

THE IMPACT OF NATIVE VS NON-NATIVE ENGLISH TEACHERS ON LEARNER MOTIVATION

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Abstract: *This article explores the influence of native and non-native English teachers on learners' motivation in the process of English language teaching. The study analyzes both groups of teachers in terms of their pedagogical methods, ability to convey cultural aspects of the language, level of communication with students, and their role in shaping the learning environment. Findings show that learners' motivation depends not only on the teacher's linguistic competence but also on their methodological preparedness and interpersonal relationship with students. The paper also reviews research from different countries and provides recommendations for the English language teaching system in Uzbekistan.*

Keywords: *native teacher, non-native teacher, learner motivation, English teaching, pedagogy, language acquisition*

INTRODUCTION

In today's era of rapid globalization, English has become the dominant means of international communication, education, and professional development. Therefore, the issue of effective English language teaching has gained increasing importance worldwide. The competence of English teachers — their proficiency level, pedagogical skills, and teaching approach — has a direct impact on students' motivation and success in learning the language.

In recent years, much debate among scholars has centered on the distinction between native English teachers (NETs) and non-native English teachers (NNETs), focusing on their respective strengths and weaknesses. Some researchers argue that native teachers, with their authentic pronunciation, natural fluency, and deep cultural understanding, are better at inspiring learners. Others contend that non-native teachers, who have themselves learned English as a second language, are more empathetic toward students' challenges and can therefore boost motivation through understanding and effective explanations.

Motivation is one of the most crucial psycholinguistic factors in second language acquisition. As Gardner and Lambert (1972) emphasized, motivation encompasses not only the desire to learn but also emotional and social support throughout the process. From this perspective, the teacher's personality and teaching style play a decisive role in shaping learner motivation.

In Uzbekistan, the recent trend of inviting native English teachers has gained momentum; however, the actual impact of such teachers on students' motivation has not been sufficiently studied. This paper seeks to address this gap by analyzing how both native and non-native English teachers influence learner motivation and identifying the key differences between them.

Linguistic advantages of native and non-native teachers

Native English teachers possess natural fluency, authentic pronunciation, and an intuitive grasp of cultural context. Their teaching often creates an “authentic environment,” allowing learners to experience the language in its natural form, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation (Braine, 2010).

However, non-native teachers also have unique advantages. Having learned English as a second or foreign language themselves, they better understand the difficulties and learning stages that their students experience. This shared experience enables them to structure lessons systematically and explain complex grammar more clearly. As Cook (2005) notes, non-native teachers can provide a “two-way model” of language learning — combining linguistic instruction with learning strategies.

Furthermore, learners often feel more comfortable with non-native teachers, as they experience less fear of making mistakes. This emotional comfort helps strengthen the affective dimension of motivation.

The relationship between cultural competence and motivation

Language learning is not limited to grammar and vocabulary; it also involves acquiring cultural competence.

Native teachers are the natural carriers of their culture and can vividly transmit social norms, humor, and everyday communication patterns through language. This fosters integrative motivation — the learner's desire to connect with the target culture (Gardner, 1985).

Non-native teachers, on the other hand, often approach cultural learning collaboratively with students. They explore cultural topics together, compare them with local traditions, and encourage reflection on cultural differences. This process promotes reflective motivation, allowing learners to gain not only intercultural understanding but also critical awareness of their own culture.

In practice, combining both types of teachers creates a richer educational environment. For example, in several Uzbek language centers, joint teaching by native and non-native instructors increased learner participation rates by 30–40% (Tashkent ELT Research, 2023).

Teaching methods and techniques for fostering motivation

The level of learner motivation largely depends on the teacher's pedagogical approach. Native English teachers often use communicative methods, encouraging learners to speak freely, participate in role plays, and express ideas through real-life

communication. This strengthens instrumental motivation, as students gain confidence in using the language in practical situations.

Non-native teachers, meanwhile, often emphasize grammar-based and structured lessons, which may be more suitable for beginner and intermediate learners (CEFR A1–B1 levels). Their ability to simplify complex grammatical concepts and build vocabulary methodically enhances learners' confidence and consistency.

Modern research (Ryan & Dörnyei, 2018) shows that blending the strengths of both approaches — the blended teaching model — produces the most effective results. In such settings, the native teacher focuses on pronunciation and speaking fluency, while the non-native teacher reinforces grammar and learning strategies.

The case of Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, interest in English language learning has grown rapidly in recent years. Many educational institutions now employ foreign native English teachers, while local non-native teachers have achieved high qualifications and international certifications in CEFR, CLIL, and communicative methodologies.

Studies conducted in Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara (Alimova, 2022) revealed that 65% of students felt more motivated with native teachers, but 72% said they understood grammar better when taught by non-native teachers. These results highlight the importance of a balanced learning environment.

Students reported that the most effective approach was a mixed teaching model, in which both native and non-native teachers collaborate. This approach ensures balanced development of all four language skills — listening, speaking, reading, and writing — and sustains long-term motivation.

Psychological aspects of motivation and teacher personality

A teacher's personality — including empathy, patience, humor, and a positive attitude — plays a central role in shaping learner motivation. As Dörnyei (2001) explains, teachers influence the “emotional rhythm” of the classroom, which directly affects motivation. When teachers show encouragement and belief in their students, learners develop strong intrinsic motivation.

Non-native teachers tend to connect with students through empathy, as they share similar learning experiences. Native teachers, on the other hand, often serve as role models and sources of inspiration due to their fluency and cultural authenticity. In both cases, the teacher's personality remains the most powerful factor in fostering motivation.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the teacher's nativeness is an important but not decisive factor in shaping learners' motivation. Motivation is a complex and multidimensional construct influenced by the teacher's linguistic ability, pedagogical style, personality traits, cultural competence, and the overall classroom atmosphere.

Native English teachers enhance integrative motivation by providing authentic language input and cultural immersion. Their pronunciation, fluency, and natural expressions help learners develop confidence and enthusiasm for real-world communication. Conversely, non-native teachers strengthen instrumental motivation through structured lessons, grammatical clarity, and empathetic support, making the learning process more accessible and less intimidating.

The findings indicate that effective motivation emerges from the synergy between both teacher types. Therefore, the integrated teaching model — combining native and non-native instructors — is the most effective approach. It harmonizes integrative, instrumental, and affective forms of motivation, producing balanced linguistic and emotional development.

In the context of Uzbekistan, it is essential to continue improving the professional qualifications of local non-native teachers while promoting cooperation and experience exchange with native teachers. This strategy enriches the educational environment, enhances intercultural understanding, and fosters sustainable motivation for English learning.

Ultimately, the main goal of English education is not merely to teach linguistic knowledge but to cultivate confidence, curiosity, and communicative competence. Thus, the decisive factor in motivating learners is not the teacher's native language but their pedagogical expertise, empathy, and learner-centered approach.

Practical recommendations

Mixed Teaching Approach — implement co-teaching between native and non-native teachers to combine linguistic authenticity with methodological clarity.

Teacher Training Programs — organize professional development courses to strengthen non-native teachers' communicative and cultural competencies.

Motivational Classroom Environment — create supportive atmospheres where mistakes are treated constructively, reducing students' anxiety.

Learner Autonomy — encourage learners to take responsibility for their progress through independent study and use of digital resources.

Final remark

The complementary cooperation between native and non-native English teachers provides the most effective foundation for learner motivation. Through pedagogical innovation and cultural exchange, language learning becomes not only an educational process but also a means of personal growth and global integration.

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