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ПОРІВНЯЛЬНЕ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ МОТИВАЦІЇ ТА СТАВЛЕННЯ ДО НАВЧАННЯ СЕРЕД СТУДЕНТІВ, ЯКІ ВИВЧАЮТЬ АНГЛІЙСКУ МОВУ ЯК ОBOB'ЯЗКОВИЙ ПРЕДМЕТ ТА ПРЕДМЕТ ЗА ВИБОРОМ.

Роль мотивації та ставлення у вивченні мов є ключовою для успішності студентів, однак відмінності між вибіркоvim та обов'язковим контекстами навчання залишаються недостатньо дослідженими, особливо в неангломовних країнах. У цьому дослідженні порівнюється мотивація та ставлення серед українських студентів університетів, які вивчають англійську мову як вибіркоvim (n = 100) або обов'язковий предмет (n = 100), із застосуванням змішаної методології. Кількісні дані, зібрані за допомогою 30-пунктового опитування, адаптованого з тесту ставлення/мотивації Гарднера (Attitude/Motivation Test Battery), та якісні результати з напівструктурованих інтерв'ю виявляють суттєві відмінності. Студенти, які обрали англійську мову добровільно, демонструють вищу внутрішню мотивацію (M = 4,56 проти 3,21, p < 0,01), зумовлену особистим інтересом, культурною цікавістю та самостійним навчанням, а також більш позитивне ставлення (M = 4,78 проти 3,89, p < 0,01). Натомість студенти обов'язкових курсів орієнтуються переважно на зовнішні мотиваційні чинники, такі як академічні вимоги та кар'єрні перспективи (M = 4,12 проти 3,45, p < 0,05), часто стикаючись зі стресом і втратою зацікавлення. Якісні дані підкреслюють, що студенти вибіркоvim курсів отримують задоволення від автономії та додаткових ресурсів (наприклад, цифрових інструментів), тоді як студенти обов'язкових курсів відчують тривожність через вимоги щодо складання іспитів та обмежені можливості для занурення у мовне середовище. Контекстуальні фактори в Україні, зокрема урбаністично - сільський розподіл у доступі до ресурсів та зростаючий суспільний акцент на англійську як на шлях до глобальних можливостей, додатково впливають на ці динаміки. Дослідження підкреслює необхідність адаптованих педагогічних стратегій: вибіркові курси виграють від

заохочення автономії та культурної взаємодії, тоді як обов'язкові курси потребують втручання для розвитку внутрішньої мотивації через культурно релевантний контент, спільне навчання та справедливий розподіл ресурсів. Подолання цих викликів дозволить педагогам і політикам підвищити ефективність мовної освіти, адаптуючи методики до мотиваційного профілю учнів. Це дослідження робить внесок у глобальну дискусію щодо мовної освіти, підкреслюючи важливість контекстуально специфічного підходу в неангломовному середовищі та пропонуючи практичні рішення для подолання мотиваційного розриву та сприяння інклюзивному й зацікавленому навчанню.

Ключові слова: мотивація, вибіркові предмети, вивчення іноземних мов, мовна освіта, мотиваційний профіль.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING AMONG STUDENTS STUDYING ENGLISH AS AN ELECTIVE AND AS A COMPULSORY SUBJECT.

Abstract

The role of motivation and attitudes in language learning is pivotal to students' success, yet the distinction between elective and compulsory learning contexts remains underexplored, particularly in non-English-speaking countries. This study compares motivation and attitudes among Ukrainian university students studying English as an elective ($n = 100$) versus a compulsory subject ($n = 100$), employing a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data from a 30-item survey, adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery, and qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews reveal significant differences [3]. Elective learners exhibit higher intrinsic motivation ($M = 4.56$ vs. 3.21 , $p < 0.01$), driven by personal interest, cultural curiosity, and self-directed learning, alongside more positive attitudes ($M = 4.78$ vs. 3.89 , $p < 0.01$). Compulsory learners prioritize extrinsic motivators, such as academic requirements and career prospects ($M = 4.12$ vs. 3.45 , $p < 0.05$), often

experiencing stress and disengagement. Qualitative findings highlight elective students' enjoyment of autonomy and supplementary resources (e.g., digital tools), while compulsory learners face anxiety due to exam pressures and limited immersive opportunities. Contextual factors in Ukraine, including urban-rural disparities in resource access and the growing societal emphasis on English as a gateway to global opportunities, further shape these dynamics. The study underscores the need for tailored pedagogical strategies: elective courses benefit from fostering autonomy and cultural engagement, whereas compulsory courses require interventions to cultivate intrinsic motivation through culturally relevant content, collaborative learning, and equitable resource distribution. By addressing these challenges, educators and policymakers can enhance language education's effectiveness, aligning methodologies with learners' motivational profiles. This research contributes to global discourse on language education by emphasizing context-specific approaches in non-English-speaking settings, offering actionable insights to bridge motivational gaps and promote inclusive, engaging learning environments.

