

THE LEVELS OF AFFECTIVE FILTER IN ONLINE LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG TESL STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITIES IN SELANGOR

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Abstract

In the days following the pandemic, the shift to virtual learning has posed a significant challenge for educators and pupils. However, this drastic and unexpected change has caused students to worry about their educational performance and learning efficiency. It is important to address those scholars who struggled with motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence, all of which led their affective filter levels to shift rapidly in online learning thus underachieving in the classroom due to this affective filter. Therefore, this study investigates the levels of affective filter in online language learning among TESL students in Malaysian universities. The participants were TESL students from Malaysian universities. The inputs of the study were collected through a google form questionnaire in this quantitative research. The findings indicated that access to learning devices, excitement for upcoming lessons, and challenges in learning English has affected their affective filter levels the most. To conclude, students must have learning facilities, lessons must be made easy and English lessons must be less challenging.

Keywords: Motivation, Anxiety, Self-Confidence, Online Learning

INTRODUCTION

In online language learning, the level of affective filter hypothesis is crucial as it determines how much understandable input the acquirer receives and comprehends, as well as how open the acquirer is to the input (Krashen, 1981). Negative emotions in learning, such as lack of confidence, worry, lack of desire, and stress, act as filters that obstruct the learning process. The epidemic, on the other hand, significantly impacted the educational process. The shift from traditional to online learning had a significant psychological impact on pupils. For most teachers and students, online learning will not appear as effective as traditional learning (Ismail Sahin & Mack Shelley, 2020). Since online learning entails a great deal of difficulty for students. Examples include a lack of technology, a slow internet connection, and an uncooperative family. These operate as filters, affecting students' performance in the long run.

The shift to virtual learning has posed a significant challenge for educators and pupils. However, this unexpected and sudden transformation has created worries about pupils' learning quality and academic accomplishment (Sahu, 2020). Students struggle with motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence, all of which rapidly shift their affective filter levels in online learning. Students underachieve in the classroom due to this affective filter.

The findings of this study will aid TESL students at Malaysian Universities who have been suffering from the dramatic transition from physical to virtual learning. Similarly, schools all throughout the nation have been forced to close due to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. The unexpected transformation in the educating and studying activity may have influenced the affective filters of TESL undergraduate students. La Spisa L. (2015), The learner's anxiety, motivation, and self-esteem are all affective filters that can be diminished or boosted by their learning environment. As a result, the level, causes, and outcome of the affective filter in online learning among TESL students in Malaysian Universities are highlighted in this study. The outcomes of this study could help identify pupils experiencing mental barriers because of excessive levels of affective filters.

Furthermore, the discovery of this research may be beneficial in identifying dangers to online learning that may harm students and their participation in online learning classes. The objectives of this research are to 1) examine the level of affective filter in online language learning among TESL students in Malaysian Universities, and 2) investigate how different levels of affective filter influence online language learning among TESL students in Malaysian Universities. The research questions for this study are 1) how does the current online language learning setting influence the level of affective filter of TESL students? And 2) how do the different levels of affective filter affect the performance of TESL students in online learning?

AFFECTIVE FILTER HYPOTHESIS

According to Uquillas and Córdova (2020), the affective filter hypothesis links emotional factors to aspects of acquiring and learning a second language. Uquillas and Córdova (2020) found that emotional elements affect students' educational conduct in research. They found that students did not submit assignments or efficiently use online tools like Zoom, Google Meet, or Google Classroom. Furthermore, students' attendance in virtual classrooms was unique for students owing to such platforms. Another issue was the pupils' emotional filter, which was abnormally high due to their inability to buy computers or internet access (Munni & Hasan, 2020).

The emotional filter of a learner can be either strong or low, meanwhile, the higher the filter, the more likely language acquisition will be hampered. As a result of high levels of worry or stress throughout the learning process, most students in online class learning have a high affective filter. According to Gardner & MacIntyre (1993), language anxiety is "the apprehension felt when a situation requires the use of a second language in which the individual is not completely proficient." Some students haven't fully acclimated to and aren't used to online learning because it's more difficult and nerve-wracking. Additionally, when a person experiences boredom, a lack of self-confidence, or a lack of drive when studying online, the emotional filter rises, preventing language learning. Emotions, attitudes, and motives all impact the process and outcome of language learning (Arnold, 1999). According to Gardner et al (2004), affective variables impact language learning and success.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis, first put out by Dulay and Burt (1977), explains how the Affective Filter serves as a barrier, keeping comprehensible language information from getting to the mental Language Learning Device restricting language learning. Krashen (1982) asserts that the three main factors that affect the Affective Filter are motivation, self-assurance, and anxiety. When a learner wants to learn a language and enjoy it at the same time, they are driven (Gardner, 1985).

By defining language anxiety as "the anxiety experienced when a situation necessitates the use of a second language with which the individual is not entirely skilled," Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) described language anxiety as occurring when a person is not proficient in a second language. Additionally, "derogatory self-related cognitions..., emotions of panic, and physiological reactions such as an elevated heart rate" are characteristics of this anxiety, according to the authors. A different kind of emotional component is anxiety. One of the most well-known and widely felt emotions is this one. Whether the environment is informal (learning languages "on the streets") or formal (in the classroom), language anxiety ranks high among variables affecting language learning, according to Arnold (2000, p. 59). Anxious students won't be able to focus on the learning objectives, will waste their energy, or will simply want to give up on the learning project because they won't be able to collaborate with the lecturers. "Students who feel comfortable in the classroom and like the instructor may seek out additional intake by volunteering... and may not be more tolerant of the teacher as a source of input," writes Krashen (1981, p. 23) (Ni, 2012).

