THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN THE ACQUISITION OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A PRELIMINARY STUDY BASED ON EXTREMADURAN LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Foreign language acquisition, and more concretely, English as a foreign language (EFL) learning are areas which have been thoroughly studied throughout the history of Applied Linguistics. However, the main focus has been traditionally placed on purely linguistic factors that are involved in EFL acquisition. Until recent decades, extralinguistic aspects which are determinant in language learning, such as motivation, have been disregarded. The principal aims of this study are to explore the importance of motivation in EFL learning and the role of educators in the motivational process within the region of Extremadura, and to present a preliminary image of the current situation. With the purpose of doing so, a small-scale survey has been designed and conducted among groups of adolescent and young adult Extremaduran EFL learners who are studying in distinct educational levels: 3rd year of ESO, 1st year of Bachillerato and 2nd year of the degree in English Studies. The results highlight the vital relevance of motivation in the process of foreign language acquisition and present different motivational scenarios united by the considerable need for further action with the aim of improving the teaching-learning process. Additionally, this investigation suggests a series of factors that may be decisive in motivation. Therefore, some initial grounds from which educators could construct their oncoming work are established.

Keywords: EFL, learning, motivation, students, teachers

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Through these heartfelt words, I want to express my most genuine appreciation and thank everyone who accompanied me on this intense journey. You are the essence of this magnificent castle; it also belongs to you.

To Cristina Blanco García, the light when darkness was reigning, the momentum when I needed it, the main and most splendorous piece of this castle.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Learning a foreign language is a process that may seem distressing, both from the students' and the teachers' perspective. An extensive series of factors should be accounted for with the aim of achieving a successful learning experience. Linguistic aspects such as grammar, vocabulary or syntax appear to be the core of this endeavour. Additionally, important emphasis has been placed on developing learners' linguistic skills -listening, reading, speaking and writing- within the classroom.

Nevertheless, going beyond language itself, researchers such as Hult (2008) enlighten the substantial relevance of extralinguistic factors on language learning (i.e. causes which are not directly related to language but, however, substantially impact the process of acquisition). Alonso-Alonso (2023) deepens into a selection of them, mainly connected to the field of psychopedagogy of learning: personality, intelligence, cognitive style, etc. Among them, motivation emerges as being quintessential on foreign language acquisition.[1] It seems to be the psychological basis from which language learning is articulated on (Ushioda, 2016, pp. 564-565). This importance raises the interest on broadening the current available knowledge on this area of research. In addition to the aforementioned information, English appears to be among the most studied foreign languages worldwide (Kramsch, 2008, p. 6), which increases even more the significance of the results. Apart from this, when the geographical scope of investigation is narrowed to the Spanish region of Extremadura, where research in motivation within the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom seems to be particularly scarce, the relevance of the study increases considerably.

The present BA dissertation aims to explore the importance of motivation within the EFL classroom applied to the Extremaduran context and the role of educators in the process of motivating students. With the purpose of doing that, a small-scale survey will be conducted among delimited groups of adolescent and young adult EFL learners studying in different educational stages. As a result, a preliminary panoramic of the situation will be created and analysed. From this initial image, the results for the distinct

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[1] It is necessary to mention that my personal realisation of the relevance of motivation -which is the core of this study- and the willingness to carry out this research emerge from the content that I learnt in some of the modules which I completed throughout the degree in English Studies: *Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Inglés*, *Pedagogy of Modern Foreign Language 1, Pedagogy of Modern Foreign Language 2* and *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. The first module was studied at University of Extremadura whereas the last three modules were part of my Erasmus experience at Cardiff University.

groups of study will be compared in order to determine variation in levels and types of motivation and differences in the perception of the teacher as a motivational agent. Consequently, important factors which influence motivation will be proposed and further course of action will be suggested.

Deriving from the aforementioned analysis, this research intends to be considered a means of reflection for educators regarding their motivational practices. It pretends to enlighten certain aspects that may have not been considered by teachers on their daily practices and suggest action for improvement. As a consequence, solutions to enhance the process of acquisition of the English language learning will be proposed, particularly applied to Extremaduran participants in the learning process.

Finally, this preliminary study pretends to be metaphorically considered as the seed from which motivational research within EFL acquisition in the region of Extremadura should emerge. It aims at being perceived as an initial study which establishes some parameters from which investigation can be constructed and expanded. The necessity of a research of these characteristics and the potential future impact that it may have within motivational studies are the factors that contribute to its uniqueness and importance.

In order to achieve these aims, this BA dissertation is structured in two clearly differentiated parts. Firstly, this study presents a thorough literature review on the subject matter deepening into motivation and its connection with both educational agents, students and educators. The second part is, in turn, concerned with a practical study of motivation among EFL learners studying in different learning contexts. In the first place, this part of the dissertation will provide a detailed explanation of the small-scale survey approach that has been adopted and the different procedures it entails. After that, the data will be extracted from the questionnaires. Subsequently, the resulting figures will be quantitatively and qualitatively analysed and the results will be discussed. Eventually, the conclusions derived from this research will be commented on and suggestions for further studies will be proposed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Around the middle of the twentieth century, the field of Linguistics experienced an expansion on its scope of investigation as a result of the advent of Applied Linguistics (AL) as a subfield of research per se (Allen & Corder, 1977; Davies & Elder, 2004). From that moment, it has been widely defined by authors and linguists. Among the multiple definitions, Brumfit (1995, p. 27) seems to briefly portray its essence when he refers to AL as "the theoretical and empirical investigation of real-world problems in which language is a central issue". Considering the area of research that its own definition highlights, it should be mentioned that one of the main concerns of AL has been language acquisition. It has been specially interested in the investigation of education within the foreign and second language framework (Kramsch, 2008, pp. 3-4). This focus of AL consequently led to the consolidation of a specific subfield within its research purposes: the study of EFL.

The area of inquiry of EFL has been progressively evolving and expanding. Before being interconnected with AL and during the first decades of its development as a discipline, its concerns were fundamentally linguistic aspects related to the acquisition of English as a foreign language. Those areas that were of special interest during that period mainly included methodologies for the acquisition of a foreign language (L2) based on the traditional linguistic skills, this is, listening, reading, speaking and writing, never disregarding the study of grammar and vocabulary (Howatt & Smith, 2014).

However, from this starting point, the inherent interdisciplinarity of AL has contributed to the continuous expansion of EFL research interests towards extralinguistic factors. Socio-cultural and psychological phenomena that intervene in the process of foreign language acquisition, among others, have been increasingly attracting the interest of applied linguists, especially in the recent decades (Hult, 2008). One of those factors beyond mere language that is considered to be indispensable in language acquisition is motivation (Ushioda, 2016, pp. 564-565).

2.1. MOTIVATION

Being originally a broader concept that belongs to the field of psychology, motivation is generally considered to be a force that empowers individuals in the prosecution of a certain objective (Eggen & Kauchak, 1994). Therefore, regarding the extensive scope of action indicated in its own definition, motivation can be applied to specific aspects of

human life. Among these, education can be highlighted as an essential area in which it can have a decisive impact.

