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## DEVELOPING TRAUMA-SENSITIVE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES FOR RESILIENT LEARNING IN ACADEMIA: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH OF PSYCHOLINGUISTICS AND ELT

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### Abstract

*This study explores the integration of trauma-sensitive pedagogical practices within English Language Teaching (ELT) for undergraduate students in Lahore, Pakistan. It investigates how these practices impact Second Language Acquisition (SLA), focusing on cognitive, emotional, and linguistic outcomes. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative assessments, qualitative interviews, and classroom observations to evaluate the effectiveness of trauma-sensitive interventions. The findings reveal significant improvements in language proficiency, classroom engagement, and emotional resilience among trauma-affected learners. Quantitative data demonstrate enhanced performance in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while qualitative insights underscore the importance of emotional safety, personalized feedback, and culturally inclusive materials in fostering a supportive learning environment. Key practices such as mindfulness activities, scaffolding, and collaborative learning were instrumental in achieving these outcomes. This study contributes to the growing field of trauma-informed education by bridging the gap between psycholinguistics and ELT. It provides actionable recommendations for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to implement trauma-sensitive strategies that enhance both linguistic and emotional development. By prioritizing empathy, inclusivity, and resilience, this research advocates for systemic changes in educational practices, ensuring equitable opportunities for all learners.*

**Keywords:** Trauma-sensitive pedagogy, English Language Teaching (ELT), Second Language Acquisition (SLA), psycholinguistics, emotional resilience, inclusive education, mindfulness, scaffolding, Lahore, higher education.

### 1. Introduction

Trauma has emerged as a significant factor affecting the cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development of learners, particularly in educational settings (Brunzell, Stokes & Waters, 2016).



For English Language Learners (ELLs), the effects of trauma can be profound, creating unique challenges that hinder their Second Language Acquisition (SLA) journey. Displacement, socio-economic instability, and personal crises often exacerbate the difficulties these learners face, manifesting in their academic performance and engagement (Alharbi, 2020). As the global classroom becomes increasingly diverse, the need for trauma-sensitive pedagogical practices has never been more critical. Despite growing recognition of trauma's impact on education, the integration of trauma-sensitive methodologies in English Language Teaching (ELT) remains underexplored (Perfect, 2017). This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining how psycholinguistic principles can inform trauma-sensitive practices within ELT to create more inclusive and resilient learning environments.

### **Trauma and Its Impact on Education**

Trauma can be broadly defined as an emotional or psychological response to distressing events that overwhelm an individual's capacity to cope (Van der Kolk, 2014). In the context of education, trauma often manifests as difficulties in concentration, memory retention, and emotional regulation—critical components for successful language learning (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Learners who experience trauma may exhibit heightened anxiety, withdrawal, or disruptive behavior, further impeding their ability to engage with academic content (Craig, 2016). These manifestations are particularly pronounced in ELLs, who already face the cognitive demands of acquiring a new language while navigating the complexities of cultural adaptation (Ngo, 2021).

The relationship between trauma and SLA is intricate. Psycholinguistic research highlights the role of working memory, affective states, and motivation in language learning, all of which are negatively impacted by trauma (Baddeley, 2012). For instance, learners with trauma histories may have impaired working memory, limiting their ability to process and retain new linguistic information (Gathercole & Alloway, 2008). Moreover, trauma often elevates affective filters—psychological barriers that hinder language input processing—thereby reducing learners' overall linguistic proficiency (Krashen, 1982). These challenges underscore the urgency of adopting trauma-sensitive practices that address both the cognitive and emotional dimensions of learning.

### **Psycholinguistics and Trauma in SLA**

Psycholinguistics offers a valuable lens for understanding the interplay between trauma and SLA. By examining how cognitive processes such as memory, attention, and language processing are affected by emotional states, psycholinguistics provides actionable insights for designing effective teaching strategies (Kormos, 2020). For example, research indicates that positive emotional states can enhance cognitive performance and facilitate language learning (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Conversely, negative emotional states, often associated with trauma, disrupt neural pathways critical for learning and memory consolidation (Tzourio-Mazoyer et al., 2017). Recognizing these dynamics is essential for developing pedagogical approaches that mitigate the adverse effects of trauma.

