

Lowering the filter: The role of attitude in English language acquisition

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Abstract

This paper delves into Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which suggests that emotions such as motivation, attitude, self-confidence, and anxiety play a significant role in how easily or how challenging it is for students to acquire a second language. Among these emotional factors, attitude is especially important as it influences other aspects of the affective filter. This paper takes a narrative literature review approach to examine how attitude impacts language learning, particularly in the case of learning English. It explores the definitions, dimensions, and key factors that shape students' attitudes and highlights teaching strategies supported by research that create an encouraging classroom environment. Such an environment can motivate students to engage more with the language. The findings highlight that having a positive attitude is key to success in learning a language. When students stay motivated and confident, they are more likely to jump into conversations, keep practicing, and step out of their comfort zone. On the other hand, students who feel anxious or discouraged often struggle to engage with the language, making it harder for them to improve. This study also emphasizes that addressing emotional and psychological aspects in language teaching is just as important as teaching grammar and vocabulary. In fact, these emotional factors play a crucial role in helping students truly succeed in their language-learning journey.

Keywords: Affective Filter Hypothesis; Affective factors; Attitude; English as a Foreign Language (EFL); Pedagogical Implications

1. Introduction

Knowing more than one language has never been more valuable. It opens up new opportunities, whether for advancing in education, growing a career, or connecting with people from different cultures. Some people learn a new language to get ahead professionally, while for others, it is a personal challenge that encourages growth and helps them communicate in a whole new way. Whether it is for work, travel, or the joy of understanding others, being bilingual or multilingual enriches life in countless ways.

There are over 7,000 languages spoken around the world, giving people endless possibilities to learn a language that suits their personal and professional goals (Bentz et al., 2018). Beyond individual benefits, speaking multiple languages is key to fostering cooperation on a global scale. It helps bridge cultural divides, strengthens communication worldwide, and promotes peaceful collaboration. Language also plays an important role in solving shared challenges, as highlighted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015). Of all the languages, English has become the most widely used for international communication (Jenkins, 2014). Knowing English allows people to participate in global conversations, access better opportunities, and navigate an interconnected world.

Research has shown that being bilingual or multilingual boosts cognitive flexibility, improves problem-solving abilities, and offers economic benefits, which is why language learning continues to gain importance worldwide (Baker & Wright, 2017). In response, educators and policymakers are constantly working to make language learning more effective and

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accessible (Moeller & Abbott, 2018). However, learning a new language is not just about memorizing words and mastering grammar. How learners feel about the process, whether motivated, confident, or anxious, plays a huge role in how successfully they can pick up and use a new language.

Even though learning a second language, especially English, has become more important than ever, many students still struggle to master it. One of the main reasons for this is something called the "*affective filter*," a concept introduced by Stephen Krashen in his 1982 Affective Filter Hypothesis. Essentially, Krashen suggests that emotions like motivation, attitude, self-confidence, and anxiety play a huge role in how easily a student can pick up a new language. Research shows that how students feel directly affects their ability to learn (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Dewaele, 2019; Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Ghafar, 2023).

When students see English as something that can help them in school, at work, or in their personal lives, they are much more likely to stay involved in their learning, participate in class, and keep pushing themselves to get better (Gong et al., 2023). Confidence plays a big part too. When students believe they can succeed, they are more willing to take chances, practice speaking, and keep going, even when it feels challenging. However, when students feel like learning English is too difficult, unnecessary, or something they will never be good at, they lose motivation, shy away from speaking, and miss out on opportunities to practice.

Students who have a positive attitude toward learning English are more likely to engage in class discussions, share their ideas, and take responsibility for their own progress (Getie, 2020; Zulfikar et al., 2019). They view English as an important skill, making them want to practice and get better. In contrast, students who feel discouraged or find English intimidating, especially in high-pressure classrooms, tend to hesitate to speak, avoid using the language, and struggle to make progress (Yin, 2023).

The classroom environment is a major factor in how students feel about learning English. Many students are afraid to speak because they worry about making mistakes or being judged (Ni, 2012). If mistakes are seen as failures instead of a natural part of learning, students are more likely to stay silent to avoid embarrassment. Over time, this can lead to frustration and anxiety, which only makes it harder for them to get better.

