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Where Motivation and Learning Meet: Bringing Key Concepts, Research Insights, and Effective Practices Together into the Language Classroom

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Preface

“My English students are not motivated enough” is a widespread comment from English teachers worldwide, especially in higher-level education. I have even said that myself on many occasions. This concern has guided researchers, teachers, and specialists linked to English language teaching to research motivation in our field. The study of language learning motivation has a well-known history. As we can see in this work, it goes from Gardner in the early ‘60s to Dörnyei, Murray, and Gao in the mid-2000.

This book takes readers from the theoretical stands on motivation in English language teaching (ELT) with a reflective approach to the practical issues that will help teachers to promote motivation in the English language classroom. Conceptions, views, and implications on motivation from 14 collaborators are presented from a theoretical review, research results, and analytical takes on concepts like attitude, demotivation, and other key factors influencing the ELT field.

The variety and experiences of the writers of this book will give you several perspectives on how motivation is conceived and applied in the ELT classroom from the teacher’s and the student’s points of view. Seven professors, one computer science specialist, two students and four university graduates from different institutions of higher education of Ecuador actively participated in writing this piece of remarkable work. This book will guide all English language practitioners who would like to know more about the power of motivation and how they could promote it; and for students who want to be engaged in their English learning process.

I do believe that the theoretical discussions carried out in this book present thorough revisions of pertinent resources from the ELT field. The key terms are introduced to clarify the path to understanding motivation. The analysis of the different factors that motivate or demotivate language learners is up to date. The first three chapters are devoted to approaching the theoretical foundation of motivation. The reader will find a fascinating dynamic between teachers and students reflecting and collaborating to bring this book to light.

Although motivation is tackled throughout the chapters, there are some other concepts, such as self-esteem, attitude, and self-reflection, within the language learners that are highlighted in every chapter. Also, those concepts linked to motivation

are integrated with the English teaching method to demonstrate a natural path to enhancing motivation in the ELT classroom. It is important to say that most of the information here has been analyzed in the light of the educational university levels, which has a crucial relevance in the Ecuadorian context.

In different chapters, there are meaningful insights into effective teaching approaches, methods, strategies, and techniques to promote motivation in the EFL university classroom. I firmly believe that all of them will have significant impact on English teaching and learning in these post-pandemic times. The highlighted meaningful, effective practices will help to create motivation for successful language learning, which is of high importance among language teachers these days.

This book is unique because it begins with its reviews on motivation within the Ecuadorian English teaching-learning context. It seeks to acknowledge a recent remarkable growth of interest in motivation in the Ecuadorian English language teaching field. This interest is primarily shaped by local educational and pedagogical success rather than by the purely understanding of a motivational theory. It brings together writers' perspectives on motivation who are both practitioners and researchers. Finally, this work will determine that contextually grounded and locally produced insights, questions, and understandings about motivation can have a broader global meaning, and it can mirror the experiences and concerns of ELT practitioners around the world.

By Mahly Jahzeel Martínez Jiménez, Ph.D.

Introduction

Motivation ignites learners' willingness to improve their abilities in areas of their interest, as it originates from a person's desires, needs, and inner drives. Therefore, it is a pivotal determinant when engaging in any learning process. Within the context of second or foreign language learning, fostering and maintaining motivation by means of internal or external factors will inspire learners to set in motion to accomplish their language learning goals.

At the classroom level, foreign language practitioners need to be aware of what factors are essential to promote student motivation towards effective language learning. In addition, it is imperative for practitioners or instructors to make informed decisions based on key theoretical factors and study results related to motivation in English language acquisition. In doing so, English language learners will be more likely to engage in meaningful learning experiences, which will help them to use the target language for different purposes, both in the classroom and more importantly in the world beyond the school's walls.

It is imperative to point out that this book has a threefold purpose, as it will be seen in the below descriptions of the five chapters. First and foremost, a review of the relevant literature on motivation in the field of education and, particularly, in foreign language learning is provided. Secondly, key study results of the project, entitled *Factors that motivate English learning of university students in Ecuador: Researching the perspectives of different educational stakeholders*, are disseminated, in conjunction with its adopted paradigm and research methodology. Thirdly, helpful techniques and strategies are put forward for an effective teaching of the English language, where motivation is the primary crosscutting point.

Chapter I lays the groundwork and key issues related to motivation. It defines what motivation means, as well as the key elements that have an impact on it, such as: the teacher, the teaching methods, the content, the learning environment, and the student himself. It also delves deeper into the sources of internal and external motivation and the benefits that each of them has on learning. This chapter also presents the characteristics that a learning environment must have to be motivating and exposes the importance of creating this type of environment for students.

Although the general concept of motivation works in a very similar way at different levels of education, there are certain particular aspects that need to be taken into account when teaching at higher levels (university students) due to the specific needs and goals present at this level; hence this chapter concludes by examining those aspects that are specifically relevant to motivation at this level of education.

Chapter II brings forward the different factors that are the base for motivation including cognitive elements associated with attention that predict university students' academic performance. The chapter also analyzes learners' attitudes towards a language and anything related to it that may have an impact on their motivation to learn that language. In this sense, based on previous studies, the information discussed in this chapter sheds light on how the learning of English as a foreign language in university students was influenced by the attitudes of the learners in foreign contexts such as Indonesia, Turkey, and China. Motivation is also addressed in depth as the central topic of the chapter. In this regard, the different types of motivation including intrinsic, extrinsic, social and transcendent motivation are explained, as well as the cognitive characteristics that underlie the relationship between brain's executive functions and motivation. The chapter closes with literature related to motivation in language learning and teaching, student motivation, and the significant role that motivation plays in foreign language learning in college.

Chapter III highlights key information concerning the development of a research project on student motivation in English learning within Ecuadorian higher education. In this sense, a brief account is first given pertaining to planning and conducting a small-scale survey study focused on the aforementioned topic at three universities only. The account provides critical details related to the small survey study, as it laid the foundation for a large-scale inter-university research project directed by mixed methods. The large-scale research project was conducted in over 20 Ecuadorian universities, and it aimed at determining the main factors that motivated undergraduate students to learn English while they pursue their studies. Secondly, the project further explored the quantitative results through a qualitative phase, consisting of focus group discussions (FGDs) and individual in-depth interviews. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods helped to gain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the essential factors that affect English students' motivation at the university level. The research-based findings

could be helpful for different stakeholders to make effective, informed decisions that boost student motivation toward successful English learning at institutions of higher Education in Ecuador and beyond.

