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Investigating Affective Learning Within Teaching Strategies for ESL College Students: A Systematic Review

Ping He , Aida Hanim A Hamid*  and Mohamed Yusoff Mohd Nor 
The National University of Malaysia,
(Universiti Kebangsaan) Malaysia

Abstract. Affective teaching is an underexplored field in college contexts. Affective teaching is especially pertinent for foreign language learning, unlike traditional teaching which primarily provides students with practical knowledge and forgoing development on their emotional psyche. This study emphasizes the significance of affective learning for the language acquisition of college students learning English as a second language (ESL). The study analyzed recent developments relating to affective teaching strategies for ESL students. This study involved examining 24 empirical studies published in the past five years (2020–2024) using the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) method. The Scopus and Web of Science databases were searched to find breakthroughs, challenges, and practical applications of affective teaching. The affective components key to ESL learning were highlighted, resulting in the identification of three main components: motivation and self-growth, self-efficacy and autonomy, and environmental factors. The analysis also discusses innovative teaching models proposed by recent studies. The findings indicate that emotional health is crucial for sustaining students' intrinsic motivation to improve their language skills, while positive reinforcement encourages a conducive learning environment. Both findings confirm affective teaching as a relevant alternative to traditional teaching methods, especially for ESL students who are prone to emotional barriers, such as language anxiety and disinterest. This paper also found that healthy, low levels of anxiety are beneficial for ESL learning, as a form of extrinsic motivation, as experienced through friendly peer competition.

Keywords: affective learning outcomes; ESL; PRISMA; teaching strategies; college students and system literature review

*Corresponding author: Ping He; p121489@siswa.ukm.edu.my

1. Introduction

1.1 Importance of Affective Learning Outcomes

Over the years, the affective domain of learning has received much academic scrutiny from educators and scholars alike. This focus has sparked controversies involving opposing voices representing different educational institutions, of whom some still advocate for conventional curricular methods (Gauvreau et al., 2016). The characteristics of affective learning are grounded in students' own beliefs, attitudes, values, emotions, and situations of acceptance of or resistance to their curriculum (Nurmatova & Altun, 2023).

Many education scholars believe that learning outcomes are “socially constructed, [...] ways of being that emerge from conscious and/or unconscious judgments regarding perceived successes at attaining goals, standards or beliefs” (Swain, 2013). This definition implies that emotion and cognition are “inseparable”, by linking direct cognitive resources, and affecting attention, memory, and behavior (Aubrey, 2022).

Researchers have defined emotions in various ways (Gkonou & Miller, 2020; Richards, 2020). From a biological point of view, emotions are thought to be innate in humans, whereas cognitive research describes emotions as an individual's interpretation of their surroundings (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 2014). Affections are mental responses produced by external stimuli, which could regulate cognitive activities, such as a person's attention, perception, and language use (Nychkalo et al., 2020). Classroom affection sparked research interest, because emotion is central to many teaching processes, including teacher retention and student learning (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018; Toraby & Modarresi, 2018). Scholarly interest in this topic supports the notion that affection, cognition, and language should not be studied separately. Emotions are not cumulations of cognitive processes but, instead, a way for teachers and students to convey learning goals and solutions to each other (Almesaar, 2022).

Student-related studies prioritized learning anxiety (Alrabai, 2014), while the topic of language learning enjoyment has been somewhat underexplored (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018). Both Alrabai (2014) and Dewaele & Alfawzan's (2018) studies report that the effectiveness of language learning deteriorates when students fail to preserve their emotional welfare. Despite increasing attention being paid to students' enjoyment of learning foreign languages, few studies have examined how affective learning can influence language acquisition by students of English as a second language (ESL). This study aimed to shed light on cases of affective learning used for teaching ESL students at the college level. It is hoped that the outcome of this study will advocate for affective learning as a relevant alternative to traditional teaching. The study explored how emotional learning was integrated into the curricula of college students in recent times.

1.2 Implementing Affective Teaching in ESL Learning

English proficiency plays an important role in students' career establishment, because it is a required skill in markets owing to the lingua franca status of English (Ramamurthy, 2019). In efforts to improve instruction quality, understanding the learning methodologies that students use to absorb knowledge is critical

(Lestari & Fatimah, 2020). This paper differentiates between teaching strategies that focus on improving students' intellect and those that elevate their emotional intelligence during ESL acquisition. Traditional teaching models equip students with practical knowledge skills and applications, and could overlook students' emotional experiences. This phenomenon should be rectified because positive learning attitudes and healthy emotions ensure that students are comfortable in wielding their knowledge in practical settings, which serving as the root of the arousal of students' interest in learning (Rubin et al., 2020).

This study comprises a systematic literature review on affective strategies used by teachers to clarify the benefits of these strategies in complementing conventional teaching environments, thereby encouraging school authorities to integrate them in their curricula. This comprehensive examination, which followed the preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analyses (PRISMA) protocol, explored the affective components involved in college students' ESL learning outcomes, to gain an understanding of how teachers incorporated affective components into the curriculum. The research pursued on the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the affective components involved in students' ESL learning outcomes, and how are they influential?

