

THE INFLUENCE OF THE AFFECTIVE FILTER HYPOTHESIS ON THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN PRESCHOOL AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

Abstract: The aim of the present paper is to review correlation between the emotional state of the learner and second language acquisition. Krashen's Affective filter hypothesis is discussed as the most essential component in acquiring a second language. It is made a strong difference between 'learning' and 'acquiring' a language. Motivation, self – confidence and anxiety are presented as the variables of the affective filter. As a result, the output in the second language acquisition, using the same input information, depends on ones' affective filter thickness.

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As English is being introduced into primary classrooms round the world, more and more teachers are being asked to teach English to Young Learners. This review deals with the affective filter variables – motivation, anxiety and self – confidence and how the psychological state of the child influences on the process of acquiring a foreign language.

The Affective Filter hypothesis states how affective factors relate the second language acquisition process. The concept of an Affective Filter was proposed by Dulay and Burt (1977), and is consistent with theoretical work done in the area of affective variables and second language acquisition, as well as the hypotheses previously covered.

Research over the last decade has confirmed that a variety of affective variables relate to success in second language acquisition. Most of those studied can be placed into one of these three categories:

- (1) Motivation. Performers with high motivation generally do better in second language acquisition (usually, but not always, "integrative").
- (2) Self-confidence. Performers with self-confidence and a good self-image tend to do better in second language acquisition.
- (3) Anxiety. Low anxiety appears to be conducive to second language acquisition, whether measured as personal or classroom anxiety.

In several places I have hypothesized that these attitudinal factors relate directly to acquisition and not learning, since they tend to show stronger relationships to second language achievement when communicative-type tests are used, tests that tap the acquired rather than the learned system, and when

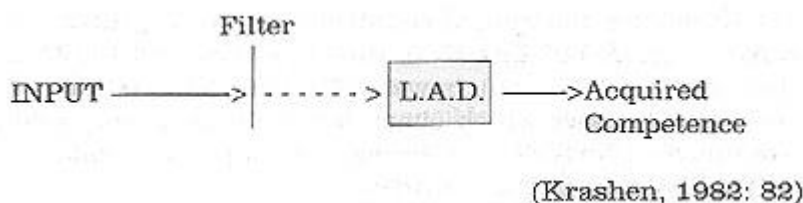
the students taking the test have used the language in "acquisition-rich" situations, situations where comprehensible input was plentiful.

The Affective Filter hypothesis captures the relationship between affective variables and the process of second language acquisition by positing that acquirers vary with respect to the strength or level of their affective filters. Those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a high or strong Affective Filter—even if they understand the message, the input will not reach that part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device. Those with attitudes more conducive to second language acquisition will not only seek and obtain more input, they will also have a lower or weaker filter. They will be more open to the input, and it will strike "deeper" (Stevick, 1976).

The Affective Filter hypothesis, represented in Fig. 1, claims that the effect of affect is "outside" the language acquisition device prop. It still maintains that *input*, is the primary causative variable in second language acquisition affective variables acting to impede or facilitate the delivery of input to the language acquisition device.

The filter hypothesis explains why it is possible for an acquirer to obtain a great deal of comprehensible input, and yet stop short (and sometimes well short) of the native speaker level (or "fossilize"; Selinker, 1972). When, this occurs, it is due to the affective filter.

Figure 1



The "affective filter", posited by Dulay and Bun (1977), acts to prevent input from being used language acquisition. Acquirers with optimal attitudes are hypothesized to have "low" -affective filters. Classrooms that encourage low filters are those that promote low anxiety among students that keep students "off the defensive" (Stevick, 1976).

This picture does not diminish, in any way, the importance of affective variables in pedagogy. The Affective Filter hypothesis implies that our pedagogical goals should not only include supplying comprehensible input, but also creating a situation that encourages a low filter.

The input hypothesis and the concept of the Affective Filter define the language teacher in a new way. The effective language teacher is someone who can provide input and help make it comprehensible in low anxiety situation. Of course, many teachers have felt this way about their task for years, at least until they were told otherwise by the experts.

