

CRACKING THE CODE OF ENGLISH LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF MOTIVATION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LAKKI MARWAT

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the motives that create and enhance undergraduate students' interest in learning English at the University of Lakki Marwat. Employing a quantitative research design, the data was collected from 90 male and female students from the Departments of Mathematics, Chemistry, and English structured questionnaire. A stratified random sampling technique has ensured the equal representation of all kinds of students. A questionnaire with 13 statements was administered among the students. The data was analyzed through SPPSS. The study some essential factors that enhance students' interest in learning English, such as teacher support and value, personal goal-setting, flexible teaching strategies, enthusiastic teachers, teacher professional development, comfortable classroom environment, encouragement to ask questions, student-centered teaching, positive instructor feedback, culturally relevant examples, use of technology, authentic and relevant content, and communication with teachers and peers. The study concluded that blending teacher-driven initiatives, supportive environments, and effective classroom techniques improves students' interest and motivation to learn English. It is recommended that student-centered approaches, technology integration, and teacher professional development be priorities for institutions and educators to construct motivating and dynamic English learning environments.

Keywords: Students' Interest, English learning, Motivation, Teacher-driven Initiatives, Supportive Environments, Effective classroom Techniques

INTRODUCTION

English proficiency is an indispensable tool that individuals require to navigate the world effectively. As a global lingua franca, English is a bridge that opens up cross-cultural communication while exposing its users to a diverse world teeming with copious information and numerous opportunities (Crystal, 2003). Understanding the myriad factors that make students use English has proven particularly interesting for research and inquiry, especially in contexts where the native language is not English.

Motivation is one of the critical and central factors in the process of second language acquisition. It affects learners' levels of involvement and perseverance, leading to their success in that endeavor (Gardner, 1985). Dörnyei (2001) also emphasizes the motivational role by saying that even people with remarkable and exceptional abilities will not make it if they do not have sufficient motivation. Thus, to increase student outcomes and achieve tremendous success in language acquisition, educators must find the



best motivational strategies appropriate for application within the language classroom.

Different factors that influence motivation have been identified in the literature on education. methodologies and management are the backbone of an encouraging learning environment, leading to engagement and enthusiasm on the part of the students (Richards Rodgers, 2001). Additionally, culturally responsive teaching—a process where the students' cultural backgrounds are acknowledged and, with careful integration, into the whole learning process—has been observed to foster engagement and promote academic success among ethnically diverse students (Gay, 2010). Technology in language teaching exposes a broad spectrum of opportunities innovative that significantly increase the learners' engagement and motivation. It is very effective as this transforms the learning process into a more interactive and studentfriendly experience, providing more tools to make their educational journey dynamic and fun (Stockwell, 2007).

Still, despite such valuable insights about the advantages of integration, there does exist an urgent need for research tailored to specific contexts. Such research should involve studying how these motivational factors play out in various educational settings that can so significantly differ from one another. The University of Lakki Marwat, with its unique cultural background and academic environment, presents an excellent opportunity to look deeper and study the complexities within the undergraduate student population.

Therefore, the more extensive goal of this research effort is to explore in detail and understand what motivating factors undergraduate students of the University of Lakki Marwat perceive as necessary for driving their eagerness and desire to learn the English language. The following questions have been formulated to achieve this goal.

- i. What do undergraduate students perceive as the key elements that enhance their motivation to learn English at the University of Lakki Marwat?
- ii. How do classroom strategies, technology, and supportive environments contribute to undergraduate students' interest in learning English?

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Prnawengtias (2022) stated that English is

acknowledged as a global lingua franca, and proficiency in this language is crucial for augmenting the competitive advantage of every graduate. Consequently, English has been established as a compulsory component of the educational curriculum in Indonesia. Providing English language courses is an effective means to meet the academic demands that enable students to attain proficiency in English as an international language. In light of the heightened levels of competition, in conjunction with requirements of the contemporary labor market, globalization, and competitive pressures, proficiency in English is indisputably essential.

Guo and Xinbo (2024) identify four main motivational factors for third-year English majors: intrinsic interests, professional development, experiential context, and societal responsibilities, with intrinsic interests being the most important. Cultural engagement, career planning, prior education, family expectations, and sociocultural factors influence motivation. To address these, English instructors should tailor teaching methods to students' needs, focusing individual passions and cross-cultural Teachers with communication. international experience can enhance students' cultural awareness. For career-focused students, curricula should include career planning, research skills, and industry insights. Universities can boost motivation with research opportunities, internships, and career seminars. According to Mat and Yunus (2014), A positive attitude toward English inspires students to engage in language acquisition inside and outside the classroom. Motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, is critical for successful language learning. All stakeholders must support students' efforts, emphasizing that mastering the language requires dedication alongside the right mindset and motivation. For educators, teaching English should go beyond meeting curricular goals, incorporating meaningful experiences authentic language exposure to enhance learning. A positive attitude, intrinsic motivation, and persistent effort are essential for successful language learners.

