

Senang vs Pleased and Takut vs Scared: Valence Perception of Emotion Words by Indonesian-speaking Adolescents (Persepsi Valens Emosi bagi Perkataan *Senang* berbanding *Pleased* dan *Takut* berbanding *Scared* dalam Kalangan Remaja Penutur Bahasa Indonesia)

RICKA PUTRI SUTEJA¹ & BERNADETTE KUSHARTANTI^{1*}

¹ Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia,
Jawa Barat 16424, Indonesia

Received: 21 September 2025 / Accepted: 5 February 2026

ABSTRACT

This study explored the valence of emotion words among Indonesian adolescents who were still learning English and examined how language proficiency influenced their perception of these words. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combined quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative insights from written interviews. Emotion words, senang and takut, were carefully selected from Indonesian written sources and paired with their English counterparts, pleased and scared. Participants were adolescents aged 14 to 19 residing in Jakarta and its surrounding areas, where Indonesian is still the dominant language in home and school environments. This study used online questionnaires (N = 433) and written interviews (N = 34) as instruments to reveal that the Indonesian emotion words senang and takut were consistently rated as having a higher emotional valence than their English counterparts. The difference was attributed to the participants' greater familiarity and fluency in Indonesian, as their exposure to and use of English remained limited, primarily in academic settings. Language proficiency emerged as a factor shaping emotional perception, with higher ratings indicating a stronger emotional connection to words in the native language. The results indicate that the word meaning, frequency, and context of language use in daily life influence emotional responses to language. Overall, the study highlights the impact of linguistic familiarity on the emotional resonance of words, suggesting that bilingual individuals may perceive emotion words differently depending on their proficiency and exposure to each language. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of how bilingualism and language dominance affect emotional cognition.

Keywords: valence; emotion words; adolescents; Indonesian; perception

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menerokai valens perkataan emosi dalam kalangan remaja Indonesia yang sedang mempelajari bahasa Inggeris, serta mengkaji bagaimana tahap penguasaan bahasa mempengaruhi persepsi mereka terhadap perkataan tersebut. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kaedah campuran, penyelidikan ini menggabungkan data kuantitatif daripada soal selidik dan temu bual bertulis. Perkataan emosi, "senang" dan "takut", telah dipilih dengan teliti daripada sumber bertulis bahasa Indonesia dan dipadankan dengan rakan setaranya dalam bahasa Inggeris, iaitu "pleased" dan "scared". Peserta kajian terdiri daripada remaja berumur 14 hingga 19 tahun yang menetap di Jakarta dan kawasan sekitarnya, di mana bahasa Indonesia masih menjadi bahasa dominan di persekitaran rumah dan sekolah. Kajian ini menggunakan soal selidik dalam talian (n = 433) dan temu bual bertulis (n = 34) sebagai instrumen untuk mendedahkan bahawa perkataan emosi bahasa Indonesia, "senang" dan "takut", secara konsisten dinilai mempunyai valens emosi yang lebih tinggi berbanding rakan setaranya dalam bahasa Inggeris. Perbezaan ini dikaitkan dengan kebiasaan dan kefasihan peserta dalam bahasa Indonesia, dan juga pendedahan dan penggunaan bahasa Inggeris yang masih terhad, terutamanya dalam konteks akademik sahaja. Tahap penguasaan bahasa muncul sebagai faktor yang membentuk persepsi emosi, di mana penilaian yang lebih tinggi menunjukkan hubungan emosi

* Corresponding author: kushartanti.hum@ui.ac.id

yang lebih kuat terhadap perkataan dalam bahasa ibunda. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa makna perkataan, kekerapan, dan konteks penggunaan bahasa dalam kehidupan seharian mempengaruhi tindak balas emosi terhadap bahasa. Secara keseluruhan, kajian ini menekankan kesan kebiasaan linguistik terhadap resonans emosi sesuatu perkataan, serta mencadangkan bahawa individu dwibahasa mungkin menganggap perkataan emosi secara berbeza bergantung pada tahap penguasaan dan pendedahan mereka terhadap setiap bahasa. Dapatan ini menyumbang kepada pemahaman yang lebih luas tentang bagaimana kedwibahasaan dan dominasi bahasa mempengaruhi kognisi emosi.

Kata Kunci: valens; perkataan emosi; remaja; Bahasa Indonesia; persepsi

INTRODUCTION

Valence is a dimension of emotion. Lewin first coined this term (in Shuman *et al.*, 2013, p.1) as a reference to express “...*the forces that attract individuals to desirable objects and repel them from undesirable ones.*” Osgood *et al.* (see Kervyn *et al.*, 2013) stated in their book, *The Measurement of Meaning*, that valence is one of the components of the semantic differential used to measure concepts. It was then expanded as a concept to assess emotion using valences of negative-positive, good-bad, and happy-sad (Bestelmeyer *et al.*, 2017; Muhammad, 2018). Furthermore, Osgood *et al.* (in Kervyn *et al.*, 2013) explained that semantic differential response is categorized into three dimensions, namely, the evaluation dimension (positive-negative, good-bad, right-wrong), the potency dimension (hard-soft, strong-weak, and heavy-light), and the activity dimension (active-passive, slow-fast, and hot-cold). Hence, valence can be classified as an evaluative dimension. Knowledge of emotion words is certainly influenced by experience and language use. It may also be influenced by the social norms adhered to by a particular community (Wierzbicka, 1999; Ahn & Chang, 2022) and by experience and age (Ahn & Chang, 2022). Ahn & Chang (2022, p. 2) also wrote that “[...] valence ratings can also be useful as an indirect measure of emotion word knowledge for children and adults”. For example, children’s emotional experiences with positive and negative valence words tend to occur earlier than those involving neutral-valence abstract words (Muraki & Pexman, 2024). Emotional valence describes the degree of pleasantness or unpleasantness of the emotional reaction triggered by a word, ranging from strongly negative to strongly positive. For example, “*death*” carries a very negative valence, whereas “*party*” has a very positive one (Ferré *et al.* 2025).

