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## Insights into Cultural, Social, and Psychological Factors that Influence Foreign Language Learning

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### Abstract

The significance of socio-cultural and psychological aspects in acquiring foreign languages is receiving more attention. Foreign language education has become a significant component of the global academic system, wherein people acquire languages other than their first language in the classroom. Different factors have been analyzed to impact learning a second language in the classroom significantly. This article explores various social, cultural, and psychological factors influencing students' performance in a foreign language. The focus is to evaluate the impacts of these factors and assess how the participants rate the effects. The study is quantitative, and data was gathered through a structured questionnaire ranked using the Likert Scale. A total of 200 participants were randomly selected for the study, including twenty teachers that facilitated the participation of the students, mainly during the distribution of the questionnaire through digital systems. Analysis was conducted using appropriate statistical tools, such as percentage values, mean and standard deviation. A total of nine social, cultural, and psychological factors were analyzed, including interaction patterns in the classroom, rapport with teachers, lack of motivation, the attitude of learners, general cultural concerns, initiation issues, self-consciousness, fear of making mistakes, and classroom anxiety. These factors exert impact at varying degrees on the learning of English as a foreign language in the classroom. The analysis indicates that psychological factors exert more influence on the students, followed by social factors.

## Introduction

Researchers have shown great concern in unveiling the role that social, cultural, and psychological variables play in acquiring a second language in the classroom (See for example: Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019; Wei et al., 2019; Getie, 2020; Wang et al., 2021; ). Several studies have shed light on the myriad of factors that affect successful EFL (English as a foreign language) instruction in the classroom, exploring how teachers can take advantage of these factors to have better engagement with the students (Cheng, 2021; Esra & Sevilen, 2021; Awabdeh & Albashtawi, 2023). It is important to emphasize that learning a foreign language

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in a classroom setting is accomplished through participation in various activities that require direct interaction between the instructors and the students. The primary goal is to achieve a level of fluency in the target language comparable to that of a native speaker.

The focus of this study is to explicate the social, cultural, and psychological factors that impact the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the classroom. The study provides insights into how different variables associated with the factors mentioned above affect the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL), and how teachers can take advantage of the knowledge of these factors to help them restructure their engagement with the students.

## Literature Review

The goal of acquiring a target language should be to achieve grammatical and lexical proficiency (Peña et al., 2021) and communicate effectively using a general language competence that considers sociolinguistic competencies such as grammar, conversation, and practical competence. As a result, if the English language is taught in an environment that disregards students' cultural, social, and psychological contexts, it is possible that the students will not be able to learn English effectively, along with the other social and educational abilities that are part of their EFL education (Hernandez et al., 2021). According to Onishchuk et al. (2020), understanding the psychological, social, and cultural components of a foreign language is an essential component because it influences the learner's ability to communicate as well as their overall achievement in the foreign language. A lack of appropriate conversational skills can have a negative impact on a learner's self-esteem, restrict their ability to interact with other individuals, and lead to unfavorable assessments of the abilities and trustworthiness of a speaker.

As a result, it is important to investigate the existing body of literature reviews to discover the criteria that researchers have used when addressing the variables that affect the teaching and learning of a foreign language in the classroom.

## Psychological Factors that Affect Foreign Language Learning

Nervousness, consciousness, motivation, assertiveness, and shyness are psychological variables essential to one's ability to speak a foreign language. If these variables are not understood, they will produce unfavorable results, such as poorer academic achievement, resistance to new information, increased self-centeredness, and unpleasant relationships, distinguished by bitterness, categorizing, dissension, and stereotypes. Poor educational performance frequently leads to a decreased feeling of self-worth, low levels of consciousness, inactive enthusiasm, and diversity in learning methods. Browning et al. (2021) state that a psychological factor is "mentally or emotionally preoccupied with the factors in students' development." At the very least, it includes four of the many factors involved, such as anxiousness, attitude, aptitude, and motivation, because the existence of these factors has been demonstrated through some research findings. Some of the psychological factors are further reviewed.

