

GENDER AND AFFECTIVE FILTER: A STUDY OF SLA PROFICIENCY AMONG MALES AND FEMALES

Ayesha Nadeem^{*1}, Warda Shafqat², Raza-E-Mustafa³

^{*1,2}MPhil Scholar, Department of English, University of Gujrat

³Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Gujrat

¹24031702-002@uog.edu.pk, ²24031702-009@uog.edu.pk, ³razaemustafa@uog.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: *

Ayesha Nadeem

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ABSTRACT

Gender plays a crucial role in Second Language learning. Men and Women acquire their second language differently. Other factors like motivation, willingness, emotions, etc. also affect SLA learning. The present study tries to investigate how Affective filters (positive or negative emotions) affect SLA proficiency and how men and women acquire the second language, and whether or not the level of proficiency is the same between both genders. To conduct this study, the researcher used a mixed-method approach. The researcher constructed a questionnaire and an Oral Proficiency Test (OPT) to find a relationship between performance and emotions in men and women. For data collection, the researcher selected 20 participants of which 10 were males and the other 10 were females. After conducting their surveys and tests, the researcher applied Krashen's (1982) Affective filter hypotheses on males and females respectively. The researcher tried to analyze the data in four sections: motivation, anxiety, confidence, and attitude. The researcher found that affective filters affected the oral proficiency of males and females in SLA differently. Affective filters caused more hindrance in females' proficiency as compared to males. Through this study, the researcher can conclude that gender and Affective filters are deeply connected. Men are more proficient in a second language and have better performance as compared to women.

Key Words: Gender, Affective Filter, SLA, Motivation, Anxiety, Attitude, Confidence.

INTRODUCTION

Acquisition is a process of subconsciously gaining language. It is a natural language internalization process (Krashen, 1982). Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a process of acquiring a second language other than the native language which will be known as L2. SLA investigates how a subject acquires his second language what is the process of the acquisition and what are the factors that influence language acquisition. Social variables are measurable attributes that influence an individual or a group of individuals within a society. Ethnicity, Social Class, age, and gender are four social variables. Language and Gender

both have deep connections and influence each other. Proficiency in Second Language acquisition refers to "the ability to perform language tasks in an appropriate manner, which involves both linguistic knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge effectively in communication" (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 55). Farhady (1982) conducted a study to investigate the language skills. He analyzed that females significantly performed better than males on a listening comprehension test. He observed 800 university students as a sample who had to take a placement test. Furthermore, he noticed that girls usually take the ground

earlier than boys. Girls use longer sentences. Their articulation and grammar are more correct than boys. It shows that women have a richer vocabulary. He found that women are better at reading and spelling. Results also showed that girls have more positive attitudes toward language learning. This study shows the influence of gender in women.

Men and Women have language differences. "The men have a great many expressions peculiar to them, which the women understand but never pronounce themselves. On the other hand, the women have words and phrases that the men never use, or they would be laughed to scorn. Thus it happens that in their conversations it often seems as if the women had another language than the men" (Rochefort, 1665). Men's and Women's proficiency levels of second language are different. They acquire their second language differently for instance, as motivation plays a vital role in in second language acquisition. Women have a high level of motivation to learn a language so they pay more interest in learning their second language because of their motivation to join the target language culture. This high amount of motivation results in higher proficiency than the other gender. (Ehrman & Oxford, 1992).

Several factors affect learners' proficiency in SLA. Krashen (1982) proposed five series of hypotheses, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis is one of them. The researcher used Affective Filter hypothesis as an approach to this study. The purpose of this research is to identify how these factors are influencing the oral proficiency of learners of the English language and do these factors equally influence the proficiency of men and women. Do both suffer from these issues?

Research Objective:

The researcher conducted this study:

- To investigate the effect of Affective filters (positive or negative emotions) on men's and women's SLA proficiency levels.
- To analyze the effect of gender on leaning second language.

Research Questions:

- Do different factors like anxiety, motivation, praise, compliments, and disrespect influence the second language proficiency level among males and females equally?
- Is there any significant difference in language learning attitude based on gender?

Delimitation:

- This study will only focus on SLA.
- This study will only investigate the Affective Filter (motivation, anxiety, attitude, and confidence).
- The sample of the study is only 20 participants.
- Men and Women are the focus group.

