

Factors Influencing English Language Learning Motivation among High School Students in Dongying City, Shandong Province, China

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Abstract

This research aimed to study 1) the factors influencing English language learning motivation among a population of 380 Chinese high school students in Dongying City, Shandong Province, and 2) to provide recommendations for improving English language teaching and learning, with a duration focusing on one academic year. English, as a global language, plays a vital role in students' academic and career development, particularly in the context of China's integration into the global economy. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, surveying 380 students from 16 schools and conducting in-depth interviews with 12 teachers.

The findings reveal that external factors, such as family support, educational institutions, and career aspirations, significantly contribute to students' motivation. Meanwhile, internal factors, including personal interest, self-confidence, and practical usage of English, also influence students' motivation. Additionally, this study offers recommendations for educators to foster engaging learning environments and enhance access to resources.

Addressing these factors can help improve English language education and support students' long-term academic and professional success in an increasingly interconnected world.

Keywords: *English learning motivation, Chinese high school students, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, educational strategies.*

1. Introduction

The global ascendancy of English as a lingua franca has solidified its pivotal role in international commerce, academia, and diplomacy (Xhemali, 2022; 5 Minute English, 2024a; 5 Minute English, 2024b). Within the context of China, this significance is amplified by the nation's progressive integration into the global economic framework and its strategic emphasis on cultivating international partnerships (People's Daily, 2020). The current state of English education in China reflects a national priority to equip students for global engagement, yet challenges in pedagogical approaches and student motivation persist across various regions. Consequently, English language education has been prioritized within Chinese secondary education, with its inclusion as a mandatory component across various educational tiers (British Council, n.d.).

Notwithstanding its recognized importance, the acquisition of English presents a spectrum of challenges for Chinese high school students. These challenges encompass linguistic intricacies, restricted exposure to authentic linguistic environments, and an educational paradigm predominantly oriented towards standardized examinations (Zhang, 2023; Huang, 2005). Given these obstacles, an investigation into the motivational determinants influencing students' engagement with English is imperative, as motivation is a fundamental determinant of academic achievement and language acquisition (Tan, 2022; Dörnyei, 2001). This study specifically focuses on Dongying City, Shandong Province, an area experiencing rapid economic development and increasing demand for English proficiency, yet where local student motivation in English language learning requires deeper understanding to tailor effective educational strategies. Understanding these factors is crucial for addressing specific regional needs and improving language acquisition outcomes.

Contemporary research underscores the interactive influence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational constructs on students' engagement with English learning. Intrinsic motivation, characterized by factors such as personal interest, self-efficacy, and perceived instrumental value of the language, correlates with sustained learning commitment (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gardner, 1985). Conversely, extrinsic motivation, encompassing parental support, institutional reinforcement, and socio-cultural expectations, provides critical external stimuli for motivational engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Ushioda, 2011).

A comprehensive understanding of these multifaceted motivational dynamics is essential for the formulation of efficacious pedagogical strategies. Therefore, the rationale for this research lies in the pressing need to identify specific motivational factors affecting students in Dongying City, thereby enabling the development of targeted interventions. This study endeavors to explore the internal and external variables that modulate the motivation of high school students in Dongying City, Shandong Province, to learn English. By elucidating these factors, the research findings are anticipated to furnish insights that can inform educational policies and practices aimed at optimizing the quality of English language instruction within China. The potential benefits include providing educators and policymakers with evidence-based strategies to enhance student motivation, which can lead to improved English proficiency, better academic performance, and ultimately, greater opportunities for students in their future careers and global interactions.

2. Research Objectives

2.1 To investigate the factors influencing English language learning motivation among senior high school students in Dongying City, Shandong Province.

2.2 To provide recommendations for improving English language learning motivation among senior high school students in Dongying City, Shandong Province.

3. Literature Review

Motivation to learn English is vital for academic success and career development, especially in China, where English proficiency enhances globalization efforts and international opportunities (Chen, 2022; Dörnyei et al., 2022; Li, 2022). This review summarizes key theories related to motivation, discusses findings from relevant studies on English learning motivation globally and within China, explores the intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing this motivation, identifies challenges faced by students, and highlights existing research gaps that this study aims to address.

