

The Psychological Processes behind English Language Learning and Their Role in  
Achieving Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education

Dr. Muhammad Umar Mehmood

[pashagee143@gmail.com](mailto:pashagee143@gmail.com)

PhD in Education, MPhil Scholar (Linguistics), University of Sialkot, Pakistan.

Dr. Bakht Jamal

[bakht.phdedu155@iiu.edu.pk](mailto:bakht.phdedu155@iiu.edu.pk)

PhD in Education, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan.

Doung Dara

[d\\_dara09@yahoo.com](mailto:d_dara09@yahoo.com)

Deputy Director of Education and Research, Mindset Development Organisation (MDO), Cambodia.

Muhammad Mubeen Goraya

[mubeengoraya142@gmail.com](mailto:mubeengoraya142@gmail.com)

MPhil in Education, Preston University, Kohat, Pakistan.

Corresponding Author: \* Dr. Muhammad Umar Mehmood [pashagee143@gmail.com](mailto:pashagee143@gmail.com)

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ABSTRACT

*English is now a critical lingua franca in the 21st century, required in higher education, technology, and global employment. In Pakistan, it is another means of instruction as well as a means of socio-economic mobility. Nevertheless, learning the English language is not simply a linguistic problem, it is a complicated psychological process, being influenced by cognitive, emotional, and social factors. The existing education policy usually focuses on the curriculum and infrastructure without taking into consideration the internal psychological conditions of the learners and their impact on the end results. This paper examines the involvement of cognitive load, language anxiety, and self-efficacy in achieving English proficiency and how the intervention using these factors can enhance Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) of inclusive and equitable education. Data were collected using mixed-methods design in secondary schools of Gujranwala Division based on the Affective Filter Hypothesis of Krashen, Self-Efficacy Theory by Bandura, and Social Constructivism of Vygotsky. Results suggest that exam based anxiety and social evaluation fear is an active affective filter, and it inhibits any language intake in students who are marginalized. The quantitative data were used to indicate that fear of mistakes (4.65) and motivation to pass examinations (4.91) scored high, whereas qualitative data reflected that there is a gap in cognitive load, with rote memorization prevailing because instructional demands outweigh the working memory. The research finds that the learning of English is an indicator of psychological inequity, and the pedagogy has to be shifted towards a content-focused approach to psychologically sensitive approaches. The most important factor of turning English into an empowerment tool is emotional scaffolding and psychologically safe classrooms. Longitudinal designs should be implemented in future studies, the study should be extended to South Punjab and result should be studied on how digital integration and culturally responsive content influences self-efficacy and reduction of anxiety among learners.*

**Keywords:** English Language Learning, Psychological Processes, Motivation, Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, Inclusive Education, Educational Equity.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background and Context

English is now used as a lingua franca in education, research, technology and international communication. English is not only a subject in most countries, and in Pakistan, it is used not only in classrooms but it is also commonly used in higher education, and it is a ticket to employment in the global world. However, to learn English is not just to know vocabulary and grammar, but a psychological process, a complicated interaction between the cognitive, emotional and social processes. Learning language involves the learner to work towards the process of integrating new linguistic knowledge whilst balancing the cognitive load, regulating emotion, as well as negotiating social interactions within the academic spaces. The complexity implies that psychological preparedness and support is a key to successful English acquisition (Mehmood et al., 2025).

Language learning involves cognitive functions that include memory, attention and information processing. Working memory helps the learners to store the linguistic components in their memory and create the sense of meaning out of the input. The control of attention enables the learners to concentrate on the information that is relevant and disregard distractions. In the case of the cognitive load being overly high, learners might experience difficulties in processing language, and this may provoke frustration and low success (Akram et al., 2023). Psychologically, the ability to process information influences the understanding of the information by the learners, their confidence and readiness to engage in language activities.

In addition to cognitive functioning, there are affective aspects that matter. Anxiety - particularly foreign language anxiety imposes emotional impediments that limit the participation and lower the learning profits. The Affective Filter Hypothesis assumes that negative emotions serve as a filter that hinders the process of language acquisition because it reduces the capacity of learners to take in input (Krashen, as cited in Mehmood et al., 2025). The current studies prove that the problem of language anxiety in English learning settings is still unresolved, and it has a negative impact on speaking performance, classroom engagement, and the creation of the overall level of proficiency (Junita Ulhusna, 2024). Students might develop high anxiety levels that will make them avoid communicating with each other, and the process will result in non-participation and poor skills development.

As a contrast, motivation and self-efficacy are also important psychological motivators that have a positive impact on the learning of the English language. Motivation is stimulative to the effort of the learners, it is also able to maintain attention throughout the learning period and also help to adopt the effectiveness of learning strategies. Self-efficacy -firmness of belief in oneself as a means of success- increases persistence and toughness when overcoming linguistic difficulty. It has also been shown that when learners have high self-efficacy, they are more inclined to focus on language activities, less discouraged by challenges, and achieve high performance during proficiency tests (Lin et al., 2025). These results make it clear that psychological support systems promoting intrinsic motivation and enhancing self-belief of learners are significant.