RQ2: How do positive emotions correlate with improved ESL learning outcomes?

RQ3: How do teachers integrate affective teaching strategies in the classroom to improve ESL students' learning outcomes?

Through a deliberate exploration of these questions, our study provides a holistic understanding of language learning strategies. The study identified impactful approaches to encourage ESL learning through the affective domain further. Thematic analysis was applied to the findings to highlight patterns of essential affective components that strongly influence the language learning process. Finally, a thorough discussion of the findings is conducted to synthesize the practical implications and contributions of the study, followed by the shortcomings and future research directions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Affective Learning Outcomes in ESL

The physical presence of teachers in classrooms is significant for affective learning; it facilitates students to realize the value of learning while ensuring their emotional enjoyment of the process. Teachers achieve these outcomes by executing teaching strategies involving the affective realm, and by shaping values, beliefs, and positive attitudes in the learning setting. Savickiene (2010) reveals that attitudes cannot be directly observed in individuals, though actions and behaviors can serve as a relevant substitute. The most common components of the affective domain are attitudes and values. These affective components typically measure an ESL student's retention of the learning material. However, though abstract values and attitudes can be measured, they do not provide a clear indication of every ESL student's learning patterns, thus necessitating further research. Consequently, emotional development pertains strongly to students' willingness

to engage in novel ideas and educators' ability to stimulate students' affective responses.

Recent studies indicate that affective teaching strategies promote attitude formation and change. Affective attitude coaching engages the student by leading them to desired behaviors that are consistent with the desired attitude, thus bringing about the desired change assuming that teacher support is consistently enforced (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). Affective elements, such as humor, fun, joy, surprise, and even confusion (also known as cognitive dissonance), can prove beneficial for students' emotional progress (Heydarnejad et al., 2022). Anderson's affective learning scale (Rubin et al., 2020) involves a seven-step semantic differential scale indicating students' attitudes toward teachers, courses, and the behaviors they had learned. The study found slight variations on the affective learning scale, which reveals that factors related to both teachers and students may cause anxious attitudes toward English learning. This finding solidifies the notion that, even though learning through the affective domain is a process that requires self-discipline, educators play a critical role in affecting students' perceptions of difficulties related to ESL learning positively.

In contrast, it is also found that learning English does not always induce anxiety. Instead, anxiety can be construed as a welcoming attitude toward challenges, and it is a vital stimulating factor that could unlock students' potential to achieve desired learning outcomes (Liu, 2021). With the establishment of positive psychology as a specific field of study that offers insights into human emotions, researchers no longer solely focus on negative emotions such as boredom and anxiety, but take into account drivers of positive emotions such as happiness and enjoyment (Zheng & Zhou, 2022a). Moreover, teacher-related variables, such as their friendliness, how often they use the English language, their teaching strategies and whether they encourage students can affect students' emotions (Liu et al., 2023). These findings are critical for this paper, which aims to unearth the relationship between student learning enjoyment levels and affective teaching strategies used.

2.2 Defining Positive Psychology

In recent years, we have seen a rise in modern positive psychology movements. Positive psychology deviates from the interest in purely pathological tendencies of general psychology, which tends to study the negative conditions, anomalies, and disorders. Instead, the new school of thought devotes itself to "the scientific study of what is right in life" (Guo, 2021). Positive psychology, which aims to accelerate the transformation of the field of psychology from merely "fixing the worst things in life" to "building the best qualities in life", has been introduced to the field of foreign language learning (Mercer & MacIntyre, 2014). According to the PERMA model proposed by Seligman (2011), positive emotions characterize human happiness. By revealing the important role of positive emotions in optimizing human function, it is of great importance to carry out research on positive emotions within the framework of positive psychology (Sun, 2024).

Mercer and MacIntyre (2014) claim that the introduction of positive psychology may be of great benefit to the field of foreign language acquisition because the subjects studied by positive psychology, such as positive emotions and

personality, are closely related to the practice of language learning and the human dimension, which meets the needs of language educators (Ariyanti et al., 2023). Since 2014, a number empirical studies have been conducted on EFL and foreign language education from the perspective of positive psychology. These studies focus on the well-being and positive traits of foreign language teachers and students (Majchrzak & Ostrogska, 2021). Negative emotions tend to limit the potential of language input, while positive emotions broaden an individual's horizons and help them absorb more language (Macintyre et al., 2019).

Moreover, positive psychology indicates that emotion is closely related to motivation, which has been the subject of extensive research in the field of foreign language (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). This motivation, as explained by Hussain et al. (2020), can be categorized into two subcategories: i) Intrinsic motivation, which relates an individual's personal interest, attention, curiosity or satisfaction being fulfilled by learning new languages; and ii) Extrinsic motivation, which acts as an external reward or pressure, whether from societal factors (job requirements, grades, etc.) or personal effects (recognition from peers and families).