In educational psychology, an affective filter is an emotional blockage to new learning. If a learner is suffering from discomfort from embarrassment, shame, or fear of punishment around learning then one would say that the learner has an affective filter preventing learning from taking place.

Affective filters are common and instructors need to be aware of the causes of affective filters while dealing with learners who may be more susceptible to emotional impulses or pressures.

Let us turn to the three basic factors that underlie the Affective Filter.

1. Self-confidence

- Self confidence as basic character trait: Self-confidence as a general characteristic is often linked to family variables. Families who display inconsistent discipline, or over-severe discipline and disapproval of their children produce people who have a low self-image and little confidence in themselves.

On the contrary homes where parents are strongly approving of their children and of their friends, who join in many activities with them, and who have regular but not rigid routines, and where standards of behaviour are open to discussion produce children who are confident of themselves.

- Self confidence as a variable: However, once again, self-confidence can be variable. Thus, one study of American adolescents found that young males who were failing at school tended to have a low self-image, but if, in the subsequent year, they became delinquent, their self-image improved. This implies that a variety of factors may affect self-image, from family through school to peers.

Once again, we will note that the relationship between success and self-image may not necessarily be all one way. Although there are reasons to believe that children who have a good self-image may do better than those who have a poor self-image, there are also grounds for believing that a child's self-image can be undermined by poor results at school.

One study on the relationship between self-confidence and FL learning was carried out by Clement (1986) who investigated 293 francophone students at the University of Ottawa, who were learning English. The integrative orientation had no effect on language outcomes - the best predictor was self-confidence.

2. Anxiety

Anxiety, the third factor mentioned by Krashen, is also multiple in its forms and in its origins. Psychologists distinguish between

- Trait anxiety: this is a permanent disposition to be anxious. Once again, it appears to be related to upbringing, and indeed may be closely linked to self-image.

- state anxiety : here the anxiety is linked to a specific moment in time, within a specific situation. It may be relational, being linked to specific persons - a particular teacher, for example.

- situational anxiety: this is aroused by a specific type of situation or event - examinations, public speaking, or classroom participation.

Examinations of learner diaries suggest that anxiety does accompany language learning in several of its aspects.

- Bailey, after examining 11 such diaries, found that the learners tended to become anxious when they compared themselves with other learners in the class and found themselves wanting. Their anxiety decreased as they became more proficient.

- Ellis & Rathbone, in their examination of learner diaries, discovered that some of the learners found teachers' questions threatening, and claimed to freeze up when interrogated. The greatest anxiety was found to be associated with the oral skills.

- Oxford found that some learners were anxious about losing their identities in the target culture. This led to emotional regression, panic, alienation and a 'reduced personality'.

None of the above studies demonstrated that anxiety was necessarily negative in its effect on learning. It has been discovered that sometimes students who are anxious do better than those who are not. Higher levels of anxiety may be associated with higher levels of risk-taking, so that those who actually attempt to produce more difficult structures may report more anxiety than those who are content to remain at a lower level of attainment. (Kleinmann)

debilitating anxiety. The former is positive in its effects, pushing students on to make greater efforts, Albert and Haber distinguish between facilitating and while the latter frightens the student off task. It may, of course, be more a matter of the intensity of the feeling, than of its quality

3. Motivation

Motivation is the first factor mentioned by Krashen in his Affective filter hypothesis, that's why I'll discuss it in more details than the others two.

3.1 Definition

The following definitions of motivation were gleaned from a variety of psychology textbooks and reflect the general consensus that motivation is an internal state or condition (sometimes described as a need, desire, or want) that serves to activate or energize behavior and give it direction (see Kleinginna and Kleinginna, 1981a).

- internal state or condition that activates behavior and gives it direction;
- desire or want that energizes and directs goal-oriented behavior;
- influence of needs and desires on the intensity and direction of behavior.

Franken (1994) provides an additional component in his definition:

- the arousal, direction, and persistence of behavior.

While still not widespread in terms of introductory psychology textbooks, many researchers are now beginning to acknowledge that the factors that energize behavior are likely different from the factors that provide for its persistence.

