



# UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: A STORY OF AN INDONESIAN EFL LEARNER

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## ABSTRACT

Second language acquisition is the process by which someone learns a second language (L2) in addition to their native language (L1). The acquisition of an L2 is a complex and multi-dimensional process, influenced by various factors such as age, motivation, exposure to the language, social and cultural factors, and individual differences in cognitive and learning abilities. This article will highlight motivation of other factors and centralize it to depict what and how English as a second language learned by an Indonesian who pursued his study. The interview data was qualitatively analysed to portray the situation as well as to demonstrate wider explanations of how the process was going on. The analysis shows that motivation played the most factor despite intertwined and established to the other factors of the construction of second language acquisition. Furthermore, the result of this study could seek second language learners to consider their most influencing factors in adapting themselves in learning second language.

**Keywords:** *Language Attitude, Language Exposure, Learning Setting, Motivation*

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## INTRODUCTION

The astonishing and fascinating phenomena of human development is learning a second language. Second language acquisition is the process of learning a new language after acquiring one's native language. It is a complex and dynamic process that involves a wide range of factors, such as the individual's cognitive abilities, motivation, learning strategies, and exposure to the language. It also sparks discussion and debate to provide an explanation and a very thorough idea that might completely clarify what happens and what it affects.

One of the key factors in second language acquisition is input (Krashen, 1981). In order to learn a language, learners need to be exposed to meaningful and comprehensible input in the target language. This can come from a variety of sources, such as textbooks, teachers, native speakers, or media.

Another important factor is motivation. Learners who are motivated to learn a new language are more likely to engage in language learning activities and to persist in the face of challenges. Motivation can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as personal interest in the language, cultural and social factors, and perceived utility of the language (Muravev, 2023; Strand & Demie, 2005).



Motivation is one of the main theories in second language acquisition that gets a lot of attention. According to academics, learning a second language is not always about strategy, intent, and intelligence. Motivation plays a role in the backside of those, to give impact to the learning process and regulate what may play a role in the ground of the process as well, in order to promote higher comprehension (Al Othman & Shuqair, 2013; Dörnyei, 1994; R. C. Gardner et al., 1985; Quan, 2014).

The term motivation may garner a lot of attention in studies on second language acquisition. Because it is widely recognized as a crucial component of second language acquisition performance by academics and researchers in the related sector (Al Othman & Shuqair, 2013). Some scholars have provided several definitions that highlight its components in order to convey its significance.

Johnstone (2000) claimed that motivation increases one's ability to accomplish goals. According to this notion, motivation could be the catalyst that causes someone to act (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Atkinson (1964), who wrote many years ago, stated that motivation is a distinguishing characteristic that sets one individual apart from another in completing goals. To elaborate, given that Gardner (1972) cited Keller (1983), motivation may be a decision people make on how they will approach a goal or experience as well as how much effort they will make to avoid something.

There are certain well-known figures in the field of second language acquisition who emphasize the definition of motivation. For instance, Ellis (1994) described motivation in second language learning as the learner's intentional endeavour to learn and understand the second language out of need and desire. These two factors, communication demands and attitude toward speakers of the language, can be described as two variables (Lightbown P. & Spada N. M., 2013).

Furthermore, the debate over studies of motivation in second language acquisition has changed over time. Guerrero (2015) separated these historical periods into three chapters, one of which is the social psychological chapter (1959–1990), which is closely related to Gardner's work and places a strong emphasis on goal setting and perseverance as the primary sources of motivation. It is also the result of the interplay between a second language and its culture. As a result, the important foundation to describe the motivation in the learning process is attitude and social environment toward second language and its speakers (2015).

As mentioned in Sepora et al., (2012), Guerrero (2015), Gardner & Lambert (1972) proposed two key terms: integrative, which refers to a deliberate process of learning a language, and positive attitude, which refers to an interest and intention to integrate to the culture of its group of people. A different term is "instrumental," which suggests that learners are motivated by real-world goals (R. Gardner & Lambert, 1972) related to their occupation, future plans, passing exams, getting promotions, receiving rewards, avoiding penalties or punishments, being able to write and read academic articles in the target language, and/or other motives (Sepora et al., 2012).

