



Factors Affecting Learners' Motivation in English Language Education

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Abstract: *This research investigates the factors influencing undergraduate students' interest in learning English at a public university. A quantitative methodology was used, with 250 students completing a 27-item Likert scale survey. The survey measured motivational factors, concerns, confidence, learning processes, benefits, attitudes, and self-regulation. Participants found it easy to participate because of the university's diverse student population and the researchers' affiliation. Questionnaires were distributed in class, with explanations in both Khmer and English to ensure clarity. The study revealed the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on English language learning in the Cambodian context. Recommendations are provided to assist educators and policymakers in improving motivation strategies and students' language proficiency for academic success.*

Keywords: *Motivational Factors, Learning Attitude, Learning Process, English as a Second Language.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English is taught at all educational levels in Cambodia, from primary to higher education, with a focus on reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and 21st-century skills [1]. Its importance has grown as a global communication tool and a measure of proficiency beyond exams. People learn English for various reasons, including professional needs, living abroad, or traveling [2]. Motivation plays a crucial role in enhancing students' learning efficiency, attitudes, and engagement [3]. Since the 1990s, motivation has been recognized as key to second language acquisition and personal goals [4]. Understanding motivation helps improve language learning and supports students' educational journeys.



2. RELATED WORKS

Students at the university level in Cambodia need to be faster and more active in learning English, which highlights the need for effective motivational strategies [5]. A lack of motivation often leads to boredom and insufficient engagement in learning English, with both internal and external factors contributing to this challenge. Motivating student teachers through intrinsic and extrinsic factors is crucial [6]. This study aims to identify how motivational factors impact the English learning process for Cambodian university students. It focuses on understanding the effects of these factors and how they influence students' engagement and interest in learning English. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. How do motivational factors affect students' English language learning?
2. What learning processes enhance students' motivation to learn English?

2.1. Theories Affecting Motivational English Learning

Demotivation in schools is defined as a decline in students' motivation to learn English over time [7]. It can result from both internal and external factors, known as demotivators, that reduce motivation. Factors contributing to demotivation include learning environments, teacher qualities, parental involvement, and social influences. Additionally, students may feel fatigued if English is not required for their future studies or if other classes related to their main field of study are more engaging. Addressing these demotivators can help students improve their academic performance and underscore the important role of students in the learning process [8].

2.2. Factors Affecting Motivation to Learning English

Two key forms of motivation affect English learning: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation arises from internal factors, which drive individuals to engage in activities for their inherent value. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, involves external rewards. Both forms are crucial in the learning process [9]. [10] explored the link between motivation and success in acquiring a foreign language, emphasizing that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations influence behavior and student development. Extrinsic motivation fosters competitiveness, whereas intrinsic motivation encourages the genuine pursuit of knowledge. Nurturing both types can lead to effective study habits and a passion for learning. These points will be further elaborated upon in the next section.

2.3. Intrinsic Factors

As mentioned above, intrinsic learning motivation originates from internal factors such as personal growth and interest. [11] defines it as the personal desire and satisfaction derived from learning a language. [12] noted that intrinsic motivation is driven by internal rewards, whereas [13] noted that it involves enjoyment without external pressure. Intrinsically motivated students learn for mastery, challenge, curiosity, and delight. [14] reported that intrinsic motivation is key for developing English speaking skills among first-year college students in Metro Manila, with motivation levels varying on the basis of personal factors. Research from the 1970s and 1980s showed that tangible rewards can reduce intrinsic motivation when individuals are already self-driven [15]. Intrinsic motivation can be linked to short-term goals such as grades



and approval, as well as long-term goals such as scholarships and job prospects. Unlike extrinsic motivation, it is based on personal choice [16].

2.4. Extrinsic Factors

In contrast to intrinsic motivation, which comes from personal fulfillment, extrinsic motivation is driven by external incentives such as money, fame, grades, and praise. Extrinsic motivation leads people to pursue external goals, engaging in activities for rewards or to avoid punishment rather than for personal enjoyment. In education, students motivated by extrinsic factors may study to meet expectations from parents, teachers, or societal pressures. The key external motivators include parental expectations, role models, earning potential, and grades. These external factors are particularly important for students lacking intrinsic motivation, as they can spark interest in learning [17, 18].

