



**THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT IN
ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

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Abstract

Motivation and emotional well-being are important psychological factors influencing the process and outcomes of foreign language learning. For students with disabilities, these factors may become particularly significant because learning difficulties, communication barriers, limited social interaction, and previous negative educational experiences can affect their confidence and willingness to participate in language learning activities. This paper examines the role of motivation and emotional support in English language learning among students with disabilities. Particular attention is paid to intrinsic motivation, learner autonomy, self-confidence, foreign language anxiety, and supportive teacher–student relationships. The study is based on an analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature concerning language learning motivation, inclusive education, and the emotional dimensions of learning. The analysis suggests that a supportive educational environment can contribute to students’ sense of competence, autonomy, and belonging. Positive feedback, achievable learning goals, individualized tasks, emotional encouragement, and opportunities for meaningful communication may help students overcome anxiety and become more actively engaged in English language learning. The paper argues that psychological support should be



considered an integral component of inclusive English language education rather than an additional element of the teaching process.

Keywords: motivation, emotional support, English language learning, students with disabilities, learner autonomy, self-confidence, foreign language anxiety, inclusive education, teacher–student interaction.

Introduction

Learning a foreign language is not exclusively a cognitive process. It is also influenced by learners' emotions, motivation, self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and learning environment. Psychological factors can determine whether students actively participate in learning activities, persist when difficulties occur, and perceive their own progress positively.

This issue is particularly relevant to students with disabilities. Depending on the nature of their educational needs, such students may encounter difficulties related to communication, mobility, sensory perception, concentration, or processing information. Such difficulties can influence their confidence and willingness to participate in foreign language activities.

Motivation has long been recognized as one of the important factors in second and foreign language learning. Dörnyei emphasizes that motivation not only initiates language learning but also helps learners sustain the effort required for long-term language development.

At the same time, psychological support from teachers and other significant adults can influence how students perceive their own abilities. Therefore, English language instruction for students with disabilities should consider both linguistic objectives and the psychological conditions necessary for successful learning.

Motivation as a Psychological Factor in English Language Learning.

Motivation can be understood as a complex psychological construct that influences the direction, intensity, and persistence of learning behavior. In foreign language education, motivated learners are generally more willing to participate in learning activities, practice language skills, and continue working despite difficulties.

Dörnyei's Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom emphasizes the importance of creating basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining motivation, and encouraging positive self-evaluation.

For students with disabilities, motivational strategies may need to be adapted to individual needs. For example, a learner who experiences difficulties in speaking may benefit from beginning with short, predictable responses before progressing to longer communicative tasks. This approach allows the learner to experience small achievements and gradually develop confidence.

The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is also relevant. Intrinsic motivation is associated with interest and satisfaction derived from the learning activity itself, whereas extrinsic motivation may involve external rewards or expectations. In inclusive education, teachers should aim to develop internal interest in language learning while using external reinforcement appropriately.

Recent research provides further evidence of the relationship between motivational and psychological factors in language learning. A 2026 multilevel meta-analysis of 74 studies found positive relationships between both intrinsic and extrinsic L2 motivation and language achievement, with the association being stronger for intrinsic motivation.

Emotional Support and the Learning Environment



Emotional support refers to the psychological and interpersonal conditions that help learners feel accepted, respected, safe, and capable of participating in educational activities.

For students with disabilities, emotional support may include:

- respectful teacher–student communication;
- positive and specific feedback;
- patience and encouragement;
- opportunities to make choices;
- recognition of individual progress;
- avoidance of humiliating or excessively comparative assessment;
- creation of predictable and psychologically safe learning situations.

A supportive teacher does not simply praise students regardless of their performance. Rather, the teacher provides constructive feedback that helps learners understand what they have achieved and what they can improve.

Dörnyei identifies appropriate teacher behavior and a pleasant, supportive classroom atmosphere among the basic motivational conditions necessary for effective motivational strategies.

Although his framework was developed for language classrooms in general, its principles are particularly relevant to learners who may require additional psychological and educational support.

Self-Confidence and Learner Autonomy. Self-confidence is closely related to students' willingness to use a foreign language. Learners who are afraid of making mistakes may avoid speaking even when they possess sufficient linguistic knowledge.



For students with disabilities, repeated experiences of failure or excessive comparison with peers can negatively affect their academic self-perception. Therefore, teachers should emphasize individual progress rather than simply comparing learners with predetermined standards or other students.