The studies cited above examined positive psychology through the lens of students' learning outcomes, thus potentially overlooking how teachers' positive psyche may affect language learning efficiency. This paper bridges this gap by examining the affective domain of both students and teachers, to retain a clearer distinction between the effects discussed above.

2.3 Teaching Strategies in ESL Teaching

Affective learning outcomes in ESL contexts depend strongly on the teaching and learning methods employed. Methods could include simulations, open debates, role playing, and problem-based learning—all of which are advantageous for examining student retention of extracurricular activities, because they typically provide emotional leeway for self-expression (Bin, 2020).

In recent times, higher education has seen English teaching encountering major overhauls regarding teaching methods and their relation to the audience's psychology; attention is being paid to what college students prefer and whether they accept new teaching methods. This shift in teaching philosophy aims to challenge students' emotional intelligence and adaptability, which was the focus of Chang and Tsai's (2022) research. They claim that emotional intelligence significantly mediates students' academic achievements, thereby illustrating that the main driving forces shaping those achievements being learning motivation, self-efficacy, and external factors such as environmental or social support. This finding is rationalized by the logic that ESL learning is a social cognitive process of which many practical applications are guided by thoughts, emotions, and beliefs. Consequently, learning a language is concluded to be a highly emotional effort, thus validating this paper's objective of emphasizing affective teaching strategies for ESL learning.

Extracurricular activities in contexts of ESL learning have also received little attention, yet the few studies there are have yielded surprising results. Students could experience positive emotions if they are provided with adequate teacher support, if a conducive learning environment is created, and if effective teaching

strategies are applied (Zheng & Zhou, 2022a). This teaching effort could include local authorities supplementing the ESL learning facility with an appropriate environment for foreign language education, both physically and socially. The physical environment typically invokes the social: an interactive classroom with tables arranged in circles around peers may foster camaraderie and peer-to-peer learning (Al-Jarrah et al., 2024).

In some studies, the concept of teacher efficacy centers on the perception that teachers assess their own abilities, especially in terms of how their teaching can shape student values and behavior, and impart knowledge (Rodríguez et al., 2015). This emphasis on teacher's psychology to evaluate affective learning outcomes is a significant research milestone, though its correlation to positive psychology and other emotion-induced learning processes could be expanded. Against this backdrop, this paper attempts to identify the psychological needs and preferences of college students in relation to college English teaching reform. The findings of this study may bridge the knowledge gap relating to the way affective learning outcomes are influenced, either through the teaching atmosphere or the teachers themselves.

3. Methodology

This section discusses how the PRISMA methodology was employed for this systematic review to retrieve articles related to teaching strategies for affective learning outcomes for ESL students. Two databases, namely Scopus and Web of Science, were selected to find related articles in the higher education context. This step was followed by the next steps of the process, namely search strategies, screening, eligibility, and data extraction, to ensure all articles were relevant and contained data that enabled us to draw speculative conclusions (Moher et al., 2009). A comprehensive list of theoretical or empirical studies enabled this paper to identify recent challenges, breakthroughs, and possible solutions regarding affective teaching for ESL learning.

3.1 The Review Protocol

The PRISMA methodology was adopted to optimize the selection process of studies by considering information resources and eligibility criteria for screening (see Figure 1). PRISMA is commonly used in education fields to garner relevant articles and compile facts and theoretical and practical implications, and provide clarity on knowledge gaps pervading the selected topic. The PRISMA diagram had the following benefits for this paper (Teixeira & Daly, 2024):

1. Clarified research intent to streamline overall research process;
2. Lay down proper framework procedures with justifications for each article that was included or excluded; and
3. Enabled mass consolidation of relevant literature with optimal efficiency.

These benefits enabled this review to streamline the data collection process optimally. While it is possible to compile and sort studies manually, the risk of human error and spending a great deal of time doing so would significantly undermine both the quality and efficiency of the study. Even so, it should be noted that this method carries the inherent limitation of treating all non-conforming

literature as unilateral text, which means that articles must still be read to verify the validity of the curated batch (Teixeira & Daly, 2024).

Fortunately, with the PRISMA 2020 statement in place, much of the flow diagram's maneuverability was improved. The expanded search strategies for multiple databases simultaneously and incorporation of citations of studies according to the selection process were especially relevant for collecting this paper's intended data, by providing transparent statistical findings that would otherwise be muddled by ambiguous texts (Sohrabi et al., 2021).

3.2 Search Strategies

Papers included in the search all covered topics related to affective learning. This focus involves the non-random mention of psychological or affective concepts such as emotions, beliefs, and attitudinal behaviors (Haitao & Lu, 2020). Furthermore, this search strategy considered specific terms or jargon of this field such as motivation, perceived competence, attitude, interest, enjoyment, pleasure and anxiety, both positive and negative. This was done to align the search to possible affective components or factors that are crucial in ESL learning.