On the other hand, a classroom that encourages students and makes them feel supported can help them feel more comfortable and willing to take risks (Dewaele et al., 2019; Kyrpa, 2023). Teachers who bring energy, humor, and engaging activities create a space where students feel safe to experiment with the language. When mistakes are treated as part of the learning process, students are more likely to speak up, interact with their classmates, and start building confidence in their English skills.

This paper uses a narrative literature review approach to explore how attitude affects language learning, particularly in English. It discusses the definitions, dimensions, and factors that influence students' attitudes. It also highlights research-backed teaching strategies that can create a supportive environment, helping students maintain a positive attitude throughout their language journey. By creating learning spaces that foster a positive attitude toward language learning, English teachers can help language learners develop language skills and a mindset that allows them to learn a new language.

2. Conceptual Dimensions of Attitude

Language learning is considered a cornerstone of human existence, as knowing a language enables the expression of opinions, hopes, and dreams (Tavil, 2009). However, due to several psychological factors, some learners become lost in the process of acquiring or learning a second language, often struggling to overcome barriers that hinder their progress and engagement.

Attitude is a key factor in language learning success, encompassing students' feelings, perceptions, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies. In the context of foreign language learning, various factors influence the learning process, including motivation, attitudes, anxiety, learning achievements, aptitudes, intelligence, age, and personality (Gardner, 1960; Hasan & Fatimah, 2014; Pratolo, 2017; Hashwani, 2008). Among these factors, a learner's attitude is recognized as one of the most important factors impacting language acquisition, emphasizing that a positive attitude toward learning is essential for mastering a language (Fakeye, 2010).

Buschenhofen (1998) affirms that educators consider attitudes crucial for predicting and contributing to achievement in language learning. Second language learners who give up halfway often hold passive attitudes towards learning and view foreign language acquisition as a burden. As a result, their academic performance tends to be worse than that of

persistent learners carrying positive attitudes. Conversely, students with positive attitudes are generally more active and attentive in class, striving to learn more.

With the increasing need and ongoing interest in learning a second or foreign language, understanding learners' attitudes towards the language is crucial. Attitude plays a key role in determining success or failure in language learning, as positive attitudes often lead to higher motivation and engagement. Contrarywise, negative attitudes can create barriers, hindering progress and reducing the effectiveness of instructional methods. Therefore, addressing and fostering positive attitudes in learners is essential for achieving successful language learning outcomes.

Several views and definitions of attitude in language acquisition and learning are offered by different scholars, theorists, and researchers. Experts in learning theory define attitude in various ways. Schwarz et al. (2009) view attitude as a behavioral intention, while Bohner and Wanke (2002) see it as a central component of human identity. Latchanna and Dagneu (2009) argue that understanding one's attitudes provides insight into human behavior, viewing attitude as a state where beliefs and feelings are formed. Mensah et al. (2013) states that attitude reflects individuals' performance, influencing how they think, act, and behave.

Attitude plays a crucial role in how individuals engage with learning, particularly in acquiring a second language. Wenden (1991) categorizes attitude into three key components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The cognitive aspect relates to a learner's beliefs and how useful or necessary they perceive the language. The affective component involves feelings and emotions toward something; the behavioral component refers to actions taken regarding an object.

According to Baker (1992), attitude is a hypothetical construct that explains the direction and persistence of human behavior. It plays a significant role in education and psychology. Attitudes can be classified in several ways, such as instrumental, utilitarian, pragmatic, integrative, social, and interpersonal, or they can be a mix of these types. Since attitude guides learning behavior over time, it is important to understand the interplay between attitude and behavior.

According to İnal et al. (2003), attitude is a fusion of feelings and beliefs that guides behavior, especially in learning. Attitude directly influences the level of effort, resilience, and general approach of the learner when acquiring a second language. Since a learner's attitude can determine the extent of their success, assessing and understanding these perspectives is crucial. Teachers can identify such attitudes and, as a result, modify the teaching approach to support the language learning process better.

Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) suggested that attitude consists of three components: cognitive (beliefs), affective (feelings), and conative (behavior). The cognitive component refers to beliefs, such as the belief that learning English can lead to better career prospects. The affective component involves feelings, such as a learner's excitement or motivation when speaking English. The conative component relates to behavior, such as when a learner actively seeks opportunities to practice English outside the classroom by joining language clubs or using language apps. These three elements, when combined, shape a learner's overall attitude toward language learning.