## Anxiety and Fear of Making Mistakes

The concept of language anxiety refers to a set of circumstances with personality characteristics comprising two psychological elements: emotional tension and unpleasant self-perception (Russell, 2020). Wang & Zhang (2021) further explained that these components presumably interfere with behavior instrumental to language acquisition and that their intensity is more significant in individuals who are emotionally high in foreign language speaking anxiety. In agreement with Li (2020), Ergün & Dewaele (2021) asserts that learning a second or foreign

language is a difficult task that can make a person anxious. Anxiety is characterized by various emotions, including unease, frustration, self-doubt, and apprehension, and it can make learning a foreign or second language more difficult. In addition, Liu & Yuan (2021) discovered that students felt anxious when speaking English in China, which stimulated their performance. It occurred most frequently when they used a foreign language in public, particularly in the presence of native speakers. When a learner of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) becomes tongue-tired or at a loss for words in an anticipated circumstance, they can experience intense anxiousness, which frequently results in disappointment and an overall sense of failing. Roy et al., (2020) asserts that adults, unlike infants, are preoccupied with how others will evaluate them. They are conscientious about making mistakes as to what they say because making mistakes constitutes a public exhibition of ineptitude, which in some societies would be an evident circumstance of "losing dignity." Therefore, they avoid making mistakes as much as possible. It is abundantly clear that the reluctance of adult students to make errors is the explanation for their inability to speak English without pausing for clarification.

Students who exhibit particular psychological patterns are more likely to respond unfavorably to auditory instructions and commands that we give them. For instance, students who have high anxiety levels (also known as "uptight people") do not respond as favorably as people who have lower anxiety levels to intrinsic motivation commands such as "it is essential that you do well" and "this will weigh double on your grade," etc. When dealing with the effects of anxiousness brought on by learning a foreign language, the majority of people's personalities react more favorably to being praised than they do to being reprimanded or blamed (Shao et al., 2020).

### **Self-Consciousness**

Researchers have discovered a link between self-consciousness and second language acquisition. According to Abbiss (2020), that is because the principle of self-consciousness is either ambiguous or open to multiple interpretations. According to Abbiss (2020), consciousness is a combination of personal and societal factors. Negative self-consciousness and many other potential topics may hinder foreign language acquisition. Insecurity, dread, anxiety, and destructive behavior are just some mental health issues that can stem from a lack of self-confidence, as suggested by research cited by Abbiss (2020). This may hold when acquiring a new language as well. A lack of self-confidence prevents the learner from getting off to a strong start in learning a foreign language because it reduces their desire to study Bao & Liu (2021).

The educational environment has been found to influence students' success in acquiring a second language Abbiss (2020). Classes where students study a foreign language, should encourage them to believe in themselves. It is crucial to foster a community where pupils can feel secure in their abilities. Students' sense of self-worth can be boosted in classrooms where they are encouraged to speak up and ask questions without worrying about what the instructor will think. Consequently, students' levels of consciousness are inextricably linked to their instructors' demeanor, the comments and inquiries they receive, and the language training activities they are expected to participate in.

### **Cultural Factors**

Culture and language go in tandem. Cultural transmission relies on linguistic continuity. Whether teaching a native speaker or a complete foreigner, cultural symbols will always be present in the classroom. Teachers of English as a foreign language are often asked to describe the English-speaking world's culture and societal distinctions and help their students adapt to the society to which they are being exposed. Teachers' perceptions of themselves, their pupils,

the educational program, and the connection among societies significantly influence student learning. Meanwhile, students' optimistic and neutral perspectives on both the culture of the foreign language and their own culture may essentially enable FLA (Foreign Language Acquisition).

Many professionals in the field of applied linguistics and language teaching argue that the culture of the linguistic community should be more heavily utilized in the processes of both teaching and learning a foreign language. Students' natural apprehension of a new language often results in a pessimistic outlook (Fromkin et al., 2011). Most linguists and teachers now agree that grammatical and social skills are necessary for fluency in a language and that the relative importance of these two aspects of language knowledge relies on whether we view language from an interactional or sociolinguistic viewpoint. This is why fundamental cultural variables that affect foreign language acquisition include students' perspectives on the language, other general cultural problems, and how they introduce new topics.

