cooperation and optimism;
- To use previous knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences to acquire the English language more quickly, effectively and autonomously;
- To show a receptive attitude, interest, effort and confidence in one's ability to learn and use a foreign language;
- To learn how to use, with progressive autonomy, the conventional and audiovisual media, information and communication technologies as tools to communicate and to learn English;
- To appreciate English (or any foreign language) and other languages in general as means of communication and understanding between people from different backgrounds and cultures and as learning tools.

7.3 Journals

Journals have been found to be:

Like a checkpoint between your emotions and the world. They are private but allow you to view your feelings from some distance. In a journal you can clarify, release, organize and soothe your feelings. You can experiment without consequences. Journals provide flexibility for approaching and understanding your own emotions (Jakobs qtd. in Méndez López, 2011, 47-48).

Indeed, journals or diaries are a form of personal writing and life narrative that document personal struggles (Ben-Amos and Ben-Amos, 2020; Rak, 2020; Yang, 2021). Through them students can find a space for private reflection, which can help them process their thoughts, feelings and uncertainties of their lives. Regarding the pandemic, they can even use their journals to document their lives during this biological disaster for their past, present and future selves.

Besides, a journal represents an informal writing where students can express themselves without the pressure they usually have when doing assignments. Although at the beginning, they might make more grammar and spelling mistakes, they are working on these skills without realising that they are working on them, which overtime the constant use of them will allow teachers to see major growth in their students skills (more complete sentences, punctuation, restating questions, grammar use, etc.).

7.3.1 Materials

The materials needed for this proposal are: (1) standard B6 or A5 notebooks (125x176mm; 127x210mm, respectively). The idea is that in the beginning of the academic year (September), teachers ask their students to buy a notebook with the aim to write daily on it. (2) Emotion wheel: the emotion wheel describes eight basic emotions (anger, badness, disgust, fear, joy/happiness, sadness, surprise) and tiers of related and more nuanced version of those primary emotions. Teachers should hand in a colour copy of the emotion wheel also at the beginning of the academic year since, it will help students identify and verbalise their complex emotions which will broaden their vocabulary.

7.3.2 Explanation of the activity

As previously said, behind the idea of journaling there is the goal to help students to explore their feelings, thoughts and to help them to cope with difficulties that they might undergo. It helps to process internal struggles and confusion as well as to be able to deal with future scenarios. Moreover, through this tool, teachers will strengthen their bond with them since students will feel heard, valued and that their needs and necessities are understood. Fact that will boost motivation both in onsite and online classes.

Teachers should choose to structure and evaluate student journals in different ways. It is necessary that the objectives behind journaling remain clear to all students. This is why, it would be important that teachers clarify: (1) their relationship with students' diaries; (2) how journals will be evaluated; (3) what forms of expression can be included in their journal (photos, art, poetry, narrative, etc.); (4) structure of the journal; (5) beyond the emotional part: teachers should explain students that the use of journals are helpful to build vocabulary, grammar and to improve their writing skills.

In order to carry out this proposal, each teacher will have to decide depending on the type of group and the interest they show for these activities. However, this proposal has been designed to write in a daily basis, either in classroom or at home, depending on the teacher's decision.

The idea is that students express anything that happens to them. At the beginning, it might be difficult for them to get into the task and write about themselves. So, it would be useful that teachers provide some writing prompts not only to get familiar with journaling but also to encourage confidence to write personal things. A prompt might be a sentence to complete, a question to respond to, or a quote to explain.

7.3.2.1 Steps

In the beginning of the school year, teachers would tell their students that throughout the academic year, they will write a daily journal in which they are able to express anything that happens to them. They would be asked to buy a notebook and they would be given an emotion wheel. It is important that teachers explain the objectives behind journaling (described above).

As a way of introduction, teachers could introduce a memoir called "Note to Self" released by American YouTuber, entrepreneur, and author Connor Franta (Franta, 2017a). The book was written as a self-reflection. The sections are composed of short personal essays, stories, poetry, photography, letters to his past and future selves, and diary-style entries which focus on his experiences of depression, loss in love, coming out of the closet and social anxiety ("Note to Self, 2017")⁶. This reading might be a good starting point to get familiarised with journaling and its different forms of expressions but also to connect students with real world facts which could make them feel more comfortable starting to write a journal.