Despite its relevance, the application of psycholinguistic principles to trauma-sensitive pedagogy in ELT remains limited. Existing studies have primarily focused on general education contexts, leaving a significant gap in understanding how trauma impacts SLA specifically (Perfect, 2017). This gap is particularly concerning given the growing prevalence of trauma among ELLs, many of whom are refugees or migrants with exposure to war, displacement, or socio-economic



instability (Birman & Tran, 2017). Addressing this gap requires a multidisciplinary approach that integrates psycholinguistic insights with evidence-based teaching practices.

### **The Case for Trauma-Sensitive Pedagogy in ELT**

Trauma-sensitive pedagogy emphasizes creating safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments that acknowledge and address the needs of trauma-affected learners (Brunzell et al., 2016). In the context of ELT, this approach involves adapting teaching methods to reduce stress, build resilience, and foster positive emotional engagement. Strategies such as scaffolding, mindfulness activities, and emotional regulation techniques have been shown to enhance both cognitive and emotional outcomes in trauma-affected learners (Crosby et al., 2018).

Incorporating trauma-sensitive practices into ELT also aligns with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which advocate for flexible and inclusive teaching methods that accommodate diverse learner needs (Meyer et al., 2014). For instance, providing multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement can help trauma-affected learners access and process linguistic content more effectively. Additionally, fostering a classroom culture of empathy and respect can reduce affective filters, enabling learners to engage more fully with language learning tasks (Craig, 2016).

### **Research Objectives**

This study aims to advance the field of trauma-sensitive pedagogy in ELT by addressing the following objectives:

1. To identify the psycholinguistic effects of trauma on SLA, focusing on cognitive and emotional processes.
2. To examine how trauma-sensitive pedagogical practices can support resilience and inclusivity in ELT classrooms.
3. To develop evidence-based strategies for integrating trauma-awareness into ELT methodologies.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of trauma-sensitive practices in enhancing language proficiency and emotional well-being.

### **Research Questions**

The research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the psycholinguistic impacts of trauma on SLA?
2. How can trauma-sensitive pedagogical practices address these impacts in ELT contexts?
3. What strategies can ELT practitioners adopt to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment?
4. How do trauma-sensitive approaches affect students' language proficiency and overall resilience?

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study have significant implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. By elucidating the psycholinguistic effects of trauma on SLA, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of how trauma shapes language learning processes. Moreover, the development of trauma-sensitive pedagogical strategies will provide practical tools for ELT practitioners to create more inclusive and resilient classrooms. These insights will also inform



policy and curriculum design, promoting systemic changes that prioritize the well-being of trauma-affected learners (Brunzell et al., 2016).

This study's focus on ELLs is particularly timely given the increasing prevalence of trauma among this population. As global migration continues to rise, educators must be equipped to address the unique challenges faced by learners with trauma histories (Birman & Tran, 2017). By integrating psycholinguistic principles with trauma-sensitive pedagogy, this research seeks to empower educators to support learners' cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development effectively.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Trauma profoundly impacts English Language Learners (ELLs), affecting cognitive functions like memory, attention, and emotional regulation essential for Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Learners facing displacement, socio-economic instability, or personal crises often struggle with linguistic development due to heightened affective filters and impaired working memory. While psycholinguistic research acknowledges these challenges, its application to trauma-sensitive pedagogy in ELT remains limited. Despite growing recognition of trauma's role in education, ELT lacks systematic trauma-sensitive approaches. Existing research primarily addresses general education, leaving a gap in understanding how trauma-informed strategies can enhance SLA. This study investigates the psycholinguistic effects of trauma on SLA and explores trauma-sensitive teaching methods to foster resilience and inclusivity in ELT. The findings aim to equip educators with practical strategies to support trauma-affected learners, improving both language proficiency and emotional well-being.

### **Conclusion**

Trauma-sensitive pedagogy represents a critical frontier in ELT, offering a pathway to more inclusive and effective teaching practices. By integrating psycholinguistic principles with evidence-based strategies, this study seeks to address the unique challenges faced by trauma-affected learners and contribute to their academic and emotional resilience. Through a multidisciplinary approach, this research aims to foster a deeper understanding of trauma's impact on SLA and provide actionable insights for educators and policymakers. Ultimately, the adoption of trauma-sensitive practices in ELT has the potential to transform classrooms into spaces of healing and growth, empowering learners to thrive both academically and emotionally.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **The Effects of Trauma on Learners**

Trauma, defined as a psychological or emotional response to distressing events, has profound effects on learners' cognitive, emotional, and linguistic capabilities. Research highlights that trauma disrupts brain development, particularly in areas responsible for memory, attention, and emotional regulation (Van der Kolk, 2014; Shonkoff et al., 2012). Recent studies extend this understanding by emphasizing trauma's impact on learners' academic engagement and achievement (Craig, 2016; Perfect, 2020). For English Language Learners (ELLs), trauma poses additional challenges, such as heightened anxiety and impaired cognitive processes essential for Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Ngo, 2021).

