



INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

FACTORES MOTIVACIONALES INTRÍNSECOS Y EXTRÍNSECOS EN EL APRENDIZAJE DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS

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Abstract

This study explored the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors influencing English language learning among fifth-level students in the PINE career at the Technical University of Cotopaxi, using a mixed-methods approach that included surveys and classroom observations. The findings indicated that both types of motivation were present at high levels, with extrinsic motivation linked to career ambitions, social recognition, and academic requirements showing a slight predominance over intrinsic motivation, which was closely related to cultural interest, personal curiosity, and enjoyment. The results demonstrated a favorable, but not statistically significant, relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This suggests that students use each type of motivation on its own. Students may want to learn, yet they can have trouble understanding the content. Structural issues that might make learning harder include having too many students in a class and having classes that are too hard. To get pupils more interested in studying English, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are needed. However, motivation alone is not enough. Students may not do their best work until they obtain enough help from the school. This shows how important it is to improve the school's infrastructure in order to acquire the best learning outcomes.



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Keywords: Motivation; Intrinsic; Extrinsic; EFL

Resumen

La motivación es fundamental para aprender inglés. El objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar los factores motivacionales presentes en el proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera, tanto interno como externo al individuo. En la carrera PINE de la Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi, se utilizaron las herramientas de investigación con 23 alumnos del quinto ciclo que tienen un nivel A2+ según el MCER. Para la investigación se aplicó un enfoque mixto, siendo las encuestas analíticas y las hojas de observación los instrumentos principales para la recogida de datos. Los resultados revelaron que la motivación intrínseca y extrínseca se correlaciona de manera positiva, pero con bajo nivel de significancia. Esto revela que los estudiantes se sostienen en los dos tipos de motivación: la extrínseca, asociada al reconocimiento académico y las oportunidades profesionales que benefician; y la intrínseca, basada en el interés personal, la satisfacción y la autorrealización. Por lo tanto, se llega a la conclusión de que los elementos de ambas motivaciones funcionan como sistemas paralelos, los cuales se distinguen por un valor numérico mínimo que proporciona una valoración educativa, social y académica. ¡Esto refuerza la enseñanza del inglés en términos motivacionales!

Palabras clave: Motivación; Intrínseca; Extrínseca; EFL

Fecha de recibido: 21/11/2025

Fecha de aceptado: 29/01/2026

Fecha de publicado: 09/02/2026

Introduction

One of the finest ways to move ahead in school and at job is to learn English. English is an important language for talking to individuals who speak other languages and for helping people from various cultures understand each other better. Cruz González and Morales Vázquez (2023) concur on the importance of learning English as a second language and the many factors that influence this process, especially those that are economic, family, and emotional in character. Brown (1988) asserts that desire is universally acknowledged as a critical determinant of students' effective advancement in second language or foreign language learning. Students that are motivated show great dedication, perseverance, and better results while learning a language. Cedeño et al. (2024) define motivation as an internal process that is not easily apparent yet originates, directs, and sustains action impacted by internal or external factors that govern human behavior. To put it another way, motivation is what makes us do something because we want or need to. Motivation may be defined as the impetus that compels us to act, often originating from two primary sources: intrinsic factors grounded in personal interests and aspirations, and extrinsic factors formed by incentives or environmental pressures. Intrinsic motivation is the natural drive that comes from a person's feelings and experiences, as well as their participation in activities. This is especially true when pupils are likely to do something without needing outside rewards Saranraj and



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Meenakshi (2016). Dörnyei (1998) said that having an integrative mindset and a positive affect are very important for learning a second language.

On the other hand, Pranawengtias (2022) discovered that extrinsic motivation, which is linked to the quality of the class, the tactics used in the classroom, and money or reward, or punishment, has a somewhat bigger effect on student motivation than intrinsic drive. In this context, extrinsic motivation is doing something to get a certain result, such getting prizes or incentives. (Legault, 2016)

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the effects of extrinsic and intrinsic motivating variables on the acquisition of English as a second language (L2), while recognizing the role of educational interventions in this process. Consequently, questionnaires were administered to elucidate the dynamics of motivation in the context of English as a foreign language, particularly within Ecuadorian colleges.