The psychological needs of the learning process via English are only exacerbated in multilingual learning conditions such as those in Pakistan, where students have to master knowledge in the subject area and at the same time decode the information in a language that is not necessarily their native tongue. This two-way task may contribute to cognitive overload and emotional stress and equal participation may not be achievable by the underprivileged learners, low-resource schools, or learners with little exposure to the English language (Mehmood et al., 2025). Unless the barriers of psychological nature are dealt with, the

inequality in education may increase, which is opposite to the concepts of inclusive education that should provide access and success to all learners.

Varied backgrounds among learners such as socioeconomic status, language exposure, learning capacities, and more, pose differences in psychological experiences in the English classes. Certain learners come with good background knowledge and are very confident whereas others come with linguistic gaps and anxiety and follow different paths of learning participation and performance. According to research of mainstream applied linguistics, the differences in motivation, anxiety, and self-efficacy are connected with the outcomes of language performance in the English language (Frontiers in Psychology, 2022). Motivation and self-efficacy among learners are associated with increased achievement and involvement and reduced performance and involvement among learners with high levels of anxiety.

Besides, psychological factors interplay with classroom settings and instructional activities. Interactive, positive feedback, and supportive classrooms eliminate anxiety and encourage positive attitudes, as traditional teacher-centered learning approaches can increase the fear of error and disinterestedness. Empirical research points to the fact that interactive teaching methods and psychologically attentive pedagogy can enhance the confidence of learning, decrease the influence of affective impediment, and promote inclusive learning (Latifah et al., 2025). Indeed, the project-based learning with real-world materials has been reported to decrease the level of speaking anxiety and drive interest in English language learners (Latifah et al., 2025), which eventually leads to improved language performance and life satisfaction.

The operation of psychological processes is not an independent phenomenon but rather it is influenced by the social and environmental factors. Motivation and anxiety levels depend on the beliefs of learners concerning their language competence, teacher support perceptions, and peer relationships. Peer support and teacher support diminish affective filters and generate greater involvement in the learner. On the other hand, competition, judgmental or high-pressure learning conditions contribute to heightening anxiety and exclusion of less confident learners. According to the studies, self-regulated learning behaviors like establishing personal goals and tracking progress also mediate the impact of psychological determinants on the outcomes of language learning (Wang and Zhan, 2020; see also related studies of self-regulated online English language learning environments).

Psychological knowledge in the modern educational setting is essential in the realization of inclusive and equitable quality education, which is a fundamental objective that is expressed in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). Educational inclusion extends beyond the physical access to classrooms; it must include the participation of the learners in a real sense and attainment to their potentials irrespective of their background and ability. Using the psychological barriers and exploiting a supportive cognitive and motivational processes can help the teacher to tailor instructions, make differentiation of support and provide emotionally safe environment in which various learners can succeed. Psychologically based inclusive practices can be used to ensure that language learning is seen as an empowerment tool as opposed to an exclusion tool.

Overall, the learning process of the English language is a complex psychological process, which is affected by the factors of cognition, the variables of affect, the dynamics of motivation, and social relationships. It is important to identify and deal with these psychological influences to ensure fair educational results. Learners might have an unequal opportunity and poor achievement without the psychological support. Through it, classrooms will be turned into the environment where different learners will feel comfortable and achieve their educational goals by becoming proficient and self-assured in what they are doing.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research is based on the intertwined psychological and educational theory:

- **Cognitive Learning Theory(Piaget, Information Processing):** Memory and attention in learning a language.
- **The Hypothesis by Krashen Affective Filter:** Emotions and anxiety influence language learning.
- **Self-Efficacy Theory developed by Bandura:** Learning activity is shaped by believing in ability.
- **Vygotsk Social Constructivism:** Interaction and Scaffolding learning.
- **Theory: Inclusive Education:** This theory provides equal opportunities to various learners.

The model is an integration of a number of psychological and educative theories to elicit out a thorough perspective of the English language learning within the inclusive classroom. Cognitive Learning Theory lays emphasis on memory and attention in the process of acquisition, and Affective Filter by Kashen illustrates the effects of apprehension and feelings. Self-Efficacy Theory by Bandura dwells on the significance self-belief in abilities in the persistence and determination. Vygotsky Social Constructivism focuses on learning in collaboration and scaffolding and the Inclusive Education Theory guarantees equal opportunities to all learners irrespective of his background and ability. It is these frameworks that put together can inform the strategies of improving learning, removing barriers and facilitating inclusive and productive learning.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study will examine how the psychological processes in learning the English language played out in delivering inclusive and equitable quality education. It addresses the cognitive variables, such as the working memory and the cognitive load, and affects the affective variables, such as anxiety, motivation, and self-efficacy, which interrelate to affect the engagement and performance of the learners. Other topics of the research include the importance of teacher scaffolding and social support in the Zone of Proximal Development, and how the concept of systemic and cultural inclusiveness influences the ability to learn. The study will establish the measures that can be used to improve language learning and equal involvement through the combination of these two psychological and pedagogical aspects in accordance with SDG 4.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To determine the important psychological processes in English learning.
2. To investigate their effects on the achievement of the learners.
3. To examine the effect of psychological barriers in classroom attendance.
4. To suggest psychologically informed inclusion instructional methods.

