

# Socio- psychological Barriers to Effective Language Learning in Adult EFL Classroom in Context of Bangladesh

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts in English

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

**Student's Full Name & Signature:**

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## Approval

The thesis/project titled “Socio- psychological Barriers of Effective Language Learning in Adult EFL Classroom in Context of Bangladesh” submitted by Sumaiya Sharmin (15303007) of Summer, 2019 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English on April 24, 2019.

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## **Ethics Statement**

I, Sumaiya Sharmin, confirm that this thesis paper is a work of my own, and to the best of my knowledge there is no plagiarism involved. All the information and sources, used in this research have been acknowledged. I have never submitted this material, either in whole or part, previously or concurrently in any institution.

## **Abstract**

This paper inspects the socio-psychological barriers that adult learners face in classrooms while learning a foreign language, in this case, English. It also studies how these barriers are working negatively for the whole learning process. The context of this research is Bangladesh, and qualitative data were collected through face to face and online interviews. To learn about the experiences of the adult learners, the researcher conducted research on 21 adult students who are currently taking foreign language learning courses. The interviews reveal five significant challenges that adult learners face, such as fear of new language, previous learning experience, classroom anxiety, age and motivation. Most of the existing literatures work on how the issues with classroom management, teachers training, teaching methods etc. can be barriers to the learning process whereas this study enlists all the socio psychological issues that adult learners face by analyzing real life experiences of the participants.

**Keywords:** EFL; Effective Learning; ELT; Socio-psychological Barriers; Adult Classroom.

## **Dedication**

*I would like to dedicate my work to my parents for giving me the opportunity to choose my own field of research interest and also for making me realize that the world of language is where I wanted to be.*

## **Acknowledgement**

To begin with, I would like to take a moment to thank the Almighty for providing me the context where I could utilize my capability and interest. I would like to thank my father and my mother who always support me in my choices and have been great influence in my journey towards pursuing my Undergrad Degree.

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## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This study is mainly about the socio-psychological issues of effective language learning process faced by adult students in EFL (English as Foreign Language) classrooms. Socio-psychologically adult students face some challenges that young students might not. That is why adult EFL classrooms need extra concern. For conducting this research 21 participants were interviewed, and qualitative data were collected from those face to face and online interviews. Those 21 students are students of a language institute and in present, they are learning English for different purposes. Currently, classroom practitioners and researchers are continuously trying to find out how to maximize learning in classroom. They try to look for any reason that may hinder the process, and seek solution for those issues. Now, classroom management, teacher's effectiveness, curriculum design etc. are given much importance while discussing how to maximize learning efficacy. Yet, there is another significant factor that might be considered as the setback for effective language learning which is socio-psychological issue. In our country, there is a good number of language teaching institutes. Adult language teaching is becoming popular day by day. Therefore, the barriers should be a concern for the researchers so that the learners get to learn efficiently. Because of learners' socio-psychological barriers while language learning, the learning process gets hampered. Now, among these socio- psychological issues motivation, age, language learning experience in school and college, fear of new language, anxiety issue in classrooms etc. are some of them. For example, Rahman (2005) states that students concentrate on the functional role of

English language. It indicates that in our country, people take English as only a subject to pass the exam, even though this trend has started to change nowadays. They have a small scope for practicing English and within that area, they only learn English for specific purposes. Thus, they tend to learn English with structures and grammatical knowledge without understanding the contextual use of the language. If a teacher tries to change that tradition and tries to teach the language through intuitive learning, his acceptance in the class decreases. The prejudice and conventional mind set bounds them to feel stressed in this situation and they feel the urge to learn it through grammar and structure because of their previous language learning experience in school and college days. At the end of the day, all of these factors make contribution to reduce the learning effectiveness and turn out to be barriers in the process of leaning a foreign language in our context.

On the other hand, Shahed (2001) discusses the traditions and influencing factors of English language learning and uses the term 'Subject of horror' for English language in context of Bangladesh. Most of the people in our country only learn English for academic purposes, and also, they only have little exposure to English or none at all. They find English, a language, which is very difficult. This also disturbs the effectiveness of learning as the learners do not find the class interesting or relatable because they are already terrified by the idea of learning English. All of these reasons get reflected in adult classrooms. Thus, preceding English language learning experience, becoming anxious in language classroom, fear of a new language, motivation, age etc. are some of the factors that become the barrier in language learning in adult classroom.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

English language learning is not a new phenomenon in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, the number of adult foreign language learners is increasing every year. People are more conscious about career choices in present. Many people think they can get a better career if they go abroad. For that, they need to sit for IELTS (International English Language Testing System) exam based on English language skills. Additionally, if they want to sustain a quality lifestyle abroad, they need to learn English anyway. Moreover, even in Bangladesh, the importance of communication skill is becoming a major concern. Therefore, if someone wants to do well in his career, he needs to be good at English spoken skill and writing skill as well. Nonetheless, higher study requires skill in English as well. That is why adult students from different fields want to be good at English for a good result in their academic areas. Hence, it is unnecessary to mention that the quality of adult language class needs more nurture and concentration. Therefore, it will be of great value if we can find out some possible barriers which hinder the process vitally and will lead us closer to the solutions. Since doing a research throughout the country is difficult, time consuming and almost impossible for a student to conduct, the researcher has considered only adult EFL classrooms to conduct the research. Adult EFL students mostly take these classes for career purposes. Hence, if we cannot provide a better learning for them, at the end, it is our economy which will be affected. Purpose of this research is to find out the possible barriers in effective language learning in adult EFL classroom since a learner may face many issues to get the grasp of the foreign language.

## **1.2 Context of the Study**

This research will solely focus on adult EFL classrooms in Bangladesh. People who want to go abroad, want to get better skill in English in order to do well in their job sector or in academics,

take EFL classes. Here, adult learner means who have already completed their HSC and their age is 18 or above. We can find these adult language classrooms in many language learning institutes. For example, British Council, Mentors', Saifur's etc. are language learning institutes. These institutes offer courses that provide foundation Grammar and writing knowledge to the adult students who want to fulfil their gap in English grammar or who actually want to learn the language from the root. Additionally, they offer spoken course which can make the students prepare for fluent speaking in the target language. Also, they make the students prepare for IELTS. That is how the language learning platforms play significant role in adult language learning in our country. Even though people in our country get to learn English in schools and colleges, but for some reason, we lack the exposure and efficiency even in adulthood. Hence, for career purpose or academic purpose, adult people realize that they need better skill in English language, and therefore they go for language learning courses. Now, if these courses cannot provide better teaching, our country will be affected economically since many people learn English just to go abroad, and they increase our country's revenue.

