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Psychological Barriers and Growth Mindset in Foreign Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

Language learning is not merely a cognitive process; it is an emotional and psychological journey shaped by confidence, vulnerability, and mindset. This study explores key psychological barriers—including anxiety, fear of judgment, perfectionism, and cognitive fatigue—that hinder learners' progress and presents strategies to foster a growth-oriented approach. Drawing on qualitative data from language learners, the findings revealed that high-stakes environments, excessive teacher correction, and an overemphasis on accuracy often suppress fluency and self-expression. In contrast, adopting mistake-tolerant practices—such as gamified risk-taking and reframing errors as valuable achievements—can foster a more supportive and growth-oriented learning environment. These strategies not only normalize error-making but also enhance metalinguistic awareness, promote intrinsic motivation, and support long-term retention. Additionally, the study identifies specific emotional and social stressors—such as internalized negative self-talk, method paralysis, and unrealistic goal-setting—that contribute to mental blocks and disengagement. To address these barriers, this research advocates for a paradigm shift in TESOL education—one that integrates psychological support, emotional safety, and growth mindset principles into instructional design. A model TESOL syllabus and ten strategies for promoting mistake tolerance are proposed, incorporating reflective practices, low-pressure speaking tasks, and self-directed error analysis. By reframing mistakes as necessary steps in learning and building environments that empower students to take linguistic risks, educators can cultivate both communicative confidence and emotional resilience.

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1. Introduction

As a global lingua franca, English offers access to opportunities in education, business, and intercultural communication^[1]. Despite its widespread importance, many learners struggle to achieve fluency. Learning English as a foreign language presents various challenges influenced by pedagogical approaches, learner motivation, and sociocultural dynamics.

Language learning is not merely a cognitive process but an emotional journey shaped by psychological barriers such as anxiety, fear of judgment, and self-doubt^[2]. While traditional pedagogy prioritizes grammatical accuracy, this study argues that fostering a growth mindset—a belief in the malleability of language abilities—can transform these barriers into opportunities for resilience^[3–5]. This oversight has created a gap in the understanding of emotions such as anxiety, fear of judgment, and self-doubt, which disrupt language acquisition^[6,7]. Emerging research highlights the role of growth mindsets in mitigating these challenges^[3,8], yet empirical evidence linking mindset interventions to language learning outcomes remains sparse^[9]. Drawing on qualitative data from English language learners in Istanbul, Turkey—a context shaped by high-stakes testing and sociocultural pressures—this study demonstrates how growth mindset strategies (e.g., reframing mistakes as learning tools), self-directed learning (e.g., personalized digital resources), and delayed corrective feedback mitigate psychological barriers such as anxiety and self-doubt^[10]. These approaches not only lower the affective filter but also foster resilience, enabling learners to sustain motivation and navigate real-world communication challenges with greater confidence^[11].

This study addresses this gap by examining the interplay between psychological barriers and adaptive strategies in language learning. Drawing on learner narratives, this study identifies how high-pressure environments, teacher corrections, and cognitive overload erode confidence, while growth-oriented practices—such as reframing mistakes and self-directed learning—promote resilience^[12,13]. By synthesizing these insights, this study provides a holistic framework

for educators to balance linguistic rigor with emotional support.

The affective filter hypothesis posits that anxiety inhibits language processing, a phenomenon evident in learners' difficulties with exam settings and spontaneous communication^[11,14,15]. However, few studies have explored how learners navigate these barriers independently or reinterpret setbacks as growth opportunities^[16]. This research fills this void by offering actionable strategies to transform fear into motivation.

Ultimately, this study advocates for a paradigm shift in language education—one that integrates psychological resilience into curricula. By validating learners' emotional experiences and promoting growth mindsets, educators can reduce attrition and foster lifelong language engagement^[17,18].

2. Literature Review

Psychological barriers such as foreign language anxiety and fear of making mistakes often initiate a self-perpetuating cycle of avoidance, in which learners withdraw from speaking opportunities and thus delay progress^[6,19]. In contrast, growth mindset theory offers a constructive framework for breaking this cycle^[3]. Learners who perceive mistakes as integral to the learning process—rather than as indicators of failure—demonstrate greater resilience and persistence. This dynamic relationship between psychological obstacles and adaptive coping strategies forms the theoretical backbone of this study. It synthesizes the affective filter hypothesis, which highlights the emotional conditions necessary for language acquisition, with contemporary research on learner resilience and mindset flexibility^[9,11].

Psychological barriers to language learning have been extensively documented. Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a critical impediment, manifesting as fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension^[19]. Anxiety disrupts fluency^[14,19]. Similarly, cognitive interference during high-stakes tasks, such as exams, impairs recall—a phenomenon reflected in learners' difficulties^[20].

Fear of mistakes, a subset of FLA, discourages risk-

taking and practice^[6]. Perfectionism stifles language experimentation^[21]. Social pressure further compounds this issue, as learners internalize real or imagined criticism^[22]. Such dynamics reinforce a cycle of avoidance, corroborating the assertion that emotional barriers perpetuate stagnation^[13].

While necessary, teacher corrections can intensify anxiety when they are overly critical^[23]. Loss of confidence after corrections reflects that excessive focus on formality inhibits communicative competence^[24]. Balanced feedback, prioritizing fluency over accuracy—a principle neglected in cases in which rigid corrections deter learners^[25].

Growth mindset theory offers a counterpoint, namely, framing mistakes as learning opportunities^[3]. Learners with growth mindsets persist despite setbacks^[8]. Similarly, resilience building through incremental goals^[16].

Self-directed learning (SDL) empowers learners to overcome traditional pedagogical limitations^[26]. This independent study aligns with the concept of learner autonomy, which enhances engagement and adaptability. SDL also mitigates mental fatigue by allowing personalized pacing^[27]. Motivation plays a critical role in language acquisition and influences persistence and performance^[12]. Autonomous learning, supported by resources such as online communities and language exchange platforms, empowers learners to take control of their progress^[28]. The input hypothesis underscores the importance of exposure to comprehensible input, which technology can provide in diverse forms^[11]. Digital platforms such as Duolingo and YouTube have emerged as valuable language-learning tools, offering interactive and immersive experiences. Studies have highlighted that technology enables learners to practice at their own pace and explore topics of interest, thus fostering intrinsic motivation^[29]. However, these tools are most effective when used in conjunction with structured educational programs (Harmer^[30]).

High-stakes communication, such as job interviews, introduces unique stressors^[2]. Performance pressure undermines preparedness for metacognitive reflection^[5,31].

