IDENTIFYING PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS FOUND AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE

J. Karisma

Department of Linguistics, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore
karishmakarisma95@gmail.com

Abstract

It is observed that communication in a second language has become rigid and inflexible. Students from various backgrounds tend to face various kinds of inhibitions. This study analyses and identifies the inhibitions faced by the students from their point of view and to find out the reasons for having inhibitions while learning English as a second language among the undergraduate students and to suggest corrective measures through technology integrated learning.

Key words: *Inhibitions, Psychological barriers, Second language, Integrated learning*

1. Introduction

Language is at the center of human life. People use it not only to express themselves but also as a medium of communication. English Teaching in India since independence has had several developments in the field of education such as expansion of educational opportunities and universalization of education. English has been gaining greater importance for global communication.

The psychological barrier in pedagogy covers everything that hinders, restrains and eventually reduces the effectiveness of training, education and personal development. *(Lyudmila Alekseevna Verbitskaya 2003).*

It is observed that communication in a second language has become rigid and inflexible. Students from various backgrounds tend to face various kinds of inhibitions. This study analyses and identifies the inhibitions faced by the students from their point of view and to find out the reasons for having inhibitions while learning English as a second language among the undergraduate students and to suggest corrective measures through technology integrated learning.

2. Data

The data was collected from the Salem district of Tamil Nadu. The samples were restricted to 18 respondents. The samples were collected from final year students of the Department of English. The study focuses on the psychological barriers that students face while learning English as a second language. For this research, the psychological barriers have been restricted to 14.

The information regarding various social variables was collected namely; name, age, gender, mother tongue, place of residency, educational qualification, medium of instruction in school, board of studies, parents' education qualification. A questionnaire method is used to collect the data from the students to specify their psychological barriers and to check their LSRW skills.

3. Psychological Barriers

The fourteen psychological barriers chosen for the study are as follows-

3.1 Anglo Phobia

It is a psychological aversion towards English. Those who have Anglo Phobia dislike speaking in English. They feel disinterested to listen when others speak in English *(Vemuri et.al. 2013)*.

3.2 Diffidence

Language learners are afraid to speak in the target language. They fear that they might go wrong and make mistakes *(Vemuri et.al. 2013)*.

3.3 Sudden demand for speaking in English

The speaking skills have been neglected right from basic classes to +2 standards. Here students cannot cope up with sudden changes in the syllabus and hesitate to talk in English all of a sudden in colleges *(Vemuri et.al. 2013)*.

3.4 Emotional Interference

Feeling of sadness, fear, anger and anxiety influences our reception and receptivity to others' ideas. They may find it difficult to concentrate on the content of the message if one is emotionally charged *(Vemuri et.al. 2013)*.

3.5 Fear of failure

It makes many people feel nervous to respond in English, because they concentrate more on others' feelings than that topic. They do not try to cope with nervousness; the students think more about what others feel than the topic at hand.

3.6 Short-term memory

Problem of accessing and activating linguistic knowledge stored in a person's mental lexicon. Unable to hold verbal information for a long time in their working memory while communicating their ideas with others *(Vemuri et.al. 2013)*.

3.7 Prejudices and Bias

Most of the students develop prejudices against other peers who can speak well and reject new ideas, fresh thoughts that are desirable qualities to learn language. This is one of the main barriers to productive skills *(Vemuri et.al. 2013)*.

3.8 Role of gender on psyche

Gender difference plays a vital role in the classroom. It shows a major impact on students' attitudes when the classroom activity demands a learner's response. Gender consciousness and physical changes in the Indian classroom leads to a development of disparity between male and female students when it comes to co-operative learning and performance group tasks or role plays *(Vemuri et.al. 2013)*.

3.9 Attitude

Attitude is the established way in which we think and feel about things and ideas which also creates a psychological communication barrier.

3.10 Self- abasement

A person with self-abasement lacks self-confidence. They believe that they cannot speak the language well and therefore lack the confidence to speak before others.

3.11 Pride

Many students give too much importance to self-image and others' evaluation.
Persons who do well in written English but poor in oral English always suffer from this barrier.

3.12 Lack of self-esteem

Feeling unworthy, incapable, negative thinking and incompetent about self makes it difficult to learn a language.

3.13 Shame

Feeling shy and ashamed to learn a language are main barriers to learning a language effectively. Individuals think that committing a mistake is a great prestige issue.

3.14 Lack of attention

When a person's mind is distracted or preoccupied with other things, the person will not be able to form proper messages, listen to other's ideas and give feedback.

