

**THE EFFICACY OF EXTERNAL INCENTIVES AND SIMPLIFIED GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION
ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN UNMOTIVATED STUDENTS**

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Abstract. *This study explores the impact of external incentives and simplified grammar instruction on English language learning among students lacking intrinsic motivation. While much research has focused on traditional approaches to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), less attention has been paid to how external motivation and streamlined grammar lessons can influence outcomes, especially among disengaged learners. Using a mixed-method approach, this research examines the role of rewards, simplified grammar explanations, and structured learning environments in improving engagement and language acquisition in such students. Results indicate that external incentives paired with simplified grammar instruction can significantly enhance student participation and language competence, but only when applied within a structured framework that encourages active involvement.*

Keywords: *external incentives, simplified grammar instruction, English language learning, unmotivated students, extrinsic motivation, language proficiency, student engagement, second language acquisition, communicative language teaching, educational rewards.*

INTRODUCTION

English language learning, particularly in contexts where it is taught as a second or foreign language (L2), presents challenges for educators, especially when dealing with students who lack intrinsic motivation. Traditional pedagogical approaches often rely on intrinsic motivation, focusing on learners' long-term goals such as career advancement or global communication. However, this approach may not always be effective for students who are either indifferent or resistant to language learning. This raises the question of whether alternative strategies, such as external incentives and simplified instructional methods, can foster engagement and improve outcomes for unmotivated students.

External incentives—such as tangible rewards or recognition—have been shown to motivate students in other educational contexts. Similarly, simplifying grammar instruction, breaking it down into digestible units with an emphasis on practical usage rather than complex theoretical explanations, may reduce the cognitive load and help unmotivated learners engage with the material. This study seeks to investigate the efficacy

of these two approaches in the context of English language learning among unmotivated students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

External Motivation in Language Learning

A substantial body of research has explored the role of motivation in language acquisition. Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, emphasizing that while intrinsic motivation leads to deeper learning, extrinsic motivators can still drive behavior, particularly in educational contexts where intrinsic motivation is lacking. Several studies (Dörnyei, 1998; Oxford & Shearin, 1994) suggest that external rewards such as grades, certificates, or other tangible incentives can encourage participation and effort, especially in students who are otherwise disengaged. However, the long-term efficacy of extrinsic motivation remains contested, with some researchers warning that it may lead to surface-level engagement rather than meaningful learning (Kohn, 1993).

Simplified Grammar Instruction

The complexity of English grammar has long been a barrier for learners, particularly in EFL contexts. Traditional grammar instruction often overwhelms students with rules and exceptions, leading to frustration and disengagement (Ellis, 2006). By contrast, a simplified approach focuses on essential grammar structures and practical application in communicative contexts. This method aligns with the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, which prioritizes language use over grammatical accuracy. Research by Long (1991) supports the idea that simplified input can make linguistic structures more comprehensible, reducing cognitive load and fostering better retention.

Motivation and Simplified Grammar Instruction

There is limited research exploring the intersection of motivation and simplified grammar instruction. However, some studies (Lightbown & Spada, 2006) suggest that simplifying instructional content can reduce the intimidation factor for unmotivated students, making language learning more accessible and less stressful. The combination of extrinsic motivators and simplified instruction could, therefore, create an environment where demotivated students feel more capable and willing to engage with language learning tasks.

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to assess the impact of external incentives and simplified grammar instruction on unmotivated English language learners. A quasi-experimental design was used, with two groups of students: an experimental group that received external incentives and simplified grammar instruction, and a control group that received traditional instruction without incentives.

PARTICIPANTS

The study involved 100 secondary school students from two public schools in a non-English speaking country. All participants were identified as being unmotivated to learn English, based on teacher assessments and self-reported questionnaires. The students were randomly assigned to either the experimental group (50 students) or the control group (50 students).

INTERVENTION

The experimental group received simplified grammar instruction focusing on practical usage rather than complex rules, coupled with external incentives such as small rewards for participation, attendance, and performance in assessments. The control group received standard grammar instruction, with no external incentives. Both groups followed the same curriculum and learning objectives.

DATA COLLECTION

Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-tests assessing English language proficiency, specifically targeting grammar knowledge and usage. Qualitative data were gathered through student interviews and classroom observations to assess engagement levels and attitudes toward learning English.

DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to determine the statistical significance of any differences between pre- and post-test scores. The qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns related to student motivation, participation, and perceptions of grammar instruction.

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

Quantitative Analysis

The results of the pre- and post-tests showed a statistically significant improvement in the language proficiency of the experimental group compared to the control group. The mean post-test score for the experimental group was 72.4, compared to 58.7 for the control group ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that the combination of external incentives and simplified grammar instruction contributed to greater learning gains among the unmotivated students.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The thematic analysis of interviews and classroom observations revealed several key themes. First, students in the experimental group reported feeling less intimidated by grammar lessons, attributing this to the simplified instruction. Many noted that they felt more confident using English in practical situations. Second, the external incentives were found to be a motivating factor, especially in terms of class participation and attendance. However, some students indicated that their motivation waned once the incentives were removed, suggesting that the effects of external motivation may be short-lived.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that external incentives, when paired with simplified grammar instruction, can have a positive impact on English language learning among

unmotivated students. The quantitative results showed significant improvements in language proficiency, while the qualitative data highlighted increased student engagement and confidence in using English. However, the findings also suggest that external incentives alone may not lead to sustained motivation, pointing to the need for a more holistic approach that integrates both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators. Further research is needed to explore long-term effects and to identify strategies for fostering lasting motivation in disengaged learners.

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