For bilingual speakers or people living in multicultural environments, differences in equivalent words enrich their emotions. The number of emotional words that bilingual speakers use significantly influences their emotional and communication skills (Alqarni & Dewaele, 2020). This can happen to Indonesians, whether adults, children, or adolescents, who live in bi- or multicultural environments and are commonly multilingual. Generally, people in big cities, such as Jakarta and its surroundings – Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi (the area called *Jabodetabek*) use several languages. In these areas, younger generations mainly acquire Bahasa Indonesia as their first language (see Ananta *et al.* 2015 based on National Census 2010) and learn it formally at school along with a foreign language, particularly English (Kushartanti & Zakiyah, 2020; Kushartanti, Ihsan, & Nazarudin, 2020). Some of them started to learn English even before they were in school. In other words, in addition to Indonesian, they also use English, although the ability to speak these two languages is not always the same for every child. Under such conditions, it can be said that they also indirectly perceive the words they acquire, including various emotion words. How do they perceive equivalent words in those two languages? Therefore, this question must be examined.

A study from Kyeong *et al.* (2024) comparing the emotional experiences of adolescents in the United States and Japan, with a focus on differences in valence (positive vs. negative) and arousal, revealed significant differences in emotional expression between the two countries, influenced by cultural values and social norms unique to each society. Another study on emotion words in bilingual adolescents supports that language experience can be used to better understand emotions and self-development influenced by an individual's cultural background (Vidal Noguera & Mavrou, 2024). Furthermore, in a study on Spanish-speaking adolescents (first language users, or L1, and heritage language users, or HL), it was found that HL adolescents expressed emotion words similar to L1 culture (Vidal Noguera & Mavrou, 2024).

According to Li & Yu (2015), understanding the meaning of words that describe emotions, including whether they are positive or negative, becomes more accurate as a person gets older. Generally, words with positive connotations are easier to comprehend than those with negative or neutral meanings, and grasping this concept is vital for fostering empathy. Li & Yu (2015) added that valence has an impact on overall emotional and social growth. In addition, Grosse and Streubel (2024) found that adolescents (16-17 years) used more emotion words than children (10-11 years), and they used them in a similar way to adults. It was further found that there were differences in the general and specific emotion vocabulary in adolescents who had developed sufficiently. The capacity of adolescents to comprehend and apply language related to specific emotions is closely associated with their social and emotional growth. Moreover, emotion-specific vocabulary continues to be refined throughout adolescence and is linked to enhanced abilities in emotion recognition and regulation. Effective social interactions and emotional balance depend heavily on this development.

This study focuses on how young Indonesian-speaking adolescents, especially those who are still learning English at school, perceive emotion words in Bahasa Indonesia and English. The objective of this study is to explain the extent to which the young generation of Indonesians differs in the valence of emotion words in both languages. The words *senang* and *takut*, which are found in written sources such as blogs and other online media, were chosen and compared with their equivalents in English, namely *please* and *scared*.

METHODOLOGY

This study used mixed quantitative and qualitative methods. To identify frequent Indonesian emotion words used by adolescents, we searched for such words in written sources. It was also performed as the performed step to make the instrument of this study. The next step was to arrange questionnaires and a written interview question list for the main instrument of this study. The primary data used in this study were questionnaires distributed to adolescents who were enrolled in high schools in Jabodetabek. The results of the written interviews were used to support the study's primary objective.

CHOOSING THE MOST FREQUENT EMOTION WORDS USED BY ADOLESCENTS

This study identified the most frequently used Indonesian words in their written form. We collected 120 writings (articles and short stories) written in Indonesian from various online sources on special pages aimed at adolescents. These writings were then transferred into plain text format (.txt) file, to be processed using *AntConc* software (www.laurenceanthony.net, 2019). From the

number of tokens, *senang* and *takut* were ranked first and second in terms of the frequency of the appearance of emotion words. Based on this, we searched for the English translation of *senang* and *takut* in *Google Translate*, bilingual dictionaries, and thesauri. Their equivalents were *pleased* and *scared*, respectively. *Google Translate* was used to determine the highest frequency of use of the translated word, as shown in the top position of the translated meaning. This page was selected because people of the same age as the respondents use it when studying foreign languages. Based on this preliminary finding, we checked bilingual dictionaries and thesauri and described the corresponding words in the following section.

DEFINING *SENANG*, *PLEASED*, *TAKUT*, AND *SCARED*

Senang, *pleased*, *takut*, and *scared* have several definitions. This section presents the procedures to define these words based on dictionaries, thesauri, and *Google Translate*, which are frequently used by Indonesian students.