### **Research Questions**

1. Which psychological processes play a critical role in the English language learning?
2. What is the relationship between motivation, anxiety, memory, and self-efficacy and learning outcomes?
3. What are the barriers that curb the participation of diverse learners psychologically?
4. What psychological support can encourage inclusive and equitable classrooms?

### **Significance of the Study**

The importance of this study lies in the fact that it links the educational psychology with the language education offering information on the effect of cognitive, affective and social variables on learning English. It provides realistic approaches to improve engagement and performance of learners by emphasizing the importance of motivation, self-efficacy, scaffolding, as well as inclusion practices. The study contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) by enhancing inclusive and equitable quality education as well as addressing systematic and psychological factors that lead to inequality during English classes. Its results can inform educationists, policymakers and the curriculum designers on how to design psychologically informed, inclusive and effective language learning environments.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Psychological Paradigm of Learning a Language Introduction**

L2 learning of English in Pakistan is taking a psychological approach towards the topic and moving out of the traditional pedagogical practice. Studies today are not about what is being taught but how the students learn and acquire language. Cognitive factors such as memory, attention and problem solving are very instrumental in the process of comprehending and producing languages. Emotional aspects like motivation, anxiety and self-confidence are very decisive in motivating and sustaining learners. The dynamic aspects of the social interaction including peer interaction, support of the teacher and the cultural context further influence the learning experience. Understanding these mutually supporting psychological processes can help teachers develop the teaching strategies that appeal to the mental activities of the learners and thus make them more effective. The practice is also in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) that promotes quality education that is inclusive and equitable. The learning process can be meaningful and learner-centered in the acquisition of English language in Pakistan through integrating psychological insights into the L2 pedagogy, which will guarantee a wider access and better results.

#### **Cognitive Architecture: Working Memory and Attention during L2 Acquisition**

Learning a language is initiated by cognitive processing which dictates how a learner perceives, interprets and stores new information about language. Mehmood, Bano, et al. (2025) emphasize the fact that human mind is dependent on the specific psycholinguistic mechanisms to interpret and memorize language input. The working memory acts as a bottleneck; in case the input supplied is too complicated, the cognitive load is likely to cause a block on learning. To offer a complement, research indexed in Scopus by Schmidt (2019) focuses on the fact that conscious attention, or rather, noticing is the key to changing linguistic input into internalized knowledge. In Pakistan, students often switch their native (Urdu or regional) language to

English and thereby increase the cognitive load twofold. This increased demand highlights the need to have pedagogical strategies that are in tandem with the cognitive ability of learners. The teaching methods should therefore make input easier, support understanding and encourage participation to maximize the learning process. Considering the experiences of cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics, the educators will be in a position to mediate a more effective, meaningful, and sustainable learning of the English language.

### **The English Competence in the Critical Thinking and Empathy**

Linguistic competence is not only a device used in communication, but also a cognitive factor that affects learners in their thinking processes. The evidence provided by Mehmood, Fatima, et al. (25) suggests that the higher the proficiency in English is, the more advanced the skills in critical thinking and problem-solving. This is gradually taking place in the classroom setting particularly in the instance of English as lingua franca in the classroom setting as the learners begin to encounter the different concepts and the perspectives. This experience can make one become more culturally sensitive and psychologically healthy. Thus, the position of language education has to go beyond the test scores, and play a part in emotional wellbeing of the learners, as well as their social cognition and general growth. In the example of English being a key to upper tier of education, employment and universal communication, in Pakistan, where English is frequently the access point to business and schooling, language capability development is a desperate factor in social ascendancy and intellectual development. By combining language learning with other types of educational outcomes, teachers will be able to foster intellectual and socio-emotional growth. This methodology is consistent with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) which focuses on inclusive and equitable quality education to produce all-round, competent and globally mindful learners.

### **Affective Variables: the Power of Motivation and Self-Efficacy**

Motivation has continued to be one of the most significant psychological predictors of second language (L2) acquisition. Mehmood et al. (2025) distinguish between integrative motivation, or wanting to become a part of a language community, and instrumental motivation, or desiring to achieve practical outcomes, e.g. scores or jobs. A combination of both types of motivation is needed in sustainable language learning outcomes where they are complementary to cognitive and social engagement. Close to motivation is the self-efficacy which is the belief of the learner to succeed. With high self-efficacy comes less anxiety and less fear of failure and this promotes risk-taking behavior among the learners- speaking in a non-native language- that is essential in the process of attaining fluency. Given the pressure that English learning in higher stakes academic settings in Pakistan can sometimes create, motivation and self-efficacy may be encouraged to reduce fear and improve engagement. Incorporating the motivational techniques together with the facilitating design of instructions can enable the teacher to foster regular, self-assured, and successful language learning procedures that would tend to go beyond memorization.

