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# THE INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

***Khavva Ashirova***
*Asia International University*

**Abstract** Second language acquisition is influenced not only by cognitive ability but also by learners’ emotional and psychological conditions. Factors such as anxiety, self-confidence, motivation, personality traits, and emotional well-being significantly shape learners’ participation, communication skills, and academic achievement in language classrooms. Moreover, the language learning process shapes students’ personalities and identities. Waller, Wethers, and De Costa (2017) contended that the act of acquiring a language is fundamental to the reconstruction of students’ identities. This study investigates the relationship between psychological factors and the effectiveness of foreign language learning among secondary school students. The research focuses on how emotionally supportive and learner-centered teaching approaches contribute to improved linguistic competence and classroom engagement. A mixed-methods methodology involving classroom observations, interviews, and surveys was implemented with five groups of secondary school learners over one month. Various strategies, including collaborative tasks, gamified activities, and non-evaluative exercises, were introduced to reduce stress and encourage active participation. The findings revealed that supportive classroom environments positively affected students’ confidence, motivation, vocabulary development, and communicative performance. Learners who initially demonstrated anxiety and reluctance gradually became more engaged and expressive during classroom interaction. The study concludes that psychologically informed teaching practices play a vital role in enhancing both emotional well-being and language acquisition outcomes. Furthermore, the research highlights the importance of creating inclusive and low-anxiety learning environments that support diverse personality types and encourage effective communication.

**Keywords:** second language acquisition, psychological factors, anxiety, self-confidence, motivation, personality, emotional well-being, communicative competence

## Introduction

The process of learning a second language is influenced by many cognitive, emotional, and social factors. While language acquisition has traditionally been examined from linguistic and methodological perspectives, modern educational research increasingly emphasizes the

role of personality and psychological condition in shaping successful learning outcomes. Emotional states such as anxiety, confidence, motivation, and self-esteem significantly affect learners’ ability to absorb, process, and use a new language effectively. Consequently, second language acquisition (SLA) cannot be viewed solely as an intellectual activity; it is also deeply connected to learners’ emotional well-being and personal experiences. Students enter language classrooms with different psychological backgrounds and personality traits. Some learners are naturally confident and sociable, while others may struggle with fear, stress, or traumatic experiences that hinder classroom participation. These emotional and psychological conditions directly influence communication skills, willingness to interact, and overall academic achievement. Learners who experience emotional distress or low self-confidence often avoid speaking activities, hesitate to participate in discussions, and become less motivated to practice the target language. As a result, their language development may progress more slowly compared to learners who feel psychologically secure and supported. Recent pedagogical approaches highlight the importance of creating learner- centered classrooms that reduce anxiety and encourage active engagement. Educational psychologists and language researchers suggest that supportive environments, collaborative activities, and emotionally safe learning conditions help students develop greater confidence and linguistic competence. This study examines the relationship between personality, emotional condition, and language learning performance. It also investigates how psychologically informed teaching strategies can improve learners’ motivation, participation, and communication abilities in secondary school language classrooms. Research in second language acquisition demonstrates that emotional and psychological factors have a considerable impact on learning effectiveness. Scholars have argued that language learning involves not only cognitive processing but also emotional engagement. Learners’ attitudes, emotions, and mental states influence how they perceive linguistic input and how successfully they retain and apply new information. In addition, enhancing learners’ abilities to use the language in authentic contexts is viewed as a crucial component in language teaching.

Within this stage, Hymes’s (1981) concept of “communicative competence” is particularly relevant. The concept asserts that the principal goal of acquiring a language is not simply to master the mechanics of language but to empower students to apply language effectively and appropriately in various social contexts. Darvin and Norton (2017) explain that students must continuously reshape their identities across different contexts to engage meaningfully in their education and demonstrate their ability to perform in the target language, which can sometimes be challenging. Language learning engagement shapes a novel identity of speakers of a new language, which in its turn motivates learners. As Mitchell et al. (2013) suggest, an individual’s perception of their ideal self as a skilled language user plays a crucial role in fostering commitment to language learning. One of the most influential theories related to emotional factors in language learning is Stephen Krashen’s (1985) “Affective Filter Hypothesis.” According to Krashen, emotional barriers such as stress, anxiety, low confidence, and fear can create a mental filter that blocks language input from

