

Enhancing EFL Class Design: Affective Filter Hypothesis in Action

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Abstract: This study examines the influence of emotions, specifically negative emotions such as anxiety and fear of failure, on primary learners' second language acquisition. It highlights the relevance of the affective filter hypothesis, which suggests that cultivating a low emotional filter facilitates language learning. The study emphasizes the significance of motivation, both instrumental and integrative, in promoting learner engagement. It also underscores the importance of educational diversity, including multimedia teaching, in fostering intrinsic motivation. Additionally, the study recommends that teachers create a positive and safe learning environment, incorporate real-life scenarios, and cultivate healthy teacher-student relationships. Encouragement, preparation for challenges, and a focus on the learning process contribute to enhancing learners' self-efficacy and confidence. By considering emotions, educators can optimize language acquisition for primary learners.

Keywords: Affective Filter Hypothesis, EFL class design, Educational diversity.

1. Introduction

The understanding of a second language among primary learners is influenced not only by cognitive factors and the teaching environment but also by emotions arising from the teaching process and feedback received during the learning process (Swain, 2013). Negative emotions, such as high tension, result-related anxiety, fear of failure, and frustration vulnerability, directly diminish learners' motivation and willingness. These emotions act as filters, reducing the assimilation of valid knowledge when they are negative. Consequently, the affective filter hypothesis posits that learners establish an effective language learning environment when they receive valid information and maintain a sufficiently low affective filter for positive feedback (Du, 2009). In a low-emotional-filter learning environment, student input and feedback are more readily observable, enabling teachers to adapt the pace and focus of lessons accordingly.

Motivation is one of the most important emotions and is reflected in the learner's strong desire to explore unfamiliar areas. Motivation can generally be divided into two types: instrumental motivation, which means using the results of language learning as a tool to achieve a goal; and integrative motivation, which means that learners can gain satisfaction from the learning process and the results, resulting in a virtuous circle of achievement and motivation (Zheng, 2021). In practice, the educational

The approach is based on the principle of completing teaching tasks, and learners are often motivated by completing assignments or passing exams. This fill-in-the-blank education ignores the emotions and motivation of the students. Educational diversity can take the form of extended learning resources, such as the use of picture books, the display of animations, or the provision of audiobooks. Multimedia education can increase intrinsic motivation and a sense of achievement in learning (Lou, 2017). The materials provided to learners should also follow the principle of moving from easy to difficult to improve learners' confidence and attitudes. Teacher behavior and activities should be

designed to help students reduce their negative emotions.

The learner's motivation directly influences attitudes toward learning, including the speed of receiving unknown information, the efficiency of processing complex information, and the attention paid to information processing biases. At the same time, it is difficult for teachers to speculate on students' motivations in a short time, but they can observe students' attitudes visually. It is undeniable that human behavior is governed to a large extent by likes and dislikes (Ajzen et al., 2018). Learners often face dilemmas in specific situations where they are asked to use a language in which they are not proficient, and if they do not receive positive feedback, this situation can cause language anxiety. Language anxiety may consist of social fears, test anxiety, and the fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz, 2001). Language anxiety can also be divided into input anxiety, processing anxiety, and output anxiety according to the cognitive processing perspective (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Language anxiety is a systematic result of students' personalities and study habits, as well as being influenced by the perfectionism of social achievement standards. There are several ways in which teachers can reduce the impact of anxiety, such as increasing learner interest through non-comparative tests, increasing the proportion of basic skills on tests to reduce learners' feelings of worthlessness, and changing the layout of tables in the classroom to increase the frequency and length of learners' social interaction. Education in second languages should help students become more tolerant of unknown knowledge and misunderstandings rather than focusing on their failures.

The affective filter hypothesis is applied in a variety of practical teaching activities, including multimedia teaching, motivational-motivational teaching, and simulated scenario teaching (Du, 2009).

