

The role of motivation in English language learning: a qualitative study

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Abstract

Numerous studies have proven a positive association between learners' enthusiasm for a foreign language and their achievement in a foreign language. This study is based on semi-structured interviews and focus groups with students, reveals the critical importance of motivation in English language learning. Further, this study analyzes students' lived experiences and the factors impacting their motivation to learn the English language. The participants in the various courses at Quirino State University were chosen using a purposeful sampling technique. The findings indicated that the influence of the teacher, enjoyment of learning, desire to learn, parental influence, and classroom environment all affected students' motivation to learn the English language. Thus, this study proposes that teachers should be aware of these motivational elements in their classrooms and include them in developing an English Language Intervention Program aimed at motivating students and enhancing their competency in learning the English language.

Keywords: Motivation; English Proficiency; English Language Learning

1. Introduction

Motivation is believed to be a factor that influences behavior directly. Individuals choose to undertake certain jobs or establish specific goals and then work toward accomplishing those goals. However, what occurs between setting the goal and realizing it? One might presume that motivation is critical because it affects their success rate when they choose to study the English language. Internal motivation can pave the way to achievement. Internal and external wants influence how an individual progresses toward their goals. When it comes to language learning, motivation can be classified as external or internal. This drive to learn a new language could arise from personal achievement, personal objectives, personal inspiration, and possibly just a need to improve intellectually with or without any external benefit (Ajmal, Keezhata, Yasir, & Alam, 2021). Moreover, English learning and teaching is considered to be complex and need special effort. Teachers and researchers have extensively accepted motivation/demotivation as one of the most important elements in second/ foreign language (L2) learning. The current research reveals the role of motivation and the factors affecting students

'motivation in teaching-learning English as a foreign language (Ekiz & Kulmetov, 2016). However, many studies revealed that various factors affect the English proficiency of students, such as motivation. Motivation refers to the combination of attempts plus desire to obtain the objective of learning the language plus desirable attitudes towards understanding the language (Gardner, 1985 and Alizadeh, 2016). Motivation is the backbone of language teaching (Aquino et al., 2016). Gardner (1985) further conveyed that motivated learners positively regard the language they are learning or desired to learn. Thus, they firmly want to achieve learning goals, and they exert more effort in learning the language. Moreover, Basco & Han (2016) posited that students with high motivation levels had a high level of self-esteem.

Furthermore, Oroujlou & Vahedi (2011) emphasized that systematic and academic application of "motivation and attitude" in language learning classes is significant and can make language courses more engaging. Additionally, Knell and Chi (2012) believe that a motivated learner "makes an effort, is persistent and attentive to the task at hand, has goals, desires, and aspirations, enjoys the activity, makes judgments about success and failure, is aroused, and employs strategies to assist in achieving goals." Finally, Zaman et al. (2015) stressed that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation strongly influences the learner in learning a second language.

Furthermore, Rondina (2010) stressed that the classroom served as a community of learners sharing a mutual goal, i.e., learning the course's subject matter; thus, every learner is expected to feel free to ask and share knowledge about the course. Yet, this was not always the situation in the many classes. Despite this scenario, language instructors, professors, and the administration, with their goal to intensify and improve English language skills among their students, are exerting effort by finding ways and means to motivate their learners to learn and excel in English. The concept justifies that if students are correctly encouraged, they perform better in learning the English language.

Based on the above premises, this study was perceived to determine the factors influencing students' learning of the English language. The results of this study served as a basis and guide in developing a language intervention program to motivate and improve the level of student's English language proficiency.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Motivation in English Language Learning

Many studies have shown that motivation has an effect on language learning as well as the academic performance of students. One study found that there is no significant correlation between reading strategy use and reading motivation and or between reading proficiency and reading motivation (Jeongyeon, 2015). However, in Iran, Mohammadian (2013) concluded that intrinsic motivation is the most important predictor among all motivation regulation for all students. Moreover, Filipino researchers and scholars too, believe in the moving power of motivation to stimulate the desire to learn. In fact, Lucas et al., (2010) argued that learners are intrinsically motivated to learn reading and writing skills. Further, knowledge and accomplishment were found as intrinsic motivational factors in learning the four skills. Moreover, Ekiz & Kulmetov (2016) contended that "students' learning motivation is directly affected by the teacher and the teaching techniques that are supported by appropriate guidance and advice. Teachers and their teaching methods also affect students' motivation. Further, he also stressed that environmental factors affect learners' motivation. Even if they try to motivate themselves, the environmental factors like classroom management prevent them."

