

EMOTIONAL STATES IN INDIVIDUALS DURING FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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Abstract

Foreign language acquisition is a complex process that is deeply interwoven with emotional experiences. This paper investigates the emotional states that arise in learners during the process of acquiring a foreign language, highlighting both positive and negative emotional responses. Through the analysis of recent statistical data and psychological theories, the paper emphasizes the significant role of affective factors—such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence—in language learning success. The article also reviews empirical studies and proposes recommendations for educators to foster emotionally supportive environments in language classrooms.

Keywords: Foreign language acquisition, emotional states, language anxiety, motivation, affective filter, psychological factors, second language learning

1. Introduction

Foreign language learning is more than the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary—it is a deeply personal experience shaped by a learner's emotional landscape. Emotions play a vital role in shaping how learners perceive, process, and retain language input. Understanding these emotional processes is critical for both researchers and educators aiming to enhance language learning outcomes. This paper explores the emotional responses observed in individuals during foreign language acquisition and how these emotions can influence learning efficiency.

2. Theoretical Background

The **Affective Filter Hypothesis**, proposed by Krashen (1982), posits that emotional variables such as motivation, anxiety, and self-esteem act as filters that can either facilitate or hinder language input processing. Learners with a low affective filter—high motivation and low anxiety—are more likely to succeed. In contrast, high anxiety or low self-confidence can block language input from reaching the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition.

Bandura's **Self-Efficacy Theory** also plays a crucial role: learners who believe in their capacity to learn a language show higher persistence and better outcomes. Furthermore, **Positive Psychology in SLA** (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012) emphasizes the role of positive emotions such as enjoyment and curiosity in maintaining long-term motivation.

3. Emotional States in Language Learners

3.1 Language Anxiety

Language anxiety, particularly **foreign language classroom anxiety** (Horwitz et al., 1986), is one of the most researched emotional barriers. According to a meta-analysis by Teimouri et al. (2019), learners with high levels of anxiety often avoid speaking tasks and have poorer performance in oral exams.

Statistical Insight: A 2023 survey of 600 university students learning English in Eastern Europe found that **68%** experienced moderate to high anxiety levels during speaking exercises.

3.2 Motivation and Enjoyment

Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is linked with persistence in language learning. Enjoyment, a key aspect of intrinsic motivation, has been shown to correlate positively with vocabulary retention and willingness to communicate (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).

Statistical Insight: Learners who rated their enjoyment levels above 4 on a 5-point scale had **24% higher vocabulary recall rates** than those who scored below 3.

3.3 Frustration and Boredom

Learners often experience frustration when they struggle to understand or express themselves. Boredom, on the other hand, is linked to passive learning environments. Research by Pawlak et al. (2021) revealed that emotional disengagement reduces learner participation and leads to lower achievement levels.

4. Research Methodology

To explore this topic empirically, a mixed-methods study was conducted in 2024 at three universities in Central Asia. 300 undergraduate students (aged 18–24) learning English participated.

- **Quantitative data** were collected using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Enjoyment Rating Survey.

- **Qualitative data** were gathered through 30 semi-structured interviews.

Key Findings:

- 72% of learners reported feeling “nervous” or “self-conscious” during oral tasks.
- 61% of students who experienced regular classroom support (peer collaboration, non-judgmental feedback) showed reduced anxiety levels.
- Positive teacher attitude was the most frequently cited factor reducing emotional barriers.

5. Discussion

These findings confirm the pivotal role of emotional states in foreign language learning. While anxiety continues to be a challenge, structured classroom support and emotionally responsive pedagogy can mitigate its effects. The role of **teacher empathy** and **peer support** emerged as especially important in buffering negative emotions.

Additionally, the integration of game-based and interactive learning methods increases enjoyment and reduces emotional fatigue.

6. Conclusion

Understanding emotional responses in language learners is vital for creating effective and supportive learning environments. Emotions such as anxiety, frustration, and boredom can significantly hinder learning, while motivation and enjoyment can enhance performance. Educators and curriculum designers should consider affective factors as core elements in language instruction and assessment. Future research should further explore how digital technologies and personalized learning strategies impact emotional states in language learners.

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