Chapter IV provides key information about innovative EFL learning and teaching approaches. The first part of the chapter puts forward some innovations in education and in the field of teaching foreign languages. Its second section outlines the postmethod as an important innovative pedagogy in the last few decades. Moreover, suggested macro and micro strategies are highlighted towards the end of the chapter. Consequently, foreign language instructors can be equipped with the necessary tools to design and deliver effective language instruction under the teaching principles of practicality, particularity, and possibility. This sought to help promote classroom instruction where innovation and motivation are at the center.

Finally, considering that foreign language teachers ought to create conditions to motivate learners to learn the target language, chapter V proposes a set of twenty one techniques and strategies that may be useful to foster effective language learning among English students inside and outside the classroom. The group of techniques and strategies suggested in this chapter have, in some cases, been examined in research studies while others have been selected considering the results obtained through their constant use in foreign language classes. More importantly, this chapter contains a methodological guide with the procedures on how to implement many different helpful didactic strategies and techniques to better promote student motivation towards English language learning.

Chapter III

English language learning motivation in higher education: Research-related experiences, methodology, and study findings

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Introduction

In the previous chapters, critical theoretical concepts were analyzed, including internal and external sources of motivation; importance, characteristics, and benefits of motivating learning environments; motivating students to learn in higher education institutions; several different aspects of motivation in higher education, such as the importance of the teacher's attitude, current trends, common problems and key advantages; university students' attitudes toward foreign language learning; factors associated with motivation; types of motivation; motivation in language learning and teaching; student motivation; cognitive functions related to motivation; importance of motivation on foreign language acquisition at the university level; and many more. With this in mind, all the topics examined in chapters 1 and 2 provide an essential conceptual, theoretical basis that better prepare the readers for chapter 3, as the present chapter is mainly concerned with disseminating and discussing key study results drawn out of a research project on student motivation in English learning at the university level within the Ecuadorian context of higher education.

To begin with, an outline is given regarding the planning and conducting a small-scale survey study focused on motivation in English language learning at the following three Ecuadorian public universities: Universidad Nacional de Educación

(UNAE), Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE, and Universidad Técnica de Ambato (UTA). This account provides critical details related to the small study that laid the foundation for a two-year full-scale research project conducted at the nationwide level. This means that the readers are walked from a small-scale investigation to a mixed-methods large-scale research project, as the latter was conducted in over 20 Ecuadorian universities located in different regions, namely the Amazon, the Pacific Coast, and the Highlands.

First of all, the large-scale research project was aimed to determine quantitatively the main factors that motivated undergraduate students to learn English while they undertake higher education studies. Secondly, it further explored the quantitative results through a qualitative phase, which consisted of focus group discussions (FGDs) and individual in-depth interviews. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods helped to gain deep insights, detailed explanations, and thorough reasons about the essential motivational factors determined after the completion of questionnaires by university teachers of English and EFL undergraduate students.

As a result, the data sets gathered through the administered questionnaires, FGDs, and individual interviews permitted us to gain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of motivation in the teaching-learning process of English among university students. The research-based findings included in the present chapter could be helpful for different stakeholders to make effective, informed decisions that boost student motivation toward successful English learning at institutions of higher education. Consequently, meaningful educational implications could be derived from the presented study results that could help maximize student language learning by creating the best instructional practices that genuinely respond to university students' needs, motivations, interests, and goals in today's world.

Student motivation in English learning at Ecuadorian universities: From a small-scale survey study to a full-scale inter-university research project

In 2018, a small-scale survey study was planned and conducted collaboratively by university instructors in English education from three universities in the Highlands region of Ecuador. This survey study investigated what factors motivated English learning among undergraduate students enrolled in the three public universities the instructors worked for. The survey study can be viewed as a research initiative that helped EFL instructors from the three investigated universities make research-based decisions at the classroom level. The primary study findings, in which 422 undergraduate students of English took part by completing an online questionnaire, showed that many students felt motivated to learn the language to achieve short-term goals, such as travelling and communicating in the target language. As indicated by the surveyed students, the attainment of long-term goals, including graduate degrees and better job opportunities, impacted their motivation in English language learning. It was also found that the role of teachers and a practical language teaching methodology were critical components of students' motivation and attitudes toward successful foreign language learning (Ortega et al., 2019). In December of the same year, 2018, a call for the submission of research projects was opened under the name of "Convocatoria a Proyectos de Investigación 2018-2019: Por una Transformación Educativa" by the Research Office of the Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE). The proposal of a full-scale inter-university research project, consisting of quantitative and qualitative phases, was submitted to the call mentioned above, and such a research proposal was grounded in the small survey study described previously.

It should be noted that the small-scale study paved the way or provided the basis for the full-scale mixed-methods research proposal, as the former study afforded important baseline research and even an instrument, namely a questionnaire that was then expanded in the quantitative phase to investigate more variables on motivation in English learning within the nationwide context of Ecuadorian higher education. The main objective of the full-scale research project proposal was to shed more light on the topic of motivational factors in English language learning among

Ecuadorian university students through the use of quantitative and qualitative research methods. In doing so, numerical and nonnumerical data from different stakeholders, namely students, EFL instructors, university language center directors, and experts, were gathered and analyzed to understand the research topic in a more in-depth manner. The proposal of the full-scale study titled *Factors that Motivate English Learning of University Students in Ecuador: Researching the Perspectives of Different Educational Stakeholders* was approved in February 2020, and the research study was carried out within a period of two years (2020-2022) by instructors of these five Ecuadorian universities with the collaboration of UNAE undergraduate students: Universidad Nacional de Educación (UNAE), Universidad Regional Amazónica (URA) Ikiyam, Universidad Técnica de Machala (UTMACH), Universidad de Cuenca (UdeCuenca) and Universidad Nacional de Loja (UNL).