In many contexts, especially in non-English-speaking countries, teaching English is often constrained by traditional methodologies that prioritize rote memorization over communicative competence (Harmer^[30]). This disconnect between classroom practices and real-world needs has led

to a growing emphasis on learner-centered approaches that incorporate technology and real-life applications^[32].

Studies have revealed that language acquisition is most effective when learners are motivated by personal goals and cultural relevance^[12,33]. However, in settings where English is treated solely as an academic subject, learners frequently experience frustration and disengagement^[10]. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that considers linguistic, cognitive, and emotional factors.

The introduction of English in education often emphasizes basic vocabulary and grammar without practical application, resulting in limited long-term engagement. Language acquisition requires meaningful interaction, which is often absent in traditional classroom settings^[34]. Early exposure to English should include activities that integrate listening and speaking because these foundational skills set the stage for future development^[35].

A significant barrier to effective language learning in many contexts is the overemphasis on grammar. Grammar-focused instruction often leads to disengagement, particularly when it lacks communicative elements^[36]. The “exam culture” prevalent in many education systems reinforces this issue, as learners prioritize test preparation over language use^[37].

Fear of making mistakes and lack of confidence are common psychological barriers to language learning. These challenges are particularly acute in oral communication, where learners feel vulnerable to judgment^[38]. Creating supportive environments that encourage practice without the fear of failure is essential for developing speaking skills (Thornbury^[29]).

Group activities and peer-to-peer interactions enhance language acquisition by creating opportunities for authentic communication^[39]. Collaborative learning aligns with social constructivist theories, which emphasize the role of social interaction in developing linguistic competence (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson^[36]). The effectiveness of cooperative tasks is improving both fluency and accuracy^[40].

In sum, the existing literature underscores the prevalence of psychological barriers but underexplored interventions fostering growth mindsets. This study bridges this gap by linking adaptive strategies—goal-setting, SDL, and reframing mistakes—to tangible learner outcomes.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to investigate the lived experiences of foreign language learners, with a focus on psychological barriers and growth mindset strategies. The research design aligns with the thematic analysis framework to systematically identify themes through learner narratives, comprising direct quotations addressing classroom challenges, self-directed learning, and high-stakes communication^[41].

3.1. Data Collection

30 Participants were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure diversity across age (18–35 years), proficiency levels (CEFR A2–C1), and learning contexts (18 classroom-based learners and 12 self-directed learners). Recruitment occurred via flyers and online forums across several universities in Istanbul.

Semi-structured interviews: Each lasting 45–60 minutes. Sample questions included: *“Describe a situation where anxiety affected your ability to speak English”*; *“How do you respond to corrections from teachers or peers?”*; and *“What strategies help you stay motivated during setbacks?”*

3.2. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis followed a six-phase framework^[41]:

1. **Familiarization:** Researchers repeatedly read interview transcripts and field notes to identify preliminary patterns.
2. **Initial Coding:** Generated 58 codes (e.g., “fear of judgment,” “SDL empowerment,” “cognitive overload”).
3. **Theme Development:** Codes were grouped into overarching themes such as psychological barriers (e.g., exam anxiety, fear of mistakes), growth mindset strategies (e.g., reframing errors, goal-setting), impact of teacher feedback, role of technology, and autonomy in learning.
4. **Theme Review:** Themes were refined through iterative discussions.
5. **Theme Definition:** Final themes were mapped to the study’s theoretical framework, integrating Dweck’s Growth Mindset Theory.

6. **Reporting:** Findings were structured around key themes, supported by illustrative participant quotations.

3.3. Data Saturation

Data saturation was achieved at $n = 17$ interviews, with no new themes emerging in the final 13 interviews^[42].

3.4. Limitations

Three key limitations were acknowledged:

1. **Sample Bias:** Overrepresentation of university students (18–35 years) limits generalizability to older learners or non-academic contexts.
2. **Self-Reported Data:** Subjective accounts may not fully align with objective proficiency measures (e.g., standardized test scores).
3. **Cultural Context:** Findings reflect experiences in Istanbul, Turkey; cultural variations in language anxiety (e.g., East Asian vs. European contexts) were not explored.

4. Findings: Psychological Barriers to Growth Mindsets

4.1. Psychological Barriers to Language Learning

Language learning is deeply connected to emotions, and many learners experience anxiety, fear of mistakes, self-doubt, and mental fatigue, which can hinder their progress.

This section explores the psychological barriers that hinder effective language learning, as reported by learners themselves. Drawing on rich qualitative accounts, it identifies ten core challenges: performance anxiety, fear of mistakes, social pressure, self-doubt, high-stakes communication, cognitive overload, teacher correction styles, internalized negative self-talk, method paralysis, and burnout from unrealistic goals. Together, these barriers illustrate how emotional and mental factors—such as fear of judgment, overcorrection, and information overload—disrupt fluency, erode confidence, and discourage risk-taking. The findings underscore the need for supportive, low-stakes, and emotionally safe environments that promote resilience, normalize error,

and empower learners to overcome internal blocks.

4.1.1. Examination and Performance Anxiety

Timed examinations and high-stakes communication scenarios frequently evoke significant anxiety in language learners, impairing their fluency and cognitive functioning. Participants described intense pressure to perform within strict time limits, often leading to verbal disfluencies and cognitive blocks. For instance, Student x14 recounted, *“While practicing, I felt a mix of nerves and pressure. The timer made it especially stressful, and I kept stumbling over my words.”* This sense of urgency created by external constraints, such as timers or formal speaking tasks, often resulted in mental blankness. As the same student noted, *“I was trying to explain my opinion on a topic, and I just blanked. The words would not come out right, and I couldn’t form coherent sentences quickly enough.”*

These high-pressure conditions not only impaired fluency but also triggered physiological symptoms of anxiety, such as panic and mental block. Student x16 echoed this experience, stating, *“I kept stumbling over my words and could not express my thoughts clearly within the time limit. Each time I tried to articulate my thoughts, I felt this rising panic.”* Such testimonies highlight the detrimental impact of performance-based anxiety on learners’ communicative competence, reinforcing the need for low-stakes, confidence-building activities in language instruction.

4.1.2. Fear of Making Mistakes and Anxiety

The anticipation of making mistakes and the fear of being judged by others emerged as a prominent barrier to language development, particularly in oral communication. This fear often prevents learners from speaking up, leading to reduced practice opportunities and stagnation in fluency. Student x2 shared, *“Mistakes in English made me feel so nervous that I often avoided speaking,”* reflecting a common defensive response to perceived risk in language use.