3.1 Theoretical Foundations of Motivation

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) distinguishes intrinsic motivation—driven by personal interest—from extrinsic motivation—influenced by external rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Deci & Ryan, 1985). SDT posits that fulfilling needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness can foster more self-determined forms of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Similarly, Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System highlights the role of students' aspirations and self-concept, particularly the 'ideal L2 self' (the learner's vision of themselves as a successful L2 speaker) and the 'ought-to L2 self' (attributes a learner believes they ought to possess to meet expectations), in sustaining learning. In Chinese schools, intrinsic motivation often stems from curiosity and a genuine interest in the language and culture, while extrinsic motivation is significantly shaped by family expectations, societal pressures, and the high-stakes examination system (Noels et al., 2019; Tan, 2022).

3.2 Relevant Studies on English Learning Motivation

A growing body of research has explored the multifaceted nature of English learning motivation. Globally, studies have consistently shown that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors play significant roles, though their relative importance can vary across cultural and educational contexts. For instance, research in Western contexts often emphasizes the role of integrative motivation (a desire to identify with the L2 culture) and intrinsic interest (Gardner, 1985; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000).

Within the context of English education in China, numerous studies have investigated motivational factors specific to Chinese learners. Research indicates that instrumental motivation, such as the desire to achieve academic success, pass examinations like the Gaokao, and secure better career prospects, is a powerful driver (Liu & Littlewood, 2021; Gao, 2020). Parental expectations and the emphasis on education within Chinese culture also exert considerable influence (Wang & Gao, 2018; Zhang, 2019). However, intrinsic factors like personal interest in Western culture, enjoyment of learning English, and the desire for self-improvement are also recognized as important, particularly for sustained engagement (Chen, 2022; Tan, 2022). Studies have also highlighted the impact

of the learning environment, teacher-student relationships, and teaching methodologies on students' motivation in the Chinese EFL classroom (Li & Dörnyei, 2023; Sun, 2021). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective pedagogical approaches tailored to the Chinese context.

3.3 Factors Influencing English Learning Motivation

Drawing from established theories and empirical research, several key factors influencing English learning motivation can be identified. These are often categorized as intrinsic and extrinsic, as outlined in the conceptual framework of this study

3.3.1 Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to the drive to learn English for its own sake, stemming from internal satisfaction and interest. Key intrinsic factors include:

Interest in Learning English: This involves a genuine curiosity and enjoyment of the English language, its associated cultures, or the learning process itself. Students motivated by interest are more likely to engage deeply with learning materials and persist through challenges (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Noels, Clément, & Pelletier, 2001).

Self-Efficacy in English Language Learning: This refers to students' belief in their own capability to succeed in learning English. Higher self-efficacy is associated with greater effort, persistence, and resilience when facing difficulties (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996).

Goals for Learning English (Personal): These are personal aspirations related to English learning, such as self-improvement, personal growth, or the desire to communicate with people from other cultures. These personal goals can provide a strong internal impetus for learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2011).

However, excessive academic pressure, a common feature in the Chinese education system, can sometimes undermine intrinsic motivation if students feel overly controlled or stressed (Lin & Chen, 1995; Zhao, 2021). Research indicates that the intense demands for high academic achievement in China generate toxic levels of stress, negatively impacting students' psychological well-being, motivation, and overall development (Lin & Chen, 1995; Zhao, 2021; Chen et al., 2020). This pressure, stemming from both school and family expectations, can lead to feelings of anxiety, burnout, and decreased intrinsic motivation to learn (Lin & Chen, 1995; Zhao, 2021).

3.3.2 Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation arises from external incentives and pressures. Significant extrinsic factors include:

Educational Institutions: Schools and other educational bodies play a crucial role through curriculum design, teaching quality, learning resources, and the overall

learning environment they provide. The emphasis placed on English by the institution, along with supportive teaching practices, can significantly impact student motivation (Li & Dörnyei, 2023; Sun, 2021).

Societal Influences: The perceived value of English proficiency in society for career advancement, social status, and global communication strongly influences students. China's increasing global integration has amplified the societal importance of English (Wang & Gao, 2018; Chen, 2022).

Family Support and Expectations: Parental encouragement, involvement in their children's learning, and the creation of a supportive home learning environment are powerful extrinsic motivators. Conversely, high parental pressure can also lead to stress (Zhang, 2019; Lin & Chen, 1995). Standardized exams like Gaokao, heavily influenced by family and societal expectations, also foster motivation but may lead to an overemphasis on rote learning (Liu & Littlewood, 2021; Gao, 2020).