Anxiety facilitates the development of the learner's emotional filter. Learning a language is more difficult when a language learner's emotional filter is high. According to Krashen (1981), input may not reach the brain's acquisition region when language learners are anxious.

"Language learning is a cognitive activity that relies on encoding, storage, and retrieval processes, and anxiety can interfere with each of these by producing a split attention scenario for nervous pupils," writes Macintyre (1995). (See p. 96). Poor performance on listening tests has also been connected to high levels of anxiety (Elkhafaifi, 2005). Lack of enthusiasm to communicate in class has been connected to anxiety over learning a foreign language. (Meihua, Jackson, 2008)

An elevated emotional filter—an intangible psychological barrier that rises or falls in response to a person's stress level, possibly prohibiting or severely restricting contact with the work at hand—is linked to anxiety (Chametzky, 2017).

Motivation

Most scholars and educators agree that motivation "is a very vital, if not the most important factor in language acquisition," without which even "skilled" people cannot attain long-term goals, regardless of the curricula or the teacher. According to Gardner's (1985) interpretation, enthusiasm for second-language acquisition is "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity," and recent educational theory has tended to support this definition. SLA motive therefore relates to the acquirers' inclination and desire. Gardner and Krashen distinguish between integrative and instrumental motives as the two main categories of motives. The first motivation motivates L2 learners, who are eager to converse with speakers of the target language in social settings.. With the latter motivation, however, L2 acquirers are only concerned with passing a test, going overseas to school, travelling, or getting a promotion. These two impulses are categorically good for the SLA and detrimental to it, respectively (Du, 2009).

Harmer (1991) describes motivation as an inner force that encourages people to pursue their dreams. It means that if people find internal drive, they will do all in their power to seek and accomplish it. Additionally, Ellis (1985) asserted that motivation is crucial to the SLA process and that students' motivation influences their language learning. Many researchers have looked into the connection between motivation and English learning or performance. In a study of 120 high school students' emotional states, Wang Zhen (2018) discovered that pupils with high motivation are more likely to achieve higher English scores.

Motivation, according to Dornyei (1998), "provides the major push for initiating second language acquisition and subsequently the driving force to continue the long and sometimes laborious learning process." Many experts believe that emotional barriers are at the root of many poor second language acquisition attempts. Experts believe that the most successful performance in second language acquisition is mostly tied to the emotional variables involved in learning a second language. It is important to understand how language learners learn so that they can be positively instructed utilising affective filters to advance their second language acquisition abilities. While negative impacts might settle the mind and inhibit effective learning, positive effects can provide more significant help for learning (Kavitha, n.d.).

The fact that it eases classroom tension and motivates students to engage more fully in class activities makes it one of the most effective methods of motivation for learning a second or foreign language (Pomerantz & Bell, 2011).

Self-confidence

The personality characteristics of L2 acquirers have a significant impact on learning. The most important of the personality attributes is self-confidence. Success is more likely to come to those who have a positive self-image and enough self-assurance. Self-assured people are open to taking chances, speaking in another language, and expanding their knowledge. Low self-esteem prevents people from taking advantage of opportunities to learn their target language because they fear seeming foolish and making mistakes (Du, 2009).

Self-confidence, among other personal characteristics, plays an important part in developing learners' speaking abilities for various reasons. First, a self-assured learner is never frightened to speak in front of people and is never hesitant to try new things in the language. Second, risk-taking, willingness, self-evaluation, and self-image are all linked to this characteristic. Furthermore, pupils who are extremely self-assured frequently accomplish better speaking success because they trust in their growth and talents. Furthermore, self-confidence is an important component for EFL teachers to consider. Self-confidence is one of the twelve principles of language instruction, according to Brown (2007) (Kuvandikova Sarvinovz Abdumhammadovna, 2022).

Self-confidence means "belief in one's capacity to accomplish anything well." It's a type of upbeat emotional state. According to Krashen (1982), the efficacy of English learning is connected to the personality of the learners. Self-confidence is the most significant personality trait of all. It has also been proven that pupils with high confidence levels may study more effectively and get greater results (Lin & Lin, 2020). According to Krashen's emotional filter theory, persons with high self-confidence and motivation are more likely to learn a second language, while those with low anxiety are more likely to learn a second language (Min, 2016)

Affective Filter affecting The Level of The Affective Filter in Online Language Learning

As a result, language acquisition must take place in a non-threatening setting. What will it be like for students to speak into a microphone (and possibly a camera) in front of people they can't see or with whom they have no practical relationship if they are terrified to do so in a closed classroom with familiar classmates? Doctor Barry Chametzky, a specialist in e-learning and educational technologies, has this to say about it: "Frustration and anxiety are common when online post-secondary foreign language learners struggle with the course material and environment due to their lack of expertise or erroneous expectations. The ensuing imbalance frequently obstructs satisfactory course advancement." (p. Chametzky, 2013) (Rojas, 2020).