The search on the two databases was limited to the year range 2020 and 2024. There are three groups of search terms for the student range ("college students" or "university students" or "college" or "university"), and students' emotional acquisition, which mainly uses the following words: "affective domain" or "affective benefit" or "affective learning outcomes" or "emotional well-being" or "psychology" or "emotion" or "affection". The main search terms for English teaching strategies are: "English teaching" or "English learning" or "English education" or "language" or "English" or "teacher self-efficacy" or "efficacy of instructional strategies".

3.3 Screening

To avoid human biases when selecting articles, screening and assessment qualifications were divided into two stages. First, the two authors independently assessed each study's relevance to the affective domain by skimming its title and abstract. Studies are only excluded if both authors agreed on its irrelevance. Second, the authors assessed a study's full text for inclusion and deliberated whether a study referred to the three elements of pedagogy, namely learning outcomes, teaching, and curriculum content. Any disagreements about the assessment were resolved through discussion between the two authors. Consensus was achieved about all included studies.

As a form of quality assurance, each authors recorded reasons for each article's inclusion or exclusion in preliminary stage of abstract reading as well as the comprehensive dive on the full text. During the review stage, they also noted down their input to be further verified independently by the other supervisor.

3.4 Eligibility Criteria

This paper's inclusion criteria are that studies had to: (a) Be available or officially translated into English; (b) Involve quantitative or qualitative measurement of students' affective learning outcomes; (c) Have been undertaken in an ESL environment; (d) Involve university students (aged 18 and above); (e) Have used

students' emotional outcomes as primary learning outcomes; (f) Report on emotional outcomes (e.g. anxiety and motivation), (g) Had to be about teaching (e.g., higher education teaching strategies), and (h) Had to involve course content (e.g., summaries of academic implementation).

This review included quantitative studies with pre- and post-study designs; qualitative research did not require a "before and after" research framework, but had to include a discussion of any changes to the students' emotional learning processes. Mixed method studies conforming to the following criteria associated with each method were excluded: (a) Lacked full text; (b) Had been retracted; (c) Was not on ESL education; (d) Was not aimed at college students; (e) Focused on student learning strategies rather than teaching strategies; (f) Did not involve students' emotional learning acquisition, and (g) Was not about positive emotion.

