



THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT: *This article explores the role of motivation in learning English at the secondary school level. Based on academic research and personal observations, it argues that motivation is one of the most significant factors influencing students' success in English language acquisition. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play unique roles, and teachers, classroom climate, and learning strategies also contribute. Personal experiences and reflections are included to show how motivation affects actual learning outcomes and student engagement.*

KEYWORDS: *motivation, English language learning, secondary school, intrinsic, extrinsic, student engagement*

The Role of Motivation in Learning English at the Secondary Level

Motivation is one of the most influential factors in determining success in second language acquisition. In secondary schools, where English is often taught as a foreign language, students face multiple challenges: grammar complexity, pronunciation, vocabulary retention, and pressure to perform well on exams. However, research consistently shows that students who are motivated—whether



by personal interest or external rewards—are more likely to succeed (Dörnyei, 2001). There are two main types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal desire to learn for one's own satisfaction, interest, or curiosity. Extrinsic motivation involves external rewards such as grades, recognition, or job opportunities (Ryan & Deci, 2000). At the secondary level, both types are present. For example, a student may study English because they love reading English novels (intrinsic), or because they want to get a high score on a university entrance exam (extrinsic). From my personal experience, intrinsic motivation had a much greater effect on my English learning. While I initially studied English to pass exams, I started making real progress only when I began enjoying the language. Listening to English music, watching movies, and writing messages in English gave me a sense of joy and purpose that no exam could provide. It made learning feel natural and enjoyable, not forced. Teachers play a critical role in fostering motivation. According to Gardner (1985), a supportive and enthusiastic teacher can significantly enhance a student's motivation by creating an engaging and inclusive environment. In my school, I had both types of teachers—some who inspired us through creativity and kindness, and others who only followed the textbook strictly. I noticed that students were more willing to participate and practice English in classes where the teacher was encouraging and used interactive methods.

In addition, classroom environment greatly affects motivation. When students feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment, their willingness to try grows. Peer support is also essential. I was lucky to have classmates who enjoyed practicing English with me, and our teamwork motivated me to continue learning even when I faced difficulties. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social interaction in learning, which emphasizes the importance of learning through collaboration and communication. Another important factor is how English is taught. Traditional methods such as memorizing rules or translating texts often



demotivate students. More student-centered activities like debates, role plays, and games make learning more dynamic and meaningful. When I prepared a group project about global environmental problems in English, I was highly motivated to research and present it well—not because it was an assignment, but because I cared about the topic. The motivation came from a sense of ownership and relevance.

While extrinsic motivation (e.g., test scores, scholarships) can push students in the short term, it is intrinsic motivation that sustains long-term learning. Students who find personal meaning in English are more likely to continue practicing it outside of school. They explore online resources, engage with native content, and develop language skills beyond the textbook. That was exactly my case. Once I found pleasure in reading English articles about things I loved—like music, culture, or science—I started learning more efficiently than ever before.

In conclusion, motivation is not just a factor—it is the driving force behind successful English learning at the secondary level. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play important roles, but long-term mastery of the language requires genuine interest, confidence, and enjoyment. Teachers, classmates, classroom environment, and teaching methods all contribute to developing this motivation. Based on research and my personal experience, I strongly believe that without motivation, no language program can be truly effective.

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