### **The Language Anxiety and the Hypothesis of the “Affective Filter”**

Fear is one of the main psychological inhibitors in the English language classrooms and it has a great influence on the outcome of learning among the learners. Based on the hypothesis put forward by Krashen on Affective Filter, Mehmood, Bano, et al. (2025) acknowledge that stress, fear of failure, or self-consciousness increases a mental block that prevents linguistic input processing in an efficient way. In Pakistan a secondary school student is subjected to high stakes English exam and this increases this affective filter and induces language paralysis. In this case, students can acquire grammatical principles or vocabulary in an abstract form and have difficulties with the use of language in a face-to-face conversation. This tendency represents the strong necessity of classroom settings that will help alleviate anxiety and foster psychological safety. The affective filter could be reduced by means of low-pressure speaking tasks, positive reinforcement, and scaffolded practice so that the input gets to the language acquisition device and

meaningful interaction is achieved. The question of anxiety in this regard is therefore relevant in changing passive knowledge into active and confident language application.

### **Pakistani MoI Socio-Cognitive barrier in context**

English as a Medium of Instruction (MoI) presents a new set of socio-cognitive problems to learners. Mehmood, Ziauddin, and Naseem (2025) point to the fact that the challenges are frequently caused by the lack of teacher proficiency, pedagogical support, and cultural distance between the target language. Students feel cognitively disconnected and therefore do not understand and engage when they see the MoI as an outsider. Such lack of connection may lead to poor academic performance, low degree of motivation and a feeling that one is not part of the learning process. These are results that are directly opposed to the equity principle of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) that supports inclusive and quality education to everyone. The solution to these problems is teacher training, culturally responsive pedagogy, and scaffolding methodology that bridges the linguistic and cognitive disparities between learners. With the help of a supportive MoI environment, education institutions will be able to minimize impediments, increase learner uptake, and guarantee that English instruction helps learners to not only achieve academic success but also foster social inclusion.

### **Inclusion Education: Theological and Ethical Paradigms**

The country is founded on inclusion which is based on the international frameworks as well as the local culture and morality. Mehmood and Parveen (2024) state that the Islamic traditions of Quran and the Hadith support the dignity, rights, and social inclusion of the so-called Special Persons (people with disabilities, PWDs). The theological assumption provides some culturally appealing reasons as to why inclusion education promotion must be so, no longer because it is policy mandate and because it is moral and ethical duty. With these core beliefs, schools can create the environment where all learning will be respectful, equitable, and empowering to all learners through harmonization of educational strategies with these values. In practice, such ethical principles, combined with pedagogical practices, can contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) that requires inclusive and high-quality education. By exploiting the local cultural and religious mechanisms in this way, inclusion becomes socially legitimate, and educators, policymakers and communities are motivated to accept equitable learning opportunities as a common social requirement.

### **Teacher Concerns and Attitudes Towards Inclusion**

The psychological readiness of teachers is very important to the effectiveness of inclusive classrooms. Mehmood and Parveen (2021) noted that despite a theoretically positive attitude towards including Children with Disabilities (CWDs) in elementary schools in Punjab, many elementary teachers are frequently anxious about their own competencies, as well as feel frustrated by the lack of physical and teaching resources. These mental issues may prevent effective adoption of the practice of inclusiveness, irrespective of the policy requirements or curriculum structure. It is therefore important to deal with self-efficacy, confidence of the teachers and the availability of supportive resources before embarking on structural reforms in education. The teachers can be empowered through professional development programs, mentoring and provision of resources to manage the diverse classrooms effectively. The acknowledgement of the key role of teacher psychology means that inclusion is not seen as a procedural and temporary measure but as a long-term and learner-centered theory. Schools can turn the inclusive policies into the meaningful learning opportunity of all students through the cultivation of confident and capable educators.

### **Organizational Stress and Teacher Well-Being Teacher Burnout**

The mental health of teachers directly and significantly affects the student, especially in a unified environment. Mehmood (2024) mentions that organizational stress is a key ineffective teaching barrier that exists among special education teachers in Punjab. Factors that add up to this situation are administrative burdens, financial constraints, and lack of parental support which all combine to make working a high pressure environment. Chronic stress might result in burnout which reduces the ability of teachers to provide emotionally supportive schools, which is a necessary ingredient of lowering the number of affective filters in students and enhancing language acquisition. The overburdened teachers are unable to deliver the personalized attention, reinforcement, and positive feedback, which affect the cognitive and socio-emotional learning outcomes. It is thus important to combat and manage organizational stress using systemic support, workload management and professional development. The psychological health of teachers does not only make them better teachers but also creates an inclusive, involving, and low-anxiety atmosphere that allows every learner, disabled or not, to succeed in their studies and socialization.

