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## Motivation in English Learning at University: A Mixed-Methods Study Investigating the Perceptions of Different Stakeholders\*

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**Abstract.** The research study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, and it was aimed at determining and analyzing the essential factors that motivate university students' English learning within the Ecuadorian higher education system. The quantitative study results, drawn from a questionnaire administered to 109 EFL university teachers, were further explained through a qualitative phase. The latter phase consisted of in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, namely university teachers, language center directors, Ecuadorian experts and international experts in English language education. The insights gained from the conducted 25 in-depth interviews were essential to explain in greater detail the motivational factors determined in the quantitative phase. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data sets helped to gain an in-depth understanding of motivation in student learning of English as a foreign language within the Ecuadorian university context. The results showed that factors associated with intrinsic and instrumental motivation are key toward student language learning. In this sense, English is seen as a tool for a more effective completion of different academic tasks required to university students. Also, motivation in English language learning is promoted when effective instructional practices and a positive classroom environment have a central role in the university classroom. In terms of extrinsic motivation, students are likely to become more motivated when their teachers employ meaningful strategies and techniques. Moreover, teaching materials and resources can help to foster learner motivation when students' input and insights are carefully taken into account in a strategic manner.

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**Keywords:** English learning; mixed-methods research; motivation; university students; stakeholders

## 1. Introduction

In today's globalized world, more and more people want to learn English as a second or foreign language. Whether people want better job opportunities or to travel abroad, learning English can help accomplish many of our personal or professional goals (British Council, 2013). This means that learning English is almost a necessity for anyone trying to improve in their life. Indeed, English has become the most used language in the world and currently it no longer constitutes a privilege of elites but a necessity among most people (British Council, 2018). This language might be an important element of a systemic change in education and other areas many countries need (Joseph & Reigeluth, 2010; Taylor, 2016).

English is part of the curriculum in many education systems around the globe. Many countries have realized that being able to communicate in this language brings opportunities for the development of their societies. In other words, many children and teenagers are given the opportunity to learn it at school even though many of these communities do not learn it at an acceptable level (Cha & Ham, 2013).

According to Chilingaryan and Gorbatenko (2015), motivation is the "desire to achieve a goal, combined with the energy to work towards that goal" (p. 6). Motivation has a relevant role in language learning plays a very important role, and it might account for students' ability to do well or poorly on difficult activities during the teaching and learning process (Ordorica, 2010), and it helps to correlate the achievement with proficiency of the language learned (Riyanti, 2019).

Alizadeh (2016) distinguished two kinds of motivation in language learning. Integrative motivation is the behaviour of an individual who wants to learn English to become part of the target community or join the second language culture. Instrumental motivation is developed when students want to learn the target language with utilitarian objectives upon the usage of language, for instance, getting a high-ranking job with a great salary. Integrative and Instrumental motivation have been considered as fundamental factors in successfully learning a language. That is why many research studies have been carried out at different educational levels. Concerning tertiary education, Aoyama and Takahashi (2020) claimed that students may lose both integrative and instrumental motivation when they find methods and curricula overly traditional, deficit of facilities at universities, absence of learners' self-confidence, and lack of immersion of learners in English-speaking communities. Under this panorama, Ametova (2020) stated that educators must create a positive attitude towards language practice inside and outside the classroom by developing goal-oriented tasks which elevates learners' instrumental and integrative motivation to learn English. Nguyen (2019) affirmed that when learners are highly motivated, they show commitment with the tasks their teacher assigns, use language to communicate, and develop their language skills easily. Meanwhile, learners who

lack enough motivation feel forced to learn a language, and the teaching and learning process is affected.

On the basis of the information discussed above, a mixed-methods sequential explanatory research study was conducted to determine first the factors that influence student motivation toward English learning within the Ecuadorian university context through the administration of a questionnaire. Secondly, by interviewing different stakeholders (e.g., experts in English education, language center directors and EFL university teachers), insights, reasons and explanations were gained in great detail to better understand the main factors that seem to impact the most English students' motivation at the tertiary level. The present research study, thus, addresses these research questions:

What aspects motivate students to learn English while they pursue undergraduate programs within the Ecuadorian higher education context, as perceived by EFL teachers?

What are the views and perceptions of experts, language center directors and EFL teachers regarding essential factors that are considered to influence students' motivation in English learning at university?