It starts when people learn a new language and exhibit inappropriate behaviour because of variables that impact language performance (Dover, 2011).

According to Krashen, the students' performance would suffer if the filter is turned on. As a result, pupils are unable to obtain adequate input, which negatively impacts their academic attainment. According to Krashen, the emotional filter should be lowered for greater comprehension and academic achievement so that adequate input, such as the receiving of fresh ideas, may occur. Students' performance can only be enhanced with such an input (Rahman et al., 2020).

Students have identified stress as a major issue preventing them from performing well in school (Hindman, Glass, Arnkoff, & Maron, 2014) (Binfet et al., 2016).

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

The main objectives of quantitative research methods include objective measurements, examination of the data using statistics, arithmetic, or numbers from polls, assessments, and other types of data gathering, besides the use of computational techniques to manipulate statistical data that has already been acquired. A Likert scale was used for the survey. Quantitative research aims to collect statistical data to understand a particular event better or generalize it to larger populations. An approach to quantitative research known as a descriptive study design examines the levels of affective filter among TESL students at Malaysian universities studying languages online. As a result, this research aims to identify the affective filter level in online language learning among TESL students in Malaysian Universities. In addition, the second research objective of this study is to investigate how different levels of the affective filter affect online language learning among TESL students in Malaysian Universities.

The quantitative method was employed to gather data through a google form questionnaire in this study. This study adopted a questionnaire on Reducing Affective Filters in ELL Programs by Mohammad Junaid Siddiqui (2015). The questionnaire was provided to bachelor in teaching English as a Second Language students in Malaysian Universities. The questionnaire was developed using Google Forms and shared with 50 respondents to collect the necessary data for this study.

Data collection procedure

In this study, a questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool. There were seventeen closed-ended questions on the survey. Closed-ended inquiries about the multiple-choice answers were included in the questionnaires. The items were divided into 2 sections,

Section A. Demographic, Section B(i). Motivation, B(ii). Anxiety, and B(iii). Self-confidence. The instrument consists of 5 Likert-scale choices of answers.

Purposive sampling was used to select its group of respondents, which is an intentional selection of the population. As a result, the respondents for this study were chosen based on their enrollment in the learning institutes. Furthermore, the respondents are from

Malaysian universities. Nonprobability sampling was used to select respondents from the university using this method. In total, 50 students in Teaching English as Second Language

students from Malaysian Universities could participate as respondents in this study. Participants will be both male and female.

The data acquired through the questionnaire's distribution supports the survey in this study. The distribution was carried out with the use of Google Forms. Data collection is a technique for generating information or data that is relevant to the study's objectives. The sort of data

employed in this study to progress with this research was primary data. The Mohammad Junaid Siddiqui (2015) questionnaire was used as the primary data to collect quantitative data from the 50 respondents. All the participants responded to the questionnaire and submitted it. Both males and females will be chosen as participants in this research. The researcher reached out to the respondents over WhatsApp to get in touch with them. An item overview and a brief description of the survey's goals were both included in the online questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The data analysis procedure used quantitative data and descriptive statistics to assist

in classifying the data in a productive way. Furthermore, bar charts with frequency and percentages were used to interpret the respondents' demographic data. Calculations using SPSS were made to determine response percentages and frequency levels.

4.0 FINDINGS SECTION A Demographic

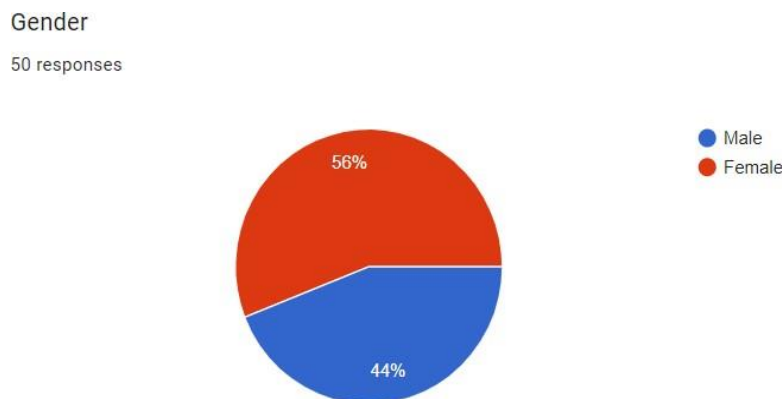
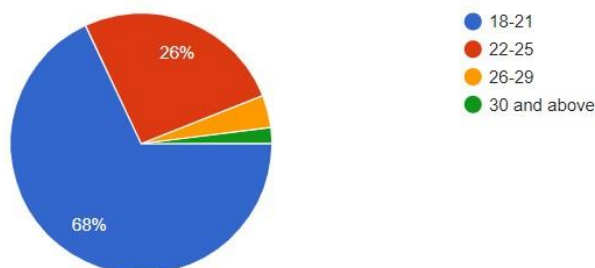


Chart 1 displays the number of respondents who participated in this survey. 56% of 50

students were female and 44% were male respondents. Along these lines, the figure above shows that both male and female respondents answered the questionnaire.

