

**ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN STUDENTS' LEARNING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF
ENUGU STATE**

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of motivation in students' learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 2708 senior secondary school students in public secondary schools in the study area, while a sample of 270 students was used for the study. A structured questionnaire titled Role of Motivation in Students' Learning of English Language Questionnaire (RMSLELQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in English Language Education and Measurement and Evaluation. For the reliability Cronbach Alpha was used to obtain a coefficient of 0.80. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, with a criterion mean of 2.50. The findings revealed that students' intrinsic motivation influences their learning of English Language to a high extent, with a grand mean of 3.05. The study also found that extrinsic motivation influences students' learning of English Language to a high extent, with a grand mean of 3.09. The study concluded that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play important roles in promoting students' interest, participation, persistence and commitment to learning English Language. It was therefore recommended that teachers,

parents and school administrators should adopt appropriate motivational strategies to improve students' engagement and learning outcomes in English Language.

Keywords: Motivation; Intrinsic Motivation; Extrinsic Motivation; English Language Learning;

Introduction

Motivation is a fundamental psychological factor that influences the direction, intensity and persistence of students' efforts toward learning. In the school environment, motivation explains why some learners willingly participate in classroom activities, practice what they have been taught and persist when they encounter difficulties, while others show little interest or withdraw from learning tasks Deepa, (2020). In language education particularly, motivation is important because learning a language requires sustained practice, participation, interaction and willingness to make mistakes before achieving proficiency. Recent studies indicate that learners' motivational beliefs, self-efficacy, intrinsic value and attitudes are positively associated with English language achievement and the use of effective learning strategies (Kanat & Kozikoğlu, 2018). Therefore, understanding the role of motivation in students' learning of English Language is essential, especially at the secondary school level where learners are expected to develop competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

English Language occupies a particularly important position in the Nigerian educational system. It serves as the official language of the country and is widely used as the medium of instruction, communication and assessment in formal education. At the secondary school level, competence in English is particularly important because students require the language not only for success in English Language as a school subject but also for learning and expressing knowledge in several other subjects. Evidence from Nigeria has shown a strong positive relationship between English proficiency and students' achievement across a number of school subjects, demonstrating that inadequate proficiency in English may have consequences beyond the English classroom (Ozowuba, 2018). Similarly, Ogbonna (2019) observed that English Language teaching and learning in secondary schools in Enugu State remains important despite persistent challenges affecting students' achievement. Consequently, anything that increases students' willingness and determination to learn English deserves serious attention.

The importance of English Language notwithstanding, students' learning of the subject can be affected by several learner-related, teacher-related and environmental factors. Motivation is particularly significant because it influences whether students approach learning activities with enthusiasm or reluctance. A motivated student is more likely to attend lessons regularly, participate in discussions, complete assignments, practice language skills and seek clarification when concepts are difficult. In contrast, students with low motivation may demonstrate poor study habits, absenteeism, truancy, classroom indiscipline and limited participation. A study conducted among secondary school students in Enugu North Local Government Area identified truancy, classroom indiscipline, poor study habits and absenteeism among factors affecting effective learning of English Language (Eze, 2022). These problems can be understood partly through the motivational conditions surrounding students' learning experiences.

Furthermore, motivation is closely connected with students' attitudes towards English Language. Students who perceive English as useful, interesting and relevant to their present and future goals are more likely to invest effort in learning it. On the other hand, negative attitudes can reduce students' willingness to participate in language-learning activities. Research involving secondary school learners has demonstrated that attitudes toward English, intrinsic value and self-efficacy are significantly associated with English achievement (Kanat & Kozikoğlu, 2018). In Nigeria, Aika, Uyi-Osaretin and Musa (2021) similarly examined students' attitudes toward English Language learning alongside home background and possession of recommended textbooks, noting that students' attitudes constitute an important factor in understanding the learning of English in secondary schools. Thus, motivation and attitude are interconnected elements that can either encourage or constrain students' engagement with English Language.