Students come from different social backgrounds with different mindset. That is why it is important for the teachers to know one's own classroom so that he or she can plan his lessons accordingly, and so the tasks will not be against students' mind set. It means that teacher should be aware of the way how he is approaching his adult students and also what tasks he is providing them. In adult classroom, inductive learning should be introduced such a way that they find it interesting and relatable so that they do not look for only grammar and structures. Most importantly, those tasks should be effective enough. Now, for doing so, interaction between teacher and students is important, as Olaoluwakotansibe Agbatogun (2014) states that interaction is a major component of successful instructional process. That is why teacher needs to eradicate

communication gap to give clearer instruction. Giving feedback is also the same. Teacher needs to have it in mind to whom and how he is giving feedback. In case of the classrooms where the teacher is even younger than the students, a teacher should be an authority that facilitates the students, but not a controller, while keeping the classroom having in his control. He does not need to be the controller or director of the class. Students will get anxious and their learning will be hampered if they do not get the stress-free environment. Importance should be given to motivate and encourage students along with providing guidelines. Pedota (2007) describes how motivating, challenging, and engaging students is of great importance if teacher has high expectations from that class which will also help to improve student behavior in academic accomplishments, and in real life to act in a moral and ethical way. In that way fear of learning English can also be lessened. Finally, to change the attitude towards English language, the teacher needs to motivate them in such a way that they do not only learn it for passing exams or their specific motive, but also, they take it like a life style and start making effort to increase the exposure towards English. All of these efforts to get effective learning environment will fail to succeed if the learners carry or face psychological challenges in the classroom. That is why it is important to find out the problems they face socio-psychologically while learning a foreign language.

Now, there are few renowned language institutes in our country, and many of them are in Dhaka. The researcher is determined to take interview of 21 adult students to find out some possible barriers that will give a picture of how socio- psychological issues might affect the whole process.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

This paper will try to find out major setbacks of language learning in context of Bangladesh and will analyze how these factors affect the learning process. In order to complete this research, two research questions have been developed:

1. What are the major socio-psychological barriers that adult learners face in EFL classrooms of Bangladesh?
2. How do those constraints affect language learning process?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

There are a lot of studies on primary and secondary ESL (English as Second Language) classroom and its challenges. On the contrary, there are only few studies that can be found on adult EFL classroom. In fact, there are only few significant studies that talk about socio-psychological factors that adult language learners face. Therefore, this research will be an important contribution for further research if we want to execute a more effective learning environment. Additionally, many people are going abroad after learning foreign languages. They bring and add revenue to our economy. That is why it is important to give them better education so that the learning process gets easier, and they face less difficulty. At the end, our country will be benefitted by the act. Moreover, there is a growing trend of adult language learning. This large number of people can help the country to be more globalized as the communication sector will be strong and companies will get precious employees who will be able to communicate with the foreign delegates. Lastly, the classroom practitioners are always trying to make improvements in classroom situation. This study will be a contribution to the further research. Therefore, this research will contribute in foreign language learning area to a great extent.



## **1.6 Dissertation Outline**

This paper will start with a review of literature based on the field of foreign language learning. The literature review will contain the significant existing studies which will help us to get an idea about how far we already know about the issue, and how much this research will contribute to further studies. This portion will be presented in chapter 2, and chapter 3 will be about the method and participants of the studies. Research findings and discussion will be in chapter 4 in details, and finally, chapter 5 will present the summary of the research findings and conclusion.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In order to ensure effective learning, it is important to find out the socio-psychological barriers that might inhibit learner's efficacy in classroom. Especially, teachers face many issues to execute an interactive and fruitful adult class because of the different factors which are carried by the students themselves. These issues in an adult EFL classroom are not only different from ESL classroom, but also different from primary, secondary, and higher secondary classroom. Now, this chapter will give an overview of existing literatures related to this research. With the relevant literatures, the researcher will try to find out the gaps, and this study will try to make a contribution towards fulfilling the gap. Also, this section will include impact of socio-cultural context on adult learners' mindset; impact of age; motivation for learning foreign language and how anxiety is a huge barrier even in adult classroom.

### **2.1 Does the Socio-cultural Context Have Any Impact on Learners' Mindset?**

Cultural issue is directly related to language learning and teaching. Here, cultural issue refers to the idea of the established way of language learning. In Bangladesh, Grammar translation method is well established and practiced throughout the years. Alam (2015) claims that advocates of this method consider that learning a foreign language is attained through the continuous and fast translation of sentences from the target foreign language to the learner's first language and vice versa. Larsen-Freeman (2004) think it is expected to learn a language better through the study of grammatical structure of the target language because in this way, learners would become more acquainted with grammar of the language. As a consequence, culturally, learners from our country

have this mindset that learning grammar and structure is more effective in order to learn a new language whereas communicative language teaching focuses on meaning rather than structure. If any teacher tries to alter that structural teaching with practical teaching, such as communicative method, the popularity of the teacher decreases in that class and learners tend to neglect the class lectures as a result. Alam (2015) stated that, “The Grammar Translation Method holds that splitting the language into parts determined by the grammatical categories of the language has psycho linguistic validity” (p.1). Moreover, learning through structures gives them only a partial knowledge of the language. Gower, Phillips, and Walters (1983) say that many of the patterns that students learn are particular grammatical items (p. 126). Diana Ansary (2012) claimed that it is challenging for the teachers of Bangladesh to apply CLT in classrooms. Rahman and Karim (2015) blames that intrinsic barriers covering cultural causes which consider passive-student traditions and negative-to-group-work attitudes that lead towards failure of the process or partial success. Students have a negative attitude towards communicative and task-based learning. On the other hand, adult students sometimes consider tasks unnecessary, therefore they do not feel interested and reluctantly attend activities. Hence, the tasks and activities cannot serve their purposes well. Now, this is an effect of cultural mindset in EFL classroom that can be considered as a barrier towards effective teaching. Resolving this cultural mind set towards unconventional language teaching and learning, is a big concern for better quality education.

## **2.2 Is the Incentive for Foreign Language Learning Different for Adult Students?**

Motivation behind English learning and outlook towards the target language is another significant concern in case of adult language learning. Foreign language learning noticeably varies from

language acquisition in the fact that foreign language students sometimes set about learning only with limited objectives, such as becoming proficient at good understanding of the language at around an intermediate level (Dornyei, 1990, P. 6). Most of the students in adult classroom learn a foreign language out of a practical reason. This is called instrumental motivation. For example, a learner might learn a language solely because he wants to take IELTS, or he wants to write a good and error free report in his office. Someone else might be weak in fluency, and he wants to be better at communication within his work field. This instrumental motivation significantly affects language learning. Kormos & Csizer (2008) studied three age groups for finding the dissimilarities in language learning motivation between different levels and found that the secondary school learners were interested in English-language considering it as cultural products which affected their motivated behavior whereas the two older age groups consider English language as an international posture. Ushioda (2010) discusses that motivation is not a major concern in the case of children's native language acquisition, but motivation can make a huge difference in case of how willingly and successfully students learn other languages later in life. Children have higher curiosity level in case of language learning which a significant reason why children have higher motivation, and that is why they learn faster and easily than the adult students. Now, Karim (2004) says that public schools and post-secondary institutions are unsuccessful to prepare learners with sufficient English language proficiency to communicate in English which is considered to be the international language of commerce, science and development. In later stage when people feel the urge to learn a foreign language, they go to language institutes and join adult classes. Karim (2004) states that there is a noteworthy number of private language schools in Bangladesh, and it is estimated that 5% learners take private language classes in our country. The underlying motivation behind joining these language classes is mostly instrumental and which

according to Dornyei (1990), can be defined as a set of motives involving the individual's striving for better career prospects (P.2). Certainly, this motivation is the driving force continuing learning English, but this motivation also requires them to be only enthusiastic about the fast learning and structural learning. As a result, adult students are mostly concerned about having the knowledge of the language, rather than achieving the skill in English. Moreover, Schimdt, Boraie & Kassabgy (1996) believe that English language ability is related with educational accomplishment, which in turn regulates social status. Therefore, academic success is also a driving force. The problem is, because of the instrumental motivation and lack of integrative motivation, learners are not really interested to learn the language rather they want to use it. A research based on the EFL classrooms in Egypt by Schimdt, Boraie & Kassabgy (1996) illustrates that significant professions need a certain level of proficiency in English, and career development in Egypt in many fields is affected by the capability of communicating fluently in English. This statement is also applicable for our context.

