

MOTIVATION IN EFL CLASSROOMS:

A REVIEW WITH A FOCUS ON YOUNG ADULT LEARNERS

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Abstract

This review article examines the crucial role that motivation has in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, with a specific focus on young adult learners. Through a comprehensive literature review, key theories and research findings were analyzed to elucidate the factors that influence motivation in language learning and their impact on young adults' language acquisition. Integrative motivation, driven by the desire to combine with the target language community, appears as a vital factor influencing language learning success among young adults. Dörnyei's Motivational Self System emphasizes the importance of learners envisioning their ideal L2 selves and setting language learning goals aligned with personal aspirations. Goal-setting and self-regulation strategies are identified as significant contributors to intrinsic motivation and enhanced language proficiency. Moreover, the Affective Filter Hypothesis sheds light on the connection between motivation and learners' emotional state, highlighting the role of motivation in lowering affective filters and facilitating language acquisition. Practical suggestions for EFL teachers are presented, supporting engaging and empowering language learning environments, clear goal setting, promoting learner autonomy, and addressing affective factors to reduce anxiety. By incorporating insights from motivation theories and research, educators can create motivating language learning experiences for young adult learners, fostering their language proficiency and communication skills.

Keywords: Motivation, young adults, EFL, teaching, learning.

Introduction

In the context of today's globalized world, English proficiency has become a crucial asset for young adults seeking to broaden their academic horizons and advance in their careers. As young adults embark on their language learning journey in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, motivation emerges as a key determinant of their success. The role of motivation in language learning is particularly significant during this critical phase of personal and academic development, as it influences learners' dedication, persistence, and overall language proficiency. As educators and researchers attempt to understand and foster the motivational drivers behind young adult learners' language acquisition, it becomes essential to explore the multifaceted nature of motivation in the EFL context.

This review article delves into the complex topic of motivation in EFL classrooms for young adult learners. It offers a comprehensive analysis of the influential factors and pedagogical approaches that impact their language learning experiences. Dresel & Ziegler (2009) highlight the crucial role of motivation in this context, particularly for young adults who often undertake language learning with a specific goal in mind, such as integrating into the target language community or pursuing opportunities in English-speaking countries

Drawing from prominent motivational theories, such as Gardner's Socio-Educational Model, Dörnyei's Motivational Self System, and Locke and Latham's goal-setting theory, this review aims to identify the key factors that drive and sustain young adult learners' motivation. By critically examining empirical studies, research findings, and best practices in EFL classrooms, the article seeks to shed light on the transformative role of motivation in determining successful language acquisition journeys.

Furthermore, this review explores the intricate relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and how these motivational factors interact with learners' affective states, as proposed by Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. The affective filter plays a fundamental role in language learning outcomes, and its connection to motivation warrants careful consideration in language classrooms.

The ultimate goal of this review article is to equip language educators and researchers with valuable insights into fostering a motivating and empowering language learning environment for young adult learners in EFL classrooms. By understanding the interplay between motivation, affective factors, and pedagogical practices, educators can design tailored strategies that address the unique needs and aspirations of young adult learners, facilitating their journey toward becoming proficient English speakers and global communicators.

Methodology

This review article employed a systematic approach to gather and analyze relevant literature on motivation in EFL settings for young adults. A thorough literature search was conducted using reputable academic databases, including ERIC, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and other scholarly resources, as well as specific keywords and key phrases, such as "motivation in EFL classrooms," "young adult learners," "integrative motivation," "intrinsic motivation," "Dörnyei's Motivational Self System," "goal-setting," "affective filter hypo-

thesis" and "self-regulation," were utilized to identify peer-reviewed articles, research papers, and books relevant to the topic. The inclusion criteria ensured that relevant studies focusing on motivation in EFL classrooms for young adult learners were considered, while irrelevant sources were excluded. Data from selected studies were meticulously analyzed and critically evaluated to identify key themes and theories related to motivation.

To ensure the robustness and reliability of the review, the data from multiple sources were cross-referenced and compared to identify commonalities, discrepancies, and recurring patterns in the research findings. Each selected study was critically evaluated to assess the strengths, limitations, and contributions of the research. The synthesis and integration of the literature provided valuable insights and recommendations for EFL teachers seeking to create motivating and effective language learning environments for young adults.

Through this rigorous methodology, this review article on motivation in EFL classrooms for young adult learners provides valuable insights and recommendations for EFL teachers and educators seeking to create inspiring and effective language learning environments. The incorporation of findings from various studies and theories contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence motivation and language learning success among young adult learners in EFL contexts.