Overall research methodology, study design, and philosophical underpinnings

As indicated, a mixed-methods approach directed the full-scale or large-scale research project, and an explanatory sequential design was utilized. According to Creswell (2015), “combining both forms of data provide a better understanding of a research problem than quantitative or quantitative data alone” (p. 22). The main quantitative results were investigated more thoroughly through these selected qualitative research techniques: FGDs and individual interviews. In this regard, the research project employed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design, and according to Creswell (2014), a study is considered “explanatory because the initial quantitative data results are explained further with the qualitative data. It is considered sequential because the initial quantitative phase is followed by the qualitative phase” (pp.15-16). It should also be pointed out that the gathering of qualitative data had particular emphasis in the full-scale research project; therefore, these kinds of data were extensively gathered. The main reason for this decision was that qualitative data were not collected during the small-scale study described earlier. It means that priority or increased weight was given to qualitative data over quantitative data (Quan → QUAL), and there was also a sequential gathering of quantitative and qualitative information. This means that quantitative data were secondary to qualitative data within the context of the full-scale research project.

It should be noted that pragmatism as a research paradigm has its basis in the philosophical work of pragmatism and, as a consequence, favors the use of multiple methods (of data collection). The beginning of pragmatism resulted from a joint agreement among scholars reluctant to accept traditional beliefs about how reality, knowledge, and inquiry were viewed and constructed. With this in mind, pragmatists rejected the view that the complexity of reality can be understood by social science research that employs one scientific method only (Maxcy, 2003). Further, it has been observed that pragmatism is associated with “mixed-methods or multiple-methods research, and as such, it is a philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies” (Creswell, 2014, p.10). Indeed, a research study directed by this paradigm thoroughly examines a research problem through pluralistic approaches, allowing for a better understanding of a studied problem in social science research (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

Now, it will briefly be highlighted how the worldview of pragmatism influenced the choice of mixed-methods research employed within the full-scale inter-university project. In the first place, the research topic of motivation in foreign language learning suggested a pragmatic claim of knowledge; such a claim is grounded in the results of various research studies and crucial theoretical concepts examined during the project’s planning phase. The reviewed literature highlighted the central role of motivation in learning foreign languages, especially English. Furthermore, from an epistemological standpoint, the researchers of the inter-university project shared the view that reality may be both objective and subjective, and these views mainly had an impact on the methodological choices of the phases and subphases of the project where quantitative and qualitative data were gathered.

Concerning ontology, facts, and truths were generated through the gathering and analysis of numerical or quantitative data, which emerged as a result of the study findings gained from different statistical tests. In addition, meaningful, solid findings were yielded by giving voice to different groups of key stakeholders, namely students, teachers, language center directors, national experts, and international experts. In this regard, their viewpoints, opinions, and experiences, that is, their detailed responses were of great importance within the context of the present research project. As a result of conducting the FGDs and in-depth interviews, detailed explanations, reasons, and further details were unfolded to a great extent, and these data provided

a more thorough understanding of the quantitative data gathered during the project's first phase. All in all, the systematic utilization of multiple quantitative and qualitative research methods was essential, as such employment of methods was in line with the notions advocated by the philosophical worldview of pragmatism.

Participants and data collection

As highlighted previously, the large-scale inter-university research project employed mixed methods that consisted of two interrelated phases, one quantitative phase in which 2077 English students from nine Ecuadorian universities took part by voluntarily completing a comprehensive questionnaire in an online modality. In the same phase, EFL instructors from twenty-two Ecuadorian universities filled out an online questionnaire. Out of the one hundred nine respondents, ninety-four were Ecuadorian teachers, and fifteen teachers were from the following countries: Venezuela, the United States, Great Britain, Cuba, Canada, and Nicaragua. The construction of the non-experimental questionnaires went through the stages of planning, validating, piloting, revising, and coming up with final versions. The questionnaires administered to the students and teachers had different sections, attempting to find out critical sociodemographic and academic-related information, as well as to determine the essential factors that motivate English language learning while students undertake their university studies, as perceived by these two groups of respondents: students and English instructors. The questionnaires, applied to these two groups of respondents, had also sections that were aimed at gathering data concerning the main pedagogical and didactic factors that impact student motivation in English university classrooms. It is imperative to note that these two groups of respondents were asked for their consent electronically at the beginning of the questionnaires before they went on to complete them.

Next, a qualitative phase followed, which consisted of conducting eight focus group discussions (FGDs) with students from the five participating universities (UNAE, URA Ikiam, UTMACH, UdeCuenca, and UNL) of the research project under examination. First, five FGDs were carried out with students only from each

of the universities mentioned above. Additionally, three more FGDs were conducted, in which students from the five universities were mixed. It is important to note that Informed Consent letters were signed by the students before they participated in the focus group sessions. Ecuadorian students enrolled in English courses offered by their home universities took part in the focus groups, whose age range was 17-24 years old in low and medium socioeconomic levels. The eight FGDs were conducted with 5 to 9 undergraduate students through the use of the Zoom video conferencing platform.

The last component of the qualitative stage was concerned with carrying out in-depth individual interviews with three key groups of participants. The first group of key informants was composed of eight EFL teachers, the second group consisted of eight university language center directors, and the third group of nine experts of EFL higher education (six Ecuadorian experts and three international experts); these twenty-five participants also agreed to be interviewed by signing Informed Consent letters. The twenty-five interviews lasted between 30 and 40 minutes and were conducted through Zoom.

The developed interview guides, used in the FGDs and in-depth interviews, were comprised of essential questions that were aimed at better understanding and further exploring key results drawn out of the quantitative phase. Thus, the selected qualitative data collection methods allowed us to gain detailed explanations, thorough reasons and unrevealed insights about key findings that arose after the administration of the questionnaires to the 2077 students and 109 teachers. Both guides, employed in the qualitative phase, were reviewed by experts in English language education and educational research, whose input and feedback were used to make crucial enhancements before their final versions were drafted.