### **Social Factors**

It is widely accepted that one's social environment significantly influences their success in acquiring a foreign language (Abdullaev, 2021). If cultural and linguistic elements are intertwined, one helping to promote or propagate the other, then it is essential to investigate the setting in which these processes play out, which is undoubtedly the social environment. According to Bai & Wang (2023), it is considered that the social environment influences the mindset and drive. Learners may need both to make real progress when learning a new language. According to Bai & Wang (2023), the environment offers learning opportunities that lead to developing skills and knowledge. Students acquire and use a language through contact with others; however, as Gholami points out, the importance of the social background is often overlooked in EFL due to the absence of the student's social context. The author further argues that students of FL learn the language through contact with native speakers. In most EFL societies, however, the importance of the societal setting may be overlooked or undervalued. This means that the outcome of the education received is inadequate.

Attitude is another critical factor to consider when attempting to comprehend the significance of social background in acquiring a foreign language. In most cases, a student's approach to a foreign language or culture will determine how well the learner learns the language and adapts to society. Bai & Wang (2023) claims that a learner's perspective on the foreign language, the people who speak it, and the classroom environment all play significant roles in the learner's eventual success or failure. According to Bai & Wang (2023), there are two types of attitudes: those toward the individuals who speak the foreign language and those toward the actual use to which the student thinks they can put the language learned. He argues that while one's outlook doesn't directly affect their ability to learn, it does affect their desire to do so.

## **Research Methods**

### **Study Design**

The method adopted for this study is the quantitative approach, which uses numbers to evaluate the factors that impact foreign language learning. The design adopted for the study is a survey research design wherein the perspectives and opinions of the participants are gained through the survey.

### Sampling and Population

A purposive study sampling method was adopted in this study. The study participants are selected based on the purpose of the study. Both teachers and students were selected based on the purpose of the study, and data were collected from them. The teachers that participated in the survey organized the students and also participated in the study. A total of 180 students participated in the survey, and 20 teachers also participated. There is no gender or age concern in the data collation, as demographic variables were not considered significant in the study.

### Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

The instrument for data collection is the questionnaire, which was structured to meet the answers to the main research questions. The questionnaire was structured to be in two main parts. The first segment is for the teachers, while the second is for the students. The first segment contains only a general assessment of the various factors that impact foreign language learning. The second part for the students includes specific questions on each factor's main variables. As such, the segment for the students is divided into nine parts, containing the nine variables into three factors that affect foreign language learning. The questionnaires were structured using the Likert Scale of five values. The choice of five Scale values is to measure significant perspectives of the participants at equal value with an option to remain neutral. The table below provides further insights into the structure of the Likert Scale used and the scoring values.

Table 1. Likert Scale Ranking Values

Likert Scale	Ranking	Score value	Mean range
Strongly Agree	5	Highest	4.50-5.00
Agree	4	High	3.50-4.49
Neutral	3	Moderate	2.50-3.49
Disagree	2	Low	1.50-2.49
Strongly Disagree	1	Lowest	1.00-1.49

The questionnaire was administered electronically, as teachers were selected first. Through the teachers, questionnaires were distributed to the students. The teachers also helped in getting the questionnaires back.

### Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis is implemented with the assistance of tables, diagrams, and various other statistical instruments. In addition, the mean was computed, which was arrived at by calculating the average of the responses on the Likert scale.

### Results and Discussion

The analysis is divided into two main parts. The first part is the presentation and discussion of the result of the data collated with the teachers. The second part is the presentation and discussion of the data collated with the students.

#### Results from the Teachers

The teachers mainly ranked the social, psychological, and cultural factors that impact teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The results are presented in the tables below.