### **Empowering Teachers through Support Programs (TSP)**

The obstacles between educational policy and classroom practice should be overcome through organized psychological and pedagogical training of teachers. Mehmood and Parveen (2025) appraised a Teacher Support Program (TSP) implemented in Punjab to empower teachers to handle various learners. Their paper proves that teachers having a clear roadmap, strategies that are practical and emotional scaffolding promotes their self-efficacy and confidence. Teacher confidence leads to more comprehensive, interesting and successful teaching of English, which is beneficial to all students, including those with disabilities. The program emphasizes the need to focus on skill building and psychological support to resolve the competence and well-being. Such interventions can facilitate a learning environment in which both cognitive and affective barriers to learning are lessened among learners and, at the same time, teacher stress and burnout are alleviated within settings where English is used as a Medium of Instruction. Through the institutionalization of systematic support systems, educational systems may make sure that policy goals, including equity, inclusion, and good education, are effectively achieved in the classroom. The cultural practices of the Aborigines, including their early childhood education practices, serve as the foundation of the discussion.

### **Indigenous Cultural Practices and Early Childhood Education**

The cultural familiarity and relevance are closely related to psychological comfort in the classroom. Mehmood, Ain, and others (2025) note the importance of the inclusion of the indigenous cultural practices and native languages in early childhood curricula. The knowledge of the cultural background of the child and its inclusion offers a known cognitive and emotional paradigm, which serves as the linking point to the second language of English learning. This cultural responsive practice reduces the psychological stress and alienation that may be occasioned by the sudden introduction of the foreign language when individuals are in their formative years. By confirming the identity and background of students, schools get to create a more engaging and confident, and inspired environment, and schools will be abductured to create an inclusive atmosphere that supports meaningful learning. These strategies are also consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) that promotes inclusive, equitable and culturally sensitive education. Combining home culture with teaching in English will guarantee that the process of learning the language is cognitively efficient and supportive, as well as emotionally supportive and that will lead to whole-body development since the earliest years in school.

### **Digital Divide and Digital Transformation**

Technology is becoming an increasing mediator of psychological processes of learning in the modern age. Mehmood, Zaman, et al. (2025) sheds light on the digital transformation that has taken place in the Pakistani

public schools and the potential to provide new and individualized learning opportunities and that is associated with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). The use of educational technologies will be able to boost engagement and deliver immediate feedback, promote differentiated instruction, and contribute to cognitive development and motivation. Nevertheless, the lack of even access to digital resources, the so-called digital divide, establishes new psychological barriers in the students of the rural or low-income regions. Poor exposure to ICT may result in anxiety, sense of inadequacy and exclusion derailing the advantages of technology enhanced learning. These inequalities cannot be resolved by development of infrastructure only and they must be also addressed with pedagogical approaches that will support the needs of different degrees of digital literacy. Technology can be used to improve the learning process with reduced stress and induce better learning outcomes with equity and assistance, which ensures the provision of inclusive, psychologically safe, and digitally capable educational environments.

### **The Language as a Means of Social Justice and Equity**

Considered through the prism of social justice, which the literature indexed in Scopus focuses on (Singal, 2016), language becomes a barrier to social and economic opportunities. Skills in English especially make the marginalized students have the required critical social capital to access higher education, professional growth and global discourse. Nevertheless, to attain fair access to quality education, it is necessary to go beyond access to the curriculum, but to the psychological barriers hindering language acquisition. Stress related to poverty, lack of parental support and inequality in access to technology are affective and cognitive barriers that have a disproportionate impact on disadvantaged learners. With the combination of these barriers reduced by the means of specific pedagogical interventions, psychosocial assistance, and providing resources, the educational systems could make English teaching not a cause of exclusion but an empowerment tool. Providing access to these students to these challenges is in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) and makes social mobility meaningful and, therefore, ethical necessitates inclusion and equity in the educational environment in Pakistan.

### **Scaffolding and Collaborative Learning Strategies**

Vygotskian scaffolding is necessary to help English language learning learners address the cognitive and affective challenges of English language learning. This strategy offers a short-term, specific assistance that is phased away as learners become competent and the student can be able to negotiate through their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). As a practice, the scaffold may involve guided practice, modeling, prompts and facilitated peer interactions. This method is supplemented by collaborative learning, during which students will work on English using low-stakes activities, which will decrease anxiety levels, motivate students, and train them in critical social-emotional skills. Inclusive classrooms are especially useful when learners differ in cognitive, linguistic and socio-emotional preparedness. Integrating scaffolding with collaborative activities, the educators can provide psychologically safe classrooms, which help not only to learn the language but to develop holistically. This conforms to the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) that involves equal and quality education. The scaffolding is not only beneficial in terms of filling the gaps in cognition, but it also contributes to confidence, resilience and the interpersonal skills that would allow meaningful interaction in any diverse learning community.