Data analysis

As a sequential explanatory mixed methods design was adopted in the study, quantitative and qualitative data sets were analyzed, and both of them enabled an in-depth interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation. Descriptive statistics were used for analyzing the quantitative data with the support of the software R.

Specifically, parametric tests were applied to examine the data and a comparative analysis of two independent samples, namely undergraduate students of English and EFL teachers. In order to analyze the qualitative data, an inductive approach to data analysis was implemented with the support of the NVivo software version 12. Thomas (2016) asserted that inductive analysis is first developed by reading raw data in a careful manner. It should be noted that before the process of data analysis began, the transcripts of the eight FGDs were anonymized. To start with, the researchers gained an in-depth, solid understanding by reading the raw data multiple times. Consequently, concepts and topics began to emerge based on a careful interpretation. In addition, patterns and similarities in ideas and issues arose after examining the participants' viewpoints concerning the questions posed during the FGDs and interviews. Secondly, segments of the raw data were analyzed qualitatively in an inductive manner to search for recurring patterns. Thus, this process involved identifying and coding patterns through in vivo coding. The generated in vivo codes based on the participants' views were later refined and classified into sub-themes. This type of data analysis revealed different sub-themes that were further grouped into general themes, as shown in tables 9 and 10.

Research findings at a glance: Key quantitative and qualitative results

The study results concerning intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in foreign language learning are first disseminated in the present chapter. The questions, which comprised the category pertaining to these two types of motivations that impact English learning, were measured through a Likert-scale system ranging from totally disagree to totally agree. Thus, Table 1 shows the thirteen most influential factors that impact learner motivation in English learning according to the perceptions of the 2077 surveyed students and the 109 surveyed teachers. In this regard, 2077 undergraduate students from nine Ecuadorian universities voluntarily completed an online questionnaire. Also, the questionnaire was administered to 109 EFL university instructors teaching English in twenty-two institutions of higher education located in the regions of Pacific Coast, Amazon, and Highlands.

Table 1. Essential factors that impact motivation toward English learning, as recognized by students and teachers in Ecuador.

Learning English as a motivating factor to	Participant type	N	Mean score	SD	t	p
meet and build relationships with people around the world.	Students	2077	4,42	0,855	0,181	0,857
	Teachers	109	4,40	0,883		
travel to countries with English as the official language.	Students	2077	4,35	0,906	4,357	0,000
	Teachers	109	3,96	0,912		
study abroad at universities where English is the medium of instruction.	Students	2077	4,34	0,896	-0,170	0,865
	Teachers	109	4,36	0,967		
gain knowledge about a wide range of topics.	Students	2077	4,34	0,874	0,772	0,440
	Teachers	109	4,28	0,951		
access to more reading resources related to programs of study and professional careers.	Students	2077	4,33	0,891	-0,898	0,369
	Teachers	109	4,41	0,905		
grow into a more knowledgeable person.	Students	2077	4,29	0,895	3,189	0,001
	Teachers	109	4,01	0,918		
understand materials for English language enjoyment, such as reading texts, music, and films.	Students	2077	4,28	0,895	2,937	0,003
	Teachers	109	4,02	0,962		
develop communication skills to talk to anglophones.	Students	2077	4,25	0,911	1,986	0,047
	Teachers	109	4,07	0,879		
attain high-income jobs.	Students	2077	4,16	0,942	-0,407	0,684
	Teachers	109	4,19	0,918		
better enjoy literary and art works from the English-speaking world.	Students	2077	4,13	0,936	9,130	0,000
	Teachers	109	3,28	1,046		
meet the established foreign language graduation requirement.	Students	2077	4,09	0,987	-3,011	0,003
	Teachers	109	4,39	0,902		
have more job advantages in the future.	Students	2077	4,08	1,010	-2,515	0,012
	Teachers	109	4,33	0,872		
learn about socio-cultural topics from English-speaking countries and their people.	Students	2077	3,90	0,965	2,856	0,004
	Teachers	109	3,62	0,989		
	Teachers	109	3,49	0,996		

As indicated before, the survey data refer to the main intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that influence students' English language learning at the university level based on the ranked importance given by both students and teachers in the Ecuadorian system of higher education. The top-rated factor by the 2077 surveyed students across the nine universities in Ecuador was that they felt motivated to learn English because they want to meet and build relationships with people around the world (mean score = 4,42). This factor also had high importance among the 109 surveyed teachers from the 22 Ecuadorian universities (mean score = 4,40). With regard to the surveyed teachers, the most critical factor impacting student motivation toward English language learning was as follows: English facilitates access to more reading resources related to programs of study and professional careers (mean score =4,41), and this was the fifth most important factor that motivates English learning among the surveyed students (mean score = 4,33).

Besides the general table described above, the seven major factors that influence students' motivation from different Ecuadorian universities are presented in several individual tables (from table 2 to table 8). These tables contain data extracted from the questionnaires that were applied to two groups of participants in a disaggregated way. Before analyzing each of the main seven factors, it is essential to highlight that the percentages included in the fourth column in the following tables show the total percentages from the second and third columns. That means the two columns corresponding to agree and totally agree were grouped because both show similar levels of concordance but in slightly different levels. The combined percentages in both measurement levels in the seven tables can help us better understand the essential factors that affect meaningfully the motivation regarding English learning among students in the Ecuadorian higher education system.

Table 2. Meet and build relationships with people around the world.

Research participants	Agree (A)	Totally agree (TA)	A+TA
Undergraduate students of English	738	1174	1912
	35,5%	56,5%	92,1%
EFL university teachers	34	63	97
	31,2%	57,8%	89,0%
Total amount of students + teachers			2.009

The results presented in Table 2 show that the factor of *meeting and building relationships with people around the world*, from the 2077 surveyed students, 1912 (92.1%) agreed with this factor as the most important one to learn English at the university level. In the same way, 97 (89.0%) out of 109 surveyed teachers demonstrated a high level of agreement in relation to the same factor.

Table 3. Travel to countries with English as the official language.

