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Motivation as a Key Factor to Facilitate the Achievement of Meaningful Learning when Teaching
English as a Foreign Language in Higher Education

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Motivation as a Key Factor to Facilitate the Achievement of Meaningful Learning when Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Higher Education

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Abstract

Motivation is very important for effective learning, especially when teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in higher education. It helps students engage with the material, participate actively, and overcome challenges. On the other hand, teachers who are motivated can inspire learners by making lessons interesting and relevant to their lives and goals, creating positive learning environments and using teaching methods that meet their needs. Innovative teaching practices also play a big role in keeping students motivated. When instructors are passionate about their work, they are more likely to use creative and effective teaching methods. Consequently, that attitude encourages pupils to participate more, think critically, and develop skills for lifelong learning. Working together and using creative teaching methods further enhance motivation by meeting the needs of different learning styles. Focusing on motivation in EFL education helps students gain the skills and confidence they need for academic and professional success.

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Keywords: academic success, collaborative learning, creativity, innovative teaching, lifelong learning, motivation.

Resumen

La motivación es muy importante para un aprendizaje efectivo, especialmente cuando se enseña inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE) en la educación superior. Ayuda a los estudiantes a involucrarse con el material, participar activamente y superar desafíos. Por otro lado, los profesores motivados pueden inspirar a los alumnos haciendo que las lecciones sean interesantes y relevantes para sus vidas y objetivos, creando entornos de aprendizaje positivos y utilizando métodos de enseñanza que satisfagan sus necesidades. Las prácticas de enseñanza innovadoras también juegan un papel importante en mantener motivados a los estudiantes. Cuando los instructores son apasionados por su trabajo, es más probable que utilicen métodos de enseñanza creativos y efectivos. Consecuentemente, esa actitud fomenta que los alumnos participen más, piensen críticamente y desarrollen habilidades para el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida. Trabajar juntos y utilizar métodos de enseñanza creativos mejora aún más la motivación al satisfacer las necesidades de diferentes estilos de aprendizaje. Enfocarse en la motivación en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera ayuda a los estudiantes a adquirir las habilidades y la confianza que necesitan para el éxito académico y profesional.

Palabras clave: aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida, aprendizaje colaborativo, creatividad, enseñanza innovadora, éxito académico, motivación.

Introduction

Motivation plays an essential role to facilitate the achievement of meaningful learning when teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in higher education. It can act as a driving force for students to engage with the material, participate actively in the learning process, and persist in overcoming challenges. A motivated professor can inspire students by making the content relevant, interesting, and applicable to their lives and future goals. He or she can create a positive learning environment that fosters enthusiasm and curiosity. Additionally, a professor who understands the individual needs and interests of students can tailor his or her teaching methods to enhance motivation.

There is a need to cultivate and support motivation among students in higher education to achieve their learning outcomes and succeed in their studies. Regarding this, Acosta and Ramirez (2021) indicated that motivation influences academic success in EFL learners, emphasizing the importance of nurturing this aspect among EFL pupils in higher education to enhance learning and academic performance. It has been observed that if learners have intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, they tend to engage more actively in language learning activities. Related to this aspect, Delgado and Herrera (2021) highlighted the crucial role of motivation in predicting English proficiency among students; this indicates that motivation boosts students' confidence in their language abilities. Furthermore, Lee (2020) also stipulated that factors such as aptitude, motivation, strategy use, language experience, and gender influence the vocabulary development of EFL learners. In summary, motivating students in higher education is crucial for their success and meaningful learning experiences.

Teachers play a pivotal role in guiding learners everyday to understand their motivation for learning and maintain a positive attitude towards their educational pursuits. Ortega-Auquilla et al. (2020) mentioned that professors should help students figure out why they want to learn and stay positive about it. That is so because what they really understand and remember is

what matters to them and what they find interesting or want for themselves. Instructors can empower students to overcome challenges, for instance, by providing clear explanations, offering constructive feedback, or simply considering diverse learning needs; in this sense, they are showing encouraging instructional methods. Trigueros et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of supportive teaching practices for enhancing learning outcomes, especially in university-level English as a Foreign Language courses.

Teachers always have the chance to inspire and motivate students in the classroom. They show how good they are by supporting, encouraging, and motivating learners. Calero (2021) suggested that teachers should act as cheerleaders; this involves reflecting on the meaning of the learning process and incorporating innovative teaching methods. The goal is to support students in their professional and personal growth. It is important to spend time thinking about why they are learning something and why it is relevant for them. They should also be willing to try out new and creative ways of teaching to make learning more interesting and effective for their pupils. Daniels et al. (2018) also highlighted the importance of instructor enthusiasm, clear communication, and peer collaboration in fostering motivation.