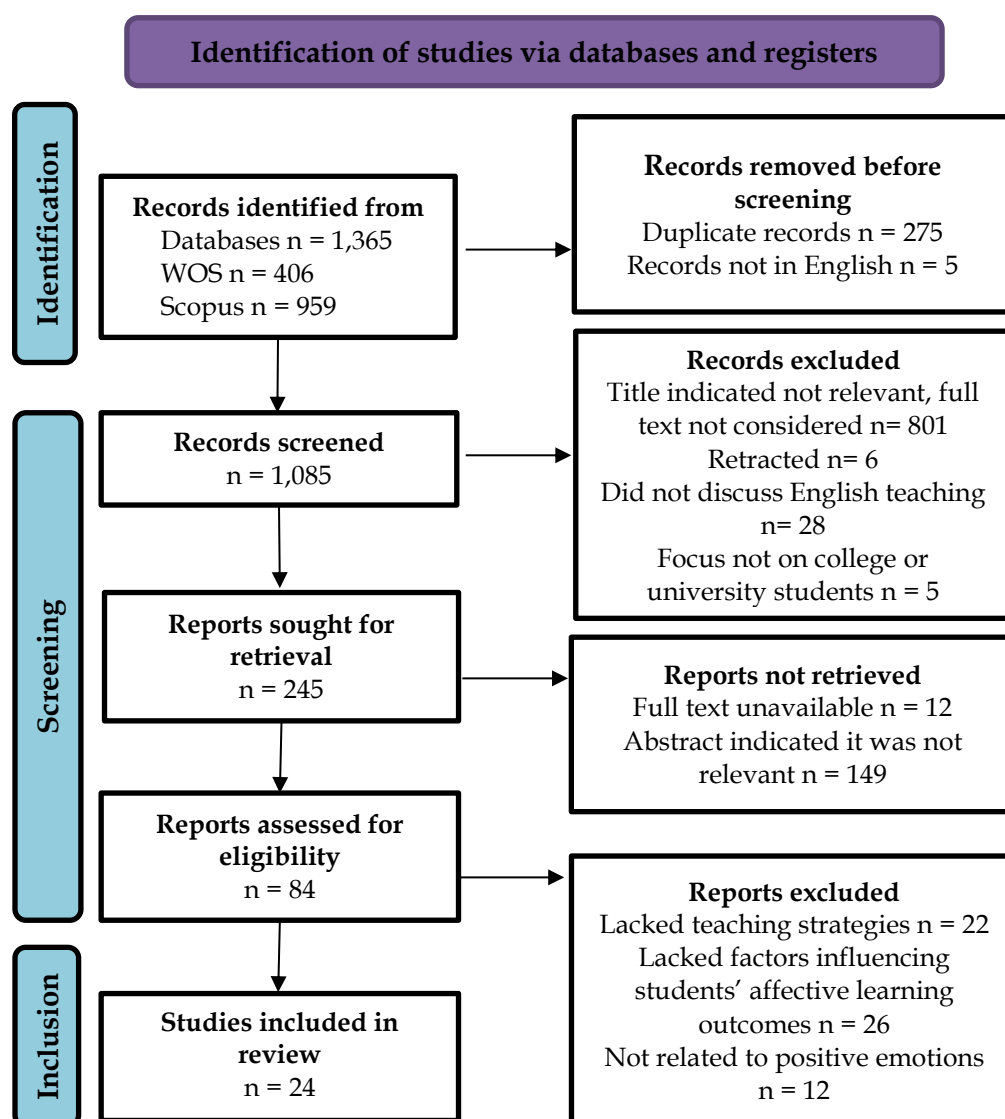


Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram for selection of papers

3.5 Data Extraction

The extraction of relevant information for inclusion in this study followed the guidelines of Harris et al. (2014), who list review categories as follows: author, year, geographic location, sample size, age range, school environment, program content and teaching, fidelity of implementation measures, methodology, and results. Subsequently, the results were categorized according to Chang and Tsai's (2022) research on the driving forces of emotional intelligence for academic achievement. The categories are motivation and self-growth, self-efficacy and autonomy, and environmental factors. For the method of analysis, this paper adopted the systematic review that Shurovi et al. (2025) employed for deductive thematic analysis; it was selected as a model reference because it examines ESL learning outcomes in a similar way as this paper.

4. Results

A total of 1,365 studies were identified through a database search. After removing 275 duplicates, 1,090 studies were screened by title and abstract. Following the selection process, 84 full-text articles were assessed against eligibility criteria. A deeper evaluation was conducted by manually reading the remainder of potentially eligible articles. Eventually, a total of 24 studies are included in this systematic review.

There were two main aspects of data analysis. This first one involved categorizing studies into three overarching themes, namely motivation and self-growth, self-efficiency and autonomy, and environmental factors. These themes underline the main affective components involved in affective learning outcomes, and the ways positive emotions could correlate with improved ESL learning. Then, specific articles that mentioned novel teaching strategies or theoretical models were identified, to extrapolate teachers' efforts over the years to integrate the affective domain into the classroom.

For reference, Table 1 presents the distribution of articles selected for this study.

Table 1: Types of research articles

Author(s)	Country	Publication date	Research types
Abdulaal et al.	Saudi Arabia	2022	Quantitative
Abrera et al.	Philippines	2024	Quantitative
Al-Jarrah et al.	Jordan	2024	Quantitative
Almesaar	Saudi Arabia	2022	Mixed
Bai	China	2022	Quantitative
Bi and Zhang	China	2020	Quantitative
Bin	China	2020	Quantitative
Diert-Boté	Spain	2022	Qualitative
Garita and Sánchez	Costa Rica	2021	Mixed
Guo and Liu	China	2022	Quantitative
Haitao and Lu	China	2020	Quantitative
Hu et al.	China	2022	Quantitative
Huang and Chang	China	2020	Quantitative
Li and Yu	China	2025	Quantitative

Author(s)	Country	Publication date	Research types
Liu	China	2021	Quantitative
Pakirathan et al.	Malaysia	2023	Qualitative
Wang	China	2021	Theoretical
Xia	China	2020	Quantitative
Yarquah	Kazakhstan	2024	Quantitative
Zhang	China	2022	Quantitative
Zhang and Nguyen	Malaysia	2022	Qualitative
Zheng and Zhou	China	2022a	Mixed
Zheng and Zhou	China	2022b	Quantitative
Zheng et al.	China	2024	Quantitative

4.1 Factors that Influence Students' Affective Learning Outcomes

4.1.1 Motivation and Self-growth

According to half the articles in the database (Table 1), motivation serves as the most consistent and discernible factor in students' affective learning outcomes. This aligns strongly with Hussain et al. (2020), who list two subcategories of motivation that were both found in the participants of the articles that were examined. Motivation covers most fundamental spheres of learning because it is human nature to constantly develop one's skills and embrace change, with motivation being the biological receptor to evaluate the type of growth students should adopt.

Though intrinsic motivation is the desired outcome of ESL learning, many articles reveal that students' ESL processes are predominantly extrinsic in motivation. This is evidenced by the research topics of the articles underlining the significance of positive psychology by observing in tandem with detrimental effects of low motivation as characterized by learning anxiety and disinterest. Zhang (2022) denotes ESL process being strongly linked to academic performance, even if a student experiences intrinsic motivation. This is because students perceive the learning process as added enjoyment when performance is high, as opposed to those who are extrinsically motivated, who perceive achievements as their only source of gratification in foreign language.