In keeping with Gardner and Lambert's (1972) classification of motivational styles, Ryan and Deci's (2000) introduced of a different motivational notion. This idea underlines the importance of the extrinsic-intrinsic theory, which explains how logic, reasoning, target, and motivation are related (Sepora et al., 2012).

Thus, second language acquisition is a complex and challenging process, but it can also be a rewarding and enriching experience. With the right combination of motivation, input, and



learning strategies, learners can successfully acquire a new language and open up new opportunities for personal and professional growth. This essay will attempt to explain and examine the part motivation plays in influencing and managing the goal and process of learning a second language.

## **METHOD**

This study employed qualitative approach. Qualitative research provides a flexible and exploratory approach to studying second language learning phenomena and allows researchers to gain a rich and detailed understanding of the acquisition experience perspectives, and behaviors of the learners (Oxford, 2013; Tassinari, 2018).

The data of this study was collected through an interview. A direct interview was conducted to Ahmad, a pseudonym, a former Indonesian PhD student in an Australian university. The interview was entirely recorded. Later, the audio recording was genuinely transcribed. Afterwards, the audio transcription was carefully analyzed and decoded to elicit ideas and to maintain the originality of the participant's voice about the issue centralized in this study.

The analysis toward the audio transcription was then categorized into themes that could simplify the researcher to cluster the issue and explanation. Thus, the result was extensively discussed and presented to integrate them into the issue portrayed throughout this writing.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Language Exposure***

According to research, motivation plays a crucial role in learning a second language (Sung, 2013; Courtney, 2017; Lanvers, 2017). According to the conversation with Ahmad, the instrumental motive kept him from extending his English-learning experience. He used English as a tool to achieve specific objectives. First of all, his English language proficiency was greatly improved while he was attending the Islamic Boarding School, where he had his first exposure to the language. Muravev (2023) and Azzolini et al. (2022) referred language exposure as the amount and quality of exposure to a particular language, which plays a critical role in second language acquisition. In the case of learning English as a second language, exposure to the language involves listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English (Allen et al., 2006a).

Research has shown that language exposure is one of the most important factors in learning a second language (Azzolini et al., 2022a; Gatt, 2017a). The more exposure a learner has to the target language, the more they will learn and improve their language skills (Azzolini et al., 2022; Cantone, 2022). Exposure can come in various forms, such as through formal language classes, interactions with native speakers, immersion programs, and self-study materials such as books, TV shows, and podcasts (Bahrani & Sim Tam, 2012a).

In order to achieve a high level of language proficiency, it is important for English language learners to have ample opportunities to use and practice the language in real-life situations (Howard, 2013). Exposure to the language should be meaningful, authentic, and relevant to the learner's goals and interests (Courtney, 2017; R. Zhang & Zou, 2022). This can help learners develop not only their language skills but also their confidence in using the language (Allen et al., 2006b; Cantone, 2022b; Courtney, 2017; Vann, 1999; R. Zhang & Zou, 2022).



Ahmad's desire to learn English more thoroughly increased over time. He started listening to English songs and seeing Hollywood films.

*Q: Ok. What made you choose to study English?*

*A: Because when I was younger, either in secondary school or after finishing primary school, I enjoyed watching Hollywood movies and listening to English songs. I am therefore interested in studying English at the moment.*

It is suggested that listening to music and watching films can help improve English language proficiency and skills (Howard, 2013; Muravev, 2023a; Sung, 2016). Both activities provide opportunities to learn and practice different aspects of the language, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and intonation (Muravev, 2023a).

When listening to music in English, learners can focus on the lyrics and try to understand the meaning of the words. This can help improve their vocabulary and comprehension skills. Additionally, they can pay attention to the pronunciation and rhythm of the song, which can improve their speaking and listening skills.

Similarly, watching films in English can provide a great opportunity to practice listening and comprehension skills (Bahrani & Sim Tam, 2012b; Cantone, 2022b). The learners can also learn new vocabulary and grammar structures by paying attention to the dialogue and subtitles. Additionally, watching films can help improve their cultural understanding and knowledge of idiomatic expressions.