The connection between attitude and learning outcomes is significant. Students with a positive outlook engage more actively in the lesson, practice outside of class, and enjoy the process of learning. In contrast, those with a negative attitude may feel anxious, uninterested, or discouraged, leading to difficulties acquiring the language (Padwick, 2010). Since attitude strongly influences learning success, it is essential to understand how students perceive English learning and adjust instruction accordingly. A learning environment where being motivated and working consistently is encouraged can enhance language learning and general academic performance.

3. Factors Influencing Attitude Toward Language Learning

Reid (2003) emphasized that attitudes are integral to the language learning process, as they cannot be separated from learning processes. This is because they are deeply intertwined with how learners approach and engage with language acquisition. Several studies highlight the strong interconnection between attitudes and motivation as critical variables in second language learning (see Bernaus et al., 2004; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003).

In classroom settings, a lack of student participation, often caused by low motivation and the absence of a positive attitude toward learning the target language, can significantly reduce overall performance. Gardner (1985) described motivation as a combination of effort, desire, and a favorable attitude toward achieving language learning goals. This suggests that motivation and attitude are closely interconnected. Supporting this view, Katesi (1993) found that both attitude and motivation are critical determinants of success or failure in language learning. Likewise, Al-Tamimi and

Shuib (2009) agree that attitudes towards a language significantly impact learners' motivation, particularly instrumental motivation, with students holding positive attitudes towards the language, its culture, and its use in social and educational contexts. These two factors should be carefully nurtured and addressed in instructional strategies to maximize student engagement and language learning outcomes.

Attitude is not only influential in learners' motivation but also interconnected with other aspects that affect academic success, as evidenced by several studies that linked attitude to other factors such as opinions, beliefs, behavior, performance, achievement, intelligence, and negative feelings such as anxiety, among other factors. This interplay can significantly impact a learner's ability to effectively acquire and engage with a new language. Kara (2009) stated that attitudes, along with opinions and beliefs, significantly influence students' behaviors and performance. Students with positive beliefs about language learning tend to develop more favorable attitudes towards it, while negative beliefs can lead to anxiety, low cognitive achievement, and negative attitudes (Victori & Lockhart, 1995).

İnal et al. (2003) looked at high school students in eastern Turkey and found something that seems obvious when you think about it. The students who felt good about school and saw learning as valuable did way better than the ones who thought it was tedious, frustrating, or a waste of time. Their attitude was not just a tiny detail. It played a massive role in how well they performed. Gardner (1985) made a similar point, especially when learning a language. A student's attitude toward the language, the learning process, and even the culture behind it can shape how much progress they make. Students who are excited about learning or find it interesting usually improve faster. However, learning becomes much more challenging if they feel frustrated, bored, or discouraged.

Gardner (1985) took a closer look at what attitude means. They explained that it is not just about academics but also connected to informal settings. It comes from a person's beliefs, values, and experiences. How someone feels about learning a language is shaped by how they see themselves and their abilities. Students who believe they can succeed and feel motivated are likelier to do well. However, if they doubt themselves or think learning is pointless, those negative feelings can hold them back.

There is also a strong link between attitude and intelligence. Öz et al. (2015) found that students with higher emotional intelligence often had a more positive attitude toward learning a foreign language. Interestingly, they also found that female students tended to score higher in certain aspects of attitude, suggesting that emotional intelligence might give some learners an advantage. However, attitude is not just about being positive or negative towards something. In language learning, anxiety plays a significant role, too. Hussain (2018) found that students who feel a lot of fear or nervousness when learning a language often struggle more. When students are anxious, it becomes harder for them to focus, participate, or take risks, which slows down their learning and eventually impacts their overall attitude toward language learning.

This is why creating a positive and supportive learning environment is so important. Khatun and Saifullah (2017) pointed out that students who develop a positive attitude towards English are likelier to succeed in acquiring the language. Teachers play a huge role in this. Their energy, enthusiasm, and support can change students' thinking about learning. Yazigy (1991) stressed that great teachers do more than explain grammar rules. They inspire, encourage, and make students feel comfortable enough to try, even if they make mistakes.

