

# ***Enhancement of Students' Motivation in Online English Classes: Teacher's Response Strategies and Challenges***

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**Abstract:** Students' motivation in online classes is a crucial concern when online learning is becoming more and more common. To improve student motivation in online English courses, this study investigates and analyzes the coping mechanisms and difficulties faced by teachers. This paper examines the many tactics used by educators to encourage and engage students in an online learning environment. It does this by using a mixed research methodology that includes surveys, comparisons, and interviews. The present study's findings highlight the difficulties faced by teachers and how these difficulties affect students' motivation. This paper has found that there are some similarities in the strategies made by teachers in different countries to enhance students' motivation to learn, but there are also many differences. Anyway, they all use some theories. The strategies of teachers with different ages and teaching experiences are also very different, young teachers know how to catch the students' interest more while older teachers are more oppressive and tend to make the classroom atmosphere tense. Secondly, students' motivation is also influenced by the students themselves, such as their personality, age, interest in the subject, and the compatibility of their major with the course content.

**Keywords:** Study motivation, Online teaching, Second language learning

## **1. Introduction**

Encouraging student motivation in an online English classroom is both a pressing concern and an exciting opportunity at a time when online education is widely used for learning. Imagine a world in which students who are driven to study can access a vast array of educational opportunities from around the globe, regardless of their location or family's educational history. With the advent of COVID-19, online learning has become the standard delivery method for remote education worldwide, and distance education has transitioned from offline to online settings [1]. Furthermore, motivation is always a key factor in learning a second language; Nevertheless, inspiring students to acquire a language is a difficult and intricate process. Many factors, including intense pressure to perform well academically, low self-esteem, and disinterest in the material being studied, can cause students to lose interest in studying. Improving pupils' willingness to learn is not a challenging undertaking, though. Studies have indicated that certain students can be kept motivated to learn if they get ongoing support and direction [2]. Naturally, this is merely a conclusion drawn from research conducted before the COVID-19. Following the pandemic, the rise in popularity of online learning

altered the nature of language instruction and made it accessible to a worldwide audience. However, this change poses the problem of how to effectively motivate and engage students in a virtual English classroom. Teachers are also faced with challenges and difficulties, and what they can do to motivate students is also raised. The purpose of this study is to provide an answer to the question of how teachers can increase student motivation in online English programs. This research will also examine how teachers cope with this challenge and examine some of their coping strategies. The findings of this study have important implications for teachers who wish to deliver top-notch online English language instruction and for students who wish to stay motivated. Additionally, identifying specific challenges and benefits contributes to a deeper discussion on effective teaching strategies in a digital age.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Study Motivation**

The term "motivation" describes the various internal and external elements that spur someone to pursue and maintain an academic or learning endeavour. There is a plethora of elements that can impact and cause students' motivation to increase or decrease, and among them, internal factors mostly refer to an internal drive to study and self-concept, which are essentially tied to the students themselves [3]. Judit, Thom, and Kata concentrated on the relationships among students' self-related beliefs, attitudes, and learning goals connected to English language learners as well as parental encouragement [3]. Through analysis, they believe that students' learning motivation is closely related to self-related beliefs. It was also discovered that parents positively impact students' motivation; however, this varies by nation, in China, parents are not the only people who can positively influence their children; friends and relatives can also play a significant role.

Regarding extrinsic influences, a range of incentives and external pressures are the primary sources of motivation. Mastoor also made the argument that instructors have a significant influence on how motivated their pupils are [4]. Teachers can accomplish this goal of inspiring pupils' motivation by putting several tactics into practice, as stated by Mastoor. As a result, to foster and sustain students' motivation in an online English classroom, teachers must implement certain tactics that are tailored to the pedagogical tenets and distinctive features of the online learning environment.