SENANG AND *PLEASED*

The word *senang* is categorized as an adjective, that is, a word that attributes nouns (Kridalaksana, 2014). In *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) V*, the word *senang* is defined as: (1) *puas dan lega* 'satisfied and relieved', *tanpa rasa susah dan kecewa, dan sebagainya* 'without the feeling of difficult and disappointed'; (2) *betah* 'comfortable'; (3) *berbahagia* 'happy' (*tidak ada sesuatu* 'nothing is troublesome', *tidak kurang suatu apa dalam hidupnya* 'nothing is lacking in life'); (4) *suka* 'like', *gembira* 'joy'; (5) *sayang* 'love'; (6) *dalam keadaan baik* 'in good condition' (*tentang kesehatan* 'regarding health', *kenyamanan* 'comfort', *dan sebagainya* 'etc'); dan (7) *mudah* 'easy', *serba mudah* 'completely easy', *praktis* 'practical'. In *Tesaurus Bahasa Indonesia Pusat Bahasa*, the word *senang* is put into adjective class, as: *aman* 'save', *bahagia* 'happy', *bangga* 'proud', *berbunga-bunga* 'flowery', *berkenan* 'pleased', *bungah* 'joy', *camar* 'delight', *ceria* 'cheerful', *doyan* 'fond', *enak* 'nice', *gemar* 'like', *gembira* 'happy', *girang* 'giddy', *lapang dada* 'accept willingly', *lega* 'relieved', *makmur* 'wealthy', *meriah* 'lively', *nikmat* 'enjoyment', *nyaman* 'comfortable', *puas* 'satisfied', *ria* 'fun', *riang* 'merry', *sejahtera* 'prosperous', *semarak* 'glorious', *selesa* 'spacy', *suka* 'like', *sukacita* 'happiness', *tenang* 'calm', dan *tentram* 'peace'.

The word *senang*, as found in Pramanik (2005), can emerge from the feeling of enjoyment caused by passion or stimulus and is a positive emotion that has an impact on the escalation of work, creativity, and motivation. Pramanik (2005, p. 79) elucidated the meaning of *senang* into two, namely (1) positive emotional reactions by controlling uncontrolled emotional expressions, do not last long, have positive consequences for oneself and others, produce positive behavior, arise from obtaining something expected; (2) positive emotional reactions by controlling uncontrolled emotional expressions, do not last long, have positive consequences for oneself and others, produce positive behavior, performed by others and oneself, arise from obtaining something expected.

In the translation of the adjective word *senang*, *Google Translate* page elicited words including *happy*, *pleased*, *glad*, *good*, *nice*, *amused*, *comfortable*, *content*, *satisfied*, and *contented*. It was noted on the page, the three most frequent words used in documents as the translation of the word *senang* were *happy*, *pleased*, and *glad*. The word *pleased* in the *Oxford Dictionary 10th Edition* has definitions as: (1) feeling or showing pleasure and satisfaction, especially at an event

or a situation; (2) willing to glad to do something; and (3) proud of one's achievement, especially excessively so, self-satisfied.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary 11th Edition defines the word *pleased* as: (1) making (someone) happy or satisfied; (2) making a choice about what to do, have, etc. Moreover, *Cambridge Dictionary 4th Edition* defines the word *pleased* as: (1) happy or satisfied; (2) very willing to do something. The word *pleased* in the *Google Translate* page means *senang* 'happy', *puas* 'satisfied', dan *senang hati* 'joyful'. Compared to the two other senses in the translation, the word *senang* has the highest rank of usage frequency. Therefore, in this study, the word *pleased* was used as the equivalent of *senang*.

TAKUT AND SCARED

In KBBI V, *takut* has some definitions, including: (1) *merasa gentar (ngeri) menghadapi sesuatu yang dianggap akan mendatangkan bencana* 'feeling afraid (terrified) of facing something that is considered to bring disaster'; (2) *takwa* 'piety', *segan* 'reverence' dan *hormat* 'and respect'; (3) *tidak berani* 'not daring' (*berbuat* 'to do', *menempuh* 'undertake', *menderita* 'suffer', dan *sebagainya* 'etc'); and (4) *gelisah* 'anxious,' *khawatir* 'worried'.

The semantic fields of the word *takut* have previously been studied by Pramanik (2005), who explained that the word is defined into two meanings: (1) a reaction of negative feeling with uncontrolled expression, lasts shortly, is caused by other people's action, has negative consequences toward others and oneself, and produces negative behavior; (2) a reaction of negative feelings with uncontrolled expression, lasts a short time, is caused by other people's action, has a negative impact on others and oneself, has no impact on others, produces negative behavior, arises because of a threat, making a mistake, seeing someone's anger, being alone, seeing something bad, being in a high place, seeing dangerous things, facing a stronger opponent, being in a dangerous situation, feeling frightened, is happening or has already happened. According to Mayiwar & Björklund (2023), "scared" is a concrete emotion that deals with immediate threats in the here and now. On the *Google Translate* page, *scared* is translated as *takut* 'afraid' and *ciut hati* 'discouraged' but the most frequently used translation is *takut* 'afraid'. Therefore, *scared* was chosen as the word examined in this study.