The study by Yang (2024) explored current college English instruction methods and identified effective strategies to boost student motivation and learning outcomes. Key techniques include fostering positive teacher-student relationships,



employing diverse teaching methods, creating engaging classroom environments, providing constructive feedback, and utilizing multimedia tools. The findings reveal that students are motivated by integrative and instrumental factors, with Indonesian undergraduates displaying strong instrumental motivation, particularly achieving long-term career goals. University English teachers should design resources and strategies that support both types of motivation, focusing on enhancing students' oral and written communication skills for everyday and academic contexts to aid their professional and linguistic development. Djafar (2021) emphasizes the role of internal and external stimuli in motivating students to learn a foreign language. Educators must use diverse teaching methods to address varying student motivation and interest in learning English. Effective management of learning patterns enhances students' motivation and awareness of English's importance, shaped by the methods and strategies used. Classroom management and varied techniques, including teacher professionalism, rewarding students, and fostering communication, can enhance students' understanding of English's significance and improve their engagement in learning. Lashari and Mustafa et al. (2018) highlight that intrinsic, extrinsic, and attitudinal factors shape students' motivation to learn a target language. Intrinsically, students are motivated by a personal drive to master the language, enhancing their identity as educated individuals. Extrinsic motivators include the desire for better job opportunities and quality of life, particularly for rural students, with parental encouragement, also playing a key role. Educators influence motivation through effective teaching and positive attitudes. Ultimately, students value the global significance of the language and believe proficiency improves their educational and social identity. According to Ekiz and Kulmetov (2016), several key behaviors and factors significantly influence learners' motivation. Family support plays a vital role, as students are more motivated when parents emphasize the lifelong value of learning English and provide material and moral support. Teacher attitudes also matter greatly, with nearly 90% of students reporting increased motivation when teachers set clear learning objectives, explain activity purposes, and maintain a friendly

demeanor in class. Peer collaboration boosts

motivation during in-class activities, while poor classroom conditions, such as overcrowding, noise, and heating issues, negatively affect it. Regular class attendance is essential for sustaining high motivation levels.

According to Saripah and Syukri (2017), short stories can motivate children to learn English. Students can enjoy reading short stories in a classroom setting. The teacher should consider the pupils' level when selecting the story. It is crucial for lowering stress. The kids must also be familiar with the chosen story. It makes it possible for the pupils to comprehend the narrative more quickly. The results indicate that Using short stories to teach English to students who have a limited vocabulary can be an alternative to increasing students' motivation. Students respond well when short stories appropriate for their English language competence level are used. Summarise it but without losing basic meaning.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach to determine what motivates undergraduate students to learn English. The study uses numerical data to measure how these strategies work, elaborates on students' perceptions, and shares their experience in learning English.

2.2. Participants

The participants of this research are 90 male and female students studying in different departments at the University of Lakki Marwat. The researcher randomly selected the required number of students from the following three departments: English, Chemistry, and Mathematics. Data collection has been done through Stratified Random Sampling. From each department, 30 students were randomly selected, and both males and females participated equally.

2.3. Data Collection Instruments

Data was obtained by administering a structured questionnaire consisting of 13 items. The design of this questionnaire is intended to ascertain what the students think are strategies and activities that most inspire their interest in learning the English language. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.



3. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the results and findings of the study, which aimed to explore what drives undergraduate students' motivation to learn English at the University of Lakki Marwat. The data was collected using structured a questionnaire administered to 6th and 8thsemester students. A random sampling technique was employed to gather responses from male and female students across the English, Chemistry, and Mathematics departments at the University of Lakki Marwat. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS software, applying descriptive statistical methods. Frequency and percentage tables were generated for each questionnaire item to determine the key aspects students perceive as enhancing their motivation and interest in learning English.

This section presents the key factors that enhance the motivation and interest of undergraduate students in learning English.

3.1. Communication with teachers and peers

Regular communication in English is a foundational pillar in language acquisition, essential for improving fluency and mastering the language. At ULM, students reported that consistent English interaction with teachers and peers facilitates ongoing practice in real-world contexts. This regular engagement enhances their motivation, promotes proficiency, and helps internalize the structure and practical usage of the language. Such practice builds confidence and fosters a deeper connection with the language, making learning more meaningful and effective.