Considering its abstract nature, there is no established consensus on how to define motivation in the EFL context. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this research, the definition provided by Kong (2009, p. 146) will be followed. This author metaphorically describes motivation in the English classroom as an engine "that push[es] students forward in English learning with enthusiasm and willingness" and is essential for them in order to foster perseverance in the acquisition of that language. Therefore, motivation is regarded as the basis upon which students construct their learning of a foreign language. If it is being overlooked, a successful learning process is almost impossible (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Clément, 1990).

Despite the fact that motivation has been traditionally disregarded and there is a need for more extensive and frequent research on this area (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 274), this psychological phenomenon is more complex than it could be imagined. In the search for a motivated English classroom, it is utterly important to obtain a thorough and deep understanding of the multiple factors that are inherent to motivation. Starting from the basis, motivation can be divided in two types according to the factors that lead the learners' desire to learn a foreign language: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Cajkler & Addelman 2012, pp. 1-2). It is highly relevant to understand the reasons for them to be defined separately, the mutual impact they have reciprocally, and the fact that they complement each other in the prosecution of motivated individuals.

2.1.1. Intrinsic Motivation

As research in the field of motivation in education focused on dissecting what it entails from a closer perspective, Brown (1994, p. 38) applied the concept of "intrinsic motivation" as defined by Deci (1972) to the classroom. In this context, the term would stand for those internal forces which drive the students towards a prosperous learning experience. Those factors which emanate from the own learner include the need to expand their knowledge, the curious nature of the human being, the desire to be self-sufficient, the enjoyment that is implied in learning or the usefulness of the knowledge they have acquired for their future lives among others (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1993; Ryan, 1995). This type of motivation would not consider any type of specific external rewards which may have a certain influence in the student.

Aiming for a more complete understanding of intrinsic motivation, it should be mentioned that it derives from Gardner's (1985) idea of integrativeness in motivation. This notion in the EFL area refers to the students' willingness to establish interactions with the L2 community and to be appreciated as a possible integrant of that group. As a consequence of the previous attitude, the learner also demonstrates a confident attitude regarding L2 and the factors that surround it. Therefore, the objective would be to become integrated in the L2 atmosphere. These factors, being internal to the students in nature, also contribute to expand the scope of intrinsic motivation.

Additionally, it is necessary to mention that the motivational Self-Determination Theory (SDT) developed by Ryan, Khul & Deci (1997) underlines the relevance of intrinsic factors in motivation. It focuses on the fact that human beings -or students in this case- exploit their own inner mechanisms to develop their personality as a one of the main forces to be motivated. In their research, Ryan & Deci (2000, p. 68) identify that these internal mechanisms or "needs" can be broadly labelled as "competence" (see White, 1963; Harter, 1978), "relatedness" (see Reis, 1994; Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and "autonomy" (see DeCharms, 1968; Deci, 1975). The result of the fulfillment of these necessities would be "self-motivation", which is essential in the process of learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000, pp. 68-69), and consequently, in EFL acquisition.

2.1.2. Extrinsic Motivation

However essential internal factors may be in the learners' desire to learn, extrinsic motivation should also be noted as a decisive factor in education. As Brown (1994, p. 38) did with intrinsic motivation, he applied it to the educational context. In this case, students feel the need to study in order to obtain external rewards whose nature may be varied. Nevertheless, they can generally be academic, such as passing an exam, obtaining an outstanding grade, or promoting into the next course; or personal, namely praise or material rewards coming from family members or teachers, or avoiding punishment (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 275; Kong, 2009, p. 146).

This subtype of motivation was also constructed upon the ideas of Gardner's (1985) motivational theory, specifically the concept of instrumental motivation. This idea, applied to EFL, would be materialised into all the potential pragmatic benefits that a proficient level in L2 would imply. For example, obtaining a job, being promoted within a company, or being paid a higher amount of money. All these external

incentives are also added to the previous interpretation of extrinsic motivation, concluding that in this case, what maintains motivation on the learners is not expanding their understanding of L2 and the inner benefits that it entails, but rewards that come from outside of the own student (Kong, 2009, p. 146).

2.1.3. Ideal Motivational Scenario in the EFL Classroom

Both, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are necessary in the process of achieving the learners' engagement when learning an L2. Nonetheless, previous research has proved that not finding the correct balance between them may lead to adverse results on the students. Consequently, it is vitally important to analyse which motivational situations should be avoided and which one would be optimal or ideal for the EFL teaching.

Firstly, Deci & Ryan (1991) concluded that, regardless of the level of extrinsic motivation that the learners may have, intrinsic forces should be present in the learners if the objective is reaching a successful performance from them. It is only when motivation emanates from the individual -thus being more authentic- that they reach more proficient levels of ingenuity, perseverance in learning, and consequently obtain more desirable results. These results are supported by other studies such as Hardre & Reeve's (2003, pp. 353-354), which suggested that students with higher levels of "self-determination" are less likely to abandon their perseverance in learning; or the motivational research carried out by Miller & Brickman (2004, p. 18). The latter investigation indicated that those learners who could envision their "future self-image" –i.e. imagine themselves speaking the L2 in relevant contexts for communication after acquiring a proficient level in the language (see Dörnyei & Hadfield, 2013, p. 4)- demonstrated a more committed attitude towards foreign language acquisition. In addition to the previous results, Brown (1990) and Kong (2009, p. 146) also argue that overemphasising the relevance of extrinsic rewards may have a negative impact on intrinsic motivation. This would consequently materialise into non-desirable results in the EFL classroom. Therefore, it can be concluded that extremely high levels of extrinsic motivation are not ideal for the consequences they may have on the students.

However, these findings should not suggest that motivation coming from external sources is completely irrelevant or damaging to the educational process. Dörnyei (1994, p. 276) claimed that extrinsic motivation itself can also function as an incentive for the learner to be intrinsically motivated. This would be translated into the

fact that external rewards may drive the students to find motivation within themselves. Considering these facts, it could be concluded that the optimum motivational scenario within the EFL classroom would be one in which the students demonstrate high levels of intrinsic motivation but are extrinsically motivated as well. Not acquiring sufficient motivation in any of the two subfields may derive into an unsuccessful learning experience.

2.2. THE TEACHER AS A MOTIVATIONAL AGENT

Having assimilated the previous information, the educator may be willing to apply this theory and increase their students' level of motivation. In this regard, teachers should consider that motivation depends primarily on personal factors which will vary from one student to another, as Rodríguez-Pérez (2012, p. 387) mentions. She indicates some factors which are beyond the control of the educator but still condition their predisposition to learning. Among the extensive list that she provides, the most common ones can be highlighted:[2]

- The student's familiar and socio-cultural environment
- Ability and capacity for L2 acquisition
- The learner's self-esteem
- Previous learning experiences
- The fact that the module is compulsory for the students

Nevertheless, the important influence of these variants, closely linked to each individual, does not mean that teachers have no implications in the process of motivation. In fact, educators are essential and decisive in maintaining their students' engagement. They are responsible for multiple factors which may either elevate the level of general classroom motivation or lead to a situation of demotivation (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). In the same vein, Rodríguez-Pérez (2012) highlights some of the areas in which the action of the educator can be decisive. For the sake of clarification and illustration of this point, some of the aspects that have been particularly remarked by the existing literature will be briefly commented on.

