



## Motivation in students' language learning performance: A comprehensive review

**Salah Mahmoud Othman**

Lecturer, Department of English, University of Benghazi, Libya

\* Corresponding Author: **Salah Mahmoud Othman**

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### Abstract

This article will analyze the critical role of motivation in students' performance in learning a language, underlining that it affects their engagement, participation, and appropriate use of strategies. Motivation is fostered by personal goals, self-efficacy, and interests, as well as external factors such as relationships between teachers and students and classroom settings. This article, therefore, focus on the importance of diversified strategies to boost motivation through such methods as appropriate content and interactive teaching methods with a supportive atmosphere.

Sustaining motivation is a very crucial activity in which teachers are involved; therefore, this paper is a call for collaborative efforts by all educators, administrators, parents, and students. The implications in this paper include; teacher training, relevant curriculum design, supportive educational policies, parents' involvement, student engagement, identification of those who are motivated by rewards only, cross-cultural issues, professional development, multimedia use and collaboration by other stakeholders. These are thought to offer a broad view and encouragement in language learning that highlight the shared responsibility of long-lasting motivation.

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### 1. Introduction

Motivation is one of the critical factors in the world of successful language learning. It strongly contributes to student excitement, engagement, and persistence. Motivated students tend to use the target language often, participate actively, and use successful learning strategies, factors that increase their proficiency over time (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015)<sup>[10]</sup>. The motivation of the language learners can be attributed to several factors, some internal to the student themselves, while others are more environment-related aids to motivation and ultimately learning in education.

One of the essential roles of motivation is guiding learners into action, making them live up to their obligations with the aid of their talents. Without motivation, language learners cannot continue their commitment to learning vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and many other aspects of the target language. Teachers must motivate their learners properly. They can encourage them by developing interest in the target language and culture through exciting lessons, rapport building, and making classes fun and interactive. As motivation is closely linked with language learning performance, this paper examines the crucial impact of motivation on students' learning of languages. Thus, the research starts by defining motivation in context with language acquisition as that inner drive that prompts one to act and learn a language. This paper further tries to explain why motivation is so significant in the subject of language education and how motivation is believed to work as the driving force for success in learning a language. It then discusses the motivational factors possibly affecting the students, including internal issues: personal goals, self-efficacy, and interests, just to cite a few, as well as external issues: teacher-student relationships, classroom environment, and parental support. The paper then discussed improvement in students' motivation, strategies for language learning through relevant content, interaction in teaching, feedback, and a supportive atmosphere.

Ultimately, the essence of this paper is to give meaningful recommendations to the educator and language instructor for developing and sustaining high motivation levels among learners.

## 2-The Significance of Motivation in Language Learning

Motivation is widely acknowledged as one of the most critical factors influencing success in learning a new language. Students who are intrinsically motivated to acquire a second language generally exert greater effort, persevere through challenges, and ultimately attain higher proficiency levels (Shan, 2020) <sup>[31]</sup>.

In addition to that, comprehensive reviews reveal motivation accounts for up to 50% of variation in learners' achievements (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003) <sup>[21]</sup>. More motivated students employ more effective learning strategies like maximizing exposure to the language, monitoring their own progress, cooperating with peers, and actively seeking opportunities to practice inside and outside the classroom (Vandergrift, 2005) <sup>[35]</sup>.

Research clearly demonstrates that motivated students are much more likely to utilize active learning strategies that lead to greater success in mastering a new language. Motivated learners tend to display higher participation in class activities including role plays, discussions, debates, and interactive games (Dörnyei, 2005) <sup>[13]</sup>. They also put in significantly more effort outside of class, listening to target language music, watching shows and movies in the language, reading books and magazines, and seeking out conversations with native speakers (Ushioda, 2008) <sup>[33]</sup>.

Motivated students are more apt to use metacognitive self-regulation techniques like goal-setting, self-monitoring of progress, and self-evaluation of proficiency (Vandergrift, 2005) <sup>[35]</sup>. They take responsibility for managing their own learning process and persist through challenges instead of giving up. In addition, motivated learners frequently engage in cooperative learning, forming study groups with peers, tutoring less advanced learners, and collaborating on group projects (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003) <sup>[8]</sup>.

With greater motivation to master the language, learners actively expose themselves to large amounts of input in the target language, produce more output and practice opportunities, closely monitor and assess their own proficiency, and participate more fully in the social process of language acquisition. This entire array of effective, active learning strategies allows motivated students to gain higher levels of linguistic competence compared to their less engaged peers.