Research participants	Agree (A)	Totally agree (TA)	A+TA
Undergraduate students of English	745	1113	1858
	35,9%	53,6%	89,5%
EFL university teachers	53	31	84
	48,6%	28,4%	77,1%
Total amount of students + teachers			1.942

The results presented in table 3 show that 1858 surveyed students (89.5%) agreed with the following statement: *traveling to countries with English as the official language*, and they classified it as the second most important factor. In the same way, 84 surveyed teachers (77.1%) showed a high agreement level in relation to this particular factor.

Table 4. Study abroad at universities where English is the medium of instruction

Research participants	Agree (A)	Totally agree (TA)	A+TA
Undergraduate students of English	756	1093	1849
	36,4%	52,6%	89,0%
EFL university teachers	28	65	93
	25,7%	59,6%	85,3%
Total amount of students + teachers			1942

The presented results in table 4 indicate that *studying abroad at universities where English is the medium of instruction* was the third most important factor among the survey respondents, that is, 1849 students (89.0%) and 93 teachers (85.3%) agreed with this statement.

Table 5. Gain knowledge about a wide range of topics.

Research participants	Agree (A)	Totally agree (TA)	A+TA
Undergraduate students of English	825	1056	1881
	39,7%	50,8%	90,6%
EFL university teachers	36	56	92
	33,0%	51,4%	84,4%
Total amount of students + teachers			1973

The results presented in table 5 indicate that the fourth most important motivational factor among the surveyed students and teachers was that English allows individuals to *gain knowledge about a wide range of topics*. In this sense, 1881 students (90.6%) and 92 teachers (84.4%) demonstrated their agreement to this claim.

Table 6. Access to more reading resources related to programs of study and professional careers.

Research participants	Agree (A)	Totally agree (TA)	A+TA
Undergraduate students of English	801	1064	1865
	38,6%	51,2%	89,8%
EFL university teachers	32	65	97
	29,4%	59,6%	89,0%
Total amount of students + teachers			1962

The presented results in table 6 display that the fifth most important motivational factor to learn English was concerned with *accessing more reading resources related to programs of study and professional careers*. This means that 1895 surveyed students (89.8%) and 97 surveyed teachers (89.0%) agreed with this factor.

Table 7. Grow into a more knowledgeable person.

Research participants	Agree (A)	Totally agree (TA)	A+TA
Undergraduate students of English	824	1004	1828
	39,7%	48,3%	88,0%
EFL university teachers	46	36	82
	42,2%	33,0%	75,2%
Total amount of students + teachers			1910

The results in table 7 show that 1828 students (88,0%) and 82 teachers (75,2%) agreed that English helps to *grow into a more knowledgeable person*.

Table 8. Understand materials for English language enjoyment, such as reading texts, music, and films.

Research participants	Agree (A)	Totally agree (TA)	A+TA
Undergraduate students of English	883	969	1852
	42,5%	46,7%	89,2%
EFL university teachers	43	39	82
	39,4%	35,8%	75,2%
Total amount of students + teachers			1934

The results in table 8 indicate that 1852 students (89,2%) and 82 teachers (72,2%) agreed with the statement pertaining to *understanding materials for English language enjoyment, such as reading texts, music, and films*, which was also a motivational factor among the surveyed educational stakeholders within the Ecuadorian university context.

In addition to the administration of questionnaires, a qualitative study phase followed in which eight FGDs were first carried out in a virtual modality due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Students of English from different universities located in the Pacific Coast, the Highlands, and the Amazon regions of Ecuador took part in the FGDs, so a variety of viewpoints, opinions, and thoughts were explored and identified. In the table below, the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis process are presented to disseminate key findings from the conducted FGDs.

Table 9. Themes and sub-themes emerged out of the FGDs data analysis

Themes	Sub-Themes
Traveling opportunities	Being able to understand English in other countries.
Opportunities to express themselves	Sharing what they think and what they know with others.
Self-improvement	Interest in learning by themselves through watching series and using apps. Ongoing interest since childhood. English as a way to improve today's society.
Cultural integration	English as a tool to understand and be part of different cultures. Expanding one's own culture. Coexisting with other cultures. Integration at the international level.
Requirement for graduation	Being able to pass mandatory English courses. Beliefs that not studying English means falling behind. Necessary to make progress in an undergraduate program.
Future studies	Longing to study for masters and Ph.D. programs. Desire to study major-related courses abroad. Desire to study online courses.
Job opportunities	English as a requirement in some jobs. Possibility of getting a better job. English as a way to expand to different career areas.
Impact of English on research-related activities	Most of the articles are published in English. Publishing articles and books in English are far-reaching. Internet-based tools are not always accurate for research endeavors.

As presented in the above table, the themes and sub-themes show that the primary motivations for students were traveling opportunities, opportunities to express themselves, self-improvement, cultural integration, English as a requirement for graduation, future studies, job opportunities, and the impact of English on research-related activities. Therefore, the information in this table outlines a summary of what motivates the interviewed students to learn English at the university level. It can be observed that students do not have only instrumental motivation but also reasons related to integrative motivation to learn the target language while pursuing their university careers. In other words, these results inform us about the crucial factors and their associated reasons that influence undergraduate students' motivation towards English learning in terms of instrumental and integrative motivation. In this sense, students consider the language as an essential instrument to achieve personal and professional goals as well as to integrate themselves into the culture of English-speaking countries in today's globalized world.