The emotional tension tied to speaking accurately can be overwhelming. Student x4 described this fear vividly: *“Speaking in English felt like walking on eggshells—I was quite afraid to make mistakes.”* Such apprehension fosters a hyper-awareness of correctness, which undermines spontaneous speech and reinforces anxiety-driven silence.

This heightened fear of error not only erodes confidence but also disrupts the natural flow of communication.

As Student x10 noted, *“The thought of making an error made me lose confidence completely.”* Together, these accounts reveal a cycle of hesitation, self-doubt, and avoidance, all of which significantly inhibit language acquisition and the development of communicative competence.

Students’ perspectives echoed this challenge, observing that fear of being wrong often leads to learner silence, avoidance, and eventual disengagement. One explained (x26), *“When I am afraid of making mistakes, I won’t participate... eventually, I drop out.”* This aligns with student accounts and underscores the importance of teachers actively **normalizing error** through humor, reflection, and mindset-building strategies.

4.1.3. Social Pressure and Fear of Judgment

Social dynamics play a critical role in shaping language learners’ willingness to communicate. Many learners experience heightened anxiety when speaking English in front of others due to fear of criticism, embarrassment, or being misunderstood. This fear often leads to silence and withdrawal, impeding the development of fluency. Student x1 expressed this sentiment clearly: *“It felt safer to remain silent than to risk saying something wrong in English.”* The perceived risk of public error often outweighs the potential benefit of practicing spoken language.

For some, the mere anticipation of judgment was enough to create hesitation. As Student x7 reflected, *“I hesitated every time I needed to speak English because I feared judgment.”* This constant self-monitoring in social settings compounds anxiety, turning communication into a stressful performance rather than a learning opportunity.

The emotional burden of potential misunderstanding also discourages learners from engaging. Student x5 noted, *“The fear of being misunderstood made me reluctant to talk in English.”* Such fears reinforce a self-perpetuating cycle: the less learners speak, the more intimidating it becomes to do so, ultimately eroding confidence and delaying language development.

4.1.4. Self-Doubt

Persistent self-doubt can significantly hinder language acquisition by undermining learners’ confidence and discouraging them from taking the necessary risks for progress. When learners begin to question their own capabilities, they often withdraw from meaningful communication and lose

motivation. Student x17 captured this internal struggle, stating, *“It made me question whether the effort I had put in was worth it, and I started doubting my abilities.”*

This doubt is often compounded by emotional disappointment when perceived effort does not yield expected results. As Student x19 reflected, *“I felt this intense wave of disappointment and disbelief. All I could think about was how much effort I had put into preparing and how it felt like it was all for nothing.”* Such experiences of stagnation can lead to discouragement and a sense of futility.

When learners no longer see evidence of improvement, even consistent effort can feel unrewarding. Student x23 shared, *“There were times when I felt like I wasn’t improving at all, despite all my efforts. During these moments, it was tempting to give up or take a break from studying.”* These narratives illustrate how self-doubt, if left unaddressed, can erode motivation and lead to disengagement from the language learning process.

4.1.5. High-Stakes Communication Challenges

High-pressure scenarios such as visa interviews, job applications, and formal assessments often provoke intense stress and performance anxiety among language learners. These real-world interactions require spontaneous communication under scrutiny, which can impair recall, disrupt fluency, and trigger self-doubt. Student x21 reflected on the emotional strain of such experiences, stating, *“I was afraid of failing my visa interview, but using recordings to track my progress improved my fluency and helped calm my nerves.”* This highlights both the anxiety induced by high-stakes situations and the potential of strategic preparation to mitigate it.

The pressure to perform can overwhelm even well-prepared learners. Student x22 recalled, *“I faced a big challenge during a job interview conducted entirely in English. My mind went blank several times, and I felt like I was failing to make a good impression.”* This experience reflects the cognitive overload that often accompanies formal communication under pressure.

Moreover, the dynamic nature of authentic conversations—particularly with native speakers—can make learners feel unprepared. As Student x23 shared, *“As soon as the conversation started, I realized I was struggling to keep up. The native speaker was using idiomatic expressions that I had never encountered before.”* Such linguistic unfamiliar-

ity can intensify anxiety and diminish learners’ confidence in their communicative competence.

This challenge is compounded by overanalysis and hesitation, as described by Student x25: *“I found myself second-guessing every word and sentence, which slowed down my responses and made the conversation feel disjointed.”* These testimonies underscore how unpredictable and fast-paced real-life interactions can heighten anxiety, particularly when learners are navigating unfamiliar vocabulary, cultural nuances, or professional expectations.

4.1.6. Mental Fatigue and Cognitive Overload

Language learning often demands sustained cognitive effort, particularly when learners engage in constant self-monitoring or depend heavily on mental translation. This overanalysis can lead to mental fatigue, slowed responses, and reduced communicative effectiveness. Student x24 described the toll of this mental strain: *“Translating every word mentally slowed my responses and increased frustration.”* Such dependence on internal translation not only delays speech production but also heightens stress during real-time interactions.

Similarly, excessive second-guessing of language choices can disrupt the natural flow of communication. Student x25 noted, *“Second-guessing every sentence made conversations feel disjointed and exhausting.”* This internal scrutiny, while rooted in a desire for accuracy, often backfires—leading to broken speech patterns, reduced confidence, and cognitive overload.

Ultimately, this form of mental exhaustion undermines learners’ fluency by creating a cycle of hesitation and self-doubt. As learners become preoccupied with correctness rather than communication, their ability to engage in spontaneous conversation diminishes, often resulting in breakdowns in understanding and expression.

4.1.7. Impact of Teacher Corrections on Confidence

Excessive correction, particularly when focused on formality and minor mistakes, can discourage learners and reduce their confidence in speaking.

Focusing on Formality

An overemphasis on formal language use in instructional settings can undermine learners’ confidence and restrict their willingness to communicate. When fluency takes

a back seat to rigid correctness, students often begin to second-guess their natural speaking patterns. Student x1 shared, *“Every time I spoke casually, the teacher corrected me for not following formal rules,”* highlighting how constant correction stifled authentic expression.

This insistence on formality can lead learners to internalize a sense of inadequacy in their spontaneous speech. As Student x8 explained, *“The teacher’s emphasis on formality made me second-guess my natural way of speaking.”* Instead of encouraging communication, such feedback can create anxiety around language use, leading to self-censorship and hesitation.