Trauma-related stress activates the brain's survival mode, which inhibits higher-order cognitive functions, including those necessary for language learning (Porges, 2021). This results in



difficulties in concentration, memory retention, and problem-solving—skills critical to mastering a new language (Gathercole & Alloway, 2008). Furthermore, studies have identified that trauma increases the affective filter, a psychological barrier that reduces the ability to process and retain linguistic input (Krashen, 1982; Alharbi, 2020). These insights underscore the urgency of implementing trauma-sensitive pedagogical practices to support ELLs.

### **Psycholinguistic Perspectives on Trauma and SLA**

Psycholinguistics offers a valuable framework for understanding how trauma affects SLA. This field examines the intersection of cognitive processes, emotional states, and language acquisition, providing actionable insights for educators (Kormos, 2020). Research indicates that trauma impairs working memory and attention, which are crucial for language processing and retention (Baddeley, 2012; Tzourio-Mazoyer et al., 2017). Recent advancements highlight the role of emotional states in modulating these cognitive processes, with positive emotions enhancing and negative emotions inhibiting learning outcomes (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).

Emerging studies have emphasized the role of neuroplasticity—the brain’s ability to reorganize itself in response to experience—in mitigating trauma’s adverse effects on SLA. For instance, interventions that combine cognitive and emotional support have been shown to improve language proficiency among trauma-affected learners (Bergmann, Sprenger, & Schmid, 2021). These findings suggest that trauma-sensitive pedagogical practices, informed by psycholinguistic principles, can significantly enhance learners’ linguistic and emotional resilience.

### **Trauma-Sensitive Pedagogy: Principles and Practices**

Trauma-sensitive pedagogy emphasizes creating safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments that address the needs of trauma-affected learners (Brunzell, Stokes, & Waters, 2016). Key principles include fostering emotional safety, promoting resilience, and adopting culturally responsive teaching practices (Crosby et al., 2018). Recent research has expanded these principles to ELT contexts, demonstrating their effectiveness in enhancing language proficiency and emotional well-being (Birman & Tran, 2022).

One widely recognized strategy is scaffolding, which involves providing learners with structured support to gradually develop their language skills (Meyer et al., 2014). Studies have shown that trauma-affected learners benefit from tasks that are broken into manageable steps, as this reduces cognitive load and anxiety (Al-Hoorie et al., 2023). Additionally, incorporating mindfulness activities and emotional regulation techniques into language lessons has been found to improve learners’ focus and engagement (Cavanagh & Spangler, 2020).

### **Universal Design for Learning and Trauma-Informed ELT**

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides a flexible framework for designing inclusive educational environments that accommodate diverse learner needs (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014). Recent studies have explored the application of UDL principles to trauma-sensitive ELT, emphasizing the importance of multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement (García & Tyler, 2022). For instance, visual aids, collaborative activities, and multimodal instruction have been shown to enhance language comprehension and retention among trauma-affected learners (Alharbi, 2020; Ngo, 2021).

Moreover, fostering a classroom culture of empathy and mutual respect is crucial for reducing affective filters and enabling learners to engage more fully with language tasks (Craig, 2016).



Research highlights that trauma-sensitive classrooms not only improve linguistic outcomes but also contribute to learners' overall emotional resilience (Brunzell et al., 2016; Birman & Tran, 2022).

### **Cognitive and Emotional Implications of Trauma on SLA**

The cognitive implications of trauma include deficits in working memory, attention, and executive function—all essential for SLA (Baddeley, 2012; Gathercole & Alloway, 2008). Recent studies have further identified disruptions in neural pathways related to language processing, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions (Tzourio-Mazoyer et al., 2017). For example, cognitive-behavioral approaches that integrate language tasks with emotional support have shown promise in mitigating these challenges (Cavanagh & Spangler, 2020).

Emotionally, trauma elevates stress levels and induces negative affective states, which hinder motivation and engagement in language learning (Porges, 2021). However, research suggests that creating positive emotional experiences in the classroom can counteract these effects, enhancing both cognitive and linguistic outcomes (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). This underscores the importance of adopting trauma-sensitive practices that address both cognitive and emotional dimensions of learning.