Age

50 responses



According to the chart above, 68 % of the students were between the ages of 18 to 21. 26% were between the ages of 22 to 25. Meanwhile, 4% of respondents were in the age group of 26 to 29 and 2% of 30 and above. Accordingly, we might infer that the majority of establishment responders are between the ages of 18 to 21.

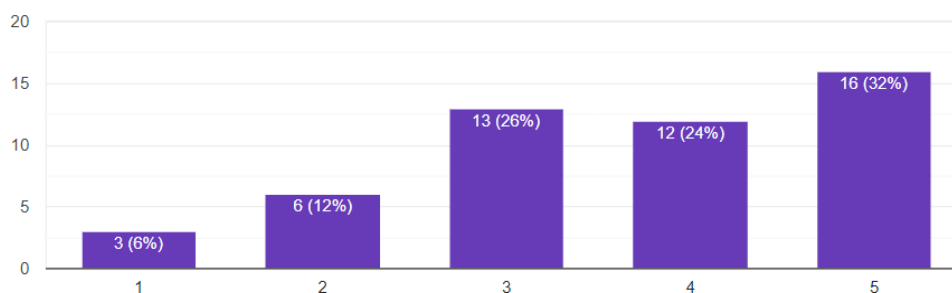
SECTION B (i)

Motivation

My instructor is using inspiring virtual tools to make the online language learning fun.



50 responses

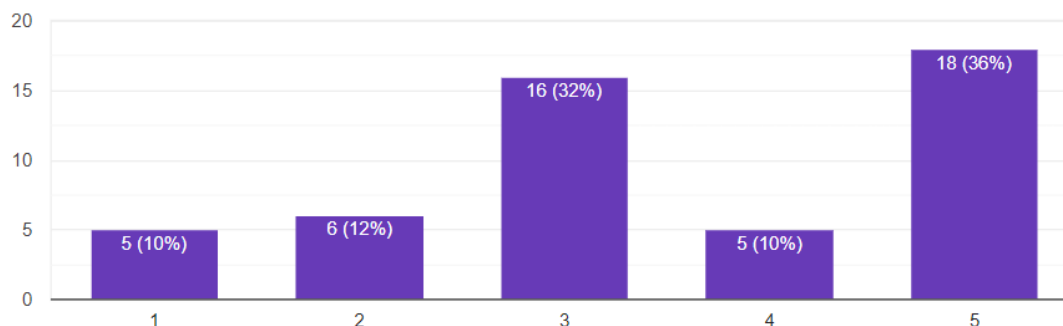


The majority of students, 32%, agreed that the instructor is using inspiring virtual tools to make online language learning fun, However, 6% of students completely disagreed.

I am at ease during the online language learning and has not diminished my ambition to study.



50 responses

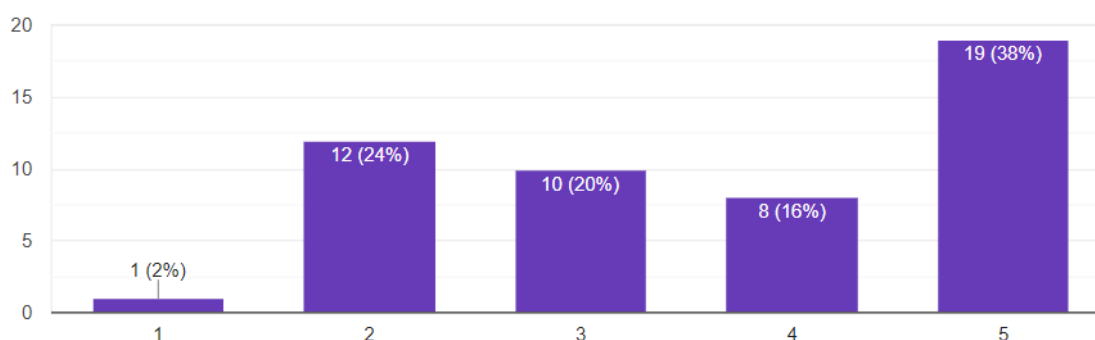


36% of students agreed that they were at ease during the online language learning and had not diminished their ambition to study and 10% completely disagreed with the statement that they were not at ease since the epidemic has not diminished their ambition to study.

My teacher employs engaging teaching methods including games, music, and films in the online language learning courses.



50 responses

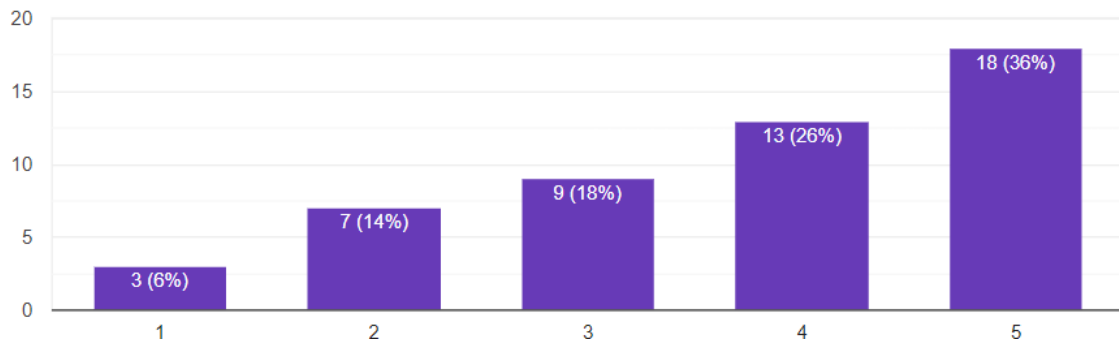


38% of students agreed, while 2% completely disagreed, that the teacher employs engaging teaching methods including games, music, and films in the online language learning courses.