Table 1. Regular communication in English with my teachers and classmates promotes my ability to learn the language more efficiently.

,	, ,	3	,		Cumulative
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Percent
	strongly agree	27	29.3	30.0	30.0
	agree	59	64.1	65.6	95.6
	neutral	3	3.3	3.3	98.9
	disagree	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

It was considered one effective strategy for learning English as most students, about 95.6%, agreed with it, as shown in the above table. However, 3.3% are neutral, and 1.1% disagree with this statement.

3.2. Authentic and Relevant Content Offering authentic and relevant content tailored to students' needs is an impactful strategy that enhances their learning experience, supports diverse learning styles, and strengthens their interest in mastering English. Students in the study noted that this approach makes learning English more meaningful and relatable, improving retention while steering away from outdated topics that fail to resonate with their interests. Additionally, it fosters critical thinking, fluency, and versatility in language use, equipping students with practical skills for real-world applications.

Table 2. Authentic and relevant content that aligns with my needs strengthens my motivation and engagement in learning English.

					Cumulative
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	strongly agree	41	44.6	45.6	45.6
	agree	47	51.1	52.2	97.8
	neutral	2	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

The majority of 97.8% of students strongly agree, 45.6% agree, 52.2% support this strategy, and only 2.2% do not respond to the statement.

3.3. Use of technology

Incorporating technology in English classrooms is highly beneficial for students learning the language. When teachers integrate tools such as educational videos, interactive applications, and communication platforms, they create dynamic



and engaging lessons that help students learn English more efficiently. Language learning applications like Duolingo, Babbel, and Quizlet offer diverse activities that improve vocabulary and grammar, while pronunciation tools like Elsa Speak and Speechling assist students in mastering challenging sounds and enhancing pronunciation. Furthermore, communication tools such as Zoom and Google Meet allow students to practice English with peers and native speakers worldwide, enriching their language learning experiences and fostering global connections.

Table 3. Using technology in English classrooms increases my engagement and interest in learning.

					Cumulative
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	strongly agree	47	51.1	52.2	52.2
	agree	28	30.4	31.1	83.3
	neutral	6	6.5	6.7	90.0
	disagree	7	7.6	7.8	97.8
	strongly disagree	2	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

The above table shows that 52.2% strongly agree, 31.1% agree, 6.7 % are neutral, 7.8% disagree, and 2.2% strongly disagree with the above statement.

3.4. Culturally relevant examples _____

Providing culturally relevant examples in lessons effectively motivates students to learn English. This approach bridges the gap between students' pre-existing knowledge and new concepts, making

learning more accessible and relatable. According to responses from the study's questionnaire, students highlighted that when teachers incorporate examples related to their cultural backgrounds, it helps them connect English to real-world contexts, making the language more meaningful. This strategy is considered effective in fostering a supportive learning environment that enhances students' interest in mastering English.

Table 4. Culturally relevant examples in lessons make learning English more relatable and enjoyable for me.

					Cumulative
		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	strongly agree	44	47.8	48.9	48.9
	agree	27	29.3	30.0	78.9
	neutral	12	13.0	13.3	92.2
	disagree	6	6.5	6.7	98.9
	Strongly disagree	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

Table 8 reveals that 78.9% of students agreed with the statement. Additionally, 13.3% are neutral, and 6.7% and 1.1% of students do not support this statement.

3.5. Positive instructor feedback

Receiving affirmative feedback from teachers fosters a positive attitude among students toward learning English. According to students, this factor is crucial in enhancing their motivation to engage with the language. When teachers

acknowledge students' diligence and progress, it reinforces their sense of satisfaction and self-belief. This feedback mechanism not only assists students in identifying and improving specific areas of weakness but also contributes significantly to cultivating a supportive and encouraging educational environment.

Table 5. Receiving positive and encouraging feedback from instructors improves my attitude and

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motivation toward learning English.

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	36	39.1	40.0	40.0
	agree	37	40.2	41.1	81.1
	neutral	10	10.9	11.1	92.2
	disagree	6	6.5	6.7	98.9
	strongly disagree	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

Table 5 shows that 81.1% of students agree with the above statement, While 11.1% are neutral, and 7.8% do not support this statement.

3.6. Student-Centered Teaching

Students feel that a student-centered approach makes learning English more appealing and enhances their ability to acquire it effectively. When teachers employ student-centered

methodologies in English classes, lessons become more interactive and enjoyable, improving comprehension and practical application of English skills. This approach tailors teaching methods, activities, and interactions to students' needs and preferences. By doing so, teachers can create a supportive environment that motivates students to engage with and learn English enthusiastically.

