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THE ROLE OF EMOTION-BASED LEARNING IN ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This article examines the role of emotion-based learning in developing English language proficiency among students of higher education institutions in Uzbekistan. Based on modern educational psychology, affective factors, socio-cultural context, and communicative methods, the paper argues that emotional engagement significantly enhances motivation, retention, creativity, and communicative performance. The study analyzes how emotions influence cognitive processes, explores practical tools for integrating emotional learning into English classrooms, and highlights challenges faced in Uzbek higher education. Recommendations are provided for educators to create emotionally supportive and stimulating environments that align with national language policy and current reforms in the education system.

Keywords: emotion-based learning, affective filter, English language proficiency, higher education, Uzbekistan, emotional intelligence, motivation, communicative competence.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has implemented large-scale reforms in foreign language education, prioritizing English as a key tool for global integration, innovation, and academic mobility. While methodological developments have focused primarily on communicative competence, digital resources, and updated curricula, one crucial aspect—**emotion-based learning**—often remains insufficiently explored in local academic discourse.

Learning a foreign language is an inherently emotional process. Anxiety, confidence, curiosity, enjoyment, and even fear shape students' attitudes toward English and influence their learning outcomes. Numerous studies show that when learners experience positive emotions, their brain activates neural networks responsible for memory, creativity, and problem-solving. Conversely, stress and anxiety can inhibit language acquisition.

In Uzbek higher education institutions, where students often face exam pressure, limited speaking practice, and high expectations, the emotional dimension becomes especially important. Therefore, analyzing the role of emotion-based learning in improving English proficiency is essential for strengthening teaching quality and supporting national educational goals.



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Emotional factors in language acquisition. The relationship between emotions and language learning has been widely discussed in second language acquisition (SLA) theories. Key emotional factors include:

- **Motivation** (intrinsic and extrinsic)
- **Anxiety and stress levels**
- **Self-confidence and self-efficacy**
- **Student attitudes toward the target language**
- **Teacher–student rapport**

Positive emotions support the release of dopamine and serotonin—neurotransmitters that enhance memory consolidation and cognitive flexibility. Negative emotions increase cortisol levels, which limit students' ability to concentrate and communicate.

Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis states that emotional barriers such as fear or low motivation block language input from converting into acquired knowledge. This theory strongly supports emotion-based learning: lowering the affective filter helps students absorb language more effectively.

Emotional intelligence (EI) in language education. EI—awareness, control, and expression of one's emotions—helps learners manage stress and maintain motivation. Students with higher EI tend to:

- participate more actively in speaking tasks,
- demonstrate better problem-solving skills,
- show higher levels of communicative competence.

Thus, integrating EI principles into language courses can significantly improve proficiency.

Contemporary reforms and their emotional dimension. Uzbekistan's government promotes English learning through:

- updated curricula,
- CEFR-based assessment,
- expanded international partnerships,
- teacher professional development.

However, less emphasis is placed on **emotional well-being**, even though many students experience:

- fear of making mistakes,
- exam anxiety,
- low confidence in speaking,
- limited exposure to real-life communication.

These emotional challenges directly hinder proficiency development.

Socio-cultural characteristics of Uzbek students. Uzbek students often demonstrate:

- high respect for teachers,
- strong collectivist values,
- fear of public embarrassment.



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These cultural traits affect classroom communication. Many students prefer not to speak unless they are confident in their answer. Therefore, instructors must consciously build emotionally safe learning environments.

Enhancing motivation and engagement. Emotionally rich lessons create internal motivation—students learn not because they “must,” but because they want to. When lessons involve creativity, humor, empathy, or personal relevance, students participate more actively.

Reducing language anxiety. Emotion-based techniques such as:

- positive feedback,
- pair work,
- stress-free speaking tasks,
- supportive classroom climate help reduce anxiety and increase fluency.

Improving memory and retention. Emotional stimuli—stories, personal experiences, music, and visuals—activate long-term memory. Students remember emotionally meaningful content more easily than mechanical grammar rules.

Supporting communicative competence. Emotions encourage authentic communication. When students role-play real-world situations, discuss personal opinions, or work on emotionally relevant topics, their speaking and listening skills develop faster.

Storytelling and narrative techniques. Teachers can use stories that provoke curiosity, empathy, or excitement. Students can create:

- personal narratives,
- digital stories,
- role-plays based on emotional themes.

Narratives help integrate vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation naturally.

Positive classroom climate. Key elements include:

- open communication,
- mutual respect,
- constructive feedback,
- teacher enthusiasm.

Such a climate increases students' confidence and willingness to take risks.

Use of art, media, and music. Music lowers anxiety, films evoke empathy, and visual arts stimulate imagination. Emotionally charged media can serve as effective language input.

Gamification and playful learning. Games produce joy and reduce stress. Gamified activities improve attention, problem-solving, and vocabulary retention.

Mindfulness and emotional awareness practices. Short mindfulness exercises help:

- reduce stress before exams,
- increase concentration,
- regulate emotions.

Students learn to manage negative feelings that interfere with language learning.

Despite its benefits, emotion-based learning faces several obstacles in Uzbekistan:



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Traditional teaching methods. Many educators still rely on grammar-translation or teacher-centered instruction. These methods do not provide emotional engagement.

Large class sizes. Crowded classrooms limit individual attention, reducing opportunities for emotional connection.

Limited teacher training in emotional pedagogy. Most teacher-training programs do not deeply cover emotional intelligence, psychology, or affective methodologies.

Assessment system focused on accuracy. Exam-driven assessment often increases anxiety and discourages experimentation in speaking.

To promote emotion-based English learning, the following steps are recommended:

1. **Integrate emotional intelligence training** into teacher development programs.
2. **Design CEFR-aligned tasks** that emphasize creativity, emotional reflection, and meaningful communication.
3. **Include emotional-based activities** in national English textbooks.
4. **Promote collaborative learning** to support positive peer relationships.
5. **Revise assessment practices**, giving weight to fluency, creativity, and real-world communication.
6. **Develop digital emotional learning resources** such as storytelling apps, gamified platforms, and interactive simulations.

Conclusion. Emotion-based learning plays a vital role in enhancing English language proficiency among university students in Uzbekistan. By understanding the emotional nature of language acquisition and applying affective pedagogical strategies, educators can significantly increase student motivation, confidence, and communicative competence. As Uzbekistan continues to modernize its education system, incorporating emotional learning principles will be essential for preparing English-proficient, globally competitive graduates.

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