

# The role of motivation in teaching English to young learners in Uzbekistan

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**Abstract:** Motivation is one of the most important factors influencing the success of foreign language learning, especially among young learners. In Uzbekistan, teaching English has become a national priority due to educational reforms and the growing importance of international communication. This article examines the role of motivation in teaching English to primary school students and analyzes effective strategies that increase students' interest and participation. The study is based on theoretical analysis, classroom observations, and practical teaching experience. Special attention is given to innovative motivational techniques such as gamification, positive reinforcement, and interactive activities. The article also considers recent educational reforms in Uzbekistan and their impact on foreign language education. The findings show that motivated students demonstrate higher engagement, better language retention, and greater confidence in communication. The study concludes that the use of innovative motivational strategies can significantly improve the effectiveness of English language teaching and support students' long-term language development.

**Keywords:** motivation, young learners, English teaching, Uzbekistan, gamification, foreign language education, innovation

## INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, the knowledge of foreign languages has become an essential requirement for personal, academic, and professional development. Among foreign languages, English plays a particularly important role because it is widely used in international communication, science, technology, and education. For young learners, learning English opens new opportunities and helps them become active participants in the global community.

In Uzbekistan, significant reforms have been implemented to improve the quality of foreign language education. Under the leadership of Shavkat Mirziyoyev [1; 1-6], special attention has been given to teaching foreign languages from an early age. The President emphasized the importance of foreign language education and stated: "It is time to create a new system of teaching foreign languages in our country, which will become a solid foundation for the future. Since we set ourselves the goal of building a competitive state, graduates must be fluent in at least two foreign languages." This

statement clearly shows that foreign language learning is considered a national priority and an important part of educational development.

These reforms aim to create better learning conditions, improve teaching methods, and increase students' interest in foreign languages. In primary schools across Uzbekistan, English is now taught from early grades, and teachers are encouraged to use modern and innovative teaching approaches [2; 7-18].

For example, teachers often explain the importance of English to students in simple and motivating ways:

“Aziz o‘quvchilar, ingliz tilini o‘rganish orqali siz dunyoning turli mamlakatlaridagi insonlar bilan muloqot qila olasiz.”

(Translation: Dear students, by learning English, you will be able to communicate with people from different countries.)

Motivation is one of the key factors that influence how successfully students learn a foreign language. It determines students' willingness to learn, their level of participation, and their persistence in overcoming difficulties. Young learners, especially children in primary school, are naturally active and curious, but they can easily lose interest if the lesson is not engaging.

This article explores the role of motivation in teaching English to young learners, with particular attention to the educational context of Uzbekistan. The literature review examines the theoretical foundations of motivation, including key psychological and pedagogical theories developed by international and Uzbek scholars. It also analyzes previous research on motivational strategies in foreign language teaching. Following the literature review, the methodology section describes the research design, participants, and instruments used to investigate motivation levels among young learners. The study aims to identify effective motivational strategies that can improve English language learning outcomes in primary education.

Motivation has been widely studied in the field of education and foreign language learning. Researchers agree that motivation plays a crucial role in determining students' success, especially in learning a foreign language at an early age.

One of the most influential researchers in this field is Zoltán Dörnyei [4; 23-45], who defined motivation as the driving force that initiates and sustains learning behavior. According to Dörnyei, motivated students are more likely to actively participate in classroom activities and achieve better results. He emphasized that motivation is not a fixed characteristic but can change depending on the learning environment and teaching methods. This means that teachers play an important role in creating conditions that support and increase students' motivation.

Another important contribution was made by Robert Gardner [5; 50-72], who developed the socio-educational model of motivation. Gardner identified two main types of motivation: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Integrative

motivation refers to students' desire to learn a language in order to communicate with people from other cultures and become part of the language community. Instrumental motivation refers to learning a language for practical purposes, such as getting a good job or passing exams. In the context of Uzbekistan, both types of motivation are important. For example, students may learn English to study abroad (instrumental motivation) or to communicate with international friends (integrative motivation).

The socio-cultural theory developed by Lev Vygotsky [11; 79] also provides valuable insights into motivation and learning. According to his theory, students learn more effectively when they interact with teachers and peers. Group work, discussions, and cooperative activities help students stay motivated and actively engaged in learning. In Uzbek classrooms, group activities such as dialogues and role-playing can significantly increase students' motivation.

For example, students may work in pairs and practice simple conversations:

"Hello, my name is Ali. What is your name?"

"Salom, mening ismim Ali. Sening isming nima?"

Such interactive activities make learning more meaningful and enjoyable.

Another important theory related to motivation was developed by Abraham Maslow [8; 35]. Maslow's hierarchy of needs explains that students must feel safe, comfortable, and supported in order to learn effectively. According to Maslow, psychological factors such as confidence, belonging, and self-esteem influence motivation. If students feel anxious or afraid of making mistakes, their motivation decreases. Therefore, teachers must create a positive and supportive classroom environment.