Haitao and Lu (2023) concur with the study above. They found that emotion is influential for both students' learning effectiveness and teachers' performance. Guo and Liu (2022) found a prevalent source of extrinsic motivation for EFL was to learn English owing to its relevance in most careers and industries; students felt obligated to learn English even if they did not have positive attitudes about it. Garita and Sánchez (2021) also identified motivation as a strong variable in relation to effective language learning, which suggests that students can learn to take control of their own learning by understanding the metacognitive, affective, or social domains.

4.1.2 Self-efficacy & Autonomy

Self-efficacy, like motivation, plays a role in maintaining students' long-term retention. This self-efficacy may be supplemented by high levels of peer-to-peer influence, individual differences between students, and discipline beyond the

classroom. Li and Yu (2025) state that self-efficacy is the main predictor of learning outcomes of first-year students, with students with high-efficacy being more likely to improve their academic performance in the learning process through unexpected outcomes. Wang (2021) reports that autonomous students have a smoother EFL learning process because of consistent practices and knowledge acquisition. Self-regulated learning was found to affect emotional confidence, just like motivation did, which has fluctuating implications for teaching strategies centered on academic performance (Zhang & Nguyen, 2022).

Furthermore, measuring academic self-efficacy identified students who were struggling with certain aspects of proficiencies such as linguistics, speaking or listening (Zhang & Nguyen, 2022). Haitao and Lu (2020) stress that instilling independence regarding learning is a significant part of teacher's role, and involves the teachers being stimulated and improved through interaction during the process of communication. Xia (2020) confirms that English reading should be an active cognitive behavior because the cognitive process involves complex psychological changes in university students, necessitating a suitable atmosphere where they are exposed to overarching knowledge, cultures, and social networks.

4.1.3 Environmental Factors

The promotion of a positive environment is imperative for fostering new teaching and learning strategies in tertiary education. The environment, in this context, includes both social and physical aspects, with the former being particularly exemplified through moral support from other individuals. For instance, a positive social environment makes it possible for teaching strategies in a classroom to establish achievable goals for students and to create encouraging learning atmospheres for emotional expression, and promotes the desire to learn English for the sake of fulfillment (Al-Jarrah et al., 2024). Not only does this finding confirm previous research claims about the positive physical environment directly supporting positive social environments, it also expands on it. Bi and Zhang (2020) found that mental health changes as the environment changes and the student ages. This process signifies positive psychology being perpetuated through assigning group-based activities to encourage rapport among students. Teachers are pivotal in creating engaging environments to optimize students' engagement with English and to ensure that their motivation remains high, which speeds up students' ESL acquisition process (Almesaar, 2022).

In turn, a positive physical environment can yield similar results regarding enhancing learning efficiency. Zheng and Zhou (2022b) found that learning spaces that comprised bright, expansive rooms and conjoined tables enabled seamless, positive peer influence, as well as enabling related teacher strategies. For example, to cultivate collaborative learning and shared accomplishments in classroom tasks, teachers can seat highly proficient students next to less proficient ones. In contrast, Diert-Boté (2022) reviewed the negative consequences of a less-than-ideal environment, such as judgmental peers causing fear of criticism in students, which may inhibit learning. This finding indirectly suggests that poor environments may distort some students' intrinsic motivation to fulfill expected norms of English learning level, negatively shaping them into extrinsic motivation instead. It also explains why Alrabai (2014) found that the effectiveness of

language learning deteriorated when students failed to maintain their emotional welfare.

4.2 Teaching Strategy

According to the data reviewed, a significant majority of articles on teaching strategies had prioritized students' affective attitudes toward the ESL process as their primary focus. This is depicted how most of the strategies aim to ensure student "enjoyment", "gaiety", and "fulfillment. From the motivational and environmental factors above, a direct correlation is identified with positive affective learning outcomes. Abdulaal et al. (2022) conducted a study on foreign language gaiety and apprehension, which were found to be significant contributors to forming the ideal second-language student identity. This is performed through teaching strategies that stimulate high communicative willingness in students, to encourage the enthusiastic use of language. In addition, Al-Jarrah et al. (2024) identify the significant role of humor in language learning, by creating positive emotional experiences, which renders learning more digestible to students. This finding, in particular, aligns with the claim of Heydarnejad et al. (2022) that affective elements such as humor, and even confusion, are beneficial to emotional learning progress because it humanizes learning materials.

From these articles, it is clear that collaboration is an essential tool that teachers use when preparing classroom activities and assessments. Zheng and Zhou (2022b) emphasize that positive emotions can co-exist with negative emotions, just as motivations do. In order to deal with students' foreign language learning anxiety, teachers must convince students about the benefits of learning foreign languages as a goal beyond classroom performance and expectations. This may also subconsciously develop autonomy in the language learning process, by nurturing students to become lifelong students (Garita & Sánchez, 2021). Additionally, teacher immediacy is strongly suggested by Wang (2021) to maintain a stable teacher-student relationship. This notion is particularly important because teachers are often the main facilitators of student learning processes. A healthy attitude toward language learning may boost student cognitive and affective capabilities by allowing them to establish an implicit trust that they will improve once they exert sufficient effort to learn.