The psychological impact of this instructional approach is evident in Student x10’s account: *“My confidence in speaking was shaken because I was told it wasn’t ‘formal enough.’”* These reflections illustrate how prioritizing formality over communicative competence can discourage experimentation, inhibit risk-taking, and ultimately hinder language development.

Negative Effects of Frequent Corrections

While corrective feedback is a necessary component of language instruction, excessive or overly critical correction can have detrimental effects on learners’ confidence and motivation. When feedback focuses predominantly on errors—especially those related to formality—students may internalize a sense of inadequacy that discourages further participation. Student x6 remarked, *“My confidence dropped whenever the teacher mentioned my informal English,”* highlighting the emotional toll of repeated correction.

Constant focus on formal correctness can also create an environment of hyper-vigilance and self-doubt. Student x5 explained, *“The teacher constantly pointed out that my sentences didn’t meet formal standards,”* suggesting that rigid expectations inhibited natural language use and expression. Instead of fostering improvement, such feedback can lead to performance anxiety and reluctance to speak.

Student x9 echoed this sentiment, stating, *“I was criticized for not adhering to strict formal English rules.”* This type of correction, when delivered without constructive guidance or encouragement, can make learners feel scrutinized rather than supported. To maintain a productive learning environment, corrections should be balanced with positive reinforcement that validates effort and encourages risk-taking in communication.

Teacher Framing and Emotional Safety

Learners’ responses to mistakes are strongly influenced by how teachers present error correction. Emotionally safe environments—where feedback is offered in supportive language and mistakes are treated as part of the process—encourage continued participation and reduce anxiety. One emphasized (x27) this effect, noting that when he replaced “You’re wrong” with *“Try again, it’s...,”* he retained vocabulary more easily and responded with enthusiasm rather than fear. Techniques such as **reframing mistakes playfully** help build resilience by removing the emotional sting from failure. These findings reinforce the idea that **tone, body language, and corrective phrasing** are pedagogical tools with psychological consequences.

4.1.8. Internalized Negative Self-Talk and Mental Blocks

Several learners reported experiencing mental blocks—moments of speech paralysis or cognitive shutdown—particularly during high-pressure situations. These blocks were often rooted in a history of internalized negative self-talk following past mistakes. Learners described developing a habit of self-criticism, which accumulated over time and led to emotional interference when trying to speak. Drawing parallels to cognitive-behavioral explanations, learners noted that their brains would “retrieve” negative memories when prompted to speak, reinforcing feelings of inadequacy and fear.

As explained in a learner reflection from external content, *“Every time you made a mistake, you punished yourself... your brain saved every single negative word you said about your English.”* This self-reinforcing cycle of negativity leads to what learners described as a “*mental block*,” where past failures override current competence.

4.1.9. Information Overload and Method Paralysis

Some learners experience a psychological block not because of linguistic complexity, but due to the overwhelming volume of available learning strategies. In the era of online education and algorithm-driven content, exposure to conflicting advice—each claiming to be the “best method”—can result in paralysis and reduced motivation. As one learner explained, *“I was so convinced there was one right way to learn a language... I kept looking for a shortcut... but I just*

got stuck.” This “method paralysis” reflects a modern anxiety: fear of choosing the wrong path and wasting time. The emotional toll of excessive comparison with others’ learning journeys further intensifies this block, creating confusion and detachment from one’s personal process.

4.1.10. Unsustainable Goal-Setting and Burnout

Overambitious planning, while rooted in excitement, can lead to demotivation and guilt when learners inevitably fall short of their high expectations. One learner noted, *“I told myself I’d watch an English movie every day... after three days, I quit entirely.”* The disappointment of not meeting self-imposed goals created a mental block that was only overcome when the learner scaled back to more sustainable expectations. This reveals the importance of pacing and habit-building, rather than intensity, in preventing psychological fatigue in long-term language learning.

4.2. Growth Mindset in Language Learning

Shifting from a fear-based approach (avoiding mistakes) to a growth-based approach (seeing mistakes as learning opportunities) can help sustain motivation in language learning. Some learners found ways to redirect frustration into motivation by adopting a more positive mindset.

4.2.1. Embracing Mistakes as Learning

Resilience plays a critical role in successful language learning, particularly when learners are able to reframe mistakes not as failures but as essential steps in the learning process. Adopting this mindset reduces anxiety, encourages risk-taking, and supports long-term engagement. Student x15 expressed this shift in perspective, stating, *“I reminded myself that mistakes are part of learning. It’s okay to get things wrong.”* This acceptance fosters a healthier relationship with language learning, where errors are seen as growth markers rather than setbacks.

Developing a problem-solving attitude further reinforces this resilience. Student x25 described this approach by noting, *“Each small victory rebuilt my confidence. I began to see mistakes as puzzles to solve.”* By interpreting challenges as opportunities for discovery, learners transform frustration into motivation, thereby deepening their engagement and sustaining their progress over time. This mindset aligns closely with growth-oriented learning models that em-

phasize persistence, curiosity, and emotional regulation in the face of difficulty.

Teachers also play a crucial role in modeling growth-oriented thinking. By responding to their own mistakes with humor. Teachers show students that mistakes are not identity threats but **opportunities for connection and reflection**. These micro-moments of reframing reinforce the idea that mindset is a practice, not a trait.

4.2.2. Coping with Setbacks and Failure

While failure can initially feel discouraging, resilient language learners often transform these experiences into powerful sources of motivation and growth. Instead of allowing setbacks to define their progress, they reinterpret failure as a call to action. Student x19 reflected on this shift in mindset: *“Failing a test felt like a personal failure, but I used it as motivation to work harder.”* This ability to channel emotional disappointment into renewed effort reflects a proactive and adaptive approach to learning.

Similarly, Student x23 described a moment of struggle followed by a commitment to improvement: *“After struggling in a language exchange, I felt disappointed but determined to improve.”* These narratives illustrate the emotional weight of failure but also highlight the learners’ capacity to persist. By reframing failure as a temporary obstacle rather than a definitive setback, learners cultivate resilience and sustain momentum in their language development.

4.2.3. Learning as an Enjoyable Process

Language learning can often feel overwhelming, especially when approached as a rigid, high-stakes endeavor. However, breaking the process into smaller, achievable steps helps learners manage this complexity and find joy in progress. Student x20 shared, *“Setting small goals reduced overwhelm and gave me daily achievements to celebrate,”* highlighting how micro-accomplishments can foster a sense of control and continuous momentum.

Reframing learning as a creative and exploratory process further reduces stress and enhances engagement. As Student x13 expressed, *“Reframing learning as creative exploration reduced stress and increased enjoyment.”* This mindset encourages experimentation and playfulness, which in turn nurtures intrinsic motivation and a more positive emotional connection to the language.