To begin with, supporting the learners' autonomy in the process of learning is considered fundamental to obtain positive results regarding motivation (Rigby et al., 1992). If this condition is met, students will feel that their role in the learning process is

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[2] The factors included in the list are the result of my own translation.

essential, which will contribute towards their engagement (Hounsell, 2005, p. 107). Additionally, a positive learning atmosphere and an effective rapport between learners and teachers should be established (Rodríguez-Pérez, 2012, p. 389; Rahimi & Karkami, 2015, p. 59). In order to raise the level of motivation, the students' needs and interests must be considered. In connection to this last point, teachers should also welcome to their classes those methodologies that add relevance to the content that is being taught and favour a communicative approach to teaching, since this is positively transformed into extraordinary motivational results (Thoonen et al., 2011, p. 347; Rodríguez-Pérez, 2012, p. 393). Finally, another vital aspect to be contemplated is the delivery of feedback. It is only when the comments on the students' performance are constructive that they feel encouraged to continue with a positive attitude towards the learning process (Aslam & Khan, 2020).

2.3. THE STUDY OF MOTIVATION WITHIN EFL IN EXTREMADURA

As has been previously stated, research in motivation within the study of EFL is not particularly abundant. It is especially rare to encounter studies that analyse both types of motivation and the relevance of the teacher when it comes to keeping students engaged with the subject. However, figures decrease even more when the scope of the study is narrowed down to Extremadura. This is an autonomous region in Spain which is mainly characterised by being monolingual and generally underpopulated by citizens who are distributed in rural and urban areas (Castellano-Risco, 2019, p. 23), in comparison to other areas which may be more cosmopolitan, even within Spain. Only a limited number of papers investigating some subareas of motivation within the EFL classroom in Extremadura can be found. Among them, Martínez-Agudo's (2013) one can be highlighted as it explores Extremaduran students' response to the teachers' feedback in motivational terms. The scarcity of research in motivation within EFL in this region is translated into a vacuum of information which may be crucial for educators to become aware of the reality of motivation within the educational system in which they are immersed. This necessity establishes the grounds for the considerable relevance of the present study, which is intended to enlighten the reader in relation with the motivational scenario that can be found within the study of EFL in Extremadura.

3. METHODOLOGY

In the desire to continue deepening into the study of motivation in the EFL classroom, as it awakens the interest of a progressively increasing number of researchers, different methodologies have been employed. However, although not with the exact same purpose of this research, it is noticeable that a large number of investigations have been based on the results that derived from surveys.

Just to cite some examples of this type of investigations, Rodríguez-Pérez (2012), for instance, evaluated part of the causes that intervene in the motivation of students applied to the context of foreign language acquisition. She analysed it from the perspective of the teachers in different educational levels through an open-ended survey. Another illustration would be Niżegorodcew's (2013) research, which investigated motivation in two different EFL schools for adults and compared the results that were extracted from a small-scale survey. In addition to the previous papers, Garrido-Hornos (2023) adapted the English Language Learning Motivation Scale (ELLMS) (Ardasheva et al., 2012) for survey-based research that aimed at assessing the level of motivation of undergraduate students at four Spanish state universities whose degree was not related with English or any type of Linguistics. The conclusions that could be drawn from the aforementioned studies underline the reliability and importance of surveys in motivational studies within the EFL area of inquiry.

Considering the previous data, together with the fact that this study is preliminary, and its space and time limitations, a small-scale survey-based approach has been adopted. The theoretical background for the complete process inherent to this particular study was extracted from Dörnyei and Csizér's (2012) investigation on the creation and analysis of questionnaires in the field of second language a+cquisition. This includes the preliminary procedures before the survey design (cf. Section 3.1), the creation of the questionnaire (cf. Section 3.2), the sampling and data compilation (cf. Sections 3.3 and 3.4) and the analysis and reporting of the final results (cf. Section 4). Firstly, potential participants for this study were selected according to certain criteria based on obtaining data that could be interesting in motivational terms. After the selection of the final participants, the survey was designed. Regarding the purposes of this research, a unique questionnaire was created on the online platform Google Forms. Its creation entailed the study and consideration of previous validated and successfully

used motivation scales and surveys that will be detailed on the oncoming sections. Once the survey was created, students from different points within Extremadura completed it. Eventually, the extracted data was processed and examined quantitatively and qualitatively.

3.1. SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

In the first place, the participants for this investigation were chosen following different criteria. Age was the initial factor that was considered, having adolescents and young adults as the groups of learners that were selected for this study. The decision was based on the fact that these groups are representative of an important and highly interesting group of foreign language learners (Singleton & Ryan, 2004). Additionally, the aforementioned learners usually study English under different circumstances -e.g. compulsory vs. non-compulsory education- which may lead to hypothesise that the final results that will be extracted from the study might show significant variation.

Three courses in which EFL is present were chosen: 3rd year of ESO,[3] 1st year of Bachillerato and 2nd year students of the degree in English Studies. The selection of these specific groups was intended to avoid any possible biased results. As for ESO, 3rd year was selected since learners in this course are fully immersed in a stage of compulsory education in which the study of English is mandatory. In the case of Bachillerato, 2nd year students were not chosen in consideration of the fact that their foreign language teaching is substantially focused on preparing the learners for university entrance exams. Therefore, 1st year students were considered the ideal ones, being representative of obligatory EFL learning within non-compulsory education in which English is not the main focus of study. Finally, at the university level, the degree in English Studies was preferred considering that it can be labelled as optional English-centered formation. Therefore, its learners could enrich this study with an analysis of motivation within the EFL classroom from a different perspective. They study the

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[3] The terms "ESO" and "Bachillerato" refer to different levels within the Spanish educational system. Considering the fact that this study is being carried out within the Spanish educational system and absence of exact equivalents for those educational stages in English, the Spanish terminology was used. However, for the sake of clarity and comparison, some approximated equivalences can be established. Taking the English and Welsh educational systems as reference, ESO (Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria) would correspond to Key Stage 3, years 8 and 9, and Key Stage 4, years 10 and 11. On the other hand, Bachillerato would be similar to Key Stage 5 or Sixth Form, years 12 and 13. Within the Spanish educational system, ESO comprises four courses within secondary obligatory education. Nevertheless, Bachillerato belongs to non-mandatory studies and learners need to complete two academic years at this stage. The purpose of the vast majority of Bachillerato students is to access university.

language under particular circumstances, having a more thorough knowledge of all the aspects that that are involved in English learning.

Additionally, considering the limitations of this study and with the aim of ensuring the obtention of the most genuine data, a selection of a restrained number of participants from each course was made. Firstly, within the degree in English Studies, only 2nd year learners were selected. The reasons behind this decision are based on the fact that this group could provide the study with the largest number of answers -it has no students participating in (inter)national mobility programmes- and all the modules that correspond to this specific year are related with an in-depth study of EFL.

After having estimated that the number of responses which would be obtained from the previous group could potentially reach 40, the size sample of the rest of the levels -3rd year of ESO and 1st year of Bachillerato- was determined accordingly. Consequently, two classes of each course with a mean of 20 students per group were invited to participate. This would facilitate a fairer comparison of the extracted data, having a roughly balanced number of answers from each course.

