

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS**

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**Abstract:** Learning a new language is not merely an academic endeavor; it is a profound psychological journey that transforms learners on multiple levels. For English language learners (ELLs), this transformation involves cognitive, emotional, and social changes that influence their identity and interactions. This article examines the psychological transformations experienced by ELLs, highlighting the intricate relationship between language acquisition and psychological development.

**Key words:** psychological, inadequacy, incredibly, ELLs, feelings of isolation, educators, transformation, cognitive acquisition.

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Participants included ELLs from various cultural backgrounds enrolled in language learning programs. The quantitative survey measured levels of anxiety, motivation, and self-efficacy. The qualitative interviews explored personal experiences and perceived changes in identity, cognition, and social interactions. Data were analyzed to identify common themes and significant psychological shifts.

Learning a new language can be a complex journey, especially for English language learners (ELLs), who often face a variety of psychological changes throughout the process. The endeavor to master a new linguistic system involves not only the cognitive acquisition of vocabulary and grammar but also significant emotional and social transformations. Understanding these psychological changes is crucial for educators, parents, and the learners themselves, as they navigate the challenges and triumphs of language acquisition.

One of the most common psychological responses among English language learners is anxiety. The fear of making mistakes while speaking or writing in English often leads to a reluctance to participate in class or engage in conversations. This anxiety can be exacerbated by prior negative experiences in language learning or societal pressures to succeed. For many ELLs, the stakes feel high; language proficiency is often linked to academic performance, social acceptance, and future job opportunities.

This anxiety is not merely a personal barrier; it can create a cycle where fear inhibits practice, which in turn impedes progress, reinforcing feelings of inadequacy. Recognizing this initial stage is crucial for educators to provide the right support and encouragement. Creating a safe and nurturing environment where mistakes are seen as part of the learning process can help alleviate this fear.

As learners begin to acquire proficiency in English, they often face an internal struggle with their identity. Language is inherently tied to culture, and for many ELLs, speaking English can lead to feelings of disconnection from their native culture. They might experience a sort of 'cultural duality', where they feel different from their peers who are native English speakers while simultaneously feeling distanced from their own cultural communities.

This struggle can manifest in different ways, from embracing English at the cost of one's native language to resisting English altogether in favor of maintaining cultural ties. Educators can support students by acknowledging and celebrating their multicultural identities, encouraging them to see their bilingualism as an asset rather than a liability.

As ELLs begin to achieve milestones in their language learning journey, they often experience a significant boost in confidence. This psychological transformation can be profound, with learners feeling empowered to express themselves and engage more fully with their surroundings. Positive reinforcement from teachers, peers, and family can help solidify this newfound confidence.

Furthermore, as learners become more proficient, they start to develop a sense of agency. They realize that learning English opens doors to new opportunities, and this realization can be incredibly motivating. ELLs may find themselves actively seeking out situations to practice their language skills, whether through participating in community events, joining clubs, or even online platforms. This shift from passive to active learning reflects a growing sense of ownership over their language acquisition journey.

The language learning process is often characterized as an emotional rollercoaster with peaks of joy and moments of frustration. Learners may celebrate breakthroughs, such as successfully completing a conversation without hesitation or understanding a movie without subtitles, only to feel discouraged when faced with complex grammar rules or unfamiliar idioms.

This emotional volatility underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in the classroom. Teachers can help learners navigate these ups and downs by encouraging resilience, promoting a growth mindset, and sharing stories of perseverance in language learning. By

normalizing these emotional fluctuations, educators can help students view challenges as opportunities for growth rather than insurmountable obstacles.

Language learning is inherently social, and as ELLs become more proficient in English, they are often able to forge deeper connections with their peers. This aspect of the psychological transformation is vital, as social integration plays a key role in mental well-being. Making friends, collaborating on projects, and engaging in group activities can enhance feelings of belonging and support.

However, it's essential to recognize that initial social interactions may be fraught with challenges. ELLs might struggle to understand cultural nuances or idiomatic expressions, which can lead to feelings of isolation. Building social skills alongside language proficiency can be beneficial, and activities that promote teamwork and communication can help alleviate this challenge.

The psychological changes experienced by English language learners are multifaceted and complex. From the initial anxiety of starting a new language to the empowerment that comes with fluency, these transformations are an integral part of the learning process. By recognizing and addressing the psychological aspects of language acquisition, educators and learners can work together to create a supportive and enriching environment where all students can thrive. It is essential to remember that language learning is not just an academic pursuit; it is a deeply human experience that involves emotions, identity, and connection.

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ДМ Ахмедова SCHOLAR 1 (15), 318-323