### **The Role of Cultural Sensitivity in Trauma-Sensitive Pedagogy**

Cultural sensitivity is a cornerstone of trauma-sensitive pedagogy, particularly in ELT, where learners often come from diverse cultural backgrounds (Birman & Tran, 2022). Research indicates that acknowledging and valuing learners' cultural identities fosters a sense of belonging and reduces the emotional barriers to language acquisition (Ngo, 2021; García & Tyler, 2022). For instance, integrating culturally relevant materials and activities into language lessons has been shown to enhance learners' engagement and motivation (Al-Hoorie et al., 2023).

Moreover, cultural sensitivity extends to understanding the unique trauma experiences of learners from different backgrounds. For example, refugees and migrants may face trauma related to displacement, loss, or discrimination, necessitating tailored interventions that address their specific needs (Birman & Tran, 2022; Ngo, 2021). These findings highlight the need for ELT practitioners to adopt a culturally responsive approach that integrates trauma-awareness with respect for learners' cultural contexts.

### **Gaps in Existing Research**

While significant progress has been made in understanding trauma's impact on education, gaps remain in its application to ELT. Most existing studies focus on general education contexts, with limited attention to the specific challenges faced by ELLs (Perfect, 2020; Alharbi, 2020). Furthermore, research on the effectiveness of trauma-sensitive practices in improving SLA outcomes is still emerging, necessitating further exploration (Bergmann et al., 2021).

Another critical gap is the lack of longitudinal studies that examine the long-term effects of trauma-sensitive pedagogy on learners' linguistic and emotional development. Addressing these gaps requires a multidisciplinary approach that integrates insights from psycholinguistics, education, and mental health (Cavanagh & Spangler, 2020; Crosby et al., 2018).

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The findings of this literature review have significant implications for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers. By highlighting the cognitive and emotional challenges faced by



trauma-affected learners, this review underscores the need for systemic changes that prioritize trauma-sensitive practices in ELT (Brunzell et al., 2016; Perfect, 2020). For instance, integrating trauma-awareness into teacher training programs can equip educators with the skills to create supportive and inclusive classrooms (Cavanagh & Spangler, 2020).

Moreover, policies that promote culturally responsive teaching and UDL principles can enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of ELT for diverse learner populations (Meyer et al., 2014; García & Tyler, 2022). These recommendations align with the broader goal of creating educational environments that support learners' cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development.

### **Conclusion**

This literature review demonstrates that trauma significantly impacts learners' cognitive and emotional processes, with profound implications for SLA. By synthesizing insights from psycholinguistics, education, and mental health, this review highlights the potential of trauma-sensitive pedagogy to enhance language proficiency and emotional resilience among ELLs. However, it also identifies critical gaps in existing research, emphasizing the need for further studies that explore the long-term effects of trauma-sensitive practices and their application in diverse cultural contexts. Ultimately, this review underscores the importance of adopting a multidisciplinary approach to address the complex interplay between trauma and SLA.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to investigate the effectiveness of trauma-sensitive pedagogical practices in English Language Teaching (ELT) for undergraduate students. By integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the cognitive and emotional effects of trauma on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and evaluate the impact of trauma-sensitive interventions on learners' academic and emotional outcomes.

The research is divided into three phases:

1. **Exploratory Phase:** This phase involves qualitative data collection through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to identify recurring themes related to trauma's impact on SLA and effective teaching practices.
2. **Intervention Phase:** Based on the findings from the exploratory phase, trauma-sensitive teaching modules are designed and implemented in selected university classrooms.
3. **Evaluation Phase:** Pre- and post-intervention assessments are conducted to measure changes in students' language proficiency, emotional resilience, and classroom engagement.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What are the cognitive and emotional impacts of trauma on SLA among undergraduate students?
2. How can trauma-sensitive pedagogical practices address these impacts in ELT contexts?
3. What strategies can ELT practitioners adopt to foster a supportive and inclusive learning environment?
4. How do trauma-sensitive interventions affect students' language proficiency and overall resilience?