4. Data Analysis

The researcher used descriptive and inferential analysis by applying statistics to understand the features of the specific data. Table 1 shows the group data of psychological barriers found among students and the percentage of fourteen psychological barriers of individuals has been mentioned horizontally and fourteen psychological barriers has been mentioned vertically. Numbers of barriers possessed by individuals were found by using a questionnaire method. It has been evaluated and also cross-checked through a few tasks to check if the individuals have these psychological barriers or not.

S.No.	Name	Individual's Psychological barriers														Total Barriers	Total Percentage
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		
1.	R 1	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	9	64.2
2.	R 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	10	71.4
3.	R 3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	12	85.7
4.	R 4	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	5	35.7
5.	R 5	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-	5	35.7
6.	R 6	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-	5	35.7
7.	R 7	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	7	50
8.	R 8	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	12	85.7
9.	R 9	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	6	42.8
10.	R 10	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	10	71.4
11.	R 11	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	9	64.2
12.	R 12	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	8	57.1
13.	R 13	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	4	28.5
14.	R 14	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	5	35.7
15.	R 15	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	6	42.8
16.	R 16	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	5	35.7
17.	R 17	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11	78.5
18.	R 18	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	5	35.7
	Total	3	17	15	6	15	10	6	10	3	11	10	5	14	9		
	Total Percentage %	16.6	94.4	83.3	3.33	83.3	55.5	33.3	55.5	16.6	61.1	55.5	28	78	50		

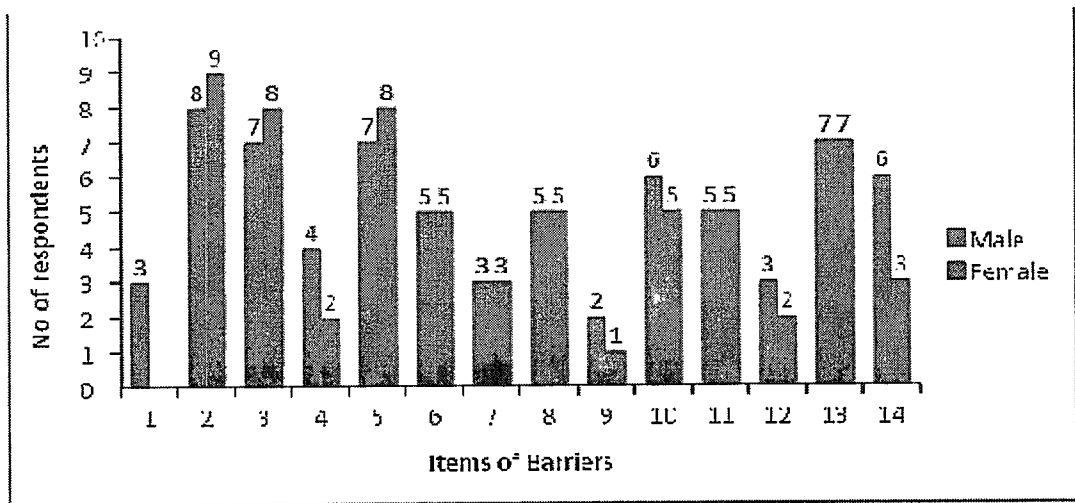**Shows the Group Data of Psychological barriers**

*R-Respondents

TABLE -1

In Table – I the 3rd column represents a fourteen psychological barriers taken for the study where 1 = AngloPhobia, 2 = Diffidence, 3 = Sudden demand for speaking in English, 4 = Emotional Interference, 5 = Fear of failure, 6 = Short-term memory or poor retention, 7 = Prejudice and Bias, 8 = Role of gender on psyche, 9 = Attitude, 10 = Self-abasement, 11 = Pride, 12 = Lack of Self-esteem, 13 = Shame, 14 = Lack of attention.

It indicates that each barrier is encountered by a minimum of 28.5% and maximum of 85.7% by both genders. For male, the highest percentage of barrier is 85.7% and lowest barrier is 35.7%. For females, the highest barrier is 78.5% and lowest barrier is 28.5%.

Diffidence barrier (Afraid and fear of speaking in English) is highest for both the gender of 94.4%. Anglo Phobia (Dislike speaking in English) and Attitude (attitude towards teacher and class is negative) are the lowest barriers that can be found in both genders i.e. 16.6%. Male has the highest percentage in diffidence of 88.8% and lowest in Attitude of 22.2%. Females ·do not have Anglophobia as a barrier and the highest in Diffidence barrier of 100%.