3.2 Importance of motivation

Most motivation theorists assume that motivation is involved in the performance of all learned responses; that is, a learned behavior will not occur unless it is energized. The major question among psychologists, in general, is whether motivation is a primary or secondary influence on behavior. That is, are changes in behavior better explained by principles of environmental/ecological influences, perception, memory, cognitive development, emotion, explanatory style, or personality or are concepts unique to motivation more pertinent.

For example, we know that people respond to increasingly complex or novel events (or stimuli) in the environment up to a point and then responses decrease. This inverted-U-shaped curve of behavior is well-known and widely acknowledged (e.g., Yerkes & Dodson, 1908). However, the major issue is one of explaining this phenomenon. Is this a conditioning (is the individual behaving because of past classical or operant conditioning), a motivational process (from an internal state of arousal), or is there some better explanation?

3.3 The relationship of motivation and emotion

Emotion (an indefinite subjective sensation experienced as a state of arousal) is different from motivation in that there is not necessarily a goal orientation affiliated with it. Emotions occur as a result of an interaction between perception of environmental stimuli, neural/hormonal responses to these perceptions (often labeled feelings), and subjective cognitive labeling of these feelings (Kleinginna and Kleinginna, 1981b). Evidence suggests there is a small core of core emotions (perhaps 6 or 8) that are uniquely associated with a specific facial expression (Izard, 1990). This implies that there are a small number of unique biological responses that are genetically hard-wired to specific facial expressions. A further implication is that the process works in reverse: if you want to change your feelings (i.e., your physiological functioning), you can do so by changing your facial expression. That is, if you are motivated to change how you feel and your feeling is associated with a specific facial expression, you can change that feeling by purposely changing your facial expression. Since most of us would rather feel happy than otherwise, the most appropriate facial expression would be a smile.

3.4. Explanations of influences/causes of arousal and direction may be different from explanations of persistence.

In general, explanations regarding the source(s) of motivation can be categorized as either extrinsic (outside the person) or intrinsic (internal to the person). Intrinsic sources and corresponding theories can be further subcategorized as either body/physical, mind/mental (i.e., cognitive, affective, conative) or transpersonal/spiritual.

In current literature, needs are now viewed as dispositions toward action (i.e., they create a condition that is predisposed towards taking action or making a change and moving in a certain direction). Action or overt behavior may be initiated by either positive or negative incentives or a combination of both. The following chart provides a brief overview of the different sources of motivation (internal state) that have been studied. While initiation of action can be traced to each of these domains, it appears likely that initiation of behavior may be more related to emotions and/or the affective area (optimism vs. pessimism; self-esteem; etc.) while persistence may be more related to conation (volition) or goal-orientation.

Table 1

| Sources of Motivational Needs | |
|--|---|
| <u>behavioral/external</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elicited by stimulus associated/connected to innately connected stimulus • obtain desired, pleasant consequences (rewards) or escape/avoid undesired, unpleasant consequences |
| <u>social</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • imitate positive models • be a part of a group or a valued member |
| <u>biological</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase/decrease stimulation (arousal) • activate senses (taste, touch, smell, etc. • decrease hunger, thirst, discomfort, etc. • maintain homeostasis, balance |
| <u>cognitive</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintain attention to something interesting or threatening • develop meaning or understanding • increase/decrease cognitive disequilibrium; uncertainty • solve a problem or make a decision • figure something out • eliminate threat or risk |
| <u>affective</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase/decrease affective dissonance • increase feeling good • decrease feeling bad • increase security of or decrease threats to self-esteem • maintain levels of optimism and enthusiasm |
| <u>conative</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet individually developed/selected goal • obtain personal dream • develop or maintain self-efficacy • take control of one's life • eliminate threats to meeting goal, obtaining dream • reduce others' control of one's life |
| <u>spiritual</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand purpose of one's life • connect self to ultimate unknowns |

3.5 Achievement motivation

One classification of motivation differentiates among achievement, power, and social factors (see McClelland, 1985; Murray, 1938, 1943). In the area of achievement motivation, the work on goal-theory has differentiated three separate types of goals: mastery goals (also called learning goals) which focus on gaining competence or mastering a new set of knowledge or skills; performance goals (also called ego-involvement goals) which focus on achieving normative-based standards, doing better than others, or doing well without a lot of effort; and social goals which focus on relationships among people (see Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Urdan & Maher, 1995). In the context of school learning, which involves operating in a relatively structured environment; students with mastery goals outperform students with either performance or social goals. However, in life success, it seems critical that individuals have all three types of goals in order to be very successful.

