

## The Interplay of Psycho-Social Determinants in English Language Acquisition: A Study of Government Middle School Students

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The study underscores the significance of psychosocial elements in the acquisition of English as a second language. The data was gathered from 298 children from the middle wing of Government schools in New Delhi using Stratified Random Sampling. Data was interpreted based on three constructs: Motivation, Attitude and Anxiety. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine relationships among the psychosocial variables and English language learning. The findings emphasize on the importance of addressing the psycho-social barriers in learning English as second language in government schools to enhance language acquisition and students' development.

**Keywords:** Psycho-social, English Language Acquisition, Second language, Government schools

Educational learning in recent times is appropriately linked not just to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities, but also to transformations in the motivational and emotional dimensions of young learners, which accompany the attainment of creative and expansive social experiences (Ariyan, 2022). Through the years, education was mostly linked to academic success and summative evaluation but now there is a greater focus on experiential learning. Language acquisition is among them. However, in contemporary times, variety of factors including psychological components plays a significant role in acquisition of second language (Dewaele, J.-M., & MacIntyre, P. D, 2014). The increasing focus on the impact of psychosocial factors on second language acquisition (Zhao, X., & Wang, D., 2023b) arises primarily from the centralised nature of responses to language learning (Gardner, 1985,2010). English as

a worldwide language has a prominent role in education, scientific exploration, technology, cultural exchange (B. Neelambaram et al., 2005). The significance of English across diverse domains mandates its integration from the very beginning of academic education. Incorporating English education as early as middle school, when students are in a formative stage of cognitive development, establishes a solid foundation for them to integrate the English language into various fields and subjects that pique their interest. The acquisition of English as a second language is a process that requires time and dedication to truly comprehend and acquire. Throughout this process, learners encounter various challenges and obstacles in mastering English as a second language following their native tongue. This issue is particularly significant in regions where English is not the primary language, such as rural areas in India or within government

schools (Goyal, 2010). There are numerous reasons the education system in government schools must prioritise in improving psycho social attributes of students learning English. To begin with, the contemporary world is intricately linked through the internet. It has become an essential and unavoidable aspect of a student's life across all disciplines. Furthermore, proficiency in English is essential for pursuing advanced studies. Thirdly, in our society, where the exchange of culture holds significant value among diverse individuals from various nations, a common language is essential. The attainment of this can ensure access to employment opportunities, travel, advanced education, and an overall improved quality of life (Crystal, 1997).

Students in government schools encounter greater difficulties in acquiring English language skills when compared to their counterparts in private institutions (Rob French & Geeta Kingdon, 2010). There are several factors involved, including insufficient basic resources, lack of self-confidence and motivation, family background, home environment, and economic conditions, among others. Students in government schools largely rely on the support provided by their schools for their educational development, considering their diverse socio-economic circumstances. Compared to those who attend in private schools, students in government schools encounter limited opportunities for English practice. Alongside the conventional curriculum and teaching strategies, elements associated with psychology and social dynamics, such as motivation, attitude, and anxiety, play a crucial role in the learning process of English.

There are numerous studies conducted on language learning in India and outside India related to importance of psycho social factors in learning language. Psychologists (Vygotsky, 1982–1984; Bozhovich, 1968)

claim that the trajectory of personality development is mainly influenced by an individual's emotional experiences. The findings of "Barriers Experienced by Middle School Students in the Process of Learning English" (Özlem Çelik, Orhan Kocaman, 2015) have shown that middle school children primarily encounter linguistic, educational, emotional obstacles, along with a lack of support and valuable resources.

Rod Ellis was a Professor in the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. He has published a number of books on second language acquisition and teacher education. In his book "The Study of Second Language Acquisition" Ellis illustrates that the attitude of the learner influence and also get influenced by the improvement one has made in second language learning. Attitude plays the major role in learning second language. (Ellis, 1994). Saglmael in his study "Students' Perceptions of Language Anxiety in Speaking Classes" added that motivation and attitude are other affective factors which determine the successful acquisition of foreign language (Saglmael, 2013).