Motivation can be broadly understood in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic influences. Intrinsic motivation arises when students engage in learning because they find the activity interesting, enjoyable or personally meaningful, whereas extrinsic motivation is associated with external outcomes such as examination success, praise, rewards, parental expectations, certificates and future employment opportunities Saito et al., (2020).. Both forms can influence students' commitment to learning English, although intrinsic motivation can encourage learners to develop greater independence and persistence. Research involving secondary school students found that learners with stronger intrinsic motivational profiles also tended to demonstrate higher self-efficacy and achievement (Hayashi, 2020). Similarly, research on second-language learning has shown that students' idealized image of themselves as successful language users and their actual

learning experiences can serve as important motivational forces, while repeated experiences of failure can become powerful sources of demotivation

The teacher also plays a major role in developing and sustaining students' motivation to learn English. Teachers who create supportive classrooms, recognize students' efforts, provide constructive feedback and employ interesting instructional activities can encourage students to participate actively in learning. Conversely, teachers' negative attitudes, ineffective teaching approaches and poor classroom management may discourage learners. Research on secondary schools in Nigeria found a significant relationship between student-teacher relationships, classroom engagement, motivation and academic performance, emphasizing the need for teachers to develop appropriate motivational strategies (2018). In Enugu State, studies have also identified teachers' attitudes, inadequate subject knowledge, poor teaching methods and classroom-management problems as factors affecting English Language learning (Ogbonna, 2019; Eze, 2022). This suggests that students' motivation cannot be examined independently of the quality of teacher-student interaction and classroom practices.

The learning environment is another factor that can strengthen or weaken students' motivation. An environment characterized by adequate instructional materials, manageable class sizes, appropriate facilities, positive teacher-student relationships and opportunities for participation can make English Language learning more attractive to students. Conversely, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate learning resources and poor physical conditions can discourage active participation. Studies in Enugu State have reported shortages of instructional materials, inadequate English Language facilities, overcrowded classrooms and other environmental challenges affecting effective English Language teaching and learning (Ogbonna, 2019; Okoyeukwu et al., 2023). These conditions are relevant to motivation because students' willingness to learn may decline when they perceive their learning environment as unsupportive or frustrating.

Students' motivation is also associated with engagement, persistence and language-learning behaviour. Learning English requires repeated exposure and practice, and students need sufficient motivation to continue working when they experience difficulties in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension or writing. Evidence from second-language research indicates that motivation is associated with learners' engagement and that anxiety may mediate the relationship between motivation and language-learning outcomes (Saito et al., 2020). Similarly, Deepa (2020) argues that motivation can be enhanced when language learners are given opportunities for autonomy, creativity and authentic communication. Therefore, English Language

teachers need to move beyond approaches that merely require students to memorize grammatical rules and should create learning experiences that enable students to communicate, collaborate and see practical value in the language.

Goal orientation is another dimension of motivation that may influence English Language learning. Students who establish clear academic and language-learning goals are more likely to direct their efforts toward achieving particular outcomes. Goal-setting can encourage learners to monitor their progress, identify areas of weakness and sustain effort over time. Research involving students in Enugu demonstrated that goal-setting intervention enhanced students' performance in English Language compared with students who did not receive the intervention (Ugwuegbu et al., 2013). Although this study predates the period specified for the present literature, more recent research continues to emphasize the relevance of self-regulation, motivational beliefs and strategic learning to language achievement (Kanat & Kozikoğlu, 2018; Danesh & Shahnazari, 2020). This reinforces the argument that motivating students involves helping them develop meaningful goals and strategies for achieving those goals.

However, the relationship between motivation and English Language learning should not be assumed to be automatically positive in every context. Evidence from Nigeria shows that motivational factors may produce different outcomes depending on the learners, environment and other variables. For example, Okonkwo, Chioma and Nwankwo (2023), in a study of senior secondary school students in Orlu Education Zone of Imo State, reported a very weak negative significant association between academic motivation and English Language achievement. This finding demonstrates that motivation alone may not guarantee improved academic achievement. Instead, motivation may operate alongside teaching quality, instructional resources, students' prior knowledge, learning strategies, family background, school environment and assessment practices. This contrasting evidence makes it necessary to investigate the specific role motivation plays among students within particular educational settings rather than generalizing findings from other locations.

The situation is particularly worthy of investigation in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State because previous studies have documented challenges associated with English Language learning within the area and the wider Enugu educational environment. Research focused on Enugu North has identified student-related problems such as truancy, absenteeism, poor study habits and classroom indiscipline, while teacher and environmental factors have also been reported as constraints to effective learning (Eze, 2022). More recent research on Enugu

Education Zone similarly identified shortage of specialist English teachers, inadequate instructional materials, teaching strategies and students' mother tongues as challenges to teaching English as a second language (Okoyeukwu et al., 2023). These circumstances make it important to examine whether motivation can help students overcome some of these barriers and become more actively involved in learning.