Keywords: motivation, elective subjects, foreign language learning, language education, motivational profile.

1. Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, English has emerged as the dominant global lingua franca, playing a pivotal role in education, business, science, and culture. Its widespread use has made English proficiency a highly sought-after skill, often seen as a gateway to academic, professional, and personal opportunities. As a result, English language learning has become a cornerstone of education systems worldwide, with students engaging in its study under varying conditions—some as a compulsory subject mandated by curricula, and others as an elective chosen out of personal interest or aspiration.

The distinction between studying English as a compulsory subject versus an elective is not merely administrative; it reflects deeper differences in students' motivations, attitudes, and learning experiences. Motivation, defined as the driving force behind learning behaviors, and attitudes, which encompass learners' perceptions and feelings toward the language, are widely recognized as critical factors influencing language acquisition success [3,4]. While elective learners often approach English with enthusiasm and curiosity, compulsory learners may view it as an obligation, leading to differences in engagement, persistence, and outcomes.

Understanding these differences is particularly relevant in the context of countries like Ukraine, where English is increasingly seen as a vital tool for integration into global networks. The country's socio-political and economic transformations have heightened the importance of English proficiency, with many students viewing it as essential for accessing higher education abroad, securing

employment in international markets, and participating in global cultural exchanges. However, the way students engage with English - whether as a compulsory subject or an elective - can significantly shape their learning trajectories.

Despite the growing body of research on motivation and attitudes in language learning, few studies have explicitly compared the experiences of elective and compulsory English learners, particularly in non-English-speaking countries like Ukraine. This gap in the literature is significant, as the voluntary nature of elective courses may foster intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes, while compulsory courses may rely more heavily on extrinsic motivators, such as academic requirements or future career prospects. These differences have important implications for teaching practices, curriculum design, and policy development.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining the motivational and attitudinal profiles of students studying English as an elective versus a compulsory subject. By exploring the factors that drive their engagement and shape their perceptions, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how these differing contexts influence language learning experiences. Furthermore, it seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on language education by offering insights that can inform strategies to enhance motivation and attitudes across diverse learning environments.

The findings of this study have the potential to benefit educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers by highlighting the unique needs and challenges faced by students in each context. For elective learners, the focus may be on sustaining their intrinsic motivation and enthusiasm, while for compulsory learners, the challenge lies in fostering a sense of purpose and engagement. By addressing these issues, educators can create more effective and inclusive learning environments that empower students to achieve their language learning goals.

In the following sections, this paper will review the relevant literature, outline the methodology, present the findings, and discuss their implications for theory and practice. Through this comprehensive exploration, the study aims to shed light on the complex interplay between motivation, attitudes, and learning contexts, offering valuable insights for the field of English language education.

2. Literature Review

The role of motivation and attitudes in language learning has been extensively studied, with researchers emphasizing their impact on learners' engagement, persistence, and success. Gardner's socio-educational model of second language acquisition highlights the interplay between motivation, attitudes, and language achievement, distinguishing between integrative motivation (a desire to engage with the target language community) and instrumental motivation (practical reasons such as career advancement).[3] Dörnyei expanded on this framework by introducing the concept of the L2 Motivational Self System, which emphasizes the role of learners' self-concept and future aspirations in shaping their motivation.[2]

Attitudes towards language learning, including perceptions of the language's cultural value and usefulness, are also critical determinants of success.[1] Positive attitudes are often associated with higher levels of motivation and greater willingness to invest effort in learning. Conversely, negative attitudes can lead to disengagement and lower achievement.

Recent studies have explored the differences in motivation and attitudes between elective and compulsory language learners. Ushioda found that elective learners tend to exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation and more positive attitudes, as their engagement is driven by personal interest rather than external requirements.[7] However, compulsory learners often rely on extrinsic motivators, such as academic pressure or future career prospects, which can lead to a more utilitarian approach to learning.