In any case, since at the beginning, students might feel uncomfortable or not confident enough to express themselves freely, teachers should provide some prompts or topics to write about. The first days of classes, they could write about their personal information (hobbies, family, birthday, interests, etc.) as a way of introduction. Overtime, students will become more confident to write anything that they feel and experience. However, teachers every week will introduce a new prompt either related to any curricular topic that has been dealt in class or any other free topic but always following the contents of the curriculum. For instance, there

⁶For more information see: (Franta, 2017b)

could be reflections on: (1) Self-reflection; (2) Reflections on media (books, movies, music, songs, comics, poetry, film, shows; TedTalks, etc.); (3) Reflections on daily life; (4) Reflections on the pandemic; (5) Reflections on relationships (friends, parents, teachers); (6) Reflections on values and ideologies, among many other topics.

In order to better understand the concept of the prompts, an example related to the COVID-19 crisis is provided: with this topic, there would be three main content areas to discuss:

- Looking back: How have you been during the time off from school? What did you do? What was good, what was not? How did you cope with remote learning? how did you feel?;
- Looking at the present: How are you today? What are you happy about - what questions do you have? do you feel more anxious?, etc.;
- Looking to the future: What will happen at school? What are your plans for the next few days?

The order in which these three aspects are discussed with the pupils depends largely on the teacher, but also on the questions that the respective groups express. However, it seems important in any case to address all three aspects in order to do justice to all of them. By asking these questions, students could report on emotions they have experienced, why and how this emotion has been originated. They could also describe the situations that have originated a specific emotional reaction, how they felt during the event and why they have felt in that way. One might also notice that the use of specific grammar might be used: by “looking back”, students would be expected to use past tenses such as past simple or continuous. This could be done one week. The next week, students could be asked to write about the “looking at the present” in which any form of present tenses might be used. Finally, by “looking to the future” students are expected to use the future forms.

Besides, writing a journal will imply also working on other skills such as reading or listening, even speaking. A specific prompt might be introduced depending on the unit that is dealing in class but also by reading or watching a short video, documentary or even a film. This also will rise our students’ critical thinking on any current topic.

Students hand in their journals entries every week. The content of the diaries might bring-up follow-up activities for class.

7.3.3 Expected outcomes

Combined with the unusual situation, feelings certainly will surface that were previously unknown to the pupils in this intensity (e.g. boredom, missing friends/relatives, imbalance, etc). Some students may lack the vocabulary to describe their emotions. This is why the teacher offers the emotion wheel as a starting point to talk about different feelings and their effects. It is also

expected that the journal would allow them to reflect not only on a specific situation and their reaction to it but also to analyse whether they have learned something from it or the impact on their mental well-being. Of course, not all of it will be negative emotions: writing a journal will also help to focus on the positive things that students experiences. From journaling, students will improve their writing skills, creativity and critical thinking.

The expected grammar and vocabulary will always vary depending on the prompt and situation. Yet, in regards to grammar, it is expected to be used: verbs of opinion; dynamic and stative verbs; modal verbs and past modal verbs; past verbal tenses; present verbal tenses; future verbal tenses; reported speech; conditionals; used to, be used to, get used to; passive; wish clauses and defining and non-defining relative clauses.

Furthermore, if they feel comfortable and close to the teacher, this might become the students' opportunity to talk to an adult with no fear of reprise. If they end up having a problem, they will feel confident enough to talk to the teacher about it in total confidence.

7.3.4 E-version

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the growing importance of information and communication technologies (ICT) in today's world and their potential in the professional field as well as in education. This is why, these activities have an electronic or computerized version that can be done if there was another long confinement and school closure. There are many journaling apps that can be downloaded, all class should agree on any of them.

