



THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH.

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Annotation: Motivation is widely recognized as a primary determinant of success in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). This article explores the multifaceted nature of motivation—specifically integrative and instrumental types—and its impact on English language proficiency. By synthesizing existing literature and examining learner behaviors, the study highlights how intrinsic drive and extrinsic goals influence persistence and achievement. The findings suggest that while external rewards may initiate the learning process, long-term fluency is most effectively sustained by internal desire and a positive attitude toward the target culture.

Keywords: Motivation, SLA, English Learning, Integrative Motivation, Instrumental Motivation, Learner Persistence.

Learning English in a globalized world is often viewed as a necessity rather than a luxury. However, despite the availability of high-quality resources, many learners struggle to reach professional proficiency. The differentiating factor is rarely just cognitive ability; it is motivation. Motivation serves as the "engine" of learning, providing the initial stimulus to start the journey and the stamina to navigate the complexities of English grammar, phonetics, and syntax over several years.

The study of motivation in SLA has been dominated by Robert Gardner's socio-educational model. Gardner categorized motivation into two distinct types:



Integrative Motivation: The desire to learn a language to integrate into the community of the target language speakers. This is often linked to a genuine interest in the culture and people.

Instrumental Motivation: The desire to learn for practical purposes, such as passing an exam, securing a promotion, or meeting a graduation requirement.

Recent scholars, like Zoltán Dörnyei, have expanded this to include the L2 Motivational Self System, which focuses on the "Ideal L2 Self"—the person the learner envisions themselves becoming if they master English. Research consistently shows that learners with a strong "Ideal Self" are more likely to engage in self-regulated learning.

Motivation is widely recognized as one of the most critical factors in successfully learning English (or any second/foreign language). It acts as the driving force that initiates learning, sustains effort through challenges, and determines long-term persistence and achievement. Without sufficient motivation, even talented learners may struggle or give up, while highly motivated individuals often overcome limited resources, aptitude gaps, or difficult environments to make significant progress.

Why Motivation Matters So Much. Language learning is a long, gradual process that requires consistent practice in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It involves making mistakes, facing plateaus, and investing time without immediate rewards. Motivation provides the energy to push through these hurdles. Research in second language acquisition (SLA) consistently shows that motivation influences:

- **Effort and engagement:** Motivated learners study more frequently, use strategies actively, and interact with the language more.

- **Persistence:** It helps sustain learning even when progress feels slow or when external conditions (like limited English exposure in non-English-speaking countries) are not ideal.



- Outcomes: Higher motivation correlates with better proficiency, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and the four core skills. It can even outweigh aptitude in many cases.

In EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts—common in places like Uzbekistan—where daily immersion is limited, strong motivation becomes even more essential because learners must create their own opportunities for practice.

Types of motivation in english learning. Motivation is not one-dimensional. Key frameworks include:

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation (from Self-Determination Theory):

- Intrinsic: Learning English because you genuinely enjoy it— for the pleasure of understanding songs, watching movies without subtitles, reading books, or the satisfaction of mastering a skill. This type often leads to deeper engagement, better retention, and long-term success.

- Extrinsic: Driven by external rewards or pressures, such as getting a better job, passing an exam (e.g., IELTS/TOEFL), traveling, or meeting academic requirements. While useful for starting and maintaining short-term effort, it can fade if the rewards disappear.

Integrative vs. Instrumental Motivation (from Gardner's socio-educational model):

- Integrative: Desire to connect with English-speaking cultures, make friends, or integrate into communities where English is used. This fosters positive attitudes and sustained effort.

- Instrumental: Practical goals like career advancement, higher education, or global opportunities. English's status as a global language makes this very common and powerful.

Most learners have a mix of these. Studies show that intrinsic and integrative motivations often predict stronger long-term results, but instrumental motives (e.g.,



English for future career prospects) are highly relevant in many contexts and can be very effective when combined with enjoyment.

Evidence from Research

Numerous studies highlight motivation's role:

- Motivated students engage more, persevere longer, and achieve higher proficiency levels.

- In EFL settings, factors like the perceived usefulness of English as a global language, communication opportunities, and travel/career benefits are frequent drivers.

- Lack of motivation is linked to procrastination, lower participation, and higher dropout rates. Conversely, fostering motivation improves not just language skills but also overall academic performance.

Gardner's model, for instance, emphasizes that motivation (combined with attitudes) explains why some learners succeed even with average aptitude.

Practical Ways to Build and Maintain Motivation

Motivation can fluctuate, so it's helpful to actively cultivate it:

- Find your "why": Reflect on personal reasons—career growth, cultural interest, travel, or self-improvement. Revisit this regularly.

- Set small, achievable goals: Break learning into manageable steps (e.g., learn 10 new words daily or watch one short video in English) and track progress in a journal. Celebrating wins boosts dopamine and sustains drive.

- Make it enjoyable (boost intrinsic motivation): Consume content you love—English songs, podcasts, YouTube channels, movies, or books on topics that interest you. Use apps, games, or language exchanges for fun practice.

- Create routines and accountability: Schedule short daily sessions. Partner with a friend, join a language club, or use apps with streaks/community features.

- Balance intrinsic and extrinsic: Use rewards (e.g., treat yourself after completing a module) but focus on building internal satisfaction.



- Address dips: It's normal for motivation to wane. Take short breaks if needed, vary activities, or remind yourself of past progress. Focus on what you can control rather than perfection.

- Leverage real use: Practice speaking with others, join online communities, or apply English in daily life (e.g., labeling items or thinking in English).

For teachers or parents supporting learners: Make activities meaningful, relevant to interests, and at the right challenge level to build confidence and autonomy.

In summary, motivation is the "fuel" of English learning. It turns potential into progress and makes the journey sustainable and rewarding. While external factors help spark it, nurturing internal drive—through enjoyment, clear goals, and consistent small wins—leads to the best and most enduring results. If you're learning English, identifying what personally motivates you and incorporating enjoyable practice can make all the difference. Consistent effort, powered by motivation, leads to real proficiency over time.

Motivation is not a static trait but a dynamic process. It fluctuates based on the learning environment, teacher-student rapport, and the perceived relevance of the material. While instrumental motivation (getting a job) is a powerful "starter motor," it often lacks the emotional depth required for the "long haul" of language mastery.

Furthermore, the "Self-Efficacy" of a student—their belief in their own ability to succeed—acts as a multiplier for motivation. If a student is motivated but lacks confidence, the motivation quickly turns into anxiety.

Conclusion

In the context of English language learning, motivation is the most significant predictor of long-term success. It bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Without sufficient motivation, even the most gifted students will fail to reach their full potential. Conversely, a highly motivated



learner with average cognitive abilities can achieve near-native fluency through sheer persistence and consistent practice.

Recommendations to foster a high-motivation environment, the following strategies are suggested:

Personalization: Teachers should align English lessons with students' personal interests (e.g., using English news about a student's favorite hobby).

Goal Setting: Learners should set "SMART" goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to provide frequent senses of accomplishment.

Cultural Exposure: Encouraging students to engage with English-speaking cultures (music, literature, film) can shift motivation from instrumental to integrative.

Safe Environment: Reducing "affective filters" by creating a classroom where mistakes are viewed as progress rather than failures.

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