3.3.3 Challenges Faced in Learning English

Beyond these motivational factors, students often encounter challenges that can hinder their learning process and demotivate them. Common challenges include:

Linguistic Intricacies and Perceived Difficulty: The complexity of English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation can be daunting for learners.

Limited Exposure and Practice Opportunities: Lack of authentic environments for using English outside the classroom can reduce engagement and confidence.

Exam-Focused Teaching: An education system heavily oriented towards standardized examinations may prioritize test-taking skills over communicative competence, potentially diminishing intrinsic interest (Zhang, 2023; Huang, 2005).

Resource Disparities: Particularly in rural areas, limited access to qualified teachers and quality learning materials can further impede motivation (Liu & Littlewood, 2021; Sun, 2021).

These challenges often interact with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors.

3.4 Synthesis, Research Gaps, and Future Directions

While existing research provides valuable insights into both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, there is a need for more nuanced understanding of how these factors interact and manifest in specific regional contexts within China, such as Dongying City. Much research has focused on major metropolitan areas, and less is known about the motivational dynamics in rapidly developing second-tier cities. Furthermore, while many studies identify factors, fewer propose comprehensive, context-specific strategies that integrate insights from various motivational drivers and address identified challenges simultaneously. For example, how to effectively combine communicative teaching

approaches with culturally relevant content to boost both intrinsic and instrumental motivation (Chen, 2022), or the practical application and impact of innovative methods like gamified learning platforms (You & Dörnyei, 2016) and blended learning (Zhang, 2023) in these specific contexts, warrants further investigation. Additionally, there is a limited number of long-term studies examining the sustained effects of different motivational interventions.

This study aims to address some of these gaps by providing an in-depth investigation of the factors influencing English language learning motivation among high school students in Dongying City. It seeks to not only identify these factors but also to understand their interplay and to propose actionable recommendations for educators and policymakers to improve English education in this specific context. Therefore, this study established a conceptual framework, as shown in Figure 1 (previously Figure 1.1), to systematically examine these multifaceted influences on English language learning motivation. This framework, which will be detailed further, guides the investigation of extrinsic factors (educational institutions, society, family) and intrinsic factors (interest, self-efficacy, goals, and the mediating roles of challenges and strategies) and their collective impact on student motivation, ultimately leading to recommendations for enhancing English language teaching.

Motivation in English learning involves complex dynamics between intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Addressing the identified research gaps by focusing on specific contexts like Dongying City will help educators and policymakers develop more targeted and effective strategies to improve language learning outcomes in China.

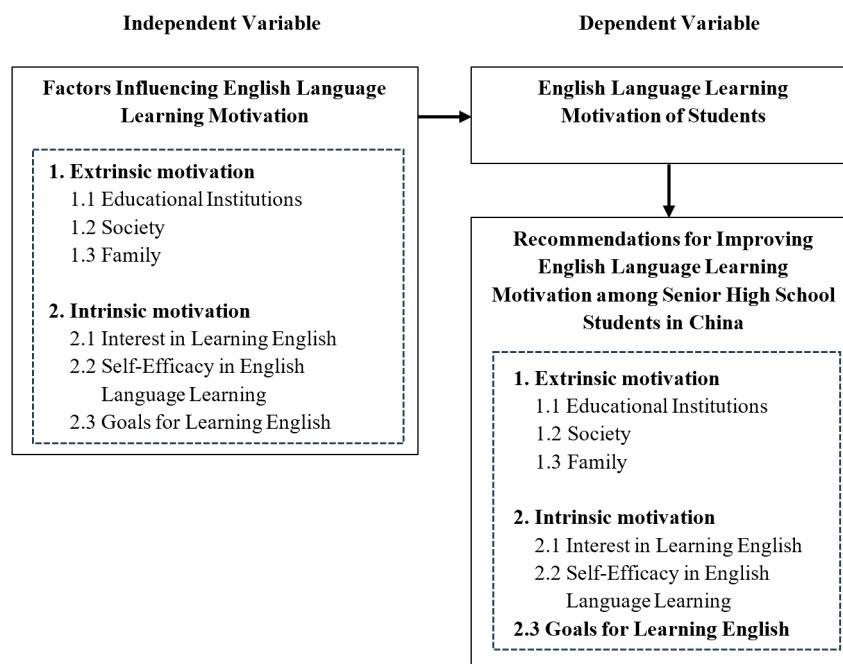


Fig.1: Conceptual Framework

The framework illustrates the relationship between independent variables (extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors) and the dependent variable (students' English language learning motivation).