For example, when teachers encourage students by saying:

"Xato qilishdan qo'rqmang, bu o'rganish jarayonining bir qismi."

(Translation: Do not be afraid of making mistakes; it is part of the learning process.)

Students feel more confident and motivated.

In addition to international researchers, Uzbek scholars have also studied motivation in foreign language learning. Jalolov J.J. [7; 112] emphasized that motivation is closely connected with students' interest and teaching methods. He noted that interactive and communicative approaches are more effective than traditional memorization methods. Saidakhmedov N. [12; 140] also highlighted the importance of innovative teaching methods in increasing students' motivation. According to his research, the use of games, visual materials, and modern technology can significantly improve students' engagement.

Recent studies have also shown that gamification is an effective motivational strategy. Gamification involves using elements such as points, rewards, and

competitions in the learning process. When students receive rewards for their efforts, they feel more motivated and interested.

For example, teachers may use simple reward systems:

“Bugungi darsda faol qatnashgan o‘quvchilar yulduzcha oladi.” (Translation: Students who actively participate in today’s lesson will receive a star.) This approach encourages active participation and creates a positive learning atmosphere.

Overall, the literature shows that motivation is a key factor in successful language learning. Both psychological theories and practical studies confirm that motivated students demonstrate higher engagement, better performance, and greater confidence. Teachers play a central role in supporting and developing students’ motivation through effective teaching strategies. This study used a qualitative research design to examine the role of motivation in teaching English to young learners. The research focused on primary school students in Uzbekistan.

### Participants

The participants were 20 primary school students aged between 7 and 10 years old. These students were learning English as a foreign language. The students had different levels of English proficiency, but all of them had been studying English for at least one year.

The teacher also participated in the study by providing observations and feedback about students’ motivation and behavior.

The results of this study showed that motivation plays a significant role in improving students’ participation and engagement in English language learning. Based on classroom observations, questionnaires, and informal interviews, it was found that students demonstrated higher interest and involvement when motivational strategies were used. During classroom observation, it was noticed that students were more active when the teacher used games, visual materials, and positive reinforcement. For example, when the teacher introduced vocabulary through games, students participated enthusiastically and showed better understanding. Students raised their hands more often and were willing to answer questions.

This indicates that interactive methods increased students’ motivation.

The questionnaire results also showed that most students had positive attitudes toward learning English. Out of 20 students:

17 students said they liked English lessons

15 students said they liked learning through games

14 students said teacher praise motivated them

16 students said they felt more confident when lessons were interactive

This shows that motivational strategies have a direct positive impact on students’ attitudes.

Interviews with students confirmed that games and positive feedback were important motivational factors. One student stated:

“Menga ingliz tili darsi yoqadi, chunki o‘qituvchi bizni maqtaydi.”

(Translation: I like English lessons because the teacher praises us.)

Teacher observations also showed that students who received encouragement were more confident and participated more actively.

Overall, the results clearly demonstrate that motivational strategies significantly improve students’ engagement and learning behavior.

The findings of this study confirm the importance of motivation in foreign language learning, especially among young learners. The results are consistent with the theories of Zoltán Dörnyei, who emphasized that motivation directly influences students’ effort and participation. The study showed that motivated students were more active and willing to learn.

The results also support the theory of Robert Gardner, who explained that motivation is closely connected with students’ attitudes toward language learning. When students enjoy learning, they become more engaged.

The socio-cultural theory of Lev Vygotsky is also supported by the findings. The use of group activities and interactive tasks helped students learn more effectively.

In the Uzbek educational context, traditional teaching methods often focused on memorization. However, this study shows that modern interactive methods are more effective. When teachers used games, praise, and visual materials, students showed greater interest. These findings are especially important in Uzbekistan, where educational reforms emphasize innovation and quality in foreign language teaching.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that motivation plays a key role in teaching English to young learners. Motivated students show higher levels of participation, confidence, and interest in learning.

The study found that the most effective motivational strategies include:

- positive reinforcement
- interactive activities
- games and gamification
- supportive classroom environment
- teacher encouragement

One important innovation identified in this study is the use of gamification in English language teaching.

Gamification involves using game elements such as points, rewards, and competitions to increase motivation. This method makes learning more enjoyable and helps students stay engaged.

For example, teachers in Uzbekistan can use simple reward systems:

“Faol qatnashgan o‘quvchilarga yulduzcha beriladi.”

(Translation: Students who actively participate receive a star.)

This innovative approach is easy to implement and highly effective.

Motivational strategies not only improve students’ language skills but also help develop positive attitudes toward learning. This is especially important for young learners, as early motivation influences their future academic success.

Therefore, it is recommended that English teachers in Uzbekistan actively use motivational strategies and innovative teaching methods to improve the quality of education.

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