QUESTIONNAIRES

We used a two-part questionnaire in this study. The first part was related to the respondents' profiles. The second part is related to the measurement of valence. The first part of the questionnaire comprised questions regarding the demographic information of the respondents. This part covered personal information (domicile, gender, age, class, language spoken at home and school), including information on respondents' parents (education, language use, ethnicity, and income). This part also inquired about the respondents' language ability in both Indonesian and English (writing, reading, speaking, and listening).

This study was inspired by the Berlin Affective Word List Reloaded (BAWL-R) project conducted by Bahn *et al.* (2018), which can be seen in the second part of the questionnaire. The part of the questionnaire was used to measure valence in the form of a scale, adapted from SAM (Self-Assessment Manikin, see Bradley & Lang, 1999), which was used to measure valence regarding people's affective reactions. The SAM scale is presented in numbers along with a range of images to measure the reaction intensity. In this study, respondents were shown the words

senang, takut, pleased, and scared. Each word was followed by a set of numbers and images of emoticons. There were six numbers (from 1- 6) and emoticons in the instrument used in this study. The instructions for respondents to complete the questionnaire was “Choose the sign and number based on what you think when you hear the word [...]”

Number 1 and the image on the left show the most negative valence, while number 5 and the image below show the most positive valence. The number 6 and a circled question mark are provided as options for respondents who feel that they do not know the answer.

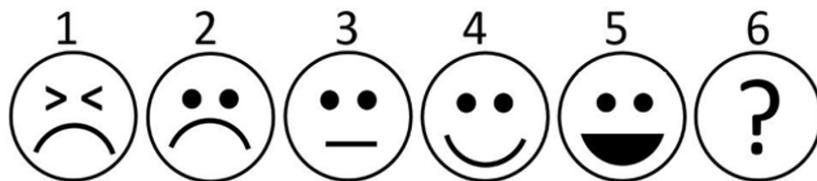


FIGURE 1. Choices of emoticons and signs to indicate valence in the questionnaire

We used valence data to get an idea of respondents’ perceptions of the four tested words. Frequency and mean analyses were performed to determine the tendency found, while a t-test was used to determine the significance of the valence difference in those words. Correlation analysis was performed to identify the relationship between equivalent words.

The target respondents of this study were high school students in Jakarta and its surroundings (Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi, or known as the *Jabodetabek* area) who speak Indonesian and study English at 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. Before distributing the questionnaire, we approached school and high school students throughout Jabodetabek via social networks and online channels. By filling in the questionnaire, respondents were considered to have provided their consent to participate in this study, as stated in the questionnaire introduction.

THE WRITTEN INTERVIEW AND THE RESPONDENTS

The interview was conducted as a triangulation of understanding of the four observed words, as well as to get an idea of the context in which the words *senang, takut, scared, and pleased* appear based on the daily experience of adolescents. The interview was a written and structured interview carried out through the *WhatsApp* application. It comprises two parts. The first part included personal information about the respondents, such as education level, age, gender, and domicile. The second part is related to the four words investigated in this study. It contained ten questions as follows.

1. What do you think is the meaning of the word SENANG?
2. What do you think is the meaning of the word TAKUT?
3. What do you think is the meaning of the word PLEASED?
4. What do you think is the meaning of the word SCARED?
5. Based on your experience, in what situation does the word SENANG come up?
6. Based on your experience, in what situation does the word TAKUT come up?
7. Based on your experience, in what situation does the word PLEASED come up?

8. Based on your experience, in what situation does the word SCARED come up?
9. In your opinion, do the words SENANG and PLEASED have the same or different meanings?
Please elaborate.
10. In your opinion, do the words FEAR and SCARED have the same or different meanings?
Please elaborate.

Questions numbers 1- 4 aimed to determine respondents' knowledge about the words being observed. Questions 5-8 were intended to explore the relation between the words and respondents' experiences. The remaining questions, numbers 9-10, were used to determine respondents' knowledge of the differences between equivalent words.

The interview was conducted online via personal chat in the *WhatsApp* application. The total number of respondents involved in this interview was 34 people, aged 15-17. Like those who filled out the questionnaire, respondents who were involved in the interview were predominantly female (25 out of 34). The interview results (written in Bahasa Indonesia) were subsequently processed and qualitatively analyzed to gain a general understanding of the everyday contexts that may trigger the observed words.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Four hundred thirty-three respondents filled out the questionnaire in this study, consisting of 109 (25.2%), 123 (28.4%), and 201 (46.4%) of 10th, 11th, and 12th-grade students, respectively. The respondents of this study were in the 14–19 age range, with 17 being the age of most of them (178 people or 41.1%). The remainder were participants aged 16 (117 people or 27%), 15 (81 people or 18.7%), 18 (39 people or 9%), 14 (15 people or 3.5%), and 19 (3 people or 0.7%). The respondents in this study were female (352 people or 81%). Most respondents live in Jakarta (37.9%) and Bekasi (30.3%). The rest were those who lived in the Bogor, Tangerang, and Depok areas.

Based on information regarding the ethnicity of their parents (from both sides), most respondents were Javanese (42.3%). There were also respondents from other large ethnic groups, such as Sundanese (father: 17%; mother: 21%), Betawi (father: 10.9%; mother: 10.4%), Batak (father: 9.2%; mother: 9.7%), Chinese (father: 6.7%; mother: 6.7%), and Minang (father: 3%; mother: 3.5%). We also found that several parents of the respondents came from other ethnic groups, such as Dayak, Papua, Palembang, Aceh, Nias, Bugis, Bengkulu, Manado, Bali, and Lampung.