Table 2. Results of Social Factors from the Teachers

Variables	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	S.D
Interaction Patterns	40%	20	10	15	15	3.29	1.142
Rapport with students	5%	15	0	30	50%	3.86	1.176
Lack of motivation	15%	10%	5%	25%	45%	3.23	1.140

The data from table 2 indicates that most teachers disagree and strongly disagree that interaction patterns impact foreign language learners, with about 20% and 40%, respectively. About 10% remained neutral. The remaining 30% agree and strongly agree at an equal 15% value each. The implication is that the teachers don't think that interaction patterns in the classroom are a solid social factor that affects the learning of English as a second language in the classroom. The table further indicated that teachers think good rapport with the students is the greatest social factor affecting learners of English as a foreign language. Less than 20% disagree and strongly disagree about the impact of rapport. The table also indicates that a lack of motivation affects EFL learners. About 70% of the teachers accepted that lack of motivation is a decisive factor. Less than 80% of the teachers admitted that rapport with students is the primary factor affecting EFL learners in the classroom.

Table 3. Results of Cultural Factors from the Teachers

Factors	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	S.D
Attitude of students	15%	10%	5%	50%	20%	2.85	1.267
Cultural differences	10%	10%	0%	50%	30%	3.15	1.192
Initiation issues	45%	15%	5%	20%	15%	2.07	1.005

The data from table 3 indicates that 50% of the teachers that participated in the study agree, and 20% strongly agree that the attitude of students towards the language and the teachers in the classroom affects their language learning. Conversely, 15% strongly disagreed, 10% disagreed, and 5% of the teachers were neutral. This result is quite similar to what is seen in the case of cultural differences. Culture is a significant carrier of a people's ideology, perceptions, and generality of projects which also shapes attitude and predisposition towards a foreign concept, in this case, a foreign language. In this context, cultural differences are projected to highlight acceptance and rejection issues. To what extent do the students accept or reject the foreign language as a primary means of communication in the classroom? Do they prefer to use their native language and treat English as strange? About 80% of the teachers that participated in the study accepted that these cultural differences and considerations affect the progress of TEFL in the classroom. However, over 60% of the teachers believe that initiation issues in discourse are not significant in the foreign language classroom.

Table 4. Results of Psychological Factors from the Teachers

Factors	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	S.D
Self-consciousness	20%	10%	0%	40	30	2.49	1.174
Fear of making mistakes	10%	5%	0%	50%	35%	3.27	1.285
Anxiety	10%	5%	0%	45%	40%	3.16	1.205

Table 4 provides data that supports that all the psychological factors are significant and impact learning a foreign language in the classroom. According to the responses gathered from the teachers, self-consciousness, fear of making mistakes, and anxiety are significant psychological factors which affect how students attain proficiency in their foreign language in the classroom.

One further hint is provided in table 4, which indicates that 85% of the teachers agree that the fear of being ridiculed in the classroom is the most significant intrinsic factor that affects the active participation of students in classrooms where they are learning foreign languages. This is indicated by the fact that approximately 50% of the instructors agree with this statement, suggesting that the concern for critique is a substantial essential facet. Even in classes where language is not taught, students still struggle with anxiety caused by the fear of being criticized. When students participate in a classroom conversation or activity, they are acutely aware of the possibility that they will be labeled a failure. In the context of learning a foreign language, the awareness of the possibility of committing grammatical errors in the foreign language brings about a greater level of anxiety than the actual threat of being criticized. Students are aware of the possibility of being reprimanded or castigated for making mistakes in a foreign language because they are still learning it.

About the same 85% of teachers believe that anxiety is a significant component in determining students' proactive participation level in the classroom. The insinuation is that the fear of making a blunder will naturally lead to anxiety, preventing the student from participating in any type of conversation in the foreign language while in class. There is a strong connection between these various aspects. Anxiety is a natural and inevitable consequence of fear. This indicates that the instructors' opinions are supported by general psychology projection. Anxiety is the following mechanism to be activated in a person after fear when that person is scared of something. As seen in the table, a lack of enthusiasm and interest are also significant factors; however, they are not nearly as substantial as the factors relating to fear and anxiety.

### Result from the Students

The data gathered from the students are further segmented into three units according to the significant factors. This informs the further segmentation of the section to provide precise data analysis.