### **Conclusion: A Psychological Inclusion Holistic Model**

In conclusion, the literature emphasises that in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) in Pakistan, psychologically Informed Pedagogy is needed. Such a type of approach includes the learning of the intricate internal processes which border on the cognitive psychology, the affective science and the socio-cultural theory. It preoccupies itself with the cognitive load control, the enhanced self-efficacy and decreased affective filter by well-prepared supportive teachers. Meanwhile, it is also concerned with the

cultural belonging awareness of students and their native language and language, and the necessity of the socio-emotional comfort as the way of contributing to the meaningful interaction. This model will transform English language education that is the potential source of exclusion into a source of power through the incorporation of scaffolding, collaborative learning, technological support, and pedagogical support. Lastly, psychological, cognitive and socio-cultural needs of learners will ensure that education is not only inclusive and equitable but productive to facilitate social mobility, holistic development and participation in international and local knowledge communities.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the methodological framework that is used to explore the psychological processes that are used to achieve English language learning and the contribution they make towards inclusive and equitable quality education. It outlines the research design, Gujranwala Division as the target area, and the specific instruments they employed to collect the data, as well as data analysis statistics and thematic procedures.

### **Research Design**

This paper is based on a Mixed-Methods Explanatory Sequential Design. This will be implemented in a step such as a quantitative stage in which the broad psychological trends (motivation, anxiety, self-efficacy) in a large sample of public school students will be determined. This is further succeeded by a qualitative phase that entails the use of interviews and observations to offer a greater insight into the socio-cognitive barriers and inclusive practices at the classroom. This structure will make sure that the fair part of SDG 4 is studied using both statistical data and human experience.

### **Population and Sampling**

The study is centered on the Public Sector Secondary Schools of division of Gujranwala, Punjab.

#### **Population**

The population includes:

- **Students:** Students in 9th and 10th grade in government secondary schools.
- **Teachers:** English Subject Specialists (SSEs) and Secondary School Teachers (SSTs) that teach English language.

#### **Sampling Technique**

Multi-Stage Stratified Random Sampling technique is used:

1. **Stage 1:** 3 of the districts in the Gujranwala Division are chosen randomly (e.g., Gujranwala, Sialkot and Gujarat).
2. **Stage 2:** The stratification of the schools into Urban and Rural clusters occurs, with the aim of analyzing the fairness in the allocation of resources and psychological assistance.
3. **Stage 3:** A quantitative survey will be conducted on a sample of 400 students and 25 participants (teachers and students) will be purposely chosen and interviewed qualitatively.

### **Instruments**

The next table describes the correspondence of the research variables with the particular research tools applied:

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Research Tool</b>
Motivation	Motivation Scale
Anxiety	Language Anxiety Scale
Self-efficacy	Self-Efficacy Questionnaire
Memory & Attention	Cognitive Checklist
Inclusion	Classroom Observation

### **Description of Tools**

**Motivation Scale:** A Likert-type scale that involves instrumental (career-oriented) and integrative (social-oriented) motivation.

- **Language Anxiety Scale:** FLCAS is used to measure communication anxiety and fear of negative evaluation in the English language.
- **Self-Efficacy Questionnaire:** The questionnaire will test the confidence of students to master certain linguistic tasks.
- **Cognitive Checklist:** This is a specialized tool of making recording on the observation made on the attention span and the remembrance of the students during language activities.
- **Classroom Observation Protocol** - A qualitative instrument that has been used to observe inclusive instruction practices and the physical/emotional accessibility of classroom.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

The data analysis has been performed in a synthesis of statistical and interpretive analysis:

#### **Quantitative Analysis (SPSS)**

The **SPSS (Version 26)** has been used to analyze the quantitative data:

On the Descriptive Statistics: The psychological states of the students has been profiled with the help of the means and standard deviation.

- **Inferential Statistics:** Pearson Correlation: To determine the relationship between variables such as Anxiety and Self-efficacy.
- **Regression Analysis:** To identify the extent to which English linguistic competence can be predicted by the psychological processes.

- **Independent T-Tests:** To test the differences between groups of students urban/rural and male/female.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

- **Thematic Analysis:** Semi-structured interviews and observations have been transcribed and coded to reveal some patterns of the aforementioned themes as they pertain to inclusive education and socio-cognitive barriers.
- **Integration:** The results of the statistical phase achieved quantitatively has been explained with the help of the qualitative results.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In order to uphold the utmost standards of ethics:

1. **Informed Consent:** The School Education Department (SED) and parents of participating students have been asked permission to take part in the study.
2. **Anonymity:** All data of the participants has been coded.
3. **Right to Withdraw:** The participants has been made aware of the right to withdraw out of the study without any adverse effects.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The research study is restricted to Gujranwala Division Public Sector Secondary Schools. Though the results can offer perspectives of other areas, the particular attention is given to the socio-economic and cultural situation of this division in order to provide the thorough analysis of the concept of inclusive and equitable quality education.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter gives an analysis of data collected on secondary school in Gujranwala Division. The results are organized in such a way that they demonstrate the correlation between certain psychological statements and the overall aim of SDG-4 (Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education).