Finally, in order to ensure the most equitable geographical representation of the region of Extremadura, educational centres from both provinces -Badajoz and Cáceres- participated in this study. For the group of 3rd year of ESO students, IES Eugenio Frutos in Guareña -a village within Badajoz- was selected. IES Valle del Jerte in the city of Plasencia (Cáceres) contributed to this research with the responses of its 1st year of Bachillerato learners. Eventually, 2nd year students of the degree in English Studies in Facultad de Filosofía y Letras (Cáceres) at University of Extremadura were chosen to undertake the survey. The reason behind this decision from a geographical standpoint is founded in the fact that no schools or faculties offering the degree in English Studies can be found in the province of Badajoz. Nevertheless, this means that the aforementioned faculty is representative of Extremaduran English Studies learners coming from both provinces. It should also be mentioned that the inclusion of students belonging to villages and towns also offers a more complete panoramic of motivation in the different characteristic areas of Extremadura that Castellano-Risco (2019, p. 23) refers to: rural and urban territories. Additionally, it is essential to mind that according to the preliminary nature of this study and its constraints, the cluster sampling (see Baltes & Ralph, 2022, p. 7) for this investigation can be considered representative of a small section of Extremaduran EFL learners under different circumstances.

3.2. SURVEY DESIGN AND COMPOSITION

Having completed the delimitation of participants for this study, the process of survey design was initiated. Both the aims of this research and the characteristics of the learners that would answer the questions were considered with the purpose of obtaining the most accurate questionnaire for this investigation. Consequently, a unique and meticulously-designed survey was created.

Regarding the content (see Appendix), the questionnaire included an initial part in which the students were asked to provide some demographical data -e.g. age, gender, province in which they reside, etc.- and answer some questions related to variables that may have an impact on their EFL learning, such as the number of years that the learner has been studying English or whether they belong (or have belonged) to a bilingual section or not.[4] After this introductory part, the survey was divided into three main sections. On each of them, the student was asked to rank eight statements in a scale from 0 to 5 according to their own criteria, being 0 "I completely disagree" and 5 "I completely agree". The first and second sections were devoted to the analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation respectively. The creation of this part of the questionnaire was based on Garrido-Hornos' (2023) Spanish adaptation of the ELLMS (Ardasheva et al., 2012). Finally, section 3 intended to investigate the role of educators in the process of motivating learners. Its composition derived from Rodríguez-Pérez's (2012) paper on the main causes that intervene in students' motivation. An interpretation of the teachers' answers regarding their own role on the motivational process was taken for this survey. Consequently, the validation process of the particular questionnaire for this study was successfully completed.

In addition, it is utterly important to mention that the survey was designed and completed in Spanish by all the participants. This decision responds to two reasons. Firstly, the fact that the learners with the lowest level of English -those in 3rd year of ESO- could have found difficulties when responding to it in English. Secondly, the aim of carrying out an unbiased data collection.

Finally, prior to data collection, a draft of the resulting questionnaire was sent to students with similar characteristics to those of the final participants for this research

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[4] This question is the only one that presents a slight modification between 3rd year of ESO and the rest of the courses since there is no bilingual section in Bachillerato or at the university level. However, students at these stages could have been part of a bilingual section in the past.

with the aim of testing its appropriateness. No explanations were offered to them regarding the content of the survey, and in addition, they were asked to explain what they understood while reading each of the statements included in the questionnaire. The entire group of experimental subjects completed the survey with no problems and demonstrated an excellent level of comprehension of its content. Therefore, the process of questionnaire design concluded prosperously.

3.3. PROCEDURES REGARDING DATA COLLECTION

Once the final survey was designed and successfully tested, the pertinent educational institutions were contacted in order to present this project and ask for their participation in it. After their acceptance, this research and the questionnaire associated with it were presented to the learners. The procedures that were followed did not vary among the different groups. I personally entered the students' classrooms, introduced myself and the investigation, and raised awareness on the students' data protection. After that, the characteristics of the survey were explained, emphasizing its anonymity and the fact that its completion would not have any academic impact on their grades. Additionally, the learners' relevance in the project was highlighted. The purpose of these decisions was obtaining the sincerest answers from the students. With the same aim, I offered my assistance during the process of survey completion in case any student had doubts. Lastly, to conclude with this process, I doublechecked the correct registration of the data.

3.4. DATA PROCESSING AND FINAL SAMPLE SIZE

Within the process of data scrutiny, responses which contained irrelevant information in relation to the questions were discarded as it may be an indicator of absence of interest or earnestness. For instance, if a student answered "No" to the question "How long have you been studying English?", all the data they provided in the survey would be invalidated. Nevertheless, no answers were discarded. The final valid responses that were obtained from the cluster sampling number 108, having a similar percentage of answers from each of the selected groups (see Table 1). This ensures the aforementioned balanced representation of the different courses and facilitates an unbiased comparison of the extracted data between them.

Table 1

Distribution of participants per course

Courses	Number of participants	Percentage
2nd year of the degree in English Studies	30	27.78%
1st year of Bachillerato	43	39.81%
3rd year of ESO	35	32.41%
TOTAL	108	100%

The final data was examined and processed on an Excel file. All the gathered information was codified and analysed following the methods and guidelines indicated in Dörnyei & Csizér (2012) for a small-scale survey-based investigation with characteristics that are similar to those of my study. Particularly, means and percentual information were considered and examined.

Finally, it should be noted that the original indicators for each of the values from 0 to 5 that the students had to select (see Section 3.2) were transformed for the data analysis. The correlation between the figures and the labels they were attributed for each of the sections of the survey is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlation between the values and labels for each section

Value	Section 1: Intrinsic motivation	Section 2: Extrinsic motivation	Section 3: The role of the teacher as a motivational agent
0	Absent	Absent	Inexistent
1	Very low	Very low	Very bad
2	Low	Low	Bad
3	Medium	Medium	Good
4	High	High	Very good
5	Very high	Very high	Excellent

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section aims at quantitatively analysing the results extracted from the survey that has been described (cf. Section 3.2). Additionally, a qualitative interpretation and discussion of the figures will be provided. With regard to the aims of this study, on Section 4.1, the general results will be commented on. This includes all the courses together and draws an initial motivational panoramic considering the groups of Extremaduran EFL learners that have participated on this study and their respective educational levels and situations. After that, Section 4.2 presents a comparison of the results of the three subgroups of students to be analysed on this BA dissertation in pursuance of any type of variation between them. On Section 4.3, the demographic data and the students' personal experiences on EFL learning will be considered with the aim of discovering if any variable appears to cause significant alteration on the three sections which will be investigated. In that case, the finding will be commented on.

4.1. DISCUSSION OF GENERAL RESULTS

The ideal motivational scenario detailed on Section 2.1.3 suggested that the optimum situation for the students' engagement would be having the highest possible level of intrinsic motivation. This should be combined with a standard degree of extrinsic motivation in order to avoid situations of anxiety, burnout or any incidences on intrinsic motivation. Focusing on the analysis of the role of the educators in the process of motivation, it seems obvious that the ideal indicators would correspond to the most elevated levels of appreciation.

