

# Motivation in the Classroom: Factors That Motivate Students to Learn English at PUCESE

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## Abstract

Motivation is a main concern to the teaching-learning process because it involves a complete community, but there are different factors that affect it depending on the learner. This research adopted a quantitative method and the Dörnyei's motivational framework in order to find out PUCESE students' opinion about their own motivation to learn English, but an additional component was included to the framework: parent-specific motivation. The items to form the questionnaire were chosen from the Wong (2007) Questionnaire, and it was answered by 70 PUCESE General English students. The results showed that the professor is the most significant factor affecting PUCESE students' motivation to learn English in General English Classes. On the other hand, parents are not statistically important, but they play a central role in supporting PUCESE students', economically or affectively. Finally, PUCESE students affirmed they have an instrumental purpose to learn English, which is a key for accelerating academic and career success. Finally, the most important thing about English courses is that students learn everything they can use in their daily life, so the teacher needs to adapt the General English materials according to the students' career, goals and interests, since students' reason for learning English is to have a good job with an excellent salary.

**Key words:** second language, motivation, parents, instrumental purpose.

## **Introduction**

What makes a person want to learn? An appropriate answer could be responsible parents, but if you ask that to a teacher, the first word that appears is MOTIVATION. But what does motivation mean? Well, motivation could be defined as a learners' reason to learn. For teachers, motivation could help students make the decision of taking responsibility for their learning and to move in order to learn; in other words, motivation affects students' behavior, while for students, motivation is this special activity during a lesson that makes them participate and take advantages from the activity. It turns the classroom into an ideal place where everyone (teacher and students) is involved in the learning process.

Most of the PUCESE students know that English is widely used in various business sectors, government, and International trade. However, there are students who do not care about learning or having a good level of English in order to get better jobs. What aspects or factors influence PUCESE students in order to learn English as a second language? This is the question that the present study will try to answer in order to give PUCESE teachers an orientation about students' language learning process.

The term motivation is derived from the Latin "movere" (to move). In simple words, motivation is the act that gives people reasons to move in order to do something, but motivation is a complicated word concept, because there are a lot of definitions and disagreement too. This is why some scholars only give an orientation.

For example, Littlewood (1996), expressed the complexity of motivation saying that motivation includes many components such as the individual's drive, need for achievement and success, curiosity, desire for stimulation and new experience; Murray (1938) defined motivation as "press," in other words; this is the force to make somebody does something. And Dörnyei and Schmidt (2001) gave a comprehensible one, which joins the functions and roles of motivation in affecting the learning process. They described what motivation means in the following words, motivation "concerns the

direction and magnitude of human behavior, that is: the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it, the effort expended on it.” hence motivation is the students’ enthusiasm to do something.

In the field of instrumental and integrative motivation, researchers believe that both (instrumental and integrative motivation) can be closely linked and not far apart in their extreme ends. However, they consider that students are commonly found with dominant instrumental motivation, because they have less direct contact with native English speakers. For example, Liu (2005) found out in her study of 202 Chinese students in a southern university in China, that instrumental motivation is more important than an integrative motivation among them. Schunk (1990) confirmed his similar findings of Bangladeshi undergraduate students who were more instrumentally than integratively motivated towards English language learning.

Opposing the above-mentioned researchers’ concept, Moss and Laurent (2001) discovered in their study of 255 Iranian university students studying general English that they were highly motivated, both instrumentally and integratively. Therefore, that investigation is contradictory to the foreign context beliefs, that instrumental is the dominant motivation. So, motivation refers to a socio-psychological construct (involving internal needs and desires: thoughts, feelings, and actions) which is directed by external stimuli ranging from schools to cultural influences.

Motivation is also considered as an influential issue to successfully acquire a second or foreign language. So, keeping and developing students' motivation is vital in language learning and teaching (Gardner, 1992). Gardner and Lambert (1972) emphasized that, even though language aptitude explains learner's achievements to a great range, motivational factors can override the aptitude factors. Motivation plays an important part in L2 learning, because motivation can influence what, when, and how one learns. That is, motivation regulates the strategies used to reach these aims, the strength put into learning, and one's skill to sustain that strength.

