

# An Investigation into Factors That Positively Affect English-Majored Freshmen's Extrinsic Motivation in Learning Communicative Tasks

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## AIMS & RESEARCH QUESTION

Although Vietnamese students recognize the importance of English and want to communicate, many still struggle to speak effectively and confidently (Ly, 2022). To address this gap, this study explores the factors that can enhance English-majored freshmen’s extrinsic motivation in communicative tasks, leading to the research question:

*What factors positively affect their extrinsic motivation in learning communicative tasks?*

## LITERATURE REVIEW

- Teachers:**
- **Teacher characteristics:** Warm, friendly, supportive, enthusiastic → increase student motivation (Dang et al., 2021).
  - **Teacher assistance:** Intimate behavior and devoted support during lessons motivate learners (Dang et al., 2021).
  - **Teaching methods:** Use varied activities (discussion, interview, presentation, questioning, simulation) to avoid boredom and maintain motivation (Le, 2019).
- Classmates' interactions:**
- **Peer practice:** Working with friends creates a supportive, low-anxiety atmosphere (Hassan et al., 2023).
  - **Positive relationships:** Good rapport encourages willing and enthusiastic participation (Harmer, 2007).
  - **Peer influence:** High English use or proficiency among classmates stimulates motivation (Ekiz & Kulmetov, 2016).
  - **Collaboration variety:** Pair and group work increases excitement, especially in large classes (Le, 2019).
- Environmental factors:**
- **Class size & management:** Small classes foster speaking practice; large classes limit interaction, make management difficult, and reduce task variety (Trinh & Mai, 2018).
  - **Facilities & equipment:** Lack of projectors, loudspeakers, or space hinders learning; adequate facilities encourage participation (Trinh & Mai, 2018).
  - **Temperatures:** Extreme heat or cold reduces motivation; air-conditioned classrooms enhance comfort and productivity (Harmer, 2007; Luu, 2012).
  - **Noise & crowding:** Crowded or noisy classrooms lower motivation (Dang et al., 2021).
  - **Positive Atmosphere:** Comfortable, supportive, and cooperative environments boost motivation, while high-pressure classrooms cause anxiety (Dang et al., 2021; Le, 2019).
- Communicative tasks:**
- **Task content and complexity:** strongly influences student motivation; too difficult lowers motivation, optimal challenge enhances it (Kormos & Wilby, 2019).
  - **Task topics:** should match learners’ level, knowledge, and interests; adapt if necessary (Harmer, 2007; Luu, 2012; Le, 2019).
  - **Interactive/game-like tasks:** increase attention and participation (Harmer, 2007; Le, 2019).
  - **Clear goals and reasons for tasks:** help sustain motivation (Harmer, 2007).

## METHODOLOGY

- Participants:** 141 English-majored freshmen, coming from either the major of English Language or English Language Teacher Education, with 135 students responding.
- Design:** The study used quantitative approach in order to investigate factors that positively influence English-majored freshmen’s extrinsic motivation when learning communicative tasks. “A quantitative enquiry is systematic, rigorous, focused and tightly controlled, involving precise measurement and producing reliable and replicable data that are generalisable to other contexts” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p.203). Surveys were chosen as the primary method for this investigation to help achieve objective, accurate data, and give to many people in different locations (Gürbüz, 2017).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

- ❖ **Teachers:** Students are more motivated with supportive, warm, and enthusiastic lecturers who allow time for brainstorming and vary classroom activities.
- ❖ **Classmates’ interaction:** Positive peer relationships, pair work, and small group work strongly boost motivation — this was the most influential factor.
- ❖ **Environment:** A lively, stress-free classroom enhances motivation, while high pressure reduces it.
- ❖ **Tasks:** Games and level-appropriate, interesting topics increase engagement; occasional challenges can also stimulate learning.

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