Literature Review

Motivation is a fundamental factor influencing language learning outcomes in EFL classrooms, especially when satisfying young adult learners. This section reviews relevant literature on motivation in EFL settings, focusing on studies that specifically examine the motivational aspects of young adult learners. By exploring key motivational theories and research findings, this literature review aims to deepen our understanding of the factors that drive and sustain motivation in EFL classrooms.

Gardner's Socio-Educational Model

Gardner's Socio-educational Model has been widely used to investigate language learning motivation in diverse educational contexts. According to Gardner (2001), integrative motivation, driven by learners' desire to integrate into the culture of the target language community, is particularly crucial for successful language acquisition. Young adult learners often possess integrative motives as they seek opportunities to interact with native speakers, engage in study abroad programs, or pursue further studies in English-speaking countries. In a study by Clement et al. (1994), young adult learners in EFL classrooms who reported high integrative motivation demonstrated greater language proficiency and a stronger willingness to communicate in English.

Dörnyei's Motivational Self System

Dörnyei's Motivational Self System (2005) emphasizes the role of the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self in language learning motivation. Young adult learners often envision themselves as proficient English speakers or perceive an obligation to achieve certain language goals. By aligning their learning efforts with their envisioned selves, young adults can sustain motivation and persevere in their language learning efforts. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) conducted a study that revealed how young adult learners' beliefs about their future L2 selves were associated with their motivation levels and language proficiency. The theory highlights the importance of learners' self-concepts and future visions in shaping their language learning motivation. EFL teachers can utilize this framework to create motivating and empowering learning environments, encouraging students to envision themselves as successful language users and promoting a positive attitude toward language learning.

Goal-Setting and Self-Regulation

Setting clear and attainable language learn-

ing goals can significantly influence young adult learners' motivation and success. Locke and Latham's Goal-setting Theory (1990) posits that specific, challenging goals can lead to increased effort and persistence. In EFL classrooms, teachers can collaborate with young adult learners to set personalized language learning goals, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment. A study by Saito and Samimy (1996) found that young adult learners who actively engaged in goal-setting and self-regulation practices showed higher levels of intrinsic motivation and language proficiency.

Goal-setting and self-regulation are vital components in enhancing young adult learners' motivation and language learning outcomes. Drawing on Locke and Latham's Goal-setting Theory (1990), setting clear and challenging language learning goals can ignite a sense of purpose and drive among students, encouraging them to invest more effort and persist in their language studies. EFL teachers can facilitate this process by collaboratively establishing individualized goals with their students, ensuring that the objectives are realistic and achievable. When learners take an active role in setting their language learning targets, they develop a stronger sense of ownership and commitment to their studies.

Saito and Samimy's study (1996) highlights the positive correlation between engaging in goal-setting and self-regulation practices and increased intrinsic motivation and language proficiency. By integrating goal-setting and self-regulation strategies into the EFL classroom, teachers can empower young adults to take charge of their learning journey, leading to greater motivation and success in language acquisition.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory (1985) distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation arises from internal factors, such as interest and

enjoyment in the learning process, while extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards or pressures. Creating meaningful and enjoyable language learning experiences is essential to foster intrinsic motivation among young adult learners. A study by Lamb (2007) highlighted how engaging tasks and opportunities for autonomy in EFL classrooms contributed to higher levels of intrinsic motivation among young adult learners.

Furthermore, recognizing the delicate interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is essential for cultivating a balanced and sustainable motivational environment in EFL classrooms for young adult learners. While intrinsic motivation is often considered more desirable, extrinsic motivation can still serve as a valuable catalyst for language learning. Extrinsic rewards, such as praise, recognition, or certificates, can provide short-term encouragement and validation, especially for learners who are still developing their intrinsic interest in the language. However, it is crucial for educators to avoid over-reliance on extrinsic incentives, as excessive external pressure may undermine intrinsic motivation over time (Ryan & Deci, 1985).

Affective Filter Hypothesis and Its Connection to Motivation

In the context of EFL classrooms, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) plays a significant role in understanding how emotions and motivation influence language learning outcomes. According to this hypothesis, learners' affective factors, such as anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation, create a "filter" that affects the degree to which they can acquire a second language. When the affective filter is low, language input is more easily processed and absorbed, leading to efficient language acquisition. Conversely, a high affective filter can impede language acquisition by blocking language input and inhibiting learners' willingness to take risks and participate in communicative activities.