The virtual classroom exercises are inspiring, and I feel comfortable learning English there.



50 responses



“The virtual classroom exercises are inspiring, and I feel comfortable learning English there” was voted in by 36% who agreed and 6% disagreed.

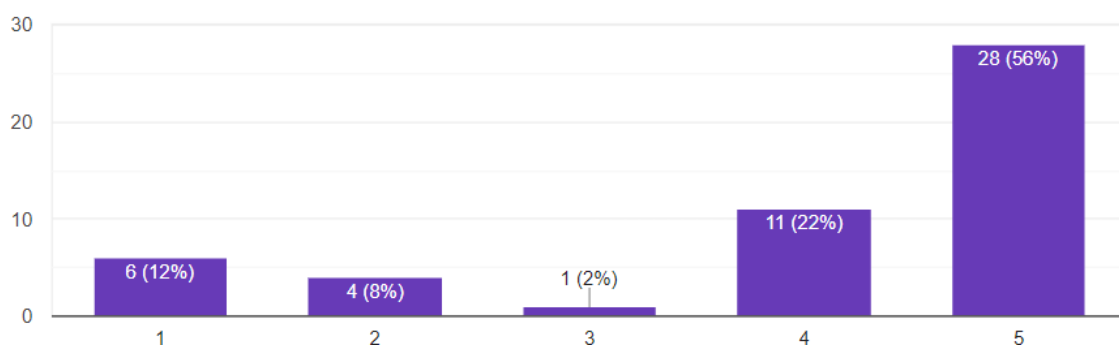
SECTION B (ii)

Anxiety

Because I am unable to complete my teacher's assignments during online language learning on time, I am frustrated.



50 responses

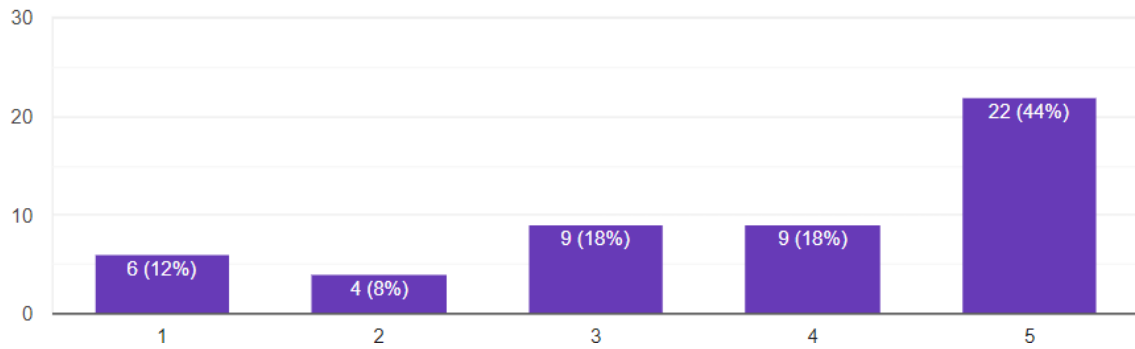


56% of the students agree and 2% neutral to “Because I am unable to complete my teacher’s assignments, I am frustrated”.

When I'm scared, I shut down and avoid doing anything.



50 responses

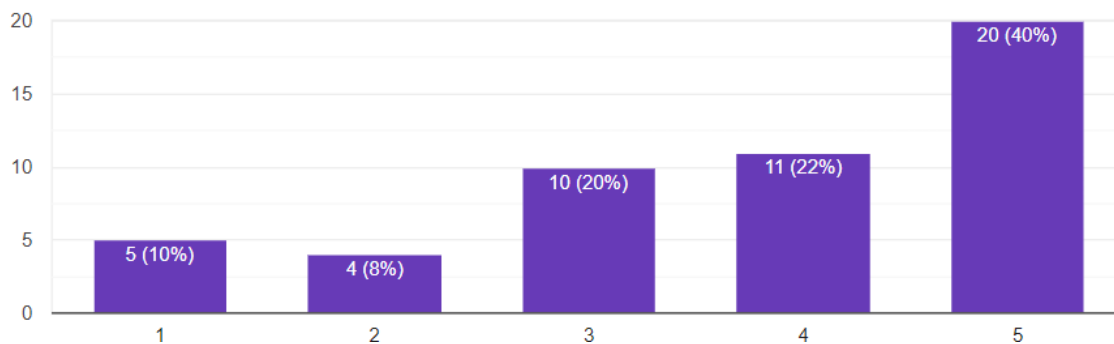


44% of students agreed that they shut themselves down and avoid doing anything when they are scared. 8% of students disagreed with the statement.

During the evaluation, I feel anxious.



