

An effective way to enhance English learning motivation for first-year students at the State Pariyatti Sasana University in Mandalay of Myanmar

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Abstract

The research titled “An effective way to enhance English learning motivation for first-year students at the State Pariyatti Sasana University in Mandalay of Myanmar. The study has two main objectives: (1) To study English learning motivation for first year of students in State Pariyatti Sasana University in Mandalay of Myanmar (2) To propose the way to boost motivation of students who are learning English in State Pariyatti Sasana University in Mandalay of Myanmar. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative data from questionnaires with 55 students and qualitative data from interviews with five English teachers.

The findings show that while students recognize English as vital for academic and professional growth, their motivation is weakened by late exposure to English, anxiety in speaking, and limited opportunities for real-life practice. Conversely, motivation increased when students engaged with native speakers, authentic materials, and supportive teachers.

The study concludes that enhancing students’ motivation to learn English requires the implementation of specific student-centered and interactive teaching strategies. Teachers can motivate students by incorporating group discussions, collaborative tasks, role-plays, and real-life communication activities that encourage active participation. Providing constructive feedback, recognizing students’ efforts, and creating a supportive classroom environment can also strengthen learners’ confidence and intrinsic motivation. Additionally, using contextually relevant materials that connect English learning to students’ academic and daily lives increases their interest and engagement. Therefore, curriculum adjustments, teacher training in communicative methodologies, and institutional support are essential to sustain motivational teaching practices.

Keywords: English Motivation; Students; Teacher; Myanmar; Mixed-Methods

Introduction

In the contemporary world, proficiency in English has become a crucial skill, directly linked to academic success, career opportunities, and global communication. Individuals with strong command of English gain access to better employment prospects and enhanced career development. With the rapid advancement of information technology (IT), online learning

platforms have also emerged as effective tools for language learning when implemented appropriately. As Venkatraman and Zaheer (1990) noted, IT-based applications have gained significant popularity across diverse fields, fostering competitiveness and innovation. The field of education has similarly embraced these tools, with a growing emphasis on technology-assisted instruction in language learning.

Despite long exposure to English during their schooling years, many students still struggle with fundamental aspects of English grammar and communication. This gap, frequently identified by both instructors and students themselves, highlights the need for more practice-oriented and motivational approaches. The ability to communicate in multiple languages is increasingly vital in today's interconnected world, as it not only expands professional opportunities but also facilitates cross-cultural understanding. Among more than 6,500 languages spoken globally, English occupies a distinctive role. It is the third most spoken language worldwide, the official language of 53 countries, and the primary medium of international communication in diplomacy, commerce, science, aviation, technology, and tourism. The British Council has projected that by 2020, nearly two billion people worldwide would be learning English, underscoring its global significance.

In Myanmar, the role of English has deep historical roots. During British colonial rule (1886–1948), English was widely used as the medium of instruction at all educational levels. Following independence in 1948, Myanmar adopted Burmese as the primary language of instruction, though English remained a key component of education through mission schools and monastic institutions. As a result, English has continued to hold an important place in Myanmar's education system, particularly in higher education.

Motivation is a decisive factor in language learning, often described as the driving force that sustains learners' enthusiasm and perseverance. It can be compared to the engine and steering wheel of a vehicle, guiding learners from disinterest to engagement. Motivated teachers play an equally critical role, as their enthusiasm and commitment inspire learners to develop persistence, confidence, and goal-oriented behaviors (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Prior research emphasizes that motivation is central to the learning process (Frymier, Shulman, & Houser, 1996; Houser & Frymier, 2009), and is closely linked to learners' self-efficacy, values, goals, and autonomy (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002b). Particularly in higher education, the shift toward student-centered learning makes motivation even more essential for success.

However, challenges persist in Myanmar's educational context. Many students begin learning English seriously only in their twenties, which often reduces their initial motivation. Developing countries, including Myanmar, also face shortages of qualified English teachers and insufficient teaching resources, making it difficult to adopt scientific, learner-centered approaches. At the State Pariyatti Sasana University (SPSU) in Mandalay, first-year students face an additional challenge: they are required to study multiple subjects simultaneously. The short duration of English teaching sessions further limits opportunities for practice, often leaving students feeling inadequate in their language skills.