Motivation is a central component influencing the affective filter in language learning con-

texts. Young adult learners who are highly motivated to learn English tend to have a lower affective filter, enabling them to engage more effectively with language input and take advantage of language learning opportunities (Dörnyei, 2005). On the other hand, learners who experience anxiety or lack motivation may raise their affective filter, hindering their language learning progress (MacIntyre, 1995). Therefore, educators must be attentive to the affective factors that impact motivation in their EFL classrooms, as reducing anxiety and fostering a positive learning environment can lead to a more optimal affective filter, ultimately enhancing language acquisition.

Critical Discussion

The review of literature on motivation in EFL classrooms for young adult learners has highlighted several key findings and implications. First, Integrative motivation emerges as a significant driving force for language learning success among young adults. Learners who perceive English as a means to integrate into the target language community, such as through studying abroad or engaging in authentic interactions with native speakers, exhibit higher language proficiency and greater willingness to communicate in English (Clement et al., 1994). Consequently, EFL teachers should foster a classroom environment that promotes cultural exposure, encourages international communication, and instills a sense of belonging to the global English-speaking community. Second, Dörnyei's Motivational Self System underscores the importance of the ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 self in sustaining learners' motivation. Young adult learners who envision a positive and proficient future L2 self are more likely to persist in their language learning journey (Dörnyei, 2005). EFL instructors can support learners in envisioning their desired L2 selves by providing clear language learning goals, creating personalized learning pathways, and offering positive feedback that reinforces learners' sense of progress and achievement (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Furthermore, Goal-setting and Self-regulation strategies play a vital role in enhancing young adult learners' motivation and language learning outcomes. Learners who actively engage in setting specific and challenging language learning goals demonstrate higher levels of intrinsic motivation and proficiency (Saito & Samimy, 1996). To promote goal-oriented learning, EFL teachers should collaborate with young adults in defining realistic language learning objectives, offering guidance in developing action plans, and fostering a supportive learning environment that empowers learners to take charge of their progress.

Intrinsic motivation emerges as a crucial factor in EFL classrooms, where young adult learners are more likely to be engaged and committed when they find the learning process enjoyable and meaningful (Ryan & Deci, 1985). By incorporating authentic and enjoyable tasks, real-life materials, and opportunities for learner autonomy, EFL educators can ignite and sustain young adults' intrinsic motivation, leading to increased language engagement and proficiency (Lamb, 2007).

Conclusions

This review has underscored the significance of motivation in EFL classrooms, particularly in the context of young adult learners. Integrative motivation, the desire to integrate into the target language community, and intrinsic motivation, the internal drive for learning enjoyment, emerge as key determinants of young adults' language learning success. EFL teachers must recognize the diverse motivational factors influencing their students and tailor instructional practices accordingly. By incorporating Dörnyei's Motivational Self System into language instruction, teachers can create a dynamic and inspiring classroom environment. Encouraging young adult learners to envision their ideal L2 selves and setting meaningful language learning goals can motivate learners to persevere and strive for

linguistic proficiency.

Goal-setting and self-regulation strategies empower young adults to take ownership of their language learning journey, fostering a sense of responsibility and achievement. EFL instructors should emphasize goal-oriented learning and provide learners with the tools to monitor their progress and adjust their learning strategies accordingly.

To enhance intrinsic motivation, it is essential to create enjoyable and meaningful language learning experiences. EFL teachers should design tasks that align with learners' interests and aspirations, introduce authentic materials that reflect real-life language usage, and promote learner autonomy in the learning process.

Incorporating the Affective Filter Hypothesis into the understanding of motivation in EFL classrooms allows teachers to recognize the interplay between learners' emotions and their language learning experiences. As motivation can influence the affective filter, educators should strive to create a supportive and encouraging learning environment that fosters positive emotions and reduces anxiety. By addressing learners' affective needs and enhancing their motivation, EFL teachers can help young adults lower their affective filter and optimize their language learning potential. Thus, the Affective Filter Hypothesis serves as a valuable framework for comprehending the complex relationship between motivation and language acquisition for young adult learners in EFL settings. In summary, maximizing language learning outcomes for young adult learners requires an understanding of motivation in EFL classrooms and the promotion of that motivation. Goal setting, self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, the motivational self-system, and the affective filter are all factors that influence young adults' success and involvement in language learning. EFL teachers can help young adults develop into self-assured, independent, and proficient users of the English.

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