The present research examines the psycho-social factors encountered and the extent of their role in the process of learning English. Psychological factors pertain to an individual's internal thoughts, emotions, and actions, whereas social factors are connected to the external social context, including the community, friends, and family. Acquiring a new language involves not just cognitive functions, but also the necessity of engaging socially and emotionally with others. The psycho-social variable is simplified into three key components: Motivation, Attitude, and Anxiety. Each of them plays an essential part in the process of acquiring language skills. The drive to learn and positive thoughts are crucial factors that work together to improve language (L2) learning (Gardner, 1985). The

process begins with extrinsic motivation through incentives such as rewards, praise, and compliments from educators and fellow students, which subsequently fosters intrinsic motivation and positively influences one's attitude towards language acquisition. The fear of mispronunciation, facing evaluation, or being mocked by other students can significantly hinder the learning process.

### **Objectives**

1. To investigate the role of motivation in the acquisition of English as a second language among government middle school students.
2. To analyse the influence of anxiety on students' learning of English as a second language.
3. To explore the relationship between students' attitudes toward English and their English learning outcomes.
4. To investigate the combined influence of motivation, attitude, and anxiety on English language acquisition among government middle school students.

### **Method**

#### **Sample**

Sample was comprised of 298 students from four Government schools of New Delhi. The students were from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> standard. Participants were selected from Stratified Random Sampling as it ensures proportional representation from each group. Students were aged among 11 to 14 years. The goals and aim of research were well explained to students and were assured that responses would be kept confidentially. While collecting data, it was found that the English proficiency level of these children was not up to the mark. Students of 5<sup>th</sup> grade were struggling to even read basic English sentences. However, data was collected with the help of English teachers.

### **Data Collection**

Structured Questionnaire was formed through various resources for data collection. It consists of eight questions related to psycho-social factors in learning English. For every question on the questionnaire, the responses were calculated on the basis of the range of each sentiment level on the 5point Likert scale which includes (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree). Range "1" stands for "Strongly Disagree", "2" stands for "Disagree", "3" stands for "Neutral", "4" stands for "Agree" and "5" for "Strongly Agree". To further explain Likert scale is the best tool to collect data that is really high in quality. Likert scales give experts an organised way to get a range of ideas and concepts. They enable participants say whether they strongly agree, disagree, strongly disagree or are neutral about a statement or question. Questionnaire consisted of eight questions in total. Question 1,6,7,8, composite factors of Motivation. Question 3,4,5 are related to Attitude and Question 2 checks the Anxiety level of students.

Further, Descriptive and Inferential Statistics were used to analyse data through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

In Descriptive Statistics response distribution is summarised by Frequencies and Percentages. Central tendency and Variability of the items is mentioned by Mean and Standard Deviation.

A reliability analysis assesses the internal consistency of the eight items measuring psychosocial factors related to learning English as a second language. The scale demonstrated excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha (Table-2) coefficient of  $\alpha = .889$ , exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of .70 for good reliability.

This suggests that the items are measuring a common underlying construct with high internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items was .825, further confirming that the items contribute meaningfully to the scale. There were eight items included for the analysis. These results indicate that the instrument is psychometrically stable and suitable for further statistical analysis, including correlation and regression.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| .889             | .825   | 8          |

Correlation Analysis Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationships between the psychosocial factors (Motivation, Attitude, Anxiety) and learning English as a second language.

A standard Multiple Regression was conducted with Learning English as the dependent variable and Motivation, Attitude,

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage

|                   | Q1  |      | Q2  |      | Q3 |      | Q4  |      | Q5  |      | Q6  |      | Q7  |      | Q8  |      |
|-------------------|-----|------|-----|------|----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|
|                   | F   | P    | F   | P    | F  | P    | F   | P    | F   | P    | F   | P    | F   | P    | F   | P    |
| Stronlgy Disagree | 0   | 0    | 7   | 23   | 14 | 4.7  | 15  | 5.0  | 4   | 1.3  | 3   | 1.0  | 2   | 0.7  | 30  | 10.1 |
| Disagree          | 11  | 3.7  | 33  | 11.1 | 79 | 26.5 | 31  | 10.4 | 8   | 2.7  | 23  | 7.7  | 10  | 3.4  | 7   | 2.3  |
| Neutral           | 7   | 2.3  | 14  | 4.7  | 72 | 24.2 | 22  | 7.4  | 17  | 5.7  | 36  | 12.1 | 40  | 13.4 | 7   | 2.3  |
| Agree             | 145 | 48.7 | 182 | 61.1 | 81 | 27.2 | 78  | 26.2 | 120 | 40.3 | 138 | 46.3 | 159 | 53.4 | 88  | 29.5 |
| Strongly Agree    | 135 | 45.3 | 62  | 20.8 | 52 | 17.4 | 152 | 51.0 | 149 | 50.0 | 98  | 32.9 | 87  | 29.2 | 166 | 55.7 |

