

**MOTIVATION FACTORS IN LEARNING ENGLISH AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL:
ACADEMIC DESIRES, CAREER ASPIRATIONS, AND PEDAGOGICAL
INFLUENCES**

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Abstract (Annotatsiya)

This article explores the multi-faceted motivational factors that influence English language learning among university students, with a specific focus on non-philological institutions such as Tashkent State Agrarian University. Motivation is widely recognized as a critical determinant of success in second language acquisition. However, maintaining high motivation levels at the tertiary level is complex, as students must transition from general language knowledge to specialized, professional communication. Drawing upon socio-educational and self-determination theories, this paper examines the distinction between intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental, and integrative motivation in an academic context. It identifies key demotivating barriers—such as abstract curricula, traditional teacher-centered instruction, and test anxiety—and proposes practical pedagogical solutions. The paper argues that by aligning English curricula with students' future career goals, fostering classroom autonomy, and establishing a low-anxiety environment, universities can systematically boost student engagement and communicative competence.

Keywords

L2 Motivation, Higher Education, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Intrinsic Motivation, Instrumental Motivation, Self-Determination Theory, Pedagogical Strategies, Tashkent State Agrarian University.

Introduction

In the contemporary globalized economy, English has established itself as the primary medium for international science, technology, commerce, and academic research. For university students specializing in technical disciplines—such as agronomy, agribusiness, food security, and environmental engineering—developing proficiency in English is no longer a luxury but an absolute professional necessity. It serves as the gateway to reading international research papers, attending global conferences, and participating in cross-border professional networks. Consequently, higher education institutions face the challenge of turning passive language learners into active, self-driven communicators.

At the heart of successful language acquisition lies the concept of motivation. Defined broadly, motivation is the cognitive and affective drive that initiates, directs, and sustains the difficult, long-term process of learning a foreign language. In educational psychology, second language (L2) motivation has been extensively studied through various frameworks, most notably Robert Gardner's socio-educational model and Zoltán Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System. These frameworks demonstrate that language learning is unique because a language is not just an academic subject, but a social tool that alters a student's professional identity. At the university level, understanding what drives students to engage with or retreat from English instruction is essential for designing effective curricula.

Statement of the Problem (Muammo)

Despite the high global value of English, many university instructors in Uzbekistan struggle with low student motivation and passive classroom participation. This motivational deficit is particularly evident in non-philological universities and is driven by several key factors:

1. **The Disconnect Between General English and Professional Utility:** Many university curricula rely on generic General English textbooks that focus on basic daily routines, shopping, or tourist travel. For agrarian and technical students, these topics feel disconnected from their professional future. When students do not see immediate, practical utility in what they are learning, their instrumental motivation—the drive to learn a language for career advancement or academic success—drops significantly.

2. **Dominance of Controlled Extrinsic Motivation:** A large portion of university students are driven primarily by external pressures, such as passing mandatory exams, obtaining course credits, or avoiding parental disapproval. According to self-determination theory, this type of external regulation is highly fragile. Once the external pressure is removed (e.g., after the final exam), students often cease all language practice and quickly lose their acquired skills.

3. **High Affective Barriers and Classroom Anxiety:** In traditional, teacher-centered classrooms, students are frequently subjected to public correction of grammar and pronunciation. This creates a high "affective filter," characterized by anxiety, fear of making mistakes in front of peers, and low self-confidence. Terrified of being judged, students choose silence over active participation, which destroys their intrinsic motivation to communicate.

4. **Passive Learning Environments:** Monotonous lectures, repetitive grammar-translation exercises, and a lack of collaborative group work lead to cognitive boredom. When students are treated as passive receivers of grammar rules rather than active participants in their own learning process, their natural curiosity and intrinsic drive to learn diminish.

Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative, descriptive approach, analyzing contemporary research in educational psychology, second language acquisition, and curriculum design. It applies these motivational frameworks specifically to the academic context of Tashkent State Agrarian University. By evaluating the classroom experiences of students in agricultural and technical spheres, the study identifies practical, non-statistical, and highly effective pedagogical interventions designed to transition students from passive, externally pressured learners to active, internally driven communicators.

Solutions

A. Cultivating Instrumental Motivation through ESP Integration

To rebuild student motivation, the English curriculum must be directly tied to the students' immediate and future professional needs. This is achieved by transitioning from General English to English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

- **The Solution in Practice:** At Tashkent State Agrarian University, English topics should be redesigned around real-world agricultural and scientific themes. Instead of reading general lifestyle articles, agro-ecology students should analyze simplified scientific reports on soil conservation, biotechnology, or modern drip irrigation. When students realize that English is a direct tool that helps them understand their core agricultural subjects and prepares them to secure high-paying jobs in international agricultural firms, their instrumental motivation increases. They no longer view English as an obstacle to get past, but as a career-building asset.

B. Nurturing Intrinsic Motivation through Autonomy and Choice

According to Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation flourishes when three basic psychological needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Giving students a sense of ownership over their learning process is highly motivating.

- **The Solution in Practice:** Instructors should offer students choices in their learning activities. For instance, when assigning a presentation project, instead of assigning a single mandatory topic, teachers can provide a list of options (e.g., organic farming methods, drone technology in agriculture, or water scarcity solutions in Central Asia) and allow students to choose. Furthermore, allowing students to select their own group partners and decide on the format of their final report (such as a digital slide presentation, a mock panel discussion, or a poster session) builds a strong sense of autonomy. When students feel they have a voice, they invest more effort into the task.

C. Lowering the Affective Filter and Re-defining Mistakes

To keep students motivated to speak, the classroom culture must change from a place of constant correction to a safe space for communication and experimentation.

- **The Solution in Practice:** Teachers must shift their feedback strategies. During communicative activities, group discussions, or presentations, instructors should avoid interrupting students to correct minor grammatical slips. Instead, the focus should remain entirely on message comprehension and communication. The teacher can take private notes of common errors and address them during a dedicated "language cleanup" session at the end of the class. Emphasizing that mistakes are a natural, healthy part of the acquisition process lowers student anxiety, reduces their self-consciousness, and encourages them to use the language freely.

D. Shifting toward Task-Based and Collaborative Learning

Active social interaction naturally boosts student engagement. Working in pairs or small groups helps distribute cognitive load, builds peer support, and makes the learning process dynamic.

- **The Solution in Practice:** English classrooms should replace passive lecturing with interactive task-based learning. Working in groups of three or four, students can be given a realistic problem to solve, such as designing a plan for a sustainable farm or analyzing data from a regional agricultural study. This social collaboration meets the human need for "relatedness." Students feel supported by their peers, which reduces individual pressure and transforms the English class into an engaging, collaborative laboratory.

Conclusion

Motivation is not a fixed trait that university students either have or do not have; rather, it is a dynamic, highly responsive state that is deeply influenced by the classroom environment, the curriculum, and the instructor's methodology. While technical and agricultural university students often enter English classes with low initial interest due to dry, outdated curricula, their motivation can be systematically revitalized. By aligning English course content with their professional aspirations (ESP), granting them a voice in their learning choices, fostering supportive group collaborations, and minimizing performance anxiety, instructors can transition students from passive compliance to active, self-directed fluency. Ultimately, cultivating strong, internally driven motivation is the key to preparing Uzbek university graduates to enter the international scientific and professional arena with confidence.

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