

LOWERING THE AFFECTIVE FILTER FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AS A WAY TO FACILITATE SUCCESSFUL LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The "affective filter" is a theoretical construct in second language acquisition that attempts to explain the emotional variables associated with the success or failure of acquiring a second language. The affective filter is an invisible psychological filter that can either facilitate or hinder language production in a second language. Optimal input occurs when the affective filter is low.

To reduce the affective filter in English learners, it is necessary: 1) to modify teaching materials and styles, 2) imply appropriate error correction and 3) use positive tone and body language. In other words, it is important to create a supportive learning environment that helps learners feel as comfortable as possible.

In order to reach every learner, a teacher must explore all of the styles and the methods associated with each. It is his responsibility to know his students' preferred styles and develop engaging lessons suited to them as individuals. It is always important to include visuals and realia. Providing visual and tangible examples of the topic at hand is one of the best ways to teach, not just students, but anybody who is trying to learn something.

There are many considerations to be made when determining what to correct and how to correct it. If someone corrected every word that came out of your mouth, you'd eventually stop talking. The purpose of the affective filter is to allow students to make mistakes without fear of being corrected. A teacher must convince students that in his classroom making mistakes and learning from them is considered a positive and productive experience.

By using positive tone and body language a teacher can provide the environment in which students feel most at ease. Learners don't always understand teacher's words, but learners do always understand his tone. Not only can teacher's attitude be heard in his voice, it can be seen in his eyes and shown with his body language. It should be the goal of the educator to provide an environment which facilitates the lowest levels of the affective filter.

When the affective filter is low, the learner is in an emotionally safe place. These feelings of safety lower imaginary walls, promoting more successful language acquisition. This type of environment becomes a welcoming invitation to keep learning.

REFERENCES

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