

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING LANGUAGE LEARNING

Ilyos Shodiyev

**Abstract:** *Language learning is not merely a cognitive process but also a psychological experience shaped by learners' emotions, attitudes, and motivation. This study explores the major psychological factors that influence foreign language acquisition, focusing on motivation, anxiety, self-efficacy, and attitude. Data were collected from a group of university students learning English as a foreign language through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that learners with higher intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes toward the target language tend to perform better, while anxiety and lack of confidence negatively impact language progress. The paper concludes that psychological factors play a central role in language learning success and recommends that teachers create a supportive and low-anxiety environment to enhance students' motivation and confidence.*

**Keywords:** *motivation, anxiety, self-efficacy, attitude, language acquisition, psychology of learning*

### Introduction

Language learning has always been a complex process influenced by a variety of cognitive, social, and psychological factors. In recent years, researchers have increasingly recognized the crucial role of psychological aspects such as motivation and anxiety in determining learners' success in acquiring a foreign language. Motivation serves as the driving force that encourages learners to engage in continuous study and overcome challenges, while anxiety often acts as a barrier that inhibits language performance and reduces self-confidence.

This study focuses on the psychological factors affecting language learning among students of Termiz State University, Uzbekistan. The research particularly examines the impact of motivation and anxiety on English language acquisition. Understanding these factors can help teachers design more effective learning environments that reduce fear and increase students' willingness to communicate.

The main objectives of this research are:

1. To identify the relationship between learners' motivation levels and their English language performance.
2. To explore how language learning anxiety influences students' participation and achievement.

By investigating these issues, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological dimensions of second language acquisition and to provide practical recommendations for language teachers to enhance learning outcomes.

### Literature Review

A large body of research has emphasized the importance of psychological factors in second language acquisition. Among these, motivation and anxiety have been identified as two of the most influential variables affecting learners' success.

According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), motivation plays a key role in determining learners' effort, persistence, and success in language learning. They distinguish between integrative motivation—a desire to integrate with the culture of the target language—and instrumental motivation, which is driven by practical goals such as passing exams or getting a better job. Learners with strong motivation tend to invest more time and energy in learning, which leads to better outcomes.

Another critical factor is language learning anxiety, which has been widely discussed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). They define language anxiety as a specific form of anxiety that arises in language classrooms, involving fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety. High levels of anxiety often lead to reduced participation, lower confidence, and poor academic performance.

In addition, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) suggests that emotional variables such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence influence the success of language acquisition. A "high affective filter" (high anxiety or low motivation) prevents input from being fully processed, whereas a "low affective filter" facilitates learning.

Studies conducted by Dörnyei (2005) and MacIntyre (1999) further highlight that the interplay between motivation and anxiety determines learners' engagement and persistence. Thus, understanding these psychological dimensions can help educators develop strategies that enhance motivation and minimize anxiety in the classroom.

## Methodology

### 1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to investigate the psychological factors influencing language learning among students of Termiz State University. The research particularly focused on motivation and anxiety as the key variables.

### 2. Participants

The participants of this study were 25 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Termiz State University, Uzbekistan. All participants were English language learners aged between 18 and 23 and had been studying English for at least two years. The selection process was conducted through random sampling to ensure objectivity and reliability.

### 3. Data Collection Instruments

Two research instruments were used for data collection:

1. Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was distributed to measure the students' levels of motivation and anxiety.

2. Interview: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five participants to obtain more detailed information about their emotional states, attitudes, and challenges in learning English.

#### 4. Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and correlation analysis) to explore the relationship between motivation and anxiety. The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of common themes and patterns.

#### 5. Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed about the aims of the study and participated voluntarily. Their identities were kept confidential, and informed consent was obtained before data collection.

#### Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that both motivation and anxiety play a crucial role in the English language learning process among the students of Termiz State University. Based on the questionnaire and interview data, it was found that most students demonstrated a moderate to high level of motivation, especially those who viewed English as a key to better career opportunities and global communication. Students with strong intrinsic motivation—those who enjoyed learning English for personal satisfaction—showed greater consistency and better academic performance.

However, the research also indicated that anxiety negatively affected learners' progress. Many participants reported feeling nervous when speaking English in front of others or during exams. This performance anxiety often led to hesitation, reduced fluency, and avoidance of classroom participation. Students who expressed higher levels of anxiety generally performed worse in speaking and listening tasks.

A significant correlation was observed between motivation and anxiety: students with higher motivation tended to experience lower levels of anxiety, suggesting that confidence and positive attitudes can reduce emotional stress in language learning. The study also found that teacher behavior and classroom environment strongly influenced both motivation and anxiety.

Supportive feedback and an encouraging classroom atmosphere helped students feel more confident and engaged.

In summary, the findings confirm that psychological factors—especially motivation and anxiety—are deeply interrelated and have a substantial impact on students' language learning success.

These results highlight the importance of integrating motivational strategies and anxiety-reducing techniques into English teaching practices.

#### Conclusion

This study explored the influence of psychological factors—particularly motivation and anxiety—on the English language learning process among 25 students at Termiz State University.

The findings revealed that motivation plays a key role in sustaining learners' engagement and performance, while anxiety negatively affects their confidence, participation, and language achievement.

The study also indicated that these two factors are interrelated: higher motivation often reduces anxiety, whereas excessive anxiety can weaken motivation.

The results suggest that teachers should adopt psychologically supportive teaching methods that foster positive attitudes and reduce emotional tension in the classroom.

Creating a friendly, low-anxiety environment and providing constructive feedback can help students become more confident and self-motivated. Furthermore, teachers should design activities that promote intrinsic motivation—such as communicative tasks, peer interaction, and goal-oriented projects.

In conclusion, psychological factors are central to the success of language learning.

By recognizing and addressing students' emotional needs, educators can significantly enhance language acquisition outcomes and create a more effective and human-centered learning experience.

#### REFERENCES:

1. Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The Psychology of the Language Learner: Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
2. Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.
3. Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125–132.
4. MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Methods and results in the study of anxiety and language learning: A review of the literature. *Language Learning*, 41(1), 85–117.
5. Oxford, R. L., & Shearin, J. (1994). Language learning motivation: Expanding the theoretical framework. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(1), 12–28.
6. Csizér, K., & Dörnyei, Z. (2005). The internal structure of language learning motivation and its relationship with language choice and learning effort. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(1), 19–36.
7. Ellis, R. (2008). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

8. Krashen, S. D. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

9. Liu, M., & Huang, W. (2011). An exploration of foreign language anxiety and English learning motivation. *Education Research International*, 2011, 1–8.

10. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78.