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What motivates learners?

A fundamental aspect to learning is to be motivated to do so. Motivation can come from many different sources such as: earning more money, moving to a different country, using media, etc. Many of our students come to us because of these reasons so, how can we keep the motivated?

Motivation can be defined depending on its source, its goals or its quality. Intrinsic comes from within the learner and extrinsic as a result of an external source; positive or negative. An intrinsically motivated student will 'want' to do something with the language; an extrinsically motivated one will 'need' to do something with English.



Learners with an instrumental motivation have practical reasons to learn English. Such as, having better job opportunities or studying an M.A. abroad. Integratively motivated learners are the ones that like the language, the culture it represents or its people. They may have a love interest in another country and want to communicate with them.

Positive motivation is when a person expects a reward for their action. For example, when I learn English, I will be able to find a British girlfriend. Negative motivation is fueled by feelings of fear and the impact of underperforming. Students that risk losing their jobs are an example of this type of motivation.

Resultative motivation is the one that stems from achievement and this is where the teacher can have some influence on students. Learners that have a positive learning experience and achieve better in learning the language, will become more motivated to continue learning.



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These are some tips that might help your learners stay motivated:

- Having clear objectives and working towards achieving them by establishing “mini-goals”. For example, if a learner wants to improve employment prospects, we could set a mini-goal such as producing an online profile for a business-oriented social network.
- Showing learners a practical, everyday use of the language. For example, using English to enjoy films, music and other media.
- Helping learners become aware that they can use the language to communicate with native speakers. This can be done inside a language school or using the web, regardless of the learners’ proficiency.
- Receiving quality instruction, fostering interaction among students, and giving plenty of opportunities for meaningful communication.
- Creating a safe, friendly and comprehensive atmosphere in the classroom that makes all students feel comfortable.
- Identifying and working on specific needs learners have for their jobs or studies in English: writing emails and reports; making presentations and phone calls; summarizing information.
- Using role-plays and simulations to mirror situations learners need to handle e.g. meetings and social situations.