Literature Review:

Language Acquisition is a complex process. Different factors affect Second Language Learning/Acquisition for instance anxiety, motivation, stress, attitude, and self-confidence. In Language Anxiety and Achievement, Horwitz (2001) used the term 'Language Anxiety'. According to researchers, Language Anxiety is a different and specific kind of anxiety rather than a trait anxiety. Researchers researched to find out the relationship between anxiety and achievement. He used the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) as an instrument to measure anxiety. Research showed that there is a negative relationship between anxiety and achievement. Researchers concluded that anxiety is a cause of poor language learning. Gender differences in second language acquisition is a significant topic of research. Men and women may have different communicative styles and behaviors because of their different socialization patterns (Tannen, 1990). Women fare better in the process of acquiring a second language (Ahmed, Raza-E-Mustafa, Ahmad, 2024). Researchers noticed that women focused on interpersonal communication more than men. Due to this, women are more comfortable talking in social settings as compared to men. Some biological, sociocultural, and psychological factors affect the SLA process. These researches highlight that men and women both acquire second language differently. According to Van der Silk

et al. (2015), women show more willingness to acquire a second language. They have more positive levels and higher motivation levels in comparison to men. Women are better performers because they are more willing to understand the culture of the target language. He conducted a study to investigate the gender impacts on Second Language proficiency in Dutch. It showed that women have high proficiency levels as compared to men.

Psychological factors like motivation, anxiety, attitude, etc. influence proficiency in a second language. These are not only the factors that affect SLA Proficiency even some other factors affect the proficiency at different degrees. These factors include teaching setting, teaching methods, and teaching material. To test the influence of these factors on learners' oral proficiency, Cheng (2019) conducted a study. The research methodology of his study includes: interviews, questionnaires, and personal classroom observation. The researcher collected data from students in his class. He did a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the collected data and found that this teaching method greatly affected the oral proficiency of learners.

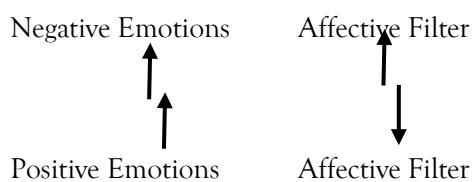
Social context plays a significant role in proficiency outcomes. Family background also affects the proficiency of second language learners (Splosky, 1989). Phon (2017) analysed 15 undergraduate students who were studying English as their major subject at a rural University in Cambodia. His study aimed to investigate how socioeconomic status influences English language proficiency among non-native speakers. The study showed that students from rural areas faced more difficulties in second language learning. Poverty was one of the main obstacles to their poor proficiency. They possessed lower target language skills and knowledge.

Societal expectation also plays an essential role in language proficiency. According to Berne (1990), women have better oral proficiency due

to their societal role. They are more involved in verbal interactions. Women are more conscious about the language use. They are more conscious about the choice of words and even more conscious about the social norms so they might possess better skills in language use in different social contexts (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). The social settings of the learners also play a vital role in their language acquisition (Khalid, Raza-E-Mustafa & Anwar, 2023). This very study is designed to look at how the oral proficiency of men and women is affected by different factors like anxiety, motivation, attitude, and confidence. All the above-mentioned work elaborated on the effects of Affective filters but no one tried to find out how these factors affect males and females This work is designed to investigate the responses of men and women to these factors. The researcher will do a qualitative and quantitative analysis of data to find out the differences in these factors between males and females.

Theoretical Framework

Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter hypothesis is used as a theoretical framework and model. Oral proficiency is measured by motivation, anxiety, confidence, and attitude. According to Krashen, these are the factors that influence second language learning. Krashen (1982) proposed five hypotheses of which Affective Filter Hypothesis is one. According to Krashen (1985), the word 'filter' refers to emotions. There are two types of emotions; positive and negative. When humans are suffering through negative emotions the affective filter goes upward because of that the lesser input will be processed. On the other hand, if someone is feeling happy and positive the affective filter goes down then more and greater input will be processed. The inhibited role is played by negative emotions on the other hand, the facilitated role is played by positive emotions.



According to Krashen four different factors influence proficiency in Second Language Acquisition which are mentioned below:

- Motivation
- Attitude
- Anxiety
- Self-confidence

These factors influence the proficiency level of learners in different ways.

Research Methodology

This study is designed to investigate the effects of Affective Filters in men and women. It is a mixed-method study. Researcher conducted a survey to check positive or negative emotion of the participants

Data Collection

The researcher selected 20 participants for this study who are learning English as their second language. Of those participants ten are males and the other ten are females. The data has been collected from students of different

universities. They come from different cultures and different areas. The researcher collected data online. The procedure of data collection is mentioned below:

Survey:

The researcher asked participants to fill out a questionnaire to measure their emotional state. The purpose of the survey was to test their emotions. According to the Affective Filter hypothesis, if a person is motivated and has positive emotions then he/she will be able to process the input. On the other hand, if he is demotivated and facing negative emotions then he or she will not be able to process the input, and their performance of acquiring English as a second language will be affected. In the survey, the designed questionnaire had 4 parts: Part 1 was about their motivation level, part 2 was to check their anxiety level, part 3 was about their self-confidence and lastly, part 4 was about their attitude level towards language learning. Every part contains 25 points in total.