By focusing on incremental progress rather than per-

fection, learners can sustain motivation, build confidence, and develop a resilient attitude toward challenges. Viewing language acquisition as a dynamic and enjoyable journey—rather than a linear path toward mastery—promotes long-term engagement and adaptability.

4.2.4. Goal-Setting and Incremental Progress

Setting clear, attainable goals is a key strategy for maintaining motivation and fostering a sense of progress in language learning. When learners break the larger task of language acquisition into manageable milestones, they reduce feelings of frustration and self-doubt. Student x20 reflected on this benefit, stating, *“Each time I met a goal, no matter how small, I felt a little more confident. It helped me see that I was making progress.”* These small wins serve as tangible reminders of advancement, reinforcing learners’ belief in their own capabilities.

Celebrating incremental success not only builds confidence but also strengthens long-term perseverance. Student x18 shared, *“This small victory made me realize that my hard work was paying off, and it gave me hope that I could continue to improve.”* These moments of recognition foster a forward-looking mindset that sustains engagement even when progress feels slow.

As learners reframe setbacks as part of the journey toward their goals, frustration can be transformed into purpose. As Student x20 added, *“Shifting from frustration to determination helped me see challenges as steps toward my goals.”* This mindset cultivates adaptability and resilience—two essential qualities for long-term success in language learning.

4.2.5. Self-Directed Learning and Autonomy

When traditional classroom instruction fails to meet learners’ practical language needs, many turn to self-directed learning as a means of advancing their skills. This shift from passive reception to active engagement empowers learners to explore language in ways that are personally meaningful and contextually relevant. Student x1 explained, *“Self-study became my main tool for improving my English skills,”* reflecting a growing reliance on independent learning strategies.

Learners often utilize diverse resources, such as books, videos, and online content, to create immersive environments tailored to their interests. Student x2 noted, *“I started*

reading and watching content in English to teach myself,” demonstrating how self-selected input fosters both language exposure and intrinsic motivation.

Taking ownership of the learning process also allows for greater experimentation and adaptability. Student x9 shared, *“I decided to take control of my learning by diving into English independently,”* while Student x6 added, *“Learning independently allowed me to experiment with different methods in English.”* These experiences illustrate how autonomy encourages exploration beyond textbook constraints.

For many, self-directed learning is also associated with a greater sense of freedom and personal agency. As Student x10 expressed, *“Exploring English on my own gave me a sense of freedom in learning.”* By stepping outside the limitations of traditional education, learners engage with language more naturally and enjoyably. This autonomy, paired with goal-setting and a growth-oriented mindset, strengthens motivation, builds confidence, and sustains long-term progress in language learning.

5. Discussion

This study highlights the profound impact of psychological barriers on second language acquisition and extends existing theories by foregrounding learners’ adaptive strategies. While earlier research has consistently demonstrated the detrimental role of anxiety, fear of mistakes, and self-doubt in language learning, the present findings offer an enriched view by illustrating how learners actively mitigate these barriers through growth mindsets, self-directed learning, and metacognitive techniques^[4,5].

For example, Student x25’s approach of treating mistakes as “puzzles to solve” exemplifies **growth mindset theory**, reinforcing that emotional resilience is not innate but cultivable^[6]. This insight advances the **cognitive interference model**, which originally framed anxiety as a disruptor of working memory, by showing that learners can *reappraise* emotional stressors and redirect their energy toward persistence^[43]. In this sense, the study extends the **affective filter hypothesis**, arguing that anxiety is not merely a static block but a dynamic emotional state that can be moderated through mindset training and strategy use^[11].

5.1. Theoretical Contributions and Integration

One of the key theoretical contributions lies in reconceptualizing language anxiety not as an insurmountable barrier but as a *transformable experience*. Learners like Student x21, who used self-recording to reduce interview stress for **metacognitive strategy development** in high-pressure contexts^[15]. These findings highlight how metacognitive tools foster both cognitive control and emotional self-regulation—critical components of effective communication in unpredictable environments.

The role of **teacher feedback** emerged as a particularly sensitive area. While some studies^[23,24] have long debated the merits and dangers of correction, this study adds specificity: feedback timing and tone deeply influence learner confidence. Learners such as x6 and x10 internalized repeated corrections on “informality” as signs of personal inadequacy, leading to disengagement. These insights suggest that **delayed correction techniques** and **scaffolded encouragement** may better serve learners during early fluency stages than a rigid focus on formality^[10].

5.2. Pedagogical Implications

The findings suggest actionable strategies for TESOL professionals and curriculum designers:

5.2.1. Growth Mindset Integration

Educators should **explicitly teach** that mistakes are indicators of progress, not failure. Activities such as error journals, peer-reflection logs, or self-assessment checklists can support learners in reframing failure as learning. Student x25’s puzzle-solving metaphor illustrates how resilience-based framing sustains motivation. **Policy-wise**, national curricula could incorporate **growth mindset modules**, akin to Finland’s resilience-oriented reforms, to institutionalize psychological scaffolding alongside linguistic instruction^[18].

Teachers must consciously **frame mistakes as neutral or positive events** rather than indicators of failure. Approaches such as “try again” phrasing, visual cues (e.g., covering mistakes with a heart), and guided reflection help build safe emotional spaces. These techniques align with recommendations for **reformulative feedback**, while also incorporating affective dimensions, in socio-emotional learning frameworks^[18,24].

5.2.2. Self-Directed Learning (SDL)

Participants who embraced **autonomy**—like Student x9 using YouTube for vocabulary expansion—affirm that Learner-controlled environments foster deeper engagement^[26]. However, autonomy should be **scaffolded**, especially for beginners. Institutions can support SDL by offering **curated digital resources**, thematic video playlists, and progress trackers to structure independent learning without overwhelming the learner.

5.2.3. High-Stakes Communication Readiness

Interview-related anxiety (Student x22, x23, x25) highlights the need for **real-world task simulation**. This study supports stress inoculation^[44]. For example, mock UN debates, visa simulations, or online oral portfolios could prepare learners for unpredictable linguistic environments while lowering their affective filter.

5.3. Systemic Critiques and Recommendations

The data also draws attention to **systemic flaws** in traditional language education. Overemphasis on grammar, formality, and exam preparation—common in many national curricula—has created a culture where correctness outweighs communicative competence. Student x23’s experience of disengagement during overly academic instruction underscores that language instruction often lacks **ecological validity**^[36].