It is visible that students like to experiment with tools and materials to solve problems and make projects, which helps them develop skills like creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork. Being creative and including innovative teaching methods is crucial for learners to improve constantly. Quintana-Ordorika et al. (2024) investigated the impact of introducing the Maker pedagogical approach in teacher training on teachers' acceptance and motivation. They indicated that incorporating Maker pedagogy can increase educators' engagement and enthusiasm, providing valuable insights into utilizing innovative methods to enhance motivation and improve teaching practices. The significance of having intrinsic motivation as instructors can bring a great deal of benefits. Mentiş and Kutluer (2023) delved into the impact of motivation to teach on educators' resilience and job satisfaction, utilizing the self-determination

theory. They centered on the significance of intrinsic motivation among educators in fostering meaningful learning outcomes for students:

The level of autonomy is effective over positive emotions. If we aim to have better education and teachers who inspire students with positive energy, it may be easier to achieve this with teachers who have a higher level of autonomy. (Mentiş & Kutluer, 2023, p. 1)

Burnout levels and attitudes toward teaching impact the motivation of prospective teachers. Dikmen et al. (2023) found that motivation to teach acts as a mediator between burnout and attitudes toward teaching, shaping how future teachers view their profession and cope with fatigue. When prospective teachers feel engaged and passionate about teaching, they are more likely to maintain positive attitudes, even in the face of burnout. This motivation prepares them to tackle challenges and employ effective teaching methods to facilitate meaningful learning.

Motivation is crucial in higher education because it directly impacts students' academic success and overall learning outcomes. In this setting, students are expected to take more responsibility for their learning, engage in critical thinking, and apply concepts independently. My teaching experience in higher education has shown that motivated students tend to be more proactive, engaged, and willing to participate in class discussions. While university students are adults, motivation remains important as it empowers them to set and pursue their academic and career aspirations, develop critical skills, and adapt to the demands of higher education. Ultimately, motivated university students are better positioned to succeed academically and thrive in their personal and professional lives.

The fundamental reason for crafting this essay is to explore how motivation helps students learn English better in college. It will be seen how motivated teachers make lessons interesting and relevant to students' lives, creating a positive environment where learners are eager to learn. When they feel encouraged, they try harder and understand more. Matching

lessons with students' goals also inspires them to succeed. Overall, motivation plays a big role in making learning English enjoyable and successful in higher education.

Motivation is a driving force behind successful language learning at the university level. It encourages students to participate actively, persist through challenges, and achieve proficiency in a foreign language. This essay examines how motivation influences various aspects of language learning, including academic performance, classroom dynamics, teaching methods, and the enthusiasm of both educators and learners. By exploring each of these areas, we may gain insight into the significant impact motivation has on shaping the language learning experience for university students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Motivation and Academic Success in EFL Learners

Motivation acts as a potent catalyst for academic success in EFL learners, driving engagement, perseverance, and achievement. Its role in enhancing learning and facilitating language proficiency development is fundamental. Focusing on motivation as a primary factor to make learners succeed when taking an English course should be mandatory. In some cases, this element has been left aside, making pupils responsible to memorize something to learn, so they tend to get bored and lose interest, and at the end, the consequences come when observing the final grades or simply the students' mood in classes. Motivation needs to be studied globally if better results want to be visualized. Acosta and Ramirez (2021) mentioned that "students' emotions play an important role in academic performance; it is suggested to establish motivators that help students increase their positive emotions" (p. 9).

Furthermore, motivation encourages students to actively engage with course content and participate in language practice, leading to improved academic success. When students are

engaged, they invest more time and effort, which, in turn, fosters greater perseverance and resilience in tackling language learning obstacles. Delgado and Herrera (2021) stated that “successful learning requires motivated students, and as mentioned by the social cognitive theory, motivation is one of several factors that contribute to developing a proper learning strategy” (p. 97). When learners have confidence in their abilities, set achievable goals, and receive support from their surroundings, they are better equipped to navigate their learning journey successfully. Therefore, motivation is essential to create an environment conducive to academic achievement in higher education.

Impact of Teaching Practices on Motivation

The way teachers teach greatly affects how motivated students feel. Teachers are key to keeping students interested in learning. When they use supportive methods, such as explaining things clearly and giving helpful feedback, this boosts motivation, but if teachers just talk without giving students a chance to practice what they have learned, classes become boring. It is frustrating for learners when they cannot use what they have learned. Instead, teachers should aim to inspire and connect with students personally. Being understanding and approachable helps students feel comfortable asking questions and learning better. Trigueros et al. (2019) mentioned that “the teacher should be accessible, not distant or intimidating, and should understand students’ mistakes and doubts; likewise, the teacher should try to connect and interact with students on a more personal level” (p. 8).

