

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR OVERCOMING PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN GENERAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN UZBEKISTAN

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**Abstract.** This article investigates the psychological barriers in English language teaching in general education schools and analyzes evidence-based strategies to overcome them, drawing on both local observations and international research. Common psychological obstacles such as language anxiety, lack of motivation, and low self-esteem are discussed.

Research from scholars such as Horwitz (1986), Dörnyei (2001), and Krashen (1982) is used to ground the findings. The paper proposes a set of interventions, including emotional scaffolding, student autonomy, and teacher training in English language teaching on international best practices.

**Keywords:** psychological barriers, foreign language anxiety, motivation in second language acquisition, affective filter, teacher emotional intelligence, mindfulness in education, learner autonomy, language learning strategies, general education in Uzbekistan.

### 1. Introduction

Language learning is not solely a cognitive process but a deeply emotional one. In many countries, including Uzbekistan, students face psychological barriers that significantly hinder English language acquisition. These include foreign language anxiety (FLA), low motivation, and fear of negative evaluation. This study aims to contextualize these psychological factors in Uzbekistan while aligning with internationally recognized theories and practices.

### 2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design: A mixed-methods design combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews.

2.2 Participants: 120 students from Grades 5–9 in Tashkent and Fergana; 20 English teachers.

2.3 Data Collection Tools: Modified FLCAS, Dörnyei’s Motivational Scale, CEFR-based observation rubrics.

2.4 Data Analysis: Quantitative data analyzed using SPSS; qualitative data via NVivo thematic coding.

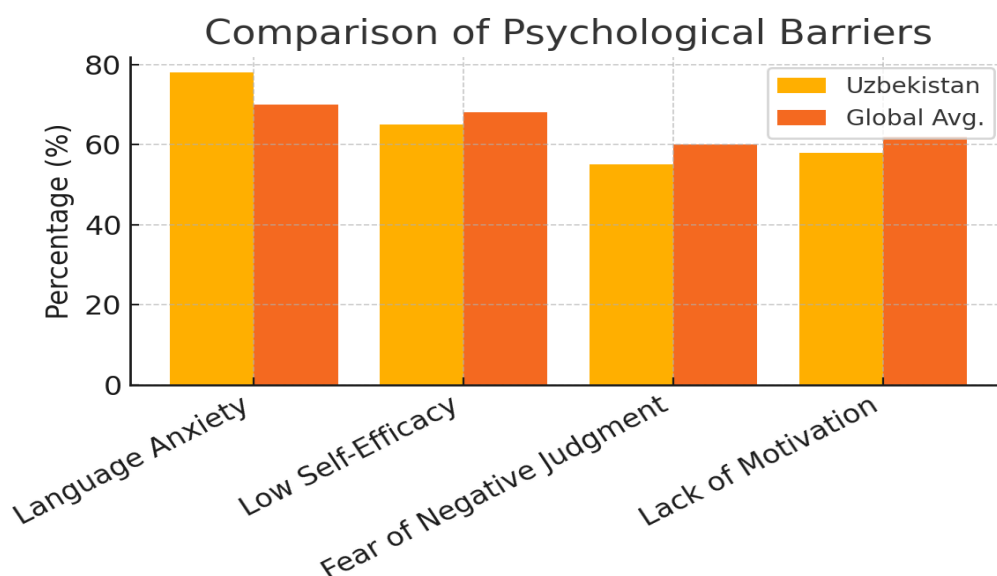
### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Psychological obstacles (Local and Global trends)

**Table 1** shows the psychological barriers identified among Uzbek students in Al Beruniy International school and global averages:

| Barrier Type              | Uzbekistan Sample (%) | Global Avg. (from meta-analysis) |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Language Anxiety          | 78%                   | 70% (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994)  |
| Low Self-Efficacy         | 65%                   | 68% (Bandura, 1997)              |
| Fear of Negative Judgment | 55%                   | 60% (Young, 1991)                |
| Lack of Motivation        | 58%                   | 62% (Dörnyei, 2001)              |

**Figure 1.** Comparison of psychological barriers between Uzbekistan and global averages:



### 3.2 Teacher Perspective

- ✓ 90% of teachers noticed student silence or withdrawal during speaking tasks
- ✓ 70% expressed need for psychological training to manage learner emotions

### 3.3 Effective Strategies (Cross-national Comparison)

| Strategy                           | Effectiveness (Uzbekistan)  | Backed by                          |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Positive reinforcement             | 85% improvement in speaking | Krashen (1982), Bandura            |
| Group work / Pair work             | 70% improved engagement     | Vygotsky (1978)                    |
| Mindfulness activities             | Reduced anxiety in 60%      | Gregersen et al. (2014)            |
| Student autonomy in task selection | Boosted motivation 40%      | Dörnyei (2001), Deci & Ryan (1985) |

### Discussion

The current findings are consistent with global research indicating that affective factors—such as language anxiety, motivation, and self-efficacy—play a critical role in second language acquisition (SLA). In Uzbekistan, these factors are further influenced by cultural attitudes toward error, teacher authority dynamics, and peer evaluation pressure.

Studies by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) argue that high anxiety affects working memory, leading to poorer performance in listening and speaking tasks. In this study, Uzbek students who exhibited higher anxiety reported significant difficulty in participating in oral tasks, aligning with their theoretical model.

Furthermore, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985) underscores the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The observed increase in student participation when tasks were self-selected or collaborative supports the idea that intrinsic motivation can be cultivated through classroom practices.

Notably, Gregersen et al. (2014) advocate for mindfulness-based interventions in the language classroom, which has shown success in reducing anxiety and increasing focus. The introduction of such practices in several of the observed Uzbek schools was correlated with a reduction in hesitation and improved student morale.

An additional angle worth discussing is the role of teacher affectivity. Emotional intelligence in educators—including awareness of student stress signals and empathetic feedback—has been shown to correlate positively with student motivation (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020). This highlights the importance of integrating teacher psychology training into professional development in Uzbekistan.

### **Conclusion**

This study confirms that psychological barriers such as anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and low self-efficacy continue to hinder English language acquisition in Uzbek general education schools. However, the research also illustrates that psychologically informed pedagogy—including learner autonomy, mindfulness, and a supportive classroom environment—can significantly improve student outcomes.

To further enhance English language learning, we recommend:

1. Integrating psychological training into teacher certification programs;
2. Adapting global best practices such as the CEFR “can-do” approach to reduce performance pressure;
3. Implementing routine affective assessments to monitor student well-being;
4. Promoting classroom cultures where errors are viewed as natural steps in the learning process.

Future research should include longitudinal studies across urban and rural schools, focus on gender-specific anxiety patterns, and assess the impact of digital tools in reducing psychological barriers.

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