Most respondents (325 people or 75.1%) speak Indonesian at home. Some used a mixture of Indonesian and English (69 people or 15.9%) and a mixture of Indonesian and local languages (28 people or 6.5%). Some others stated that they used a mixture of Indonesian and other foreign languages (10 people or 2.3%). Only one respondent (0.2%) claimed to be using English at home.

Indonesian was the language used by respondents at school; 354 people (or 81.8%) admitted that they use this language. In addition, respondents used a mixture of Indonesian and English (64 people or 14.8%). A mixture of Indonesian, foreign, and local languages was used by several respondents. As many as 8 respondents (1.8%) used a mixture of Indonesian and local language (Javanese). Moreover, a mixture of Indonesian and a foreign language (Mandarin) was used by 4 respondents (0.9%) of the total respondents. Meanwhile, it was found that there were respondents who used English at school (3 people or 0.7%).

PROFILE OF INDONESIAN AND ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

The questionnaire also included a self-assessment concerning the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills of the respondents, both in Indonesian and English, based on what they acknowledged. They were asked to pick between two choices (“yes” and “no”) for the questions asking about the four language skills. The analysis result is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Respondents’ Competence in Indonesian and English

Competence		Indonesian (N=433) (%)	English (N=433) (%)
Listening	yes	99,1	85
	no	0,9	15
Speaking	yes	98,8	77,6
	no	1,2	22,4
Reading	yes	100	97
	no	0	3
Writing	yes	99,1	92,6
	no	0,9	7,4

Table 1 shows that the highest competency in both languages was reading skill, while the lowest competency was speaking. The table also shows that most respondents had superior ability in Indonesian compared to English. This can be seen from the *yes* answers which reached $\geq 98\%$ in all Indonesian language skill components. Different results were found for the respondents’ English language skills, ranging from 77% to 97%. This table confirms the respondents’ language use at home and school, indicating that the use of Indonesian as the first language was dominant in daily activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TENDENCY IN VALENCE PERCEPTION OF *SENANG*, *PLEASED*, *TAKUT*, AND *SCARED*

This section explains the results of the descriptive statistical analysis of the comparison of the two pairs of emotion words observed. In this section, we present the results of the mean valence perception analysis and the correlation analysis results. Table 2 presents the analysis of the mean scores of observed words.

TABLE 2. Tendency in the Valence Perception of the Word *senang*, *pleased*, *takut*, and *scared* (Mean and Standard Deviation)

	M	SD
<i>senang</i>	4,56	0,69
<i>pleased</i>	3,95	1,24
<i>takut</i>	1,59	0,82
<i>scared</i>	1,58	0,93

Table 2 shows that the valence of the word *senang* tended to be perceived differently from that of the word *pleased*. The results of the paired sample t-test analysis revealed a significant difference where the word *senang* (M=4.56; SD=0.69) tended to be perceived as having a higher valence than *pleased* (M=3.95; SD=1.24), $t(432) = 9.62, p < .000$. It would be interesting to see more about how these words are perceived individually, which would strengthen this finding. From the analysis of the frequency of use, we found details as shown in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3. Valence of Words *senang* and *pleased* based on Respondent's Individual Response

<i>senang</i>			<i>pleased</i>		
Valence Value	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)	Valence Value	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
1	0	0	1	10	2,3
2	2	0,5	2	57	13,2
3	23	5,3	3	23	5,3
4	128	29,6	4	152	35,1
5	278	64,2	5	182	42,0
I don't know	2	0,5	I don't know	9	2,1

Table 3 demonstrates that more respondents positively perceived the word *senang* than those who positively perceived the word *pleased*. For the word *senang*, 406 respondents (or 93.8%) perceived it positively (valence values 4 and 5), while for the word *pleased*, only 334 respondents (or 77.1%) did. The data also found that 90 respondents (or 20.8%) perceived *senang* negatively, while 9 of them (or 2.1%) answered that they did not know. This finding demonstrates that some respondents viewed the word “*pleased*” negatively (67 people or 15.5%). It is possible that they did not understand this word, and this can be attributed to their English language ability, as revealed in the previous section (see Table 1).

In the meantime, the words *takut* and *scared* tended to be perceived negatively by respondents, and the results of the questionnaire showed that these two words were perceived similarly, with almost the same valence. Based on the paired sample t-test, it was found that there was no significant difference between the two words; *takut* (M=1.59; SD=0.82) and *scared* (M=1.58; SD=0.93), $t(432) = 0.38, p = .071$. However, it is also interesting to see the individual values of these two words based on the number of respondents’ answers (Table 4).

TABLE 4. Valence of Words *takut* and *scared* based on Respondents' Individual Responses

<i>takut</i>			<i>scared</i>		
Value	Number of Repondents	Percentage (%)	Value	Number of Repondents	Percentage (%)
1	262	60,5	1	286	66,1
2	79	18,2	2	53	12,2
3	90	20,8	3	72	16,6
4	0	0	4	19	4,4
5	0	0	5	0	0
Don't Know	2	0,5	Don't know	3	0,7

Table 4 shows that respondents’ perceptions of the negative valence of the words *takut* (341 people) and *scared* (339 people) were not significantly different. However, it was also found that several respondents (19 people) perceived *scared* positively. The possible reason for this finding might be the inability of respondents to understand the word. This confirms the language ability displayed in Table 1.