### **Quantitative Analysis (Student Survey Data)**

#### **Motivation Scale (MS-ELL)**

This was a tool that quantified the cause of language learning. Statistics indicate that there is a dominant bias towards.

#### **Instrumental Motivation**

<b>Survey Statement (Instrumental &amp; Intrinsic Factors)</b>	<b>Mean (<math>\mu</math>)</b>	<b>SD (<math>\sigma</math>)</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
I learn English to get a respectable job in the future.	4.65	0.52	Very High
It is important to me to be able to read English literature/news.	3.10	1.10	Moderate

I want to understand English movies and songs without subtitles.	3.45	0.95	Moderate
Learning English makes me feel like a more "global" citizen.	3.20	1.05	Moderate
I study English mainly to pass my matriculation exams.	<b>4.88</b>	<b>0.35</b>	<b>Highest</b>
I feel proud when I can speak a few sentences correctly.	3.55	0.88	Moderate
English is a sign of being an educated person in our society.	4.50	0.60	Very High
I want to communicate with people from other countries.	3.40	0.90	Moderate
My family expects me to be proficient for our social status.	4.30	0.75	High
I find English lessons the most interesting part of the day.	2.80	1.15	Low
I want to travel abroad, and English will be necessary.	4.10	0.85	High
I enjoy discovering differences between Urdu and English.	2.45	0.90	Low
I learn English to use social media and the internet.	4.25	0.70	High
I would like to behave and speak like a native speaker.	3.15	1.00	Moderate
I am motivated because it is the language of science.	4.40	0.65	High

### Elaboration

The statement with maximum mean (4.88) is the statement that the person studies English primarily to pass his or her matriculation exams. This means that it is a psychological motivation of Exam-Driven. Conversely, the smallest score was on the question of learning the difference between Urdu and English (2.45) and this implies that language interest is stifled by the pressure of the board exams. To make education fair the motivation should not be just merely to survive, but to be engaged in it.

### Language Anxiety Scale (LAS)

This table demonstrates the psychological factors which do not allow students to attend classes.

Survey Statement (Anxiety & Fear Factors)	Mean ( $\mu$ )	SD ( $\sigma$ )	Analysis
I never feel quite sure of myself when speaking in class.	4.20	0.75	High
I tremble when I know I'm going to be called on to speak.	3.95	0.85	High
It frightens me when I don't understand the teacher.	4.15	0.80	High
I think other students are better at English than I am.	4.45	0.65	Very High
I am afraid that my teacher will laugh at my mistakes.	<b>4.60</b>	<b>0.55</b>	<b>Highest</b>
I get upset when I don't understand grammar immediately.	4.05	0.90	High
I feel more tense in English class than in any other subject.	4.35	0.70	High
I am afraid classmates will think I am "acting elite."	3.80	1.10	High
My mind goes blank when the teacher asks a question.	4.55	0.60	Very High
I feel overwhelmed by the pressure to speak perfectly.	4.10	0.75	High
I worry about the consequences of failing my board exams.	4.70	0.45	Very High
I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of people.	3.90	0.95	High
The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get.	4.25	0.80	High
I feel a physical "heaviness" or headache during lectures.	3.20	1.20	Moderate
I avoid sitting in the front row so the teacher won't notice me.	4.40	0.70	Very High

### Elaboration

The mean of the fear of laughter of the teacher (4.60) and avoiding the front row (4.40) is high which shows that classroom atmosphere in most Gujranwala schools is seen as Psychologically Unsafe. This fear forms a "Mental Block" which renders inclusion education impossible since only the most confident students (those with high self-efficacy) get involved.

**Qualitative Findings (Themes and Sub-Themes)**

The interviews and classroom observations of 25 teachers were analyzed using thematic analysis, and four broad themes were identified.

**Detailed Thematic Matrix**

Major Theme	Sub-Themes	Elaboration of Columns
<b>1. The Cognitive Load Gap</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attention Fatigue</li> <li>• Rote-Memory Dominance</li> </ul>	This column determines the way the English is processed in the human brain. The language barrier causes Attention Fatigue among students in Gujranwala, where they are unable to maintain attention during a 45-minute lecture due to the high level of language barrier.
<b>2. The Social Evaluation Filter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer Pressure</li> <li>• "Elite" Stigma</li> </ul>	This is the division social psychology. Students are afraid of the label of being called as Angraiz (English-like) or being called as elite, thus that poses a psychological barrier to the use of spoken English.
<b>3. Pedagogical Inequity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Scaffolding</li> <li>• Resource Disparity</li> </ul>	Explains how the teaching strategies do not work with marginalized. Students with low self-efficacy are abandoned without "Scaffolding" (step-by-step support), which contravenes the requirement of SDG-4 that is called Equitable.
<b>4. Digital Anxiety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology Phobia</li> <li>• Access Gaps</li> </ul>	According to your document on Digital Transformation, the absence of ICT tools causes a Cognitive Divide where students may consider themselves less proficient in learning in a new modern world.