The **disconnect** between what is taught (grammar, formal writing) and what is needed (conversation, contextual adaptability) leaves learners unprepared for actual language use. In contrast, self-directed learners often bridged this gap by turning to **authentic content**—such as TED Talks, tech reviews, and video essays—highlighting that **comprehensible input** fosters more durable learning when it is personally meaningful and contextually rich^[11].

To close this gap, the following systemic shifts are proposed:

- **Assessment Reform:** Move from grammar-heavy tests toward **portfolio-based assessments** (e.g., video logs, peer interviews) to reward progress and reduce anxiety.
- **Teacher Training:** Programs should equip educators with **delayed correction strategies** and tools for emotional scaffolding, drawing on communicative approaches already adopted in places like Canada^[10].
- **Technology Integration:** Hybrid models using **foreign**

language apps or AI-driven speech tools should be incorporated into formal education to offer low-pressure speaking practice and personalized feedback before real-life interaction.

5.4. Modeling: Learning by Mistakes

I present a model that categorizes different types of learning activities based on two key factors (**Table 1**): How the learning is acquired and whether mistakes are part of the learning process:

Learning by Practice: Knowledge or skill is devel-

oped through direct experience, repetition, and active engagement (e.g., doing, speaking, performing).

Learning by Theory: Knowledge is developed through abstract thinking, reading, observation, memorization, or instruction without necessarily doing it firsthand.

Mistakes Tolerated: In these situations, making errors is expected, acceptable, and often essential for learning. Mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities.

Mistakes Avoided: In these cases, errors are undesirable, dangerous, or too costly—they must be minimized or prevented, either because of safety concerns, ethical reasons, or professional consequences.

Table 1. Learning by Practice × Mistake Tolerance.

	Mistakes Tolerated	Mistakes Avoided
Learning by Practice	Learning languages, art, and sports	Riding a bicycle, surgery practice
Learning by Theory	Learning Physics, algebra, and grammar lessons	Learning nuclear safety rules, Aviation protocols, Medical dosage calculations

The “Practice + Mistake-Tolerant” quadrant demands psychological flexibility and a belief that competence grows through effort and feedback. **Fixed mindset** individuals struggle here not because language learning is inherently hard, but because their fear of error contradicts the very mechanism through which language is learned: making and learning from mistakes.

The “Learning by Theory + Mistakes Tolerated” quadrant—where mistakes are allowed, but the primary mode of learning is theoretical (e.g., learning physics, algebra, or grammar), a **fixed mindset** can also hinder progress here, though in a different way than in practice-based learning. In this cell, mistakes are intellectual stepping stones. For fixed mindset learners, even theoretical errors can threaten their sense of competence. Rather than embracing the cognitive conflict that fuels conceptual learning, they may retreat into surface-level understanding or passive learning modes. To avoid mistakes, they often try memorizing rules or formulas without internalizing them, which creates fragile knowledge that collapses under variation.

5.5. The Pedagogy of Productive Mistakes: Encouraging Risk-Taking and Reflection

Both teachers and self-learners should encourage making mistakes rather than avoiding them. There are several

effective strategies to actively promote mistake-making in language learning:

5.5.1. Reframe Mistakes as Achievements

- **Classroom Motto:** “No mistakes = no learning.”
- Teachers openly say: “*The more mistakes you make, the faster you’ll improve.*”
- Keep a “**Mistake of the Day**” board—highlight funny or insightful errors and correct them *as a class*, in a non-judgmental way.
- Use humor: Normalize errors by even showing the *teacher’s own language mistakes* from the past.

5.5.2. Use Low-Stakes, High-Fun Speaking Activities

These principles create the *freedom to fail* without consequence: (Role-plays, Improvisation games)

- **Role-plays** (e.g., acting as a tourist or shopkeeper): **Role-plays** are **simulated real-life conversations** where students act out specific roles (like a tourist, customer, teacher, friend, or shopkeeper). The aim is to make speaking **purposeful and contextual**—not artificial grammar drills, but *real situations* that learners might face.

Set the scene:

“You’re in New York. You lost your bag. Talk to a police

officer.”

Assign roles:

- Student A = tourist who lost a bag
- Student B = police officer taking notes

Give minimal guidance: maybe 3–4 key phrases (e.g., “Excuse me, can you help me?”/“Where did you lose it?”).

Act it out! Let students improvise. Encourage creativity—even funny or exaggerated performances.

Reflect together afterward:

- What went well?
- Any words or grammar they needed but didn’t know?
- Teacher gently corrects key errors *after* the scene, not during.

- **Improvisation games** (“Say anything in English for 60 seconds, no matter how weird!”): The teacher gives a **funny or unpredictable prompt**, and students must **react immediately**—speaking in English, even if imperfectly.

Set the scene:

- Student A says something random:
“I bought a pet elephant yesterday.”
- Student B *must accept it* and continue:
“Yes, and it ate all the bananas in my house!”
- The goal is to keep adding to the story—*never reject, always build*.

- **60-Second Talk Challenge:** Each student speaks for **one minute non-stop** about any silly topic.

Set the scene:

“Why cats should be presidents”/“My dream house on Mars.”

- No pauses, no corrections—just talk!
- The class applauds effort, not accuracy.

- **Random Object Scene:** Teacher shows an everyday object (e.g., a pen, a shoe).

Set the scene:

- Students must invent and act out a mini-scene using it in a creative way.
“This pen is actually a magic wand that turns people into cats.”

- **Alphabet Conversation:** Two students have a dialogue

where each new sentence must begin with the next letter of the alphabet:

Set the scene:

A: “Are you ready for the trip?”

B: “Better than ever!”

A: “Can you pack my bag?”

B: “Don’t forget your toothbrush!”

- **Speed-Dating Conversations:** This is a **rotating-partner speaking activity** inspired by the format of social “speed dating.” It’s *not romantic*—it’s about **repetition with variation**, helping learners gain fluency and confidence.

Set the scene:

Students sit in two lines (or an inner and outer circle) facing each other. The teacher gives a simple speaking prompt—e.g., “Describe your favorite holiday,” or “Convince your partner to visit your city.”

Each pair talks for **2–3 minutes**. When the time is up, one line rotates—everyone gets a *new partner* but **the same topic**.

Students repeat the conversation, trying to improve or expand it each time (correcting mistakes they noticed before).