Similar studies examine the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors in the acquisition of English as a second language. Inostroza et al. (2024) conducted a study to ascertain motivational and attitudinal characteristics among young Chilean English learners from Concepción. Data was gathered from a questionnaire administered to 137 pupils in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades of state-run primary schools. The findings suggest that the instructor profile significantly impacts students' motivation and attitudes towards learning English, especially in relation to the availability of multimodal and audio-visual resources. These findings underscore the significance of equitable access to resources in early language acquisition and demonstrate how disparities in teaching environments might influence learners' experiences. Furthermore, prior research indicates that early EFL policies in Chile and similar contexts are frequently influenced by economic, political, and structural issues, which hinder the equal execution of early language instruction.

Another study done by Ugli et al. (2025) investigated the balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors among English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, where a 25-item questionnaire was designed to measure intrinsic motivation (e.g., I learn English because it stimulates my mind) and extrinsic motivation (e.g., I learn English because it is a requirement for my career). They found that overall, students generally show intrinsic motivation, especially intellectual interest in English, which increases along with their language proficiency. The qualitative data reveal how this motivation is developed over time through increasing autonomy and personal involvement, which quantitative data alone do not fully capture.

Falcon & Arroyo (2024) sought to identify types of motivation among A2-level students at a language center in an Ecuadorian public university. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire administered to a sample of 229 students using a descriptive research design. The findings revealed a high overall level of motivation, which was more prominent than instrumental motivation. Specifically, students' motivation was strongly influenced by factors such as the desire to travel abroad and improve job prospects in the instrumental dimensions, while access to cultural content and opportunities for interaction with native speakers were central to integrative motivation. These results suggest that Ecuadorian university students perceive English not only as a practical tool for academic and professional advancement but also as a means of cultural connection and intercultural communication, indicating a shift in the traditional understanding of foreign language learning in higher education contexts.

These studies reveal that the drive to learn English goes beyond just meeting classroom requirements or dealing with outside pressures. Young learners often find themselves drawn to English because it sparks their



curiosity and aligns with their personal aspirations. Additionally, factors like job prospects, travel opportunities, and cultural exchange play a significant role. Overall, this research indicates that motivation is fueled not only by individual effort but also by the social and institutional contexts that shape students' experiences with the English language.

Materials and Methods

Research Approach and Design

The present study follows a mixed approach. According to Phakiti et al. (2018), a major advantage of mixed methods research is that it allows you to acquire a full and nuanced view of the thing you are studying by combining data from multiple qualitative sources with descriptive and quantitative data. You can look at the material from a lot of different but still valuable aspects if you properly combine both approaches. The chapter demonstrates the integration of diverse methodologies in applied linguistics research and provides pragmatic guidance on executing a mixed-methods study, along with suggestions for data design and analysis. This study aimed to identify and provide a comprehensive understanding of the motivational factors that affect fifth-level university students at the Technical University of Cotopaxi.

Instruments and techniques

This research was conducted using an observation sheet and an analytical questionnaire focused on the types of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that influence English language learning as a second language. An analytical-descriptive method was employed, based on the qualitative interpretation of data gathered through direct classroom observations and the analysis of structured open-ended survey questions. It allowed us to get patterns, irregularities, or trends related to motivation within higher education in Ecuador, expanding and providing a deeper vision of the analyzed data. Data were collected through two main instruments. Non-numerical data observation sheets and analytical survey sheets. The observation sheet is specifically designed according to the parameters of the investigation of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors to record specific indicators such as participation, communicative initiative, responses, and willingness of students in learning the English language.

Additionally, an analytical questionnaire was used, based on items adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) of 1985, an extensively recognized instrument to assess motivation and attitudes in language learning. Moreover, a Likert scale was used, which facilitated obtaining quantifiable data suitable for statistical analysis. The data was interpreted using thematic coding to identify repeated categories related to motivational factors. These factors were then classified into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This process improved the validity of the findings through source triangulation, which included observed behaviors, questionnaire responses, and previous theories on motivation in English language learning in Ecuador. Overall, the process offered a clear view of how different motivational factors affect students' engagement, performance, and attitude toward learning English.