### **Participants and Sampling**

The sample cohort for this study consists of undergraduate students from universities in Lahore, Pakistan. Participants are selected using purposive sampling to include those who have experienced trauma or stress due to socio-economic, personal, or academic challenges. The sample includes:

- **Students:** 100 undergraduate English Language Learners (ELLs) aged 18-25 from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.
- **Teachers:** 15 ELT practitioners with varying levels of experience in trauma-sensitive pedagogy.
- **Experts:** Psychologists and psycholinguists for consultation during the design and evaluation of interventions.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

1. **Psycholinguistic Assessments:**
  - Standardized tools such as the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to measure affective states.
  - Working memory tests to evaluate cognitive capacities related to language learning.
2. **Language Proficiency Tests:**
  - Pre- and post-intervention assessments using standardized tests such as IELTS or TOEFL to measure linguistic outcomes.
3. **Surveys and Interviews:**
  - Custom-designed surveys to capture participants' perceptions of trauma-sensitive practices.
  - Semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, and experts to explore qualitative aspects of the interventions.
4. **Observation Protocols:**
  - Structured classroom observations to assess engagement, interaction, and the effectiveness of implemented strategies.

### **Intervention Design**

The trauma-sensitive teaching modules are developed based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and insights from psycholinguistics. Key components include:

- **Scaffolding:** Providing structured support to help learners gradually develop language skills.
- **Mindfulness Activities:** Incorporating exercises to enhance focus and emotional regulation.
- **Culturally Relevant Materials:** Using content that reflects learners' backgrounds to foster inclusivity.
- **Emotional Support:** Creating safe spaces for learners to share their experiences and receive guidance.

### **Data Analysis**

1. **Quantitative Analysis:**
  - Descriptive and inferential statistics (e.g., paired t-tests, regression analysis) to evaluate changes in language proficiency, resilience, and classroom engagement.





## 2. Qualitative Analysis:

- Thematic analysis of interview transcripts and reflective journals to identify recurring themes and patterns.
- Triangulation of data from multiple sources to ensure validity and reliability.

### Ethical Considerations

1. **Informed Consent:** Participants are provided with detailed information about the study and must provide written consent before participating.
2. **Confidentiality:** Pseudonyms and secure data storage methods are used to protect participants' identities.
3. **Emotional Support:** Counseling services are made available for participants who may experience distress during the study.

### Timeline

1. **Exploratory Phase:** Conduct literature review, interviews, and focus group discussions (3 months).
2. **Intervention Phase:** Develop and implement trauma-sensitive teaching modules (6 months).
3. **Evaluation Phase:** Collect and analyze pre- and post-intervention data (3 months).
4. **Finalization:** Write the report, undergo peer review, and submit findings (2 months).

### Significance of the Study

This methodology aims to provide actionable insights into the integration of trauma-sensitive practices in ELT. By focusing on undergraduate students in Lahore, this study contributes to a growing body of research addressing the intersection of trauma, language learning, and inclusive pedagogy in diverse cultural contexts.

## 4. Data Analysis

### Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected through quantitative assessments, qualitative interviews, and classroom observations. The findings are organized to address the research questions, providing insights into the impact of trauma on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) among undergraduate students and evaluating the effectiveness of trauma-sensitive pedagogical practices in English Language Teaching (ELT).

### Quantitative Data Analysis

#### Pre- and Post-Intervention Classroom Performance Scores

Table 1 below illustrates the average scores of students in classroom-based English language assessments conducted before and after implementing trauma-sensitive teaching modules.



Test Component	Pre-Intervention Mean	Post-Intervention Mean	Percentage Improvement
Listening	68%	82%	20.6%
Reading	62%	76%	22.6%
Writing	58%	75%	29.3%
Speaking	64%	80%	25%

Figure 1 provides a bar graph representation of these improvements:

#### Key Findings:

- All components of classroom performance showed significant improvement post-intervention.
- Writing demonstrated the highest percentage improvement (29.3%), suggesting that scaffolded writing tasks and tailored feedback effectively supported students.
- Listening and speaking performance improvements indicate enhanced comprehension and communicative confidence, likely influenced by reduced classroom anxiety and increased participation.

#### Classroom Engagement Levels

Student engagement was measured through a Likert-scale survey (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Table 2 summarizes the average scores for key engagement indicators.

Engagement Indicator	Pre-Intervention Mean	Post-Intervention Mean
Active Participation	2.8	4.2
Peer Collaboration	2.5	4.0
Confidence in Speaking English	2.6	4.4

Figure 2 depicts these trends with a line chart:

#### Key Findings:

- Confidence in speaking English showed the most substantial improvement (69.2%).
- Peer collaboration increased significantly due to group tasks and collaborative classroom activities designed to foster trust and reduce emotional barriers.
- Overall, active participation levels improved markedly, reflecting students' increased comfort and willingness to engage.