### Result of the Social Factors

Three factors were examined to exhibit social impacts in acquiring a foreign language in the classroom. They include interaction patterns, rapport with teachers, and lack of motivation. These factors are discussed in the three tables in this section.

Table 5. Result of the Interaction Patterns

Factors	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	S.D
Interaction Patterns	8.33	5.55	10	44.44	31.68	2.92	1.381
Rapport with teachers	45.55	27.79	8.33	12.22	6.11	2.01	1.103
Lack of motivation	9.44	10.55	6.66	34.44	38.90	3.89	1.852

This table summarizes the students' responses on the degree of impact of these factors. The result above indicates that the students have different views from the teachers. Table 5 shows that over 75% of the students affirm that interaction patterns in the classroom affect their learning of English as a second language. Different questions were asked in the questionnaire on the patterns of interaction. The first question seeks to unveil the extent to which teachers dominate talks in the classroom. The second question is about the extent to which students talk to teachers. The third question was the need to find out if the teachers give open-ended questions in the classroom, and the fourth question focused on finding out if the respondents love interacting with their friends outside the classroom. The students attempted these questions, focusing on comparing the different factors in each category. As such, it is evident that many students affirm that interaction patterns, including communicating with teachers and students in the classroom, significantly impact their learning of English as a second language.

Similarly, the students affirm that good rapport with teachers contributes to their growth, but the students lack good connections with the teachers. Four questions were also presented to the students on their rapport with teachers. On a general projection, all the questions are built on the extent to which the respondents establish a connection with the teachers. The responses indicate that the respondents do not have an effective rapport with the teachers. The implication is that for students to enhance their learning of the second language through interaction, there is a need for effective rapport between the teachers and the students. In the same vein, a more significant percentage of the respondents remain neutral on the issue of whether the teachers carry themselves in high esteem. This question is situated to ascertain teachers' personalities and predispositions in discharging their duties.

However, a good number of the students unveil that they receive support from the teachers in learning the English language in class. The table above further indicates that over 70% of the respondents disagree that they have a good rapport with the teachers. The questions attached to the questionnaire unveil that the students are interested in good rapport with the teachers, but they don't get it. The result in table 5 is similar to what is seen in table 2, where a more significant percentage of the teachers think that rapport with the students does not improve their foreign language proficiency.

The data in table 5 further indicates that lack of motivation is a huge factor that affects learning a foreign language in the classroom. Motivation is an excellent aspect of second language learning. The basis of motivation, an essential component of second language learning, was reviewed in the literature review section. Questions were also fielded to the students to unveil their level of motivation in learning the English language and the use of the language in interaction in the classroom. The data indicates that over 70% of the respondents accept that lack of motivation affects them. This is also similar to what is seen in table 2, where the teachers agree that lack of motivation is a significant factor in the classroom. To discuss the nature of motivation in the classroom, four questions were further attached on motivation in the classroom, to the students' questionnaire. The questions are basically on how lack of motivation affects their learning. The responses affirm that when students are motivated, they are emotionally strong and ready to learn in the classroom.

### ***Result of the Cultural Factors***

This section directly focuses on the classroom's cultural perceptions of the English language. The cultural view, which is part of the Interactionist approach to second language learning, plays a significant role in language acquisition. For instance, in the first question on the issue of culture, most students affirm that English is a Western tool and that they have no need to learn it. In other words, more students perceive English more from a global perspective and are receptive to it instead of attributing it to a western tool. There is also the dimension of religion. The fourth question in the first and second segments largely borders on the claim that the English language and their religion move in the opposite direction. The table below provides a summary of the comparison of cultural factors.