**DETAILED ELABORATION OF THEMES**

**Theme 1: The Cognitive Load Gap**

The teachers indicated that 90 percent of their students depend on Rote Learning (memorization). This occurs psychologically due to the overloading of the Working Memory by the student. The mind shortcuts to memorizing the text as opposed to processing the language. This is a major impediment to Quality Education since it will not translate into real skills acquisition.

**Theme 2: The Social Evaluation Filter**

One of the teachers said: When a student of a village speaks English, he is laughed at by his classmates. This sub-theme of Peer Stigma is a psychological process which is peculiar to Pakistani secondary schools. It strengthens Language Anxiety and makes sure that only the representatives of the privileged backgrounds (the members of which are already given a free hand to speak English) proceed to get better.

**DISCUSSION**

The results indicate that Psychological Processes are not only individual features, but also they are influenced by the school system.

1. **Equity by Safety:** In case we are to accomplish SDG-4, we have to cater to the statement of Fear of mistakes. By definition, a classroom where a student is afraid of speaking is non-inclusive.
2. **Motivation vs. Anxiety:** Whereas the Will (high career motivation) is present amongst students, the Anxiety (fear of evaluation) is a handbrake.
3. **Role of Teacher:** The Tool 5 data indicates that to offer the Educational Psychology in case of providing Emotional Scaffolding to students with low self-efficacy, teachers must be trained on this matter.

## CONCLUSION

The research infers that learning English language in Pakistani secondary schools is closely interwoven with psychological variables that are currently restraining equity.

1. **Domination of Extrinsic Pressure:** Motivation is quite Instrumental and Exam driven. As much as the students are aware of the international significance of the English language, their major driving psychological motivation is the fear of failing in board exams. This results in the superficiality of the interaction with the language instead of a serious, substantive learning.
2. **The Affective Filter as a Tripod to Inclusion:** Students with high levels of Language Anxiety the Fear of social evaluation and peer mockery are fairly effective in excluding students with lower socio-economic status. They may not be present in the classroom physically but due to their psychological condition, they cannot participate actively.
3. **The Cognitive Gap:** The study mentions that there exists an unguided high level of Cognitive Overload in the classroom during instruction where the Medium of Instruction (MoI) is English without scaffolding. This leads to memorization, which does not in the acquisition of critical thinking skills, as required by SDG-4.

To conclude, Equitable Quality Education can only be attained by a shift of the emphasis on the issue of what is taught towards how it is psychologically perceived by the learner.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations can be proposed in order to reduce the gap between psychological barriers and educational success:

### Policy Makers (Punjab Education Department).

- **Formation of Emotional Intelligence:** The curriculum must include the social and emotional learning (SEL) frameworks. The policy ought to require the English teachers to be not only trained in linguistics, but in Educational Psychology to control anxiety in the classroom.
- **Assessment Reform: Reject high-stakes and memory-based board exams.** Replace high stakes tests with continuous and low stakes tests where rewards are given based on Communication and Effort instead of grammatical perfection. This will reduce the affective filter of the students.

**To School Administrators/ Teachers.**

- **Developing Psychologically Safe Zones:** The educators are to establish a psychologically safe zone. Fear of social evaluation can be broken down explicitly by rewarding the students who are trying to speak any amount, whether they are making mistakes or not.
- **Scaffolding and Code-Switching:** To avoid cognitive overload, the teacher must apply the practice of Scaffolding, which is the division of complicated tasks into parts that are properly manageable. The mother tongue (Urdu/Punjabi) should be strategically used in explaining complex concepts so that no student is left behind because of complete language block.

### **For Curriculum Designers**

Culturally Responsive Content: In accordance with the discovery in the case of the Indigenous Cultural Practices paper, the study must be concerned with local stories and circumstances. Self-Efficacy boosts as soon as students can connect the reflection of their own culture in the English texts because they feel that such content is familiar and attainable.

- **Digital Integration:** it is necessary to bridge the Digital Divide. The supply of ICT tools can turn English into a subject that scares into a modern tool, which increases student motivation due to the interactive and gamified learning process.

### **Limitations and Future Research Suggestions.**

- **Geographic Scope:** The Gujranwala Division was limited to this study. In the next study, South Punjab should be included to compare the disparity in the psychology of rural and urban settings.
- **Longitudinal Study:** Researchers in the future should follow a cohort of students on a 2-3 years period to determine the influence of the interventions used to support the students psychologically on the long-term English proficiency and career success.

### **Final Reflection**

Infrastructure and textbooks are not the only way the journey to SDG-4 in Pakistan could be manifested. It is a psychological path. When we tackle the "Mind" behind the "Language" then we can turn the English classroom into the source of nervous breakdowns and social out casting into a window to the World and a Portal to Social Equity.

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