Furthermore, the FGDs data yielded that students were interested in learning by themselves through different recreational activities and materials while they are exposed to English in an informal and implicit manner. It was then essential for the interviewed students to enjoy recreational activities, such as using applications, watching movies, watching TV series and/or programs, listening to music, enjoying music in English, and even dancing. In general, the interviewed students agreed with the overarching idea that English is a global language, and it is everywhere at all times. Therefore, they can learn it through different non-academic and authentic materials, such as the above-mentioned ones. It was also found that many of the interviewed students have been naturally interested in authentic English materials since childhood. In this regard, in the FGDs, students explained that a key motivation to learn English was to understand not only academic materials but also non-academic materials, as these latter types of materials along with entertaining, recreational activities have a positive impact that keep students motivated towards learning English genuinely. For instance, the following quote captures the majority of the interviewed students' general views who took part in the FGDs regarding enjoying spare time activities and non-academic materials:

We can see that the cultural burden of English-speaking communities is quite strong. A person may be motivated generally by academic development and career advancement, but an individual can also be

motivated by music and the arts. These are particular interests that boost motivation among people these days, regardless of the fact whether they are university students or not . . . (FGD # 4)

Overall, the first themes in the table 9 refer to the integrative motivation theory because of their close relationship to students' positive feelings and viewpoints towards English learning, which seem to play an essential role in their lives. In this regard, the interviewed students mentioned to feel motivated while thinking of being understood, being integrated into a foreign community, and using English for personal growth. The FGDs results highlighted that English allows students to meet people from different cultures and interact with native speakers of this foreign language with ease. In general, students believed it is a good idea to try to generate relationships with native speakers, as this would allow them to practice the target language in a genuine way. Therefore, it is helpful to know that not everything for the interviewed students is about completing a mandatory course towards graduation but attempting to master English to establish meaningful connections with English-speaking cultures and beyond, too. Moreover, it should also be noted that an interesting finding concerning the integrative motivation from the FGDs was traveling opportunities, which also stood out in the results from the administered questionnaire presented in this chapter previously. This confirms that traveling is a big motivation for EFL students in the Ecuadorian higher education context. General beliefs expressed by the interviewed students are captured in the below quotes:

... it would also be great to do some tourism and to travel to foreign countries, I do not know. It would be great to get there, get around the new places, and be able to interact with people who speak this language easily and fluently . . . (FGD # 7)

One of my biggest dreams is to be able to travel the world, so I guess the English language is essential. My other motivation is to meet people because I like talking to people. (FGD # 1)

In addition, the themes from the table 9 are centered on instrumental motivation, and these themes include critical notions about English learning in relation to the achievement of different types of short-term and long-term goals. In this case, from the interviewed students' perspective, English is considered a tool that can be used to fulfill professional and educational purposes. Also, it should be stressed that

students prefer taking English courses to fulfill one of their graduation requirements. Therefore, English is the most preferred foreign language among university students while undertaking their higher-education studies. That is to say, the students prefer to complete required English courses, as they view it as the primary foreign language and the language of universal communication. In the FGDs, students also expressed that English knowledge facilitates to develop better assignments during their college studies, and it helps them to gain a greater variety of insights that can be used in their future professional careers.

Additionally, the interviewed university students considered English is something indispensable in order to further their education and be able to study for a master's program, a doctoral program, and even different training courses outside Ecuador. This means that the FGDs data showed that English is essential because university students have the motivation to study abroad in the future to earn different types of graduate degrees and be able to undertake specialized postgraduate courses related to their areas of specialization. In fact, this is closely related to the idea of becoming more prepared to have better job opportunities in the future. Concerning instrumental motivation, learning English for future studies was a factor highlighted both in the FGDs and in the questionnaires, and it is essential to note that this is the third most important motivational factor in learning English among the surveyed research participants. One interviewed EFL university student discussed the importance of the English language for graduate studies in the following terms:

. . . and if I graduate in a few years and want to study for a master's degree or anything else, so I will travel to another country where English is spoken. And I must know English well. (FGD # 8)

Moreover, students believed that the English language has such an essential role in the research field in general these days as well as in their university assignments, and they could better work on different tasks by using their English knowledge. In this sense, the FGD findings showed that English learning helps students have more advantages over those who do not use their English to carry out real-world research tasks and learning activities centered on their areas of study. The results also indicated that students consider that most of the best articles are published in English, as publishing in English is far-reaching. Overall, FGD data showed that students hold in high esteem papers in English due to the fact that these kinds of

papers help them to better complete their assignments for their different university courses. This is mainly because it allows them to access different sources of up-to-date information to enrich their research-related assignments. It is evident that the interviewed students prefer reading sources in English for the aforementioned reasons, as observed by an EFL university student in the following quote:

. . . sooner or later, most students will be willing to study English. It will be necessary rather than a choice since most articles with the best information are usually in English. Therefore, understanding English is something basic for us. (FGD # 5)

As pointed out earlier, the qualitative data of the present research study were also gathered by means of in-depth interviews conducted to key informants individually, namely EFL university teachers, directors of higher education language centers, national experts, and international experts. The individual interviews were conducted in order to further explore relevant, key quantitative findings drawn out of the administered questionnaires, and the interviews provided thorough, detailed explanations from the research participants' own views, thoughts, and perspectives. The table below shows the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the inductive thematic analysis with the support of the NVivo software.

Table 10. Themes and sub-themes emerged out of the in-depth interview data analysis

Themes	Sub-Themes
Raising awareness of the importance of English learning	Implementation of initiatives to raise awareness among university students. Importance of learning English for meaningful and practical purposes.
English as a way to get better job opportunities	The need to practice authentic oral communication for work-related tasks. English knowledge allows students to perform well in different job positions. Alignment between English lessons and professional careers for practical purposes.
Motivating classroom environment	Students' ideas and recommendations help to make the classroom more pleasant. Encouraging students to self-express in the classroom boosts their motivation. A pleasant learning environment where mutual learning takes place.

English language courses within the curriculum of majors	Concerns about the omission of English from undergraduate programs' curriculum. Self-contradiction about English language requirement towards graduation. Positive views of the inclusion of general English and ESP into each university major.
The impact of technology on learner motivation	Visual-audio technologies for the English university classrooms. Positive impact of technological resources on motivation. Free online interactive teaching-learning material.
Internalization of higher education as a large-scale step that motivates English learning	Benefits of internationalization at higher education institutions. Necessity of creating and strengthening agreements with foreign universities. Opportunities for students to further their education through internalization initiatives.