The extrinsic factors include educational institutions, societal, and family influences, while intrinsic factors comprise learning interest, self-efficacy, and learning goals. The framework further incorporates four recommendations for improving English language learning motivation: teacher development, curriculum reform, resource accessibility, and stakeholder collaboration.

4. Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate factors influencing English language learning motivation among senior high school students in Dongying City, Shandong Province, China. The study population comprised 29,379 students from 16 public secondary schools, from which 380 students were selected using cluster sampling. Demographic data for these students, including gender, age, and academic achievement, were collected and are presented in detail in the "Participant Characteristics" subsection of the "Results" section. Additionally, 12 teachers from these participating schools were purposively selected based on their experience and expertise. Detailed demographic information for these teachers, including gender, age, years of English teaching experience, and educational background, was also gathered and is presented alongside student demographics in the "Participant Characteristics" subsection of the "Results" section. This comprehensive participant information provides context and enhances the study's credibility.

4.1 Instrument Development

Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire was structured into four main parts: 1) Personal Background (demographics, academic achievement), 2) External Factors (educational institutions, societal influences, family factors), 3) Internal Factors (interest, self-efficacy, goals), and 4) Open-ended Questions. The selection and framing of questions for external and internal factors were guided by the study's conceptual framework and a review of relevant literature to ensure comprehensive coverage of the key constructs. The instrument underwent rigorous validation through expert review using the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC), yielding a value of 1.00. Reliability was established through a pilot study with 30 students, achieving a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85.

In-depth Interview Development

An in-depth interview guide was developed to elicit rich qualitative data from teacher participants. Semi-structured interviews were designed, with questions formulated based on a review of literature on teaching English as a foreign language, student motivation, and the specific research objectives. The interview guide focused on: Teachers' perspectives on student motivation, Challenges in English language teaching, Recommendations for improvement, and Teaching experiences and strategies. The guide was reviewed by experts in language education to ensure clarity and relevance of the questions before being used in the study.

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection adhered to ethical guidelines, securing necessary permissions from school administrators and parents. Questionnaires were administered in controlled classroom environments, while individual teacher interviews were conducted and audio-recorded with consent. The analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Qualitative data analysis involved content analysis, encompassing transcription, coding, categorization, and thematic interpretation of interview responses.

5. Research Results

This section presents the findings derived from the data analysis, addressing each research objective.

Objective 1: To investigate the factors influencing English language learning motivation among senior high school students in Dongying City, Shandong Province.

Analysis of 380 questionnaire responses from senior high school students in Dongying, Shandong Province, China, revealed the levels of influence of various internal and external factors on their English language learning motivation. Descriptive statistics, including mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), for each factor are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Internal and External Factors Influencing English Language Learning Motivation (N = 380)

Category	Factor	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
External Factors	Educational Institutions (overall)	3.87	0.43
	Society (overall)	1.20	0.64
	Family (overall)	3.65	0.09

Category	Factor	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Internal Factors	Interest in Learning English	2.60	1.07
	Confidence/Self-Efficacy in English	2.80	1.17
	Goals for Learning English (overall)	3.46	1.28

Based on the data presented in Table 1, which displays the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) of factors influencing English language learning motivation among 380 senior high school students, the significant external and internal factors influencing students' motivation were identified.

Among external factors, *Educational Institutions* demonstrated the highest mean score (M = 3.87, SD = 0.43), indicating a substantial influence. Students emphasized the role of schools in promoting English language learning through aspects such as mandating English as a compulsory subject, teacher quality, teaching methodologies, and learning resources. *Family* also showed a strong positive influence (M = 3.65, SD = 0.09), with family support—including encouragement, academic assistance, and a conducive learning environment—positively impacting student motivation. In contrast, *Society* had a relatively lower mean score (M = 1.20, SD = 0.64), suggesting a less consistent or weaker influence as perceived by students. Nevertheless, some students still acknowledged the importance of English in today's society and its value in real life, despite limited opportunities to use it outside the classroom.