### Mean and Standard Deviation

Mean and standard deviation scores were computed for each item assess central tendency and variability. Mean scores ranged from 3.26 to 4.36. The Mean value for Q1, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8 are all above 4.00. Q2 shows a moderate mean (M = 3.869) while Q3 has the lowest mean (M = 3.262).

and Anxiety as independent variables. This analysis determined the predictive power of each psychosocial factor in explaining English learning outcomes.

All analyses were performed using standard statistical procedures, and significance was set at  $p < .05$

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

A frequency and percentage analysis was conducted to describe students' responses to the eight psychosocial statements related to learning English as a second language. The sample consisted of 298 middle school students from government schools in New Delhi. The majority of students either agreed or strongly agreed with items Q1, Q5, Q6, Q7, and Q8, received the highest levels of agreement. Items Q3 and Q4 showed more variability, with a noticeable proportion of students selecting "Disagree" or "Neutral," reflecting mixed attitudes. Item Q2, measuring anxiety, showed moderate levels of agreement.

The means ranged from 3.26 (Q3) to 4.36 (Q1), indicating generally favourable attitudes toward English. The overall mean for all items combined was 4.02. Standard deviation (SD) indicates how much students' responses vary from the mean.

A low SD means responses are *close together* (more agreement), while a high SD

means responses are *more spread out* (less agreement). Standard deviation values ranged from 0.70 to 1.24. Items Q3, Q4, and

Q8 showed relatively higher variability compared to other items. The overall standard deviation across all items was 1.04.

Table 3

|      | Q1    | Q2    | Q3    | Q4    | Q5    | Q6    | Q7    | Q8    |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Mean | 4.356 | 3.869 | 3.262 | 4.077 | 4.349 | 4.023 | 4.070 | 4.185 |
| SD   | .705  | .945  | 1.164 | 1.203 | .815  | .921  | .785  | 1.244 |

### Pearson Correlation

Pearson correlations showed strong and significant associations among the psychosocial factors and learning English as a second language. Motivation was strongly correlated with English learning ( $r = .828, p < .001$ ), followed by Attitude ( $r = .699, p < .001$ ). Anxiety showed a moderate but significant correlation with English learning ( $r = .510, p < .001$ ). Inter-correlations among motivation, attitude, and anxiety were moderate, indicating that the variables were suitable for inclusion in regression analysis.

### Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted with Learning English as the Dependent variable and Motivation, Attitude, and Anxiety as predictors. The model was statistically significant with  $R = .879$ , value of  $R^2 = .773$  (Adjusted  $R^2 = .772$ ) and  $p < .001$ . This indicates that the three psychosocial factors jointly explain 77.3% of the variance in students' English learning outcomes. Motivation emerged as the strongest predictor ( $\beta = .631, p < .001$ ), followed by Attitude ( $\beta = .493, p < .001$ ). Anxiety also significantly predicted English learning, though to a lesser degree ( $\beta = .260, p < .01$ ).

### Discussion

The present study examined the influence of psychosocial factors- motivation, attitude, and anxiety on middle school students' acquisition of English as a second language. The results underscore the substantial impact of emotional and attitudinal factors on students' engagement and academic perfor-