2. Motivating A1 Learners Through Multimodal Instruction

For learners at the A1 level, their motivation should tend to be toward the normalization of language. The affective filter

hypothesis is an extended and expansive contribution to teaching diversity. Inspired by multimedia teaching, with modern teaching equipment, teachers can motivate students in multiple ways: auditory, visual, and communicative. Therefore, the teacher should create a positive and relatively safe atmosphere that will satisfy the learners' desire to express themselves. I would like to adopt scenarios to simulate the use of abstract words in real-life conversations. This will not only reduce learners' anxiety in the face of new knowledge but will also ease the tension associated with using unfamiliar language. For example, when introducing abstract concepts such as prepositions of orientation to beginners, teachers can show the position of actual objects to help learners understand. Typically, A1 learners are not impressed by tedious and planar knowledge but have a long-lasting memory for pictures captured by the eye. Teachers can then make the application of new knowledge more tangible by creating a real-life conversational environment, for example, by pretending to be looking for an object and asking questions.

Motivating learners at the A1 level towards language normalization is crucial for their language acquisition journey. The affective filter hypothesis represents an extensive and valuable contribution to teaching diversity. Drawing inspiration from multimedia teaching approaches and leveraging modern instructional equipment, educators can employ auditory, visual, and communicative modalities to inspire and engage students. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to establish a positive and secure learning environment that caters to learners' expressive needs. One effective strategy involves adopting scenarios that simulate real-life conversations, enabling learners to engage with abstract words in a contextually meaningful manner. This approach not only alleviates anxiety associated with encountering new knowledge but also mitigates the challenges linked to using unfamiliar language. For instance, when introducing abstract concepts like prepositions of orientation to beginners, teachers can facilitate understanding by visually demonstrating the positioning of actual objects. A1 learners typically exhibit stronger retention of visually vivid content compared to monotonous and abstract instruction. Consequently, by creating immersive conversational environments, teachers can enhance the practical application of new knowledge, fostering a more tangible and meaningful learning experience. Similar approaches allow learners to have fun and be encouraged to take in knowledge, transforming rigid instrumental motivation into integrative motivation while also allowing them to be more courageous in giving feedback to the teacher about their learning.

Healthy and positive teacher-student relationships can help learners reduce the risk of anxiety (Cook et al., 2018). Influenced by their homeschooling and personalities, shy and introverted children may feel anxious under the pressure of socializing and learning with their peers. These anxieties act as an invisible wall that visibly divides their motivation and feelings of worthlessness, resulting in a sudden reduction in the attentional resources they apply to process cognition and learning. Teachers, in addition to their traditional academic educational tasks, should also enhance learners' sense of security and trust in the learning atmosphere by controlling their emotions.

To nurture an inclusive and supportive learning environment, teachers should cultivate a personal image that values the diverse abilities of students while accepting their

imperfections. This strategy is essential because learners with a forward-thinking mindset frequently fear negative evaluations, which can hinder their learning outcomes. Therefore, teachers should encourage students to share their accomplishments, assist peers in developing courage and self-assurance, and foster an environment where all students experience a sense of belonging, respect, and inclusion. This environment can be reinforced with affirmations such as "the teacher and class will applaud your bravery" and "this classroom allows for imperfection".

However, mere encouragement is insufficient; teachers should proactively assist students in preparing for challenging situations such as question answering, public speaking, and class interactions. Through coaching and motivation, teachers can inspire students to exert additional effort, fostering their self-efficacy and confidence. Moreover, teachers should emphasize the learning process rather than focusing solely on test scores. By implementing strategies such as dividing students into groups and altering classroom layouts, teachers can reduce the unfamiliarity of classroom communication. Additionally, teachers should encourage students with language anxiety to engage more with their peers, enhancing their confidence through relevant assignments, and fostering their sense of value within social structures and self-perceptions through self-regulation abilities.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study suggests several key recommendations to optimize EFL classroom dynamics. Firstly, instructors should provide learners with tailored recommendations and incorporate instructional tools to foster motivation among students. Secondly, it is imperative to cultivate a nurturing and supportive educational environment that mitigates the fear of failure and encourages the manifestation of individual strengths. Thirdly, employing diverse instructional approaches tailored to the unique needs of students not only establishes trust between the learners and the instructor but also fosters the development of self-confidence. By adhering to these recommendations, learners can enhance their resilience in the face of challenges and surpass preconceived limitations.

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