In the context of Ukraine, research on motivation and attitudes towards English language learning has gained momentum in recent years, particularly in light of the country's increasing integration into global economic and cultural networks. Ukrainian scientists have contributed valuable insights into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by learners in this region.

For instance, a study by Kozarenko and Kravchenko examined the motivational profiles of Ukrainian university students studying English as a foreign language.[4] Their findings revealed that while many students were instrumentally motivated by the prospect of better job opportunities and international mobility, others expressed integrative motivation, driven by an interest in English-speaking cultures and a desire for global communication. The study also highlighted the influence of socio-economic factors on students' attitudes, with learners from urban areas reporting more positive attitudes towards English compared to their rural counterparts.

Another survey conducted by Pikhart and Bilytska explored the impact of digital technologies on motivation and attitudes among Ukrainian English learners. [5]. The researchers found that the use of online platforms, such as language learning apps and social media, significantly enhanced students' intrinsic motivation by making learning more interactive and accessible. However, they also noted that the lack of digital literacy and access to technology in some regions posed challenges for learners, particularly in rural areas.

Furthermore, a study by Tarnopolsky and Kozhushko investigated the role of English as a global language in shaping Ukrainian students' attitudes [6]. Their findings indicated that students perceived English as a key to personal and professional growth, with many viewing it as a "must-have" skill in the modern world. However, the study also revealed that some students experienced anxiety and frustration due to the perceived difficulty of mastering the language, particularly in the absence of immersive learning environments.

These studies underscore the complex interplay between motivation, attitudes, and contextual factors in shaping Ukrainian students' experiences with English language learning. They also highlight the need for tailored approaches to address the diverse needs and challenges faced by learners in different regions and educational settings.

By integrating insights from both international and Ukrainian research, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how motivation and attitudes differ between students studying English as an elective and as a compulsory subject, with a particular focus on the Ukrainian context.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The study involved 200 students from a university in Sumy national agrarian university, divided into two groups: elective English learners ($n = 100$) and compulsory English learners ($n = 100$). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 25.

3.2 Instruments

Data were collected using a mixed-methods approach:

- Quantitative Data: A 30-item survey adapted from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery was administered to measure motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and attitudes towards learning English [3].
- Qualitative Data: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 participants (10 from each group) to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions.

3.3 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (independent t-tests) to compare the two groups. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns and themes.

4. Results

4.1 Quantitative Findings

- Motivation: Elective students scored significantly higher on intrinsic motivation ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.78$) compared to compulsory students ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.89$; $p < 0.01$). Compulsory students, however, reported higher extrinsic motivation ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.67$) than elective students ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.72$; $p < 0.05$).
- Attitudes: Elective students exhibited more positive attitudes towards learning English ($M = 4.78$, $SD = 0.65$) than compulsory students ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.71$; $p < 0.01$).

4.2 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews provided deeper insights into the experiences, perceptions, and emotions of students studying English as an elective versus a compulsory subject. These findings complement the quantitative results, offering a nuanced understanding of the factors that shape motivation and attitudes in each context.

4.2.1 Elective English Learners

Elective students consistently described their English learning experiences as enjoyable, fulfilling, and personally meaningful. Many participants expressed a genuine interest in the language, often citing their fascination with English-speaking cultures, literature, and media as key motivators. For example, one student remarked, *"I love watching English movies and listening to music. Learning English helps me understand the lyrics and dialogues better, and it feels like I'm connecting with a whole new world."*

This intrinsic motivation was further reinforced by the voluntary nature of their enrollment. Elective learners often viewed English as a tool for self-expression and personal growth rather than a mere academic requirement. One participant noted, *"I chose to study English because I wanted to challenge myself and explore new opportunities. It's not just about grades; it's about becoming a more global citizen."*

Additionally, elective students highlighted the importance of autonomy in their learning process. Many reported using supplementary resources, such as language learning apps, online courses, and social media platforms, to enhance their skills outside the classroom. This self-directed approach not only deepened their engagement but also fostered a sense of ownership over their learning journey. As one student explained, *"I like that I can learn at my own pace and focus on topics that interest me. It makes the process more enjoyable and less stressful."*

4.2.2 Compulsory English Learners

In contrast, compulsory learners often described their experiences with English as more utilitarian and pressure-driven. While many recognized the practical benefits of English proficiency, such as improved job prospects and academic success, their motivation was largely extrinsic. One participant stated, *"I know English is important for my future career, so I study it because I have to, not because I want to."*

Feelings of pressure and anxiety were common among compulsory learners, particularly in relation to exams and grades. Several participants expressed frustration with the perceived difficulty of mastering English, especially in the absence of immersive learning environments. One student shared, *"I find English really hard, and sometimes I feel like I'm just memorizing words and rules without*

really understanding how to use them. It's stressful because I need to pass the course to graduate."