Beliefs about language learning, held by both students and teachers, can either support or obstruct progress in acquiring a new language. Thornton (2009) found that college students and instructors have differing beliefs about second language learning, which can either encourage or limit learning based on individual perceptions. For instance, students who believe that consistent practice and exposure lead to fluency tend to be more proactive in engaging with the language. On the other hand, instructors who assume that only exceptionally gifted students can become fluent may set lower expectations for struggling learners, providing them with less encouragement and support. These differing beliefs can have a profound impact on a student's learning experience, either motivating them to improve or discouraging them from making progress.

Abu-Melhim (2009) suggests that while teachers can guide and encourage students, the responsibility for active participation rests with the learners themselves. Students must take an active role in engaging with lessons and contributing to classroom discussions to make the most of the learning experience. This means that successful learning depends not only on good teaching but also on the student's willingness to be involved and motivated.

Language learning involves psychological and social aspects, relying heavily on learners' motivation and attitudes (Padwick, 2010). Success in a target language relies not only on intellectual capacity but also on the learner's attitudes

toward language learning, which can also affect motivation and other learning factors. Thus, language learning is both a social and psychological phenomenon.

Similarly, Gardner and Lambert (1972) concluded that students' ability to master a second language is influenced not only by mental competence and language skills but also by their attitudes and perceptions towards the target language. This shows that learning a new language is not just about skill or intelligence. It is also about how students feel about the language and their motivation to learn it.

Baker (1992) emphasized the importance of attitudinal research in language learning, stating that attitudes play a crucial role in language restoration, preservation, decay, or death. De Bot et al. (2005) reiterated that high motivation and positive attitudes facilitate second language learning. Learners lacking interest and willingness to acquire the target language often develop negative attitudes, hindering their motivation and enthusiasm for learning.

Feng and Chen (2009) highlighted that the learning process is emotional and influenced by various emotional factors. Both teachers and students engage in emotional activities, which affect learning outcomes. Attitude helps learners express their preferences toward objects or situations, and foreign language learners' inner feelings and emotions significantly influence their perspectives and attitudes toward the target language (Choy & Troudi, 2006).

The positive or negative attitude of learners toward language learning is commonly referred to as their language learning attitude or attitudinal orientation. This encompasses learners' feelings, beliefs, and predispositions toward acquiring a new language, and it can significantly influence their motivation, engagement, and overall success in the learning process. In fact, numerous studies have explored students' positive and negative attitudes and perceptions toward learning a second or foreign language, as these factors have attracted significant research interest (Al-Zahrani, 2008).

For studies leaning toward positive language learning attitude, for example, Hashwani (2008) investigated students' attitudes, motivation, and anxiety towards learning English and found that students generally had positive attitudes and high enthusiasm, emphasizing the importance of English proficiency in daily life. Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) studied Petroleum Engineering students' motivation and attitudes towards learning English, revealing positive attitudes towards using English in Yemeni social and educational contexts and a favorable view of English-speaking cultures. Similarly, Al Mamun et al. (2012) examined university undergraduate students and found their attitudes towards English to be generally positive and instrumental. Momani (2009) examined secondary students' attitudes towards learning English and their achievements in reading comprehension. The findings indicated neutral to positive attitudes and a strong correlation between attitudes and reading performance.

Negative attitudes towards learning English courses have also been observed. Not all students have a positive attitude toward learning English, especially when it comes to formal courses. Abu-Melhim (2009) found that nearly half of the Jordanian university students surveyed had a negative attitude toward learning English. Likewise, Abd Aziz (1994) observed that while students at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia were generally comfortable speaking English, they were less enthusiastic about taking English courses at the university level. Language learning is shaped by both personal motivation and broader historical and cultural influences. Despaigne (2010) found that in Mexico, negative attitudes toward English were tied to colonial history and linguistic imperialism, leading students to associate the language with cultural dominance. This resistance creates psychological barriers, reducing motivation and hindering progress.

Studies show mixed results on students' attitudes toward learning a language change over time. Al-Zahrani (2008) found that Saudi students' views on English remained steady. In contrast, Lamb (2009) observed that students in Indonesia started eager and motivated, but their enthusiasm for formal language lessons faded over time. This shift suggests that traditional teaching methods may not always sustain students' interest and engagement. When learning feels repetitive or disconnected from real-life use, maintaining a positive attitude toward language learning becomes more difficult. More dynamic and adaptable teaching approaches help students stay motivated and continue to see English as a valuable skill rather than just another school subject.

