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FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract: This empirical study investigates the key factors influencing English language learning motivation among university students within modern higher education contexts. Utilizing a comprehensive mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the research explores how intrinsic, extrinsic, and pedagogical elements shape student academic engagement. Grounded in Zoltán Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System and Self-Determination Theory, the findings indicate that instrumental motivators—such as career advancement, higher income potential, and international certification requirements—alongside the Ideal L2 Self, serve as the strongest drivers for adult learners. Furthermore, the pedagogical environment, teacher expertise, classroom interactivity, and the integration of digital tools significantly impact sustained learner motivation. Conversely, outdated curricula, mixed-ability groups, and language anxiety emerge as primary demotivating factors. Finally, the paper provides practical pedagogical recommendations, including the adoption of specialized English programs, modern technological resources, and interactive methodologies, designed to optimize instructional efficiency and foster long-term student success in higher education.
Keywords: motivation, EFL, higher education, L2 Motivational Self System, pedagogical factors.

Introduction. In the era of rapid globalization and technological advancement, English has firmly established itself as the primary vehicle for global communication, scientific research, engineering, and international business. Preparing competitive professionals who can operate within this global landscape imposes significant responsibilities on higher education institutions (HEIs). Consequently, developing students' academic and professional English proficiency has become a strategic priority in contemporary tertiary education worldwide. However, regardless of how advanced a curriculum or institution's infrastructure may be, the ultimate success of language acquisition relies heavily on student motivation. Motivation serves as the psychological engine that drives learners toward specific goals, sustains effort through cognitive challenges, and determines the depth of language processing over time. Unlike primary or secondary school pupils, university students are adult learners (andragogical cohort) with distinct career trajectories, personal ambitions, and defined academic expectations. Their motivation to learn English is multifaceted, shaped by a complex interplay of internal aspirations, socio-economic demands, and immediate classroom dynamics. The primary objective of this study is to systematically analyse the critical factors influencing English language learning motivation among university students, identify both positive motivators and demotivating variables, and offer actionable pedagogical recommendations to enhance instructional efficacy in higher education.

Literature review. Research into motivation in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has evolved across several distinct theoretical paradigms over the past several decades:2.1. Socio-Educational Model (Gardner & Lambert, 1972)Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert pioneered the study of language motivation by categorizing it into two fundamental constructs: Integrative Motivation: The learner's desire to identify with, interact with, or integrate into the target language community and its culture.

Instrumental Motivation: The pragmatic drive to acquire a language for practical gains, such as securing employment, obtaining higher salaries, passing standardized examinations, or meeting degree requirements.2.2. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)Self-Determination Theory (SDT) categorizes human motivation based on the degree of self-regulation involved: Intrinsic Motivation: Engaging in language learning for its inherent satisfaction, curiosity, personal enjoyment, and intellectual fulfillment. Extrinsic Motivation: Performing an activity to attain external rewards (e.g., grades, praise, professional status) or to avoid negative consequences.2.3. L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005)To reflect the realities of globalized English learning, Zoltán Dörnyei introduced the L2 Motivational Self System, which consists of three core components: Ideal L2 Self: The ideal vision of oneself as a fluent, effective, and successful speaker of the L2 in the future. Ought-to L2 Self: The attributes an individual believes they must possess to meet expectations, avoid sanctions, or satisfy societal/academic obligations.L2 Learning Experience: Executive motives related to the immediate learning environment (e.g., impact of the teacher, peer dynamics, syllabus design, classroom atmosphere).

Research methodology. This investigation adopted a Mixed-Methods Design to yield both statistically generalizable data and deeper qualitative insights: Quantitative Phase: A structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was administered to 350 university students across various disciplines and academic levels. Qualitative Phase: Semistructured interviews were conducted with 20 undergraduate/graduate students and 10 university EFL instructors to explore qualitative nuances behind the quantitative trends.

Results and discussions. The findings indicate that university students' motivation is governed by a combination of external pragmatic goals, self-identity aspirations, and classroom-based factors.