Despite these challenges, some compulsory learners acknowledged the value of English in a globalized world. For instance, one participant noted, *"Even though I don't enjoy studying English, I know it's necessary if I want to work in an international company or travel abroad."* However, this recognition often did not translate into positive attitudes or intrinsic motivation, as the learning process was frequently perceived as a burden rather than an opportunity.

4.2.3 Contextual Factors in Ukraine

The qualitative findings also shed light on the role of contextual factors in shaping students' experiences. In Ukraine, where English is increasingly seen as a key to personal and professional advancement, many participants emphasized the importance of English for accessing global opportunities. One student from an urban area commented, *"In Kyiv, English is everywhere—on billboards, in cafes, and on social media. It feels like a must-have skill if you want to succeed."*

However, students from rural areas often faced additional challenges, such as limited access to qualified teachers, outdated teaching materials, and fewer opportunities to practice English in real-life settings. One rural participant explained, *"We don't have many English speakers here, and our textbooks are old. It's hard to stay motivated when you don't see how you'll ever use the language."* These disparities highlight the need for targeted interventions to address inequities in access to quality English language education.

4.2.4 Emotional and Psychological Dimensions

The interviews also revealed the emotional and psychological dimensions of language learning. Elective learners frequently described feelings of excitement, curiosity, and accomplishment, which reinforced their positive attitudes and motivation. One participant shared, *"Every time I understand a new word or phrase, I feel a sense of achievement. It's like unlocking a new level in a game."*

Compulsory learners, on the other hand, often reported feelings of frustration, anxiety, and disengagement. The pressure to meet academic requirements and the fear of failure were recurring themes in their narratives. As one student admitted, *"I feel like I'm just going through the motions. I don't enjoy it, but I have no choice."* These emotional responses underscore the importance of creating supportive and engaging learning environments that address students' psychological needs.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal significant differences in motivation and attitudes towards learning English between students who study it as an elective and those who study it as a compulsory subject. These differences are consistent with

prior research, which has consistently highlighted the role of voluntary engagement in fostering intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes [7,2]. However, the study also provides new insights into the specific challenges and opportunities faced by learners in each context, particularly within the Ukrainian educational landscape.

5.1 Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation

Elective students in this study demonstrated significantly higher levels of intrinsic motivation, driven by personal interest, curiosity, and a genuine enjoyment of the learning process. This aligns with the findings of Kozarenko and Kravchenko, who noted that Ukrainian students who voluntarily engage with English often do so out of a desire to connect with global cultures and media [4]. The voluntary nature of elective courses allows students to pursue their interests autonomously, which fosters a sense of ownership and engagement.

In contrast, compulsory learners exhibited higher levels of extrinsic motivation, primarily driven by external factors such as academic requirements, future career prospects, and societal expectations. While this type of motivation can be effective in achieving short-term goals, such as passing exams or meeting graduation requirements, it often lacks the depth and sustainability of intrinsic motivation. Tarnopolsky and Kozhushko similarly found that Ukrainian students studying English as a compulsory subject often viewed it as a necessary skill for professional advancement, rather than a source of personal fulfillment [6].

5.2 Attitudes Towards Learning

The study also revealed stark differences in attitudes towards learning English between the two groups. Elective students reported more positive attitudes, describing their learning experiences as enjoyable, meaningful, and culturally enriching. These findings echo those of Pikhart and Bilytska, who highlighted the role of digital technologies in enhancing students' engagement and enthusiasm for learning English.[5] Elective learners often seek out additional resources, such as online platforms, films, and literature, to supplement their classroom learning, which further reinforces their positive attitudes.

Compulsory learners, on the other hand, tended to view English as a pragmatic tool rather than a source of personal or cultural enrichment. While they recognized the importance of English for academic and professional success, many expressed feelings of pressure, anxiety, and disengagement. This is consistent with the findings of Tarnopolsky and Kozhushko, who noted that compulsory learners in Ukraine often struggle with the perceived difficulty of mastering English, particularly in the absence of immersive learning environments [6].

