

EMOTIONAL AFFECTIVE FILTERS OF EFL LEARNERS: THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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Abstract

This essay explores how emotions—particularly negative ones like anxiety and fear of failure—affect young learners’ ability to acquire a second language. It draws attention to the affective filter hypothesis, which proposes that lowering emotional barriers can improve language learning outcomes. The research also highlights the role of both instrumental and integrative motivation in increasing learner involvement. Furthermore, it stresses the value of diverse teaching approaches, such as the use of multimedia, in encouraging intrinsic motivation. The study suggests that teachers should foster a supportive and secure classroom atmosphere, use real-life contexts, and build positive relationships with students. Providing encouragement, preparing learners for difficulties, and emphasizing the learning journey all help strengthen students’ self-efficacy and confidence. Overall, the study concludes that addressing learners’ emotional needs can enhance second language acquisition in primary education.

Keywords: *Second language acquisition, Affective filters, Language learning, English as a foreign language*

Literature review

Language acquisition has been a baffling topic among experts for it begs to encompass the norm of teaching and learning language which are vital especially to those who consider such languages as foreign or secondary. English as a foreign language (EFL) learners tend to consider such as non-essential because they already have learned their mother tongue or second language. For instance, Uzbek people learn English in schools as an EFL subject because they have already acquired their mother tongue, Uzbek and Russian as their second language. The mindset of non-essentiality often breaks their emotions to eagerly learn a new language like English.

The Language Acquisition Theory by Stephen Krashen (1982) involves affective filter hypothesis which involves the emotions of students towards learning a new language. Being able to identify their motivations and anxieties can lead to a better understanding of where to start in defining a clear path towards actual learning English instead of diving into instruction without clear direction (Racuya, 2020).

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, combining theoretical analysis with a cross-disciplinary literature review to examine the relationship between language acquisition among EFL learners and their affective filters towards learning English. The methodology includes the following components:

Analysis of related literature. A comprehensive review of literature about the subject was done to comparatively analyze the underlying theory on language acquisition especially, the Affective Filter Hypothesis by Krashen. The research and journals were taken into audit and were extensively reviewed in order to provide clear conclusion.

Observational Analysis of EFL learners in real classroom scenarios. The author is an English teacher and she conducted real-time class observations and noted clear examination of how learners behave in accordance to their affective filters manifested during their classes.

Analysis of learner's informal interview answers. Informal interviews on learners were conducted and the answers were noted comprehensively. The random learners from the different grade levels were subjected to several prepared questions to assess their emotional states and impressions about learning English as a foreign language.

Thorough analysis of the Affective Filter Hypothesis among learners. The salient data gathered were cross-examined to the prevailing affective filters manifested by learners as they were subjected to checking the levels of their motivation, attitude, self-esteem and anxiety.

Through these methods, a clear conclusion and recommendations were made in order to utilize the EFL learner's affective filters in improving their chances of acquiring English more effectively and efficiently.

Introduction

English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' second language development is shaped not only by cognitive abilities and classroom conditions but also by the emotions generated during instruction and through feedback (Swain, 2013). Negative feelings—such as tension, performance anxiety, fear of failure, and frustration—can weaken learners' motivation and readiness to participate. When these emotions are present, they function as barriers that hinder the absorption of meaningful input. In line with this, the affective filter hypothesis argues that successful language learning occurs when learners are exposed to appropriate input while maintaining a low emotional barrier that allows positive feedback to be effective (Du, 2009). In such supportive

environments, student responses and progress are more visible, enabling teachers to better adjust lesson pace and focus.

The crucial role of motivating students. Motivation is a key emotional factor, reflecting a learner's strong drive to explore new areas. It is commonly categorized into instrumental motivation—using language learning as a means to achieve specific goals—and integrative motivation, where learners find enjoyment in both the process and outcomes, creating a reinforcing cycle of success and engagement (Zheng, 2021). However, many educational practices remain task-oriented, focusing on completing assignments or passing exams, which often neglects students' emotional and motivational needs. A more diverse approach to education can address this gap by incorporating resources such as picture books, animations, and audiobooks. Multimedia instruction, in particular, can boost intrinsic motivation and foster a sense of accomplishment (Lou, 2017). Learning materials should also progress from simple to more complex to build confidence and encourage positive attitudes. Additionally, teachers should design their behavior and activities to help reduce students' negative emotions.

Motivation vs Anxiety. Learners' motivation significantly shapes their attitudes toward learning, influencing how quickly they absorb new information, how effectively they process complex material, and how much attention they give to potential biases in understanding. While it may be difficult for teachers to determine students' motivations immediately, observable attitudes can provide useful insights. Human behavior is largely influenced by personal preferences and aversions (Ajzen et al., 2018). In situations where learners must use a language they are not yet comfortable with, lack of positive feedback can lead to language anxiety. This anxiety may include social fears, test-related stress, and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz, 2001). From a cognitive perspective, it can also be categorized into input, processing, and output anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Such anxiety is influenced by individual personality traits, study habits, and societal expectations for high achievement.

Teachers can take several steps to reduce anxiety, such as using non-comparative assessments to maintain learner interest, emphasizing basic skills in testing to lessen feelings of inadequacy, and organizing classroom layouts to encourage more frequent and meaningful social interaction. Second language education should also promote tolerance for uncertainty and mistakes, rather than emphasizing failure.

Overall, the affective filter hypothesis can be effectively applied through various teaching strategies, including multimedia instruction, motivation-focused approaches, and simulated real-life scenarios (Du, 2009).

Conclusion

In summary, the study offers several important recommendations for improving EFL classroom dynamics. First, teachers should provide personalized guidance and use a variety of instructional tools to strengthen student motivation. With this, learners will be able to decipher what they want and help them provide better directions towards language learning. Second, it is essential to create a caring and supportive learning environment that reduces fear of failure and allows learners to express their individual strengths. Being able to reduce anxiety is essential so the learners would establish confidence and self-esteem inside an EFL classroom. Third, adopting diverse teaching methods that address students' specific needs can help build trust between teachers and learners while also boosting self-confidence. Fun and engaging activities not only provide motivation, but also, they tend to make a long-lasting impact towards students over-all performance. By following these strategies, students can develop greater resilience, overcome challenges, and move beyond perceived limitations.

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