Study Unit

The unit of study consists of students now in the fifth "A" semester of the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages major, emphasizing English. The sample group was chosen since it was evident that these students were engaged in the course and were willing and able to fill out the questionnaire, which is a very crucial



aspect of the research process. This strategy ensures that the data gathered is valuable and demonstrates that the local population is informed and concerned about the subject. The selection criteria was to include individuals directly involved in the pedagogical dynamics of language teaching, which is crucial for gathering relevant information aligned with the study's aims. This study may involve students from prior semesters who are enrolled in the same major, unexpected upon available resources and time. This type of growth would provide us a bigger and more complete set of data, which would help us see how students' academic and professional life develop while they are in school. This would make the findings better and give a better understanding of what it is like to learn both foreign and local languages.

Results and Discussion

The quantitative analysis revealed high levels of motivation in both dimensions. The mean score for extrinsic motivation ($x = 4.13$) slightly exceeded that for intrinsic motivation ($x = 4.00$), suggesting a strong orientation towards academic and professional rewards among PINE students. Regarding the relationship between variables, the Pearson correlation analysis between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation toward English language learning reported a coefficient of $r = 0.08$. This indicates a positive but statistically insignificant relationship between both constructs within the group of university students. This suggests that, in the studied population, extrinsic motivation operates independently of internal or intrinsic factors; for instance, students' commitment to meeting academic requirements or professional goals is unrelated to their inherent interest in or enjoyment of the language.

Extrinsic Analysis

While the quantitative data show a null correlation ($r = 0.08$), the qualitative interviews reveal that students maintain both motives in separate compartments. Among the 23 participants interviewed, the most frequently cited extrinsic motivation for learning English was the aspiration for better life opportunities and prospects, with 18/23 respondents. This was followed by communication/cultural exposure and social recognition (13/23), academic demands tied to their major or university degree (12/23), and professional/career advancement (9/23).

These findings suggest that students perceive English not merely as an academic requirement or professional asset, but above all as a gateway to broader life possibilities:

Professional Projection and Employability

The findings indicated that professional projection and employability were the primary motivators for individuals. Students regularly described English not only as an academic requirement but also as an essential tool for economic survival and potential career success. The results demonstrate that college students know a lot about what employers want these days, and learning English is becoming more of a must than a benefit. This idea is a strong sort of extrinsic motivation since people really need to get a job and rise up the social ladder. So, it looks that the main reason students want to keep learning English is because they expect it will help them in their careers in the long run. This elucidates the elevated extrinsic motivation scores identified in the quantitative investigation.

Cultural and Prestigious Capital



The results also show how English may be a source of cultural and social wealth. Students often thought that being good at English meant being smarter, more knowledgeable, and more connected to the world. Not only does knowing English help you get a job, but it also shows that you are different from others and makes students feel like they are part of a larger, global community. This kind of motivation indicates you want people to see you and think you're part of a group. This means that learning a language is related to finding out who you are and where you belong in the world. So, English is crucial for more than just what kids can achieve; it's also important for who they can become.

Academic Engagement vs. Time Management

Students' thoughts on how to stay interested in their studies and manage their time show that they think about what drives them in a more complicated way. Several respondents indicated procrastination or a failure to prioritize academic assignments, particularly when they perceived the tasks as uncomplicated or were constrained by time. This behavior shows that students care more about their long-term goals, like getting good grades, finishing their classes, or getting a degree, than about how they study every day. Students are still thinking about the big picture of moving up in their jobs, but this focus on the future can make them less interested in what they're learning now. The results show that motivation and learning habits are two separate things. This means that having a bigger outside reason to do something doesn't always mean you'll work harder at your regular learning activities.

Intrinsic Analysis

In contrast, the qualitative interviews reveal that students are mostly driven by cultural and internal social interests, as all 23 respondents acknowledged this element. After that, 16 out of 23 respondents said they were interested in learning more and wanted to master the material. 15 out of 23 respondents said they were personally interested in and enjoyed the material. Conversely, self-realization and the perceived intrinsic value of the language were identified as the least often mentioned motivational drivers.

The interviews suggest that students' motivation is largely rooted in intrinsic and cultural factors, supported by personal engagement, enjoyment, and the meaningful role the language plays in their self-development.

Cultural and Social Interest

This is the predominant motivational factor that shows that students are very interested in learning about other cultures and making friends who speak English. Students expressed a genuine desire to interact with individuals from various backgrounds, understand differing perspectives, and make meaningful contributions to intercultural exchanges. This view shows how motivation can be integrated, as learning a language is seen as a way to meet new people and learn about other cultures. This kind of excitement seems to make students want to participate in class and stay interested. They see English not just as a school subject, but as a way to talk to and connect with other people.