Taking the previous information into consideration, Table 3 illustrates a percentual representation of the different discussed values and Figure 1 presents the means for each section. The initial motivational image depicted by the figures is apparently positive regarding the levels of the different types of motivation, with nearly two thirds of the students' responses being "very high" (5) or "high" (4) in both sections. In addition, the means are "medium-high" (3-4) for these categories of motivation, having a slightly higher level of intrinsic motivation.

Table 3

Percentual representation of general results across all groups

Value	Section 1: Intrinsic motivation	Section 2: Extrinsic motivation	Section 3: Perception of the teacher as a motivational agent
5	40.05%	44.44%	11.69%
4	26.16%	15.16%	27.31%
3	15.97%	15.16%	29.17%
2	9.26%	9.03%	13.54%
1	3.70%	6.25%	7.29%
0	4.86%	9.95%	11.00%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%

Figure 1

Means of general results in the different subsections
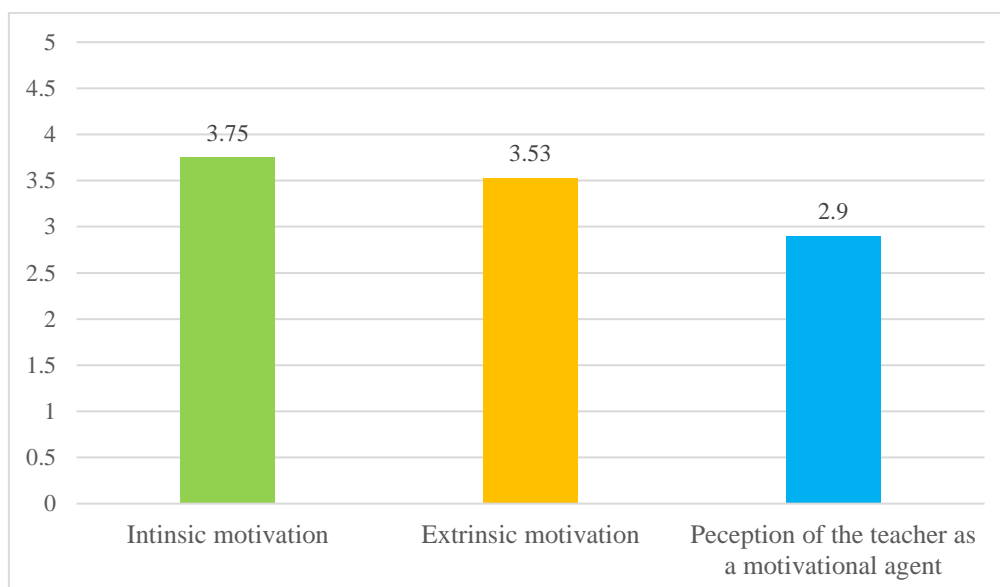
However, regarding the aforementioned type of indicator, a mean (m) of 3.75 seems not to be sufficient as better results could be achieved. When cautiously examining the different factors related to intrinsic motivation that were included in the questionnaire, it was found that three of them had a mean under 3.5. They are "[English] helps me to grow in a personal aspect" (m=3.43), "I would like to feel immersed on its culture (music, literature, cultural events, etc.)" (m=3.36) and "I enjoy learning it" (m=3.18). This indicates that the students did not find substantial engagement with EFL learning through those aspects. Furthermore, these results may suggest that there exists a need for an improvement on EFL material or methodology with the aim of heightening the students' enjoyment and attraction towards it. This might consequently

lead to a clearer perception of the utility of the language for the learner's personal life and a rising interest on the distinct aspects surrounding the language, including its culture.

Additionally, the analysis of the collected data in relation with how students perceive teachers in the motivational process is somehow more alarming. The mean of the answers did not even reach 3 (see Figure 1 above). This could signify that the educators' efforts need to be generally potentiated should they be willing to be considered excellent motivational agents. The aspects in which learners feel that teachers should improve the most are positive and constructive feedback delivery (m=2.91), good rapport and communication in and out of the classroom (m=2.79), the learning atmosphere and conditions (m=2.75) and the students' autonomy on the learning process (m=2.48). The vast majority of these problems seem to deal with communication and mutual understanding of feelings, whose importance had been previously highlighted by Rahimi & Karkami (2015, p. 59). Therefore, potentiating those aspects within the context of EFL learning-teaching may lead to better motivational results. Accordingly, this improvement might also have a positive effect on the learners' intrinsic motivation levels.

4.2. VARIATION AMONG GROUPS OF STUDY

Not disregarding the previous results, the extracted data coming from the different groups that have participated in this investigation will be compared to determine if any significant variation can be detected among them. In order to do so, the three different subsections - intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and the perception of the teacher as a motivational agent- will be compared. Figure 2 graphically presents the comparative means for the different courses on each category.

Firstly, there exists a decreasing tendency on intrinsic motivation levels, with a difference of nearly 1.5 between 2nd year of the degree in English Studies (2nd DES in Figure 2) learners and 3rd year of ESO students. Considering the characteristics of each group (see Section 3.1), it could be concluded that learners involved in optional studies find more inner motivation to study EFL. Additionally, when learning the English language is the core objective of that non-compulsory education, motivational levels increase significantly.

Figure 2

Means of each course in the distinct subsections
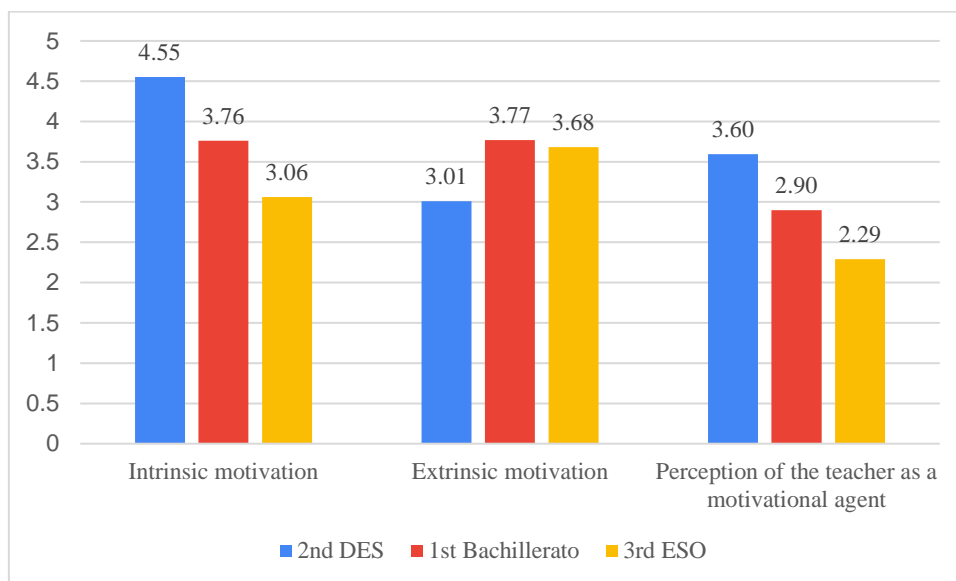
In the case of the courses with the lowest rates of intrinsic motivation -1st year of Bachillerato and 3rd year of ESO- their students seem to coincide with the general results. They indicate that their main obstacles for the obtention of more abundant inner forces to study English are the enjoyment of the learning process (m=3.02 for 1st Bachillerato; m=2 for 3rd ESO) and the interest on the cultural aspects surrounding English (m=3.28 for 1st Bachillerato; m=2.07 for 3rd ESO). Apart from this, Bachillerato students also mirror the general results by pointing that English is not useful for their personal lives (m=3.35). On the contrary, 3rd year of ESO students perceived more problems in the fact that EFL learning is neither curious nor attractive for them (m=2.59). This may be linked to the employed methodology or learning materials and the impact they have in the process of appealing to the students' interest.