RESULT FROM WRITTEN INTERVIEW

The results of the written interviews regarding the four observed words were processed in the matrix to determine how respondents compared the words based on three things: the words' meaning, experience related to the words, and the difference or similarity of the equivalent words. Based on the result of the written interview, the following words were defined: *senang*, *pleased*, *takut*, and *scared*. Some respondents mentioned English words as the “synonyms of the Indonesian words”. Other respondents gave more than one definition, while the remaining did not answer.

Table 5 illustrates the comparison of the definitions of *senang* and *pleased*. Table 6 exhibits the comparison of the words *takut* and *scared*. Both tables present definitions grouped by category, along with the number of respondents who provided those definitions.

TABLE 5. Comparison of Definitions of the Words *senang* and *pleased* based on Respondents' Answers

	<i>senang</i> (N)	<i>pleased</i> (N)
feeling	21	13
ocassion	8	4
circumstation	2	2
condition	1	-
atmosphere	1	-
taste	1	4
“synonym of the equivalent words”	1	9

TABLE 6. Comparison of Definitions of the Words *takut* and *scared* based on Respondents' Answers

	<i>takut</i> (N)	<i>scared</i> (N)
feeling	15	11
ocassion	2	1
circumstation	5	3
condition	2	2
atmosphere	7	4
taste	1	9
“synonym of the equivalent words”	2	3

The two tables above show that the equivalent words were interpreted differently by the respondents. Moreover, we can also find that there was a tendency where a foreign language was aptly interpreted as a synonym of the Indonesian word, but not the other way around.

It was also revealed from the written interview that apart from giving labels to the definitions (*perasaan* 'feeling', *peristiwa* 'occasion', etc.), respondents also gave various detailed elucidations of the words *senang*, *pleased*, *takut*, and *scared*. The elucidation reflected the associations linked to those words and was not the same as equivalent words. *Senang* and *pleased* were associated with positive words, but were not in the same way; likewise, with the words *takut* and *scared*.

The results of the written interviews revealed that respondents' experiences related to the observed words also varied. An interesting finding was the differences in their experiences with these four words. They revealed that the respondents tended to distinguish equivalent word pairs. Of the total 34 respondents, 28 said that the word *senang* is different from the word *pleased*. The reason for this is that the intensity of the word *senang* is stronger than that of the word *pleased*.

Meanwhile, 23 of 34 respondents stated that *takut* and *scared* were alike. The respondents' answers in the written interview confirmed the finding regarding the tendency in valence perception.

The results of this research showed that pleasant experiences (which were related to the words *senang* and *pleased*) were perceived differently in the language studied by Indonesian-speaking adolescents who study English. Although both words were perceived as positive, respondents perceived that positive emotion words in Indonesian had a higher valence than positive emotion words in English. In other words, positive emotion words in the first language have higher valence than words in the second language. This is in line with a study conducted by Garrido & Prada (2018), who found that words in L1 (Portuguese) were rated higher (extreme) in valence. L1 words were rated as more familiar than L2 words. This was also confirmed by the diverse associations between the words *senang* and *pleased*.

In the study of Imbault *et al.* (2020), how non-L1 English speakers perceived the valence of 2628 English vocabulary words was investigated. The results showed that people who spoke English as their L2 longer (more fluently) showed similar language ability to L1 speakers. Results in this study confirmed that fluency can significantly affect valence, which is in line with Imbault *et al.*'s study. Based on Table 1, the tendency of respondents' evaluation toward the use of L2 was relatively low. This can be seen from the data on English ability, which showed that the highest score was in the reading aspect (97%) and the lowest score was in the speaking aspect (77%). Meanwhile, the lowest score of Indonesian ability was on the speaking aspect (98.8%). The lowest score in the Indonesian ability aspect was found even higher than the highest score in the English ability aspect (97%). This indicates that the result of this study was relevant to the result of Imbault *et al.*'s (2020) study about how language ability has an impact on valence.

In addition, Pavlenko (2006) added relevant matters to this study. She stated that bilingual speakers often do not feel the same, even though they know the word and its meaning. Pavlenko (2006) asserted that bilingual speakers tend to experience stronger emotions in L1. This statement supports this study's result. Based on tables 2 and 3, we can see that there were about 0.5-2.1% of the respondents who said that they did not know the word *senang* and *pleased*, whereas 0.5-0.7% said they did not know the word *takut* and *scared*. Moreover, most of the respondents (98-99.5%) knew these four words.

Based on the results of the analysis above, respondents who knew the four words indicated that L1 responses were stronger than L2. The results of the valence comparison analysis, interpreted in Table 3 and Table 4, showed a more positive value for the Indonesian words (*senang* and *takut*) than for the English words (*pleased* and *scared*). This result agrees with that in the research done by Pavlenko (2006), who explained that bilinguals who know the words and meanings do not respond the same.

In addition, Dewaele *et al.* (2021), in his research on bilingual, trilingual, quadrilingual, and pentalingual speakers, stated that even though respondents mastered two or more languages, they still gave more emotional reactions in their first language. It can be concluded that L1 is used to express emotion better, while L2 is considered to have emotional distance. These results are also supported by research by Caldwell-Harris *et al.* (2011), who claimed that bilingual speakers and people who live in bicultural environments often feel differences in the emotion words they have.

