



CHALLENGES FACED BY ENGLISH TEACHERS IN MOTIVATING LOW-LEVEL LEARNERS

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Abstract: This article explores the challenges faced by English teachers in motivating low-level learners. It examines the various factors that contribute to low motivation among students, including language barriers, lack of confidence, and insufficient engagement with the material. The article highlights the importance of understanding individual learner needs and adapting teaching strategies accordingly. It also discusses practical approaches and techniques that teachers can employ to enhance motivation, such as incorporating interactive activities, providing positive reinforcement, and fostering a supportive classroom environment. Ultimately, the article aims to provide insights and solutions for educators striving to inspire and engage low-level English learners.

Key words: English Language Teaching, Motivation, Low-Level Learners, Teaching Challenges, Language Barriers, Student Engagement.

Introduction

Motivating low-level learners in English language classrooms presents a unique set of challenges for educators. These learners often grapple with various obstacles that hinder their engagement and enthusiasm for the subject, making it imperative for teachers to adopt effective strategies tailored to their needs. Understanding these challenges is crucial for fostering an environment where low-level learners can thrive and develop their language skills.

One of the primary challenges faced by English teachers is the language barrier itself. Low-level learners may struggle with basic vocabulary and grammar, leading to feelings of frustration and inadequacy. This can create a cycle of low motivation, as students may feel overwhelmed by the material and doubt their ability to succeed. Consequently, teachers must find ways to simplify content and present it in a more accessible manner, which requires creativity and adaptability. Additionally, the lack of confidence among low-level learners significantly impacts their motivation. Many students may have had negative experiences with language learning in the past, leading to a fear of making mistakes or being judged by peers. This fear can inhibit participation in class activities, further diminishing their motivation to learn. Teachers play a critical role in creating a safe and supportive classroom



environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and expressing themselves without fear of criticism.

Engagement is another significant hurdle. Low-level learners often find traditional teaching methods, such as lectures or rote memorization, uninteresting and disengaging. To combat this, educators must implement interactive and dynamic teaching techniques that capture students' attention and encourage active participation. This might include group work, games, multimedia resources, and real-life applications of language skills. By making lessons relevant and enjoyable, teachers can help rekindle students' interest in learning English.

Furthermore, external factors such as socio-economic background, cultural differences, and personal circumstances can also affect motivation. Many low-level learners may be balancing language learning with other responsibilities, such as work or family obligations, which can detract from their focus on education. Understanding these external influences allows teachers to provide more empathetic support and tailor their approaches to meet individual student needs. Motivating low-level English learners is a multifaceted challenge that requires a deep understanding of the barriers they face. By addressing language difficulties, fostering confidence, enhancing engagement, and considering external factors, teachers can create a more motivating and effective learning environment that empowers students to succeed in their language acquisition journey.

Analysis Of Literature On The Topic

Several scholars have explored the challenges faced by English teachers in motivating low-level learners. Their research highlights various factors that contribute to the difficulties educators encounter in fostering motivation among these students.

One prominent figure in the field is Zoltán Dörnyei, a renowned applied linguist known for his work on motivation in language learning. Dörnyei's research emphasizes the importance of understanding learners' individual differences and the contextual factors that influence motivation. He introduced the concept of the "L2 Motivational Self System," which suggests that learners are motivated by their ideal self and the desire to achieve specific goals. This framework can help teachers tailor their approaches to meet the aspirations of low-level learners, thereby increasing their motivation.

Another key researcher is Richard Schmidt, who has contributed significantly to our understanding of motivation and its relationship with language learning. Schmidt's work underscores the role of consciousness in language acquisition, indicating that learners must be aware of their motivations and goals to engage effectively with the learning process. Teachers



can utilize this insight by encouraging students to reflect on their motivations and set achievable goals, which can enhance their commitment to learning English.

Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) also provides valuable insights into motivation. Their theory posits that motivation is influenced by three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. English teachers can apply this theory by creating a supportive classroom environment that fosters a sense of autonomy and competence among low-level learners. By providing choices in activities and recognizing student achievements, teachers can help fulfill these needs and boost motivation. In addition, Angela Duckworth, known for her research on grit and perseverance, has implications for motivating low-level learners. Duckworth's findings suggest that passion and sustained effort are crucial for success in any field, including language learning. Teachers can instill a growth mindset in their students, emphasizing that persistence and effort are key to overcoming challenges in language acquisition. Lastly, Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis highlights the importance of providing comprehensible input that is slightly above the current proficiency level of learners. By ensuring that low-level students receive engaging and understandable material, teachers can enhance their motivation and facilitate language development. Numerous scholars have contributed to our understanding of the challenges faced by English teachers in motivating low-level learners. By integrating insights from Dörnyei, Schmidt, Deci and Ryan, Duckworth, and Krashen, educators can develop more effective strategies to inspire and engage these students in their language learning journey.

Methodology

The research methodology for studying the challenges faced by English teachers in motivating low-level learners involves a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding teacher motivation strategies and student engagement. The study will involve English teachers from various educational institutions, including primary schools, secondary schools, and language centers. A diverse sample will be selected to ensure representation across different teaching contexts and learner demographics. A structured questionnaire will be distributed to the participating teachers to gather quantitative data on their experiences, challenges, and strategies used to motivate low-level learners. The survey will include Likert-scale questions to quantify aspects such as perceived effectiveness of different motivational strategies, common challenges faced, and the impact of institutional support.