On the extrinsic motivation section, the tendency is approximately the inverse one, i.e. an increasing progression. These results are not surprising given the previously mentioned impact of extrinsic motivation on intrinsic factors (cf. Section 2.1.3). However, the most unexpected finding on this subsection is that the figures for this type of motivation are higher for 1st year of Bachillerato students when compared to their 3rd year of ESO counterparts. It should also be noted that for both groups, the most prominent external forces that motivate them to study English, with means surpassing the "high" indicator, are passing the exams (1st Bachillerato=4.79; 3rd ESO=4.80), obtaining high grades (1st Bachillerato=4.86; 3rd of ESO=4.64) and the usefulness of the

language to find a job in the future (m=4.72 for 1st Bachillerato; m=4.09 for 3rd ESO). This data, together with the characteristics of both groups, may suggest a justification for this slight abnormality on the expected results. For Bachillerato students, excellent results are considered as the main external reason for EFL learning. This may be connected to the fact that the process to access university -the main objective at this stage- is based on obtaining the highest marks. Consequently, their will to pass the examination tests is also extremely noticeable. In the case of 3rd year of ESO students, the latter factor might acquire more relevance since they only need to be awarded a "pass" to succeed on their aspiration: obtaining their certificate.

Regarding the third section, which evaluates the role of the teacher in the process of motivating students, the results seem to be unsettling for all the groups. Although in the case of 2nd year students of the degree in English Studies the mean (3.60) indicates that their overall perception of the educator as a motivational agent is "good" (3), potentially better results should be expected. In addition to this, the data indicates that for 1st year of Bachillerato learners (m=2.90) and 3rd year of ESO students (m=2.29), the implication of English teachers in the motivational process is not even recognised as "good" (3). Indistinctively, the three groups indicated through their means that more autonomy for the students during the learning process is needed (2nd DES=2.77; 1st Bachillerato=2.77; 3rd ESO=1.89). These results also back Rigby et al.' (1992) theory of the importance of the students' independence when learning a foreign language. Nevertheless, as can be seen in Table 4, differences among all the courses can be appreciated in the analysis of this section.

Means of the different courses on the evaluation of the statements related to the role of the teacher as a motivational agent

Indicator	2nd DES	1st Bachillerato	3rd ESO
The autonomy that the teacher grants me along the learning process	2.77	2.77	1.89
The utility of the content that I learn	3.47	2.95	2.77
The atmosphere and learning conditions that are created within the classroom	3.53	2.67	2.17
A good communication between my teacher and me in and out of the classroom	3.73	3.00	1.71
The attention that is paid to my interests and necessities when learning the language	3.57	3.07	2.17
A communicative approach to language learning (based on real communication in oral and written contexts)	4.13	3.02	2.49
Constructive and positive feedback delivery	4.07	2.77	2.09
An appropriate use of technology during the learning process	3.50	2.98	3.00
TOTAL MEAN	3.60	2.90	2.29

2nd year students of the degree in English Studies surprisingly alluded to the utility of the content that they learn as the second factor in which the educators' labour was not sufficient. This is closely followed by the appropriate use of technology in the classroom. As a conclusion of these results, it might be commented that there is a need for improvement regarding digital competence at this specific university level. Furthermore, teachers should prepare more relevant material for the students if they desire to increase the motivational level in the classroom.

The data that was gathered in 1st Bachillerato points at the creation of convenient learning conditions and atmosphere, and constructive feedback delivery as the main weaknesses of educators. From the analysis of this situation, it could be mentioned that teachers should consider their students' emotions and competences when commenting on their work. Apart from this, and connected to this last point, it seems that empathy and comfort for the students need to be potentiated within the educational context.

Lastly, 3rd year of ESO students indicated that there exists an important absence of rapport and constructive commentaries on their work. These difficulties highlight the communicational problems that have been detected in the general results. Consequently, mutual understanding is an area that deserves a higher amount of reflection from the teachers' side.

4.3. THE INFLUENCE OF CLIL

After carrying out the previous comparative analyses, the demographic variables and the preliminary questions about the learners' experiences with EFL learning (see Appendix) were examined. As a result, one factor was unexpectedly discovered to impact the results in a significant manner. The experience of the participants within bilingual sections or out of them was converted into different motivational scenarios. The distinctive factor for those students belonging to bilingual sections is the fact that one of the methodologies that is necessarily present in their learning process is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). This method can be defined by the use of a foreign language with the aim of teaching a non-linguistic subject, having as a result a learning experience in which the content of the specific module and language acquisition are united (Hillyard, 2011). Although the aforementioned methodology is not directly related to EFL teaching lessons per se, it has a significant impact on it. Additionally, as can be seen in Figure 3, it seems to have an especial influence on motivation within the EFL classroom.

The collected data separates two contrastive motivational scenarios. Those students who have belonged to a bilingual section or are currently learning through CLIL methodology represent the best motivational situation when compared to their counterparts who have had no contact with the previously mentioned methodology, and the general results for all the learners. The figures exemplify this phenomenon by indicating that the first group of students show higher levels of intrinsic motivation (m=3.95), slightly lower influence of external motivational factors (m=3.40), and perceive their EFL teachers as more successful motivational agents (m=3.07).

Figure 3

Means of general results, learners that have experienced CLIL and those who have not
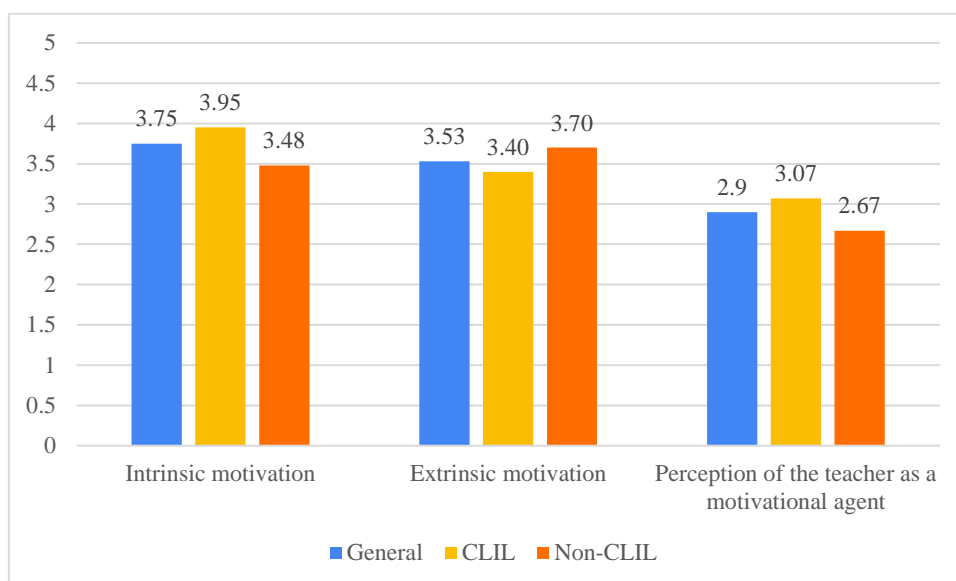
As for the inner forces that motivate CLIL students, the awareness of the utility of the English language in their future personal facet (m=4.73) is highlighted. These results may be connected to the comprehensive range of situations in which learners apply the foreign language within CLIL methodology. Consequently, they might perceive English in a more practical manner. On the contrary, even if they have a more pragmatic vision of the language, they indicate that the main obstacle for them in EFL learning is still enjoyment (m=3.44). Therefore, there seems to be a need for more entertaining material for these students in order to be engaged in the learning process.