### **2.2. Characteristics of English Class**

The English teaching classroom is a significant component in influencing students' motivation to increase it. A well-taught English classroom has the power to influence students' attitudes, involvement, and enthusiasm for the language. Over the years, teachers have developed a variety of classroom strategies. First is the attitude of the teacher. A teacher who has always approached the teaching process with enthusiasm can greatly pique students' interest in learning because students are highly susceptible to the teacher's emotional influence. Second, the instructor should motivate the students by giving them timely praise, encouragement, and constructive criticism for their work as well as acknowledging their accomplishments. This can greatly enhance and sustain the students' enthusiasm to study. It's also crucial that teachers have a variety of styles. Students will be more engaged in the classroom and learning if their teachers have engaging teaching methods. A study on the pedagogical approaches of game-based English classroom instruction, which integrates gaming with language acquisition, was conducted by Sadeghi et al. Additionally, the games are employed in the classroom to enhance the development of skills, practice, and knowledge [5]. This demonstrates that using games in the classroom can have a unique and beneficial impact on students' motivation because it can increase and sustain students' motivation by stimulating their learning awareness and motivating them.

### 2.3. Online Class as a New Code

The way that classroom instruction is conducted has changed significantly as a result of the internet's rapid development. For instance, online instruction is starting to gain traction; according to Martin, F. et al., COVID-19 has made online learning a common method of instruction across the globe [1]. A lot of educational institutions and schools have switched to online learning as a result of COVID-19. The growth of online courses can also be attributed to the spread of digital technology, high-speed internet access, and the demand for more flexibility in education. Students can study and attend classes without leaving their homes, and both students and educational institutions save a great deal of money. Online courses do present certain challenges, though. The first is the digital divide. Despite the network's increasing coverage and widespread use, some segments of the population are still unable to participate in online learning. These include children living in impoverished areas, who often lack access to electronic devices, and the elderly, who frequently lack internet literacy. Additionally, because online learning is still a relatively new teaching method, there isn't much experience to draw on yet. This means that there are still things to progressively discover, and in the interim, it requires teachers to spend a lot of time and energy. Overall, the online classroom is a relatively good new trend, but it needs to be followed up with continuous development and improvement so that it can become better and better.

There has been a lot of literature in recent years on how to improve and influence students' motivation to learn. This motivation can be broadly classified into two categories: internal factors, which are the student's interest and curiosity in learning as well as their will to learn and succeed, and external factors, which are frequently the changes and influences of external people, events, or environments on students' motivation to learn. To boost kids' motivation to learn, with a greater focus on the individual pupils, it also looks at the features and diversity of the classroom as well as the modifications and enhancements that educators and schools have done. In addition to the current trend of the online classroom, it helped in students' learning. Still, the present research has certain shortcomings. Firstly, most of the papers primarily concentrate on students, and all study data and analyses are grounded in student research. Only a small number of articles address teachers and the obstacles and problems they face during the teaching process. Few research have looked at classrooms with varied pupils; most investigations have been done with students from the same school. Furthermore, some of the study's results may have changed after COVID-19 because they were drawn before the outbreak. Therefore, this article will focus more on teachers and explore how Chinese and foreign educators can increase the motivation of different students in online English classes in the wake of COVID-19, as well as the challenges they face and response strategies. By filling in these gaps, this research seeks to improve the quality of online English language instruction by offering educators useful advice and a more thorough understanding of the dynamics of online motivation and English language programs.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Research Participants

This study primarily uses interviews and comparative research as its primary research methodologies. It is a case study of an online English language course taught by Chinese and international teachers. The information was gathered from an online English language course that combined education with phonetics, instructing students on the subject matter. Every weekend for ten weeks, the kids received two hours of instruction from the teachers. The program involves three teachers, the first is a 45-year-old Chinese professor named Dr. Dong who has been teaching for about 20 years at a Chinese university, and the other is a 50-year-old British professor named Dr. Harris who has been teaching

