

THE ROLE OF TEACHER TRAINING IN ENHANCING STUDENT MOTIVATION IN EFL CLASSES

Baydullayeva Firuza Akilbekovna

O'zbekiston Davlat Jahon Tillari Universiteti

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Abstract: Motivation is widely recognized as one of the most powerful predictors of success in learning English as a foreign language (EFL), yet learners' motivation does not develop in isolation it is shaped, sustained, and often rescued by the teacher standing in front of the classroom. This article examines the role that teacher training plays in equipping EFL instructors with the pedagogical, psychological, and interpersonal competencies needed to foster and maintain student motivation. Drawing on established theories of second language motivation and teacher cognition, the article argues that well-designed pre-service and in-service training programs directly influence a teacher's ability to create a motivating classroom climate, employ learner-centered strategies, and respond sensitively to learners' emotional and cognitive needs. The article further discusses practical strategies that trained teachers can use to build learner autonomy, self-confidence, and long-term engagement with the target language. The findings suggest that investment in continuous teacher development is not a peripheral concern but a central mechanism through which motivational quality in the EFL classroom is achieved and sustained.

Key words: teacher training, EFL classroom, student motivation, professional development, learner autonomy.

Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language is a complex professional activity that extends far beyond the transmission of grammatical rules and vocabulary items. Among the many variables that determine the success of the language-learning process, motivation occupies a central place, since it determines how much effort learners are willing to invest, how persistently they continue in the face of difficulty, and how positively they come to view the language itself (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Motivation, however, is rarely a fixed trait that a learner brings into the classroom; rather, it is a dynamic state that fluctuates according to the quality of instruction, the classroom atmosphere, and, most importantly, the behavior of the teacher (Dörnyei, 2001).

It follows that the teacher is not merely a transmitter of linguistic knowledge but an active architect of the motivational climate in which learning occurs. This responsibility places significant demands on teacher education systems, which must prepare EFL teachers not only in linguistics and methodology but also in the psychological and interpersonal skills required to inspire learners. The purpose of this article is to examine how teacher training contributes to the development of these motivational competencies and to outline concrete strategies that trained EFL teachers can apply in their classrooms.

Main Part

1. Motivation as a Central Construct in EFL Learning

Motivation in second and foreign language acquisition has been studied extensively since Gardner's socio-educational model, which distinguished between integrative and instrumental orientations toward language learning (Gardner, 1985). While early models emphasized learners' attitudes toward the target language community, later frameworks, most

notably self-determination theory, shifted attention toward the internal psychological needs that sustain motivation: the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to this perspective, learners are most likely to remain engaged when they feel that they have some control over their learning, when they experience a genuine sense of progress, and when they feel supported by both peers and the teacher.

These theoretical insights carry direct implications for classroom practice. If motivation depends on learners' perceptions of autonomy and competence, then the teacher's instructional choices the tasks assigned, the feedback given, and the overall classroom tone become decisive factors in whether motivation is nurtured or extinguished. This is precisely the point at which teacher training becomes indispensable, since intuition alone rarely equips teachers with the full repertoire of strategies needed to manage these psychological dimensions of learning.

2. The Function of Teacher Training in Building Motivational Competence

Effective teacher training programs prepare EFL instructors to recognize that their own behavior in the classroom has a direct and measurable impact on learner motivation. Harmer (2007) notes that a teacher's enthusiasm, clarity of instruction, and ability to vary classroom activities are among the strongest classroom-level predictors of sustained student interest. Training programs that incorporate observation, reflective practice, and mentoring allow novice teachers to internalize these behaviors gradually, rather than relying solely on trial and error once they enter the profession.

Richards and Farrell (2005) emphasize that professional development is most effective when it is continuous and reflective rather than limited to a single pre-service course. In-service training, peer observation, and collaborative lesson planning give practicing teachers opportunities to refine their motivational strategies over time, adapting them to the specific needs of different learner groups. Such ongoing development is particularly important in EFL contexts where learners' exposure to English outside the classroom may be limited, placing even greater responsibility on the teacher to generate motivation from within the lesson itself.

3. Practical Strategies Emerging from Trained Practice

Well-trained EFL teachers tend to apply a set of recognizable strategies that directly address learners' motivational needs. First, they design tasks that are communicative and meaningful rather than purely mechanical, allowing learners to use the language for genuine purposes (Ur, 1996). Second, they provide feedback that is constructive and specific, helping learners perceive their own progress rather than focusing solely on error correction, which supports the need for competence described in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Third, trained teachers foster learner autonomy by gradually shifting responsibility for learning onto the students themselves, for example through goal-setting activities, self-assessment, and choice in task selection. Brown (2007) argues that autonomy-supportive teaching is one of the most reliable long-term contributors to intrinsic motivation, since learners who feel ownership over their learning process are less dependent on external rewards or pressure to remain engaged.

Fourth, teacher training equips instructors with classroom management techniques that reduce anxiety and build a supportive emotional climate. Since foreign language anxiety is known to suppress motivation and willingness to communicate, teachers who are trained to recognize and mitigate these emotional barriers are better positioned to keep learners engaged, particularly those who are naturally more hesitant to participate (Dörnyei, 2001).

4. Challenges in Translating Training into Practice

Despite the clear benefits of teacher training, several challenges complicate its translation into sustained motivational practice. Large class sizes, limited institutional resources, and rigid curricula can restrict a teacher's ability to apply learner-centered techniques even when properly trained. Furthermore, training programs themselves vary considerably in quality and depth, and a single workshop or short course is unlikely to produce lasting behavioral change without follow-up support and opportunities for practice (Richards & Farrell, 2005). These challenges suggest that teacher training must be viewed as an ongoing institutional commitment rather than a one-time qualification, supported by mentoring, peer collaboration, and periodic renewal of pedagogical skills.

Conclusion

The evidence reviewed in this article confirms that student motivation in EFL classes is not an incidental byproduct of good teaching but a deliberate outcome that trained teachers are equipped to cultivate. Teacher training programs that combine solid theoretical grounding in motivational psychology with practical, reflective classroom experience produce instructors who are able to design meaningful tasks, provide supportive feedback, foster learner autonomy, and manage the emotional climate of the classroom. Given the central role that motivation plays in language-learning success, continuous investment in teacher education should be regarded as one of the most effective levers available to institutions seeking to improve EFL outcomes. Future teacher-education initiatives would benefit from placing motivational pedagogy at the core of both pre-service curricula and ongoing professional development, ensuring that every EFL teacher enters the classroom prepared not only to teach the language but to inspire the desire to learn it.

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