50 responses

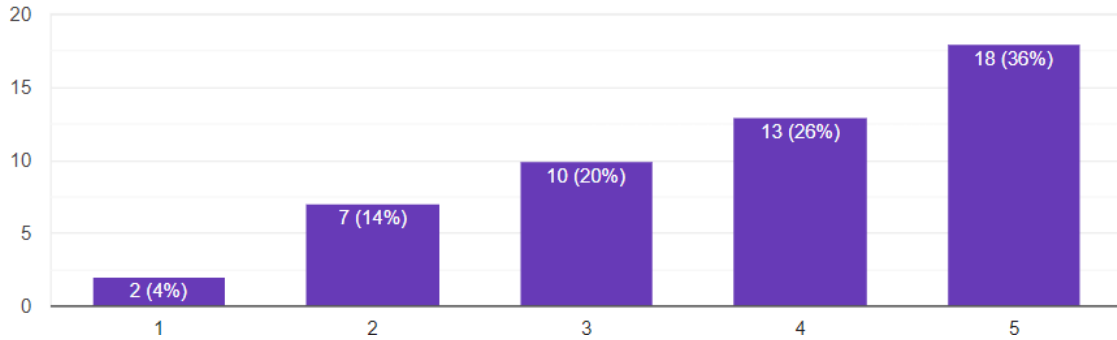


40% of students agreed that they feel anxious during the evaluation while 8% of students disagreed with the statement given.

After every lesson during the online language learning, I feel at ease, and I eagerly anticipate the next one.



50 responses



The question “After every lesson during the online language learning, I feel at ease, and I eagerly anticipate the next one.” received 36% who totally agree and 4% who totally disagree.

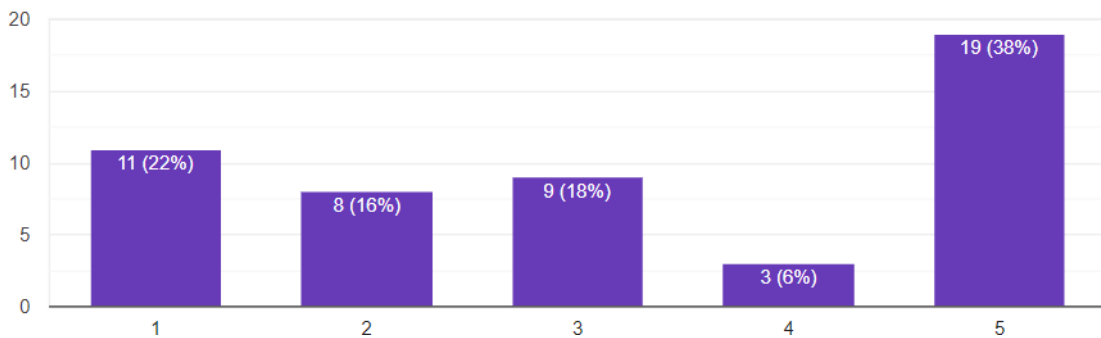
SECTION B (iii)

Self-confidence

When I speak English during the online language learning, I feel awkward.



50 responses

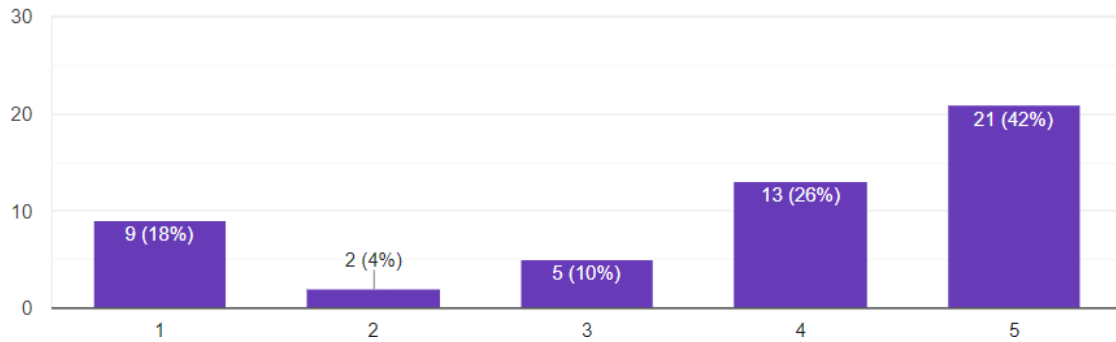


“When I speak English during online language learning, I feel awkward” 38% of students agreed and 6% of the students agreed that they feel awkward when speaking English.

When I speak English incorrectly in the virtual classroom, I become insecure.



50 responses

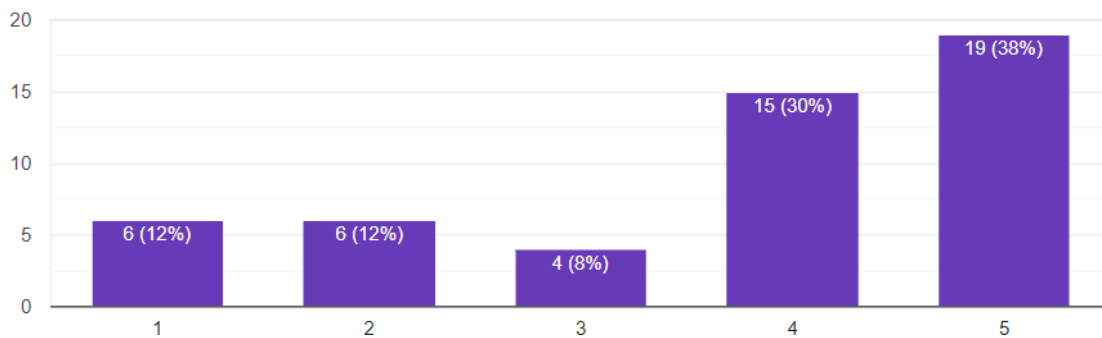


42% of students firmly agreed that they feel insecure speaking English incorrectly in a virtual classroom. While 4% of them disagreed with the statement.