When it comes to extrinsic motivation, learners that have belonged to bilingual sections or are still participating on them affirm that high grades (m=4.56) are their main external reason to study English. This data suggests that CLIL-influenced students are significantly ambitious, which would not be worrying beforehand. However, this situation should be supervised since, according to Brown (1990) and Kong (2009, p.146), extremely high results for extrinsic motivation may lead to an undesirable deviation on intrinsic motivation levels.

Eventually, the most distressing result for this group comes with the perception of the role of educators in the motivational process. These learners still demand more autonomy on EFL learning (m=2.71) and a more convenient in-class learning atmosphere and conditions (m=2.94). These results do not indicate important differences when compared to the general results, but they still underline the meaningful

challenges that educators need to overcome in the area of motivation, even for students who have been in contact with English in other modules apart from EFL.

In opposition to the previous results, the group of learners that have never studied through CLIL methodology draw a more pessimistic motivational panoramic. Their mean for intrinsic motivation (3.48) marks the minimum result compared to the general group of participants and students that have experienced the CLIL methodology. Conversely, their extrinsic motivation is the highest one (m=3.70). These results, together with the data extracted from CLIL-influenced students can add evidence to Brown's (1990) theory of the slightly negative influence that significantly large figures for extrinsic motivation can have on the inner forces that engage students in EFL learning. Finally, non-CLIL students perceive the teachers as "bad" motivational agents (m=2.67).

From a close data analysis perspective, results are similar to their counterparts that are connected to bilingual sections when indicating their main external source of motivation, which is obtaining excellent qualifications (m=4.93). The analogy of data continues in the perception of the role of educators in the motivational process. They also consider that more freedom of action for the students is needed when they are learning the language (m=2.17). The most interesting finding considering CLIL influence on motivation can be identified within the analysis of intrinsic motivation factors. These learners are not fully entertained in the process of acquisition of the English language (m=2.83) and are not interested in being immersed in their cultural aspects (m=3.11). The previous results may imply that studying different modules such as History, Geography, Biology or Music in English and focusing on the foreign language identity on those areas through CLIL methodology bring students closer to the culture surrounding the English language. Additionally, they feel the enjoyment of the process of language acquisition since their vision of EFL learning is more meaningful. As a consequence, this can be translated into more prosperous levels of intrinsic motivation, and generally, a more positive motivational scenario.

The aforementioned results are not only mirrored but also accentuated in the case of the group of learners that are currently studying through CLIL methodology (3rd year of ESO students). Data is even more polarised, as Figure 4 displays. Differences among CLIL and non-CLIL students reach even 1 point in the case of intrinsic

motivation and their perception of the role of teachers in the process of motivating students.

Figure 4

Means of 3rd ESO CLIL and non-CLIL learners
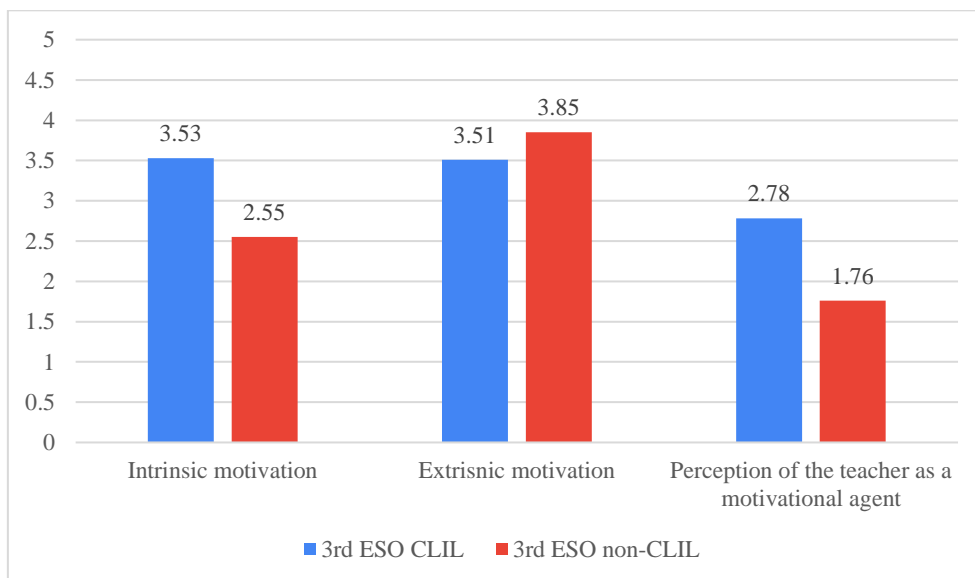
This data adds even more evidence to the influence of CLIL on the students' motivation within the EFL classroom. In addition, it also suggests that this methodology has a greater impact on learners during the precise academic stage in which students are experiencing it than once CLIL is no more a methodology that is applied to their learning process (e.g. 1st year of Bachillerato and 2nd year of the degree in English Studies). These findings enlighten even more the influence of specific methodology - e.g. CLIL- on motivation.

5. CONCLUSION

This BA dissertation has examined the role of motivation in the process of EFL acquisition. The relevance of this extralinguistic phenomenon on language learning has been demonstrated and reinforced. Additionally, an initial panoramic of the motivational situation regarding Extremaduran EFL learners has been presented. It suggests that there exists a general need for higher intrinsic motivation levels and more efficient efforts from educators with the aim of obtaining excellent results on students' engagement within their classrooms. Teachers should especially consider the communicative competence and empathy with the learners' interests. Results have also manifested that some factors such as the obligatory nature of the studies, the main objective of the educational stage in which the students are immersed, or the employed methodology, especially CLIL, may cause meaningful variation on motivational terms. In addition, this study has offered some suggestions in regards of the action that educators can take in pursuit of enhancing motivation and, therefore, achieving a more successful learning experience.