7.4 A letter to myself

As well as journals, letters are also a medium that encourages to retreat from a particular trauma or negative emotions and create a perspective that might give a chance to examine and analyse a particular experience. In other words, it is a method of self-reflection as well. This activity is peculiar because the letter will be addressed to oneself. The "letter to myself" can help students to perceive their own attitude, their wishes or their positive and negative emotions about their life experiences in a more differentiated way and thus, make them useful.

7.4.1 Materials

The materials needed for this proposal are: (1) Letter writing papers; (2) Envelopes; (3) Stamps; (4) Emotion wheel.

7.4.2 Explanation of the activity

For this activity it is not necessary to practice it every single week since it would lose the fun, the teacher has to organize the sessions so that all the aspects appearing in the syllabus are taught. It is thought that writing a letter every term might bring joy and spontaneity and thereby, motivation to do it.

Teachers should choose to structure and evaluate student letters in different ways. It is necessary that the objectives behind these letters remain clear to all students. This is why, it would be important that teachers clarify: (1) their relationship with students' letters; (2) how letters will be evaluated; (3) structure of a letter; (4) purpose of a "letter to myself"; (5) beyond the emotional part: teachers should explain students that the writing letters are helpful to build vocabulary, grammar and to improve their writing skills.

In order to carry out this proposal, each teacher will have to decide depending on the type of group and the interest they show for these tasks. However, this proposal has been designed to be carried out every term, either in classroom or at home, depending on the teacher's decision.

A "letter to myself" is a way to reflect on life decisions in the past, something that is happening in the present but it also can be used as in goal achievement (future). Choosing a point in time will depend on the teacher's decision. Writing a letter to our self is a fun exercise that gives students the opportunity to reflect on their past life, present life and set goals for an ideal future. The idea is that students write and send letters to themselves filled with something useful; whether positive, a critique, or just observations and reflections. This also will help students to reflect on how far they have come (past), cheer themselves up (present), and send good advices and recommendations to who they will become (future). After being written, letters will be addressed and stamped. After a set period of time, the teacher will send out the letters.

7.4.2.1 Steps

If the activity is done in class, the following steps should be taken:

1. The teacher distributes envelopes and stamps to all students;
2. The teacher explains the process;
3. Students write a letter to themselves in which they report on a specific event, write what they took away, what they learned, what they want to implement in the future, etc.
4. The teacher collects the letters and sends them to the students after an agreed time (for example, after three months).

One should take into account that the time can be changed. For example, the class can agree on to send a letter to their "future selves" in June. There is a long period of time between September and June and it would be fun to observe how many things match up (or not) and whether their expectations and goals in the past have been fulfilled. The goals they set are subjected to a lot of changes due to diverse obstacles, unforeseen circumstances and changing priorities. The letter will give students a view or perspective of their initial vision and will let them recognise how their current vision differs from the past.

It is advisable to create a relaxed atmosphere by playing calm background music while writing.

There are different variations regarding the content:

- (a) The content can be designed completely freely by each participant. This variant is often chosen on the grounds that a letter is something personal and that guidelines represent an intrusion into the private sphere;
- (b) Before starting, the whole group agrees on the structure of the letter;
- (c) The teacher can specify the structure of the letter.
- (d) The teacher can agree on the date for sending the letter. But, it can be agreed that each pupil writes down his or her preferred date in one corner of the envelope. However, the teacher should consider the extra work involved.

It is also possible to give a certain topic, if the teacher wants to work on a specific issue. For instance, if we wanted to work on the COVID-19 situation, some questions could be asked:

- “What would you tell to your future ‘you’ that you now know but you did not know before?”;
- “From the knowledge that you have collected from this pandemic, what would you advice to your ‘past you’. What did you learn?”;

This would also help to cope with the negative feelings that COVID-19 crisis has triggered.

Another example would be the topic “Today’s decision is tomorrow’s life”. Baccalaureate represents two very important years to think about one’s future. It is a period in which a sea of doubts floods them and makes it more complicated for them to make decisions. It is a complex and difficult stage, but one of vital importance as the steps they take during this period can influence, to a large extent, the students’ immediate future. For this, some questions could be asked: “what do I want to study?”; “where do I want to do?”; “what do I like?” or “what does motivate me?”.