3. Methodology/Materials

This study used a qualitative research design to capture the students' lived experiences during their English classes and explore their motivation to learn the English language. The participants were selected from the eight courses in the university, namely Bachelor of Arts in English, Bachelor of Elementary in Education, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Bachelor of Science in Criminology, Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering, Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management, and Midwifery. The participants are purposely chosen since they finished their Communication Arts 1 and Communication Arts 2 subjects. Further, these students also took the ELMS (English Language Motivation Scale by Gardner and English Proficiency Test. To acquire reliable information, the researcher sought the help of a research assistant, who is a student leader, to conduct the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. This is to make them feel comfortable, ensure the willingness of the participants to share their experiences and provide information for the attainment of the study objectives. Its reliability was validated and considered the research ethics protocol as stipulated in the university research manual. All the participants were interviewed in their most convenient and comfortable places during their free time and lasted for at least one hour per participant. The participants were interviewed using in-depth and semi-structured dialogues in Ilocano as their native language and Filipino, their "lingua franca" in school to ensure the fullness of data. The interview meetings for the participants consisted of closed and open-ended questions to allow the researcher to follow up points that needed clarification and elaboration of questions that were misinterpreted/misunderstood by the participants. The interview focused on students' positive and negative experiences in their English classes and what motivated them to learn English. On the other hand, the focus group discussion participants were divided into three groups. The groupings were based on the same instructors who handled the participants' English subjects (English 1 & English 2).

Moreover, the FGD started with an orientation to the participants on how and why they were included in the to learn discussion. The time allotted for the focus group discussions was approximately one (1) hour and thirty (30) minutes. Nonetheless, this time limit was extended because several participants' responses elicited from the participants enough data were extracted from the discussions, and saturation point has been reached. A second FGD session was conducted to validate the synthesized data i. Enough previous discussion and ensure that other contributions were extracted from the participants. The participants were given time to know each other for them to feel comfortable and they were able to participate actively in the discussion. Open-ended questions were also asked to the participants to elicit responses. Hence, the discussion for the previous discussion's synthesized data and ensure the English language?" The audio-record interviews and FGD's were transcribed verbatim, and the statements were translated, interpreted and, checked to preserve the original meaning of the articulations. The data were gathered, were read and read to extract significant verbalizations, and collectively described what was common among the participants' views and experiences. Condensed meanings of meaningful statements were formulated and were then categorized into codes and themes. Correspondence and critical friendly techniques were done to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the reported data.

4 Results and Findings

The findings revealed that the students who participated in this study are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated in learning the English language. The thickness and richness of the field texts gathered afforded the identification and emerging of the five interesting themes relative to the factors

influencing their motivation in English language learning. This includes teacher influence, enjoyment, desire to learn, parental influence, and classroom environment. These themes are reflected in the table 1.

Table 1. Factors Influencing the Motivation Level of Students in Learning the English Language

Themes	Meaningful Units	%
Theme 1. Teacher Influence	105	57.69
Theme 2. Enjoyment in Learning	28	15.39
Theme 3. Desire to Learn	24	13.19
Theme 4. Parental Influence	14	7.69
Theme 5. Classroom environment	11	6.04
Total	182	100.00

Table 1 above presents the five factors that affect the motivation level of students in learning the English language. Of the 182 meaningful units, the highest percentage belonged to the teacher influence, with 105 or 57.69 % total significant units. It is followed by enjoyment in learning with 28 or 15.39 % meaningful units and desire to learn with 24 or 13.19 % meaningful units. On the other hand, there are only 11 or 6.04 % significant units for the classroom environment.

The result conforms with the findings of Nawaz et al. (2015) that noted the following factors affected the students' motivation towards English language learning: teacher influence (Krishnan et al., 2013), interest in the English language, and family influence (Humaida, 2012; Krishnan et al., 2013). On the other hand, attitudes towards learning English, integrativeness, instrumentality (prevention), English anxiety, international posture, ideal L2 self, criterion measures, linguistic self-confidence, ought-to L2 self, travel orientation, and fear of assimilation are the factors identified by Nawaz which are not found in the present study.

Moreover, Krishnan et al. (2013) supported the study results and identified the desire to learn English is one of the factors impacting successful English language learning in EFL settings. Furthermore, Alizadeh (2016) posited that enjoyment of learning is also considered influential in motivation. On the other hand, external pressures and a positive attitude towards the L2 community are also the factors found in the present study.