Against this background, the role of motivation in students' learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State becomes an important area of educational inquiry. Although existing studies have examined motivation, English Language achievement, teacher-related factors, learning environments and other variables in different locations, there remains a need for context-specific evidence concerning how students' motivation influences their learning of English Language in secondary schools within Enugu North LGA. Such a study can provide useful information to teachers, school administrators, parents and educational policymakers on motivational strategies that can stimulate students' interest, participation, persistence and commitment to English Language learning. Ultimately, strengthening students' motivation, alongside improvements in teaching methods and learning conditions, may contribute to more effective English Language learning and better educational outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

English Language occupies a central position in the Nigerian educational system because it is both a major school subject and an important medium of communication and instruction. Despite its importance, students' performance and participation in English Language at the secondary school level continue to generate concern among teachers, parents and other stakeholders. In secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State, some students appear to demonstrate limited interest, poor participation, weak study habits and inadequate commitment to English Language learning. These behaviours may negatively affect their ability to develop the required skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. One factor that may contribute to this situation is students' level of motivation. Motivation influences students' willingness to begin learning activities, sustain effort and persist when faced with difficult learning tasks. Students who lack sufficient motivation may be reluctant to participate in classroom activities, complete assignments, practise language skills or seek assistance when they encounter difficulties. Conversely, highly motivated students are more likely to demonstrate active participation, persistence and positive attitudes towards learning. However, the extent to which motivation

contributes to students' learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North LGA remains insufficiently established.

Furthermore, factors such as teaching methods, teacher-student relationships, availability of instructional materials, learning environment and students' attitudes may interact with motivation to influence learning outcomes. While previous studies have examined some of these factors in different locations, their findings may not adequately explain the specific situation of secondary school students in Enugu North LGA. There is therefore a need for empirical investigation into the role of motivation in students' learning of English Language in the area. The problem of this study, therefore, is to determine the role motivation plays in students' learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State, with particular attention to how motivation influences students' interest, participation, persistence and overall engagement in learning the subject.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the role of motivation in students' learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the extent to which students' intrinsic motivation influences their learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.
2. Examine the extent to which extrinsic motivation influences students' learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. To what extent does students' intrinsic motivation influences their learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State?
2. To what extent does extrinsic motivation influences students' learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State?
- 3.

Methods

The study will adopt a descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprise of all Senior Secondary School students 2708 (SS I–SS III) in public secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. A sample of 270 students was selected from the population using simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Role of Motivation in Students’ Learning of English Language Questionnaire (RMSLELQ).” The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts in the Faculty/Department of Education, including experts in English Language Education and Measurement and Evaluation. Their corrections and suggestions will be incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire before it is administered to the respondents. Data collected from the respondents was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. For the four-point rating scale, a criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted. Therefore, any item with a mean score of 2.50 or above was regarded as indicating a high extent, while an item with a mean score below 2.50 will be regarded as indicating a low extent.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does students’ intrinsic motivation influence their learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Table 1: Responses on the extent does students’ intrinsic motivation influence their learning of English Language in secondary schools.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Students’ personal interest in English motivates them to study the subject regularly.	112	89	45	24	3.07	0.96	High Extent

2	Students are motivated to learn English because they enjoy reading English books and materials.	98	101	47	24	3.01	0.96	High Extent
3	Students willingly participate in English Language classroom activities because they find them interesting.	108	94	45	23	3.06	0.95	High Extent
4	Students make personal efforts to improve their English Language skills.	115	88	44	23	3.09	0.96	High Extent
5	Students practice speaking English because I enjoy communicating in the language.	94	100	52	24	2.98	0.96	High Extent
6	Students' curiosity about the English Language encourages them to learn more..	120	87	43	20	3.14	0.92	High Extent
7	Students study English because they want to become better at using the language.	118	91	40	21	3.13	0.93	High Extent
	Grand Mean					3.06	0.94	High Extent

The results presented in the table show that all the ten items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that students' intrinsic motivation influences their learning of English Language to a high extent. The grand mean of 3.06 and standard deviation of 0.94 indicate that, overall, students' intrinsic motivation influences their learning of English Language to a high extent in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Research Question two

To what extent does extrinsic motivation influences students' learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State?

Table 2: Responses on the extent extrinsic motivation influence students' learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State?

