



LEARNER MOTIVATION AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

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Abstract: Learner motivation and individual differences are considered essential factors influencing the success of foreign language learning. In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), researchers emphasize that learners do not acquire a language in the same way because they have different goals, abilities, learning styles, personalities, backgrounds, and levels of motivation. Motivation plays a significant role in determining learners' willingness to participate in learning activities, their persistence in overcoming difficulties, and their overall achievement in language learning. This study explores the relationship between learner motivation and individual differences in second language acquisition. It examines different types of motivation, including intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, and analyses how personal characteristics influence learners' engagement and learning outcomes. The research highlights that motivated learners are more likely to actively participate in classroom activities, practise language skills, and develop greater confidence in using English.

Key words: characteristics, influence learner, English, practice, language, skills, confidence.

In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA), learner motivation and individual differences are considered two of the most influential factors affecting the process and outcomes of language learning. Unlike other subjects, foreign language learning requires continuous practice, active participation, and long-term commitment; therefore, learners' psychological characteristics and personal factors play a crucial role in determining their success. Researchers have increasingly recognized that learners do not acquire a second language in the same way because they differ in their motivation, abilities, learning strategies, personalities, attitudes, and educational backgrounds.

Learner motivation refers to the internal and external factors that encourage individuals to begin, continue, and succeed in language learning. Motivation influences learners' willingness to participate in classroom activities, practise language outside the classroom, overcome difficulties, and achieve their learning goals. According to Gardner (1985), motivation is closely connected with learners' attitudes toward the target language, its speakers, and the learning environment. A motivated learner is more likely to invest time and effort in developing language skills, while a learner with low motivation may show limited engagement and slower progress.

The importance of motivation has been widely discussed in theories of second language acquisition. Dörnyei (2001) emphasizes that motivation is a dynamic process influenced by



learners' goals, classroom experiences, teacher support, and social environment. He distinguishes between different types of motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation, which comes from personal interest and enjoyment, and extrinsic motivation, which is related to external rewards such as exams, grades, employment opportunities, or social expectations. For example, a student who learns English because they enjoy communicating with international people demonstrates intrinsic motivation, whereas a student who studies English to achieve a high IELTS score or obtain a better job is influenced by extrinsic motivation.

In addition to motivation, individual differences represent another significant area in language education research. Individual differences refer to the personal characteristics that make each learner unique. These include age, intelligence, aptitude, personality, learning styles, cognitive abilities, cultural background, previous learning experiences, and preferred learning strategies. Understanding these differences is essential because learners may respond differently to the same teaching methods and classroom activities.

For instance, some learners may prefer visual learning and benefit from pictures, diagrams, and videos, while others may learn more effectively through auditory activities such as discussions, listening tasks, and pronunciation practice. Similarly, extroverted students may feel comfortable participating in speaking activities, whereas introverted learners may need more preparation time and supportive environments before expressing their ideas.

The relationship between motivation and individual differences has important implications for English language teachers. Modern teaching approaches emphasize the need for learner-centred education, where teachers consider students' needs, interests, abilities, and learning preferences. A successful teacher should create diverse classroom activities that provide opportunities for all learners to participate and develop their language skills. For example, group discussions, individual projects, role plays, and interactive tasks can motivate different types of learners and encourage active involvement.

Furthermore, recognizing individual differences supports the implementation of differentiated instruction, which allows teachers to adapt teaching materials, tasks, and assessment methods according to learners' levels and needs. In a mixed-ability English classroom, some students may require additional support with vocabulary and grammar, while advanced learners may need challenging tasks that promote critical thinking and independent communication.

Learner motivation and individual differences are two fundamental factors that influence the process of second language acquisition. In modern English Language Teaching (ELT), researchers argue that successful language learning does not depend only on teaching methods, textbooks, or classroom activities; it is also strongly influenced by learners' psychological characteristics, personal goals, attitudes, and abilities. Every learner has a unique way of learning a foreign language, and understanding these differences helps teachers create more effective and inclusive learning environments.

Motivation is considered one of the most important elements determining learners' success in acquiring a second language. It refers to the reasons and forces that encourage



learners to start learning, continue their efforts, and achieve their goals. According to **Gardner (1985)**, motivation in language learning is closely related to learners' attitudes toward the target language, culture, and learning process.

Motivation can generally be divided into two main types: **intrinsic motivation** and **extrinsic motivation**.

Intrinsic motivation comes from learners' personal interest and enjoyment. Students with intrinsic motivation learn English because they find the language interesting and enjoy communication. For example, a student may watch English films, listen to English songs, or communicate with foreign speakers because they genuinely like the language.

Example:

A student says:

"I learn English because I enjoy speaking with people from different countries and understanding their cultures."

This type of motivation often leads to long-term learning because the learner is personally interested in improving their skills.

In contrast, **extrinsic motivation** is connected with external goals such as passing exams, receiving certificates, getting a good job, or studying abroad. Many English learners study because English proficiency can provide better educational and professional opportunities.

Example:

A university student studies English because they need an IELTS certificate to apply for a scholarship abroad. In this case, the main motivation comes from an external goal.

Both types of motivation are important in language learning. A learner may begin studying English due to extrinsic reasons, such as career opportunities, but later develop intrinsic motivation through positive learning experiences.

Individual differences refer to the personal characteristics that make learners different from each other. These differences influence how students understand, process, and use a foreign language. Important individual factors include age, intelligence, language aptitude, personality, learning styles, previous experience, and learning strategies.

For example, two students in the same English class may achieve different results even though they receive the same instruction. One student may quickly remember new vocabulary and confidently participate in speaking activities, while another student may need more time and additional practice.

This difference does not necessarily mean that one student is more capable than the other. It may simply show that they have different learning preferences and strategies. Therefore, teachers should use different types of activities to meet the needs of different learners. Personality also affects learners' participation and progress in language learning. Extroverted learners often feel comfortable speaking, asking questions, and participating in group discussions. Introverted learners may prefer individual tasks and need more preparation before speaking.

For example:





An extroverted student may immediately participate in a classroom debate:

"I strongly agree with this idea because..."

However, an introverted student may first write down ideas before expressing an opinion.

The analysis shows that learner motivation and individual differences are essential components of successful English language learning. Motivation influences learners' effort, persistence, and willingness to communicate, while individual differences determine how learners approach and process new information. Effective English teaching should recognize that students are not identical and require different types of support. By considering learners' motivation, abilities, personalities, and learning preferences, teachers can create more effective, inclusive, and learner-centred classrooms.

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