### **1.1. Motivation in language learning: Key theoretical insights**

English is the worldwide taught language and a lingua franca in the majority of communicative situations among people; therefore, traditional models of L2 motivation are no longer applicable since the conceptual development of L2 motivation is now aligned to a methodological change reflecting an epistemological shift in the area (Woodrow, 2017). According to Dörnyei (1998), "motivation is indeed a multifaceted rather than a uniform factor, and no available theory has yet managed to represent it in its total complexity" (p. 131). Motivation in language learning is not a simple field; as a matter of fact, it has been characterised by a variety of notable theoretical dimensions which have included: the integrative motive, the Ideal and Ought to L2 selves, intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, individual differences and DMCs (Bower, 2017). The main components of the prevailing motivational approaches (expectancy-value theories, goal theories, and self-determination theory) have all been validated in certain L2 contexts, and it is hoped that future models of L2 motivation will demonstrate an increasingly elaborate synthesis of the various constituents (Dörnyei, 1998). Also, positive language attitudes guide students to develop specific language learning goals. Specific goals and frequent reference to these goals lead to increased levels of motivational behavior (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). However, in some contexts as in higher education, language instruction is based upon grades and often the goal of students is to attain high grades, rather than to explore ideas or personal knowledge (Shaikholeslami & Khayyer, 2006). Students who have negative attitudes are more likely not to give much consideration to what they would like to achieve (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995).

Therefore, one must consider that there are several factors which are beyond the teacher and the institution's scope, such as responsibilities a learner has to deal

with or feel comfortable with course activities. Consequently, these can affect the learner's motivation (Fandiño, Muñoz, & Velandia, 2019). It seems that there are common trends worldwide related to this matter. Kyriacou and Kobori (1998) stated that the most important influences on students' motivation to learn English and on student teachers' motivation to become a teacher of English seem to be generally applicable to a wide variety of countries. A possible four factors emerged in Kim and Kim's study (2021) regarding L2 learning motivation; these factors are: recognition from others, Ideal L2 self, instrumental motivation, and Ought-to L2 self. Dominance in a language, especially when there are salient individual differences, would predict achievement scores (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995).

Alizadeh (2016) offered the following explanation regarding the role of motivation in the classroom.

*Learners' motivation can go up and down depending on the context of language learning. Motivation has a key role in the development of language skills. Teachers can play a significant role in motivating learners to learn a second/foreign language. Motivation is an important factor in learning a foreign language which is influenced by different variables.*  
(p.14)

It was found that teachers have the highest influence on a students' motivation, followed closely by a students' own attitudes towards learning (Rahman, et., 2017). Other than the talents of language learners there are other factors- motivation and attitude - that can influence the efficiency of learners showing that there is a direct relationship between the efficiency of the students in language classes, motivation and attitude (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011).

### **1.2. Intrinsic and instrumental motivation in EFL**

As Fandiño and Velandia (2020) stated, high motivation is characterized by autonomous behaviors, that is, intrinsic motivation. Several factors can be attributed to intrinsic motivation in EFL students. For instance, Fan and Williams (2010) found that parental advising positively predicted students' academic self-efficacy in English as well as intrinsic motivation towards English. Similarly, Vatankhah and Tanbakooei (2014) claimed that support from others (e.g., parents, siblings, and EFL teachers) significantly influenced both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. However, other studies have questioned these claims. That is the case of Carreira (2012) who stated that perceived parental encouragement did not associate with intrinsic motivation for learning English.

Other studies on intrinsic motivation have concluded that it has a positive influence on students' behavioral intention; that is, perceived usefulness (Sun & Gao, 2020). Overall, it could be claimed that learners who are supported intrinsically and extrinsically are more motivated to learn English. One of the main influences that may drive students' intrinsic motivation is curiosity. As Carreira (2011) concluded, curiosity is a predictor of intrinsic motivation for learning EFL, interest in foreign countries, and instrumental motivation. Interest in foreign countries seems to be more influential on intrinsic motivation for

learning English, meaning it may be productive to get students interested in foreign countries, people, and their cultures in English classes (Carreira, 2012).

Instrumental motivation takes place when students try to learn a certain language because of the possible benefits this activity might bring (Yu, 2019). This may include the learning of a language to enhance employment prospects. Although instrumental motivation and intrinsic motivation are often seen as two ends of a continuum. Contrary to previous research, Carreira (2012) found that instrumental motivation is associated with intrinsic motivation for learning English. In this manner, Yu (2019) stated that “instrumental motivation, deep approaches, and learning strategies were found to be significant predictors of learning outcomes” (p. 1). This is the case when learning and teaching English may afford special status in the school curriculum; this may well have a more powerful influence being exerted by instrumental motives for pupils’ learning English, and for student teachers’ motives to be more strongly linked to the recognition of the importance of English for learners (Kyriacou & Kobori, 1998). Further, Kormos & Kiddle (2013) claimed that “social class has an overall medium-size effect on motivational factors with self-efficacy beliefs being the most strongly related to socio-economic status” (p.1).