Curiosity and Desire for Mastery

The results show that curiosity and the desire to do well are two important parts of intrinsic motivation. This part shows that students naturally want to take advantage of learning opportunities that make them feel more competent and help them grow as people. Students are interested in what they are learning, which makes them



want to learn more, ask questions, and think more deeply about it. When things get hard, their desire to learn more keeps them going and makes them more responsible for their own learning. These things work together to help people learn on their own and be self-sufficient, which makes education more fun and important. Because of this, students who want to learn the language well usually study more than just what they need to get by.

Personal interest and enjoyment

Students' intrinsic motivation is significantly affected by their personal interests and sense of fulfillment. Participants emphasized that learning English is more effective and enjoyable when perceived as engaging and dynamic, frequently likening it to a game-like experience. This perspective shows how important it is to be emotionally involved in learning a language. Having fun lowers stress and makes you more likely to join in. When you consider learning activities fun and interesting, they don't feel like chores; they feel like something you want to do. This increases intrinsic motivation. These results align with the intrinsic motivation analysis, highlighting the importance of enjoyment as a crucial element in maintaining students' ongoing engagement with English learning.

Observation Sheets Analysis

The qualitative evidence from the observation sheets applied in the classroom provides a contextualized explanation of the high levels of motivation identified. The pedagogical environment, characterized by the positive teacher's attitude and the integration of various technological materials, acts as an important extrinsic stimulator. Student behavior in the classroom, marked by active interaction, peer collaboration, and the absence of distractions, reflects a solid commitment to learning objectives.

However, the observation also identified critical obstructing factors. Although the methodology and the teacher's attitude are facilitators, the linguistic complexity of certain topics, the low levels of student proficiency, and the high number of students in the classroom were identified as important barriers. And as a result, this suggests that even when motivation is high, structural and cognitive challenges can hinder the smoothness of the learning process.

Table 1. Quantitative and Qualitative Results of Motivational Factors

Dimension (Gardner)	Quantitative Result	Qualitative Result
Extrinsic Motivation	Medium (4.13/5.0)	Students associated English with job success, economics, and degree requirements.
Intrinsic Motivation	Medium (4.00/5.0)	Students associated English with self-improvement.
Pearson's correlation	R = 0.08 (null)	

The statistics indicate that PINE students studying English face a variety of complex challenges. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels increased quantitatively, with extrinsic drive being marginally more pronounced. The minimal, inconsequential correlation between the two dimensions indicates that they operate primarily independently. Qualitative evidence corroborates this trend, indicating that students concurrently exhibit robust extrinsic motivations associated with professional ambitions, employability, academic obligations, and social acknowledgment, alongside intrinsic motivations grounded in cultural interest, curiosity, mastery, and enjoyment.



Consequently, English is regarded as more than merely a practical instrument for achieving academic success and securing employment; it is also perceived as a vital means of engaging with diverse cultures, shaping one's identity, and participating actively. Classroom observations validate these findings by illustrating that effective teaching tactics and supportive learning environments increase motivation and engagement. However, they assert that structural and cognitive barriers, such as elevated class sizes, competency disparities, and challenging subjects, may hinder the translation of drive into consistent learning advancement. The results indicate that students have a persistent enthusiasm for studying English over time. However, their personality and the surrounding circumstances influence how they manifest and perceive this urge.

Conclusions

The results show a weak but positive link between intrinsic and extrinsic drive. This demonstrates that students may maintain their academic performance despite fluctuations in their intrinsic desire, provided they have external incentives. For PINE students, internal and extrinsic motivation seem to work as separate but complementary forces that keep them interested in their studies.

Usually, fifth-level students want to do things that are useful and practical. People don't just consider English to be a school topic; they also consider it to be a kind of symbolic capital that is important for getting a job and moving up in society. Students always consider language to be a way to gain jobs, which is why they work harder than for any other reason.

Furthermore, teaching methodology and the teacher's positive attitude emerge as key extrinsic factors that help mitigate learning difficulties. Nevertheless, an unresolved tension persists: despite high levels of motivation, students' progress is constrained by external challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and a mismatch between the complexity of instructional content and students' actual proficiency level (A2+). These findings indicate that motivation alone is insufficient to guarantee effective learning outcomes unless institutional conditions, including infrastructure and appropriate level alignment, are also adequately addressed.

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