While speaking in English during the online classroom, I have fear.



50 responses

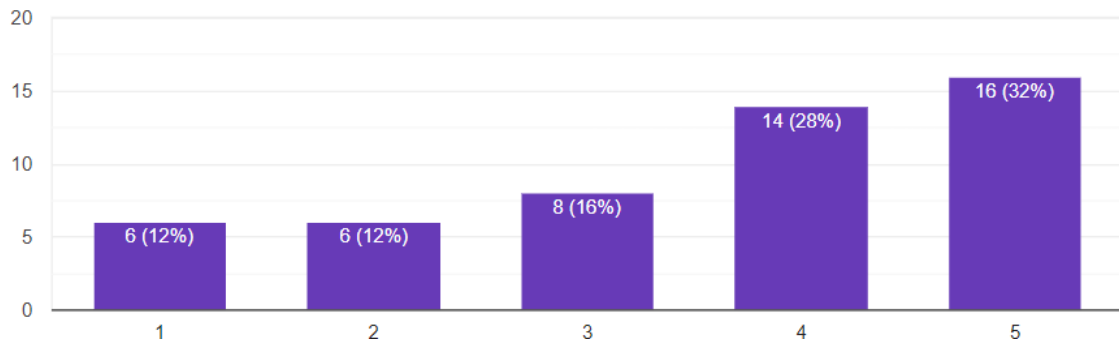


38% of students are afraid to use English in the virtual classroom. 8% of the students gave the statement a neutral response.

When I speak English, I feel at ease.



50 responses

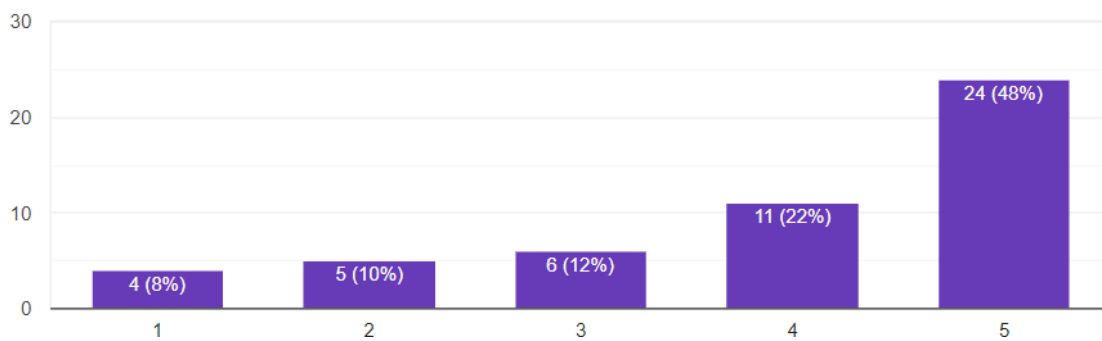


32% of respondents strongly agreed that they frequently feel at ease speaking English. While 12% of respondents completely disagree that speaking English makes them uncomfortable.

When my friends make fun of me when I speak English in front of them, I become afraid.



50 responses

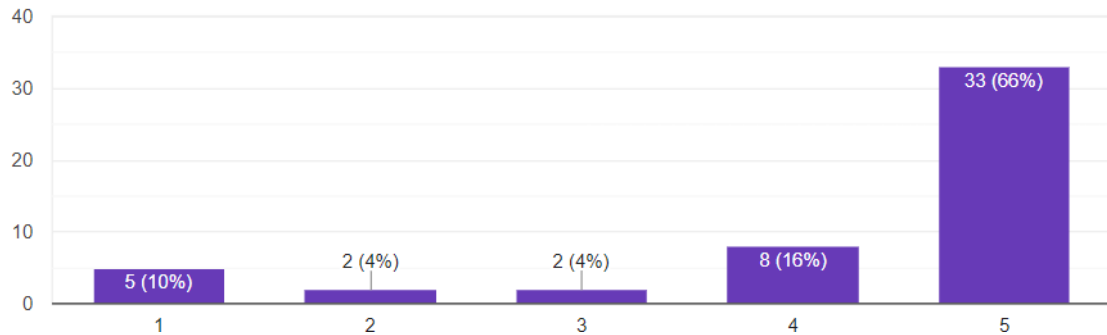


48% of students firmly agreed that they become afraid when their peers make fun of them for speaking English. Only 8% of students report having ever been concerned about their peers making fun of them for speaking English.

I believe that knowing English will help me in the future.