### **1.3. Instructional practices that motivate student language learning**

Teachers’ role is one of the key factors that motivate students in the EFL learning process. Consequently, teachers must perform keeping in mind the most effective instructional practices. Recent studies have addressed the fact that instruction and communication effectiveness are reached in one way or another via the assistance of pragmatic strategies (Jiang, Zhang & May, 2019). In this sense, contemporary EFL students may feel more comfortable with digital methods of communicating than conventional offline approaches, whether they use L1 or L2 implying that digital environments may provide social support and additional psychological benefits, which potentially contribute to creating the least L2 anxiety provoking environment for EFL students (Lee & Hsieh, 2019).

In recent studies, there has been a shift to interacting with technology. Mobile devices are considered a main way of allowing students to acquire self-learning materials rather than only mediation learning across contexts (Chung, Hwang, & Lai, 2019). Most of the common new effective instructional strategies are related to the use of online tools to help with the learning process. Gamified lessons are considered enjoyable, engaging, motivating and fun for positive learning experiences in English as a Second Language environments (Dehghanzadeh, et al., 2021). Similarly, Bado (2022) recommended that teachers plan and implement instructional activities at all stages of the Game Based Learning process, namely the pre-game, game and postgame stages since most digital games are not designed to work as stand-alone instructional tools that replace the teacher; instead, they are designed to be used as instructional tools to assist teachers in maximizing student engagement and learning outcomes.

Other strategies involving the use of technology are Digital Story Telling (DST), YouTube, Computer Assisted teaching, and asynchronous collaborative activities. In the study conducted by Yang, Chen, and Hung (2022), the DST implementation

can facilitate the students' development of becoming proficient English speakers and creative thinkers. In the case of mind mapping-based contextual gaming, it was effective in terms of improving students' creative writing performance in the aspects of fluency and elaboration; that is, they used diverse tourism vocabulary to express their positive feelings, ideas, exotic feelings and actions for travel due to their divergent thinking with the help of integrating the mind mapping strategy into the contextual game (Fu, et al., 2019). Concerning YouTube, it contributes to the literature of online self-regulated learning by focusing on videos, an important source of information and entertainment for the young generation; however, students should also be encouraged to reflect on their online learning more rigorously and make subsequent learning plans (Wang & Chen, 2020). Furthermore, as stated by Guan, Song, and Li (2018), computer assisted English teaching has been widely accepted by teachers and students to make students improve their abilities to learn English. Similarly, students who are motivated by asynchronous online collaborative writing are more likely to enjoy online learning in general (Bailey, Almusharraf, & Hatcher, 2021).

## **2. Methodology**

The present study, which is part of a two-year research project, employed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design. The quantitative data were first gathered through an online questionnaire applied to 109 English teachers working in Ecuadorian universities. This instrument included close-ended questions, and it was validated through experts and piloting. The administered questionnaire had different sections, attempting to find out key sociodemographic and academic-related information about the respondents, as well as to determine the main factors that impact student motivation within the higher education system. The prospective respondents were provided with information on the nature of the research study and its objective in an electronic manner. It was also ensured that their participation was voluntary and anonymous and that the gathered data would be used only for the purposes established for the study. This means that the respondents could decide whether or not to provide their answers based on the information included in the introductory part of the administered questionnaire.

The obtained quantitative results were then further investigated and explained by means of in-depth interviews. A six-question interview guide, reviewed by three experts, was elaborated on essential results drawn from the quantitative phase (See Appendix 1). Thus, the qualitative phase consisted of 25 in-depth interviews conducted to participants within each of the following pool of stakeholders: eight university teachers of English, eight language center directors, six Ecuadorian experts, and three international experts in English language at the university level. They all consented to their participation by signing a comprehensive informed consent form. Prior to data analysis, the participants received by email the interview transcripts and were encouraged to provide comments and make corrections if necessary.

## 2.1. Data analysis

Using the software R, the quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, that is, arithmetic mean, standard deviation and percentage were employed. Concerning the analysis of the interview data, a thematic analysis was employed with the support of NVivo 12. First, all the twenty-five transcripts were anonymized. After several readings to gain a solid understanding of the raw data, recurring patterns were identified inductively through an in-vivo coding process. Further, the in-vivo codes were carefully revised and grouped into sub-themes.

## 3. Results

Through the analysis of qualitative data, different sub-themes were created, and the emerged sub-themes were finally put together into overarching themes, which are shown in Table 1. In addition, tables 2 to 6 contain the five categories or sections from the administered questionnaire. The percentages that refer to: agree and totally agree, were grouped together as they both showed similar levels of agreement. Qualitative results are also presented, which provide explanations, views and opinions of the 25 participants who took part in the in-depth interviews. As shown below, each questionnaire category contains a group of motivation-related factors that is accompanied with detailed descriptions of the emerged themes and sub-themes. In addition, excerpts and quotes are provided, as they illustrate and capture general beliefs and views of the interview participants within each category.