5.5.3. Encourage Error-Rich Writing Exercises

Use tasks that **invite complex thought**—and thus **more room for errors**:

- Freewriting: “Write for 5 minutes non-stop. Don’t worry about correctness.”
- Creative prompts: “Invent a country. Describe its language, people, laws.”
- “Make 10 mistakes on purpose” game: Let students insert errors and let peers find and fix them—this reverses the shame of being wrong.

5.5.4. Error Recycling with Positive Framing

Turning student errors into reusable classroom content:

- Use anonymous or volunteer-based **error collections** for group editing activities.
- Create a “**Mistake Bank**”—a class-shared document with common recurring errors and best corrections.
- Allow students to “earn points” by identifying and correcting their *own* previous errors across drafts or recordings.

5.5.5. Teacher Feedback Style: Celebrate Attempts

- Respond to spoken errors with **recasts** or **expansions** instead of immediate correction.
 - Student: “He go to park.”
 - Teacher: “Ah yes—he *goes* to the park every day. That’s nice.”
- **Delayed correction** in conversation to avoid breaking the flow. Correct after speaking, not during.
- Use phrases like:
 - “Great try!”
 - “Let’s improve this together.”
 - “I see what you were trying to say—here’s a clearer way.”

5.5.6. Build a Mistake-Tolerant Classroom Culture

- **Peer agreements:** On Day 1, co-create rules like “We support mistakes” and “We don’t correct unless asked.”
- Celebrate **risk-taking**, not perfection.
- Use anonymous Q&A forms so that students can submit confusing errors without fear.
- Share stories of famous polyglots who made thousands of errors (like Benny Lewis or Steve Kaufmann).

5.5.7. Gamify Mistake-Making

- **“Most Honest Error” Contest**—Who can admit the silliest or most surprising mistake this week?
- **Points for corrections**—Every self-correction earns a point or sticker. Goal: To build meta-awareness.
- Create a badge system like:
 - “Risk-Taker” (spoke for 3 mins despite errors)
 - “Self-Editor” (noticed and corrected self)
 - “Mistake Collector” (found 5 errors from last week’s writing)

5.5.8. Use of Native Speakers’ Examples of Mistakes

Show that even native speakers:

- Misuse tenses (“I seen it yesterday”)
- Split infinitives (“to boldly go...”)
- Drop grammar in speech (“Me and him went...”)

This removes the idea that *only non-natives* make errors—and encourages communicative confidence. This

strategy can be further enhanced by analyzing mistakes made by well-known non-native speakers (i.e., presidents, movie stars).

5.5.9. Common Errors Course

Start with mistakes, not rules—Lessons begin by showing real, frequent learner errors (e.g., “*I am agree*”, “*She can to go*”), not the correct form. Students diagnose what’s wrong before being taught the rule.

Error detectives—Learners examine the underlying causes of each error—whether it stems from **mother tongue** interference (for instance, a French learner saying ‘I have 20 years’ influenced by *J’ai 20 ans*), overgeneralization, or ambiguity—thereby developing deeper grammatical awareness.

Reverse grammar drills—Give incorrect sentences and have students transform them into correct ones, explaining their reasoning.

Weekly “Error Hall of Fame”—Showcase 3–5 fascinating or funny errors submitted by students. Discuss them together as a learning moment.

Build metalinguistic awareness—Through reflection and pattern recognition, students gain confidence and clarity about how English works.

5.5.10. Modeling Mistakes as a Teacher

Focus: Normalize errors as valuable learning opportunities through teacher openness and peer correction.

Activities:

- **Intentional Error Demonstrations:** The teacher deliberately makes small, planned mistakes during lessons (e.g., “*Yesterday I go to market*”) to prompt students to notice and correct them collaboratively.
- **Role Reversal:** Students take on the teacher’s role, intentionally creating and presenting errors for their classmates to identify and correct.
- **Mistake Journals:** Students keep a personal record of corrected errors from teacher demonstrations and class activities to track their learning progress.

Homework:

Create a short, 1-minute teaching video containing three intentional mistakes. Submit both the video and a written list of the corrections.

Course Title: Overcoming Language Learning Anxiety and Strategies for TESOL Teachers

Building on the key themes identified in the findings—resilience, learner autonomy, and emotional regulation—this section outlines practical strategies for TESOL educators. These strategies reflect the ways in which learners in this study coped with psychological barriers and transformed their emotional experiences into motivation.

I suggest a course like “Overcoming Language Learning Anxiety: Growth Mindset Strategies for TESOL Educators” to TESOL students because psychological barriers, such as anxiety, fear of mistakes, self-doubt, and perfectionism, significantly impact language learners' progress and engagement (**Table 2**). Traditional TESOL training often focuses on linguistic theories, teaching methodologies, and classroom management but does not sufficiently address the emotional and psychological aspects of language learning. This course is essential for TESOL students:

Many language learners struggle with speaking anxiety, performance pressure, and fear of making mistakes, leading to low participation, avoidance of communication, and slow progress. TESOL educators must recognize and address these barriers to create a safe, confidence-building classroom environment.

Carol Dweck’s Growth Mindset Theory suggests that learners who believe intelligence and abilities can be developed through effort and persistence are more likely to succeed. Many language learners internalize failure when they struggle with pronunciation, grammar, or fluency. TESOL teachers can reshape these perceptions, helping students see mistakes as learning opportunities rather than signs of incompetence.

TESOL students are often taught various error-correction methods, but many reinforce fear and anxiety rather than promote improvement. Overcorrection and punitive feedback can cause learners to fear speaking. This course trains TESOL educators to use alternative correction techniques, such as recasts, delayed feedback, and positive reinforcement, which encourage risk-taking.

Different cultures perceive mistakes, failures, and public speaking differently. In many cultures, students are conditioned to fear failure, which renders their participation in a language classroom particularly stressful. This course helps TESOL educators understand the cultural influences of

language anxiety and accordingly adapt teaching strategies.

Many learners experience listening anxiety (difficulty understanding fast speech or different accents) and speaking anxiety (fear of mispronouncing words or being misunderstood). This course provides evidence-based strategies, such as shadowing, think-pair-share, and scaffolding techniques, to help students overcome these fears and develop natural fluency.

TESOL educators shape the classroom environment, and a supportive classroom reduces students’ fear of judgment and social comparison. This course trains teachers to create collaborative learning environments that normalize mistakes, encourage peer feedback, and promote mutual encouragement.

The teachers’ mindset affects how they give feedback, respond to student anxiety, and set classroom expectations. A teacher who understands growth mindset principles is more likely to model resilience, persistence, and positivity, which directly influence students’ motivation. The program also helps TESOL educators develop self-care strategies to prevent burnout and maintain enthusiasm in teaching.