One aspect of this theory is that individuals are motivated to either avoid failure (more often associated with performance goals) or achieve success (more often associated with mastery goals). In the former situation, the individual is more likely to select easy or difficult tasks, thereby either achieving success or having a good excuse for why failure occurred. In the latter situation, the individual is more likely to select moderately difficult tasks which will provide an interesting challenge, but still keep the high expectations for success.

3.6 Impacting motivation in the classroom

Stipek (1988) suggests there are a variety of reasons why individuals may be lacking in motivation and provides a list of specific behaviors associated with high academic achievement. This is an excellent checklist to help students develop the conative component of their lives.

3.6.1 Reasons for Lack of Motivation

1. Do not have a written list of important goals that define success for you personally.
2. Believe that present goals or activities are wrong for you.
3. Feelings/emotions about present activities are generally negative.
4. Don't have (or believe you don't have) the ability to do present activities or obtain future goals.
5. Satisfaction of achieving goals seems in distant future.
6. Present activities not seen as related to important goals.
7. Important goals conflict with present activities.
8. Extrinsic incentives are low.
9. Personal problems interfere with present activities.

3.6.2 Behaviors Associated with High Academic Motivation

DO YOU:

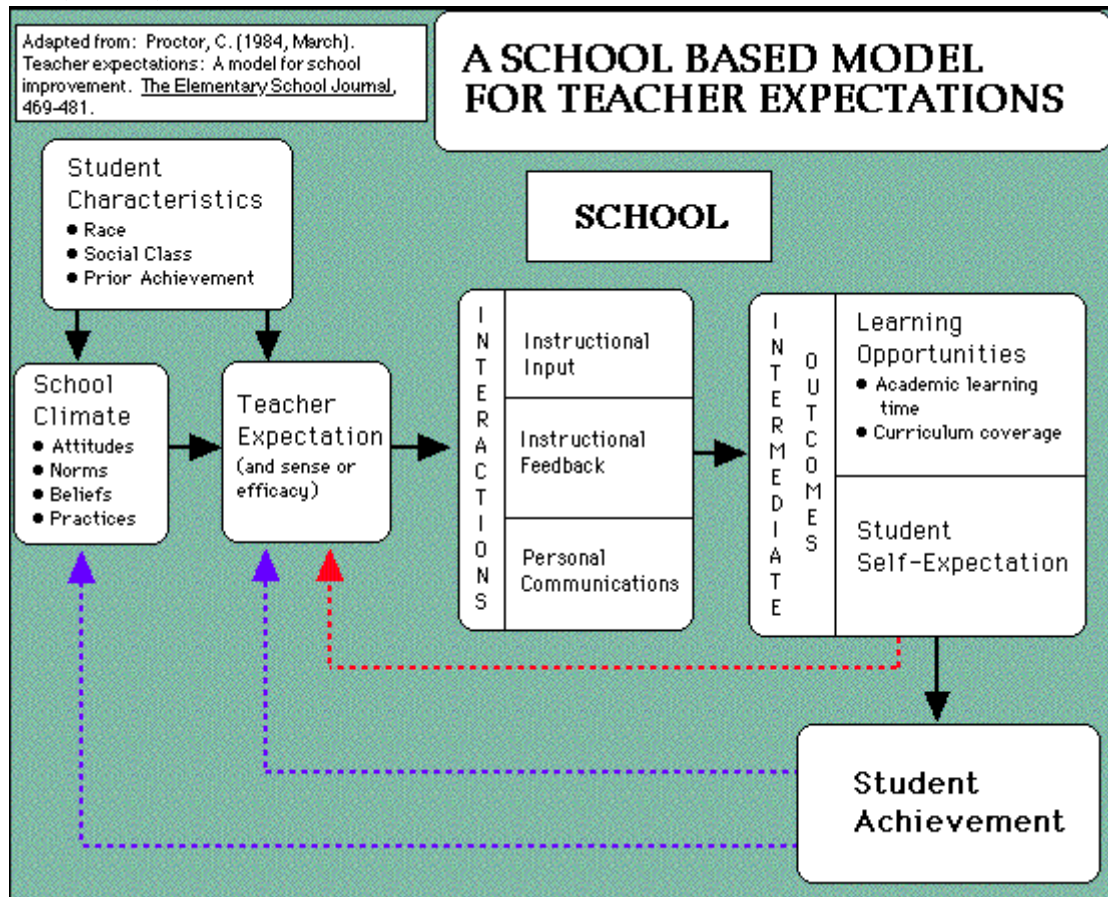
- Pay attention to the instructor?
- Volunteer answers in class?
- Begin work on tasks immediately?
- Maintain attention until tasks are completed?
- Persist in trying to solve problems rather than giving up as soon as the problem appears difficult to solve?
- Work autonomously when appropriate?
- Ask for assistance when it is really needed?
- Turn assignments in on time?
- Turn in complete work?
- When given a choice, select challenging courses and tasks?
- Accept initial errors or less-than-perfect performance as a natural part of learning a new skill?