Distribution of Motivational Factors Among University Students

Motivational Category	Core Sub-Factors	Mean Score (Scale 1– 5)	Relative Percentage (%)
Instrumental (Extrinsic)	Career advancement, salary potential, international certificates (IELTS/CEFR)	**4.62**	**92.4%**
Motivational Category	**Core Sub-Factors**	**Mean Score (Scale 1– 5)**	**Relative Percentage (%)**

Ideal L2 Self (Personal)	Aspirations of global competence, studying abroad, personal identity	**4.38**	**87.6%**
Pedagogical Environment	Instructor expertise, interactive methods, positive atmosphere	**4.15**	**83.0%**
Integrative (Cultural)	Interest in Englishspeaking culture, literature, and media	**3.20**	**64.0%**
Ought-to L2 Self (Obligation)	Institutional requirements, parental expectations, exam compliance	**2.85**	**57.0%**

Key research finding. Among university students, Instrumental Motivation and the Ideal L2 Self serve as the dominant catalysts. Unlike younger learners, adult university students perceive language learning primarily as a strategic socioeconomic investment rather than merely a mandatory school subject.

Detailed Breakdown of Influential Factors.

1.Socio-Economic and Career Drivers (Instrumental Motivation)An overwhelming 92.4% of participants reported that career-oriented goals were their primary reason for studying English. Key drivers included: Securing high-paying positions within national and international organizations. Pursuing postgraduate studies abroad (e.g., via Erasmus+, Fulbright, or national scholarship programs).Fulfilling institutional benchmark requirements, such as obtaining a mandatory B2/C1 language certificate for graduation.

2.Pedagogical Dynamics and Instructor Influence The instructor remains a pivotal factor in shaping student motivation within the formal learning space: Instructor

Enthusiasm and Competence: Teacher passion directly correlates with student classroom engagement. Interactive Methodologies: Transitioning from traditional grammar-translation methods to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), TaskBased Learning (TBL), and gamified activities increased active participation by up to 40%. Low-Anxiety Environment: Establishing a supportive classroom where mistakes are normalized reduces affective filters and promotes speaking confidence. 3. Technology and Artificial Intelligence Integration. By 2026, the integration of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Claude, and Grammarly) and digital ecosystems significantly altered student motivation: AI-driven conversational partners and real-time pronunciation feedback enhanced student self-regulation and autonomous learning. Interactive multimedia platforms rendered language input more accessible and contextually rich.

3.Demotivating Factors in Tertiary Contexts. The study also revealed several demotivators that undermine learner persistence: Outdated Curricula: Overemphasis on abstract, non-contextualized grammar rules at the expense of communicative or professional skills. Mixed-Ability Classrooms: Significant variance in proficiency levels within the same group often leads to bored advanced students

and overwhelmed beginners. Foreign Language Anxiety: Fear of negative evaluation by peers or teachers during oral production.

Pedagogical recommendations. Based on the empirical findings, the following strategies are proposed to enhance student motivation and language acquisition efficiency in higher education: Implement Specialized ESP (English for Specific Purposes) Curricula: Shift focus from general English to field-specific programs (e.g., English for Engineering, Law, Medicine, or Computer Science) to directly align with students' instrumental goals. Promote Student-Centred and Task-Based Instruction: Shift the teacher's role from a sole authority to a facilitator through debate clubs, project-based learning, and interactive presentations. Utilize Formative Assessment and Constructive Feedback: Replace punitive grading systems with developmental feedback that acknowledges incremental progress and builds selfefficacy.

Leverage AI and Digital Ecosystems: Formally integrate digital tools and AI platforms into self-study routines to foster learner autonomy and interactive practice outside the classroom.

Conclusion. English language learning motivation among university students is a complex, dynamic construct shaped by both internal identity visions and external societal pressures. The findings of this study demonstrate that adult tertiary learners are overwhelmingly driven by instrumental factors and their Ideal L2 Self, viewing English proficiency as an essential tool for professional advancement and global mobility. Simultaneously, the pedagogical environment, instructor competence, and modern instructional methods play a critical role in sustaining this initial motivation over time. By updating academic curricula to reflect students' professional needs, lowering affective barriers, and integrating contemporary technological tools, higher education institutions can maximize learning outcomes and produce globally competitive graduates.

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