Table 6. Result of Cultural factors from the Students

<b>Factors</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>
Attitude of students	11.66	7.22	4.44	43.89	32.79	3.27	1.274
Cultural differences between the source and target language	15.55	8.33	5.55	32.44	38.35	3.03	1.121
Initiation issues in discourse	32.79	15	11.66	23.33	17.22	2.15	1.104



Culture remains a significant factor that impacts the attitude of foreign language learners toward the language. How people perceive the second language determines how serious they will be in the classroom. The data above indicates that the students acknowledge that their attitude in the classroom affects the learning process. Over 75% of the students think their attitude towards the foreign language in the classroom is a significant factor. This is not comparable to less than 18% of the 180 students that participate, which disagree that attitude is a challenge in the foreign language class. Attitude is a robust cultural variable that affects the students' view and perception of the language. Learners' hostile attitude toward the foreign language will affect their seriousness in the classroom.

Another factor in the cultural considerations is the differences between the cultures of the two languages. When there is a conflict between the culture of the first language of the people and the culture of the second language, the students may shift their attention to the first language. A negative attitude towards a foreign language affects the learning process, and a negative attitude usually emanates from differences in the cultural perceptions of the learners. Just above 70% of the participants accepted that cultural differences are a significant factor in the foreign language classroom. This is far higher than the 23% who disagree or reject cultural differences' impact.

Like the teachers, the students affirm that discussion initiation patterns are not a decisive factor that impacts foreign learning in the classroom. Over 47% of the participants disagree that initiation patterns of discourse affect their learning of foreign languages in the classroom. This is above the 40% that accept that initiation patterns affect them in the classroom. To a great extent, both the response of the teachers and the students affirm that culture remains a significant factor in the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the classroom. How students and teachers handle cultural concerns may affect the output of the learning process. As Zhang et al. (2021) argues, proficiency in a foreign language may not be a complete product of the language system but a consideration of other factors, including cultural concerns.

### ***Result of Psychological Factors***

Three key psychological variables are considered in the study. These same three psychological variables were also presented to the teachers. The tables below show the results of the psychological factors gathered from the students.

Table 7. Results of the Psychological factors from the students

<b>Factors</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>
Self-consciousness	4.44	6.11	3.88	52.24	33.33	2.28	1.270
Fear of Making Mistakes	1.66	2.22	5	33.88	57.24	3.25	1.312
Anxiety	3.33	1.11	3.88	40	51.68	2.86	1.275

Psychological factors are generally considered among the most impacting factors in foreign language learning (Abdullaev, 2021). This is evidently what is seen in the table above. The concern in the first variable is to unveil the degree of self-consciousness of the students and the extent of their confidence when they speak the English language in the classroom. The question also seeks to reveal how the students feel when they interact using the English language in the classroom. The data in table 7 indicates that over 80% of the students accept that self-consciousness is a significant factor in learning a foreign language in the classroom. This is hugely higher than the less than 11% disagreeing with this proposition. Also, over 90% of the students affirm that the fear of mistakes is a significant factor. Finally, over 93% confirm that anxiety significantly impacts learning a foreign language in the classroom.

### Implication of Analysis

There are few noticeable differences in the views of students and teachers concerning the impacts of different social, cultural, and psychological factors that impact foreign language learning. In table 2, the majority of the teachers think that interaction patterns in the classroom are not a significant factor in foreign language learning in the classroom. Whereas over 50% of the teachers disagree that interaction patterns affect students, over 60% of the students strongly affirm that interaction patterns in the classroom remain a significant factor. However, both the teachers and the students agree on many points. For instance, over 60% of teachers and students affirm that all psychological factors affect foreign language learning in the classroom.

The implication of these values and the accompanied results is that other non-linguistic factors impact foreign language learning beyond language features. These factors play significant roles in shaping the extent to which a foreign language learner may be proficient in the foreign language in the classroom and beyond.

### Conclusion

This study has expounded on the implication of social, cultural, and psychological factors that impact foreign language learning. The study examined nine factors, three in each social, cultural, and psychological domain. The study unveiled that many of these factors significantly impact learning English as a foreign language in the classroom. The analysis further indicates that psychological factors are predominantly affecting the learners. This decision is reached following the observation that the learners agree, with over 75% in each of the variables in the psychological factor. This finding further implies that the psychological state of the students' minds remains a significant factor. The teachers also generally agree that psychological factors impact the learners.

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