Research by Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba (2002) also showed that bilingual L1-language learners generate faster meaning activation. In contrast, L2 activation tends to be weaker in bilingual speakers. This caused the L2 word meaning revelation to tend to be slower. Furthermore, Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba (2002) asserted that L1 emotion words produce more and stronger

memory traces than L2 words. This second research is also considered relevant to support these study results in which Indonesian emotion words (*senang* and *takut*) were perceived more positively because they can be expressed better, produce higher activity, and have more memory traces.

Another argument from Nussbaum (2001) in his book *Upheavals of Thought* is that differences in language can form differences in emotional life. This view is supported by previous research conducted by Fernández *et al.* (2000), which discovered that there was a tendency for Asians to be lower in expressing emotions than non-Asians. Although in this study we did not discuss in depth how significant a background may influence, differences were still visible in the results, namely, differences in the values given by respondents for the words *senang*, *pleased*, *takut*, and *scared*.

CONCLUSION

This study has two main purposes: to discover the extent of the valence of emotion words *senang*, *pleased*, *takut*, and *scared* on Indonesian-speaking adolescents who are still learning English at school, and to investigate the different valences of the emotion words *senang*, *pleased*, *takut*, and *scared* related to the mastered languages. Results showed that Indonesian emotion words *senang* and *takut* had higher valence compared to the English emotion words *pleased* and *scared*. This occurred due to the assumption that Indonesian was considered more familiar by the respondents, considering that Indonesian was the language most often used by respondents at home and school.

The respondents' proficiency in Indonesian compared to English was a factor that influenced the valence of the four emotion words tested. Based on the tested data, respondents showed a higher level of proficiency in Indonesian than in English. A stronger impression was found for Indonesian emotional words than for English words. This can be seen from the higher scores obtained from the two Indonesian emotion vocabularies, *senang* and *takut*, compared to the scores for the English words *pleased* and *scared*.

Based on the findings of this study, there were several areas in the field of valence research that can be further explored in the future, including the need for further research to examine and scrutinize the entire list of emotion words, especially those that have been previously researched by Pramanik (2005). This is to see whether all emotion words in Indonesian are rated more positively than emotion words in English. Additionally, tests are also needed for emotion words in English. This is necessary to find out the differences in the tendencies of results for Indonesian and English emotion words, as well as to get results from different points of view considering that this research focused more on the Indonesian emotion words.

Pavlenko (2006) stated that there was a lack of precise word translation in research on bilingual and multilingual speakers, as well as a lack of meticulousness in collecting representative data for samples. Therefore, we suggest that future researchers who are interested in studying the valence of foreign language words collaborate with those in the field of translation studies. This needs to be done in order to get more accurate answers about equivalent words.

In addition, there is a need to validate the cultural context of each word for different languages. Cross-validation by linguists is necessary to improve the accuracy of the words used. In this study, we did not ask the L1 and Lx of the respondents. We did not ask about the time when respondents first acquired their L2 either. Future researchers should inquire about L1 and Lx of

respondents and the time they acquired L2 in previous studies, explaining that the time respondents acquired L2 had an impact on the research results.

Although both groups of emotion words represent a relatively small part of the vocabulary in the particular languages, the results of this study are important. This study can fill the gap in the linguistics field knowledge related to bilingualism and valence, which has not received much attention from linguists, particularly in Indonesia. Further research with larger groups of words and more diverse and larger participants is necessary to identify stronger tendencies toward language.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported by a funding from Universitas Indonesia (NKB-110/UN2.RST/HKP.05.00/2022). We would like to extend our sincere appreciation the participants involved in this study for their time, cooperation, and support. Lastly, we sincerely thank the reviewers for their insightful comments and constructive feedback, which greatly improved the quality of this work.

REFERENCES

- Ahn, S., & Chang, C.B. (2022). Emotion Word Development in Bilingual Children Living in Majority and Minority Contexts. *Applied Linguistics*, 43, 6.
- Alqarni, N., & Dewaele, J. M. (2020). A bilingual emotional advantage? An investigation into the effects of psychological factors in emotion perception in Arabic and in English of Arabic-English bilinguals and Arabic/English monolinguals. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 24(2), 141–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006918813597>
- Ananta, A., Arifin, E. N., Hasbullah, M. S., Handayani N. B., & Pramono, A. (2015). *Demography of Indonesia's Ethnicity*. ISEAS.
- Bahn, D., Kauschke, C., Versker, M., & Schwazer, G. (2018). Perception of valence and arousal in German emotion terms: A comparison between 9-year-old children and adults. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 39(3), 463–481. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716417000443>
- Bestelmeyer, P. E. G., Kotz, S. A., & Belin, P. (2017). Effects of emotional valence and arousal on the voice perception network. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 12(8), 1351–1358. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nsx059>
- Bradley, M., & Lang, P. (1999). Affective Norms for English Words (ANEW): Instruction manual and affective ratings (Technical Report C-1). University of Florida, Center for Research in Psychophysiology.
- Caldwell-Harris, C. L., Tong, J., Lung, W., & Poo, S. (2011). Physiological reactivity to emotional phrases in Mandarin—English bilinguals. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 15(3), 329–352.
- Cambridge University Press. (n.d.) Pleased. In Cambridge online dictionary. Retrieved 19 November 2021, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pleased>
- Dewaele, J. M., Lorette, P., Rolland, L., & Mavrou, I. (2021). Differences in emotional reactions of Greek, Hungarian, and British users of English when watching television in English. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 31(3), 345–361. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12333>
- Fernández, I., Carrera, P., Sánchez, F., Páez, D., & Candia, L. (2000). Differences between cultures in emotional verbal and non-verbal reactions. *Psicothema*, 12, 83–92
- Ferré, P., Sánchez-Carmona, A.J., Haro, J. et al. (2025). How does emotional content influence visual word recognition? A meta-analysis of valence effects. *Psychon Bull Rev*, 32, 570–587. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13423-024-02555-8>
- Garrido, M. & Prada, M. (2018). Comparing the valence, emotionality and subjective familiarity of words in a first and a second language. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. DOI: 10.1080/13670050.2018.1456514