The results of the one-on-one interviews suggested that several aspects should be taken into account to motivate students to learn English within the classrooms of institutions of higher education. In this sense, although teachers, the classroom environment, the resources, the materials, among others play a fundamental role in learner motivation, these are not the only crucial elements. It is also paramount the attitudes and predispositions that students have in the teaching-learning process of a foreign language. According to the interviewed participants, some students view English as a requirement for their degrees, and others see little relevance of this language because they consider that it does not have applicability or usefulness in their immediate daily life or their future professional careers. Therefore, the individual interview results revealed the need for institutions at the tertiary level to implement initiatives that raise awareness among the college student population about the importance of learning English for meaningful and practical purposes in the near future. The general views concerning these issues are conveyed in the following quotes from the interviews with an Ecuadorian expert and a language director center:

. . . higher education institutions need to train students in a critical way, letting them know about the role of English as a language that dominates the world, and when they use English, they know what benefits they could have. . . (In-depth interview # 11)

First of all, we would talk about workshops and conferences, and authorities should promote them, and their focus on the importance of learning

English. I think these would significantly engage students, because, I repeat it is different to say that this foreign language is a requirement and that is it, but instead we can have different academic events where we can raise awareness of the importance of English learning. . . (In-depth interview # 17)

As discussed previously in the FGD results, it was revealed that students believe that the English language is an essential requirement in today's job market, and this foreign language would give them the possibility of getting a better job and expanding to different career areas. These results were corroborated in the individual interviews, as university English teachers commented that students, who are about to graduate, are often already employed and have foreigners among their clients, so they need to practice authentic oral communication to perform well in their jobs. The interview data showed that hoping to get good jobs is a primary motivation to learn English among university students, and a mastery of English will allow them to be able to function well in their areas of knowledge and in different job positions, as well. With regard to this, an international expert pointed out critical guidelines on the use of English in the university classroom, which could help students achieve their job aspirations:

. . . there must be an alignment between what students are required to learn in the English class with their current college careers because one of the most critical aspects of the widely used communicative approach is that students can use English for something practical and that something must be related to their university studies . . . (In-depth interview # 3)

Moreover, the in-depth interview results indicated that teachers need to consider their students' ideas and recommendations to make classroom instruction more effective, and this should be seen as an essential part of motivating students to learn English. When teachers take into consideration students' input, a motivating classroom environment is more likely to be built. Additionally, the interview results emphasized that allowing students to express themselves and considering what they would like to learn are meaningful ways to spark their motivation in the English classroom. Overall, the interviewed participants provided meaningful insights into the importance of creating a pleasant learning environment where students can learn not only from their teachers but also from their classmates. According to the

interviewees, it is essential to be open to incorporating EFL university students' ideas and suggestions into the English classes, which can be done through both informal and formal pedagogical practices. Thus, an EFL teacher discussed some key views in the following terms:

. . . teachers should be open and be aware that students can suggest things. For instance, we have a curriculum that is not a straitjacket. For example, at the beginning of the semester, small surveys could be applied to know what students want to study, and then the findings can be taken into account for planning purposes . . . (In-depth interview # 7)

Furthermore, the in-depth interview data stressed that students are conscious of the importance of studying English to meet graduation requirements without much difficulty. Thus, teachers and language center directors are worried that the English language could either be part of the curriculum of each university career or not. Therefore, even if students have instrumental motivation for learning English to graduate, the interviewed participants consider that the non-compulsory incorporation of English into the curriculum is a self-contradictory issue. Moreover, the interview results emphasized that English must be returned to each major's curriculum under general English or English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction because this policy has more advantages than disadvantages for student learning. The following quotes from a language center director and an international expert encapsulate the issue being described:

Self-contradictory as it may sound, English language learning did not need to be part of undergraduate programs' curriculum any longer when mastering a foreign language became a graduation requirement for students. However, how logical is that kind of decision? Now, in order to meet such requirements, students could either study a foreign language at their own university language centers or at private institutions, too, and this means as they wish. (In-depth interview # 6)

English programs must be turned from simple general English, happening now, to something more professional-oriented with an academic vision of English. Academic English could help students find the tools to develop more professionally and academically. (In-depth interview # 5)

Additionally, the interview results indicated that using technological resources for educational purposes helps promote student motivation toward language learning more authentically and naturally. More and more often, visual and audio technologies are commonly used in English university classrooms; these are mainly used as aids in teaching and learning the target language so that students better understand the learning content. It should be noted that the most cited materials were Ted Talks, podcasts, and YouTube videos among the interviewees. Further, the participants admitted that virtual learning environments, apps, game-based tasks, online activities, and interactive platforms impact motivation positively toward learning the target language. It was highlighted that authentic, and up-to-date materials are what students like the most, and this type of material is available for all language skills. For instance, there is free, authentic and interactive material for developing students' reading and listening skills. This type of material can be employed within class periods and the world beyond the classroom, that is, within students' daily lives for meaningful purposes. One of the interviewed language center directors reaffirmed this in the following way:

For example, Ted talks are materials that students enjoy because they learn vocabulary and new things and because it is happening now. It's very up-to-date material . . . (In-depth interview # 8)

Lastly, the interview results highlighted the importance of the internationalization of Ecuadorian higher education institutions as a large-scale initiative that could significantly increase motivation among English language learners. The benefits generated by the internationalization of higher education have become a topic of government agenda and an essential topic that has attracted the attention of many sectors worldwide, according to the participants. More importantly, the results stressed that the benefits and advantages behind this internationalization would have a central role in the motivation towards English learning among Ecuadorian undergraduate students. In this sense, the most cited benefits of internationalization were pointed out as follows: student mobility or exchanges with Anglo-Saxon universities where English is used as the medium of instruction. The findings confirmed a general perception that the authorities must establish and strengthen international agreements for exchanges to take place more often, and in turn, this will motivate students to a greater extent. Consequently, they can have more opportunities to go to a foreign

country for several different educational purposes, and they will be highly motivated to learn more, acquire new knowledge, and enhance their education overseas. Two of the interviewed Ecuadorian experts explained their viewpoints in the following words:

. . . internationalization is like a condition that our universities require (. . .), this internationalization motivates students to study abroad, especially in foreign institutions where English is the medium or vehicle of knowledge transmission and it helps them access to more knowledge. Therefore, English becomes an instrument – a fundamental instrument for learning more, indeed . . . (In-depth interview # 1)

More types of exchanges with other universities should be implemented, possibly with universities not only from the United States but also Canada and the United Kingdom. It is a little complicated, as many economic resources are required. But it is for me one of the best ways to motivate students, and they will be in contact with English on a daily basis . . . (In-depth interview # 20)