2.5. Learning Environment

A positive learning environment is essential for boosting students' motivation. It includes the physical setting, context, and culture where instruction takes place. Supportive environments promote inclusion, confidence, and a willingness to tackle challenges, while overcrowded or poorly lit classrooms can hinder motivation and learning [24, 25]. Anxiety and tense atmospheres significantly reduce motivation in second language learning [26]. Research highlights that classroom features, environmental factors, and parental influence impact motivation. A positive environment fosters belonging, encourages risk-taking, and enhances learning outcomes [19, 27]. Clear rules and feedback in supportive settings improve behavior and engagement [28].

2.6. Teacher Components

Educators play a crucial role in motivating students, especially in language learning. [29] reported a strong positive link between teachers and student motivation. Factors such as teacher conduct, enthusiasm, and positive relationships are key to motivation [30]. [31] highlighted that helping students feel competent boosts their motivation. Teacher attitudes and enthusiasm significantly impact student interest, emphasizing the need for patience and a risk-free environment [32, 33]. Diverse teaching methods and supportive environments also enhance motivation [34]. [32] stressed the importance of engaging teaching approaches, while varied activities prevent demotivation [34]. Effective teaching methods are essential for increasing motivation in all students.

2.7. Parental Factors

The family plays a vital role in shaping students' education and motivation. Described as "the smallest school in America" [35], the family has a profound impact. Parents, as primary educators, significantly influence children's motivation [21]. Studies confirm that parental involvement directly affects academic achievement and inspiration [36,38, 39]. Active parental support, such as monitoring progress and encouraging success, boosts motivation, while negative or passive behavior can hinder language learning. In summary, positive parental involvement is essential for fostering motivation, eagerness to learn English, and academic success.



2.8. Related Studies

A study by [27] explored factors influencing first-year English pedagogy students' motivation at Uludağ University, Turkey, finding that parental and teacher attitudes, along with the classroom environment, significantly impact motivation. Enthusiastic parental support was particularly motivating. A 2017 research project at Malaysia Technology surveyed 80 participants from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Lepar Utara, highlighting parental factors, teacher influence, and students' attitudes as critical, with teachers having the most significant impact [42]. Similarly, [18] found that engaging teaching methods, teacher approaches, and tasks significantly boosted motivation among 120 students at Maija Yang University, Myanmar. However, none of these studies specifically examined motivational factors for first-year English majors at Tay Do University.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study implements quantitative methods to gather and analyze the data. Quantitative research is a formal, objective, systematic process to describe and test relationships and examine cause and effect interactions among variables [40]. Students from the National University of Battambang will be invited to participate in this research. This research will utilize some research tools, such as survey questionnaires, to collect data and information from participants.

3.2 Research Location

The study was carried out at the National University of Battambang, in Battambang City. This study looks at the factors that influence undergraduate students' eagerness to learn English. A quantitative approach was used, with 250 students responding to a 27-item Likert scale survey that focused on motivation, learning processes, and benefits. The researchers' affiliation with the university ensured participants' accessibility. Questionnaires were distributed during class, with instructions in both Khmer and English. This study aims to improve motivation strategies and language skills by focusing on the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in English acquisition.

3.3 Population and Sample Size

NUBB has a large population of students from various backgrounds, which allows for a more generalizable sample that reflects the experiences of foreign language learners across different cultures. The respondents of this study will be taken from undergraduate students at the National University of Battambang by simple random sampling to participate in this study. The survey questionnaire will be distributed to 250 students and chosen from each academic year. Each student will spend approximately 15 minutes answering the questionnaire by completing and circling their responses on the provided Likert scale.