- Grosse, G., & Streubel, B. (2024). Emotion-specific vocabulary and its relation to emotion understanding in children and adolescents. *Cognition and Emotion*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2024.2346745>
- Imbault, C., et al. (2020). How are words felt in a second language: Norms for 2,628 English words for valence and arousal by L2 speakers. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728920000474>
- Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia. (n.d.) Senang. In KBBI online dictionary. Retrieved 19 November 2021, from <https://www.kbbi.web.id/senang>
- Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia. (n.d.) Takut. In KBBI online dictionary. Retrieved 19 November 2021, from <https://www.kbbi.web.id/takut>
- Kervyn, N., Fiske, S.T., & Yzerbyt, V.Y. (2013). Integrating the stereotype content model (warmth and competence) and the Osgood semantic differential (evaluation, potency, and activity). *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 43, 673–681. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.1978>
- Kridalaksana, H. (2014). *Introduction to Word Formation and Word Classes in Indonesian*. Pustaka Obor Publishing.
- Kushartanti, B., Zakiyah. (2020). The linguistic choice by Indonesian-speaking adolescents: A case study in Tangerang. *Linguistik Indonesia*, 38(1), 23–34. <https://doi.org/10.26499/li.v38i1.141>
- Kushartanti, B., Ihsan, M., Nazarudin. (2020). Attitudes towards Indonesian varieties by Jakarta Indonesian-speaking adolescents in Depok City. *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Language, Literature, Culture, and Education (ICOLLITE)*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201215.018>
- Kyeong, Y., Knapp, S. E., Takahashi, Y., Davis, E. L., & Cheung, C. (2024). US and Japanese adolescents' emotions across time: variation by valence and arousal. *Current Psychology*, 43(8), 6954–6965.
- Li, Y., & Yu, D. (2015). Development of emotion word comprehension in Chinese children from 2 to 13 years old: Relationships with valence and empathy. *PloS One*, 10(12), e0143712.
- Mayiwar, L., & Björklund, F. (2023). Fear and anxiety differ in construal level and scope. *Cognition and Emotion*, 37(3), 559–571. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2023.2184775>
- Merriam-Webster. (nd). Pleased. In Merriam-Webster.com. Retrieved 19 November 2021, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pleased>
- Muhammad, S. (2018). Obtaining reliable human ratings of valence, arousal, and dominance for ratings of valence, arousal, and dominance for 20,000 English words. *Proceedings of the 56th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (Long Papers)*, pp.174–184.
- Muraki, E. J., & Pexman, P. M. (2024). The role of emotion in acquisition of verb meaning. *Cognition and Emotion*, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2024.2349284>
- Nussbaum, M. (2001). *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge University Press.
- Oxford University Press. (n.d.). Pleased. In Oxford Learner's Dictionary.com. Retrieved 19 November 2021, from <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/English/pleased?q=Pleased>
- Pavlenko, A. (2006). *Emotions and Multilingualism (Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction)*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pramanik, N. (2005). *Medan Makna Ranah Emosi dalam Bahasa Indonesia*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Universitas Indonesia.
- Tim Penyusun Kamus Pusat Bahasa. (2008). *Tesaurus Bahasa Indonesia Pusat Bahasa*. Balai Pustaka.
- Santiago-Rivera, A. L., & Altarriba, J. (2002). The role of language in therapy with the Spanish-English bilingual client. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 33(1), 30–38. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0735-7028.33.1.30>
- Shuman, V., Sander, D., & Scherer, K. R. (2013). Levels of valence. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4, 261. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00261>
- Vidal Noguera, C., & Mavrou, I. (2024). A surprise I will never forget: How do adolescent Spanish-German heritage speakers express the emotion of surprise in both their heritage language and the societal language? *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 30(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069241305272>
- Wierzbicka, A. (1999). *Emotions across Languages and Cultures: Diversity and Universals*. Cambridge University Press.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ricka Putri Suteja obtained her Master's degree in Linguistics from Universitas Indonesia. She has extensive experience working with non-governmental organization, contributing to programmes related to education and community development. Her research interests include applied linguistics, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics. Email: ricka.putri01@ui.ac.id

Bernadette Kushartanti is Associate Professor in Linguistics at the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia. Her research interests include language variation and language acquisition, particularly as it relates to the language used by Indonesian children and youth. Email: kushartanti.hum@ui.ac.id