being fully processed. When learners feel nervous or uncomfortable, their ability to absorb new vocabulary, grammar, and communicative patterns decreases. Conversely, students who learn in relaxed and encouraging environments are more likely to participate actively and achieve better academic results. Anxiety is widely recognized as one of the strongest psychological barriers in language acquisition. Many learners experience nervousness when speaking in front of classmates or interacting with teachers. Public performance pressure often causes students to make more mistakes, forget previously learned material, or avoid communication altogether. Budianto (2010) emphasized that adolescents and adult learners frequently struggle with self-expression under conditions of public evaluation and criticism. Fear of making mistakes can negatively affect pronunciation, fluency, and classroom interaction. Personality traits also contribute significantly to language learning behavior. Extroverted learners usually participate more actively in conversations and group tasks because they are comfortable interacting socially. Introverted learners, however, may prefer independent work and require more supportive conditions to express themselves. Effective teaching strategies should therefore address the needs of both personality types. Language teachers are encouraged to provide balanced activities that combine teamwork, individual reflection, and low-pressure communication opportunities. Motivation represents another essential element in successful language acquisition. Motivated learners demonstrate greater persistence, stronger concentration, and higher levels of classroom engagement. O’Brien (1977) argued that teachers should help students understand the practical value of language learning while simultaneously reducing fear associated with classroom activities and assignments. When learners perceive language learning as meaningful and enjoyable, they become more willing to invest effort in mastering the language. Furthermore, collaborative learning and peer interaction can significantly improve emotional comfort and reduce anxiety. Kondo (2004) suggested that relaxation techniques, group work, and peer-based activities help students cope with language anxiety more effectively. Through supportive communication with classmates, learners gradually develop confidence and improve their speaking abilities. These findings indicate that emotionally supportive classrooms create favorable conditions for both psychological well-being and academic achievement.

Overall, previous studies demonstrate that personality traits, emotional stability, and psychological support strongly influence language learning outcomes. However, there remains a need for additional research examining how psychologically informed teaching methods affect learners in real classroom settings, particularly in secondary schools. The present study therefore investigates how personality and emotional conditions influence language learning and how psychologically informed teaching strategies can improve students’ motivation, participation, confidence, and communication abilities.

## Methods

### Research Design

The present study employed a mixed-methods research design combining classroom observation, interviews, and surveys. The research was conducted to investigate how teaching

strategies focused on emotional support and personality-sensitive instruction affect students’ language learning outcomes.

**Participants and Setting**

The research was conducted in five secondary school groups consisting of learners aged between fifteen and sixteen years old. The study focused on students learning a foreign language in a secondary school classroom environment. Particular attention was given to students who initially demonstrated signs of anxiety, shyness, low confidence, or low motivation.

**Data Collection**

Data collection took place over a one-month period. During this time, students participated in various classroom activities specifically designed to reduce anxiety and encourage active engagement. Researchers conducted both oral and written interviews individually and in groups to understand learners’ perceptions of classroom atmosphere, participation, and emotional experiences during language lessons. Classroom observations were systematically organized to monitor students’ behavior, participation rates, communicative interaction, and academic progress. The observations focused particularly on learners’ willingness to communicate, classroom engagement, confidence, and responses to different teaching activities.

Surveys were also used to collect information about students’ psychological conditions, motivation, confidence, and perceptions of the classroom environment.

**Teaching Strategies**

Teachers incorporated several psychologically supportive teaching methods into the lessons. These included gamified activities, collaborative projects, peer discussions, and non-evaluative speaking tasks. Certain activities were intentionally not graded in order to minimize students’ fear of judgment and academic pressure.

Additionally, the learning environment was designed to foster emotional safety and inclusiveness. Teachers used encouraging language, supportive feedback, and interactive teaching approaches to create a positive atmosphere. Relaxing classroom conditions and opportunities for free self-expression were considered central components of the instructional strategy.

Collaborative tasks and peer interaction were introduced to provide learners with opportunities to practice the target language in less stressful situations. Gamified activities were used to increase motivation and engagement, while non-evaluative exercises were introduced to reduce fear of mistakes and criticism.

The study focused on examining whether these methods would improve learners’ confidence, participation, vocabulary development, and overall communicative competence. Particular attention was given to students who initially demonstrated anxiety, shyness, or low motivation.

**Results** The findings of the research revealed significant improvements in learners’ emotional and linguistic development after the implementation of psychologically supportive

teaching strategies. Students who were previously reluctant to participate became noticeably more active during classroom activities and group discussions. One of the most important observations was the increase in communicative confidence among shy and anxious learners. Many students gradually overcame their fear of speaking and began expressing themselves more openly in the target language. Participation in collaborative activities and peer interaction contributed greatly to this positive transformation. Vocabulary acquisition and speaking performance also improved considerably. Learners demonstrated greater fluency during oral tasks and used a wider range of vocabulary during classroom communication. The non-evaluative nature of certain activities reduced performance pressure, allowing students to experiment with language without fear of criticism or failure. Another major outcome was the improvement in classroom atmosphere. Students appeared more motivated, engaged, and emotionally comfortable during lessons. The use of games, teamwork, and supportive communication created an environment where learners felt psychologically secure and willing to take linguistic risks. Furthermore, students with initially high levels of anxiety showed substantial progress in both participation and self-confidence. Their willingness to interact with classmates and teachers increased noticeably throughout the research period. Students who initially hesitated to speak became more willing to participate in group discussions and oral activities. The results also indicated that different personality types responded positively to different forms of classroom interaction. Extroverted students generally demonstrated active participation in collaborative and communicative tasks, while introverted and initially anxious learners benefited from supportive and less intimidating opportunities for self-expression. These results suggest that emotionally supportive teaching methods positively influence not only academic performance but also learners’ psychological well-being. The implementation of learner-centered and psychologically supportive teaching methods contributed to improvements in students’ linguistic competence, motivation, emotional comfort, and classroom engagement.