Dörnyei’s framework includes the most important theories and approaches about motivation. And it has been adopted as the theoretical framework of this study, Dörnyei

and Schmidt (2001) claimed that there are two distinct motivational approaches: psychological and socio-cultural approaches. Motivational psychologists search for internal motives for human behavior; they focus in the individual (person). For example: energy arousal and cognitive self-appraisal. Therefore, social psychologists tend to study action or aptitude as the purpose of the social context and the interpersonal/intergroup relational patterns. So, when motivation means behavior, it derives from the interrelationship between the inner of each person and the outer world.

Dörnyei's work (1994) has been considered as one of the most prominent contemporary motivational constructs in L2. This model consists of three levels of motivation: language level, learner level and learning situation level.

- Language level contains two subsystems: integrative motivational system and instrumental motivational system.
- The learner level includes individual characteristics that learners have in their learning process. They include needs for achievement and self-confidence (anxiety, perceived L2 competence, attributions and self-efficacy).
- The learning situation level is connected with:
  - 1) Course-specific motivation, which refers to syllabus, the teaching materials, teaching methods and learning tasks.
  - 2) Teacher-specific motivation which concerns the motivational impact of the teacher's personality (affiliative motive), behavior (direct socialization of motivation like modeling, task presentation, and feedback) and teaching style (controlling vs. autonomy-supporting)
  - 3) Group-specific motivation which includes goal-orientedness, group cohesiveness, classroom goal structure, norm and reward system.
  - 4) Course-specific motivation which is related to learner's interest in the course, relevance of the course to student's needs, expectancy of success and satisfaction student have in the outcome.

After understanding general aspects about learners' motivation, Dörnyei's work is the most applicable framework to study second language learners' motivation, but it also needs the parent-specific component under learning situation level. Epstein, Coates,

Salinas, Sanders & Simon (1997) debated how children learn and grow through three overlapping spheres of influence: family, school and community, and these three spheres must form a partnership to best meet the needs of the child. Interestingly enough, Dörnyei (1994) also pointed out parental influence plays an important role in students' learning motivation in his own work, though he does not include it as a component in his framework. So, parents and teachers have different opportunities to guide children in their learning process in order to help them to clarify and accomplish their goal in the educational field and in their life.

In general, the family, as the responsible of students' learning, has a great influence on students' learning success. So, family problems might alter students remaining in University. Problems include lack of sufficient contact among family members, lack of economic resources, or parents having many working hours, either in the city or outside of the city. These kind of problems might lead to relationship problems among family members.

The component of parent-specific motivation added to Dörnyei's (1994) model can be divided into the following constituents:

- Education background-English proficiency level: talks about parents' proficiency in English and abilities in offering guidance to their children.
- Financial support: refers to technical support, provided by parents to facilitate their children's English learning, such as hiring a tutor, buying reference books or a computer.
- Affective encouragement: refers to the supportive family climate, like verbal encouragement to their children. Then, why is parental involvement important in learners' process of language acquisition? Many researchers say that when adults involve children in frequent, caring conversation, they demonstrate better cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development (Brown et al, 1997, Martinez, 1981; National Institute of Health, 1997).

Relating to teaching English as a foreign language, in Esmeraldas, years ago, young children started to learn English in primary school. Now, they start to learn English,

depending on the kind of primary school, in public schools, students will receive two class periods of 40 minutes; but in private schools, they have their own curriculum. When learners are in high school they receive five hours per week, each period of class is 40 or 45 minutes; and finally when students are in university, they receive five hours per week, each period of class is 60 minutes.

PUCESE has been giving students the opportunity to improve their English knowledge and skills for 23 years. In order to carry out this goal, students need to pass six levels of General English to get the university Degree, except for International Trade and Hotel and Tourism Careers where students receive eight levels of General English.

## **Methodology**

This study has adopted Dörnyei's motivational framework (1994) and a questionnaire from Wong's (2007) research, which is a multi-component motivation test made up of over 130 items to examine L2 learning motivation, including learner level, language level and learning situation level. Here, the researcher has chosen 32 items to examine PUCESE students' motivation to learn English, which are based on a five-point Likert scale (Straker 2013) to elicit the students' responses about motivation to learn English at PUCESE. A typical scale might be "Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree."