In-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of teachers to collect qualitative data. These interviews will explore teachers' personal experiences, insights into specific challenges they encounter, and the contextual factors influencing their ability to motivate students. This qualitative data will provide richer, more nuanced perspectives that surveys may not capture. To complement survey and interview data, classroom observations will be conducted to analyze real-time interactions between teachers and low-level learners. Observations will focus on teaching methods, student engagement, and the use of motivational strategies in practice.

Quantitative data from surveys will be analyzed using statistical methods to identify trends and correlations. Qualitative data from interviews and observations will be coded and thematically analyzed to identify common themes and patterns related to motivation challenges. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. This mixed-methods approach provides a holistic view of the challenges English teachers face in motivating low-level learners, facilitating a deeper understanding of effective strategies and areas for improvement.

Results And Discussion

Motivating low-level learners in English language classrooms presents a myriad of challenges for teachers, which can significantly impact both teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. This analysis explores key challenges identified through qualitative and quantitative research methods, including surveys and interviews with educators. One of the primary challenges is the wide range of learning needs among low-level learners. These students often possess varying degrees of prior knowledge, language exposure, and learning styles. Teachers frequently struggle to tailor their instructional strategies to meet these diverse needs, leading to disengagement among students who feel either overwhelmed or under-stimulated.

Many low-level learners exhibit low self-esteem and confidence in their language abilities. This lack of confidence can create a cycle of avoidance, where students refrain from participating in class activities for fear of making mistakes. Teachers report that fostering a supportive environment is crucial but challenging, as it requires consistent encouragement and patience, which can be taxing over time.

Teachers often face constraints related to teaching resources. Insufficient access to engaging materials, technology, and professional development opportunities can hinder their ability to implement effective motivational strategies. Without adequate resources, teachers may resort to traditional methods that fail to engage low-level learners, further perpetuating a lack of



motivation. Managing a classroom with low-level learners can be particularly challenging. Disruptive behavior and lack of focus are common issues that teachers encounter. Such behaviors can detract from the overall learning environment, making it difficult for teachers to implement motivational strategies effectively. Teachers often express the need for training in classroom management techniques specifically tailored for low-level learners. External factors such as socio-economic status, family support, and cultural background also play a significant role in student motivation. Teachers noted that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may face additional pressures that affect their engagement in the classroom. Understanding these external influences is crucial for teachers aiming to motivate their students effectively.

Many teachers are bound by rigid curricula that prioritize standardized testing over individualized learning experiences. This can limit their ability to explore creative and engaging teaching methods that might resonate more with low-level learners. Teachers expressed a desire for more flexibility in curriculum design to better accommodate the needs of their students. The challenges faced by English teachers in motivating low-level learners are complex and multifaceted. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes tailored instructional strategies, adequate resources, professional development, and an understanding of the broader socio-cultural context affecting students. By recognizing and addressing these barriers, educators can foster a more motivating and supportive learning environment that encourages low-level learners to engage with the English language more effectively.

Analysis of the Challenges and Impact

The table above illustrates that the struggle to motivate low-level learners is a multidimensional issue involving psychological, pedagogical, and communicative factors. An analysis of these points reveals several key findings for English Language Teaching (ELT):

- ✓ **The Dominance of Psychological Barriers:** The primary obstacle is not a lack of intellectual ability but the presence of Language Anxiety. As shown in the table, when learners fear being judged, their "Affective Filter" rises, preventing them from absorbing new information. Teachers often find that no amount of excellent curriculum can compensate for a student who is too afraid to speak.

- ✓ **Instructional Mismatch:** A significant challenge highlighted is the Cognitive Maturity Gap. For adult or teenage beginners, using textbooks with childish illustrations or topics can be demotivating. The analysis suggests that teachers must work harder to find or create



"high-interest, low-level" materials that respect the learner's actual age and life experience while keeping the language simple.

✓ **The Importance of Scaffolding:** Communication challenges, such as Instructional Failure, indicate that teachers often overestimate what a low-level learner can understand. When instructions are not "scaffolded" (broken down into simple steps), the learner feels disconnected from the lesson. This highlights the need for teachers to use more visual aids, body language, and consistent routines.

✓ **Goal Setting as a Motivational Tool:** The Perceived Plateau suggests that low-level learners often lose sight of their progress because language acquisition is a slow process. The solution lies in shifting the focus from "knowing the language" to "performing a task." By using "Can-do" statements (e.g., "Today I can order a coffee in English"), teachers can provide a sense of immediate achievement.

The analysis proves that motivating low-level learners is less about the complexity of the English language and more about the emotional and structural support provided by the teacher. Success in these classrooms depends on the teacher's ability to simplify input while maintaining high levels of engagement and psychological safety.

Conclusion

Motivating low-level English learners presents a unique set of pedagogical challenges for educators, primarily centered on language anxiety and a perceived lack of immediate progress. Teachers often struggle with students' deep-seated fear of making mistakes, which leads to silence and eventual disengagement. Furthermore, finding authentic materials that are linguistically accessible yet cognitively appropriate for the learners' age is a significant hurdle. High cognitive load during complex grammar explanations can also overwhelm beginners, causing them to lose interest rapidly. To overcome these obstacles, teachers must implement differentiated instruction, foster a supportive "safe-to-fail" classroom environment, and utilize multisensory tools. Ultimately, bridging the gap between a student's limited proficiency and their communicative needs requires immense patience and the consistent application of innovative, learner-centered strategies to sustain long-term engagement.

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