Regarding internal factors, *Goals for Learning English* yielded the highest mean (M = 3.46, SD = 1.28), indicating strong motivation linked to university entrance exams, career prospects, and self-improvement. *Confidence/Self-Efficacy* (M = 2.80, SD = 1.17) also significantly influenced motivation, as students' belief in their ability to learn English affected their persistence and engagement. Lastly, *Interest in Learning English* (M = 2.60, SD = 1.07) played a noteworthy role, reflecting students' emotional engagement and curiosity toward the English language and culture.

Regarding challenges and strategies for overcoming them, while these aspects were included in the questionnaire (as noted in the methodology), the quantitative findings under Objective 1 primarily highlight the internal and external factors discussed above. Therefore, the analysis of challenges and strategies is more thoroughly addressed in the qualitative findings presented under Objective 2, which explore these aspects through teacher interviews and open-ended student responses.

Objective 2: To provide recommendations for improving English language learning motivation among senior high school students in Dongying City, Shandong Province

The recommendations for improving English language learning motivation were derived from qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews with 12 experienced English teachers from senior high schools in Dongying City. The thematic content analysis of their responses revealed key strategies that align with the conceptual framework outlined in Figure 1, particularly in the areas of Teacher Training and Development, Curriculum Reform, Increased Access to Resources, and Collaboration between Schools, Families, and Communities.

1. Cultivating a Positive Learning Environment

Teachers emphasized the importance of building a classroom atmosphere that is supportive, encouraging, and enjoyable, as this environment fosters students' confidence and reduces fear of making mistakes.

“Students become more confident when they are not afraid of being laughed at. A relaxed and supportive classroom helps them try speaking English.” (Teacher 8)

“Interactive and friendly learning spaces are important to keep students engaged.” (Teacher 3)

This directly supports the conceptual area of Teacher Training and Development, emphasizing emotional support and effective classroom management.

2. Employing Diverse and Interactive Teaching Methods

Many teachers reported that traditional grammar-translation approaches were ineffective in motivating students. Instead, they recommended participatory techniques such as project-based learning, group discussions, and games.

“Project-based learning like speeches or videos helps students to apply English in real situations.” (Teacher 1)

“Role-playing and group work make lessons fun and show real-life use of English.” (Teacher 2)

“Gamified learning and real-life scenarios make lessons more engaging and practical.” (Teacher 12)

These suggestions align with Curriculum Reform, advocating for task-based and communicative teaching methods.

3. Connecting English Learning to Student Goals

Teachers suggested that students' motivation can be enhanced when they understand the relevance of English to their academic and career aspirations.

“Most students learn English for the college entrance exam, but when we show how it connects to their future careers, they pay more attention.” (Teacher 4)

“English is not just for passing tests. Some students want to study abroad or work internationally, so we help them see that connection.” (Teacher 11)

This insight supports the goal-oriented instructional design aspect within both Curriculum Reform and Teacher Training.

4. Encouraging Family and Community Involvement

Teachers also highlighted the role of families and the broader community in sustaining students' interest and effort in learning English.

“When parents encourage their children or help them study, it really motivates the students.” (Teacher 5)

“Our school invites foreign teachers and organizes clubs to give students more exposure, which also gets parents involved.” (Teacher 1)

These strategies fall under Collaboration between Schools, Families, and Communities, promoting engagement beyond the classroom.

This evidence-based set of recommendations provides practical insights into how educators, schools, and policymakers can enhance English language learning motivation among high school students. The alignment of these recommendations with the conceptual framework ensures coherence and practical applicability.

6. Discussions

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research objectives, linking them to existing theories and previous research, and highlighting their implications.

Objective 1: Factors Influencing English Language Learning Motivation

The quantitative findings from this study (Table 1) revealed several key extrinsic and intrinsic factors influencing the English language learning motivation of senior high school students in Dongying City.