Asking themselves how they want to live in a year’s (or two) time and write it down, might be very helpful for them to reflect. Moreover, they will see that it is also an issue that concerns the teacher and they will feel more supported and understood.

It can be agreed with the class that the letter is first copied by the teacher before it is sent. The teacher can use these copies for documentation, evaluation and as additional feedback

7.4.3 Possible outcomes

It is expected that writing letters to themselves might help in:

- awareness of their own goals and motivation to achieve them. Among other things, if they write about their goals, they will be more likely to achieve them;

- self-coaching by writing a letter to oneself, e.g. after a certain event: writing a letter to oneself can give them important support to integrate what they have learned into everyday life;
- personality development: after receiving the letter, they might realise how they have changed;
- awareness of their emotions and how to cope with them;
- teacher-student bonding as students will feel supported and understood.

The expected grammar and vocabulary will always vary depending on the prompt and situation. Yet, in regards to grammar, it is expected to be used the same grammar that than of the journal.

7.4.4 E-version

This activity also has an electronic or computerized version that can be done if there was another long confinement and school closure. This activity could be simply done using e-mails but also there is a website in which one can write letters to oneself: <https://www.futureme.org/>. In this webpage, after writing the letter, one should choose the delivery date (after several months, 1 year, 3 years or 5 years), type his/her e-mail and send it. These letters also can be read by others so, teachers could also read them, evaluate them and provide feedback.

7.5 Dixit

Working with Dixit can be very appealing for everyone involved (teacher and students) because through the game you can experience first-hand how language influences our thinking. Sometimes exciting discussions arise, especially with older learners who also speak different languages in their everyday lives. Dixit is very psychological and often moves on a very abstract level. Those who fully engage in it can sometimes intensely feel that thinking in a foreign language, even if you know it well, is different from thinking in your mother tongue. That is why the question of the necessary language level cannot be answered universally and is ultimately also a question of type.

In this proposal this game will be focused on writing but indirectly, their speaking and reading skills will be used. We should bear in mind that for a good development of the writing skills, working in parallel with writing and reading is imperative because the latter becomes a learning strategy as it represents a source of information for modelling textual structures, rhetorical and syntactic patterns of the language (Crespo and De Pinto, 2016).

The instructions on how to play Dixit will be found in section A.3 from the appendix on page 50.

7.5.1 Materials

The materials needed for this proposal are: (1) Dixit game cards; (2) emotion wheel; (3) the class notebook.

7.5.2 Explanation of the activity

For this activity, it is not necessary to practice it every single week, the teacher has to organize the sessions so that all the aspects appearing in the syllabus are taught. This proposal could be carried out every two or three weeks and worked on cooperatively. Nevertheless, Dixit is a very versatile game which can be adapted to many topics and class objectives. Hence, using it constantly but varying the activity also might be fruitful.

7.5.2.1 Story-telling

This first variation encourages cooperative working since this time, the aim is to create a chainstory out of four cards. Students would work in groups of four and each student would have one card. The process would be the following:

- The teacher explains the adaptation of the game;
- Students should play with groups of 4, so teachers divides the class into groups of four and as heterogenous as possible (following the diversity of the class);
- The teacher shuffles the cards gives 1 of them to each player;
- The first student should share everything the card awakens in him/her. Meanwhile another student writes the ideas down in order to create a story at the end;
- The second student should use his/her card to follow-up the first part of the story: that is to say following the story based on his/her card but with a certain coordination and consonance with the first card. Meanwhile another student writes the ideas down in order to create a story at the end;
- Once all students have shared their ideas, feelings and impressions, they should create a story out of them.

This could also be modified, where students do pick their cards in order to create their story. Students can decide if the card shows the beginning, middle or end of the story. After they making some notes and discussed their ideas with their partners they will be ready to start writing. By expressing their impressions through pictures, students can learn how to identify their emotions as well as to manage and channel them.