In addition to expressing the importance of student fulfillment, a number of studies propose novel ideas and improvements to existing teaching models. Table 2 illustrates the contributions and related theories the studies incorporated.

Table 2: Teaching strategies explored

Author(s) and publication date	Theory/strategy investigated	Contribution
Bi and Zhang (2020)	Penetration behavior	Exploration of psychological identity as it affects the English proficiency of students using computer platforms for English training
Bin (2020)	Mental health theory	New teaching model that adopts mental health protocols for English pedagogy and assessments
Haitao and Lu (2020)	Communication theory	Differentiated instruction is suggested to improve learning interests of students via independent communicative activities
Zhang (2022)	Convolutional neural network	An emotion recognition method that provides technical support for affective interactions in educational settings
Zhang and Nguyen (2022)	Autoethnography	Observes listening anxiety in the ESL process by incorporating elements of information processing and self-regulated learning models

Table 2 illustrates a recurring pattern of the contributions aiming to reinforce positive psychology in both educators and students alike. For instance, Haitao and Lu's (2020) differentiated instruction emphasizes the students' desires foremost which ought to align with students' learning materials. As a result, teachers provide specialized support by providing for each student's strengths and weaknesses, thereby increasing learning retention while providing students with leeway to freely explore language learning interests. Bi and Zhang's (2020) study on penetration behavior improves our understanding of students' emotional psyche. This eases teachers' material-making processes, allowing them to adapt to students' learning habits and tapping into the underexplored field of technological support such as computer-based learning regimes. Penetration behavior may also reinforce the past notion of affective attitude coaching (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020), which encourages teachers to engage students on bringing about positive change in their attitudes, such as increased intrinsic motivation to learn ESL. All in all, these strategies function by instilling emotional intelligence as an aspect of ESL learning without turning it into an academic obligation for students.

5. Discussion

5.1 Thematic Components of Affective Learning

This paper identified significant milestones in bridging academic gaps over the past five years, such as small sample sizes and suboptimal learning environments for affective learning, which led to affective learning not being scrutinized in college contexts (Rossiter, 2003). The latest articles provide more well-rounded observations of the perspectives of both teachers and students on factors relating to affective learning outcomes, with the students usually being the priority of earlier research (Kassem, 2018). This paper references teaching strategies that affirm our knowledge of ESL motivational factors while expanding the thematic

components of affective learning outcomes, thereby addressing this paper's research objectives directly.

5.1.1 Cognitive and Emotional Health

Both the affective components necessary for ESL learning and its negative effects contain the theme of mental health. Student anxiety, emotional security, and personal attitudes to learning materials are among the top issues students encounter at colleges today. Though these are pressing concerns, they indirectly reveal a significant contribution by these studies: students innately possess adequate individual ability to succeed in ESL, as long as their cognitive and emotional well-being are sustained. This claim is confirmed by Huang and Chang (2020), who found that more than 70% of college students were rated above medium. This percentage is a marginal improvement compared to students a decade ago where only half had passed the CET-4 and CET-6 exams. The finding implies that the baseline proficiency of students over the years has been improving steadily, and the reason for this improvement is an increasing awareness of the importance of emotional health for learning.

Teaching strategies have been found to adjust accordingly to reflect this increasing awareness. The novel strategies suggested by Bin (2020) and Bi and Zhang (2020) aim to adjust the ESL curriculum so that language learning is not only an intellectual effort but also an emotional one, as mirrored in Chang and Tsai's three overarching themes. In addition to teachers changing their teaching strategies to improve student engagement, recent studies depict students themselves possessing higher awareness of their own interest in effectively motivating themselves to succeed in ESL learning (Abrera et al., 2024). The extent of students' awareness of language learning is also associated with their speaking proficiency level. In light of this, it is necessary for the parties involved in education to provide opportunities for students to freely express their own means of learning foreign language. These opportunities include establishing a supportive environment in which students can inculcate affective learning goals from one another, and developing strong teambuilding skills in the process.

5.1.2 Positive Reinforcement

In this paper, boundaries of positive psychology are scrutinized in relation to ESL learning outcomes. Guo's (2021) definition of positive psychology in learning is to do 'what is right in life'; this definition is loose and abstract and altogether too generalized for the learning context. This paper's article database reveals that, although negative extrinsic motivation often yields detrimental effects, it may still be considered by students to be the 'correct' choice for a smooth process of foreign language learning, albeit a less fulfilling one. Anxiety, for instance, is a crucial emotional condition that students should experience in order to be motivated to pursue risk-taking outcomes in learning (Bai, 2022).