Bar Graph Showing Group Data of Psychological Barriers

BAR GRAPH- 1

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Shows the Social Variables analysis

S.No.	Psychological Barriers	Gender		Locale		Medium of Instruction	
		Male out of 9	Female out of 9	Rural out of 6	Urban out of 12	English out of 9	Tamil out of 9
1.	Anglo Phobia	3	--	3	--	1	2
2.	Diffidence	8	9	6	11	9	8
3.	Sudden demand for speaking in English	7	8	6	9	6	9
4.	Emotional Interference	4	2	3	3	4	2
5.	Fear of failure	7	8	6	9	7	8
6.	Short-term memory or poor retention	5	5	3	7	6	4
7.	Prejudice and Bias	3	3	2	4	1	5
8.	Role of gender on psyche	5	5	5	5	5	5
9.	Attitude	2	1	3	--	1	2
10.	Self-abasement	6	5	4	7	5	6
11.	Pride	5	5	4	6	5	5
12.	Lack of Self-esteem	3	2	2	3	3	2
13.	Shame	7	7	5	9	7	7
14.	Lack of attention	6	3	3	6	5	4
Total		71	63	52	82	65	69

TABLE –II

Table – II shows the overall difference of psychological barriers of respondents based on the selected social variables which are locale and medium of instructions. Here it is inferred that overall male respondents have more number of barriers compared to that of female respondents.

Through this research, one can see the psychological barriers of Tamil medium students from rural areas and also can be concluded that male respondents have the highest number of psychological barriers. The above table also shows the level of psychological barriers faced by Arts college students with reference to different backgrounds of social variables.

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Shows the Group Data

S.No	Initials	Gender	Technology score L	S	R	W	Total score	Percentage %	Degree	Overcome from barriers score L	S	R	W	Total score	Percentage %	Degree	Skill levels score L	S	R	W	Total score	Percentage %	Degree	Total	Degree
1.	KM	M	22	14	17	9	72	96	H	13	16	2	10	31	62	L	8	13	14	15	50	66.6	L	153	L
2.	GL	M	19	13	20	8	60	80	A	13	18	1	8	40	80	A	9	10	15	18	52	69.3	A	152	A
3.	GA	M	20	12	22	8	62	82.6	A	12	18	4	8	42	84	A	8	13	18	24	63	84	A	167	A
4.	RM	M	22	15	22	10	69	92	H	13	18	5	8	44	88	H	10	14	17	25	66	88	A	179	A
5.	KA	M	23	12	22	8	64	85.3	A	14	17	4	9	44	88	H	9	13	17	23	62	82.6	A	170	A
6.	KJ	M	20	12	21	9	62	82.6	A	12	18	4	8	42	84	A	8	13	17	24	63	82.6	A	166	A
7.	AS	M	20	12	22	8	62	82.6	A	12	18	4	8	42	84	A	8	13	18	24	63	84	A	167	A
8.	SJ	M	23	14	22	9	68	90.6	H	14	19	5	9	47	94	H	9	13	18	20	60	83	A	175	A
9.	YV	M	20	12	16	10	58	77.3	A	13	18	4	9	44	88	A	9	15	11	30	65	86.6	A	167	A
10.	SM	F	20	13	22	9	64	85.3	A	12	19	4	8	43	86	A	9	13	20	27	69	92	H	176	H
11.	SB	F	23	12	21	8	64	85.3	A	15	18	5	9	47	94	A	8	13	18	24	63	84	A	174	A
12.	GP	F	21	13	22	8	64	85.3	A	14	18	4	8	44	88	A	10	13	18	28	69	92	H	177	H
13.	MP	F	20	14	21	10	65	86.6	A	14	17	4	9	46	92	A	9	12	19	26	66	83	A	177	A
14.	CA	F	21	12	24	9	66	88	A	14	15	4	10	44	88	A	9	13	20	28	70	93.3	H	180	H
15.	VM	F	22	12	24	10	68	90.6	H	13	17	5	9	44	88	H	9	13	19	29	70	93.3	H	182	H
16.	KS	F	24	13	23	10	70	93.3	H	12	17	4	8	41	82	H	10	13	18	27	68	90.6	A	179	A
17.	KG	F	21	12	23	9	65	86.6	A	14	15	4	9	42	84	A	9	12	20	28	69	92	H	176	H
18.	LS	F	21	12	22	10	65	86.6	A	13	17	2	8	40	80	A	9	13	16	24	62	82.6	A	167	A
Percentage%								86.5%							85.2%							85.1%			

TABLE – III

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The technology score questionnaire was given to the respondents to fill the answers where the questions were based on learning through technology. Due to constant practice of group discussion and extempore, the respondents were asked to mention if they had overcome those psychological barriers or not. They were also asked if their skills have improved through technology and practice through group discussion and extempore.

In Technology based questions, the highest score level of the male respondents were 96% and female were 93.3%, the average score level of the male respondents were 77.3% and female were 85.3%. Overall, the highest value is 96% and average is 77.3%.