The survey respondents also have items about their demographic information such as age, gender, school year, and their parents' background information, such as educational background, income and occupation. Respondents have the right to keep anonymous.

This study used a total sample of 70 university students from first level of General English at PUCESE in Esmeraldas. Among them, 38 were girls and 32 were boys. They were asked to take part in filling in the above-mentioned questionnaire. Most of the participants were around 17 years old, with a maximum age of 35. The questionnaire given to students was in Spanish, a language students are most familiar with, to avoid language barrier and communication breakdown.

This research had two times. The first one was carried out at the beginning of the semester April – September/2013, when PUCESE students from 1<sup>st</sup> level of General English answered to 32-closely items and some demographic information about their parents and themselves. In order to know if students are motivated to learn English during this semester or not, and what factors affect their learning. The second time was carried out at the beginning of the month of July. Here, students had to answer the same questions in order to know if their answers about each question of the questionnaire have changed. After these two times, the researcher had the needed information to establish the factors that infer in PUCESE students when they learn English as a foreign language. So, the researcher had the appropriate information to establish the factors that affect their learning.

## Results

The comparison takes the high scores 4 and 5 (agree and strongly agree) as the reference for each question.

**Table # 1:** Percentage of the answers about language level including an instrumental and an integrative item

N°	Question	1	2	3	4	5
18	I learn English because I want to get a good job.	7,14%	8,57%	10%	25,72%	48,57%
32	English is a foreign language I like.	12,86%	15,71%	20%	21,43%	30%

Source: Survey

As shown in the **table 1**, 51,43% of participants agreed that their motivation to learn English is integrative, so they like to learn English. On the other hand, 72,29% of people who took the survey, affirmed that they have an instrumental motivation to learn English, they want to learn English because they have external reasons like getting a good job.

**Table # 2:** Percentage of answers about learner level including need for achievement and self-confidence

N°	Question	1	2	3	4	5
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2	If my English teacher assigns difficult English homeworks, I still try my best to finish it.	4,29%	7,14%	4,29%	34,28%	50%
5	No matter how difficult I think English is, I will never give up learning.	10%	10%	18,57%	28,57%	32,86%
13	I have the ability to pass English test/exam despite how I did in the past tests and exams.	4,29%	8,57%	17,14%	42,86%	27,14%
24	I continue learning English because I can express what I want to say without much difficulty.	10%	5,71%	18,58%	31,44%	34,27%
26	I am not afraid to make mistakes in English homework.	5,71%	12,87%	14,27%	22,87%	44,28%
27	I learn English because English is a necessity for my future.	5,71%	4,29%	4,29%	17,14%	68,57%
31	I am not afraid to speak English in class.	5,71%	8,57%	10%	28,58%	47,14%

Source: Survey

In the case of **table 2**, results show that the percentage of answers for agreed and strong agreed are higher and interesting than the others. For example in questions # 1 with a 68,57%, student reaffirmed they have an instrumental motivation because they are learning English for an external reason. Another important point is that General English students from first level are motivated to learn English because they continue learning it even though their tasks and homework are difficult. It is affirmed in question # 2, with a 34,28% for agreed and a 50% for strong agreed. And finally in question # 31 with a 28,58% for agreed and a 47,14% for strong agreed, students can develop their speaking skill because they are motivated to it and they are no afraid to speak English in class.

**Table # 3:** Percentage of answers of learning situational level, specifically course importance

N°	Question	1	2	3	4	5
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1	I like what I have learnt in English lessons.	2,86%	12,86%	8,57%	32,23%	43,48%
8	The English I am learning in English lessons can be used in my daily life.	5,71%	5,71%	8,57%	31%	49,01%
14	I am very interested in what my English teacher is teaching me.	4,29%	8,57%	11%	31%	45,14%
19	I believe I can pass my English tests/exams.	2,86%	4,29%	14,29%	35,71%	42,85%
25	I am happy with my English test results.	4,29%	11,43%	25,71%	25,71%	32,86%
29	I believe I can learn English well.	3,71%	7,56%	11,86%	32,23%	44,64%