With AI tools, apps, and digital platforms, learners can practice language in a low-pressure environment before speaking in front of others. This course helps TESOL educators integrate technology into the classroom to reduce anxiety and build confidence.

The target audience is TESOL students, preservice teachers, and language educators. This course equips TESOL students with strategies to identify and address psychological barriers (e.g., anxiety, fear of mistakes, self-doubt) in language learners. It emphasizes cultivating a growth mindset in classrooms to promote resilience, confidence, and effective language acquisition (**Table 2**).

The learning objectives are:

- Identifying common psychological barriers in language learners.
- Apply growth mindset principles to reduce anxiety and boost motivation.
- Design lessons that normalize mistakes and encourage risk-taking.
- Use feedback techniques that build learners’ confidence.

Table 2. Weekly Course Outline.

Week	Topics	Activities	Readings/Resources
1	Understanding Psychological Barriers to Language Learning	Reflective journaling on personal experiences of language anxiety and confidence	Horwitz, E. K. (2001). Language Anxiety and Achievement ^[4] .
2	Growth Mindset Theory and Its Application in TESOL	Case study analysis: Learners shifting from fixed to growth mindsets	Dweck, C. S. (2006). <i>Mindset</i> ^[3] ; TED Talk: <i>The Power of Believing You Can Improve</i> ^[45] .
3	Cultural Perspectives on Mistakes and Failure	Role-play: Navigating cultural expectations in classroom participation	Young, D. J. (1991). Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment ^[14] .
4	Fear of Mistakes and Constructive Error Correction	Design a “mistake-friendly” activity and evaluate correction techniques (recasts, delayed feedback)	Akin, M. S. 2025. Psychological Barriers and Growth Mindset in Foreign Language Learning.
5	Building Learner Confidence and Motivation	Develop a mini-lesson integrating motivational icebreakers	Edutopia. Inspiring Videos. https://www.edutopia.org/videos
6	Speaking and Listening Anxiety	Record a mock dialogue; identify and discuss anxiety triggers	Goh, C. C. M. & Hu, G. (2014). Exploring the relationship between metacognitive awareness and listening performance ^[46] . <i>Improve Your English Fluency With Effective Shadowing Techniques</i> . (YouTube videos)
7	Writing Anxiety and Perfectionism	Peer review workshop focusing on constructive written feedback	Hyland, K. (2023). Expertise as collaborative practice ^[47] .
8	Assessment for Growth Mindset	Design a rubric that rewards progress and effort rather than perfection	Hattie, J. (2012). <i>Visible Learning for Teachers</i> ^[48] ;
9	Technology for Reducing Language Anxiety	Evaluate anxiety-friendly features of language-learning apps	Stockwell, G. (2013). <i>Technology and Motivation in Language Learning</i> ^[49] ; Review: Compare various learning platforms (i.e., <i>Duolingo vs. Babbel</i>)
10	Collaborative Learning and Peer Support Systems	Develop a classroom “buddy system” for confidence-building practice	Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1999). Making cooperative learning work ^[50] . Various TESOL studies in <i>Collaborative Classroom Strategies</i> (Search)
11	Teacher Mindset, Emotional Intelligence, and Burnout Prevention	Reflective journaling on personal teaching challenges and coping strategies	Gregersen, T., Mercer, S. (Eds.), 2022. The Routledge Handbook of the Psychology of Language Learning ^[44] . Various TED Talks on <i>Mindfulness for Teachers</i> . (Search)
12	Resilience in TESOL Practice: Guest Case Studies	Guest lecture: Experienced TESOL educator on building emotional resilience	Guest Lecture; Article: <i>Resilient Language Teaching Practices</i> .
13	Learning Through Mistakes: Turning Anxiety into Growth	Workshop: Design “error-positive” classroom strategies	<i>Design your own strategies</i>
14	Final Project Workshop	Peer feedback on final lesson plans integrating growth mindset principles	Brown, H. D. & Abeywickrama, P. (2010). <i>Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices</i> ^[51] .
15	Final Presentations and Reflection	Deliver a 45-minute microteaching session; reflect on mindset transformation.	TED Talk: How to Speak So That People Want to Listen (Julian Treasure) ^[52] .

6. Conclusion

This study underscores that psychological barriers—such as anxiety, perfectionism, and self-doubt—remain among the most significant obstacles to successful language learning. Yet, these barriers are not immutable; they can be transformed through intentional mindset development and emotionally supportive pedagogy. By integrating growth mindset principles, reflective practices, and mistake-tolerant classroom strategies, educators can reframe errors from signs of failure into catalysts for linguistic and personal growth.

The findings confirm that high-stakes testing, rigid correction practices, and excessive focus on accuracy frequently suppress learners' confidence and communicative spontaneity. Conversely, environments that encourage experimentation, humor, and peer collaboration enable learners to take linguistic risks without fear of judgment. Such conditions not only reduce the affective filter but also strengthen resilience and intrinsic motivation—key predictors of sustained engagement in language learning^[1].

TESOL educators, therefore, play a pivotal role in shaping learners' emotional landscapes through the deliberate implementation of affective teaching strategies. The approaches proposed in this study—such as mistake-friendly speaking activities, growth-mindset feedback techniques, metacognitive listening practices, and **teacher feedback style**—collectively help transform anxiety into engagement. By modeling vulnerability, normalizing errors, and using methods like role-plays, improvisation games, and peer-supported reflection, educators can foster classrooms where risk-taking and experimentation are rewarded rather than penalized. These strategies not only enhance communicative competence but also build learners' resilience, self-efficacy, and autonomy—core attributes of confident language users. The proposed TESOL course, *Overcoming Language Learning Anxiety: Growth Mindset Strategies for TESOL Educators*, operationalizes these insights by equipping preservice teachers with practical tools to identify, understand, and address the emotional dimensions of learning. In such environments, students are encouraged to count their mistakes as positive achievements—tangible evidence of progress and active learning—rather than as failures to be avoided. These strategies not only enhance communicative competence but also cultivate learners' resilience, self-efficacy, and autonomy—core attributes of confident language users.

Ultimately, this research calls for a paradigm shift in language education—from performance-centered evaluation to psychologically informed instruction. By embedding resilience-building, emotional intelligence, and growth-oriented feedback into curricula, TESOL programs can cultivate both linguistic competence and emotional well-being. In doing so, educators help learners not merely acquire a foreign language but also develop the confidence and adaptability necessary for lifelong learning and intercultural communication.

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The author declares no conflict of interest.

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