5.3 Contextual Factors in the Ukrainian Setting

The Ukrainian context adds another layer of complexity to these findings. The country's ongoing socio-political and economic transformations have heightened the importance of English as a gateway to global opportunities. For many Ukrainian students, proficiency in English is seen as a critical asset for accessing higher education abroad, securing employment in international markets, and participating in global cultural exchanges [4].

However, the study also highlights the disparities in access to resources and opportunities between urban and rural areas. Students from urban centers, where English-language media and educational resources are more readily available, tend to exhibit more positive attitudes and higher levels of motivation. In contrast, students from rural areas often face challenges such as limited access to qualified teachers, outdated teaching materials, and insufficient exposure to English-speaking environments. These disparities underscore the need for targeted interventions to bridge the gap and ensure equitable access to quality English language education.

5.4 Implications for Teaching and Curriculum Design

The findings of this study have important implications for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. For elective courses, the focus should be on maintaining and enhancing students' intrinsic motivation by providing opportunities for autonomous learning, creative expression, and cultural exploration. Incorporating multimedia resources, project-based learning, and real-world applications can help sustain students' enthusiasm and engagement.

For compulsory courses, the challenge lies in fostering intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes among students who may initially lack interest or feel pressured to learn. Strategies such as integrating culturally relevant content, promoting collaborative learning, and setting achievable goals can help shift students' focus from external rewards to personal growth and enjoyment. Additionally, addressing the socio-economic and regional disparities in access to resources is critical for creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

5.5 Future Research Directions

While this study provides valuable insights, it also highlights the need for further research to explore the long-term impact of motivation and attitudes on language learning outcomes. Longitudinal studies could track students' progress over time, examining how their motivation and attitudes evolve in response to different teaching methods and learning environments. For instance, investigating whether early exposure to culturally relevant content or autonomy-supportive pedagogies in compulsory courses can gradually foster intrinsic motivation would offer actionable strategies for educators. Additionally, comparative studies across different regions and educational systems could provide a broader understanding of the factors

influencing motivation and attitudes in diverse contexts. For example, contrasting urban and rural settings within Ukraine or comparing Ukrainian students with those in other non-English-speaking countries could reveal how socio-economic disparities, resource availability, and cultural perceptions of English shape learning dynamics.

Future research could also delve into the role of technology in mediating motivation. While digital tools were highlighted as beneficial for elective learners, their potential to mitigate challenges in compulsory contexts—such as through adaptive learning platforms or virtual immersion experiences—remains underexplored. Similarly, interdisciplinary studies integrating psychological theories (e.g., self-determination theory) with sociolinguistic frameworks could unravel how learners' self-concept intersects with societal expectations. Furthermore, examining the impact of peer or parental influence on students' attitudes, particularly in compulsory settings, might shed light on external motivators beyond academic requirements. The post-pandemic shift toward hybrid and remote learning also opens avenues to explore how digital environments affect engagement and stress levels among both elective and compulsory learners.

Lastly, mixed-methods research combining large-scale surveys with ethnographic approaches could capture nuanced narratives, such as how policy changes (e.g., national initiatives to promote English proficiency) influence grassroots educational practices. By addressing these gaps, future studies can inform holistic, context-sensitive strategies to bridge motivational divides and enhance equity in language education.

6. Conclusion

This study reveals significant differences in motivation and attitudes between students studying English as an elective and as a compulsory subject. Elective learners, driven by intrinsic factors such as personal curiosity and cultural interest, exhibit higher levels of engagement and satisfaction, underscoring the transformative power of voluntary learning. In contrast, compulsory learners, while recognizing the pragmatic value of English, often experience stress and disengagement due to extrinsic pressures like academic mandates and career demands. These findings underscore the necessity of reimagining pedagogical approaches to align with learners' motivational profiles. For elective courses, sustaining intrinsic motivation requires fostering autonomy through project-based learning, multimedia resources, and opportunities for cultural exchange. Compulsory courses, however, demand innovative interventions to cultivate intrinsic drive—such as integrating culturally resonant materials, collaborative activities, and real-world applications that connect language mastery to personal growth.

Ultimately, this study contributes to a global dialogue on language education, advocating for context-specific solutions that honor learners' diverse needs. By

transforming compulsory courses into spaces of exploration and elective courses into hubs of cultural connectivity, educators and policymakers can empower students to view English not merely as a skill but as a gateway to meaningful global participation. Such efforts will not only enhance linguistic proficiency but also foster inclusive, resilient learning ecosystems where motivation thrives across all contexts.

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