### **2.3 Is Age Just a Number or It Has Impact on Adult Language Learning as Well?**

Adults students face various issues while learning a foreign language compared to young students. One of the issues is that adult students may find themselves in a position that their brain psychologically refuse to take certain rules. This situation is called fossilization. Han & Odlin (2006) say that this phenomenon is a hopeless occurrence faced by adult learner while acquiring a second language, but this also can happen in case of learning a foreign language. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) brief that people may have a “mental block” against processing a foreign language sometimes, even though those same people may be excellent learners in other contexts,

where they are highly motivated, and they sincerely like the speakers of the target language. There have been many studies that have looked for the reasons of this blockade and how this is related to learning a new language, but among those studies it is evident that fossilization has close relation with new language learning. Selinker (1972) points out a causal connection between fossilization and ultimate accomplishment of language learning. This process hampers the overall process and act against acquiring the fluency of the target language. In relation to that, the Percentage of adaptation towards a language is Assumed to be directly proportional to learner's age, and so younger students learn faster with comparison to older students (Genese & Caroline, 2006). Lightbown (2000) clarifies that this happens for most adult learners where the acquisition process stops or in other words it fossilizes even before the learner has attained native like proficiency in the target language. Therefore, age is definitely one significant factor in case of adult language learning.

## **2.4 Anxiety and Fear of Learning a New Language**

According to MacIntyre (1995), anxiety that is created by fear of learning a new language can play an important causal role in creating individual differences in case of language learning and also in case of communication. This is another vital socio- psychological barrier of effective language learning. There are various reasons why a student feels anxious during learning a foreign language. Researchers indicate difficulty level of language classes, personal perception of the target language, certain traits of individuals own personality, for example public speaking phobia, perfectionism etc. and bad classroom experience as the major reason of language anxiety. Anxiety can hamper someone's learning process vastly. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) believe that learner may have an anxiety response in classroom which hinders their ability to act successfully in a foreign

language class. Learners sometimes feel that anxiety is a leading hindrance to get over in process of learning to speak a new language. Many recent approaches to foreign language teaching, such as Communicative Language Teaching and Suggestopedia etc. are continuously being modified for reducing learner anxiety. Some approaches and methods make the learners to be in a defensive position or in easy words, learners find themselves challenged in a language classroom based on their skill to produce it properly. Adult students are more conscious about their self-concept and world view and do not want to feel ashamed in front of everyone which ultimately lead them to language anxiety. It gets demonstrated differently in individuals (McDonald, 2001). This anxiety trait is shown and dealt with differently by different individuals. Some learners are less anxious. and they are not afraid to communicate in class. These learners learn fast. Some other may be anxious at times but they take initiative to overcome their fear and anxiety, and eventually they succeed. In other cases, people fail to acquire the fluency completely because of their language anxiety as Cubukcu (2008) says that language anxiety happens in different pattern and is differentiated by psychological emotions of worry, fear, and apprehension. Moreover, Horwitz (2001) notes that anxiety not only initiates negative influence to learners' language learning process, but it is logically proven that anxiety interferes many types of learning and it is one of the most highly examined variables in psychology and education. Even, Supon (2004) claims that it affects the performance of students negatively. Horwitz (2001) points out to some researchers, such as Sparks and Ganschow and their colleagues saying that they believe inefficient language learning is a cause and not a result of anxiety. Anxiety factor hinders learning during the process. Therefore, this factor is to be blamed as effective language learning barrier. According to Zheng (2008), it is significant to understand the Reasons and Results of language anxiety from a

contextual perspective which can be vital to facilitate the language Learning and teaching process and development.

Now, these studies do not list all the possible socio-psychological barriers in adult EFL classrooms which can be used to improve the effectiveness of teaching by solving the issues, and through which we can learn how to facilitate adult students in classroom more efficiently.



## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

The research methodology chapter contains details about the type of research that has been conducted. It will elaborate how the research was performed and why the particular approach, in this case qualitative approach, was selected for the study. The whole study was executed based on the central questions which are: (1) what are the major socio -psychological factor that hamper adult language learning and (2) how those factors affect the whole process. So, from this research we will get to know about those factors, and how they are affecting the process in order to find ways to resolve those issues in further studies. Also, this chapter will discuss the research design, details of the participants, setting, the process of data collection and data analysis, ethical considerations, delimitation and limitation of the research.

### **3.1 Type of the Research**

This paper aims to find out some constraints that affect the adult EFL learners through interviews so that the participants get to share the views and perspectives of their own on this matter. On particular reason for taking interview and not doing this research through quantitative method is that the elements we are looking for are not separated from the context. Patton (2005) states that qualitative researchers are more interested in naturalistic inquiry and they tend to study real world setting in an inductive manner to find out narrative description and they treat every context like case studies. Therefore, qualitative research will help us to find out the background and context of those barriers and also, we will get to know how they are affecting the whole learning process. Quantitative approach cannot provide that bigger picture we are looking for and moreover, “Qualitative research simply requires a broader and less restrictive concept” (Maxwell, 2008,

p.215). Consequently, qualitative research can give a deeper understanding of the topic. As a matter of fact, the socio-psychological factors cannot be found out through statistics and graphs since these factors are very subjective for every learner and might not be applicable for every context and every learner. Hence, the approach for this research will be solely qualitative.

### **3.2 Research Design**

Research design refers to the idea of combining all the components of the research in a particularly strategic manner. Here, a qualitative approach will be followed to collect data since we need to know what the problems are which are hindering the learning process, and how adult students' socio- psychological attitude towards the language is affecting the process. For this research, it needs case studies to understand the experience and mind set behind these issues. Thus, qualitative approach will be appropriate for this research since qualitative study focuses on analyzing and describing human experience on certain issues (Polkinghorne, 2005). At the initial phase, there were 13 question in the interview. These questions were focusing essentially on the research questions. After taking 2 interviews, the researcher noticed that the question set for finding data about fossilization was not fruitful and so she had to discard the questions related to fossilization. The researcher asked them about the tasks and activities they do in classroom and tried to find out whether this element creates any psychological barriers or not. As a matter of surprise, none of them showed any sort of negative impression about the tasks and activities. Every one of them in the study, admitted that classroom tasks do not create any psychological barrier, and they accept the fact that learning through communication is beneficial.

