

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTIVATION IN LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract. *Motivation is recognized as one of the most critical predictors of success in foreign language learning. This article reviews recent empirical studies (2022-2025) focusing on types of motivation, motivational strategies, and how motivation impacts learners' performance, persistence, and attitudes. Key findings show that intrinsic, integrative, and instrumental motivations each play significant roles; that demotivation is an under-studied but important factor; and that teachers' behavior, pedagogical methods, and learning environment strongly mediate motivation. Implications for teaching practice, curriculum design, and future research are discussed.*

Key words: *Motivation, focus, practice, acquisition, grammar, pronunciation, exposure, demotivation.*

Introduction

Learning a foreign language is often challenging; learners face difficulties in vocabulary acquisition, grammar, pronunciation, exposure, etc. Amid these challenges, motivation* acts as a driving force that helps learners persist, engage deeply, and overcome obstacles. Without adequate motivation, even well-designed curricula or excellent teaching may yield underwhelming results.

Recent research continues to confirm the centrality of motivation in foreign language learning, both in formal settings (universities, schools) and informal ones (self-study, online language learning). This paper synthesizes the most up-to-date findings.

Theoretical Background

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation: Intrinsic motivation involves doing something because it is inherently interesting or satisfying; extrinsic motivation involves doing something to obtain external rewards or avoid negative consequences.

Integrative vs. Instrumental Motivation: Integrative motivation refers to learning a language to integrate with a culture/community; instrumental motivation refers to practical benefits (job, exam success, travel).

Demotivation: The decline or weakening of motivation due to internal or external factors.

Motivational Strategies and Influencing Factors

Use of communicative tasks, teacher enthusiasm, relevance to students' lives, multimedia/audiovisual materials, learner autonomy, and social interaction have been shown to boost motivation.

Classroom environment, teacher-learner relationship, goal setting, positive reinforcement help sustain motivation.

Effects of Motivation on Outcomes

Motivation positively correlates with language achievement (vocabulary, speaking skills, reading comprehension) and persistence. E.g., in the study with Saudi students, those with higher motivation also reported better outcomes and persistence.

Demotivation (e.g. due to boring tasks, lack of progress, negative classroom atmosphere) undermines learning. Research in Uzbekistan shows that when students' expectations are not met, or teachers fail to adapt to learner needs, motivation drops.

Mechanisms by Which Motivation Affects Learning

Effort & Time Investment: Motivated learners are more likely to spend time, practice more, seek exposure.

Strategy Use: Motivated learners use more effective learning strategies (self-regulation, seeking feedback, using authentic materials).

Persistence & Resilience: They are more likely to persist in face of challenges (e.g. difficult grammar, pronunciation).

Attitude & Anxiety: Higher motivation correlates with positive attitudes and lower anxiety; negative motivation or demotivation may increase anxiety, reduce participation.

Implications for Teaching Practice

Teachers should incorporate motivational strategies explicitly: connecting lessons to students' goals, using communicative, interactive, and relevant materials.

Promote learner autonomy: allowing students to choose topics, projects, methods.

Provide regular feedback and celebrate small successes to maintain momentum.

Design tasks that are meaningful and relevant: for example, role-plays, projects, language use outside classroom.

Monitor demotivation: identify causes (boring tasks, overemphasis on error correction, mismatch of expectations) and address them.

Challenges and Future Research Directions

More longitudinal research to track how motivation evolves over time in learners, especially across transitions (e.g. from school to university).

Investigate motivation in non-Western contexts and among minority learners.

Study interactions between motivation and new technologies, e.g. gamification, augmented reality, online platforms.

Examine teacher motivation and how it influences learners.

Conclusion

Motivation is not merely a “nice-to-have” in foreign language learning but a fundamental component. It mediates how learners engage, how much effort they invest, how resistant they are to setbacks, and ultimately how successful they become. Educators and curriculum designers must treat motivation as dynamic and multifaceted: understanding its types, sources, and strategies to foster it is essential for effective foreign language acquisition.

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