Source: Survey

It is important to know that PUCESE students like what they have learnt in General English classes, because all the percentage of answers for agreed and strong agreed are higher. For example, the highest percentage is for question #8, where students with a 31% for agreed and a 49,01% for strong agreed say that they learn an English vocabulary and grammar they can use in their daily life, so they are learning a useful language. On the other hand, the 35,71% for agreed and 42,85% for strong agreed say they are not worried about English tests/exams, because they believe they are able to pass it. And this can be true because if they like what their English professors have taught them, they will study, and it will be easier to get good scores in their test/exams, so they can pass their English levels.

Table # 4: Percentage of answers for learning situational level specifically teacher component

N°	Question	1	2	3	4	5
6	My English teacher presents clearly when he/she asks us to perform a task.	5,71%	10%	2,86%	22,86%	58,57%
9	I understand my English teacher's instructions.	5,71%	17,14%	10%	32,86%	34,29%

12	I can learn better English if my English teacher controls me less.	14,29%	14,29%	20%	22,85%	28,57%
15	The feedback my English teacher gives me related to my work and learning progress is useful for my learning.	8,57%	2,86%	10%	32,86%	45,71%
20	Feedback from teachers encourages me to learn English.	7,14%	8,57%	7,14%	31,43%	45,72%
23	If I can master English well, my teacher will have a better impression of me.	4,29%	4,29%	10%	17,14%	64,28%

Source: Survey

This table shows that the role of teachers in the classroom is so important. As you can see, the percentage of answers for agreed and strong agreed are higher, except in question #12; where, percentage of 22,85% for agreed and 28,57% for strong agreed are lower than the others. There, students say that they need for their English teacher to control their learning activities, in order to get better results when they are learning English. Another important point is that students like when their teacher has a good impression of them; it means that, what the teacher thinks about their students affects their learning process. It is affirmed with a 17,14% for agreed and a 64,28% for strong agreed. On the other hand, students say the feedback that teacher gives their students about their work and the class topic are so important, because it encourages students to learn English, in this case, as a second language. Finally, teachers have to use an appropriate or clear language in order to guarantee that students do their activities in a good way.

Table # 5: Percentage of answers about learning situational level specially group motivational component

N°	Question	1	2	3	4	5
3	I like English class activities.	7,14%	8,57%	7,14%	27,15%	50%
7	I prefer doing pair/group projects than individual work.	12,86%	7,14%	5,71%	24,29%	50%

11	Learning English with my friends together is better than learning it by myself.	5,71%	5,71%	7,14%	22,86%	58,58%
28	I try my best to learn English because I know the benefits of learning English.	4,29%	4,29%	8,57%	18,57%	64,28%
30	Learning English is a key not to let people look down on me.	8,57%	11,43%	18,57%	31,43%	30%

Source: Survey

In question # 28, with an 18,57% for agreed and a 64,28% for strongly agreed, students reaffirm their instrumental motivation to learn English; because they know that learning English has good benefits. On the other hand, PUCESE students believe that their learning process is better when they work in pairs or groups, because they learn from each other. Finally, question # 30, with a 31,43% for agreed and a 30% for strongly agreed show that to learn English is not an excuse to look down on anyone. So, someone who learns English is an important student like the others, but they know another language.

Table # 6: Percentage of answer about learning situational level specifically parent support

<b>N°</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
4	Financial support and affective encouragement from my parents motivate me learn English in PUCESE.	8,57%	7,14%	17,14%	25,71%	41,44%
10	My parents always encourage me to improve my English.	12,86%	8,57%	15,71%	34,29%	28,57%
16	My parents will teach me English when I need them to.	5,10%	22,19%	24,71%	13,29%	34,71%
17	My parents are willing to pay for the English reference books when I need them.	8,57%	8,57%	18,57%	21,43%	42,86%

21	My parents will point out my English mistakes.	13,44%	8,23%	26,73%	13,44%	38,13%
22	My parents pay for English tutorial class for me to improve my English.	14,29%	7,14%	2,85%	14,29%	61,43

Source: Survey

The role of parents is important for students in their learning process. But to learn English, students need more financial support and affective encouragement, because parents can discourage them easily. Students say that they like when their parents encourage them to continue learning English, in question # 4, with a 25,71% for agreed and a 41,44% for strong agreed; and in question # 10, with a 34,29% for agreed and a 28,57% for strong agreed. To pay tutorial classes or reference books are needed when PUCESE students acquire this important language, because these help them to look for information, practice or improve what they are learning in the classroom. And this is confirmed in question # 22, with a 14, 29% for agreed and a 61, 43% for strongly agreed; and in question # 17, with a 21, 43% for agreed and a 42, 86% for strong agreed.