Analysis was done for the specific themes generated from responses to obtain a more encompassing theme. They are as follows:

Theme # 1. Teacher's Influence

The participants revealed that one of the essential factors of their motivation is the influence of their teachers, with 105 meaningful units or 57.69 % as the highest factor. This supported the claim of Rahman et al. (2017) when they posited that "most of the students agree that the teacher's influence is essential, as most teachers encouraged them to learn the language. This proved that the students are highly dependent on their teachers in supporting them learning the language." Further, Ekiz & Kulmetov (2016) emphasized that "students' learning motivation is directly affected by the teacher and the teaching techniques that are supported with appropriate guidance and advice." Moreover, (Hadriana 2013) posited that teachers play a vital role in providing a superb learning climate and they also influenced and inspired students to learn the language through their inner awareness. Students need the right approach and have the best learning strategies to understand and master the English language to meet the needs and demands. Indeed, according to Mosha (2014), the learning and teaching

process encompasses two dynamic participants in the classroom - the learner and the teacher. Learning a language does not fall entirely on the teacher. The learners must also undertake more accountability for the learning process. "It is through interactions with each other that students and teachers work together to create practical and intellectual activities that shape both the form and the content of the target subject."

Furthermore, the participants verbalized that they were motivated in their English classes because their teachers were able to give them positive reinforcement through appreciation and giving them words of encouragement whenever they commit mistakes. Relatively, the students are motivated to learn the English language because the good qualities of their teachers inspire them. Thus, the following statements were manifestations of the teacher's appreciation to the students who had given them motivation:

- "You are so good at writing." F1T1
- "Perfect answer." F1T7
- "Richard Navarro has an excellent performance." F1T60
- "What a very nice idea!" F1T12

On the other hand, the following statements exemplify the teacher's words of encouragement to students:

- "There's no such thing as the wrong answer." F1T8
- "Just keep on trying." F1T5
- "Nobody is perfect." F1T4
- "It's all right, next time you need to study very well, so you will learn something." F1T6
- "She is approachable and very willing to help." F1T9
- "She knows how to motivate us when we feel bored." F1T12
- "I like very much the way he pronounces and enunciates words in English." F1T25
- "My instructor does not humiliate students when they commit mistakes." F1T30
- "He makes the whole class alive, and he used to give us interesting and challenging activities." F1T17

Theme # 2. Enjoyment in Learning English

The second factor that influences the motivation level of students is their enjoyment in learning English, with 28 or 14.07 % total meaningful units. This result is supported by Alizadeh's (2016) study. He identified the pleasure of learning as a critical motivation factor aside from external pressures and a positive attitude towards the L2 community.

Further, the participants are intrinsically motivated or enjoyed learning the English language because they utilized it to express themselves freely in all activities in English class. Hence, the following are examples of statements from the participants illustrating their motivation in learning the English language by participating and expressing their ideas in classroom activities:

- "I enjoyed my English 1 and 2 subjects because of the group activities." F2T8
- "What I liked most in my English subjects are the challenging activities." F2T18

- "It's exciting... because all of us talk in front." F2T1

Further, they are also motivated to learn the English language because they have gained confidence and received a positive reward. The following are examples of statements from the participants showing that they are extrinsically motivated to learn the English language because they have gained confidence and received a positive reward.

- "I enjoyed my English subjects because I gained confidence." F2T10
- "I enjoyed English because it helped me boost my confidence to speak English." F2T16

Moreover, they are also extrinsically motivated to learn the English language, for they believe they can apply it in the future. The following are statements from the participants demonstrating the use of the English language in their future.

- "There's a need for me to know how to speak the English language, especially during interviews." F2T16
- "I could apply this skill soon." F2T25
- "You have the edge over the others...." F2T26

Additionally, the students are extrinsically motivated in learning the English language because they received positive rewards from their instructors. Examples of statements from the participants are the following:

- "my first time to get the highest score...." F2T22
- "inspired for having a high grade" F2T12
- "I get high scores in recitation." F2T13
- "When I got the highest grade in delivering speech...." F2T27

Theme # 3. Desire to Learn English

Krishnan et al. (2013) discovered that desire to learn English is one of the factors aside from social factors, parental encouragement, and teacher's style impacting successful English language teaching in EFL settings.

Further, the participants are intrinsically motivated to learn English because they want to communicate effectively with others and use it in their studies. Additionally, the results indicate that intrinsic motivation allows students to apply the English language skills in daily living and their future utilization of these skills in subjects including language and literature and encourage them to use the English language to communicate with other people. Thus, this conforms to the result of the focus group discussion. The participants are intrinsically motivated to learn the English language because they want to communicate effectively with others and use it in their studies.

On the other hand, the participants are extrinsically motivated in learning the English language because they receive rewards and apply them in their career and their future. Further, the results indicate that students' intrinsic motivation is geared more toward using the English language skills in their studies and for their future, specifically in their future careers. Hence, this conforms to the result of the focus group discussion. The participants are extrinsically motivated to learn the language for them to apply it in their future careers.