**Table 1: Themes and sub-themes obtained from the thematic analysis of the interview**

Themes	Sub-themes
Interrelatedness of students' intrinsic and instrumental motivations.	Having students use English in their undergraduate programs; English allows to learn about different cultural and non-cultural topics; Job advantages due to English knowledge; Teachers' impact on students' intrinsic motivation; Better professional career opportunities thanks to English; Wishing to undertake graduate programs abroad.
Effective language instruction that motivates students extrinsically.	Using English for real-life situations; Teaching practice grounded in students' motivations; Having students participate actively and meaningfully; Fostering creativity by means of solving problems; Employing a variety of teaching techniques and strategies.

How to create a motivating classroom environment.	Finding out students' interests and likes; Addressing students' doubts and questions; Taking into account students' suggestions and ideas; Creating a learning environment based on confidence and support; Promoting cooperation and collaboration among students for better learning.
Teaching resources and materials for sparking learner motivation.	Utilizing updated audio-visual technological resources (e.g., Tik Tok, Podcats, Ted Talks); Music in the English class; Using virtual learning environments; Little reliance on English Textbooks.
Professional attitudes of EFL teachers that motivate students.	Helping students to grow as human beings; Showing passion and affection for language teaching; Teachers' constructive attitudes toward the teaching-learning process.

**Table 2: Teachers' perceived importance of top factors concerning students' intrinsic and instrumental motivation**

Our students feel motivated to learn English because	Totally agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally disagree	Mean	sd
1. it allows them to study overseas where the use of this language is mandatory.	65	28	8	6	2	2.06	1.02
	59.6%	25.7%	7.3%	5.5%	1.8%		
2. it allows them to have more access to resources and reading material related to their majors.	65	32	7	2	3	1.88	0.79
	59.6%	29.4%	6.4%	1.8%	2.8%		



3. it facilitates them to meet and socialize with people from around the world.	63	34	8	1	3	1.97	1.04
	57.8%	31.2%	7.3%	0.9%	2.8%		
4. it helps them acquire and expand their knowledge based on different topics.	56	36	11	3	3	1.98	1.00
	51.4%	33.0%	10.1%	2.8%	2.8%		
5. mastery of this foreign language helps them have advantages at work.	54	45	5	2	3	1.74	0.82
	49.5%	41.3%	4.6%	1.8%	2.8%		

Table 2 shows five factors which refer to students' intrinsic and instrumental motivation when they learn English at university. Results showed that factor five had a better acceptance among participants. Of the 109 (100%) surveyed participants, 99 (90.80%) participants agreed that the mastery of English as a foreign language helped them have advantages at work. On the other hand, 5 (4.6%) participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this factor, and 5 (4.6%) showed disagreement with the statement. The in-depth interview data indicated that it is imperative to help students strengthen their desire to learn the English language, as they are already aware of its importance for greater professional opportunities. In this regard, teachers need to get to know their students in an in-depth manner; especially it is necessary to know about their interests to learn English and use that information for lesson planning. In doing so, this will help to avoid having students take part in meaningless, irrelevant learning activities based on the textbook only. For instance, the interviewed teachers commented that students, who are about to graduate, usually have jobs and their clients are foreigners, so they need to practice authentic spoken communication to perform well at work. In general, the interviewed participants agreed that what students learn in their English classes must be meaningful, practical and helpful, both for their undergraduate programs and future professional careers, as the following excerpts illustrate:

*"Perhaps you are going to have an English course at university with future engineers who are really going to want to learn to read and understand very technical manuals. And talking about their lives is not really what they need. It sounds great, but it really depends on what students want, what they are interested in, and for what this language will serve them in the future . . ." (In-depth interview to international expert 1)*

*“ . . . there should be an alignment between what students are learning in English with their university careers, because the most important premise, and especially if we are always standing from a communicative approach, is that they can use English for something and that something must be related to their majors . . . ”*  
(In-depth interview to international expert 3)

**Table 3: Teachers’ perceived importance of top extrinsic factors of motivation concerning effective instructional practices**