Table 6. Student-centered teaching methods make English classes more appealing and improve my ability to learn the language.

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	34	37.0	37.8	37.8
	agree	30	32.6	33.3	71.1
	neutral	11	12.0	12.2	83.3
	disagree	11	12.0	12.2	95.6
	strongly disagree	4	4.3	4.4	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

The data strongly support this statement, as 71.1% of students agreed, as shown in the above table. However, 12.2% of respondents remain neutral, another 12.2% express disagreement, and 4.4% disregard the statement.

3.7. Encouragement to Ask Questions

Encouraging students to freely ask questions and make mistakes in the classroom plays a crucial role

in enhancing their English skills. When teachers create an atmosphere where students feel secure in expressing their ideas without fear of criticism, it boosts their confidence and encourages active participation. As evidenced by student responses in this study, this supportive environment fosters curiosity, addresses confusion, and significantly motivates them to engage with and learn English more effectively.

Table 7. I feel motivated when I am encouraged to freely ask questions and make mistakes while learning English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	45	48.9	50.0	50.0
	agree	29	31.5	32.2	82.2
	neutral	11	12.0	12.2	94.4
	disagree	4	4.3	4.4	98.9
	strongly disagree	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

This strategy is meaningful, as 82.2% of students agreed with its effectiveness. Meanwhile, 12.2% maintained a neutral response, and 4.4% and

1.1% of students expressed disagreement with this assertion.



3.8. Comfortable Classroom Environment

A well-organized and comfortable classroom environment is crucial for effective English learning. Such an environment, equipped with academic resources and opportunities for realworld application, fosters student engagement and motivation. Teachers providing a well-structured and supportive space where students feel relaxed and free promotes engagement, enhances the learning experience, and stimulates interest in learning English. This environment reduces physical discomfort, helps students concentrate better on their language-learning journey, and increases their enthusiasm for mastering the language.

Table 8. A well-organized, comfortable classroom environment enhances my focus and motivation to learn English.

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	35	38.0	38.9	38.9
	agree	36	39.1	40.0	78.9
ne di	neutral	12	13.0	13.3	92.2
	disagree	7	7.6	7.8	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

As the table shows, 78.9% of students acknowledge its effectiveness, 13.3% are neutral, and only 7.8% disagree.

3.9. Teacher Professional Development

Teacher professional development is an effective strategy for enhancing English learning, as it helps

educators adopt modern teaching techniques and improve their communication skills. This process makes the English learning experience more engaging and impactful for students. Furthermore, professional development motivates and inspires students to actively work on improving their English skills and fosters long-term interest in the language.

Table 9. Teachers' ongoing professional development fosters an engaging learning environment that motivates me to improve my English skills.

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	36	39.1	40.0	40.0
	agree	33	35.9	36.7	76.7
	neutral	10	10.9	11.1	87.8
	disagree	7	7.6	7.8	95.6
	strongly disagree	4	4.3	4.4	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

The table above shows that 76.7% of students support this strategy's effectiveness. Additionally, 11.1% of students remain neutral, while about 12.2% disagree with this assertion.

3.10. Flexible Teaching Strategies

When teachers regularly adjust and evaluate their teaching strategies, it ensures that lessons are tailored to students' specific needs and interests

while also identifying potential learning obstacles effectively. According to students, this approach is an effective strategy for learning English, as it facilitates a flexible environment that sustains students' interest in the subject. It suggests that flexible and responsive teaching enhances student engagement and motivation, ultimately improving their ability to learn English.



Table 10. Regular adjustments and evaluations of teaching strategies by instructors help create a dynamic and motivating environment for learning English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	44	47.8	48.9	48.9
	Agree	21	22.8	23.3	72.2
	Neutral	9	9.8	10.0	82.2
	Disagree	14	15.2	15.6	97.8
	strongly disagree	2	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

According to the Table 10 results, 72.2% of students support this statement. However, 10% of students are neutral, and 17.8% ignore the statement.

3.11. Enthusiastic Teachers

The results from the study suggest that teachers' enthusiasm for teaching English is a key factor driving students' motivation to learn the language.

It fosters a sense of excitement and eagerness, making the learning process more meaningful and engaging. When combined with positive attitudes and passion from teachers, this approach not only enhances language learning but also supports students' emotional well-being and behavior. Teachers' enthusiasm sparks curiosity, leading to intrinsic motivation and independent practice, which are critical elements for mastering English.