High motivation = Lower the Affective Filter	Lower motivation = Higher the Affective Filter
High anxiety = Raises the Affective Filter	Low anxiety = Lower the Affective Filter
High self-confidence = Lower the Affective Filter	Lower self-confidence = Higher the Affective Filter
Positive Attitude = Lower the Affective Filter	Negative Attitude = Higher the Affective Filter

Oral Proficiency Test (OPT):

After conducting the survey, researchers took an Oral Proficiency Test (OPT) of all the participants to check the proficiency level of their second language. The Oral Proficiency Test had also 4 parts. The first part 1 was the warm-up questions. The purpose of this part is to ease them and to measure their initial emotional level. The indicator to measure is their comfort level and motivation. If they are feeling anxious and hesitant then it may suggest that their Affective Filter is high. The part 2 was a Narrative Task. The researcher gave situation to participants and ask them to narrate a story to check their fluency, coherence, grammar etc. Part 3 was a Role Play Task. This part gave a valuable insight into participants' emotional factors. The last part was a Reflect Task. The researcher set 5 levels of criteria to measure the oral proficiency of both males and females: Pronunciation, Coherence, Grammar and Vocabulary, Task completion, and Fluency. Every level of criteria contains 5 marks. The

indicator to measure is the participants who were fluent, confident, enthusiastic and motivated scored high and have lower the affective filter on the other hand, participants who were less confident, hesitant and anxious scored low. The total point of the test was 25.

Methods of Data Analysis

It is a mixed-method approach. The researcher analyzed data by both; qualitative and quantitative methods.

Descriptive/Qualitative Analysis:

After collecting data from participants, the Researcher analyzed the collected data. According to Krashen's hypothesis, SLA Proficiency is affected by different factors. The researcher analyzed how these factors affect oral proficiency in the English language among males and females. The analysis is given below:

Motivation

Motivation is the most important factor that affects the second language learning. According to Gardner (1985), Motivation is basically "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity". After collecting the data from the survey, the researcher found that males showed more confidence than females which means that the Affective Filter played a positive role in their proficiency in SLA learning. Some of the female participants showed greater motivation in learning language but their performance is not that good as compared to males. On the other hand, in males, the negative affective filter did not affect their proficiency as much. Based on the sample quantity, 82% of males are motivated, and 71% of females are motivated so their oral proficiency is also affected. While interviewing them, the Researcher noticed that males were highly motivated to answer the question but on the other hand, females were less in number even though they answered in the questionnaire that they are motivated in English learning.

Anxiety

Generally, anxiety is a natural response to tension and stress and it is a reaction to unease situations. "Language Anxiety is the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient" (Gardner & Macintyre, 1993). Anxiety and performance are related to each other. According to Krashen, Anxiety is a negative Affective filter. High Anxiety means a high affective filter and if the negative affective filter

is high then it will create hindrance in language acquisition. The researcher asked participants about their anxiety levels while learning a language. Both males and females said that they feel anxious when they learn a language. 51% of males face anxiety and 58% of females feel anxiety but when the researcher examined their oral proficiency test and found that female participants who face low anxiety still have poor language proficiency as compared to male participants.

Confidence

Confidence refers to having trust in your knowledge and skills. It refers to a belief that a person has to perform well in his/her task. According to the researcher's collected data, men are more confident than women and high confidence worked as a positive affective filter for them in language acquisition. However, the problem that the researcher found is even though two participants: male and female have equal confidence levels still their oral proficiency is not the same. They Both showed different proficiency. One(male) is more proficient than the other (female).

Attitude

Attitude refers to your thoughts and feelings about a particular subject or situation. Language attitude is a feeling and opinion about a particular language. It can be positive or negative. In the questionnaire, the researcher asked both male and female participants about their attitudes toward English language learning. Both showed positive responses. 80% of males wanted to learn English due to the benefits attached to it and 75% of females had positive responses.

Quantitative Analysis:

Following is a result from the survey and Oral Proficiency Test. The total points for each category is 25.