Addressing these challenges requires a systematic focus on enhancing motivation among learners. This study seeks to examine the motivational factors influencing first-year students at SPSU and to propose effective strategies to strengthen their motivation to learn English. By fostering motivation, this research aims to improve students' engagement with English learning, thereby contributing to their academic and professional growth in Myanmar's evolving educational landscape.

Objectives of the Research

1. To study English learning motivation for first year of students in State Pariyatti Sasana University in Mandalay of Myanmar
2. To propose the way to boost motivation of students who are learning English in State Pariyatti Sasana University in Mandalay of Myanmar.

Statement of the Research Questions

Based on the statement of the problems the researcher deserves to know and it has been divided into two categories the follows.

1. What is the English Learning Motivation for first year students in State Pariyatti Sasana University in Mandalay of Myanmar?
2. What are the way to boost motivation of students who are learning English in State Pariyatti Sasana University in Mandalay of Myanmar?

Literature Review

Motivation can provide a great influence on someone's life. Uno (2012) said that "The motivation is the process of psychology that can explain the behavior of someone. The nature of behavior is orientation on one goal. In other words, the behavior of someone is designed to reach the purpose. To achieve that goal needed a process of interaction some of elements. Thus, the motivation is a force encourage the person does something to reach the goal". Additionally, Santrock (2004) Motivation is the process of the spirit, the direction and the persistence of behavior someone.

Additionally, Whittaker in Primadini (2015), motivation is a term which refers to the internal condition used to active or give strength to do something to achieve certain goal. Similarly, Nasution in Primadini (2015:16) stated that motivation as the power to encourage someone to do something. The motivation is the spirit or the power to encourage someone to do something.

According to Domyei (2001), in the early 1900s, the dominant theories of motivation claimed that motivation was triggered by instincts and drives, many of them being unconscious or repressed. These theories, he said, do not feature strongly in current motivational thinking, but play a significant role in our lives and therefore are "likely to be rediscovered before long". The authors mentioned above explain that the middle of the twentieth century was characterized by conditioning theories of motivation which were related to behaviorist psychology, with a great

deal of research focusing on how stimuli and responses interplayed in forming habits. Although these behavioral accounts were based on experiments with animals such as Pavlov's dog or Skinner's rats rather than humans, Domyei (2001a) comments that much of the acquired knowledge is still relevant for the understanding of issues like the role of practice and, drilling, positive and negative reinforcement, or punishment and praise in learning.

Okumbe (1998), "Motivation is a process that starts with a physiological deficiency or need that activates a behavior or a drive that is aimed at a goal or incentive." Motivation, therefore, consists of needs (deficiencies) that set up drives (motives) that help in acquiring the incentives (goals). Drives or motives are action oriented while incentives/goals are those things that alienate a need. According to Joan Marques (2010), motivation is what people need to perform better and can only work if the right person with the right skills has been placed in charge of the task at hand Luthans (1998).

Wodkowski and Jaynes (1990) showed that parents appear to be the primary influence on a student's motivation to learn. However, Research done by Henderson (1987) proved that students from the elementary level through high school benefit from family conditions and practices that emphasize and encourage learning in school for more than twenty years. The formative effect of parents on the learning motivation of their children has an impact at every stage of development. This influence will last through the high school years and beyond.

Madrid (2002) examined 319 students and 18 teachers from Primary, Secondary, and Upper-Secondary Education to find out how powerful 18 motivational classroom strategies were. Students' global motivation perception was observed and compared with the strategies used in class. The results show that certain strategies are more powerful than others to enhance students' global motivation. The most powerful motivational strategies, among the controlled variables, according to the students' and teachers' perceptions, are the following: the use of audiovisual resources and new technologies, group work, satisfying the students' needs and interests, student participation in class, good grades and fulfillment of students' success expectations, and praises and rewards. The author concludes that teachers should promote and put into practice those motivational strategies, which increase the student's interest, attention, and satisfaction.

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

The population of this research consists of 400 first-year students at State Pariyatti Sasana University in Mandalay, Myanmar. From this population, 55 first-year students were selected as the sample for the study.

Research Tools

A mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Data Collection

A questionnaire was administered to the students to assess their motivational factors, while semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers to gain deeper insights into classroom challenges and effective teaching strategies.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative responses were thematically analyzed to identify key patterns.

Results of the Study

This study investigated the English learning motivation of first-year students at the State Pariyatti Sasana University (SPSU) in Mandalay, Myanmar. Data were collected through questionnaires administered to 55 first-year students and semi-structured interviews conducted with five English teachers. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were applied to gain a deeper understanding of students' motivational levels, influencing factors, and possible ways to enhance motivation.