In higher education, using fun and interactive ways to teach languages is significant. It keeps pupils interested and engaged in learning. These methods make students learn better because they enjoy the process. Also, in today’s world, knowing multiple languages is very useful for both studying and working, so, by using creative teaching methods, teachers not only

make learning languages more enjoyable but also help students prepare for the globalized job market. Teachers must grasp the subjects that capture students' interest, discern their needs, and anticipate their expectations to effectively motivate them to engage in learning a foreign language. It is essential for educators to align their teaching methods with the interests and requirements of their students, ensuring that lessons are relevant and engaging. By doing so, teachers can foster a sense of relevance and purpose in language learning, encouraging students to invest their time and effort into mastering the language (Calero, 2021).

Intrinsic Motivation among Educators

The intrinsic motivation of educators is a fundamental factor in cultivating a motivational learning environment that inspires and empowers students on their language learning journey. In university settings, the intrinsic motivation of a teacher influences the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning experience. When professors are intrinsically motivated, driven by a genuine passion for teaching and a personal interest in the subject matter, it significantly enhances the quality of instruction. Moriña (2019) mentioned that “emotions are a key part of learning. Faculty members should therefore take them into account and strive to emotionally connect to students” (p. 3).

Furthermore, teachers' enthusiasm and energy in the classroom can inspire students, making the process of learning English more enjoyable and stimulating. Intrinsically motivated professors are more likely to adopt innovative teaching methods and tailor their lessons to students' interests and needs, creating a more engaging and relevant learning environment. Laura et al. (2021) mentioned that “learning should be innovated so that students can use the English language at different moments of their lives, while the practice is related to the competencies proposed by the current educational curriculum” (p. 142). Teachers' resilience

and persistence in overcoming challenges further contribute to a positive learning atmosphere, fostering increased student motivation and language proficiency.

When teachers are personally fulfilled, motivated, and emotionally well, they are better equipped to create a positive and supportive learning environment for their students. Mentiş and Kutluer (2023) said that “the well-being of teachers implies the well-being of their students” (p. 8). This indicates that motivated teachers tend to approach their work with enthusiasm, energy, and a sense of purpose, which can inspire and encourage students to engage more actively in their learning. Conversely, when teachers are experiencing burnout, stress, or disengagement, it can negatively impact their ability to effectively support and motivate their students.

Dikmen et al. (2023) found that when teachers are motivated by their passion for teaching, they can create a better learning environment. Their enthusiasm has an impact on students, making them more interested to learn. When instructors are inspired, they are less likely to feel burnt out, which makes them more positive about their profession. This shows that fostering motivation among teachers not only benefits them but also improves the quality of education for students.

Classroom Dynamics: Fostering Motivation through Collaboration

Collaborative learning environments play a crucial role in nurturing student motivation in EFL classrooms. By promoting active participation, peer interaction, and cooperative learning activities, educators can create a dynamic classroom atmosphere that fosters enthusiasm and engagement among learners. There is a positive impact of collaborative learning on student motivation and overall language acquisition. These activities foster a sense of engagement over learning and provide invaluable opportunities for students to practice and reinforce language

skills. Trigueros et al. (2019) mentioned that positive emotions are a good indicator of academic motivation, effective learning methods, and academic success. In summary, fostering collaborative learning environments in EFL classrooms not only enhances student motivation but also contributes positively to overall language acquisition, facilitating meaningful engagement and academic success.

By actively participating in discussions, problem-solving, and peer interactions, students are motivated to engage more deeply with the material and are better able to internalize language concepts. It is important for students to be exposed to authentic language use and diverse perspectives. Therefore, integrating collaborative learning strategies into university language courses is essential for creating dynamic and effective learning environments that promote student engagement, motivation, and language proficiency.

Furthermore, Calero (2021) supported the incorporation of creative teaching methods to maintain student engagement, stressing the significance of lively and participatory techniques in fostering mutual assistance among peers and encouraging collaborative learning encounters. By encouraging these classroom dynamics, motivation not only enriches the learning journey but also enriches a great atmosphere among students, strengthening their dedication to mastering the language. This highlights the crucial role of creative teaching methods in fostering a collaborative and engaging learning atmosphere, where students are encouraged to actively engage with the material and support each other in their language learning journey.

Innovative Teaching Methods: Igniting Motivation through Creativity

Innovation in teaching methods is vital for sustaining student motivation. Diverse learning styles are common among university students, and innovative teaching can better

accommodate these preferences. Educators need to bring in fresh methods to help learners gain lifelong learning abilities, aiding this in both professional and personal aspects of life (Calero, 2021). By introducing dynamic approaches, instructors keep classes engaging, capturing students' interest and encouraging active participation. Additionally, in the university setting, where students are more independent, innovative strategies empower them to take ownership of their education, fostering intrinsic motivation. Interactive and collaborative activities in innovative methodologies enhance motivation and promote peer-to-peer learning and support, fostering a sense of community among students. Overall, innovation in teaching methodologies is essential for sustaining student motivation in university EFL education, catering to diverse needs, empowering students, and creating a supportive learning environment.