Many studies were conducted in diverse educational contexts have consistently demonstrated the importance of motivation in second language acquisition. For example, one study conducted within the Chinese context examined motivation factors in learning English as a foreign language among 23 primary school students in Macau using questionnaires. It found most students had positive attitudes about learning English and were driven by both intrinsic motivation like interest and extrinsic motivation like future careers (Wallace & Leong, 2020) <sup>[36]</sup>. Another study of Malaysian university students found the majority of the target students were highly motivated to learn English, attributing it to positive attitudes and past teachers using student-centered methods; females showed higher motivation, potentially due to greater verbal ability and interest in language usage (Mahammed & Rawian, 2018) <sup>[20]</sup>. Also on the Saudi context a study of Saudi students

also found most of them had high motivation to learn English for communication, media comprehension, and jobs, though discouragement from peer comparisons sometimes undermined it (Akbar *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[2]</sup>.

Additional research in India comparing students across academic levels revealed strong motivation driven by careers and cultural integration, with some variations by gender and level (Doley, 2022) <sup>[7]</sup>. Another study related to the Indonesian setting was about high school students' motivation to speak English, the study found out that learners have moderate to high motivations and that's attributed to goals like grades, fluency, and conversing with native speakers (Sri, 2020) <sup>[14]</sup>. While some minor contextual differences exist between learners' motivations, the overall findings highlight remarkable consistency in the significance of motivation globally.

Taking the above examples into consideration, motivation has been firmly established through extensive research worldwide as one of the most critical factors influencing success in second language acquisition. Students who are intrinsically motivated to learn a language generally achieve higher levels of proficiency through exerting greater effort, persisting through challenges, and utilizing more effective learning strategies. Studies conducted across diverse educational contexts consistently reveal that most language learners report high levels of motivation. This motivation is driven by both intrinsic interest in the language and culture and extrinsic goals such as advancing careers, comprehending media, and communicating in international contexts.

Educators universally emphasize the importance of actively fostering motivation through making content relevant to learner interests, facilitating autonomy and collaboration, providing an encouraging classroom climate, setting achievable goals, and rewarding effort. Despite some minor contextual variations, the fundamental and universally critical role of motivation in applied linguistics and second language acquisition is abundantly clear. Language teachers would do well to prioritize creative techniques designed to cultivating and sustaining student motivation, as it stimulates the beneficial learning behaviors and engagement that drive the ultimate mastery of a new language.

Considering the above discuss of the importance of motivation, there must be some factors that trigger that motivation and contribute to its continuation and that's what is going to be discussed in the next section.

## 3. Factors Affecting Students' Language Learning Motivation

Many factors influence learners' motivation to study and acquire proficiency in a second or a foreign language. These factors can be divided into internal factors within the individual himself or herself and external factors that are related to their environment.

The key internal factors include personality traits like Sociability and self-esteem extraverts students often have higher motivation to communicate and interact with others in the language (Boo *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[3]</sup>. Learners with high self-esteem are more willing to take risks and persist through challenges that arise when learning a new language (Listyani, 2022) <sup>[19]</sup>. They tend to set more challenging goals, use more strategies, and persist through obstacles. Developing a strong sense of self-efficacy enhances motivation to put effort into language learning (Raofi *et al.*, 2012) <sup>[29]</sup>.

In some cultures such as India, Belgium, Switzerland and many more where many languages are spoken and considered official and for that being multilingual is not just a practical skill but a deeply Fundamental value, multilingualism is a common and valued aspect of the culture. These cultures celebrate linguistic diversity and view multilingualism as a source of pride and identity. In such environments, individuals grow up with a strong intrinsic motivation to learn and master multiple languages. They see language as a bridge to connect with their own heritage, communicate with a broader range of people, and gain a deeper understanding of their cultural specifics. (O'Keefe *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[27]</sup>.

Various internal factors are also considerably influential in explaining the motivation and achievement of an individual in language learning. Such internal factors include a person's self-efficacy that implies that he or she has faith in the language ability and learning elevation. These are called self-efficacy beliefs and play a significant role to the language learners in one way or the other (Mills, 2014) <sup>[25]</sup>.

Age is also considered an essential internal factor, which plays a role in motivational orientations toward language learning. According to the existing literature, motivation for language learning differs because of age due to developmental changes in motivational attitudes and in themselves (Lamb 2017) <sup>[18]</sup>. Younger learners are more positive and motivated compared to older ones or the learners in higher grades. The key reason may include interest, enjoyment, and inspiration by the teacher while the young learners may lack persistence and their motivation is fueled by external factors (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020) <sup>[24]</sup>.

In the case of motivational orientations to language learning gender may therefore assume a significant influence. For example, a number of quantitative research works have examined gender differences in motivation profiles and established several patterns in the dataset based on males' and females' scores and gender-associated tendencies (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) <sup>[10]</sup>. For example, Henry and Cliffordson (2013) <sup>[15]</sup> synchronously carried out an empirical study on the motivation levels of adolescent Swedish learners of English and the result showed that motivated learning behavior of female student was higher than the male students. The females seemed to work harder, more persistent and more involved in language related activities and undertakings.