3.4 Research Instrument

The questionnaire, which is based on a 27-point Likert scale, has three items focusing on motivational factors, the learning process, and benefits, which also include items for personal



information. The Likert scale options were as follows: 1= Strongly disagree (SD), 2= Disagree (D), 3= Neutral (N), 4= Agree (A), and 5= Strongly agree (SA). The participants completed the questionnaires individually during class, with the researcher distributing them with the instructors' permission. Each participant took approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. To ensure full understanding, the researcher provided explanations in both Khmer and English.

3.5 Data Collection

The data were collected from the survey questionnaire and used to explore the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on learning English as a foreign language. We used a questionnaire tool due to its useful confirmation with other studies [22].

3.6 Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to present the frequencies and percentages of each questionnaire item [41, 42].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following results are interpreted through mean rank interpretation.

Table 1: Reliability of the questionnaire

Categories	Number of items	Alpha
Motivational Factors in Learning English (MFLE)	13	.622
Learning Process in Learning English (LPLE)	6	.647
Benefits of Learning English (BLE)	8	.626

Table 2: Mean Rank Interpretation

4.01-5.00	A high degree of satisfaction with English Learning
3.01-4.00	A fairly moderate degree of satisfaction with English Learning
2.01-3.00	A moderate degree of satisfaction with English Learning
1.00-2.00	Low degree of satisfaction with English learning

Table 3: Respondents' demographic profile

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender	Male	176	70.4
	Female	74	9.6
Age	Below 17-21	154	61.6
	22-25	85	34.0
	26-above	11	4.4
Specialization	Science	17	6.8
	Social Science	6	2.4
	ICT	8	3.2



	Others	219	87.6
Year of Study	Freshman	67	26.8
	Sophomore	45	18.0
	Junior	92	36.8
	Senior	46	18.4

Table 4: Motivational factors in learning English

Items	Statements	Level of Agreement %					M	SD
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
MFLE1	I'm excited to continue my English learning journey in the future.	0.4	1.6	7.2	45.2	45.6	4.34	.717
MFLE2	I enjoy actively participating in English lessons by sharing my thoughts.	1.2	4.0	30.4	48.4	16.0	3.74	.817
MFLE3	Learning English is a priority for me.	0	5.2	29.2	46.4	19.2	3.80	.808
MFLE4	My curiosity fuels my success in learning English.	0.8	1.6	12.0	55.2	30.4	4.13	.739
MFLE5	Honestly, my motivation for studying English is solely to pass exams.	7.2	28.8	34.4	24.4	5.2	2.92	1.01
MFLE6	While I may have a preference for studying in my native language.	7.2	21.2	35.2	24.0	12.4	3.13	1.10
MFLE7	Honestly, I have very little enthusiasm for my English class.	24.0	42.8	23.2	6.8	3.2	2.22	.99
MFLE8	I feel tense whenever I need to speak during my English classes.	12.4	26.0	41.6	17.2	2.8	2.72	.98
MFLE9	English helps me express myself more confidently.	0.4	2.0	17.6	59.6	20.4	3.98	.70
MFLE10	I feel comfortable participating in English class discussions by answering questions.	0.8	5.6	28.8	51.2	13.6	3.71	.80
MFLE11	I aspire to speak English fluently.	1.2	1.2	6.4	34.0	57.2	4.45	.77
MFLE12	I experience embarrassment when speaking English in front of my peers.	3.2	10.4	25.6	37.6	23.2	3.67	1.04



MFLE13	However, learning English allows me to connect new information with my existing knowledge, fostering a deeper understanding.	1.2	1.6	14.0	54.0	29.2	4.08	.77
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Table 4 shows that a high percentage of students expressed excitement about continuing their English studies (MFLE11: 45.6%) and credited curiosity for driving their success (MFLE4: 55.2%). Additionally, 57.2% aspire to speak English fluently (MFLE11), reflecting strong intrinsic motivation. While extrinsic factors, like studying solely to pass exams (MFLE5 - 28.8%) and prioritizing English (MFLE3 - 46.4%), are present, intrinsic motivation is more dominant. Challenges such as tension (MFLE8: 41.6%), lack of enthusiasm (MFLE7: 24.0%), and embarrassment in peer settings (MFLE12: 23.2%) were also noted. However, many students found that English learning helped them connect new knowledge with existing information (MFLE13, 54.0%). High engagement was evident in their enjoyment of sharing thoughts (MFLE2: 48.4%) and participating in discussions (MFLE10: 51.2%).