Nevertheless, this investigation presents a series of shortcomings mainly related to space and time that should be minded. Deriving from those limitations and the importance of the matter that is being examined, some further research on the area is needed. This investigation aims to be the basis from which EFL motivational studies within the region of Extremadura can be built on. Oncoming research should expand the sample size so that a broader image of the motivational situation in Extremadura can be depicted. Additionally, other groups of learners such as children and older adults could be examined with the purpose of analysing learners' engagement within different age cohorts. Apart from this, more demographic and personal variables connected to EFL learning should be investigated and commented on in order to deepen more into the different factors that can provoke alterations on the students' motivational situation. Finally, EFL teacher-focused motivational investigations in Extremadura should be promoted since educators are essential agents in the process of EFL learning and teaching. As a consequence, their levels of motivation are extremely important and might also have a serious impact on the students' engagement within the EFL classroom. To summarise, despite its limitations, this study pretends to motivate every reader to open their eyes towards motivation and to enjoy the satisfaction of a motivated classroom in which teachers, students and learning are harmoniously connected.

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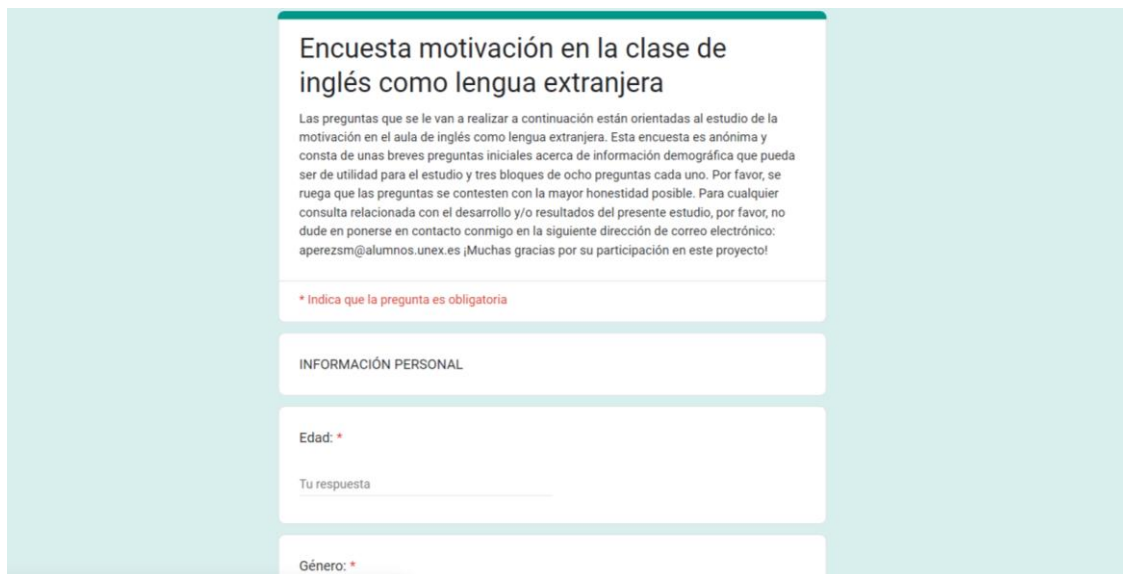
APPENDIX

The online version of the questionnaire that has been created for the present study can be accessed through the following link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1_Hi5zs82ektU5sT-BRlY-EsUMkmLhNZHxMAcLXFGggQ/prefill

Figure 5

Online version of the questionnaire

In addition, a printed version of the survey, which has not been used but can serve as an illustration, is provided below.

Encuesta motivación en la clase de inglés como lengua extranjera

Las preguntas que se le van a realizar a continuación están orientadas al estudio de la motivación en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera. Esta encuesta es anónima y consta de unas breves preguntas iniciales acerca de información demográfica y relacionada con su experiencia previa con la lengua inglesa que pueda ser de utilidad para el estudio y tres bloques de ocho preguntas cada uno. Por favor, se ruega que las preguntas se contesten con la mayor honestidad posible. Para cualquier consulta relacionada con el desarrollo y/o resultados del presente estudio, por favor, no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo en la siguiente dirección de correo electrónico: aperezsm@alumnos.unex.es ¡Muchas gracias por su participación en este proyecto!

* Indica que la pregunta es obligatoria

INFORMACIÓN PERSONAL

Edad:*

Género:*

Hombre

Mujer

Otro

Provincia en la que reside:*

Badajoz

Cáceres

Otro

Años que lleva aprendiendo inglés:*

¿Recibe formación no reglada de inglés en academias privadas, escuela de idiomas, etc.?*

Sí

No

¿Pertenece/ha pertenecido a sección bilingüe?*

Sí

No

<div style="background-color:#009688; color:white; padding:4px;">BLOQUE 1</div>

EVALÚE DEL 0 AL 5 LAS SIGUIENTES AFIRMACIONES SIENDO EL 0 "NADA DE ACUERDO" Y EL 5 "TOTALMENTE DE ACUERDO". ESTUDIO INGLÉS PORQUE...

1. **Me gusta ampliar mi conocimiento en general***

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

2. **Me parece curioso y llama mi atención***

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

3. Me hace sentir que puedo valerme por mí mismo/a en distintas situaciones*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

4. Disfruto aprendiéndolo*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

5. Me parece útil de manera personal para mi futuro*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

6.   Me ayuda a desarrollarme y evolucionar como persona*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

7.   Me gustaría aplicar mi conocimiento de la lengua con personas de habla inglesa: comunicarme/chatear/jugar con ellos en inglés*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

8.   Me gustaría sentirme inmerso/a en su ambiente cultural (música, literatura, eventos culturales, etc.)*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

EVALÚE DEL 0 AL 5 LAS SIGUIENTES AFIRMACIONES SIENDO EL 0 "NADA DE ACUERDO" Y EL 5 "TOTALMENTE DE ACUERDO". ESTUDIO INGLÉS PORQUE...

1.   Quiero aprobar los exámenes*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

2.   Quiero sacar buenas notas*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

3.   Quiero que mis familiares me den premios*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

4.   Quiero que mis profesores me halaguen*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

5.   Quiero evitar que mis familiares/profesores me regañen*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

6.   Creo que me será útil para encontrar un trabajo en el futuro*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

7. Creo que así encontraré un trabajo en el que me paguen más*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

8. Creo que puede llevarme a situaciones de liderazgo y poder en el ámbito laboral y/o económico*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

BLOQUE 3

EVALÚE DEL 0 AL 5 LAS SIGUIENTES AFIRMACIONES SIENDO EL 0 "NADA DE ACUERDO" Y EL 5 "TOTALMENTE DE ACUERDO". EN LA CLASE DE INGLÉS ME SIENTO MOTIVADO POR...

1. La autonomía que el profesor me otorga en el proceso de aprendizaje*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

2.   La utilidad del contenido que aprendo*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

3.   El ambiente y las condiciones de aprendizaje que se crean en clase*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

4.   La buena comunicación entre mi profesor y yo en clase y fuera de ella*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

5. **La atención que se presta a mis intereses y necesidades a la hora de aprender el idioma***

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

6. **La enseñanza del idioma de una manera comunicativa (basada en comunicación real tanto oral como escrita)***

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

7. **El "feedback" o los comentarios que hace mi profesor sobre mi trabajo de una manera constructiva y positiva***

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

8.   El uso apropiado de la tecnología en el proceso de aprendizaje*

Nada de acuerdo

0

1

2

3

4

5

Totalmente de acuerdo

El uso apropiado de la tecnología en el proceso de aprendizaje*