7.5.2.2 Answer a question

This variation is also very interesting because through a question and an image, it might be easier for our students to capture the emotional world much more accurately than words themselves. This adaptation would start with each student choosing one card and writing down the reason why they chose it as well as an answer to one of the following questions (depending on the teacher goals, training topic and timing of the exercise):

- How am I feeling at this very moment?;
- What would I like to be?;
- What do I regret from the past?;
- What do I fear the most?;
- How was/is (a specific event-for instance COVID-19 pandemic) for me?;
- Which card do I relate to the most?.

The cards and questions are very useful to represent the complexity of emotional states as well as the thoughts associated with those emotions. Besides, they might generate a stimuli which in turn will generate more ideas. In this sense, the triggered emotions can be worked together in class by pulling out other cards and think about ways and solutions to the problems or situations students might encounter.

7.5.3 Possible outcomes

Throughout the game and its adaptations, different contents are expected to be worked on, for example the different types of emotions, ranging from the basic and best known (happiness, sadness or anger) to some more complex ones (admiration, envy, gratitude, etc.) to identify and manage. Not only emotions have been worked on, but also the process followed when the emotion arises, as it involves thoughts, body reactions and behaviour depending on the situation experienced or presented.

Regarding grammar and lexic, players are very free in what they say since everything is open. Yet, Dixit could be adapted to different language contents or points, like expressing opinions, describing feelings, making comparisons, creating conditions (using conditionals), giving advices (using modals), dynamic and stative verbs; etc.

7.5.4 E-version

If there were the situation of confinement, the e-version of Dixit does not exist. Yet, it would perfectly work if the cards were scanned to be used during remote learning.

8 Conclusion

Emotions play a very important role in understanding our students' motivation, learning, performance, identity development and mental well-being (Meyer and Turner, 2006; Pekrun et al., 2011; Schutz and Pekrun, 2007). Positive emotions are likely to impact not only on students' learning performance in general but also their acquisition of second language (L2) learning and performance. Whereas negative emotions are thought to hinder learning achievement and motivation (Shao et al., 2019). COVID-19 has represented an enormous toll on our students' mental well-being with serious emotional consequences, fact that has influenced negatively in the academic performance of adolescents (Camacho-Zuñiga et al., 2021). Besides, one of the challenges that the 2020-2021 academic year has faced is the implementation of hybrid education. The shift to remote learning/teaching has emerged as a challenge due to the complications that teachers have encountered to find a way a way to be connected with their students while also maintaining a work-motivation balance (Mirahmadizadeh et al., 2020). This is why this thesis was focused on the importance of taking care of the emotions of our students in our English classes with the aim to stir up motivation and enthusiasm while remote learning. For this, a previous study has had to be conducted based on a bimodal study: on the one hand, a quantitative study using a 30 questions questionnaire has been used to collect data related to personal background, remote learning experience, relationship between teachers and students, emotions during the lockdown and its aftermath and emotional expression in both L1 and L2. And, on the other hand, a qualitative interviewing approach has been utilised with the aim to gain a deeper insight on the questionnaire. The objectives of the study were to evaluate the emotional state of students before and after this health crisis; to analyse the quality of remote learning; to examine the importance of the relationship between student and teacher; to know our students' capacity to express themselves in English and to offer a didactic proposal in order to help students managing their emotions.

Our findings demonstrate that students are very sceptical towards online classes: most of them consider that remote learning is not as qualitative as face-to-face learning and thus, they lose the motivation to pay attention in class. In fact, 91.7 % showed their preference for onsite classes since they could better understand and follow the contents taught in class. The data shows that the positive aspects of learning from home are quite superficial (*comfort* has been one of the adjectives that have been mostly used); the negative aspects of remote learning have been *distraction, boredom, loneliness, bad Internet connection*. Although online classes continue to be considered very poor, students have asserted their improvement comparing them with those during the lockdown. This agrees on what Besser et al. (2020) defends: online learning is at its best when it is planned in advance.