Further study by Kissau *et al.* (2013) conducting survey on high school French students also indicated that female students' score higher in various factors like French learning motivation, motivational intensity and self attitudes towards learning French. The authors claim that motivational patterns related to gender socialization also promoting studying among females might be behind motivational advantages in language learning settings.

Still, other findings highlight more complex differences by gender depending on the aspects of motivation addressed; for instance, in a large-scale questionnaire survey of Kormos and Csizér (2013) <sup>[17]</sup>, female learners reported higher levels of language learning anxiety, as opposed to male learners' higher self-efficacy for language learning. However, females were higher in such components as integrativeness and attitudes toward learning English (Stolk *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[32]</sup>.

A student's motivation to study and master a new language is affected by several influential external factors that originate from their learning environment and social context. These extrinsic motivational factors include elements such as the learning situation, relationships, incentives, and broader

social dimensions surrounding the learner (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) <sup>[10]</sup>.

One significant external motivator is the instructional context and learning tasks designed by teachers. Activities perceived as meaningful, relevant, and engaging tend to enhance motivation and foster positive attitudes. Interactive methods providing collaborative work and opportunities for creative expression can also boost motivation more than passive approaches. Providing appropriate challenges and scaffolds is crucial as well (Brown, 2007) <sup>[4]</sup>.

The teacher-student relationship further influences motivation levels from outside the learner (Ruesch *et al.*, 2012) <sup>[30]</sup>. Teachers who show care for students, establish rapport, and support autonomy tend to motivate learners and elevate their self-confidence. Negative relationships bred by criticism or control often undermine motivation.

Goal-setting is another external component that guides motivation (Moskovsky *et al.*, 2016) <sup>[26]</sup>. Teachers can help learners focus on developing their skills, rather than just getting good grades or impressing others. This can help learners develop mastery goals, which are more motivating than performance goals; also Goals emphasizing self-improvement over competing with peers are beneficial.

Incentives such as rewards and recognition can provide an extrinsic motivational, but their effects depend on factors like perceived autonomy and competence support (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014) <sup>[12]</sup>. The type of incentive matters; Incentives that are perceived as controlling can be demotivating, while those that provide informational feedback can be more motivating.

Broader social influences can shape learner motivation in a number of ways. Parents, peers, and community members can all influence a learner's beliefs about their own abilities, their goals, and the value of learning a particular language. For example, parents who value education and who speak a second language at home are more likely to have children who are motivated to learn that language. Similarly, peers who are also learning a language can provide support and encouragement, which can boost motivation and also community members who speak a particular language can create a sense of belonging and identity, which can also motivate learners to continue studying (Mercer *et al.*, 2012) <sup>[23]</sup>.

#### 4- Strategies to Enhance Students' Motivation

Learning a second language is a challenging yet rewarding endeavor that equips students with invaluable skills for an increasingly globalized world. However, many students struggle to find the motivation to put in the extensive time and effort required to reach proficiency. This implies the need to find ways to promote students motivation and one of the most important factors in this process is the teacher and his/her strategies to facilitate the process of learning a language.

Teachers enhance motivation through relevant language instruction, fostering a low-anxiety environment, and employing interactive activities, learner autonomy, and meaningful feedback (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008) <sup>[13]</sup> also engaged students driven by career goals or cultural integration achieve higher language proficiency. Sustaining motivation becomes challenging as initial enthusiasm wanes (Yeşilçinar & Üyesi, 2021) <sup>[37]</sup>.

To counter this, educators should vary pace, set achievable short-term goals, and emphasize language relevance

(Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008) <sup>[13]</sup>, moreover culturally-relevant projects, games, and media spark interest (Ushioda, 2011) <sup>[34]</sup>. Furthermore customizing content to students' interests and collaborative learning tasks further boost motivation (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003) <sup>[8]</sup>. Facilitating learner autonomy, offering praise, and avoiding negative comparisons contribute to sustained motivation (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007) <sup>[6]</sup>. Additionally ongoing attention to evolving student needs is essential for sustaining motivation.

Teachers play a pivotal role in implementing motivational strategies that inspire students and promote lifelong second language learning. Moskovsky *et al.* (2016) <sup>[26]</sup> made a suggestion based on research in educational psychology and second language acquisition; he suggested that there are three key evidence-based approaches for enhancing student motivation: fostering relevance, promoting an adaptive classroom climate, and utilizing engaging instructional techniques.

Making content relevant to students' lives and goals is a powerful way to boost motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021) <sup>[9]</sup>. When students understand how acquiring a second language can help them accomplish personal objectives and enrich their experiences, they develop intrinsic motivation to learn (Ushioda, 2011) <sup>[34]</sup>. In the same way, teachers should customize instruction to highlight real-world applications that connect to students' interests. For example, an English teacher could compile vocabulary lists related to students' hobbies and career aspirations or assign interviews with professionals who use English in their jobs.