50 responses

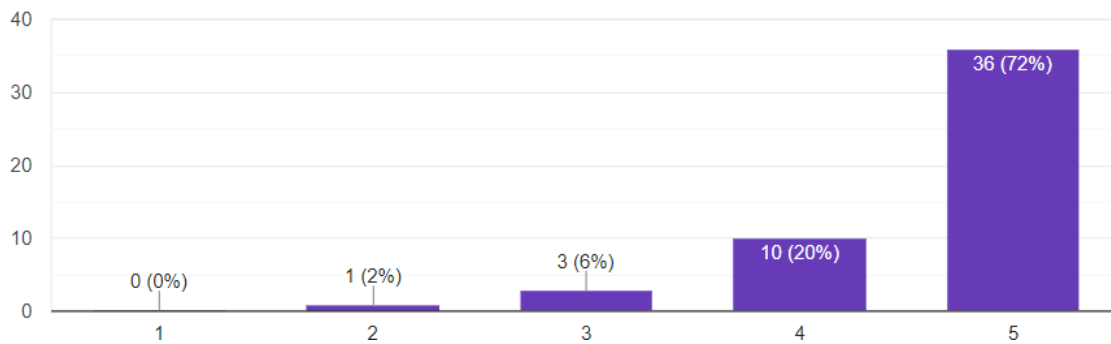


66% of students agree that learning English will benefit them. While disagreeing with the statement received 4%, neutral received the same number.

I find speaking English to be a lot of fun.



50 responses

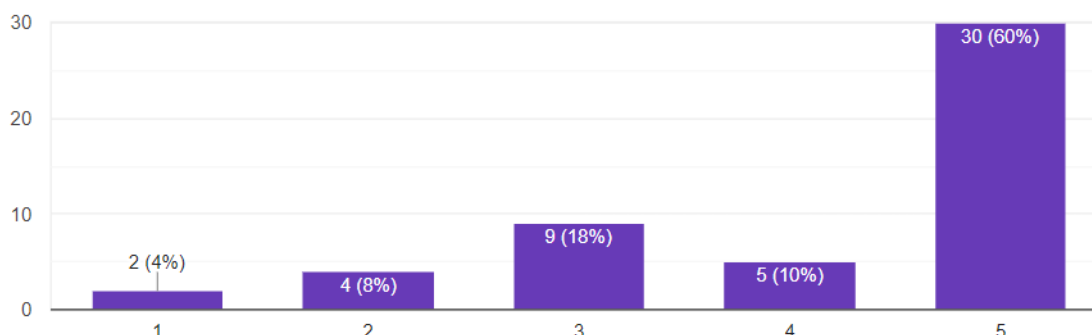


72% of students agreed that speaking English is always a lot of fun and 2% of the students disagreed with the statement.

I believe learning English is challenging.



50 responses



60% of students believe that learning English is challenging, While 4% disagree that learning English is challenging.

DISCUSSIONS

Based on the data collected from 50 respondents, the study indicates that the students have a high affective filter during online language learning. 56% of the pupils said that “Because I am unable to complete my teacher’s assignments, I am frustrated”. The students might face some problems such as internet connections, family issues, and more. Most students shut down and avoid doing anything when scared or anxious, 44% agree and 12% disagree. The result also showed that 40% of TESL students agree while 8% disagree that they feel anxious during evaluation. Not only that, 36% responded they feel awkward sometimes, maybe because their mother tongue is different and 58% believe that learning English is challenging.

Moreover, 42% of TESL students become insecure when speaking English incorrectly in the virtual classroom while 4% disagree with the statement. 38% of the respondents also are afraid while speaking English in the online classroom and 4% are unsure of the statement. 48% of students become afraid when their friends make fun of them when speaking English while 8% deny the statement.

Based on the data collected, although TESL students have a high affective filter when learning a language online, they are still motivated to perform well in the virtual class. This is due to the high level of motivation that they had during the online classroom language learning. 36% equivalent to 18 students agreed that they feel at ease during online language learning and have not diminished their ambition to study. Meanwhile, 32% (16 students) agreed with score 3 (neutral). 32% of students, which is 18 students, agreed that the instructors are using inspiring virtual tools to make online language learning fun. 38% of them also agreed that their teachers employ engaging teaching methods including games, music, and films in the online language learning courses. 36% of TESL students also agreed that the virtual classroom exercises are inspiring, and they feel comfortable learning English there. Next, 66% believe that knowing English will help them in the future while 4% disagree and are unsure. 74% of them find speaking English to be a lot of fun while only 2% disagree.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

To conclude, this paper investigates the levels of affective filter in online language learning among TESL students in Malaysian universities. This study revealed that the respondents have a high affective filter due to anxiety and lack of self-confidence. This is due to the inability to complete my teacher's assignments during online language learning on time and they become frustrated. Due to that, during the evaluation, they feel anxious.

They lack self-confidence because of the fear of judgment when speaking English. Nevertheless, they are motivated to learn the English language because their teacher employs engaging teaching methods.

Based on the findings, we can suggest that to lower their anxiety, teachers should be more flexible to complete their assignments as they need more time to adapt to online learning. Then, teachers should make them more comfortable and reassure them to be more confident.

Among the study's limitations are that not all students have the time to take the survey due to their other responsibilities, such as studying, doing assignments, and seating for examinations. This also has impacted the researchers to allocate more time to find more respondents and collect more data. Another limitation is the time constraint that the researchers had in completing the study, which restricted the opportunities for gathering more participants and data

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