- Perform fairly uniformly on different tasks that require similar skills?
- Engage in learning activities beyond course requirements?

In addition, as stated previously in these materials, teacher efficacy is a powerful input variable related to student achievement (Proctor, 1984).

Proctor (1984) developed a model of the teaching/learning process that highlights the importance of teacher expectations for student learning. This model describes the variables or factors of schools and classrooms thought to be under the influence of educators.

2 (internet)



In the early years of schooling, where teacher expectations are not yet based on documented performance (or performance can change dramatically from one year to the next), it appears that teacher expectations can produce achievement variations among students.

As children progress into later childhood and adolescence, it appears that teacher expectations generally sustain, solidify, and therefore magnify, preexisting achievement differences.

Ashton (1984) reviewed research that shows there are two components to teacher expectations:

- the teacher believes that, in general, students can learn the material;
- the teacher believes that these particular students can learn under his or her direction.

The term "teacher efficacy" has replaced the term of "teacher expectations." Ashton reports there are 8 dimensions to the development of teacher efficacy.

Table 2

| DIMENSIONS OF TEACHER EFFICACY | |
|---|--|
| 1. A sense of personal accomplishment | The teacher must view the work as meaningful and important. |
| 2. Positive expectations for student behavior and achievement | The teacher must expect students to progress. |
| 3. Personal responsibility for student learning | Accepts accountability and shows a willingness to examine performance. |
| 4. Strategies for achieving objectives | Must plan for student learning, set goals for themselves, and identify strategies to achieve them. |
| 5. Positive affect | Feels good about teaching, about self, and about students. |
| 6. Sense of control | Believes (s)he can influence student learning. |
| 7. Sense of common teacher/student goals | Develops a joint venture with students to accomplish goals. |
| 8. Democratic decision making | Involves students in making decisions regarding goals and strategies. |

There are a variety of specific actions that teachers can take to increase motivation on classroom tasks. In general, these fall into the two categories discussed above: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

Table 3

| Intrinsic | Extrinsic |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explain or show why learning a particular content or skill is important ○ Create and/or maintain curiosity ○ Provide a variety of activities and sensory stimulations ○ Provide games and simulations ○ Set goals for learning ○ Relate learning to student needs ○ Help student develop plan of action | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide clear expectations ○ Give corrective feedback ○ Provide valuable rewards ○ Make rewards available |

As a general rule, teachers need to use as much of the intrinsic suggestions as possible while recognizing that not all students will be appropriately motivated by them. The extrinsic suggestions will work, but it must be remembered that they do so only as long as the student is under the control of the teacher. When outside of that control, unless the desired goals and behaviors have been internalized, the learner will cease the desired behavior and operate according to his or her internal standards or to other external factors.

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