To motivate students to learn English, the teacher	Totally agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Totally disagree	Mean	sd
6. encourages them to participate actively.	82	23	2	0	2	1.30	0.60
	75.2%	21.1%	1.8%	0%	1.8%		
7. provides clear answers to their questions.	79	26	2	1	1	1.36	0.72
	72.5%	23.9%	1.8%	0.9%	0.9%		
8. associates the subject with real-life situations.	77	25	4	0	3	1.39	0.69
	70.6%	22.9%	3.7%	0%	2.8%		
9. employs a variety methodological techniques and strategies.	75	31	1	1	1	1.37	0.64
	68.8%	28.4%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%		
10. monitors their work and provides personalized support.	73	32	3	0	1	1.75	0.54
	67.0%	29.4%	2.8%	0%	0.9%		

The table above shows that the ninth factor had a strong impact in terms of extrinsic motivation related to teachers’ effective instructional practices. 106 (97.2%) participants agreed with factor 9 that claimed that students felt motivated when teachers employed a variety of methodological techniques and strategies in class; however, 1 (0.9%) participant neither agreed nor disagreed with this factor; and 2 (1.8%) participants were in disagreement. With regard to these factors, the interview data showed that it is essential to provide students with a great variety of learning activities, techniques and strategies, as all of them make students engage more effectively in their English classes. Thus, it is important to learn new, proven teaching practices and be willing to put them into practice with the aim of having more dynamic and engaging class sessions, according to the interview participants. In this regard, one EFL university instructor explained,

*“English language teaching is a challenge for English teachers in today’s society, and we have to face it. So, we need to try to find appropriate and helpful methods, techniques or strategies that help to motivate students and provide meaningful knowledge to them.” (In-depth interview to EFL university teacher 4)*

Furthermore, among the interview participants there was a general perception concerning the impact teachers have to foster and increase students’ participation. The qualitative data showed that in order to encourage university students of English to participate actively, it is critical to help students feel confident and capable of using the target language for a variety of purposes. In spite of mistakes students are likely to make during communicative-oriented tasks, they need to remain calm and supported thanks to their teachers’ positive attitude. Teachers need to help students not to be afraid of making mistakes, and making mistakes should be seen as a sign of learning. Most importantly, it is paramount to take into account students’ mistakes and weaknesses to provide effective feedback in a strategic and friendly fashion, as it is manifested in the following excerpt:

*“... it's very important the feedback that we, as teachers, give, right? Suddenly, if my students say: She don't eat fish, and I say What? don't!!! It's not correct to say that. Then students will never participate again, but if I say to them: Oh! you mean She doesn't eat fish; therefore, there are ways to correct and motivate students. And I'm not telling them this implicitly: you can't, you were totally wrong, or it's wrong what you said. But I'm giving them a clue, so they can do it.” (In-depth interview to Ecuadorian expert 5)*

**Table 4: Teachers’ perceived importance of top extrinsic factors of motivation concerning classroom environment**

In English classes, students are motivated to learn when	Totally agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Totally disagree	Mean	sd
11. the teacher creates a friendly and enthusiastic environment.	86	18	3	1	1	1.32	0.79
	78.9%	16.5%	2.8%	0.9%	0.9%		
12. they can ask the teacher questions freely and confidently.	86	20	2	0	1	1.25	0.53
	78.9%	18.3%	1.8%	0%	0.9%		
13. teachers’ personality creates a nice atmosphere.	75	28	4	0	2	1.39	0.65
	68.8%	25.7%	3.7%	0%	1.8%		
14. their ideas, questions and suggestions	69	36	3	0	1	1.72	0.96

are taken into account.	63.3%	33.0%	2.8%	0%	0.9%		
15. they cooperate with other students and receive their help to carry out activities in class.	54	46	7	1	1	1.61	0.73
	49.5%	42.2%	6.4%	0.9%	0.9%		

Table 4 shows factors from 11 to 15 concerning extrinsic motivation in terms of classroom environment. Results showed that factor 12 obtained high agreement among participants. 106 (97.20%) participants reassured that they felt motivated to learn English when they could ask the teacher questions freely and confidently. Nonetheless, 2 (1.8%) participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this factor, and 1 (0.9%) participant disagreed. Regarding the above-mentioned factors, the qualitative results drawn from the interviews corroborate that it is highly important to have a positive classroom environment. In this sense, the interview participants considered that students need to have a central role within this type of environment; therefore, their interests, needs, desires, likes, doubts and suggestions must be at the center of the teaching-learning process. The participants also pointed out that from the beginning of a semester they must be motivated to provide their viewpoints and recommendations in a free manner, and consequently such information must be incorporated into the design and delivery of subsequent classroom instruction. The interview data emphasized that allowing students to speak up and taking into account the things they would like to learn in the classroom are meaningful ways to foster motivation. In general, the interview data provided key views concerning the importance of creating a nice learning environment where students can learn not only from their teachers but also from their peer classmates. Thus, classroom instruction needs to be grounded in a genuine interest that leads EFL teachers to consider the following aspects: how students feel about classes, what they need to learn more effectively, what doubts and inquiries they still may have, and what problems hinder their language learning. According to the participants, informal and formal instructional practices should be carried out to better learn about university students, and it is essential to be open to incorporate their insights and suggestions into English classes. Two interviewed teachers explained their views as follows:

*“... teachers should be open to not having the last word and be aware that students can suggest things, indeed. For example, we have a syllabus to follow, but it is not a straitjacket. For example, at the beginning of the semester I applied a small survey to find out what my students want to study, and then I incorporate the things that they have told me ...” (In-depth interview to EFL university teacher 7)*

*“... build good vibes among the students and their peers and the teacher as well. Also, it's important to keep an eye on the students and be aware if they are working on their assignments or if they have any problem. Usually, after I finish*

*my class, I spend some time with them, not only to address their doubts, but also to see how they feel, how they are learning or what concerns they may have. . ."*  
(In-depth interview to EFL university teacher 6)

**Table 5: Teachers' perceived importance of top extrinsic factors of motivation concerning teaching resources and materials**

In English classes, students are motivated to learn when	Totally agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Totally disagree	Mean	sd
16. teachers use updated technological resources.	62	39	7	0	1	1.72	0.62
	56.9%	35.8%	6.4%	0%	0.9%		
17. they do activities based on songs and audios.	51	40	12	4	2	1.87	0.88
	46.8%	36.7%	11.0%	3.7%	1.8%		
18. they do activities based on videos, series or movies in English.	45	52	11	0	1	2.39	0.68
	41.3%	47.7%	10.1%	0%	0.9%		
19. their textbooks include interesting topics.	40	37	20	7	5	2.27	1.28
	36.7%	33.9%	18.3%	6.4%	4.6%		

Table 5 contains factors that inquired about teaching resources and materials teachers employed in class and how these resources impacted on students' extrinsic motivation. Results showed that 101 (92.70%) participants agreed with factor 16 which claimed learners felt motivated when teachers used updated technological resources in their English classes at university language centers. 7 (6.4%) participants, on the contrary, neither agreed nor disagreed with the factor, and 1 (0.9%) participants disagreed totally with the factor. With regard to the factors in Table 5, the interview data indicated that the use of technological resources for educational purposes helps to promote learner motivation toward language learning in a more natural and authentic manner. Audio and visual technologies are the most frequently used in the English classroom at university; they are mainly used as language teaching-learning aids that help students better grasp main ideas and essential details of different topics and grammatical structures covered in class. In this sense, Ted Talks, Podcasts and YouTube videos are seen as helpful educational aids that provide students with lots of input and exposure to the target language. In addition, virtual learning environments, apps,

game-based online activities, and interactive platforms are believed to have a positive, meaningful impact on student language learning, according to the in-depth interview participants. Google Classroom, Moodle, Facebook, Socrative, Kahoot, Educaplay, Flipgrid and Wikis were mentioned as useful technological tools that help students increase their levels of motivation toward English learning. The interview data revealed that little reliance must be given to English textbooks because they cannot be seen as straitjackets. Interview participants held a similar perception concerning the necessity of shifting away from a textbook-based language instruction to an instruction that integrates more authentic material from current educational and technology-based sources, as the ones mentioned previously. The qualitative data stressed that students are fond of the latest technological advancements, so teachers need to find the best ways to keep up with technology as much as possible. A language center director and an EFL teacher spoke about the importance of using technology in the EFL university classroom in the following terms:

*“So authentic and updated material is what students like and there is this kind of material for all language skills, such as material to develop reading and listening skills. For example, Ted Talks are materials that students enjoy because they learn vocabulary and they learn new things. And also because it's something that's happening now, isn't it?; very up-to-date material . . .”* (In-depth interview to language center director 8)

*“. . . there are now an infinite number of teaching resources we can use online to foster critical thinking among students, and they are actually motivated to use them. Such usage can be even not only within class periods but within students' daily life, outside the classroom . . .”* (In-depth interview to EFL university teacher 2)

**Table 6: Teachers' perceived importance of top extrinsic factors regarding essential attitudes of the teaching profession that impact learner motivation**

Students feel motivated to learn English when teachers	Totally agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally disagree	Mean	sd
20. show passion for the profession they practice.	80	24	3	0	2	1.33	0.62
	73.4%	22.0%	2.8%	0%	1.8%		
21. show themselves as human beings, not only as professionals.	72	31	4	0	2	1.41	0.65
	66.1%	28.4%	3.7%	0%	1.8%		