In 'Overcome the barrier' based question, the lowest score level of male respondents is 62% where only one male respondent feels that he has not overcome those barriers, average score level is 80% and highest score level is 94%. For female respondents, the highest score is 94% and average value is 80%. Overall highest score level is 94%, average is 80% and lowest is 62%.

LSRW skills based data shows that the lowest score level of male respondents is 66.6%, average score level is 69.3% and highest scoring level is 88%. Highest scoring level of female respondents is 93.3% and average scoring level is 82.6%. Overall highest percentage of LSRW skills is 93.3%, average is 82.6% and lowest value is 66.6%.

Shows the consolidated data

	Gender	Highest	Average	Lowest
Technology	M	96%	77.3%	--
	F	93.3%	85.3%	--
	Over all	96%	77.3%	--
Overcome from barrier	M	94%	80%	62%
	F	94%	80%	--
	Over all	94%	80%	62%
LSRW skills	M	88%	69.3%	66.6%
	F	93.3%	82.6%	--
	Over all	93.3%	82.6%	66.6%

TABLE – IV

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Bar Graph Showing the Group Data of Technology, Overcome From Barriers, Skill Level Score
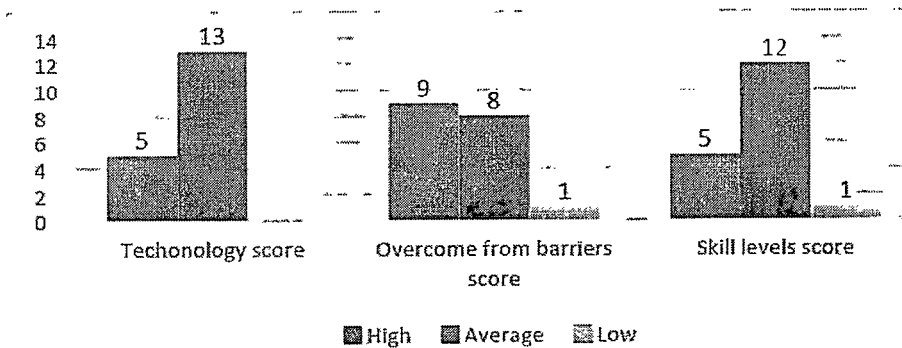
BAR GRAPH– 2

5. Findings of he Study

a) Overall male's highest number of psychological barrier is 85.7%

b) Overall male's lowest number of psychological barrier is 35.7%

c) Overall female's highest number of psychological barrier is 78.5%

d) Overall female's lowest number of psychological barrier is 28.5%

e) 85.2% of respondents had overcome their psychological barrier.

f) Through this research it is also found that the Psychological barriers are more in

    1. Students who studied in Tamil medium

    2. Students of rural areas

    3. Male students

g) Finally, we can conclude that females have improved better when compared to men in their LSRW skills and in overcoming the barriers.

Conclusion

Psychologically "inhibition" means conscious exclusion of unacceptable thoughts or desires. Factors involved in psychological inhibition are attitude and some personality factors such as the 14 barriers mentioned in the paper. Attitude plays a prominent role in the acquisition of a second language. Once their mind-set becomes negative towards learning it is quite difficult to come out of this barrier. Language learners are afraid to speak in their target language. Students who lack self-confidence think that it is difficult to improve communicative ability in oral English and they hesitate to talk in English. Low levels of self-confidence makes it difficult to communicate with others in English. They always try to avoid facing difficulties, sometimes they even have the tendency to be absent from oral English class caused by anglo phobia.

Anxiety is a kind of troubled feeling in the mind caused by fear of failure. It will distract from the task of attending the class and remembering new items. Other distractions in classrooms are sadness, fear, anger and anxiety influences our reception and receptivity to others ideas. Few of them are not able to hold the information for a long time in their memory. Almost half of them feel shy and hesitate to communicate in front of their opposite gender. Few of them feel unworthy, incapable of themselves and this makes them reject the ideas of others.

An appropriate linguistic environment is needed to improve their communicative abilities and to overcome their psychological barriers. Both formal and informal linguistic environments contribute to second language proficiency; an informal environment can provide both the adult and child with the necessary input for the language acquisition. However, in the classroom a formal linguistic environment provides rules based and feedback for the development of the students. In informal talk, speakers generally do not apply grammatical rules consciously.

This present study shows that all these barriers can be rectified through tasks in language laboratories. Conscious learning of the second language may be useful for the children whereas conscious practice of the adults lead them to be more conscious upon the rules and their mistakes. It affects their form, content and fluency. Appropriate tasks help the learner to acquire the second language naturally. Natural acquisition leads to natural and fluent expression. Task based Language Learning facilitates the learners to acquire the second language in a natural way. Action learning helps individuals to focus on LSRW skills and learning skills for lifetime.

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