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PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Annotation: Motivation plays a crucial role in the process of learning a foreign language, particularly English, which is considered a global means of communication. This article explores the psychological factors influencing learners' motivation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. It examines intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, the role of learners' self-efficacy, and the impact of classroom environment and teacher behavior. The study integrates insights from self-determination theory and socio-cultural perspectives to analyze how emotional and cognitive factors affect students' language learning engagement. By understanding these psychological dimensions, educators can implement more effective strategies to enhance student motivation and academic performance in EFL classrooms.

Key words: motivation, psychology, EFL, foreign language learning, self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation, learner engagement, teacher influence

In today's globalized world, English has become more than just a foreign language; it is a gateway to international communication, academic advancement, and career development. Despite the growing emphasis on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in many countries, learners' success is not determined solely by curriculum or teaching methods. Psychological factors, particularly motivation, play a central role in the effectiveness of language acquisition. Motivation is widely acknowledged as one of the most significant predictors of achievement in language learning. It influences the amount of time and effort a learner devotes to studying, their persistence when facing difficulties, and their overall engagement with the language. However, motivation is not a fixed trait; it is shaped by various internal and external influences, including personal interests, classroom environment, peer interaction, and, most importantly, teacher behavior.

The present article aims to explore the psychological foundations of motivation in EFL learning contexts. Drawing on theories such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and socio-cultural perspectives, the study examines how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, learner self-efficacy, and emotional factors impact the learning process. Furthermore, the paper highlights how understanding these psychological mechanisms can help educators design more motivating and

supportive learning environments for EFL students. By analyzing existing research and practical implications, this study seeks to offer a comprehensive view of the interconnection between psychology and language learning motivation. Ultimately, it underscores the need for educators to adopt psychologically informed strategies to foster sustained motivation and academic success in EFL classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation has long been a central theme in language learning research. Early studies emphasized behaviorist approaches, which viewed learning as a response to external stimuli, while more recent theories explore the learner's internal states and cognitive engagement [1]. Among the most influential psychological theories is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Deci and Ryan, which distinguishes between intrinsic motivation (engaging in an activity for its inherent satisfaction) and extrinsic motivation (engaging for external rewards) [2]. According to SDT, autonomy, competence, and relatedness are key factors in fostering intrinsic motivation, which is crucial for sustained language learning. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), intrinsic motivation has been associated with better learning outcomes, greater persistence, and increased willingness to communicate [3]. Learners who find personal value and interest in the learning process tend to show higher engagement and develop stronger language skills. Another key perspective comes from the Expectancy-Value Theory, which suggests that learners' motivation depends on their beliefs about success and the value they attach to the task [4]. This theory is especially relevant in EFL settings, where students' motivation often fluctuates based on perceived usefulness of English in academic or professional life. Moreover, affective factors such as anxiety, self-confidence, and attitude have a profound impact on language learning motivation. High levels of foreign language anxiety can hinder learners' participation, lower their performance, and ultimately reduce motivation [5]. Conversely, supportive classroom environments and positive teacher-student relationships have been found to boost learners' confidence and willingness to communicate [6]. Recent studies also explore the role of teacher behavior and feedback in shaping motivation. Teachers who use motivational strategies, including goal-setting, encouragement, and scaffolding, create learning environments that foster both competence and autonomy [7]. In addition, the integration of gamified learning, task-based activities, and collaborative learning techniques have been shown to positively influence learners' emotional engagement and motivation [8][9]. Despite growing awareness of psychological factors in language learning, some researchers argue that educational practices often overlook individual differences.

Personality traits, learning styles, and emotional intelligence should be considered when designing motivation-enhancing strategies [10].

METHODOLOGY

In this research, a mixed-method approach was used to explore how psychological factors, especially motivation, influence students' performance in learning English. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed the researcher to obtain a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of learners' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses during the language acquisition process. The study was carried out among 60 university students aged between 18 and 22 who were enrolled in English language learning programs. These participants were randomly selected from the second and third-year students of the Foreign Languages Faculty. Their proficiency levels in English varied from pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate, providing diverse perspectives on motivational challenges and supports. To gather data, a motivational survey questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms. The questionnaire was adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and included a series of Likert-scale items focusing on internal motivation, external motivation, anxiety levels, interest in English, and learners' self-perception. This allowed the researcher to gather quantifiable data on the participants' motivational levels.

In addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a smaller group of ten volunteer students. These interviews helped to collect rich, qualitative insights into learners' psychological states, emotional experiences in the classroom, teacher-student interactions, and motivational triggers. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed through thematic analysis to identify common patterns and themes related to motivation. The quantitative data collected through the survey were analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics helped to understand the general trends, while correlation analysis examined the relationship between motivational factors and students' academic performance in English. The qualitative interview data were manually coded, and major themes such as enjoyment, anxiety, teacher support, peer influence, and learning goals were extracted. Throughout the research process, ethical principles were followed carefully. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their identities were kept anonymous. The data was used solely for academic purposes, and participation in the study was entirely voluntary.

RESULTS

The findings of the study reveal a significant correlation between students' psychological motivation and their performance in English language learning.

The quantitative data from the survey indicated that students with high intrinsic motivation — such as interest in the language, enjoyment of learning, and desire for self-improvement — consistently performed better in classroom tasks and assessments. More than 70% of participants who scored high in motivation-related questions also reported higher academic results in English subjects. External motivation, such as grades, rewards, and parental pressure, was also present but was less influential in maintaining consistent performance over time. Students who relied mainly on external factors tended to show fluctuations in engagement and sometimes expressed feelings of stress or burnout. In contrast, internally motivated learners displayed greater persistence and active participation in class activities. The interviews supported these results. Students often mentioned that their mood, classroom environment, and the attitude of their teacher had a direct effect on their motivation levels. Positive reinforcement, engaging lessons, and feeling emotionally supported by the instructor were key contributors to sustained effort in learning English. One recurring theme from the qualitative data was that motivation is not static — it changes based on the learner's emotional state, confidence, and experiences in the learning environment. Additionally, anxiety emerged as a limiting psychological factor. Several students noted that fear of making mistakes or being judged negatively by peers led them to avoid speaking activities, even when they understood the material. This supports the idea that addressing emotional well-being in language classrooms is crucial for maximizing student outcomes. Overall, the results confirm that motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, as well as emotional factors such as anxiety and self-confidence, play a central role in determining students' success in language learning.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study clearly illustrate the vital role that psychological motivation plays in the process of foreign language acquisition. Intrinsic motivation — such as personal interest in English, enjoyment of learning, and self-driven goals — emerged as the strongest predictor of consistent academic performance. These findings align with previous research that highlights the importance of learners' inner desire and satisfaction in sustaining long-term engagement [1][2]. In contrast, extrinsic motivators, while initially effective, showed limited power in maintaining learners' efforts over time. This supports the view that rewards or external pressures alone cannot ensure deep learning unless they are combined with personal meaning and internal goals. Furthermore, the emotional state of learners, including anxiety and fear of failure, was found to significantly affect their participation and willingness to communicate in English. This confirms earlier studies emphasizing the link between affective factors and

language competence [3][4]. The findings also underscore the role of the teacher in shaping a psychologically supportive environment. Students felt more motivated when teachers were empathetic, encouraging, and created a classroom culture where mistakes were seen as part of learning. Thus, emotional safety is not just beneficial but essential in foreign language education. Ultimately, the discussion points to the need for language instructors to adopt psychologically informed teaching methods. Incorporating motivation-building strategies and addressing learners' emotional needs can significantly enhance the effectiveness of English language instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study has emphasized the critical influence of psychological motivation on students' success in learning English as a foreign language. The findings reveal that intrinsic motivation — fueled by learners' interest, enjoyment, and sense of achievement — is a more sustainable and powerful driver of academic engagement than extrinsic incentives. Moreover, emotional well-being, including reduced anxiety and a supportive classroom environment, significantly contributes to learners' willingness to participate and communicate in the target language. These insights suggest that foreign language teachers should prioritize the psychological aspects of instruction alongside traditional linguistic components. Creating a safe, motivating, and emotionally encouraging learning space is essential for maximizing students' language acquisition outcomes. By understanding and addressing learners' internal motivations and emotional states, educators can foster deeper engagement and improve language competence in a lasting way. Future research could explore more culturally diverse student populations and integrate psychological interventions in language curricula to further validate and expand these findings.

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