Moreover, the following are direct statements from the students as they are intrinsically motivated to use the English language to communicate with others.

- "I want to communicate with others using the English language." F3T6
- "I want to express in English all I want to say." F3T23
- "I also want to become a fluent speaker in English." F3T22
- "How I wish that someday I could be like fluent speakers." F3T15

On the other hand, the participants verbalized the following statements as they are intrinsically motivated to learn English as they utilized it in their studies.

- "So I can understand English books." F3T14
- "Read English to develop my skills more." F3T5
- "So I can understand English books." F3T23
- "Read English to develop my skills more." F3T12
- "I am more interested in English to gain more knowledge" F3T21
- "My skill in communicating the English language was enhanced." F3T17
- "to enrich my vocabulary...." F3T10
- "I am inspired to learn the English language because I want to enrich my knowledge." F3T4

In addition, the following are examples of statements expressed by the participants as they are extrinsically motivated to learn the English language because they want to gain rewards.

- "first time to get the highest score...." F3T17
- "inspired in getting a high grade...." F3T20
- "I got a high score during recitation." F3T18
- "When I got the highest grade in delivering speech...." F3T16
- "I got a high score." F3T13

Moreover, the following are examples of statements expressing the desire of the students to learn the English language for them to apply in their future.

- "There's a need to know how to speak the English language, especially during interviews." F3T12
- "I could apply these skills." F3T15
- "You have the advantage over the others in applying for a job." F3T14
- "If you know how to answer in English, they will looked-up at you." F3T9
- "They will underestimate you in other countries if you don't know how to speak in English." F3t20
- "You'll be respected." F3T16

Theme # 4. Parental Influence

One of the influential factors contributing to the student's motivation to learn the English language is their parental influence with 11 or 6.04 percent total meaningful units. It is supported by the claim of Rahman et al. (2017), who believes that "parents are the first teachers of students and they take

responsibility for their education. They are role models for attitudes and behavior that could assist in future success, as well as the development of English interests and activities."

Furthermore, the participants are extrinsically motivated in learning the English language due to the positive reinforcement and support from their families. The following excerpts from the students' statements are manifestations that they received positive reinforcement or appreciation from their families:

- "They appreciate my achievements." F4T5
- "They often appreciate me for being good in pronouncing words and delivering speeches." F4T10
- "They appreciated me when I got a high grade in English." F4T2

On the other hand, the following are statements from the participants conveying the support of their families:

- "My family supports my needs in school." F4T6
- "They feel happy for my achievements." F4T8
- "I was inspired by my husband because he is very supportive." F4T3

Theme # 5. Classroom Environment

The participants are demotivated to learn the English language due to their classroom environment. This supports Ekiz & Kulmetov's (2016) claim, who believes that environmental factors affect learners' motivation. Even if they try to motivate themselves, environmental factors like classroom management prevent them. Further, Aquino (2016) mentioned that the classroom environment demotivates students aside from fear of committing mistakes, demotivated teachers, and confidence.

Moreover, the participants shared that they lack concentration in learning because of the inadequate facility and resources. Hence, the following are statements from the participants indicating inadequate facility as one of the causes of their poor concentration in learning the English language:

- "I cannot concentrate because of the hot temperature of the classroom." F5T1
- "There's no electric fan inside the room." F5T3
- "It's so dark in the room...proper lightings are needed." F5T5
- "Rooms are not conducive for learning." F5T6
- "The comfort rooms are not clean." F5T8
- "odorous comfort rooms...." F5T9
- "We cannot concentrate with the odor of the CR." F5T14

On the other hand, the following are statements verbalized by the participants illustrating lack of resources:

- "incomplete reading materials in the library...." F5T2
- "lack of updated English books in the library...." F5T6
- "We do not have LCD projectors for film viewing in English." F5T13

5 Conclusion

The current study revealed that the participants had positive experiences learning the English language and were intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to learn the English language. When they were asked to describe their experiences in their English classes, many of them verbalized that they were encouraged to learn English. Further, their motivation factors include their teacher's influence, enjoyment in learning, desire to learn, and parental influence. On the other hand, they were demotivated to learn the English language due to the classroom environment. Thus, the result of this study suggests that instructors/professors should be aware of the existence of these factors of motivation in their classrooms, and they should develop an atmosphere by which students could be more comfortable in English classes using varied strategies to allow them to express themselves and sustain students' motivation freely. Finally, proper dissemination of the result of the study and presentation of the proposed intervention program to the administration, deans, program chairs, and English instructors and professors for evaluation and proper implementation could motivate and enhance their proficiency in learning the English language.

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