These findings emphasize that trauma-sensitive practices encouraged students to actively participate and collaborate, fostering a supportive and inclusive classroom environment.

#### Qualitative Data Analysis

##### Thematic Analysis of Student Interviews

Using thematic analysis, several recurring themes emerged from the student interviews. Table 3 outlines the key themes and sample responses.



Theme	Description	Sample Response
Emotional Safety	Feeling safe and supported in class	"The teacher listens and understands us."
Reduced Anxiety	Lowered stress levels during lessons	"I feel less nervous when speaking now."
Inclusive Environment	Materials reflecting diverse backgrounds	"It feels good to see our culture included."
Motivation	Increased willingness to participate and learn	"The activities make me excited to try more."

**Figure 3** is a word cloud generated from the most frequently used words in student interviews:

**Key Insights:**

- Emotional safety and reduced anxiety were the most frequently mentioned themes, highlighting the importance of a trauma-sensitive approach.
- Culturally relevant materials and inclusive teaching practices were instrumental in fostering motivation and a sense of belonging among students.
- Students expressed increased enthusiasm for language learning, driven by personalized support and engaging classroom activities.

**Observational Data Analysis**

Observation protocols focused on student behavior, teacher-student interaction, and use of trauma-sensitive practices. Table 4 presents a summary of observed changes.

Observation Indicator	Pre-Intervention Observations	Post-Intervention Observations
Student Participation	Limited; hesitation in activities	Active; volunteering responses
Teacher-Student Interaction	Minimal feedback; neutral tone	Personalized feedback; empathetic tone
Use of Trauma-Sensitive Practices	Rare	Frequent use of mindfulness and scaffolding
Peer Collaboration	Rare and hesitant	Frequent and confident

**Figure 4** shows a comparison of participation levels across sessions using a stacked bar chart.

**Key Observations:**

- Student participation increased markedly, with more students voluntarily engaging in discussions and activities.
- Teacher interactions became more empathetic and personalized, creating a supportive atmosphere.



- Peer collaboration shifted from minimal to a vibrant dynamic, demonstrating the success of group-based activities and trust-building exercises.

### **Discussion**

The findings demonstrate that trauma-sensitive pedagogical practices effectively enhance both linguistic and emotional outcomes for trauma-affected learners. Quantitative data revealed substantial improvements in classroom performance and engagement, while qualitative insights underscored the role of emotional safety and cultural relevance.

### **Implications**

1. **For Teachers:** Implementing mindfulness activities and scaffolding techniques significantly improves learners' confidence and classroom performance. Strategies like active listening, personalized support, and culturally inclusive materials are essential for creating a positive learning environment.
2. **For Curriculum Designers:** Incorporating content that reflects students' cultural contexts fosters inclusivity and engagement. Group-based and interactive activities should be prioritized to encourage collaboration and reduce stress.
3. **For Policymakers:** Training programs for ELT practitioners must integrate trauma-awareness modules to equip teachers with the necessary skills to address emotional and cognitive barriers. Policies advocating for mental health support in universities can further enhance the educational experience for trauma-affected students.

The intersection of trauma-sensitive practices and psycholinguistic principles provides a robust framework for addressing the unique challenges faced by trauma-affected learners. Integrating these strategies into mainstream ELT ensures that classrooms evolve into spaces that prioritize holistic student well-being and academic success.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter provided a comprehensive analysis of the collected data, showcasing the transformative impact of trauma-sensitive teaching practices in ELT for undergraduate students. By addressing both cognitive and emotional dimensions, these practices created supportive learning environments that empowered students to succeed academically and personally. The findings underscore the need for sustained efforts to integrate trauma-awareness into educational policies and classroom practices, ensuring equitable opportunities for all learners.

## **5. Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

Based on the findings of this study, several actionable recommendations are proposed to improve trauma-sensitive pedagogical practices in English Language Teaching (ELT) for undergraduate students. These recommendations are aimed at educators, curriculum designers, policymakers, and educational institutions to ensure a supportive and inclusive learning environment for trauma-affected students.

### **Recommendations for Educators**

1. **Adopt Trauma-Sensitive Teaching Strategies:**
  - Incorporate mindfulness activities and relaxation techniques to help students manage stress and anxiety.