### **3.3 Method and Instrument**

This research concentrates on different views and experiences of the adult EFL students. So, for collecting data, researcher chose adult EFL learners as the participants. The researcher took online and face to face interviews for this research. There were 21 students who were interviewed. For these interviews, the researcher chose students from an adult English language teaching institution named Mentors'. It was a one phase interview, and it included some open-ended question based on the research questions.

### **3.4 Face to Face Interview**

There are few reasons behind choosing face to face interview for collecting data in this research and the most important one is as Opdenakker (2006) says that face to face interview has always been the leading method of data collection in the field of qualitative research. Another reason is social cues. While taking any interview, a researcher can use his or her observation power to notice the metaphysical elements. Metaphysical elements refer to the things that are beyond words, such as attitude, tone, expression. These are also called social cues as Opdenakker (2006) mentioned that it is advantageous to take face to face interview for getting the social cues, for example, voice, intonation, body language etc. Now, if a researcher is looking for the context of the answers and also the true experience of the participants, it is beneficial to take face to face interview. Hence, the researcher decided to take few face to face interviews along with online interview.

### **3.5 Online Interview**

With the advancement of technology, collecting data through electronic media is becoming popular day by day because of the convenience and authenticity of the data. Online interview consumes less time than the face to face interview. Also, it is difficult to get the schedule of all the participants as all of them are adult and they have job and other responsibilities to attend. Hence, online interview is convenient in this case as the participants can just fill the form whenever they get time and the researcher does not have to wait for their individual appointments. Online interview is even popular than telephone interview. Novick (2008) claims that the bias against telephone interviews is visible and different from the electronic qualitative interviews which are getting popularity in research.

### 3.6 Participants of the Study

For conducting this research, 21 subjects were chosen to give interview. Their consents were taken before doing the recording, and they approved of publishing their details in this research. These 21 participants are students of a language learning centre named Mentors'. Some of them are taking 'Foundation Grammar' course and some of them are learning English in order to participating in IELTS exam. They are from various career background, and their age range is between 18 to 30. Among those 21 participants, there were 12 male and 9 female participants. This table below shows the pseudonym of the participants and their age:

	Names	Age
1.	Siraj Us Salekin Rupak	28
2.	Sayef Ali Khan	25

3.	Marjana Rahman	26
4.	Sk. Ayesha Binte Aziz	25
5.	Mishrat Rahman	26
6.	Mostafa Amin	30
7.	Fahima Alam Nishu	23
8.	Anika Islam	27
9.	Md Rezoanul Islam	30
10.	Sadia Islam	21
11.	Suvra Tajnuva Sarwar	31
12.	Hasan Ali Neloy	22
13.	Shabnam Parveen	27
14.	Ramisa Naoshin	18
15.	Asibul Hasan Shakil	19
16.	Robiul Hasan Siam	19
17.	Amena Rashid	19
18.	Md. Salah Uddin	23

19.	Mahir Faisal	18
20	Hisamul Kabir Shuvo	24
21.	Tarek Mahmud Utsho	24

### 3.7 Setting

For face to face interview, the participants were asked question individually in a quiet and comfortable room. No participant was pressurized to share any information they were not comfortable to share. Only, the interviewee and the researcher were present in the room. The place was convenient for the participants as they come to that place for learning every day. Each interview took 10 to 15 minutes at max. All of those interviews were being recorded with audio recorder with the consents of the participants.

On the other hand, online interviews were taken via google document system. Participants were given the link of the form they submitted the form at their convenience. Data had been collected on google document and researcher could see any submission and data anytime from home.

### 3.8 Pilot Study

For pilot study, the researcher took 2 one to one interviews. Initially, the researcher tried to take face to face interviews, but after a while she chose to take online interview as face to face interview or one to one interview was time consuming in a sense that the participants were unable to fix a suitable schedule. Moreover, it was apparent that subjects were not comfortable while giving face

to face interview in English, so the one to one interviews were taken in Bangla. So, in total only 5 interviews were taken face to face, and 16 interviews were taken online.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

After collecting the data from the face to face interviews, the researcher had to transcribe all of the audio recorded data and then she assimilated those data with online interview data. Online interview data was easier to analyze as we could get the written version of the interview already. Then, the researcher tried to analyze all of the data together with theories and structure to find out dominant themes which are responsible for slow language learning, known as the socio-psychological barriers. Thematic analysis not only provides the reason but also, give the background of the issues. Also, it was convenient to analysis those data to find out how those factors affect the whole learning process.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

Consents were taken from all of the participants before taking the interviews in case of face to face communication, and in case of online interview, and also for publishing the data collected from their interviews. If any participant has problem revealing his or her identity, their data will be submitted anonymously. Finally, from this data, the researcher will try to analyze the factors with relevant literature.

### **3.11 Delimitation**

The researcher chose one language institute and students of that one particular institute to conduct the whole research. All of the participants reside in Dhaka, and the institute they study at is also

situated in Dhaka. Therefore, it was quite easy and convenient for the researcher to take those interviews. Also, if the researcher needed them to meet face to face or needed any background information, she could ask them easily. Again, those participants were very helpful and enthusiastic about the research, so it was a benefit for the researcher.

### **3.12 Limitation of the Study**

The main limitation of the study is the number of participants. It was difficult to find adult language learners within the given time. Moreover, the researcher could only get access to one language institute where she could talk to the adult learners about their experience. Also, this study was based on the context of Bangladesh, but it was difficult to conduct the study throughout the country because of the shortage of time and lacking of the resource. Therefore, this study is based on the limited participants and on their experiences and perspectives.



## **Chapter 4: Research Findings and Discussion**

After taking the interviews, the researcher tried to find out the dominant themes from those interviews. There were five themes which were the most significant and prominent ones, such as previous unpleasant language learning experience, classroom anxiety, fear of learning a new language, age, and motivation.

### **4.1 Previous Unpleasant Language Learning Experience**

Previous unpleasant experience of English language learning in school and college days is one of the dominant themes in this research since from the data the researcher collected, it was clearly visible that most of the stress and struggle the learners go through in adult classroom is the result of their past experience. The researcher asked them about their school experience, and how helpful their teachers were and got to know that most of them had some experiences to share, and those experiences were not pleasant. Some of them mentioned about getting beaten by their teacher, and others mentioned how they were not allowed to ask too many questions rather they were asked to memorize whatever they were given in the class. One of the participants named Rupak shared his memories of English learning experience in school days and said that he was beaten by his teacher because he was not good at English, and the teacher didn't try to help him saying that he was not focused on his study whereas the participant claimed he was just scared of the subject itself. Moreover, he said it took away his confidence of using English to some extent. Another participant, Sayef, mentioned that they had to memorize everything most of the time while learning English in school. Furthermore, Mishrat stated that he could barely understand any grammatical structure in school, and he was afraid to ask his teacher. He had to complete the tasks of English out of fear of

his teacher. This is not the only case where learning was hampered because of stressful classroom environment. Amin shared in the interview that the teachers were not eager to teach them in details or with reason, and so he started to panic about the rules and a fear grew inside him for English. He even complained that the teaching method was not suitable or friendly for them which led to lack of understanding in that particular subject. On the other hand, Anika mentioned in her interview that she was from rural area and she described her experience of learning English as “horrible” and she thinks most of the grammatical rules she was taught, was wrong. As a matter of fact, English being a language of terror for many students, the researcher actually found that it is not the subject the learners fear about, rather their experience of learning this language including the environment, method of teaching, unhelpful teachers, and tension between teacher and students are the reasons of this fear. If we dig into the matter closely, Rahman and Karim (2015) mentioned some of the constraints which are responsible for this type of environment in language classroom, and those are: framework of the broader curriculum, the conventional teaching methods, class size and agendas, resources and equipment, the lacking of the knowledge in spoken of English teachers and also the sociolinguistic and strategic incompetence of the teachers.