An unexpected and interesting finding has been revealed thanks to the study: students' urge

to have online classes in which they feel involved. Despite many students could not answer the question regarding their ideal online class, 35 % of them considered that an ideal class would be that in which students working from home are involved in class and not being ignored. Based on the data analysed, this is a fact that has been constantly occurring in many occasions - when students are doing remote learning they are often ignored by their teachers. In light of these results, one can claim that most of the teachers do not have an adequate training in technological tools in order to face the aftermath of the pandemic (Castro-Castro et al., 2020). Hence, a lot of training in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is urgently needed to provide the necessary tools to teach both onsite classes and online classes properly, in order to motivate and include our students while remote learning.

The lockdown has represented a key turning point in their lives: since March 2020, negative feelings have increased considerably among students - *anxiety, stress or distress* - are some of the examples that have been constantly mentioned. Students have seen a huge transformation in terms of mood and behaviour: they have changed from being more positive to be more negative and pesimistic. Even though 47 % of the students felt considered by their teachers, students stated that there must be an effort from their teachers to connect and bond with them for their mental health as well as to have better academic achievement.

In relation to the English language, the results of the study have shown us that participants consider that their English level is *very good or good*. Although they might find sometimes difficulties to express their emotions as well as some situations in their L2, the majority do not feel anxious when English must be used. These results concur with Ozanska-Ponikw's research: students feel confident enough using English which might not only boost L2 proficiency but also emotional expression in that language.

In that perspective, a didactic proposal has been designed with some activities with several purposes beyond the academic ones: (i) to help students to identify and express emotions properly and thereby making decisions to respond to a certain situation that they might be facing; (ii) to encourage teacher and peer support while encouraging and boosting motivation towards learning in general, and remote learning in particular; (iii) to make teaching and learning process more engaging; (iv) to create an atmosphere of positivity, cooperation and optimism; (v) to promote positive emotions. While the results presented in this study might produce valuable insights, they are not fully representative due to certain limitations. One of the main limitations of this thesis and the bimodal study has been the time in terms of undergoing the questionnaire and the interviews: both had to be undergone only during two class sessions (as previously said, for 1st of Baccaulaureate, 2 sessions of 55 minutes and, for 2nd of Baccaulaureate, two sessions of 90 minutes) which has indeed restrained information. Longer interviews, for instance, could have shown more detailed and contrasted information. Another limitation has been the impossibility to put into practice the proposal. A third constraint that has been found

is the number of participants. To further investigate this phenomenon, more examples and situations would have to be studied with a higher number of participants. Moreover, some students replied very vaguely the questions from the questionnaire as well as the interviews (due to the lack of time) which also limited the results. A fourth limitation found is the age/level range: the study and the proposal has been performed and thought exclusively for 1st and 2nd of Baccalaureate classes with a intermediate/high-intermediate level of English. Thus, it would be useful as well to know the points of view of ESO students, whose levels of English are different and to know whether the proposal could be suitable for ESO students.

More research needs to be done with more examples and situations with a higher number of participants with different range ages. In view of the unexpected finding, it would be interesting to undergo a material remodelling research/study from the materials that already exist, which might facilitate the inclusion of those students who are remote learning.

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A Appendix

A.1 Questionnaire

<https://aetherbox.de/nextcloud/index.php/apps/forms/n2dGs6YWkXQLQnT5>⁷

A.2 Interviews

- What was your level of energy this week?⁸
- In one single word, how did you feel this week?
- How pleasant or unpleasant is this emotion that you felt?
- In addition to the previous feeling, what other feelings did you have during this week?
- You mentioned that your main feeling is unpleasant/very unpleasant, do you think that you have tools that help you to handle your emotions? Which ones? How did you learn them? By yourself? The school?
- Have you ever been in an English speaking country?
- Do you like taking one day online classes and another day offline classes?
- Have you felt less motivated to study this academic year?
- Do you have difficulties to express your emotions in your own language?
- Do you have difficulties to express your emotions in English? / and personal information?
- Do you prefer online classes or on-site class?
- Do you better understand the subject contents when you take online classes or on-site classes?
- In general, do you see your online classes dynamic and rewarding?
- What are the worst things about learning from home?
- How would your ideal online class be like? What are the most important things that a teacher has to consider while taking online classes?
- Is it important for you that your teachers know your mood/emotions/feelings? Why? Why not?
- Can you describe me how would your motivation in learning increase during this situation?
- Do you feel unheard by the teachers?
- Do you think that teachers take care of you and your emotions? Why? why not?
- Your feelings before and after the lockdown: how did they change?
- Do you have now more negative emotions?