Quintana-Ordorika et al. (2024) said that their findings underlined “the positive impact of maker-based learning methods and suggest that greater motivation correlates with the positive attitudes towards integrating this pedagogy in the future” (para 1). The makerspace concept provides a collaborative physical environment where individuals share knowledge, ideas, and engage in problem-solving (Gantert et al, 2022). Quintana-Ordorika et al. (2024) also stated that “the constructionist approach to learning is one of the most common features of maker education, where designing, building, tinkering, and inventing are ways of knowing and learning rather than ways of transmitting knowledge” (para 13).

By incorporating maker-based learning methods into the curriculum, learners can be provided with opportunities to actively engage with the material. This hands-on approach encourages students to explore their creativity and problem-solving skills, leading to deeper understanding and retention of language concepts. Moreover, embracing creativity and experimentation in the teaching approach empowers educators to create dynamic and interactive learning environments where students feel inspired to explore and express

themselves. Through this process, students not only achieve meaningful learning outcomes but also develop critical thinking and communication skills essential for success in their academic and professional initiatives.

Cultivating Intrinsic Motivation: Empowering Students for Lifelong Learning

Fostering students' intrinsic motivation is crucial for their language learning journey. When students feel a sense of independence, mastery, and purpose in their learning, they are more likely to stay engaged and dedicated to reaching their language goals:

It can be stated that what makes self-determination significant for education is the belief that knowledge and values that students learn by choice are likely to show more continuity after school and throughout life, which will contribute to students' well-being. (Mentiş & Kutluer, 2023, p. 1)

When learners choose what to learn, that tends to stick with them longer, even after school. This not only helps them succeed academically but also boosts their overall well-being, so by encouraging pupils to take charge of their learning and find meaning in it, educators set them up for long-term success in language acquisition and beyond.

In university English classes, fostering intrinsic motivation is key for lifelong learning. Giving students autonomy, promoting mastery, and showing the purpose of English learning keep them engaged. Creating interactive environments and encouraging collaboration help students support each other and celebrate progress. Providing real-life contexts for learning reinforces the importance of English skills beyond the classroom. By integrating these strategies, educators can empower students for lifelong success in English language learning.

In short, motivation plays a vital role in successful language learning at the college level. When both students and educators are motivated, they establish a setting where everyone flourishes. By recognizing the significance of motivation, educators can ignite students' enthusiasm, empowering them to master English confidently. This approach not only enhances academic performance but also fosters personal development, enabling students to realize their capabilities and excel in various aspects of their lives.

Conclusions

Motivation is crucial for meaningful learning in higher education, particularly in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It drives engagement, perseverance, and academic success among learners. Teachers play an important role by using supportive practices and innovative methods that inspire students and create a positive learning environment.

Intrinsic motivation among educators enhances the quality of instruction and encourages student engagement. When educators feel passionate about what they do, they innovate more by using diverse teaching methods to meet the student needs, creating dynamic classrooms where learning is enjoyable and stimulating. This motivation inspires active student participation in discussions, collaborative activities, and language practice, promoting critical thinking and lifelong learning skills.

Collaborative learning and creative teaching methods boost motivation by adapting to various learning styles and encouraging students to be active in their education. Emphasizing motivation in EFL education helps learners gain the skills and confidence they need for academic and professional success. Incorporating motivational strategies is key to creating an energetic and supportive learning atmosphere in higher education.

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DECLARACIÓN JURADA

Yo, Karla Andrea Cantillano Rodríguez, cédula de identidad 503290016, estudiante de la Universidad Nacional, declaro bajo fe de juramento y consciente de la responsabilidades penales de este acto, que soy autor intelectual del Trabajo Final de Graduación Titulado "Motivation as a Key Factor to Facilitate the Achievement of Meaningful Learning when Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Higher Education", para optar por el grado de Maestría en Educación con énfasis en el Aprendizaje del Inglés.



Heredia, a los 20 días del mes de agosto del año 2024.

Refrendo

Los abajo firmantes avalamos el Trabajo de Graduación de la estudiante Karla Cantillano Rodríguez, cédula 503290016, que lleva como título **Motivation as a Key Factor to Facilitate the Achievement of Meaningful Learning when Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Higher Education**, dado que cumple con las disposiciones vigentes y la calidad académica requerida por el posgrado.

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Juan Pablo Zúñiga Vargas
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