On the other hand, these participants really opened up and shared their story of stress and frustration of their learning experience, and it was prominently visible that these experiences had a vast impact on their adult learning phase. While taking face to face interview, Neloy described his unhelpful school environment, and he thinks it was one of the reasons why he could not improve his English language skill. He also illustrated that he did not get the chance to clarify any grammatical rules or about any of his confusion. Lack of guidance is definitely one of the barriers that has been found in these interviews. In most cases, the students feared their teacher and a tension grew between them because the memories these participants mentioned described teachers

being in an authoritative role where whatever they say is the right thing to do and there is not much scope for questioning. According to Rahman and Karim (2015), in a context, where the teacher consider himself as the superior and omniscient figure in classroom, and the learners have only one role that is to obey their teacher, communicative learning cannot be done. Even another participant Ramisa said that whenever she used to ask any question about her confusion, her teachers used to say this was the rule, and she had to memorize it as it was. They have even said there is nothing to explain. Because of this experience, she had this idea from her childhood that learning English is more about memorizing without questioning. In our country, the teacher talking time is much more than students talking time. The teachers explain throughout the class and there is barely any participation from the students. Observations disclosed that disproportionate teacher talking time for explaining to and correcting students led them to miss chances to actively participate using English while communicating (Rahman and Karim 2015). To resolve this problem, every teacher should be aware of their role and how much they should explain and how much opportunity they should provide the students to explore by themselves. Once, the balance is established, teaching will be effective enough and a well-managed classroom will be achieved. Abedin (2012) stated that if we want an effective CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) based classroom, the teachers should have good knowledge of their own roles and learners' roles in the class. There is no alternative for communication in the target language if anyone wants to learn the language and that is why classroom interaction is needed. In this matter, Rahman and Karim (2015) claimed that no matter how much students are trained, yet communication with others in the target language will make them skilled. Now, these participants did not get that chance to participate rather they had these unpleasant experiences, so it stayed in their subconscious mind which turned out to be a barrier while learning English in their adulthood.

Another dominant problem in school days was that the focus of learning was mainly based on passing exam. Siam said that his experience of learning English was based on doing model questions. They used to be given solution book to see the answers without explanation. If they would make any mistake, they would have to redo the answers after seeing the correct one from the solution book. He also said that it was only for passing the exam and for getting A+. It gives idea how they were never being prepared for the language out there rather they were only learning how to pass the exam. Even in their adulthood, this become an issue and can be seen as they really struggle to eradicate the stress and the habit of memorizing. Pressure of passing exam was even in Shakil's experience as he described how his teachers would never teach anything that would not be in the exam. Now, this created another problem as most of the students passed the exam, but they did not acquire the needed skill otherwise they would not be in the "Foundation Grammar" class in the first place. Serbessa (2006) demonstrated in her research that a huge gap remains between the numbers of students who graduate from school and those who among them actually acquire a minimum set of cognitive skills in the target language. Faisal said "In my entire school life, I learnt grammar but after my school days the problems are the same as that was in my school days". Parveen demonstrated how her teachers used to write down the rules on board, and they had to take note from that and the teacher even said if you are having any problem, come for private class. Also, there were a lot of students in one class therefore even if the teacher would take questions, he could not reply to all their questions in one class. As a result, it was difficult to solve problems by themselves. These experiences not only had an impact in their childhood memory, but also in their adulthood, these experiences became psychological issues while learning English again. Most of importantly, because of these psychological issues they lost their willingness to

communicate in classes whereas this is not vital for learning the language but also an indicator of successful learning as well. “WTC may be seen as both an individual difference factor facilitating L2 acquisition, especially in a pedagogical system that emphasizes communication, and as a non-linguistic outcome of the language learning process” (Macintyre, 2007, p. 564). Therefore, all these experiences actually became a vital barrier for these adult students which are psychologically affecting their language learning.

## **4.2 Classroom Anxiety**

There are few possible reasons that can lead to classroom anxiety even in adult EFL classroom. It is evident in different studies that classroom anxiety can be a setback for language learning. Regardless of age and level, all the learners’ achievement and intellectual abilities get affected by anxiety in case of language learning (Cubukcu, 2008). In this research, the researcher also found out anxiety issues among students in case of classroom and while using English. In this case, previous unpleasant memories of language learning and exam pressure has an impact on this issue. As we mentioned before, one of our subjects shared his experience of how he used to get beaten by his teachers in school and lost his confidence of speaking in English in front of others in his adulthood. Rupal mentioned that there were a lot of students in his class, and he was scared of asking his teacher about his problems. Eventually, the fear of his teacher ended up being the fear of the subject as a whole. For learning a foreign language, it is important to have a friendly environment where a learner would never feel threatened and language will naturally come to him. If there is tension between the teacher and the students, the class will not be interactive. Consequently, language learning will be hampered. Participation and interactive class lectures are

important to learn speaking skill. “Learners need to feel that they have arrived at their discoveries through their own efforts, and a session on discourse prosody at a later stage may be the best way to bring the latent discovery to fruition as an acquired skill” (Clennel, 1999, p.877). Moreover, Brown (2010) thinks that teachers need to establish an environment where teachers address learners’ cultural and ethnic needs, and their social, emotional, and cognitive needs to obtain learners' cooperation in urban classrooms. Nevertheless, it is seen that most of the interviewees feel stressed in foreign language classroom, and they fear to speak in English in front of the class. One interesting comment about language learning was found during the interview when Marjana said that she feels stupid and thinks less of herself whenever she doesn't understand any new word. This clearly comes from stress and peer pressure. This consequence has been described by Kondo and Ying-ling (2004) as they say that negative self-related cognition begins in any context, if an individual feels anxious. Amin said that because of bad experience in her school days, a fear grew in him which makes him stressed in classroom. He also added that he is not fluent in English, and that bothers him while talking in front of that class. He gets nervous while talking and runs out of word to say. For the lack of exact word, he cannot express whatever he wants to say. Horwitz and Young (1991) believe that language anxiety is prominently related with language learning problems and those are discrepancies in listening comprehension, lack of word production, weak vocabulary learning, less marks in language courses, and lower scores on standardized tests (as cited in Kondo and Ying-ling 2004). A research took place based on Taiwan’s language learning system where the data demonstrates that some anxious students have a record of English learning problems as they obtained low grades, faced difficulties with classroom learning, and displayed poor developmental skills (Chen and Chang 2004). Amin also mentioned another interesting factor