A student's attitude toward learning is shaped by many things, such as their background, experiences, and the support they get along the way. Gender, culture, age, and teaching style all influence how they feel about learning. Some students are eager and confident, while others struggle with doubt or pressure. No two learning journeys are the same because every student's experience is shaped by their world and the people around them.

Soku et al. (2011) found that gender influenced how students felt about studying English, but family background significantly impacted their attitude toward learning French. Buschenhofen (1998) discovered that young students and

university graduates generally had positive views on English, though their opinions shifted with age and societal changes. Psaltou-Joycey and Sougari (2010) stressed that teachers must understand these differences to adapt their teaching methods and better support their students.

Regarding gender differences, studies generally show that female students tend to have a more positive attitude toward learning foreign languages than males. Samanhudi (2019) found that 61.6% of female adolescents had a favorable view of learning foreign languages, compared to only 38.4% of males. Earlier research by Powell and Batters (1985) in the UK found that males' interest in foreign languages declined more sharply than females'. Sung and Padilla (1998) also found that female students in the U.S. were more motivated than males when learning Asian languages.

This trend has been observed in other countries as well. Kobayashi (2002) found that young female high school and university students in Japan had significantly more positive attitudes toward learning English than their male counterparts. The study suggested that this could be linked to gender roles in Japanese society, where women have marginalized status and face fewer restrictions in expanding their opportunities through English language learning. For many female students, learning English was seen as a way to open doors for the future.

On another note, research does not always point in the same direction. While some studies suggest that female students have a more positive attitude toward learning languages, others find little to no difference or even indicate the opposite. For example, Penjak and Karninčić (2015) found that male students were more eager and had more favorable attitudes toward learning English than female classmates. At the same time, Fakeye (2010) and Kızıltan and Atlı (2013) argue that gender does not significantly influence a student's attitude toward language learning. Similarly, Karatas et al. (2016) and Zareian et al. (2014) found that male and female students were equally motivated and had a positive attitude toward learning, with no apparent differences.

Starting English at a young age shapes how students connect with the language. They absorb it naturally, using it daily without thinking of it as studying. Huwari (2021) found that those who started learning English at a young age are more engaged because they learn English, like their first language, through experiences, conversations, and interactions. It becomes familiar and effortless, not something they must struggle to master. Early exposure does more than teach words and grammar. It shapes favorable attitudes toward the target language, such as confidence, curiosity, and the joy of communication. For many, starting young makes English feel natural, not just a subject but a way to express themselves and connect with others.

Some students believe they improve because they work hard and push themselves. In contrast, others feel that having the proper support from a great teacher, a positive classroom environment, or encouraging classmates makes all the difference. Cochran et al. (2010) found that female students were more likely to believe their progress in English came from their effort, which might explain why they often have a more positive attitude toward learning. At the same time, many students feel that their success depends on the encouragement they get from the people around them. This shows that a good attitude is cultivated personally. What applies and is favorable to one student might not work for another because different influences and experiences shape everyone's learning attitude and overall experience.

There is no single way to keep students maintain a positive learning attitude because everyone learns differently. Some students love setting their goals and challenging themselves to improve, while others need encouragement from teachers, classmates, or family to stay engaged. What drives students today might not keep them going tomorrow because their learning attitude is not constant. It shifts as they gain confidence, face setbacks, and receive support. Every student's journey is different, and there is no single path to success. The most important thing educators can do is create a space where students feel valued, encouraged, and inspired. When students feel supported, they are more likely to stay engaged, maintain a positive attitude, and find their way forward naturally and meaningfully.

Learning a language is not just about one single factor. It is shaped by several factors and circumstances, such as age, gender, cultural background, effort, experience, societal norms, support students get, and expectations, among other factors, which can contribute to their overall attitude toward language learning. Attitude may be rooted personally, but the people and environment around a student often play an even more significant role. Feeling supported, they take risks, practice more, and improve naturally. When they feel discouraged, learning starts to feel like an uphill battle. This is where teachers make all the difference. A safe and encouraging classroom can turn hesitation into curiosity and self-doubt into confidence. When students believe in themselves and see progress, English stops being another subject. It becomes a skill that helps them grow, connect, and open doors they never imagined.