Pointing out opportunities to use the language while traveling, studying abroad, or in future careers emphasizes its usefulness. Inviting alumni who learned the language to share how it impacted their lives makes the benefits tangible. Even small changes, like incorporating pop culture references or music lyrics students enjoy, builds relevance by bridging their out-of-school experiences. When students grasp how learning a language can help them achieve personal goals, they are more inspired to engage.

In addition to relevance, research shows that establishing an adaptive motivational classroom climate is critical for student success; Teachers should cultivate an environment that reduces anxiety and builds confidence through strong teacher-student rapport, encouragement of risk-taking, and dynamic group activities (Mercer & MacIntyre, 2014) <sup>[22]</sup>.

Validation, warmth, humor, and patience from teachers help students feel accepted and willing to experiment with the new language despite inevitable mistakes. Praising effort rather than inherent ability contributes to fostering a growth-oriented attitude, so students view challenges as learning opportunities (Dweck, 2014) <sup>[11]</sup>. Fostering class cohesion through collaborative projects and peer tutoring harnesses positive peer motivation and relationships. Celebrating multiculturalism promotes openness to linguistic diversity, emphasizing that proficiency takes time though it will eventually reduce frustration. By facilitating a classroom climate centered on mutual support rather than judgment, teachers enable students to persist despite difficulties.

Additionally, utilizing engaging and interactive instructional techniques, rather than rote memorization drills, is the key for motivation (Calvert & Sheen, 2014) <sup>[5]</sup>. When class activities engage students' creativity and critical thinking, it becomes intrinsically rewarding to participate. Games, competitions, surveys, role plays, and simulations all inspire active involvement. Also, Multimedia resources such as films in the

target language, YouTube videos, and music utilize the technology that students enjoy using daily. Introducing project-based learning that is linked to areas of concern in society has the benefit of fostering teamwork, individualization, and learning in depth. It appears that interactivity fosters motivation; especially when the target audience consists of teenagers who would prefer something new and engaging and something that involves social interaction. Teachers should assess each student's motivational orientation, such as their reasons for studying the language, to differentiate instructions appropriately (Putra, 2012) <sup>[28]</sup>. Providing constructive, specific feedback focused on effort, progress, and mastery of material rather than comparative ability boosts students' self-efficacy and growth mindset (Dweck, 2014) <sup>[11]</sup>. Ultimately, balancing challenge with a high level of encouragement and support sustains motivation.

Generally, ample research confirms that student motivation is essential for success in second language acquisition. By making instruction relevant, facilitating a warm classroom climate, and incorporating interactive techniques, teachers can significantly enhance students' motivation to learn a new language. Moving beyond rote drills, Using these student-centered strategies makes learning more exciting and helps students take charge of their own learning. With thoughtful efforts to inspire engagement, students will be empowered to reach fluency goals and reap lifelong rewards as multilingual global citizens.

## 5- Conclusion and Implications

Motivation is a factor that has been given much attention in the language learning process, and this paper pays much attention to this important factor. Motivation, thus, operates as an active force that encourages participation, communication, and the constructive development of learner behaviors and procedures for improving proficiency. These have included the attitude of the teacher and the student, the concept of Personal control, as well as attribution; the teacher-student relationship; the classroom climate; and the role of parents. There is an encouragement of diversified approaches to enhance motivation and this includes choice of material and methods, and fostering a positive learning environment. This paper emphasizes the role of teachers in the encouragement of learners and this is underlined by supporters such as educators, administrators, parents, and the learners themselves.

The strengthening of the learning environment can only be achieved by focused initiatives in key domains. Teacher preparation courses need to develop motivational strategies for learners to be implemented as necessary. Curriculum designers are required to have materials that are relevant in content. There should be an adequate time in the educational policies to provide more class sections and flexible timetables to support new approaches of teaching and learning methods that employs the use of smaller classes. Consequently, parental involvement is central for implementing motivational support in the domestic background.

There are some recommendations for the present practice to enhance the process of motivation to learn a second language, these include encouraging parents to attend informational sessions and providing teachers with relevant information that would help foster an encouraging atmosphere for learners. By identifying and encouraging successful incentive strategies, there is potential to replicate them among teachers.

It is vital to make a cultural approach which defines the choice of approaches to teaching that will respect the cultural background of students to ensure that any teaching is done in a culturally sensitive manner.

Continued professional training keeps the educators informed on different aspects of learners and emerging strategies and methods that can be adopted in classroom teaching. Pursuing students' interest can enhance motivation as well as valuing their interests that reflect the use of multimedia resources including films, videos and music. Cooperative efforts which are most appropriate in this case include cooperation involving teachers, administrators, parents, students, and the community in order to provide common support for language learning motivation and inspiration.

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