Table 11. My teacher's enthusiasm for teaching English inspires my curiosity and makes learning the language more exciting.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	33	35.9	36.7	36.7
	agree	36	39.1	40.0	76.7
	neutral	12	13.0	13.3	90.0
	disagree	8	8.7	8.9	98.9
	strongly disagree	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

76.7% of students agreed with this statement. However, about 13.3% of minority students stay neutral, and only 10%(8.7% disagree and 1.1% strongly disagree) do not support this statement.

3.12. Personal Goal-Setting

Empowering students to set personal goals and allowing them to explore English topics that align with their interests significantly encourages them to develop their language skills. Most students agreed that this strategy dramatically contributes to their English learning. This approach suggests that when students are given the autonomy to set their goals and engage with content that resonates with their interests, it fosters a sense of accomplishment. As a result, students focus on areas where they need improvement, interact with meaningful topics, develop greater autonomy, and ultimately enhance their English language skills.

Table 12. Setting personal learning goals and exploring topics that resonate with my interests motivates me to improve my English skills.

					Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	strongly agree	31	33.7	34.4	34.4
	agree	51	55.4	56.7	91.1
	neutral	6	6.5	6.7	97.8
	disagree	2	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

About 91.1% show agreement, While only 6.7% show neutrality, and 2.2% express disagreement with the above statement.



3.13. Teacher Support and Value

Most students feel inspired to learn English when teachers value and support their language development. It shows that when teachers demonstrate care and interest in students' linguistic progress, it encourages active participation, inspires them, makes them feel

valued, and motivates them to put forth their best efforts in learning English. This approach is essential for creating a supportive and constructive environment that boosts students' confidence and enhances their ability to understand English proficiently.

Table 13. I feel inspired to learn English because my teacher values and supports my language development.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly agree	41	44.6	45.6	45.6
	Agree	33	35.9	36.7	82.2
	Neutral	10	10.9	11.1	93.3
	Disagree	6	6.5	6.7	100.0
	Total	90	97.8	100.0	

Approximately 82.2% of students agree with this, as shown in the above table. Meanwhile, 11.1% remained neutral, and 6.7% disagreed with the statement.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study contributes to the existing knowledge of English language learning by examining factors driving undergraduate students' motivation in the context of Lakki Marwat. Its focus is on classroom strategies, technology, and a supportive environment, exploring how all these elements stimulate undergraduate students to enhance their interest in learning English. The findings underline classroom strategies' significant role and effectiveness in improving students' interest in English and developing their overall academic success.

We categorized our questionnaire based on classroom strategies and motivational factors to address the key elements influencing students' motivation to learn English and highlight specific factors that create a supportive environment. The environment shapes a supportive, comfortable learning. atmosphere essential to language Classroom strategies include regular communication in English, offering authentic and relevant content, incorporation of technology, giving culturally relevant examples, adopting a students-centered method, providing atmosphere where they are free to make mistakes ask questions, teachers' professional development, and using flexible teaching strategies for the students in teaching English. This study pointed out these strategies as highly effective in motivating and enhancing students' learning English. interest communication in English, offering authentic and relevant content and culturally relevant examples, creates a supportive and engaging environment that makes English learning easy and effective. It develops students' English proficiency and engagement, making English learning practical and relatable. Passionate and innovative teachers who employ modern techniques and adjust strategies to meet students' needs create a dynamic and engaging environment, sustaining students' curiosity and long-term interest in learning English. The data further suggests that integrating technology within the English classroom, including videos, interactive applications, communicative tools, and online platforms, enhances student engagement, making lessons more dynamic and interactive.

This study also identified some factors that enhance students' eagerness to learn English. When teachers give positive feedback, they empower students to set their personal goals, provide a framework for their actions and progress, and create a sense of prioritizing their content and activities that genuinely relate to their needs, shaping a meaningful learning experience. Valuing and supporting their English language development creates a sense of accomplishment. This approach leads students to work on areas requiring improved English, interact meaningful topics, develop autonomy, stay motivated, and enhance their English learning skills. Additionally, a comfortable classroom environment provides distraction-free learning



space, and enthusiastic teachers foster students' interests and confidence in mastering English. These factors collectively address all the emotional, psychological, and social aspects of language learning.

In conclusion, this study examines various factors that enhance student interest in learning the English language, encompassing motivational factors and classroom strategies. Consequently, these interrelated factors work together to contribute to the advancement of students' language abilities, deepen their understanding, enhance intrinsic motivation, and sustain long-lasting interest in learning English. By addressing the environmental, external, and social dimensions, educators can create an inclusive and supportive environment that facilitates increased student interaction and progress in English.

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