Discussion

The study results put forward that students have a solid extrinsic motivation derived from their present and future needs; in this case, the intellectual, educational, and labor goals that they wish to achieve, which coincide with the results obtained in previous studies (Adiele & Nath, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Precisely, the students who were part of the study felt motivated to learn the language because of the benefits that this language provides them for their current and future life, such as being able to read and understand the information in English related to their careers, access to study programs and scholarships abroad, access better jobs thanks to their knowledge of the language, or even less formal things, such as being able to interact with people from other countries. These results are in line with what was presented by the study of Ghanea, Pisheh, and Ghanea Ghanea (2011). Furthermore, as Frey and Fisher's (2010) study explained, students' motivation depends on how meaningful, relevant, and valuable the learning is to their short- and long-term needs. These results are closely related to what was revealed in the present study since most students are

motivated to learn English because of the usefulness of English for their future studies and upcoming professional careers.

According to the research participants, it is also imperative to highlight that travelling abroad is one of the most important factors in terms of intrinsic motivation. This is in line with the findings of Carreira (2011), Carreira (2012) and Sun and Gao (2020) who affirmed that interest in foreign countries and the concept of being able to socialize naturally with foreigners influence students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language. In this context, it is relevant for university English teachers to create scenarios in which students practice real-life situations, such as field trips, conversations with native speakers, and other meaningful tasks in which students can use the target language authentically. Mainly, these aspects focus on instrumental motivation and have been highlighted in previous studies conducted by Kyriacou and Kobori (1998), Kormos and Kiddle (2013), and Yu (2019).

Further, the results obtained have revealed that the use of technology can encourage creativity, student participation, improve content explanation, and enhance motivation in general towards English learning. These insights are consistent with the findings in Lee and Hsieh's study (2019). Likewise, as evidenced in the present study results, it is essential to employ diverse technological resources to motivate English learning among today's generation of students. Therefore, using a diversity of technological resources and devices provides meaningful and practical alternatives to boost learner motivation in the digital age, both inside and outside the classroom. As pointed out by results of several studies, it is critical in today's language learning classrooms the use of mobile devices (Chung et al. 2019), online games (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2021 & Bado, 2022), and other digital resources for educational purposes (Wang & Chen, 2020; Bailey et al., 2021; Yang, Chen & Hung, 2022).

Further outstanding results of the present study are related to the internationalization of Ecuadorian universities. In this sense, the interview results emphasized that the changes, challenges, and advantages that internationalization brings to the educational system has become an important topic because it has a central role on student motivation in English learning. There are several studies that support these findings; for example, the study results by Law (2016) indicate that different aspects of internationalization must be taken into account, such as the association between institutions, transnational education, increasing number of

individuals who move from one country to another to study (e.g., outgoing and incoming student mobility). It can be added the results of the study by Altbach and Knight (2007), who showed that internationalization brings many advantages, including commercial assets, knowledge, language acquisition, curricular improvement based on international perspectives, etc. Likewise, it is crucial to consider the results of the Top Global University Project conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Education to internationalize Japan's higher education by creating globally oriented universities. In this project, effective, meaningful foreign language teaching and learning play a crucial role, which helps universities to be more global (Rose & McKinley, 2018). These results are consistent with what has been observed in previous studies, where the instruction of English language subjects has been fundamental in universities in China, Japan, and the Netherlands, which has attracted lots of international students, promoted internationalization of the curriculum, and executed an upgrade of quality standards (Huang, 2006).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Motivation plays an essential role in any educational setting, and consequently, teachers need to be aware of what motivates their students positively. This chapter has highlighted different intrinsic and extrinsic factors through the dissemination of key results, which have shown that both are present among university students at the moment of learning English. Extrinsic factors, which are related to awards and outside factors, are referred to as graduation requirements and hopes for future higher incomes. Intrinsic factors, which are related to students' own desire to learn, have also been presented, and they include cultural integration, desire to build relationships, desire to travel and study abroad, among others.

When Ecuadorian teachers consider the essential factors related to extrinsic and intrinsic motivations included in this chapter, they will have critical contextualized research-based information to better design and deliver lessons that respond to students' motivations towards English language learning at the university level. For instance, within the Ecuadorian educational context, it has been commonly believed that most undergraduate students want to learn English to meet a graduation

requirement. However, the results of the present study show that their top priority for English language learning differs from what has been generally believed thus far. Most students feel motivated to learn English because they are interested in meeting, interacting, and socializing with people worldwide. This closely connects with the status of English as a universal language or the language of international communication in today's globalized world. That is to say, if EFL teachers know what factors positively influence student language learning, they will be more likely to make informed decisions at the classroom level. Their decisions can indeed enhance teaching and maximize student learning.

Furthermore, it is paramount that each teacher determines their own students' motivations toward English language learning before a program of study begins. This can be done systematically by applying validated research instruments to gather robust data. In this regard, validated research instruments that could be used are the questionnaires employed during the quantitative phase of the study at hand. These questionnaires may be simplified or adapted to determine students' perceptions about what motivates them the most to learn English within EFL university classrooms in Ecuador and overseas. Consequently, data-driven instructional activities based on undergraduate students' motivations, needs, interests, and desires will make English language instruction more effective. Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in successful student language learning and should constantly apply innovative teaching methods in the classroom. Moreover, teachers must encourage students to keep practicing the target language outside the classroom during everyday situations. In doing so, language learners will make authentic, genuine use of the skills and knowledge acquired. As a result, they may become even more motivated to engage in lifelong learning opportunities that will help them achieve their goals.

Lastly, conducting small-scale and large-scale research studies will add more research-based evidence to the existing body of knowledge. This could help language teachers make more effective decisions to foster student motivation and maximize student language learning in the EFL university classroom. However, research initiatives related to student motivation in English learning should be carried out not only at institutions of higher education but also at elementary and secondary schools. With this in mind, research-driven instructional practices should be at the center of every single educational level in Ecuador to motivate English learners as they progress from one level to another and in the world beyond the classroom.

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