for approximately 25 years. In addition, there is a teaching assistant (TA) for this course named Miss Liu. She is a 25-year-old Chinese student pursuing a PhD in the US with a focus on phonetics. TA's class always follows the tutor's lesson, she often instructs pupils for two hours, working with them to tackle some of the more difficult problems. The study involved eight participants, all of whom were Chinese university students. The first student is Qiao, a female senior majoring in Spanish linguistics at a Chinese university; next, there is Liu, a sophomore majoring in education at a UK university; third, there is Wu, a senior majoring in Chinese linguistics and literature at a Chinese university; and fourth, there is Zhou, a senior majoring in Chinese linguistics and literature at a Chinese university right now. and fourthly, Zhou, currently a senior student at a university in China, majoring in Chinese Linguistics and Literature; Zhang, a fourth-year business English specialist at a Chinese university; Li, a third-year Dutch specialist at a Chinese university; The eighth student is Huang, a senior at a Chinese high school who intends to apply for an undergraduate degree in education. Luo, a junior at a Chinese university, is majoring in German. After that, this study will concentrate on watching the video replay and analyzing three of the lessons with the teaching assistants, and the foreign and Chinese teachers. The TA's classes will be used as a supplemental analysis, but the focus will be on comparing and analyzing the classes taught by the Chinese and international instructors.

## 3.2. Data Analysis

### 3.2.1.Foreign Professor's Class

Upon watching the three lessons' videos again, it can be seen that Dr. Harris spoke in a gentle tone and smiled during each session. He would introduce himself, then go on to talk about his hobbies and his day's activities with the pupils before allowing them to introduce themselves. The kids' faces gradually went from serious to smiling, and it was clear that the mood in the classroom immediately lightened. It is also evident that the students quickly relaxed a lot. Second, it's obvious that the student's eyes and attention were drawn to this point as soon as Dr. Harris used some striking images to demonstrate the moving pictures while teaching the phonetics of word pronunciation. Wu students in the teaching assistant class that followed also mentioned how much they liked Dr. Harris's explanation style, noting that it helped her understand things right away and was hard to forget. According to the notion of intrinsic motivation, the professor may typically effectively raise the students' intrinsic motivation by using some engaging techniques to demonstrate the knowledge connected to the course material [6]. Observing each student's facial expression and body language, it was also noted that the student's motivation began to decline significantly after the professor had covered a lot of material. For example, Liu began to hold his head in his hands, and Huang began to yawn—movements that could be interpreted as a decline in motivation. At this point, Dr. Harris asked the students to participate in an exercise, which was noteworthy. It's important to note that this exercise is moderately challenging; virtually any student can answer, and every student will have the chance to do so; regardless of whether a student answers properly or not, Dr. Harris will provide encouragement, noted that the pupils' attention was drawn once more, and they were motivated to start actively answering the topic. Wu's example demonstrates this. Wu was the one who demonstrated this the most when he decided to initiate class questions. Wu stood out among the eight students in terms of motivation. This was due in part to the fact that she was an older student and had a slightly richer educational background. Additionally, Wu's university major aligned better with this course. However, Wu's motivation was not immediately apparent at the start of the course. Nevertheless, after taking Dr. Harris's classes for a while, her motivation became clear, even though it wasn't really apparent at first. It follows that in addition to the classroom environment and the teacher's style of instruction, an individual's intrinsic motivation is crucial.

### 3.2.2. Chinese Professor's Class

In Dr. Dong's online class, the professor is a Chinese teacher who also smiles often and speaks in a gentle tone, which greatly reduces students' anxiety and creates a calm environment for everyone. Second, based on Zhou's comments, Dr Dong primarily speaks in a combination of Chinese and English, which makes it easier for those learning a second language to understand and encourages them to keep going when they find it too hard. Consequently, Dr. Dong's bilingual teaching approach benefits second-language learning students more, which has the potential to increase learning motivation. In the classroom, Dr. Dong frequently uses the software's brush and blackboard functions to go over key points in detail. Based on observation, we can also see that students take notes based on the points that the teacher has marked so they will remember them better later. In addition, Dr. Dong provides some encouraging instances of his own to inspire students to pursue research with bravery and not be frightened of failure. This approach makes use of Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory as part of the theory of motivation, which usually focuses on improving people's beliefs about their abilities [7]. This theory is often taught by teachers through providing their own mastery experiences, verbal persuasion and demonstration to increase students' self-efficacy and thus their motivation to learn.