Regarding extrinsic factors, "Educational Institutions" emerged as having the most substantial influence ($M = 3.87$), followed by "Family" support ($M = 3.65$). The significant role of educational institutions underscores the impact of school policies, teacher quality, teaching methodologies, and available learning resources on student motivation. This finding aligns with numerous studies emphasizing the critical function of the learning environment created by schools in shaping students' attitudes and engagement in L2 learning (Li & Dörnyei, 2023; Sun, 2021). The strong influence of family support is also consistent with previous research in the Chinese context (Wang & Gao, 2018; Zhang, 2019), where parental involvement and expectations often play a pivotal role in students' academic pursuits. Interestingly, "Society" as an extrinsic factor received a notably lower mean score ($M = 1.20$). While students acknowledged the societal importance of English, this lower score in the quantitative measure might suggest that the perceived societal value does not always translate into direct, consistent personal motivation for all students, or that its influence is more indirect compared to the immediate environments of school and family. This finding warrants further qualitative exploration to understand the nuances of perceived societal impact.

Among intrinsic factors, "Goals for Learning English" demonstrated the highest mean ($M = 3.46$), followed by "Confidence/Self-Efficacy in English" ($M = 2.80$), and "Interest in Learning English" ($M = 2.60$). The prominence of learning goals, particularly those related to university entrance exams and career aspirations as indicated in the descriptive results, resonates with McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory (1985), which highlights the drive for success and achievement as a powerful motivator, especially in an academically-oriented context like China (McClelland, 1985; Tan, 2022). The importance of self-efficacy aligns strongly with Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory and numerous L2 motivation studies (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 1996), confirming that students' belief in their own capabilities is crucial for effort and persistence. The significant role of genuine interest, though not the highest-rated intrinsic factor, supports Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), which emphasizes that intrinsic interest fosters deeper and more sustained engagement. The finding that students expressed interest in the English language and culture suggests that pedagogical approaches nurturing this curiosity could be beneficial. It is important to note that while "challenges" were explored in the questionnaire, their direct impact as a measured motivational factor in the quantitative analysis for Objective 1 was less prominent than the core intrinsic factors discussed. However, low self-confidence (related to self-efficacy) can be seen as an internal challenge that clearly impacts motivation..

Objective 2: Recommendations for Improving English Language Learning Motivation

The qualitative findings from teacher interviews provided practical recommendations for enhancing English language learning motivation, which align with the broader approaches identified in the study's conceptual framework (Figure 1).

The teachers' emphasis on "Cultivating a Positive Learning Environment" by making the classroom supportive and reducing fear of mistakes directly supports the "Teacher Training and Development" approach in the conceptual framework. Effective classroom management and the ability to foster emotional well-being are key teacher competencies. This aligns with research emphasizing that a low-anxiety, supportive environment is conducive to language acquisition and motivation (Horwitz, 2001; Krashen, 1982; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

The recommendation to "Employ Diverse and Interactive Teaching Methods," moving away from traditional grammar-translation to more participatory techniques like project-based learning and games, clearly points towards "Curriculum Reform" and innovative "Teacher Training and Development." Such methods promote student engagement and cater to different learning styles, as supported by extensive research on communicative language teaching and task-based learning (Ellis, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Willis & Willis, 2007).

"Connecting English Learning to Student Goals," particularly future academic and career aspirations, as suggested by teachers, underscores the importance of making learning relevant. This supports aspects of "Curriculum Reform" (designing goal-oriented instruction) and "Teacher Training" (equipping teachers to make these connections). Helping students see the instrumental value of English can significantly boost both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, as it aligns learning with their personal ambitions (Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner, 1985; Ushioda, 2011).

Finally, the suggestion for "Encouraging Family and Community Involvement," including school-organized activities like clubs and interactions with foreign teachers, directly relates to the "Collaboration between Schools, Families, and Communities" and "Increased Access to Resources" components of the conceptual framework. Such collaborative efforts extend learning beyond the classroom, provide authentic exposure, and reinforce the value of English, thereby fostering student motivation (Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Doan Holbein, 2005; Philominraj, Ranjan, Saavedra, & Cerón Urzúa, 2022; Noels et al., 2019).

These recommendations, grounded in teachers' experiences, offer valuable insights for developing targeted strategies to enhance English learning motivation in Dongying City and potentially other similar contexts in China.

7. Knowledge from Research

Based on the findings of this study, which investigated the factors influencing English language learning motivation among high school students in Dongying City and gathered recommendations from experienced teachers, the following suggestions are proposed for educators, school administrators, and policymakers. These recommendations are aligned with the conceptual framework's approaches: Teacher Training and Development, Curriculum Reform, Increased Access to Resources, and Collaboration between Schools, Families, and Communities.