4. Implications and Recommendations for English Language Teaching (ELT)

Attitude significantly impacts how students feel about learning a language and how well they do at it. According to Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), emotions like motivation, attitude, confidence, and anxiety act like filters that can help or hurt how easily students pick up a new language. When students have a positive attitude, those emotional walls come down, making it much easier for them to engage and start learning. On the flip side, if their attitude is negative, those walls go up, making it much harder for them to join in or make progress (Jiang et al., 2024; Li & You, 2023).

When students are motivated and confident, they are much more likely to join in on lessons, keep practicing, and face any challenges that come their way. Studies have shown that students with a positive attitude tend to feel less anxious, which helps them stay focused and get more out of their learning experience (Lemana et al., 2023; Wathuge, 2021). A supportive classroom helps them hold onto that positive attitude, which plays a big part in their success (Dedel et al., 2023; Prodanovska-Poposka & Todorova, 2023). When students see how valuable English is and feel a real connection, they are much more likely to get involved in activities, giving them the practice they need to improve (Ni, 2012; Man et al., 2021; Reséndez, 2024).

When students develop a negative attitude, things start to change. Anxiety rises, motivation drops and self-confidence can take a hit (Rupiwini & Shah, 2021). Emotions like the fear of making mistakes or being judged can stop students from engaging with the language. Studies show that when students feel anxious, they are less likely to participate or use the language, which limits their chances to practice and improve (Muliadi et al., 2022; Tarasova, 2023). This shows why creating a positive classroom environment is important to help students succeed individually and ensure that every student feels supported and motivated.

Cultural views can shape how students approach learning English. Students with a positive view of the culture tied to the language tend to engage more and participate in activities (Maqsood et al., 2024). This is precisely why it helps when teachers include cultural aspects in their lessons. When students can connect with the culture, the language feels more accurate, and learning becomes easier and more enjoyable.

A positive attitude can truly make all the difference in how well students learn in language. When students are confident and motivated, they are more likely to jump into lessons, take chances, and keep going even when things get tough (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Teachers can encourage this by creating a warm and welcoming classroom, using methods that are not just interesting but also relevant to students, and showing them why learning English really matters in their lives.

One of the best ways to foster a positive attitude is by creating a classroom that is both supportive and engaging. Teachers play a huge role in shaping how students feel about learning. When lessons are interactive, relevant, and appropriately challenging, students are likelier to stay involved (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997; Rivers, 1986). Using various teaching methods and incorporating technology can make lessons more dynamic, helping students stay motivated to learn (Alqahtani, 2015). For example, computer-assisted language learning allows students to practice at their own pace and more effectively than traditional methods (Liu, 2014).

Building positive relationships in the classroom is just as important. When students feel respected and understood, they are more likely to develop a positive attitude toward learning. Teachers can encourage this by offering feedback acknowledging students' effort and progress, not just pointing out their mistakes (Muthukrishnan et al., 2024). This type of feedback helps students feel more confident and motivated to keep going.

One great way to motivate students is by helping them see how their learning connects to their everyday lives. Teachers can make lessons more engaging by linking them to what students already care about, like their experiences, goals, and interests. When students realize that what they are learning is helpful to them, it feels more meaningful. Using real-life examples can make the material come alive (Dörnyei, 2009). Activities that highlight the culture and diversity of the language can spark students' curiosity and get them excited about learning (Hagley, 2020).

For younger students, especially those in elementary or high school, having parents involved in their child's learning can make a huge difference. When parents actively support their child's language learning at home and the community values language learning, students are more likely to succeed (Mahmoud et al., 2024; Sonam et al., 2023).

To help students develop a positive attitude toward learning English, teachers should focus on creating a classroom where students feel comfortable and excited to learn. Using fun and interactive activities, encouraging students to find

their motivation, and involving families and communities can significantly impact them. When students feel supported and encouraged, they are far more likely to stay engaged and succeed in their language-learning journey.

5. Emerging Directions for Future Inquiry and Exploration

There is still much to understand about how people learn languages. One area that has not been explored enough is how digital platforms affect learning. Apps like TikTok, YouTube, ChatGPT, and Duolingo make it easier to practice, but it is unclear if they actually help people retain what they learn. Some find them useful, while others feel pressured to improve quickly or rely too much on instant corrections. It is hard to tell whether these tools build real fluency or just give the impression of progress.