Table 5: The Learning Process in Learning English

Items	Statements	Level of Agreement %					M	SD
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
LPLE14	I struggle to independently summarize the key points in English subject material.	1.2	4.4	31.2	52.4	10.8	3.67	.774
LPLE15	English class covers a lot of ground.	0.4	2.0	8.0	56.8	32.8	4.20	.698
LPLE16	I find English a challenging language to learn.	2.0	14.0	32.8	44.0	7.2	3.40	.888
LPLE17	I experience embarrassment when speaking English in front of my peers.	0.4	1.6	12.4	54.0	31.6	4.15	.721
LPLE18	However, learning English allows me to connect new information with my existing knowledge, fostering a deeper understanding.	0.4	1.6	8.4	47.6	42.0	4.29	.722
LPLE19	I experience embarrassment when speaking English in front of my peers.	0.4	5.6	23.2	52.4	18.4	3.83	.806

Table 5 reveals that 56.8% of students agreed that learning English deepened their understanding by connecting new information with prior knowledge (LPLE 18). A significant portion found English classes challenging (LPLE16 - 32.8%) and experienced embarrassment when speaking English in front of peers (LPLE17 - 12.4%; LPLE19 - 23.2%).



Table 6: Benefits of Learning English

Items	Statements	Level of Agreement %					M	SD
		SD	D	N	A	SA		
BLE20	I believe individuals who speak multiple languages possess significant knowledge.	2.0	3.2	22.8	42.8	29.2	3.94	.910
BLE21	Learning English aids me in effectively communicating in the language.	0.8	1.6	15.6	54.0	28.0	4.07	.755
BLE22	I can think critically and analyze content in English.	0.4	6.4	34.4	47.2	11.6	3.63	.787
BLE23	I desire to have numerous friends who speak English.	0.8	3.6	26.8	47.2	21.6	3.85	.825
BLE24	I have a genuine interest in learning English.	0.8	1.6	12.4	56.0	29.2	4.11	.736
BLE25	I sometimes procrastinate on my English homework.	4.0	16.8	32.8	36.0	10.4	3.32	1.003
BLE26	When I miss class, I refrain from asking my friends or teachers for homework assignments.	14.4	32.8	22.4	20.8	9.6	2.78	1.206
BLE27	I believe English contributes to my overall personal development.	0.4	2.4	8.4	51.2	37.6	4.23	.735

Table 6 shows that mean (M) values in range from 2.78-4.23, indicating various levels of agreement with different benefits for learning English for each student. The highest mean value is for the statement “I believe English contributes to my overall personal development” (BLE27), which consists of 4.23 in rank, showing strong agreement on the benefits of learning English for great personal advancement. The statement “I have a genuine interest in learning English” (BLE24) stands with a mean of 4.11, reflecting a common thought in English on the basis of its importance and usefulness for general learners. The statement “Learning English aids me in effectively communicating in the language” (BLE21) has a mean of 4.07, highlighting that many students believe that learning English effectively assists in communicating in the language. The statement “When I miss class, I refrain from asking my friends or teachers for homework assignments” contains a mean of 2.78, indicating a moderate level of agreement that they see how beneficial English is in their learning process as students and that it shows their strong efforts, as English benefits them.

Table 7: One-way ANOVA among freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors

The Motivational Factors	Between Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
		.27	1	.27	1.99	.15
	Within Groups	34.30	248	.13		
	Total	34.58	249			
The Learning Process	Between Groups	.28	1	.28	1.31	.25
	Within Groups	53.22	248	.21		
	Total	53.50	249			
The Benefits	Between Groups	.63	1	.63	.28	.59
	Within Groups	53.62	248	.21		
	Total	53.68	249			

Table 7 shows the results of the one-way ANOVA test used to compare the means of the motivational factors, the learning process, and the benefits among freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior students. For motivational factors, there was no statistically significant difference in motivation across the various levels of students ($f(1,248) = 1.995$ & $p = .159$). Additionally, similar to the previous one, there is no particular significance among other different class levels for the Learning Process ($f(1,248) = 1.310$ & $p = .254$). In terms of benefits, there was no statistically significant difference among the various levels ($f(1,248) = .289$ & $p = .591$).