22. help learners grow intellectually as well as personally.	61	29	15	2	2	2.22	0.77
	56.0%	26.6%	13.8%	1.8%	1.8%		
23. help them build up their knowledge and learning in general.	60	37	7	2	3	3.03	1.48
	55.0%	33.9%	6.4%	1.8%	2.8%		

Table 6 shows essential attitudes of the teaching profession that impact learner motivation. Thus, the results indicate that 104 (95,40%) participants agreed with factor 20, which states that learners felt motivated when the teachers showed passion for the profession they practice. Only 3 (2.8%) participants neither agreed nor disagreed, and 2 (1.8%) participants disagreed with the factor. The interview data stressed that motivation must start within the teachers themselves, and this happens when they are fond of the teaching profession and love what they do. Consequently, when teachers are motivated, students can become motivated in a more natural, authentic manner. That is to say, it is considered that there is a strong connection between motivated teachers and learner motivation. Therefore, the importance behind motivating university students cannot be overlooked. Moreover, the qualitative data revealed that teachers can help their students in different ways. Among the most important stated ways were to help students to be as motivated as possible toward language learning and to facilitate them to grow integrally. This growth refers to becoming better human beings, as students work together, help one another and become tolerant about different opinions in the same classroom. In doing so, students are very likely not only to learn the target language but also to develop important interpersonal skills, which facilitate them to grow as humans in general. According to the interview participants, it is essential to preach by example if teachers really want to help their students change their mindset and to get the most out of the provided learning experiences. In this sense, it would be nonsense if teachers and directors try to push students to be honest and flexible when they are not like that in the first place. Such an expected positive example needs to come from those in charge of the teaching-learning process and then transmit it to the students. Moreover, the data explained that teachers and directors need to become genuinely interested in student learning, look for their needs and try hard to meet them. As explained by the participants, all these things help to motivate students and have positive effects on their learning despite the fact that it entails a lot of hard work, yet a great deal of satisfaction. The below quotes and excerpts illustrate the views of the interview participants about essential professional attitudes of the teaching profession that impact learner motivation:

*“ . . . our humanism, our acting as human beings, our sensitivity, our emotions, and the ways we congratulate students' good job; all of these things mean a lot to them. Students should not be treated with disdain*

*when we draw their attention due to not well-presented assignments, etc.! Then it is very important the way we, as teachers, act.” (In-depth interview to Ecuadorian expert 3)*

*“... it’s not the same for a student who does not like English and attends a class with a teacher who is intransigent and pretends to know everything. For example, if teachers are burned out and have nothing more to give, unmotivated students will be affected. So, our attitude, as teachers, does influence a lot.” (In-depth interview to international expert 2)*

*“... my students almost never miss my classes, and I have heard from my colleagues that half of their class don’t show up. I think when students like their English class and feel motivated, they do attend, participate and collaborate. So, I think it also depends a lot on teachers’ attitude. . .” (In-depth interview to EFL university teacher 1)*

#### **4. Discussion**

The results yielded valuable information related to the perceptions that teachers have toward learner motivation in university EFL contexts. The general conception about intrinsic motivation as stated by Fan and Williams (2010) and Fandiño and Velandia (2020) who have addressed autonomy and self-efficacy as main factors is evidenced in the responses where the clear majority stated that students feel mostly motivated to have access to different resources and expand their current knowledge on several topics. Further, the study findings seem to agree with Williams (2010), Carreira (2012), and Vatankhah and Tanbakooei (2014), who have elaborated on the importance of support from others as motivation to learn English. When learners count on this support, it is considered an indicator of academic self-efficacy. Moreover, mastering the language will allow students to meet one of the graduation requirements in terms of English proficiency. As a consequence, instructors ought to work with students on autonomy with their learners. Nevertheless, support from others that can come from their peers will have a positive effect in their L2 learning. As Lee and Hsieh (2019) stated, the social aspect contributes to creating the least L2 anxiety provoking environment for EFL students.

Traveling abroad seems to be the most important intrinsic motivating factor considered by teachers. This is in concordance with what has been found by Carreira (2011), Carreira (2012), and Sun and Gao (2020) who stated that the interest in foreign countries and the concept of being capable of socializing naturally with foreigners influences learners’ motivation to learn English. For instructors, it becomes relevant to create scenarios where they practice real-life situations of traveling abroad or scenarios where learners can socialize with foreigners. Lastly, as mentioned by Kyriacou and Kobori, (1998), Kormos and Kiddle, (2013), and Yu (2019), there are factors related to socioeconomic status and work that are attributes as indicators of instrumental motivation.

The results demonstrate that more than fifty per cent of the teachers feel that their students are motivated, as English can bring many benefits and advantages.