Struggling with frustration is a big part of learning a language, though it is not often talked about. Some learners keep going, even when progress feels slow. Others lose confidence when they do not improve as fast as they expect and start avoiding practice. Teachers can make a huge difference in this. A patient teacher who understands these challenges can help students feel comfortable speaking, even when mistakes happen. When learners feel supported, they take more risks and improve. Even though emotions influence how people learn, they are rarely considered in discussions about language education.

Cultural background affects how people learn languages, but most research focuses on Western learners. In some places, students are encouraged to speak from the start, even if they make mistakes. Others place more importance on accuracy, which can make learners more hesitant. These differences shape confidence and the willingness to use a new language. If teachers considered these cultural factors, they could help students feel more comfortable practicing.

Gender and identity also play a role in language learning, though research rarely focuses on them. Some studies suggest that women are more interested in learning languages, but it is unclear if this is true everywhere. LGBTQ+ learners may face extra difficulties, especially in languages that use gendered words. This can make speaking and writing uncomfortable and may hold some students back. Since these challenges are not often studied, many schools may overlook them. Recognizing these issues could lead to classrooms where all students feel supported.

Neurodiversity is another area that has not been explored enough. Most research assumes that all learners experience language learning in the same way, but that is far from true. Students with ADHD, autism, or dyslexia may face completely different emotional and cognitive obstacles. Many neurodivergent individuals already deal with anxiety, and a high-pressure classroom can make things worse. Understanding these experiences could lead to more inclusive teaching methods that support all learners.

Early experiences with language learning can also have long-term effects, but this has not been well studied. If a child experiences extreme stress while trying to learn a second language, could that discourage them from learning another language later in life? Does early anxiety create a lifelong fear of language learning? These are areas that deserve more attention.

Beyond traditional methods, creative approaches like music, theater, and storytelling are often overlooked in formal education. These methods can make learning feel more natural and enjoyable, but they are rarely prioritized. Humor and game-based learning might also help, but more research is needed to determine how effective they are. Personality may also play a role. An outgoing student might approach language learning differently from a more reserved one. How does personality influence long-term motivation? That is another question without a clear answer.

Learning a language is influenced by much more than just classroom lessons. Economic struggles, political shifts, and world events all shape how people approach it. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, changed the way students learn. Some adjusted well to online classes, but others found it difficult without in-person interaction. In many countries, English is seen as a path to better job opportunities, but the pressure to master it can sometimes feel overwhelming instead of motivating.

Learning a new language is not just about memorizing words. It is tied to emotions, culture, and past experiences. Confidence and social expectations can make someone hesitant to speak or push them to take more risks. A comfortable and encouraging learning space, whether in a classroom or through independent study, can help learners feel more at ease. When mistakes are seen as part of the process rather than failures, students are more likely to keep practicing. Rather than focusing only on grammar and vocabulary, language education should help learners feel confident using the language in real situations.

6. Conclusion and Synthesis

After analyzing the available research, one thing is clear: how students feel about learning a language affects their overall experience. Attitude can make the difference between a student who thrives and one who struggles. When learners feel supported and encouraged, they are more likely to speak up, practice often, and grow in confidence. However, when they feel anxious, discouraged, or afraid of making mistakes, they tend to hold back, doubt themselves, and have a harder time remembering what they learn.

This paper shows that attitude does not exist on its own. It is shaped by many things, like motivation, anxiety, confidence, age, gender, intelligence, and the learning environment. Teachers play a huge role in this aspect of language learning. Research suggests that when students know they can make mistakes without being judged, they take more risks and become more engaged. Nevertheless, in classrooms where they feel pressure or fear being wrong, they are more likely to withdraw and participate less.

Focusing only on grammar and structure is not enough in language education. How students feel matters just as much as what they learn. More research is needed to explore how attitudes change over time, how different teaching styles impact motivation, and how personal experiences shape learning. When educators understand these factors, they can create classrooms where students feel safe, take chances, and build real confidence in their language skills.

Compliance with ethical standards

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The author takes full and exclusive responsibility for the completion of this paper. No other individuals have participated in its research, writing, or development in any capacity. The work presented here is entirely the result of the sole efforts of the author, whose name appears above. There have been no co-authors, collaborators, or external contributors involved in any stage of its creation, including conceptualization, data collection, analysis, or writing. As such, all ideas, interpretations, and conclusions expressed within this paper are solely those of the author.

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