Learner autonomy is another important factor. Providing students with appropriate choices can strengthen their sense of control over learning. Such choices may include selecting between two activities, choosing a topic for a short presentation, or deciding whether to respond orally or in writing when pedagogically appropriate.

This principle is consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Research involving students with learning disabilities and emotional handicaps has specifically examined autonomy and competence as motivational factors.

Foreign Language Anxiety. Foreign language anxiety is another psychological factor that can affect students' participation and performance. Speaking in a foreign language may create fear of making mistakes, being negatively evaluated, or failing to meet expectations.

Research has demonstrated relationships between foreign language anxiety, motivation, and language performance. Liu's study of 980 university students found significant negative relationships between foreign language anxiety and English learning motivation, while both anxiety and motivation were associated with English performance.

More recent research also indicates that psychological needs and language anxiety are interconnected. A 2024 study conducted with 319 university students in Tashkent found significant relationships among



autonomy, relatedness, classroom participation, foreign language anxiety, academic motivation, and academic achievement.

These findings suggest that reducing anxiety should be considered an important component of effective language instruction.

The Teacher's Role in Providing Emotional Support. The teacher plays a central role in creating a psychologically supportive environment. Teacher support can influence students' perceptions of competence and their willingness to participate in learning.

A 2024 study published in *Learning and Motivation* found that teacher concern positively predicted students' motivation and negatively predicted foreign language anxiety, while teacher concern was also positively associated with language achievement.

For students with disabilities, supportive teacher behavior can include adapting the pace of instruction, providing additional explanations, allowing sufficient response time, and acknowledging individual achievements.

The teacher should also avoid defining students exclusively by their disabilities. Instead, instruction should focus on their abilities, interests, existing knowledge, and potential for development.

Practical Strategies for English Language Teaching. Several strategies can be used to strengthen motivation and emotional support in English language education for students with disabilities.

1. Setting achievable goals



Large educational objectives should be divided into smaller, measurable goals. Successful completion of short tasks can provide learners with a sense of achievement.

2. Positive and constructive feedback

Feedback should focus on specific achievements and provide clear guidance for improvement. Instead of simply indicating that an answer is incorrect, the teacher can identify what was successful and provide a manageable next step.

3. Creating opportunities for choice

Students can be given limited but meaningful choices regarding topics, activities, or response formats. This can contribute to autonomy and engagement.

4. Reducing fear of mistakes

Mistakes should be treated as a natural part of language development. Teachers can use pair work, rehearsed dialogues, visual prompts, and short speaking tasks to make communication less stressful.

5. Connecting learning with students' interests

Personal interests can increase the relevance of English language activities. For example, students may learn vocabulary through topics related to music, games, animals, technology, hobbies, or everyday activities.

6. Recognizing individual progress

For students with disabilities, progress may occur at different rates. Individual achievement should therefore be recognized as an important indicator of learning success.

Discussion



The reviewed literature suggests that motivation and emotional support should not be considered secondary aspects of English language teaching. They are closely connected with learners' participation, persistence, confidence, and attitudes toward learning.

A particularly important issue is the relationship between teacher support and students' psychological needs. Research on learners with sensory impairments indicates that need-supportive teaching practices, including structure, autonomy support, and teacher involvement, are relevant to motivation and educational outcomes.

Research specifically involving learners with diverse educational needs in EFL contexts also demonstrates the importance of the learning environment. A 2025 European study involving students with visual, hearing, mobility, and specific learning difficulties found that teacher and peer support were significant predictors of internal motivation. These findings support the idea that inclusive English language education should address not only accessibility of instructional materials but also learners' psychological experiences.

Conclusion

Motivation and emotional support represent important psychological dimensions of English language learning for students with disabilities. An accessible curriculum and adapted instructional materials are necessary, but they may not be sufficient if learners experience anxiety, low self-confidence, lack of autonomy, or fear of failure.

Effective English language instruction should therefore combine linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological considerations. Teachers can support learners by creating achievable goals, providing constructive feedback,



offering meaningful choices, reducing fear of mistakes, recognizing individual progress, and establishing positive interpersonal relationships.

The central implication of this study is that psychological support should be integrated into the instructional process rather than treated as a separate intervention. When students feel competent, respected, and emotionally supported, they are more likely to participate actively and persist in learning English.

Thus, motivation-oriented and emotionally supportive teaching can contribute to a more inclusive, learner-centered, and psychologically safe environment for English language education of students with disabilities.

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