that whenever he gets grammatical rules, he gets stressed because it requires memorizing. On the contrary, if the class is taken with class activities and tasks, he learns better as he doesn't feel pressurised and learns naturally in a stress-free way. He believes when he learns in a fun way, he feels interested to participate and English doesn't seem difficult then. It is evident that they fear speaking in front of people in target language and since they fear public speaking, it is important to make them stress free gradually by various task, such as short presentation, group task, role play etc. Thornbury and Slade (2006) point out that this complexity derives from speaking being so ubiquitous in our daily language usage (p. 5). Another participant Nishu said that she finds it difficult to understand native speakers' pronunciation. It can be another possible reason of stress. Also, she feels embarrassed while giving presentation because she gets conscious if she is making any grammatical mistake. It creates anxiety in her. On the other hand, Anika said since she was from rural area, and she was taught a lot of wrong grammatical structures, she sometimes cannot relate to right grammar and becomes anxious. She thinks that she is unable to speak fluently because of that, and it is "embarrassing" according to her. She is always worried about her knowledge in vocabulary and about her fluency. It is not unknown to us that if the learners want to acquire the language, speaking is something they have to face otherwise only learning grammar and writing will be of no use. "A large percentage of the world's language learners study English in order to develop proficiency in speaking" (Richards and Renandya's, 2002, p. 201). In this case, anxiety issue in classroom seems to be the biggest barrier for the students. For Neloy, he feels anxious if the classroom is new to him but once he gets familiarized with the environment, he feels a bit stress free while speaking in English. On the contrary, Ramisa thinks people might judge her wrong English while talking which leads to lack of confidence in her.

Self-confidence is something that is a must for learning new language and because of self-confidence, she loses enthusiasm as well. Moreover, Siam said that as his teachers and parents were constantly pressurizing him for good result, he used to be stressed in class which gets reflected in adult classroom as well. He keeps thinking what will happen if he cannot speak correctly which makes him nervous. Shakil said that in classroom he cannot express anything in proper words because of nervousness and starts sweating. Another interesting fact that the researcher got to know from a participant named Shabnam that she feels anxious whenever some talks fluently and in error-free way. It makes her performance less confident.

Most importantly, each and every participant considers this classroom anxiety as a negative factor that makes language learning difficult and makes the process slow since this is one of the dominant setbacks in language learning. Therefore, according to Chiasson (2002) it is a must for the teacher to generate a "positive atmosphere" for learning. Hence, anxiety issue is a significant concern in an adult classroom because fruitfulness of language learning only resides in its use in conversations and it will only be possible in an anxiety free environment as Pedota (2007) informs that in a welcoming and nonthreatening environment where learning is encouraged, students generally come ready, and they have a will to learn, and are able to learn easily.

### **4.3 Fear of Learning a New Language**

Trylong (1987) noted that anxiety issue during learning a new language is a complex psychological concept which is difficult to define perfectly, and which perhaps happens due to the complicated hierarchy of intervening variables (As cited in Worde 2003). Fear of learning a new language is basically based on solely psychological issue and it is quite prominent in adult classroom. This fear may have different faces but the root and result are same as they result in poor language



learning. Now, during the interview, the researcher has found that this fear can be illustrated by some psychological factors. These factors altogether create the fear on the mind of the learner and eventually it affects the language learning process negatively. For example, one participant named Rupak, says that he doesn't feel confident speaking in English at all because he finds it difficult to grasp a new language. He says that he tries to overcome it, but he doesn't get the time between his work. For him, foreign letters, vocabularies and grammar scares him as he quotes, "Learning new thing is always hard at the beginning". This is one of the factors and this is called fear of vocabularies. Vemuri, Ram and Kota (2013) inform that learners show unwillingness, and they hesitate to speak in the target language and also overturn their thoughts inward because of this attitude. Marjana says, "New words make me feel dumb and stupid". Moreover, Anika says that lack of vocabulary makes her stressed. Even Rezoanul, Sadia, Salah Uddin, and Mahir mentioned during their interview that the most fearsome element of the language learning process is new vocabularies. Thus, this attitude towards new language creates fear within themselves.

On the other hand, diffidence and shame is another factor which leads to fear of language learning in adult students. Adult students most often feel very conscious about making mistake and if they make any, it affects them badly. Due to that shame and diffidence, the whole learning process gets hampered. Vemuri, Ram and Kota (2013) indicates that shyness and feeling ashamed while learning a new language are key barriers to learn language effectively. For example, Shuvo states, "I am afraid of making mistake". On the contrary, Mahir shares that he feels nervous while using English language. This nervousness doesn't come from the previous experience or present stressful environment whereas this is basically psychological matter that hampers their learning. Furthermore, Anika Islam says that she feels embarrassed whenever she starts speaking English

which directly affects her use of vocabulary and fluency. Nishu demonstrated that she feels if she makes any mistake, people will make fun of her and she will be embarrassed in front of others. because of this self-consciousness. Mostafa Amin asserts that he feels stressed while speaking in English as it is not his mother tongue. On the other hand, Shakil admits that he is afraid of English so much that he failed in class 7. He couldn't get any help from anyone and after a while he just lost interest in English as a result of fear. Whenever he uses English, he starts to sweat and words do not come out of his mouth because of severe nervousness. He adds that he never feared math this much as he feared English. Similarly, Siam thinks that making mistake in English will prove him "unsmart" before others. Even, Ramisa and Shabnam also agree about their fear of new language. Now, this distress is totally psychological and some classroom issues might just increase the fear somehow. One of the probable issues is feedback from the teacher. Feedbacks are necessary to ensure the quality of the education in the class, but it is a matter of question to rethink how feedbacks can be a factor to raise diffidence and shame. According to Shute (2008), the main goal of formative feedback is to elevate student knowledge, skills, and understanding in some areas. Now, the problem begins with lack of communication gap between students and the teacher. For instance, a teacher is maybe giving a student feedback for his own good, but the way of giving the feedback is not applicable for that particular student or maybe even for the context. That student will not be attentive in his class again or always be stressed in class or can distract other students as well. That is why it is important to give the feedbacks consciously so that it can contribute to their betterment. Now each situation can require feedback differently. It can be directive or indirect. Shute (2008) informs that directive feedback tells the student what needs to be fixed or revised where it is more specific compared to facilitative feedback, which is commenting and suggesting to guide students to revise and conceptualize by their own. Yet, in most of the cases, indirect

feedback is more applicable as Brown (2012) says that, indirect feedback has a greater potential to guide the students learn writing autonomously and will have an impact in the long run. Nevertheless, if the teacher wants to save his or her students from diffidence and shame, he or she has to be aware of the context and the students so that they do not end up having a bad experience from the event. Burden (2004) explains that if students experience negative situations, their language anxiety will begin to rise, and if these negative experiences continue to happen more often, their foreign language anxiety will become a regular incident, and they will start to perform poorly. To avoid this situation and to know one's students, the teacher has to make some effort to eradicate the communication gap and also, the students need to take an initiative to build a communicative relationship which will ultimately help them learn the new language. Weinstein, Curren, Tomlinsone- Clarke (2003) propose to forge positive relationships with students by sharing stories about teachers' own lives outside of school, and to learn about students' interests and activities, also to invite them to make choices and decisions about class activities. In this way, teaching will be beneficial through building a healthy interaction between teacher and students because Yu (2001) claims that language is nothing but communication, and learning a language actually means learning to communicate. Diffidence and shame has a lot to do with attitude and personality of the adult student as well. Ellis (2008) informs that risk-takers are less hesitant, willing to use complex language, and are more positive towards error correction, and they usually do not rehearse before speaking. Risk-takers learn very fast, and they do not feel offended when they are corrected.