mance, affirming that language acquisition transcends mere cognitive processes and is intricately linked to learners' emotional and psychological experiences. The discoveries reveal that the majority of students have good motivation and pleasant attitudes towards studying English. The collective comments indicate that students acknowledge the academic, social, and prospective significance of English. Nonetheless, diversity in replies about perceived difficulty indicates disparities in learners' confidence and past experience, indicating that although English is esteemed, it is not generally seen as simple or easily accessible by all students. Motivation emerged as a particularly crucial factor in English language learning. Students with heightened motivation demonstrated more engagement and improved learning outcomes. This aligns with previous studies in second language acquisition, which recognise motivation as a key factor influencing sustained effort, perseverance, and learner engagement (Gardner, 1985). Motivated learners are more inclined to engage in regular practice, pursue chances to use the language, and exhibit resilience when confronted with learning obstacles. The current results support the perspective that motivation is essential for promoting efficient English language acquisition, especially in situations when learners have restricted exposure outside the classroom. The attitude towards English significantly influenced learning results. Students who considered English positively and recognised its significance demonstrated increased engagement in the learning process. This

conclusion corresponds with Ellis (The Study of Second Language Acquisition, 1994), who highlighted that learners' attitudes both affect and are affected by advancements in second language acquisition. Positive attitudes seem to promote receptiveness to teaching and diminish resistance to language learning requirements, so improving overall learning efficacy. This underscores the need of fostering positive attitudes of English in classroom and school settings. While anxiety had a somewhat lesser impact than motivation and attitude, it nonetheless shown a significant correlation with English learning. Feelings of anxiety, especially around assessment and performance, may restrict learners' readiness to speak and engage in language risks. The findings align with previous studies on language anxiety, indicating that emotional distress might hinder language ability and involvement (Dewaele, J.-M., & MacIntyre, P. D, 2014). Moderate anxiety might hinder engagement and diminish possibilities for language utilisation, thereby affecting learning results. This discovery reinforces affective viewpoints that highlight the need of tackling emotional obstacles in language education settings. The interplay of motivation, attitude, and anxiety highlights the intricate and interconnected characteristics of psychosocial elements in English language acquisition. The results indicate that successful language education should include not just curricular material and pedagogical approaches but also emotional support, encouragement, and measures for increasing confidence, especially in government school settings where students may encounter extra obstacles.

The findings together highlight the interrelatedness of psychological elements in English language learning. Motivation, attitude, and anxiety function interdependently, collectively influencing learners' experiences and results. The findings indicate that successful language instruction

must include not just content and methodology but also learners' emotional well-being and psychological preparedness. The results reinforce the importance of classroom strategies that enhance motivation, promote positive attitudes, and provide emotionally supportive learning environments. Instructional methods that prioritise meaningful interaction, provide constructive feedback, and alleviate excessive performance pressure may enhance learners' confidence in interacting with English, especially in government school settings where they may encounter extra obstacles.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study aimed to investigate the influence of several psychosocial variables on English language acquisition among government middle school students. The research enhances comprehension of the emotive factors associated with learning English as a second language by concentrating on motivation, attitude, and anxiety. The results demonstrate that learners typically engage with English with a favourable disposition, marked by good motivation and attitudes. These psychosocial circumstances seem to facilitate students' involvement with the language and their readiness to engage in learning activities. The occurrence of anxiety within some learners indicates that emotional obstacles persist with favourable attitudes towards English. The analysis emphasises the need of acknowledging learners' psychological preparedness and emotional comfort, rather than seeing English learning just as an issue of instructional methodology or curricular exposure. Diverse learner experiences indicate that nurturing and affirmative educational settings significantly contribute to language acquisition. In conclusion, the research confirms that English language learning is a multifaceted process shaped by cognitive and psychosocial elements. Identifying and

addressing the motivational and emotional needs of learners may enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of English language learning scenarios, especially in government school contexts.

The outcomes of this research have practical significance for English language instruction in government middle school settings. The study emphasises that motivation, attitude, and anxiety play crucial roles, suggesting that English instruction can be enhanced through psychologically informed practices that promote learner engagement, cultivate positive perceptions of the language, and mitigate emotional barriers to participation. These findings may benefit educators, teacher trainers, and curriculum developers aiming to enhance English language learning results for children from varied socio-economic backgrounds.

Simultaneously, specific limitations of the research must be acknowledged. The data were gathered from government schools, perhaps limiting the generalisability of the results to other educational settings. Subsequent research might enhance this study by including longitudinal designs, qualitative methodologies, or comparative samples from many areas and educational institutions to get a more thorough understanding of psychosocial factors affecting English language development.

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