7.1 Recommendations for Enhancing English Language Learning Motivation

The qualitative data from teacher interviews highlighted several practical strategies that can be implemented to foster student motivation. These evidence-based recommendations, supported by the teachers' experiences, are categorized below according to the broader approaches identified in this study's conceptual framework:

1. Teacher Training and Development & Curriculum Reform: Fostering Engaging and Supportive Learning Environments

Cultivate a Positive Learning Environment: Educators should prioritize creating a classroom atmosphere that is supportive, encouraging, and enjoyable. This fosters students' confidence, reduces their fear of making mistakes, and encourages active participation in English language activities. This involves training teachers in classroom management techniques that promote emotional safety and student well-being.

Employ Diverse and Interactive Teaching Methods: Move beyond traditional grammar-translation approaches towards more participatory and communicative techniques. This includes incorporating project-based learning, group discussions, role-playing, and educational games that make lessons engaging and demonstrate the real-life utility of English. Curriculum should be flexible enough to allow for these interactive methodologies.

Connect English Learning to Student Goals: Teachers should be trained to help students understand the relevance of English to their personal, academic, and career aspirations. Linking language acquisition to tangible future benefits can significantly enhance both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by providing a clear sense of purpose.

2. Increased Access to Resources & Collaboration: Expanding Learning Opportunities and Support Systems

Increase Exposure to Authentic English: Provide students with more opportunities to interact with authentic English language and culture. This can be achieved through extracurricular activities (e.g., English clubs, debate teams), access to diverse learning materials (e.g., English movies, books, online resources), and interactions with native or proficient English speakers, potentially through exchange programs or guest speakers.

Encourage Family and Community Involvement: Foster stronger collaboration between schools, families, and the wider community. When parents are informed, encouraged to support their children's learning, and involved in school activities related to English, it can significantly reinforce student motivation. Community partnerships can also provide additional resources and authentic learning contexts.

3. Addressing Specific Challenges (Integrating with above approaches):

Address Exam Pressure Holistically: While exam performance is a significant motivator (as seen in "Goals for Learning English"), an overemphasis on high-stakes testing can be detrimental. Strategies to address exam pressure should focus on promoting a growth mindset, developing effective test-taking strategies as part of overall language competence (not in isolation), and emphasizing holistic language learning over rote memorization. This should be a component of both curriculum design and teacher training.

By implementing these interconnected recommendations, educators and stakeholders can create a more motivating and effective English language learning experience, empowering students in Dongying City to become more confident and successful English language learners.

7.2 Recommendations for Further Study

To further build upon the findings of this research, several avenues for future investigation are recommended. Firstly, longitudinal studies could explore the long-term impact of specific motivational strategies and interventions on students' English learning outcomes and persistence. Secondly, comparative research across different cities or regions within China, including rural versus urban settings, could provide deeper insights into how contextual factors modulate student motivation and the effectiveness of various pedagogical approaches. Thirdly, future studies could delve more deeply into the student perspective on the proposed recommendations, gathering their feedback on the feasibility and perceived benefits of different strategies. Finally, an investigation into the role of technology and digital learning platforms in fostering both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, particularly in providing access to authentic resources and interactive learning experiences, would be a valuable contribution to the field.

8. Conclusion

This study examined the key factors influencing English language learning motivation among high school students in Dongying City, China. Findings from both quantitative and qualitative data reveal a complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Specifically, extrinsic factors such as "Educational Institutions" and "Family" support, along with intrinsic factors like "Goals for Learning English" (which include the drive for exam success), "Confidence/Self-Efficacy," and "Interest in Learning English," were identified as significant influences. While the pursuit of goals related to exam

performance is a key motivator, intrinsic motivation driven by genuine interest and personal growth aspirations also plays a vital role. Challenges such as low self-confidence (related to self-efficacy) were noted as potential hindrances to motivation. This study provides evidence-based recommendations, derived from teacher insights and aligned with established motivational approaches, for fostering both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These include enhancing teaching practices through diverse and interactive methods, creating supportive and engaging learning environments, connecting learning to students' personal and future goals, and strengthening collaboration between schools, families, and communities. Implementing these recommendations aims to promote engaging and effective learning experiences that support students in Dongying City in reaching their full potential in English language learning.

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