Yarquah (2024) found that anxiety in foreign language learning can be construed as a short-term desire to improve one's own proficiency, by meeting the expectations of either the students themselves or external parties. Because of this, low levels of anxiety in students are not detrimental and may even be a crucial component of affective learning. Minimal anxiety may come in the form of

sacrificing personal interests for the sake of investigating topics that objectively provide more pragmatic functions.

That said, the role of positive psychology in affective learning ought to be reviewed; it should mediate students' affective needs through appropriate moral and emotional encouragement, but not to the extent of eliminating students' anxiety altogether. A case study (Komlosi-Ferdinand, 2019) investigated this notion in Mongolia and found that excessive emotional validation may be demotivating for learning processes, such as overconfidence and high-achiever anxiety, because of mounting pressure from higher societal expectations. To minimize this effect in students today, it is recommended that teachers employ teaching strategies that merely facilitate the learning process, rather than directly providing students with the materials they require to improve. Giving students all they need may prove overwhelming and could undermine their affective psyche.

5.2 Research Implications

The findings of this review highlight specific learning strategy proposals, and this paper contributes to practical and theoretical implications for the way affective learning can be more effectively integrated by various parties to higher education. Most notably, education policymakers ought to provide proper administrative support for affective learning. This may ease school administrations with a more unilateral ESL teaching method that does not require constant and immediate supervision of students learning foreign languages. While traditional teaching imparts foreign language learning through textbooks requiring students to memorize work, affective learning can ease the language acquisition process by invoking positive psychology through visualization, music and humor in the teaching materials, so that students can derive intrinsic motivation while fostering self-efficacy in learning (Aubrey, 2022).

From an organizational standpoint, this approach benefits educators while increasing operational efficiency of staff, because typical classroom duties are effectively 'outsourced' to the students themselves. In addition, this affective learning method could be more suitable for students who struggle with particular emotional or socio-cognitive issues, such as learning anxiety or the academic pressure experienced by high achievers. This approach could free up teachers' time and mental effort so that they can perform even more productive tasks, such as drawing up curriculum plans for the future, or simply unwind from stress. Regardless, affective learning is a relevant alternative that benefits most education stakeholders, and policymakers should consider teaching strategies that are not memory or practice-intensive for students.

5.3 Research Limitations and Recommendations

This study has two prevailing limitations that should be clarified. First, like the articles reviewed, this study analyzed a relatively small sample size of 24 articles, which limits the expanse of our conclusions'; the findings may not be applicable to affective learning outcomes in every region. The second challenge relates to our methodology, specifically that of the screening and eligibility process. While the two authors of this study thoroughly deliberated on each article's inclusion and

exclusion, it is still prone to the risk of human biases. This is especially applicable to the abstract and ever-changing relationship between language and emotion, which may jeopardize the understanding of affective components in students' language acquisition processes. To address these limitations, scholars across the world are invited to perform more comprehensive research on variations of affective learning strategies. This may include cross-country comparative analyses that directly observe discrepancies in student behavior, which could uncover cognitive or emotional factors this study overlooked. Comparative analysis can also be applied to varying education levels, which may be significant for bridging knowledge gaps, because students at lower education levels may have different emotional needs and processes during affective learning. By cross-examining these differences, more inclusive teaching strategies may be proposed to minimize ESL learning anxieties and disinterest, particularly during students' transition to higher education levels.

Additionally, more research should be done in the field of positive psychology. Considering this paper's finding that negative emotions could aid language acquisition, it is important to reevaluate findings relating to learning anxiety and other emotional conditions that were previously thought to stand in the way of students' learning. Reevaluating past research may also indirectly serve as a deeper exploration of learning motivation, which was found in this study as the primary affective component driving ESL learning.

6. Conclusion

Even though affective learning has been subject to a great deal of academic development over the years, it remains a step behind traditional teaching in terms of popularity and preference as a teaching method for teachers. Consequently, it is necessary to increase awareness of its benefits further, so that school parties and students themselves can embrace this insightful change. This study provided evidence of affective learning shaping students' cognitive retention through teachers employing the right teaching strategies, which could accelerate the motivation of students, and fundamentally influence their language acquisition efficacy. By paying attention to students' affective needs, teachers can encourage healthy ESL learning habits, such as self-efficacy, autonomy, and a desire to gain knowledge for intrinsic fulfillment. Teachers developing keener awareness for students' affective needs could also encourage positive emotions, creating a harmonious ESL learning environment which should be the intended outlook for language learning in the first place. After all, learning another language is akin to dipping oneself to another's culture, hence it should be similarly greeted with camaraderie.

In light of this notion, all education stakeholders, including government bodies, teaching staff, and administrative workers, should work together to embrace affective teaching by collaborating to prepare optimal learning environments in which students can exercise their emotional liberty. This collaboration could involve extensive curricular overhauls, as well as amendments to internal structural systems at colleges. Doing so would directly advocate for positive reinforcement in educational atmospheres while initiating opportunities for

meaningful interactions between students and teachers, thereby fostering long-term affective awareness and empathy.

7. References

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