S/N	Questionnaire Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	SD	Decision
1	The desire to obtain good grades motivates students to study English Language.	118	91	42	19	3.14	0.91	High Extent
2	Praise from teachers encourages students to put more effort into learning English Language.	94	100	52	24	2.98	0.96	High Extent
3	The expectation of student's parents motivates them to study English Language.	104	96	47	23	3.04	0.96	High Extent
4	The desire to gain admission into higher institutions motivates students to learn English Language.	110	92	45	23	3.07	0.95	High Extent
5	The possibility of getting a good job in the future motivates students to improve their English Language skills.	122	89	41	18	3.17	0.91	High Extent
6	Rewards and recognition encourage students to participate actively in English Language lessons.	127	88	37	18	3.20	0.90	High Extent
7	Competition with other students motivates me to work harder in English Language.	98	101	48	23	3.01	0.96	High Extent
	Grand Mean					3.08	0.93	High Extent

The results in the table indicate that extrinsic motivation influences students' learning of English Language to a high extent. All the items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50.

The grand mean of 3.08 with a standard deviation of 0.93 indicates that, extrinsic motivation influences students' learning of English Language to a high extent in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that students' intrinsic motivation influences their learning of English Language to a high extent. This finding suggests that students' personal interest, enjoyment, curiosity, satisfaction and desire to improve their English Language skills play important roles in their learning. Students who genuinely enjoy learning English are more likely to participate actively in classroom activities, practise their language skills, read English materials and persist when they encounter difficult topics. The finding agrees with Kanat and Kozikoğlu (2018), who reported a significant relationship between students' motivational strategies, attitudes toward English and academic achievement. Similarly, Hayashi (2020) found that learners' intrinsic motivational orientations were associated with their engagement and learning outcomes. These findings imply that English Language learning becomes more effective when students develop personal interest and enjoyment in the subject. The finding further showed that students' satisfaction when they understand new English Language concepts recorded the highest mean of. This indicates that the feeling of accomplishment derived from understanding English Language concepts can encourage students to continue learning. When students recognize their progress, they are likely to develop confidence and become more willing to undertake challenging language-learning tasks. This finding is consistent with Deepa (2020), who emphasized the importance of motivation in sustaining learners' interest and involvement in second-language learning. It is also supported by Danesh and Shahnazari (2020), who established relationships among resilience, language-learning motivation and language proficiency. Thus, creating classroom experiences that enable students to experience success may strengthen their intrinsic motivation and encourage continued learning.

The findings from research question two revealed that extrinsic motivation influences students' learning of English Language to a high extent. This indicates that external factors such as good grades, examination success, parental expectations, future employment opportunities, admission into higher institutions, praise, rewards and recognition motivate students to learn English Language. The finding is understandable within the Nigerian educational context, where performance in English Language is important for students' progression through the educational system. The result agrees with Kanat and Kozikoğlu (2018), who identified motivational strategies

and students' attitudes as important factors associated with English learning achievement. It is also consistent with Saito et al. (2020), who emphasized the relationship between motivation, engagement and second-language learning behaviour. The result is consistent with Ozowuba (2018), who established the importance of English proficiency to academic achievement among Nigerian secondary school students. It is also supported by Deepa (2020), who noted that learners' motivation can be strengthened when they recognize meaningful purposes for learning a second language. Therefore, students may be more committed to English Language learning when teachers demonstrate how English proficiency can support future academic and career opportunities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that motivation plays an important role in students' learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State. The findings revealed that students' intrinsic motivation influences their learning to a high extent, as reflected in their interest, enjoyment, curiosity, personal effort and desire to improve their English Language skills. Similarly, extrinsic motivation was found to influence students' learning to a high extent through factors such as examination success, good grades, parental expectations, praise, rewards, future employment opportunities and admission into higher institutions. The findings therefore demonstrate that both internal and external motivational factors are important in encouraging students to participate actively and persist in learning English Language. Consequently, English Language teachers should adopt appropriate motivational strategies that stimulate students' personal interest while also providing constructive encouragement and recognition. A supportive and motivating learning environment can enhance students' engagement and contribute to more effective learning of English Language.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study on the role of motivation in students' learning of English Language in secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area of Enugu State, the following recommendations are made:

1. English Language teachers should promote intrinsic motivation by making lessons interesting, interactive and relevant to students' everyday experiences. Activities such as debates, role-play, storytelling, reading exercises and group discussions should be regularly incorporated into lessons.

2. Teachers should provide appropriate extrinsic motivation through praise, recognition, constructive feedback, certificates and other non-monetary rewards to encourage students who demonstrate improvement and active participation in English Language lessons.

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