Table 8: Independent sample t-test between genders

Variables	Gender	Mean	SD	t	Sig
The Motivational Factors (MF)	Female	3.59	.302	-1.412	.007
	Male	3.66	.501	-1.164	
The Learning Process (LP)	Female	3.95	.377	1.144	.001
	Male	3.87	.623	0.944	
The Benefits (B)	Female	3.73	.393	-0.538	.005
	Male	3.77	.603	-0.455	

Table 8 compares gender differences in motivational factors, learning processes, and perceived benefits of English language learning. Independent sample t-tests revealed statistically significant differences between males and females across all three variables. In terms of motivation, males scored slightly higher than females ($M = 3.66$, $SD = .501$ vs. $M = 3.59$, $SD = .302$, $t(248) = -1.412$, $p = .007$). However, females outscored males in the learning process ($M = 3.95$, $SD = .377$ vs. $M = 3.87$, $SD = .623$, $t(248) = 1.144$, $p = .001$). For perceived benefits, males scored slightly higher than females ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 6.03$ vs. $M = 3.73$, $SD = .393$, $t(248) = -0.538$, $p = .005$). The study highlighted intrinsic motivation, such as curiosity and the perceived value of English, as key drivers of student enthusiasm, with 54% viewing English as a tool for deeper understanding. Extrinsic motivation, like rewards, was less influential (28.8%). Demotivating factors included classroom tension (41.6%) and embarrassment when speaking (23.2%), which hindered participation. On the positive side, many students enjoyed active engagement, particularly discussions (51.2%), and emphasized English's role in



connecting new information with prior knowledge (56.8%). The study suggests that educators should create supportive, interactive learning environments to reduce anxiety and boost motivation. Further research is needed to examine the impact of age and the reasons for gender differences in motivation and perceived benefits. Overall, fostering intrinsic motivation and addressing learning barriers are crucial for improving student engagement.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study aimed to identify critical challenges and evaluate the effectiveness of university students' English learning, focusing on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations at the university level. Researchers analyzed data from 250 students using quantitative methods and statistical analysis, revealing that intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in their English learning [42, 43, 44]. The findings highlight varying learning styles and satisfaction levels across the four essential English skills. Similar to a 2020 study, this research shows that students' intrinsic motivation outweighs extrinsic motivation [45, 46]. Despite diverse learning processes, students share common goals and recognize the personal benefits of English courses. Their positive attitudes and optimism drive their commitment to improving proficiency [47, 48, 49]. Overall, the study offers valuable insights for authors, researchers, teachers, and students to enhance self-development and achieve success in their educational journeys.

Limitations

This study explores how various motivational factors—such as enjoyment of learning, self-improvement desires, teacher pressure, and the perceived usefulness of English for future careers—affect the success of students at the National University of Battambang. Success is measured by improvements in standardized English proficiency tests. Limitations include the focus on a specific sample of 250 students and particular motivational factors, which may not be generalizable to learners in different contexts or other educational levels. This study is relevant primarily to adult university students concerned with self-improvement and career success.

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Recommendation

In this research, researchers meticulously addressed various aspects of the research format, navigating challenges and evaluating our process to ensure its relevance to the selected topic. Despite facing difficulties and encountering limitations encountered during data collection and analysis, researchers' focus on student motivation to learn English led us to choose the National University of Battambang as a primary research site. While our study may not cover all the factors affecting motivation, researchers encourage future researchers to explore this area



further and emphasize the importance of continued research to increase academic awareness and support the English proficiency of the next generation, given that English has global significance in business and international communication.

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