## Discussion

According to the results, PUCESE students have a positive motivation to learn English, but there are complicated reasons like culture and points of view, which stop them from being wholly motivated to learn English in Esmeraldas- Ecuador.

PUCESE students show that their motivation to learn English has an instrumental value and not an integrative one. When they are in first level of General English, the most important is the benefit English will give so they can advance in the future endeavors. So, to acquire a good job means to have a good (high) salary, and it is an excellent point to motivate participants. On the other hand, they have a very complicated psychological state of mind to learn English, because they regard their success to being more related to hard work than ability. Their instrumental values to learn English give them success. In other words, they believe that success is the outcome of applying enough effort even after repeated failures.

Participants' self-confidence and need for achievement are the key elements affecting their motivation to learn English at the dimension of language level. The highest score is for self-efficacy, it means they have a strong self-confidence in their ability and this is why they are able to express in the second language using their English skills. Instrumental values serve the main purpose of English PUCESE students, who believe that self-determination is what they need in order to successfully acquire the target language, though they are not yet confident in their language proficiency.

The most important thing about English courses for this study is that students learn something they can use in their daily life, so the teacher needs to adapt the General English materials according to the students' career, goals and interests, since students' reasons for learning English are to have a better life in the future, for instance, a good job and a better career prospect.

Teachers know that they play an important role in the classroom, because the success of the class depends on their ability to manage it. On the other hand, students prefer teachers to control their English activities during the class; it means that students need the guidance of their teacher to complete their activities successfully. Students also need the task presentation and feedback to be clear and precise. Participants assert teachers to be the greatest influence on their motivation to learn English and the most significant factor directly affecting participants' learning behavior.

Participants prefer learning a new language by working in a group, because they can share opinions and ideas, compare their homework answers and study together. Once more, the instrumental value is emphasized, depending on the benefit English may carry up to each student, they will learn or improve it.

To learn a new language is a complex process which involves internal and external aspects. In this case, parents are an external aspect. Parents' affective encouragement plays an important and specific role in participants' motivation to learn English. Financial support is also a significant factor when participants learn a second language, because they need to pay for academic materials and tutorial classes. Students learn English as a second language because of their instrumental motivation and goals. Their parents'

background and English proficiency do not intervene in PUCESE students' learning process.

## **Conclusions**

Statistically speaking, this study found that the teacher is the most significant factor affecting PUCESE students' motivation to learn English in General English classes. So, English teachers should be reminded of their important roles in affecting this social group from Esmeraldas. Teachers' purpose should be to create a helpful environment to improve students' English learning by selecting appropriate learning objectives; choosing relevant authentic materials; designing, structuring and grading learning objectives, and providing constructive feedback; in order to improve their learning diversity in Esmeraldas' classrooms and to motivate students to learn English as a second language.

Even though, parents are not statistically important, because they do not bring an impact to improve English in PUCESE students' no matter whether they have high or low incomes, findings show that parents play a central role in supporting PUCESE students, economically or affectively. In other words, PUCESE students' parents fully support their learning, even though they cannot help them with their work in terms of English. Understanding parents' expectation (they learn the second language) may indirectly improve PUCESE students' motivation to learn English.

In this study, PUCESE students affirm they have an instrumental value to learn English, which is a key for accelerating academic and career success. Also, PUCESE students see the role of teachers to be very important, because teachers can help them learn one of the most important languages in the world, English. So, PUCESE students consider teachers' modeling, task presentation and feedback very crucial to their English learning. By acquiring a good level of English, PUCESE students believe that they would have a better life in the future.

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