- Use scaffolding techniques to break down complex tasks into manageable steps, reducing cognitive load.
  - Provide regular and personalized feedback to foster a sense of achievement and motivate students.
- 2. Create a Safe and Inclusive Classroom Environment:**
- Foster a culture of empathy by actively listening to students' concerns and showing understanding.
  - Establish clear and consistent classroom routines to provide stability for students dealing with trauma.
  - Encourage peer collaboration through group activities that promote trust and mutual support.
- 3. Utilize Culturally Relevant Materials:**
- Include texts, examples, and activities that reflect the cultural backgrounds of the students to enhance engagement and relatability.
  - Design lessons that celebrate diversity and provide opportunities for students to share their cultural experiences.
- 4. Continuous Professional Development:**
- Participate in training programs and workshops focused on trauma-sensitive teaching and mental health awareness.
  - Stay updated on emerging research in psycholinguistics and trauma-informed education to refine teaching practices.

#### **Recommendations for Curriculum Designers**

- 1. Integrate Trauma-Awareness into Curricula:**
- Develop course content that includes trauma-sensitive teaching strategies and examples.
  - Incorporate flexible assessments that consider the emotional and cognitive challenges faced by trauma-affected students.
- 2. Design Inclusive Learning Materials:**
- Create textbooks and digital resources that reflect diverse cultural contexts and address real-world challenges.
  - Include activities that build resilience and emotional regulation alongside language learning objectives.
- 3. Encourage Collaborative Learning Models:**
- Introduce group projects and peer-learning activities that build social connections and reduce feelings of isolation.

#### **Recommendations for Policymakers**

- 1. Mandate Trauma-Sensitive Training for Teachers:**
- Include mandatory modules on trauma-awareness in teacher certification programs.
  - Provide funding for professional development initiatives focused on trauma-sensitive pedagogy.
- 2. Promote Mental Health Support in Educational Institutions:**



- Establish on-campus counseling centers to address the psychological needs of students.
  - Develop policies that prioritize mental health as a critical component of student well-being.
- 3. Encourage Research and Innovation:**
- Fund studies exploring the intersection of trauma and SLA to develop evidence-based teaching practices.
  - Support the creation of interdisciplinary programs that combine education, psychology, and linguistics.

### **Recommendations for Institutions**

- 1. Create Support Systems for Students:**
- Implement mentorship programs where faculty and senior students guide trauma-affected learners.
  - Provide workshops and seminars focused on stress management, resilience, and coping strategies.
- 2. Foster a Culture of Inclusivity:**
- Encourage faculty and staff to adopt an empathetic approach when interacting with students.
  - Organize cultural exchange programs and activities to celebrate diversity and build community.
- 3. Monitor and Evaluate Practices:**
- Establish feedback mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of trauma-sensitive interventions.
  - Regularly review and update policies and practices to align with emerging research and student needs.

### **Conclusion**

These recommendations provide a roadmap for enhancing trauma-sensitive practices in ELT, ensuring that students receive the emotional and academic support they need to succeed. By adopting these strategies, educators, institutions, and policymakers can create a more equitable and empowering educational experience for all learners, particularly those affected by trauma.

### **6. Conclusion**

#### **Summary of Findings**

This study investigated the integration of trauma-sensitive pedagogical practices in English Language Teaching (ELT) for undergraduate students, focusing on their impact on cognitive, emotional, and linguistic outcomes. The findings revealed that trauma-sensitive strategies, such as mindfulness activities, scaffolding, and culturally inclusive materials, significantly improved classroom engagement, language proficiency, and emotional well-being among students. Quantitative data indicated measurable enhancements in key performance areas, while qualitative insights underscored the importance of emotional safety and inclusivity in fostering a supportive learning environment.

#### **Contributions to Knowledge**

The study contributes to the growing body of research on trauma-informed education by:



1. **Bridging Gaps:** Addressing the limited application of trauma-sensitive pedagogy within ELT contexts.
2. **Providing Evidence:** Demonstrating the effectiveness of psycholinguistic principles in mitigating the challenges faced by trauma-affected learners.
3. **Offering Practical Solutions:** Developing actionable strategies that educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers can adopt to create inclusive and supportive classrooms.

### **Implications**

The research highlights the transformative potential of trauma-sensitive teaching in ELT, emphasizing its dual benefits for linguistic and emotional development. These findings underscore the need for systemic changes, including the integration of trauma-awareness into teacher training programs, curriculum design, and institutional policies. By prioritizing mental health and cultural inclusivity, educational systems can better address the diverse needs of their learners.

