

The Role of Motivation in Second Language Learning Outcomes

Turdimatova Madinaxhan Ravshanbek qizi

EFL teacher, Fergana State University

Abdukahhorova Nigorakhan Sanjarali qizi

First year student, Fergana State University

nigoraabduqahhorova1@gmail.com

Abstract: *Motivation is widely recognized as one of the most important factors influencing second language acquisition (SLA). This paper examines the role of motivation in determining learners' success in acquiring a second language. It focuses on different types of motivation, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as instrumental and integrative orientations. The study is based on a mixed-method approach involving questionnaires and interviews conducted among university students. The findings reveal that learners with higher intrinsic and integrative motivation tend to achieve better language outcomes and demonstrate greater long-term engagement. The paper concludes that motivation is a dynamic and multifaceted construct that significantly shapes language learning processes and outcomes.*

Key words: *Motivation, Second Language Acquisition, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Integrative Motivation, Instrumental Motivation*

1. Introduction

Second language learning is a multifaceted process shaped by a range of cognitive, social, and emotional factors. Among these, motivation is often regarded as one of the most influential elements in determining how successfully a learner acquires a new language. Motivation not only initiates the learning process but also sustains the effort and persistence required to achieve proficiency over time. Learners who are highly motivated tend to engage more actively in classroom activities, practice the language beyond formal settings, and demonstrate greater resilience when facing difficulties.[1] Motivation is widely regarded as one of the most important variables in second language acquisition. It determines the learner's level of engagement, persistence, and overall achievement.

2. Materials and Method

Motivation in language learning is commonly understood through two main dimensions: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic/extrinsic motivation refers to whether the motivation is more inside a person or outside of him/her. Intrinsic motivation refers to the motivation which is originated inside a person.[2] Extrinsically motivated behaviours are carried out to get a reward from outside and beyond the self. Maslow believed that intrinsic motivation is noticeably superior to extrinsic factors such as academic requirements, career opportunities, or social expectations [3]. While both types of motivation can contribute to learning, their effects on long-term outcomes may differ significantly.

This study employs a mixed-method research design to investigate the role of motivation in second language learning outcomes. The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches allows for a more comprehensive understanding of learners' motivational orientations and their impact on language achievement. Such an approach is supported by Paul Pintrich and Dale Schunk emphasize that motivation should be examined through both individual psychological factors and contextual influences within the learning environment. [4]

The participants of the study consisted of 100 university students learning English as a foreign language. They were selected from various academic disciplines to ensure diversity in educational background and learning experiences. All participants had studied English for at least five years, which ensured that they had sufficient exposure to language learning processes and motivational factors.[5]

Data were collected using two main instruments: a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was designed to measure different types of motivation, including intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental, and integrative motivation. The design of the questionnaire was influenced by the theoretical framework proposed by Robert Gardner who conceptualizes motivation as a combination of effort, desire, and positive attitudes toward language learning. In addition, items related to integrative and instrumental motivation were adapted from the model introduced by Wallace Lambert and Gardner [6].

Furthermore, the study takes into account the dynamic nature of motivation as highlighted by Zoltán Dörnyei (2005), who argues that motivation changes over time and is influenced by both internal and external factors [7]. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 selected participants to explore changes in motivation, personal experiences, and attitudes toward language learning in greater depth.

The interviews also aimed to capture learners' behavioral engagement, which aligns with the perspective of Michael Crookes and Richard Schmidt view motivation as reflected in observable learner participation and effort. Additionally, the role of learner identity and willingness to communicate was considered based on the work of Peter MacIntyre and Richard Clément emphasizing the importance of self-confidence and social context in language learning.[8]

Data collection was conducted over a four-week period. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify patterns and relationships among different types of motivation. Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring themes related to motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes.[9]

The study also considers the role of goal-setting and external influences in shaping motivation, as suggested by John Keller who highlights the importance of attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction in sustaining learners' motivation [10]

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several significant patterns regarding the role of motivation in second language learning outcomes. First, the analysis of questionnaire data indicates that students with high levels of intrinsic motivation demonstrated greater engagement in learning activities and achieved higher academic performance. These learners showed a strong interest in language learning for its own sake, which supports the claims of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan argue that intrinsic motivation leads to deeper and more sustainable learning outcomes [11].