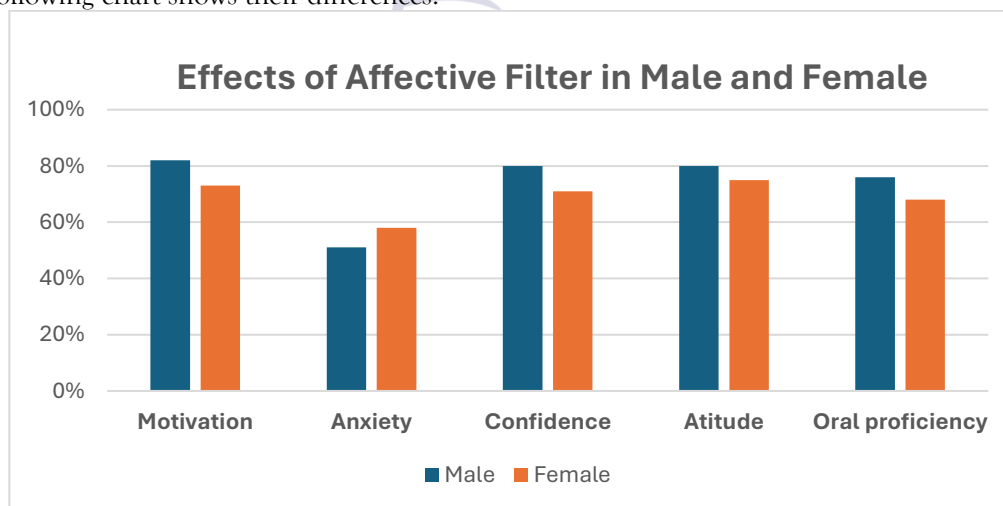
Sr.	Motivation		Anxiety		Confidence		Attitude		Oral Proficiency	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1.	25	23	23	23	23	20	23	23	24	21
2.	23	21	20	21	22	20	23	20	22	19
3.	23	20	16	16	22	20	23	20	21	18
4.	21	20	14	16	20	20	21	20	21	17
5.	21	20	11	13	20	19	20	19	21	17
6.	20	18	10	13	19	17	20	18	19	17
7.	19	17	10	13	19	16	20	18	18	16
8.	19	16	8	13	19	16	17	17	16	16
9.	18	14	8	13	17	15	16	17	14	15
10.	16	14	7	5	17	14	16	15	13	15

Above mentioned data showed that in some categories males and females had the same level of anxiety, motivation, confidence, and

attitude but still, their proficiency levels were not the same. Following are the percentages of their performances.

Sr.	Categories	Males	Females
1.	Motivation	82%	73%
2.	Anxiety	51%	58%
3.	Confidence	80%	71%
4.	Attitude	80%	75%
5.	Proficiency	76%	69%

The following chart shows their differences.



The data is interpreted through a procedure given by Krashen in his Affective Filter Hypothesis

- a) High Confidence (PAF) = High Performance & Low Confidence (NAF) = Low Performance
- b) High Motivation (PAF) = High Performance & Low Motivation (NAF) = Low Performance
- c) High Anxiety (NAF) = Low Performance & Low Anxiety (PAF) = High Performance

d) High Attitude (PAF) = High Performance & Low Attitude (NAF) = Low Performance

The interview showed that despite the negative affective filter some males showed high performance in the Oral Proficiency Test. Most of the female participants were anxious had low confidence and their proficiency level was lower than males. Findings show that male participants had control over their emotions

and feelings so their proficiency in SLA was not that affected as compared to men.

Conclusion:

The Affective Filters affect the Second Language Acquisition. Different genders respond to these filters differently. To investigate how men and women respond to these filters, the researcher conducted this study. He applied the Affective Filter hypotheses of Krashen (1982) as a model to his study. He collected data from males and females to investigate their emotion levels. After collecting the data, the researcher asked them to perform an oral proficiency test and gave them certain situations so that they could be analyzed. The researcher set criteria to measure their proficiency. The researcher analyzed their oral proficiency on five different levels: Fluency, Pronunciation, Vocabulary and Grammar, Coherence, and Task Completion. The results showed that Affective Filters affect men's proficiency in SLA less than women's. The researcher examined during the Oral Proficiency Test (OPT) showed that women didn't perform well even though according to them, they were confident, less anxious, and highly motivated still their ratio is lesser than men. Most of the men were anxious but their SLA proficiency didn't get affected. They confidently answered every question. Most of the female participants marked affective filter positive but still during the test they were panicked and confused. So, the researcher can conclude that the affective filters affect women's proficiency in SLA on a greater level than men do.

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