In addition to that, Shabnam accepts about the peer pressure. She admits that if she sees anyone talking nicely and fluently in class, she feels distressed. This element is known as prejudice and conventional mind set towards new language. As a matter of fact, some of the participants are too afraid to ask question in class and it is expected that whatever the teachers teach those are the concrete rule for them. They did not have the chance to explore by themselves. This happens because Bangladeshi cultural setting infers the teacher as the central figure who must be honoured by the learners, and the students have to listen to the teacher (Rahman and Karim 2015). Another popular convention of language learning in schools is learning grammatical structures rather than communicating. It gets reflected in the adult classroom as the students prefer learning through grammar and are always afraid of talking. Nevertheless, Doughty and Williams (1998) and Lee and Valdman (2000) include that a number of advocates of ELT focus on form, doubting the needlessness for formal grammar instruction, whereas it is a question to rethink how awareness and use of systematic language patterns should be taught in a communicative classroom (As cited in Schulz, 2001, p. 244-245). Therefore, these are the factors which altogether increase the amount of fear for a new language which ultimately becomes one of the vital barriers that hamper language learning.

#### **4.4 Age as a Psychological Factor**

Many studies confirm that even adult students can be successful language learner like young learners, but there are psychological effects of this which can be seen in this research. One of the participants, Rupak, claims that it was easy to grasp everything when he was younger. Sayef, Ayesha, Mishrat, Suvra, Shuvo admit that learning a foreign language has an advantage in childhood over adulthood. Amin asserts that when he was young, he could recall much more

things than he can now. Moreover, Nishu claims, “A child’s brain is more fertile than adult”. She believes that she could grasp and restore the language structure in childhood more. Moreover, in younger age, naturalized learning takes place whereas in adulthood, the focus of the learning is very different, and they have to struggle a bit while learning at this age, but this struggle is not physical rather age is a factor only in case of socio-psychological sector because adult students has a lot of responsibilities and there are a lot on their mind than a young student.

Some of the participants mentioned how their life is so hectic that they do not get enough time to practice the target language even though most of them are very enthusiastic about learning and others badly need to learn the language for specific purposes anyway. Rupak explains how he has so many problems in English but does not get the time because of his job and other responsibilities. Adult students only face this issue as they have a lot in mind and lack of time for practicing also affects their learning. Therefore, it is unnecessary to mention that the class lectures should be prepared in such a way that they do not have to spend a lot of time outside the class. They will get to practice the language in class and will be able to solve any problem during the lecture. Moreover, most of the interviewees are learning English because of specific reasons and even if they have the interest to learn the language in details and in depth, but they have a time limitation and that is why they always look for courses that can make them learn English in the least possible time. This factor is unique in adult classrooms than other levels. For example, Mishrat is planning to go abroad and for that reason he has to face the IELTS exam. In his interview, he emphasizes how he wants to learn the language in details but he doesn’t have much time in his hand as he has to seat for the exam as soon as possible. In the same way, they are most of the time not interested to learn the language in details and only focuses on the part they will need for their specific reason. For adult students, time is a huge factor here.

On the other hand, it is important to set the appropriate material the adult classroom because most the learners will not be able to relate to the materials if that is not age appropriate and if the task are silly and only suitable for kids, then they will lose interest and they will not consider the task fruitful enough. For that reason, adult classroom requires extra attention. Curren (2003) states that students will not be able to turn their attention to the intellectual demands in classrooms, unless students' social and emotional needs are met. For example, some of the participants even mentioned they do not like learning through task at all. They learn easily by learning structure. Therefore, age has a negative impact while learning if we consider the socio-psychological issues, but biological analogy cannot be made from this study.

#### **4.5 Motivation**

Adult students have very different purposes of language learning than a young student. This motivation turns out to be a barrier in language learning as the adult learner has very narrowed down motivation level. Most of the participants of this research mentioned how they want to learn English because of career purpose. Going abroad is a trend now, and if they want to survive in a foreign country, they need to learn their language or the lingua franca. In most of the countries, English is the lingua franca. Seidlhofer (2005) says, "English functions as a global lingua franca" (p.339). Lingua franca refers to any common language used and understood by non-native speakers. As a matter of fact, English being the most used lingua franca, people around the world are interested to learn the language. Now, adult students carry this motivation to study abroad and they start learning English.

Motivation can be of two type, such as Integral and Instrumental. Instrumental motivation is when one understands the linguistic value of a language in society, and thus learns the language. For

example, most of the participants are learning because of going abroad or for doing good in their career. It means are not really interested to learn the English culture rather they need it for their own benefit. The problem here is that, throughout the time, they focus on the outcome rather than focusing on the learning process. This basically puts pressure on their mind they have to do well in IELTS or they have to impress his superior in work sector which lead to in effective learning because at end of day, they start panicking. Consequently, students with this type of motivation basically are more interested in learning some specific topic of the language and they do not actually care about detailed learning. For instance, if a learner is actually interested to learn the language and wants to acquire it, he or she will not only focus on one aspect of the language rather will enjoy learning it, and will not feel pressurized inside. One of our participants, Sadia, mentioned that she does not like to learn with tasks because its takes too much of the class time whereas it seems appropriate for her if she gets learn through grammatical structures. Even, Rupak mentioned that he wants to improve his skills but with all of his responsibilities and job, he does not get time. Few other students mentioned about appearing for IELTS as well and they said they are learning English for specific reasons. It can easily be inferred that they have a limited time and they have a pressure to finish the courses to get good band score so that they can get a desired career. As a result, with instrumental motivation, learner will always feel the pressure and will not really enjoy it.

Furthermore, a learner who needs to learn speaking for his company communication, he will not be interested in writing. As a whole, their specific reasons and motivation level for achieving some specific goal is narrowing down their knowledge and field of interest in foreign language learning. In fact, it becomes a psychological binding for them to get good output while they fail to achieve the skills because of mental pressure any way. Therefore, even if they are given the best education

and good environment, they will fail to acquire the proficiency because of the socio-psychological barrier they create within themselves.



## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

The ultimate goal for this qualitative research was to discover the factors that hamper adult language learning socio-psychologically. Moreover, this study tried to show how those challenges affect the process and how students become unable to grasp the fluency and accuracy because of those challenges. This research is mainly based on local participants and their experiences. However, this study will contribute to the world of research by providing a ground of how these factors work because this data is based on real life experience and real-life problems that have been faced by many students over the periods. Most importantly, the research finding shows that these challenges are made because of the lack of guidance and faulty education system which ultimately leads to inability to speak and write in foreign language.

### **5.1 Key Findings**

All the interview data basically answer the research question which included finding the socio-psychological barriers to the adult students which they face in EFL classrooms, and also how those challenges affect their learning. This study involved a small group of people for collecting data, but the data that we have found can be considered precious in ELT. This data set is genuine experiences of the people and the challenges they face daily in classroom. The major findings of this research are:

- First factor that we have noticed from the interview is that, their previous learning experience in college and school has significantly affected their learning even in adulthood. People who have never had helpful teachers in English language classroom, have been traumatized by their experiences. Physical punishment, unclear feedback from the class

- teacher, and communication gap between learner and teacher just contributed to the challenge more and more.
- Next factor, we have found out is that adult students face some sort of fear for the new language itself. Learning a new language became more difficult with this fear along with the school days trauma and disinterest for grammar.
- Another significant factor that most of the students face in classroom is that they have anxiety issue. They get so anxious that they cannot speak in English even though they have that knowledge. Even if the environment is friendly, they feel challenged if there is any better speaker in the room. They find it very difficult to eradicate this stress in classroom which directly disturbs the learning process.
- The fourth challenging element we have found is motivation. Adult learners' motivation level is very different from adolescences' and young learners' motivation. They mostly learn English because of specific reasons. Therefore, they are not really interested to learn every little detail rather they want expertise in specific area and also, they seek to learn the skills in less possible time, so this instrumental motivation actually leads to lack of learning and ultimately, they do not enjoy learning the language. In fact, this becomes a challenge for them to complete.
- Lastly, age is also found as a factor in this case. As a matter of fact, they believe learning in childhood was a lot easier even though they are getting the facilities in adulthood which they never got in childhood. They find it difficult to understand the rules, and they cannot put a lot of time because of the different responsibilities they have. Also, adult students are very conscious about humiliation and it leads to fear of public speaking. Therefore, age

affects the learning process psychologically. However, this study does not provide the ground for biological effect of age in language learning.

## **5.2 Implications**

This study has significant usage in the field of ELT. Teachers can be educated to be careful about their students' challenges that they face in classroom to ensure the quality of the education. This paper will give them the idea on which area they have to be aware of. If the teachers get to learn about the barriers, they will be able to provide aid to the students. Moreover, they can suggest strategies to the students so that they can get rid of these barriers and maximize their learning ability. This way, their hard work will play off and they will be able to acquire all the skills in English without facing any social barrier.

## **5.3 Recommendations and Conclusion**

In light of the research findings, some suggestions can be provided to the teachers so that they can implement some measures and can help the students to overcome the barrier. Even though, "conceptualization of the environment" is very important for taking any measure (as cited in Doyal, 2009, p. 157) because the concept of learning environment is very different in each setting and the actions required in each context might be different as well but this study will give an idea on which area the teachers need to focus on to find out how and how much the learners are facing the challenges in adult EFL classrooms. Based on this research, it can be suggested that teachers need to choose tasks in such a way that the students do not feel pressurized in classroom and they can take part in all the class activities by using their creativity and analytic capability (Abedin 2012). Moreover, it is important to design language learning task with specific goal and objectives so that

students get benefitted from those tasks not only linguistically but also in pragmatic field (Rahman and Karim 2015). Teachers should make the class fun with activity and they should not create a stressful environment by forcing them to memorize and by giving them physical punishment. Even, Abedin (2012) explains how teachers should give attention to make the students active rather than making them memorize. Now, only giving task is not enough. In fact, those tasks have to be age appropriate and with clear instruction so that students understand how to do those tasks and they can actively participate. For a clearer understanding, the teacher can demonstrate the instructions first. Also, using gestures and expressions make things easier to understand the instructions. In a survey, Curren (2003) realizes that some participants are able to follow best after using gestures. If they get friendly environment, language will come to their conversation naturally. In this case, even students need to work on their stress level and nervousness. Kondo and Ying-ling (2004) describe “Avoidance is not a viable option; they are expected to find some way to cope with the anxiety (p. 259).

To conclude, socio- psychological barriers can destroy the interests of learners which ultimately will bring some certificates without empirical knowledge within the students. That is why this study gives a ground work for the teachers to understand that they need to understand their students and what they are facing while learning. If this knowledge can be used in making a stress-free learning environment which will provide the maximized foreign learning, then our country will get some more skilled foreign language user whom our country can utilize and even those speakers will flourish in their sector.

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## Appendix A: Sample Transcript

Full Name: Mostafa Amin

Age: 30

### 1. How was your experience of learning English in school days?

: Not so good actually, my teachers were not so eager to teach us and they were also not so qualified so it was rather a bad experience.

### 2. Was the classroom environment stressful in your school?

: yes, the environment was not suitable for learning and that's why a fear grew inside me about learning English.

### 3. Why did you start learning English again in your adulthood? Did you learn it for some specific reason or you were just interested to learn English language?

: I started learning English again at the age of 30, because I currently work in a multinational company and I have to communicate in English every now and then.

### 4. Do you have any sort of fear of learning a new language? If so, why?

: Yes, I had some fear because of my bitter-some experience from the past.

### 5. Do you think age is a factor while learning a new language?

: I don't think age is a factor while learning a new language but I admit that it gives some advantages for the young people as they have more memorizing capability than us.

### 6. Do you think learning English was easier when you were young? If so, why do you think so?

: I do not think English was easier when I was young because my teachers were not qualified enough and they made it difficult for us to learn.

### 7. What sort of difficulties do you face when learning English?

: I find it difficult to speak because I am not fluent in English and it bothers me a lot and I often feel nervous while speaking for that reason and cannot express my thoughts and cannot remember or find the exact word I am looking for to express my feelings.

### 8. Do you find the class activities and tasks useful or do you feel these are useless? Please, explain your answer.

: I find the class activities and tasks useful for learning English because when I learn through tasks and class activities, it does not give me extra pressure or it does not look like I am doing

anything difficult. it just looks like I am having fun and this kind of methods make me interested to participate.

**9. Do you feel stressed while making a public speech in English? Does it affect your learning?**

: Yes, I feel stressed and concerned while making a speech in English as I am not very good at it till now and also, it's not my mother tongue and yes it affects my learning.

**10. Do you prefer learning through grammar or tasks and activities?**

: I prefer learning through tasks and activities because in that way I can learn faster and it is a fun way of learning and I think it's easier.

**11. Would you prefer learning the language in details or just the things you need to use in daily life or pass the exam?**

: I prefer learning the language in details rather than just learning the things I need to use in daily life or pass the exam.

**12. Were your English teachers helpful in school?**

: No, they were not very helpful in school because their teaching methods were not up to the mark.

**13. Do you think anxiety make the learning process slow?**

: Yes, anxiety make the learning process slow.