**Discussion** The results of this study support existing theories emphasizing the relationship between emotional condition and successful language acquisition. The implementation of learner-centered and psychologically supportive teaching methods contributed to improvements in students’ linguistic competence, motivation, and emotional comfort. The findings align with Krashen’s (1985) theory that lowering the affective filter facilitates more effective language learning. When students experienced reduced anxiety and greater emotional security, they became more receptive to linguistic input and more willing to participate in communication activities. This demonstrates the importance of addressing emotional barriers in language classrooms. The findings concerning anxiety are particularly important because fear of making mistakes and public evaluation can prevent learners from participating in communication. In the present study, students who initially demonstrated anxiety and reluctance gradually became more active when they were provided with supportive and non-evaluative learning opportunities. This supports the argument that emotional security is an important condition for successful language learning. Collaborative

learning activities also played a significant role in enhancing learner engagement. Group tasks and peer interaction allowed students to practice language skills in less stressful contexts. Through cooperation and mutual support, learners developed stronger confidence and communication abilities. These outcomes correspond with previous research suggesting that social interaction can alleviate language anxiety and increase motivation. The inclusion of non-evaluative activities proved particularly beneficial for students with low self-esteem or fear of public criticism. By removing constant performance pressure, teachers created opportunities for learners to focus on communication rather than perfection. This approach encouraged experimentation, creativity, and authentic self-expression in the target language. The findings also highlight the necessity of recognizing individual personality differences within language classrooms. Introverted students often require more supportive and less intimidating environments to participate actively. Extroverted students, on the other hand, may thrive during collaborative and communicative tasks. Therefore, effective language instruction should include diverse teaching methods that accommodate varying personality types and emotional needs. The results are also connected with Hymes’s (1981) concept of communicative competence. The purpose of language learning is not simply to master linguistic structures but also to use language effectively and appropriately in different social contexts. The psychologically supportive classroom environment provided students with opportunities to develop their ability to communicate in the target language. The study further supports the relationship between language learning and identity development. Waller et al. (2017) argued that acquiring a language is connected with the reconstruction of learners’ identities. Similarly, Darvin and Norton (2017) emphasized that learners continuously reshape their identities across different contexts. In the present study, increased participation and confidence may have contributed to learners’ development as speakers of the target language. As learners became more willing to communicate, they appeared to develop greater confidence in their ability to use the language. Motivation also played an important role in the observed improvements. O’Brien (1977) argued that teachers should help students understand the practical value of language learning while reducing fear associated with classroom activities. The use of games, collaborative tasks, and opportunities for communication made the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable, which contributed to students’ willingness to participate.

The study also emphasizes the broader role of teachers as emotional facilitators rather than solely providers of academic content. Teachers who demonstrate empathy, encouragement, and understanding can positively influence students’ motivation and psychological comfort. A supportive teacher-student relationship contributes significantly to successful language learning experiences. The positive findings of the study should, however, be considered in relation to its limitations. The research was conducted with five groups of secondary school learners over a relatively short period of one month. Therefore, the findings may not represent long-term changes in language acquisition or apply equally to learners in other age groups, educational settings, or cultural contexts. Further research involving larger

groups of participants and longer periods of observation would provide a broader understanding of the relationship between psychological factors and language learning outcomes.

**Conclusion** In conclusion, the present study demonstrates that personality traits and psychological conditions strongly influence the language learning process. Emotional factors such as anxiety, motivation, self-confidence, and stress significantly affect learners' participation, communicative abilities, and academic performance in second language acquisition. The research findings indicate that psychologically informed and learner-centered teaching approaches can substantially improve both emotional well-being and linguistic competence. Activities designed to reduce stress and encourage collaboration helped create a supportive classroom atmosphere where students felt comfortable expressing themselves freely. As a result, learners demonstrated increased confidence, improved vocabulary knowledge, stronger communication skills, and greater classroom engagement. The study further confirms that reducing anxiety and promoting emotional security are essential components of effective language teaching. Non-evaluative activities, collaborative learning, and supportive teacher behavior can lower learners' affective barriers and encourage active participation. These strategies are especially valuable for students who experience shyness, fear of criticism, or low self-esteem. At the same time, the research highlights the importance of considering personality differences. Extroverted and introverted learners may respond differently to classroom activities, and teachers should therefore provide varied opportunities for participation. A combination of collaborative tasks, individual activities, peer interaction, and low-pressure communication can help meet the psychological needs of different learners. Although the research produced positive results, additional studies are still necessary to explore the long-term effects of psychologically supportive teaching methods. Future research may examine different age groups, cultural contexts, and educational settings to better understand how emotional and personality-related factors shape language acquisition outcomes. Ultimately, successful language learning depends not only on intellectual ability but also on emotional readiness and psychological support. By recognizing the importance of learners' emotional conditions and individual personalities, educators can create more effective, inclusive, and motivating language classrooms that foster both academic achievement and personal growth.

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