However, it is worth noting that in the Chinese teacher's classroom, the students are more likely to be listening or giving some physical feedback such as nodding and shaking their heads. It is worth noting that in the classroom of the assistant teacher, the students would be more lively, according to the interview and communication with Liu, we can learn that she feels that her mood would be significantly lighter in the classroom of the assistant teacher because the assistant teacher is about the same age as the students and they have more common topics, while the professor would make her feel a hint of oppression, probably because the professor carries a sense of authority.

## 4. Discussion

When teaching English online, many Chinese and international professors employ ways that are generally beneficial in increasing students' motivation. Additionally, the majority of these tactics can be helpful to language teachers and other educators. To create a more relaxed atmosphere in the classroom and help the students feel less formal, teachers, both Chinese and foreign, attempt to be as soft as possible in their facial expressions and words. It is evident from the students' facial expressions and body language that a positive classroom environment can raise students' enthusiasm to learn. Dr. Harris applied the principle of intrinsic motivation to make the subject matter more engaging and, consequently, more motivating. The instructors also did a good job of integrating theory and instruction. Drawing on the principle of self-efficacy, Dr. Dong utilized his own experience to inspire and motivate the students. The students' responses proved to be quite beneficial as well. The European and Chinese academics, however, employed distinct tactics. While the Chinese teachers used the features of the online classroom software to give crucial explanations, which improved the students' knowledge and motivation, the foreign professors allowed the students to complete some moderately difficult exercises, which could both increase the student's motivation and test their mastery of the knowledge points. The professor's proficiency with classroom software is especially crucial because foreign teachers frequently require the assistance of teaching assistants and are not yet familiar with the software. Instructors must ensure that their sessions are engaging because an excessive amount of monotony and dullness might lower motivation. Of course, motivation is also influenced by the kids' backgrounds. Students should be interested in what they are studying in the first place. Secondly, older students have superior knowledge, comprehension, and focus than younger students do. It is also preferable if the students have a foundation of similar information. Another unchangeable factor is that students' motivation will be somewhat limited by the professor's authority, while students in a



class with assistant professors of roughly the same age will be more engaged. Additionally, students may become less motivated to learn if they have spent a long time being afraid to express themselves. Because of this, most students in classes with Chinese and foreign professors tend to be more reserved, and very few of them actively participate in class discussions.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, by examining coping mechanisms and some of the challenges faced by instructors when teaching online, this thesis offers insightful information about how to foster and sustain student motivation in virtual learning environments. This paper emphasizes the critical role that teachers play in helping students become more motivated. It also stresses the significance of classroom environments, individualized instruction, positive teacher feedback, and a focus on students' competence and autonomy. These techniques provide pupils agency and provide language learning a purposeful and interesting aspect. Additionally, this study offers specific recommendations for enhancing the efficacy of online English language instruction. In addition to keeping an eye out for new and creative approaches, educators must acknowledge and deal with the difficulties presented by the digital sphere. This study has some limitations. For instance, there were only three lessons observed during the data collection, which means there may have been some omissions or deficiencies. Additionally, there were only a small number of students who took part in the online course—all of them were college students—so the opinions and conclusions drawn from them may not fully represent the views of all the students. Therefore, future research can collect more data to ensure the richness and diversity of the data, so that there can be more gains. The subjects of the study can be more diversified, not only limited to college students, and the background of teachers can also be richer. In the future, the research can also focus on how to solve the problems encountered by teachers in the online classroom and what can be done to make online teaching more effective.

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