### **Limitations**

While this study provides valuable insights, certain limitations should be acknowledged:

1. **Sample Size and Context:** The research focused on undergraduate students in Lahore, limiting its generalizability to other regions or age groups.
2. **Short-Term Analysis:** The study primarily evaluated immediate outcomes; long-term impacts of trauma-sensitive practices remain unexplored.
3. **Self-Reported Data:** Some qualitative findings relied on self-reported data, which may introduce bias.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

To build upon this study, future research should:

1. Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the sustained impact of trauma-sensitive interventions on language learning and emotional resilience.
2. Expand the scope to include diverse cultural and educational settings, ensuring broader applicability of findings.
3. Explore the role of digital tools and technology in implementing trauma-sensitive practices, particularly in remote or hybrid learning environments.

### **Final Thoughts**

Trauma-sensitive pedagogy represents a critical shift in the way educators approach teaching, particularly in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. By addressing the cognitive and emotional barriers faced by trauma-affected learners, these practices not only enhance academic outcomes but also contribute to students' holistic well-being. The findings of this study advocate for an educational paradigm that prioritizes empathy, inclusivity, and resilience, ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to thrive in a supportive and empowering environment.



## Appendix

### Open-Ended Questionnaire for Interviews and Observations

#### Interview Questions for Undergraduate Students

1. **Background and Experiences:**

Can you share some challenges you have faced during your academic journey that may have impacted your ability to learn English?

How do you think personal or external stressors (e.g., socio-economic challenges, family issues) have influenced your language learning process?

2. **Classroom Environment:**

How would you describe the environment in your English language classes? Do you feel safe and supported?

What teaching practices or classroom activities make you feel more comfortable and engaged?

3. **Learning Challenges:**

Have you experienced any specific difficulties in understanding or retaining the content during English classes? If yes, can you describe them?

What emotional or mental hurdles do you feel affect your ability to focus or participate in class?

4. **Teacher Support:**

How do your teachers address challenges or stressors that students may face in the classroom?

Can you recall any instances where a teacher's action or teaching method helped you overcome a learning barrier?

5. **Suggestions for Improvement:**

What changes would you recommend to make your English language classes more supportive for students who may be facing emotional or academic difficulties?

Are there specific activities or teaching methods you believe would help reduce stress and improve your learning experience?





## Interview Questions for ELT Practitioners

### 1. **Teaching Background:**

Can you describe your experience teaching English to undergraduate students? Have you encountered students who face significant emotional or cognitive challenges? How do you adapt your teaching methods for students who seem to be struggling with stress or trauma?

### 2. **Classroom Practices:**

What strategies do you use to create a safe and inclusive classroom environment? How do you ensure that all students, regardless of their personal challenges, can participate and succeed in your classes?

### 3. **Observations of Student Behavior:**

What are some common signs of stress or trauma you have observed among your students? How do these challenges manifest in their language learning abilities, such as participation, retention, or performance?

### 4. **Effectiveness of Trauma-Sensitive Practices:**

Have you implemented any specific trauma-sensitive teaching practices? If yes, can you share examples and their outcomes? In your opinion, what is the impact of addressing emotional and cognitive barriers on students' language proficiency and classroom engagement?

### 5. **Professional Development:**

Do you feel adequately trained to address the needs of trauma-affected learners? If not, what training or resources would be helpful? What additional support or resources do you believe would help you better address the challenges faced by your students?

## Observation Guidelines

### 1. **Classroom Environment:**

Are students actively participating in class activities? Are there signs of disengagement or withdrawal? Does the teacher foster a supportive and inclusive atmosphere? How?

### 2. **Teaching Practices:**

What strategies does the teacher use to scaffold learning tasks and reduce cognitive load? Are mindfulness or emotional regulation activities incorporated into the lessons? How do students respond to them?

### 3. **Student-Teacher Interaction:**

How does the teacher respond to students who appear to be struggling emotionally or academically? Are students encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings in the classroom?

### 4. **Student Behavior:**

Do students display signs of anxiety, frustration, or disengagement? How frequently do these behaviors occur?



Are there observable instances of peer support or collaboration among students?

**5. Engagement with Learning Materials:**

Are the learning materials culturally relevant and inclusive? Do they resonate with the students' experiences?

How do students interact with the materials? Are they engaged, or do they appear overwhelmed?

**Follow-Up Questions (for Both Interviews and Observations)**

1. What specific challenges do you think contribute most to the learning difficulties observed?
2. Are there any particular moments where you noticed a change in student behavior or engagement?
3. What additional measures do you think could be implemented to improve classroom dynamics and learning outcomes?
4. How do students typically react to emotionally or culturally sensitive materials?

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