A.3 Dixit game rules

<https://www.ultraboardgames.com/dixit/game-rules.php>

⁷Based on the article: (Ozanska-Ponikw, 2012).

⁸Interview based on the article: (Camacho-Zuñiga et al., 2021).

A.4 Emotion wheel

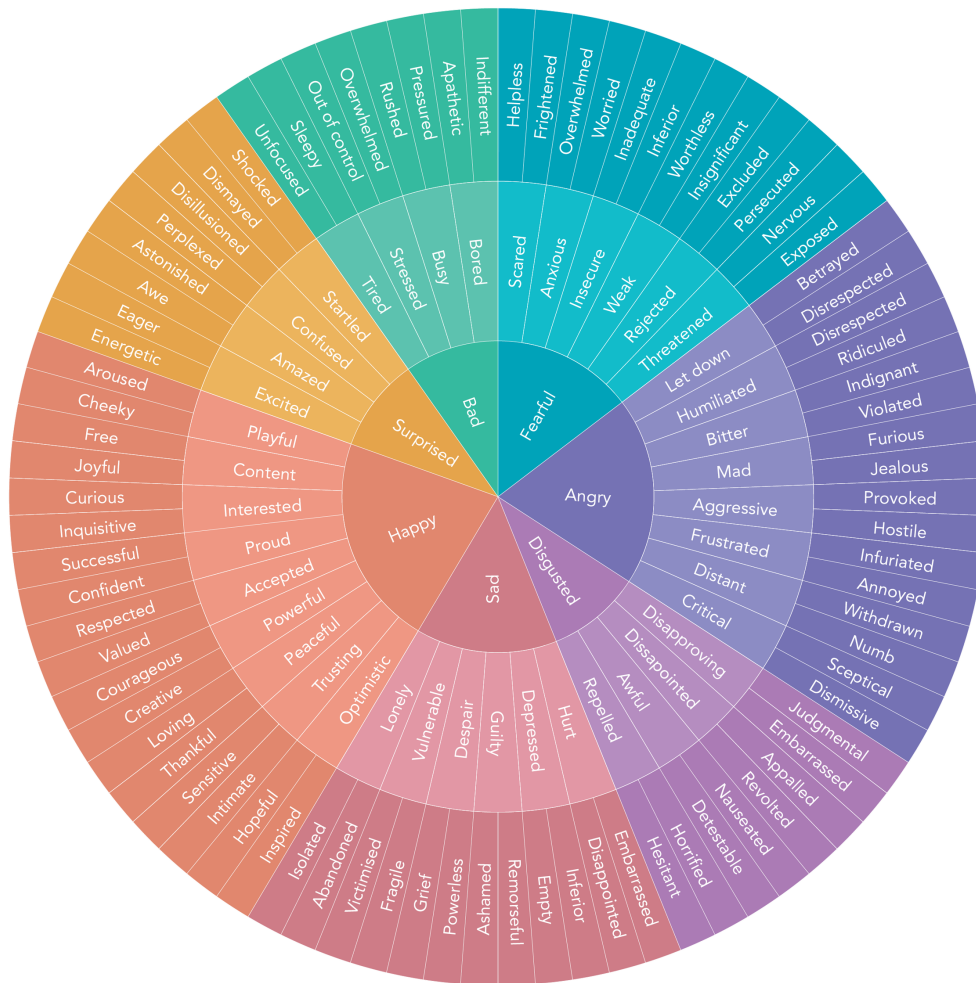


Figure 8: Emotion wheel

Source: <https://blog.calm.com/blog/the-feelings-wheel>