Second, extrinsic motivation was found to be primarily associated with short-term achievements. Students who were motivated by external rewards such as grades or future employment opportunities tended to focus on immediate goals rather than long-term language development. This finding aligns with the view of John Keller, who emphasizes that external factors can influence effort but may not ensure long-term engagement.

Third, the results show a strong correlation between integrative motivation and long-term language proficiency. Students who expressed a desire to interact with members of the target language community and understand its culture demonstrated higher levels of communicative competence. This finding strongly supports the model proposed by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert identified

integrative motivation as a key factor in successful language learning.[12]

In contrast, instrumental motivation was linked to practical and goal-oriented purposes, such as passing exams or obtaining a job. While it contributed to learners' persistence, its impact on deep language acquisition was less significant compared to integrative motivation.

Moreover, the results reveal that most learners possess a combination of motivational types rather than a single dominant orientation. This supports the perspective of Michael Crookes and Richard Schmidt argue that motivation is reflected in learners' active participation and cannot be reduced to a single factor.[13]

Finally, qualitative data from interviews indicate that learners' self-confidence and identity play an important role in shaping their motivation. In line with Peter MacIntyre and Richard Clément, students who perceived themselves as capable language users were more willing to communicate and engage in learning activities.

The results of this study confirm that motivation is a central factor in second language acquisition and significantly influences learning outcomes. Consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Robert Gardner, learners who exhibit strong motivation tend to invest more effort and achieve better results. This finding reinforces the idea that motivation is not only a supporting factor but a driving force in language learning.

One of the most important findings of this study is the strong impact of intrinsic motivation. Students who were internally motivated demonstrated higher levels of engagement, autonomy, and persistence. This result aligns with the self-determination theory developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, which emphasizes the importance of internal drives in achieving meaningful and long-lasting learning outcomes.[14]

Furthermore, the study supports the dynamic model of motivation proposed by Zoltán Dörnyei, which suggests that motivation changes over time and is influenced by various internal and external factors. The interview data revealed that students' motivation evolved as they gained more experience and confidence in using the language.

Another key finding is the significant role of integrative motivation in promoting long-term language success. Learners who were interested in the culture and community of the target language demonstrated greater communicative competence and cultural awareness. This supports the argument of Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert that integrative orientation is essential for successful language acquisition.

At the same time, the role of extrinsic and instrumental motivation should not be underestimated. As suggested by John Keller, external rewards and clear goals can help sustain learners' effort, especially in the early stages of learning. Therefore, an effective language learning environment should incorporate both internal and external motivational strategies.

The findings also highlight the importance of learner identity and social context. In line with Peter Mac Intyre and Richard Clément, students who had higher self-confidence and a stronger sense of identity as language learners were more likely to succeed. This suggests that motivation is closely linked to emotional and social factors.

Finally, the study confirms the perspective of Paul Pintrich and Dale Schunk, who emphasize the role of the learning environment in shaping motivation. Teachers can play a crucial role by creating supportive, engaging, and meaningful learning experiences.[15]

4. Conclusion

This study has shown that motivation plays a crucial and decisive role in second language learning outcomes. It is not only an additional factor but a driving force that influences learners' effort, persistence, and overall success in language acquisition. The findings indicate that intrinsic and

integrative motivation are more strongly associated with long-term achievement and communicative competence, while extrinsic and instrumental motivation are more effective for short-term academic goals. The study also confirms that motivation is a dynamic and changing process influenced by internal attitudes, external conditions, and learning experiences. Therefore, learners often demonstrate a combination of different motivational types rather than relying on a single orientation.

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