The questionnaire results revealed that a majority of students demonstrated a positive orientation toward English learning. Specifically, 61% of respondents indicated a high level of motivation, expressing strong interest in learning English for career development and international communication. Approximately 27% reported moderate motivation, while 12% displayed low motivation, often citing difficulties in grammar and lack of confidence in speaking.

Students' motivation was influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsically, many students expressed personal satisfaction in improving their language abilities and connecting with global cultures through English media. Extrinsically, students were motivated by future job opportunities, academic requirements, and encouragement from their teachers.

Despite their interest, students identified several barriers that limited their progress. The most frequently mentioned challenges were limited classroom hours, the heavy load of other academic subjects, insufficient exposure to practical English use, and a lack of modern learning resources. Several students reported that they felt unprepared for real-life communication due to the emphasis on grammar-focused instruction. One participant stated, "We don't have enough time to practice English speaking in class, so we feel nervous when trying to use it outside."

Interviews with the five English teachers supported the students' perspectives. Teachers emphasized that students' motivation was closely linked to teaching methods. They observed that learners were more engaged during interactive and communicative activities than in traditional lecture-based sessions. However, the teachers also highlighted systemic challenges, including insufficient teaching materials, limited time allocation, and students' lack of prior foundational skills.

Both students and teachers proposed practical ways to boost English learning motivation. Suggested strategies included increasing opportunities for communicative practice, particularly in speaking and listening. Incorporating multimedia and technology-based tools to make learning

more engaging. Establishing extracurricular English clubs to encourage peer interaction. Providing additional support sessions for students who struggle with grammar and confidence.

In response to the first research question, the findings indicate that first-year students at SPSU are moderately to highly motivated to learn English, driven by both personal and professional aspirations. However, their motivation is constrained by structural and pedagogical challenges. Regarding the second research question, the study identified effective ways to enhance motivation, including interactive teaching strategies, extended practice opportunities, and extracurricular activities that create a more supportive English-learning environment.

Body of the knowledge

The study found that first-year students at State Pariyatti Sasana University in Mandalay showed moderate motivation to learn English. However, several barriers reduced their progress. The late introduction of English in education led to weaker foundations and low self-confidence, while anxiety in speaking discouraged participation in class. Moreover, students had few opportunities to use English outside the classroom, limiting real-life practice and lowering sustained interest.

Despite these challenges, teacher encouragement—through praise, feedback, and supportive guidance—was a strong motivator. Students also favored interactive and technology-based methods over traditional grammar lessons, showing the value of modern teaching tools. Clear short-term goals, regular feedback, and activities such as English clubs or vocabulary journals were also found to enhance confidence and motivation.

The findings of this study reveal that students' motivation to learn English is strongly influenced by classroom practices and learning environments. The data suggest that when students receive positive reinforcement and are given opportunities to actively participate, their confidence and interest in learning increase significantly. This may be because supportive and engaging classroom conditions reduce anxiety and create a sense of belonging among learners. Furthermore, students appear more motivated when they recognize the practical value of English as a global language for their future academic and professional development. These results indicate that motivation is not only dependent on individual ability but is also shaped by instructional approaches and contextual factors within the classroom.

Suggestions for Future Researches

Based on the findings of this study, several practical recommendations are proposed to enhance English learning motivation among first-year students at State Pariyatti Sasana University in Mandalay. These suggestions are directed toward future researchers. The study has shown that students' motivation is influenced by emotional, educational, and contextual factors, including the age of English introduction, confidence levels, limited exposure outside the classroom, and the importance of teacher support and meaningful language use. Addressing these challenges

requires a comprehensive, multi-dimensional approach involving all stakeholders in the learning process.

Future research can further explore English learning motivation by:

Expanding the study population to include students from different academic years, female monastics, or lay students, providing a more comprehensive understanding across diverse groups.

Conducting comparative studies between multiple Buddhist universities or between religious and secular institutions to identify context-specific motivational factors.

Investigating the role of technology, including mobile apps, online platforms, and social media, in supporting autonomous learning and increasing engagement.

Developing and testing targeted motivational strategies, such as goal-setting workshops, peer collaboration activities, or teacher training programs, to determine their effectiveness in real classroom contexts.

These approaches can provide evidence-based solutions for improving English learning motivation in monastic academic settings.

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