Therefore, for instructors, as Tremblay and Gardner (1995) stated, managing to establish specific goals and make continuous references to these goals lead to higher levels of motivational behavior; and thus, improvements of learning in the L2. Further, the present study results are similar to the ones conducted in the Ecuadorian context (Ortega-Auquilla, et al. 2019; Ortega-Auquilla, et al., 2020), which have shown that a great number of surveyed university students felt motivated to learn the English language to accomplish various goals, such as traveling to and learning from anglo cultures, using this foreign language for real-life communicative opportunities, furthering their education and trying to be more competitive in their future careers.

Regarding strategies and resources, as Jiang, Zhang, and May (2019) claimed, teachers believe that applying pragmatic strategies motivate students and achieve effectiveness. This is evidenced in teachers' responses stating that more than seventy percent encourage students to actively participate, provide clear answers, associate the subject with real-life situations; and more than sixty-five percent agreed that students feel motivated when teachers employ a variety of methodological techniques, mentor and provide personalized support, and encourage creativity. These results aligned with the literature from Anthony, et al. (2019), Turan and Akdag-Cimen (2020), and Kim, Raza, and Seidman (2019) who suggested Blended Learning, Flipped Classroom, and self-awareness, collaboration, and critical thinking as useful strategies to motivate students' learning process. All these strategies exhibit components of the aforementioned teacher responses. The purpose of working with these strategies is for teachers to take the role of setting specific goals (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995) and acknowledge the fact that they have the highest impact on language learners' motivation (Rahman et al., 2017).

To broaden this, as stated in the literature by Lee and Hsieh (2019), the use of digital devices may encourage creativity, students' participation, explain content, among others. The majority of teachers agree that employing a variety of methodological techniques and encouraging creativity motivate students. Therefore, using mobile devices, as recommended by Chung, Hwang, and Lai (2019); online games suggested by Dehghanzadeh et al. (2021), and Bado (2022); or other digital resources from Guan, Song, and Li (2018), Wang and Chen (2020), Bailey, Almusharraf, and Hatcher (2021), and Yang, Chen, and Hung (2022) could provide alternatives to meet these objectives and maintain superlative learner motivation.

## **5. Conclusions**

Based on the information obtained throughout the present research study, the following conclusions were drawn. First, in terms of intrinsic and instrumental motivation to learn English, most of the study participants agreed that mastery of English helps university students have advantages at work. It is believed that English is an essential tool to boost career prospects, accomplish academic purposes, access to information, and engage in intercultural communication at the international level. Thus, the content presented to students has to be meaningful; it has to be something they can use in a practical manner inside and outside the language learning classroom. In addition, according to the participants' views

most of the extrinsic motivation in the classroom to learn English comes from actual language instruction, especially from effective teaching practices implemented into the teaching-learning process. That is to say, teachers need to use updated, meaningful instructional strategies and engaging teaching materials. This can in turn help create a positive environment, which may influence learner motivation and enhance students' attitudes toward English learning as well.

Furthermore, teachers also need to have passion for what they do and be motivated so they can pass that motivation to their students. Most importantly, it can be concluded that it is imperative to get to know our students, as their interests, needs, desires, goals and priorities need to be at the center of the instructional process of the English language. In doing so, student-centered instruction seems to be critical to foster and maintain motivation in English learning among university students. Equally important, teachers' professional qualities and attitudes can highly impact learner motivation and maximize student learning. Last but not least, it will certainly be helpful not only to investigate learner motivation at university but also at previous educational levels, especially within non-native English speaking educational contexts, which is the case of Ecuador. In this sense, it needs to be investigated what elementary and high school students, their teachers, Ministry of Education authorities and curriculum developers believe regarding motivation in English language learning, as a greater number of study results will help to make research-based, informed decisions and create educational policies for the enhancement of English education around the country.

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### **Appendix 1: In-depth interview questions**

1. What teaching methodologies and didactic strategies do you consider have a motivating impact on English learning in university students?
2. What didactic teaching resources help students feel motivated to learn English effectively while they are studying at the university?
3. How can a classroom environment be created that positively influences students' motivation to learn English effectively in the university context?
4. What are the main aspects that cause loss of motivation in students to learn English during their university studies?
5. In a survey applied during the first phase of the project, most university students 1,864 out of 2,077, that is, almost 90%, indicated that they feel motivated to learn the English language at university; and 84% stated that they must motivate themselves to learn English at the university. Considering this data, what additional suggestions or recommendations would you give to maintain or increase motivation towards learning the English language expressed by the students surveyed in Ecuador?
6. What institutional initiatives should university authorities implement or strengthen to motivate the learning of English by students of different undergraduate majors?