It is important to note, however, that simply listening to music and watching films in English may not be enough to become fully proficient in the language. It is important to also engage in activities that provide opportunities for speaking and writing practice, such as conversation practice with native speakers or writing essays in English (Muravev, 2023a).

### ***Communicative Goal***

He might develop this behavior in the future. However, his interest in learning English at this point was initially only sparked by his desire to be able to communicate with those who speak English as their first language. Furthermore, Ahmad thought he needed to develop the talent because international students frequently visited his boarding school.

*Q: So, did you have particularly precise objectives when you first made the decision to learn English?*

*A: Yes. First and foremost, I want to be able to communicate with individuals outside of Indonesia, namely those from the UK and the US, because whenever an English visitor comes to my town, they also attend the boarding school that is also in the village.*

Having conversations with English native speakers can significantly improve your English language proficiency in several ways. Conversing with native English speakers will help learners improve their listening skills as they will be exposed to the natural rhythm, intonation, and pace of the language (Chun, 2014).

Moreover, experience of having talk to English native speaker promotes vocabulary enhancement (Chun, 2014; Pae, 2017; Sung, 2014). When having conversation with native English speakers, according to Pae, Sim, Wang and Fang and F. Zhang and Zhang (2017, 2014,



2020, 2014) the learners are likely to encounter new words and expressions that are not part of the textbooks or language-learning materials (Farabolini et al., 2022; Gatt, 2017). This exposure to new vocabulary will help them expand their vocabulary and make their communication more natural.

Another advantage to have direct exposure to English native speaker communication is improvement of pronunciation (F. Zhang & Zhan, 2014). Native English speakers can provide feedback on the learners' pronunciation, helping them correct their mistakes and improve their overall speech (Ahn, 2020; F. Zhang & Zhan, 2014). In addition, conversations with native English speakers can help the students to learn and use English grammar and syntax in context. This can help the learners avoid common mistakes and improve their sentence structure.

Furthermore, it also helps to build confidence in the ability to speak English, which is a key component of language proficiency as well as it can be an effective way to improve English language skills, especially in terms of listening, speaking, and comprehension (Kim, 1983).

As a result, it might have motivated him to improve so that he might experience the situation more. Knowing that the improvement of English language ability could create more global and extensive experience, he also had the desire to study abroad in nations where English is widely spoken.

*Q: Do you believe that your learning objectives keep you motivated to learn? Can you elaborate?*

*A: Yes, my desire to study abroad, particularly in English-speaking nations, after completing my board school studies motivates me to continue learning, especially at the college level. My first goal actually really drives me to study more because I wrote my undergraduate thesis in English and then I did the same for my master's degree.*

*Q: Do you believe that a change in motivation will have an impact on how you learn?*

*A: Yes, I believe so. Since I already mentioned, my primary motivation for learning English is so that I can communicate with a wide range of people worldwide. I also want to study outside of Indonesia, particularly in English-speaking nations. In actuality, there are two primary drives. But I also want to share my ideas with a wider audience when I study for my master's degree, especially through scholarly writings. So that was another inspiration for me to study.*

This inspired him to continue learning and do any necessary actions he could believe would help him reach his objective. This demonstrates how important future goals might be in shaping how people feel about language acquisition (Gardner, 1985). He used English as a means of transportation to get where he was going and to ensure that he was on the right track to success despite the fact that the purpose of his learning had changed.

Being an international student can be a significant factor in improving English speaking skills, as it provides a valuable opportunity for immersion in the language and culture (Andrade, 2006; Hamamah & Hapsari, 2021; Suryanto et al., 2022). When studying in an English-speaking country, international students are exposed to English on a daily basis, whether it is through classes, social interactions, or even navigating daily life. This immersive environment can be particularly beneficial for improving spoken English, as it provides ample opportunities for practice and feedback.



Additionally, many universities and colleges that welcome international students offer resources and support to help them improve their English skills (Smiljanic, 2017; Tamimi Sa'd, 2018). This may include language courses, conversation partners, language exchange programs, and language tutoring. These resources can be incredibly helpful for international students looking to improve their spoken English, as they can provide targeted feedback and guidance to help learners identify and overcome specific challenges.

### ***Attitude toward the Language***

However, it's important to note that the extent to which being an international student improves English speaking skills can vary depending on a number of factors, including the individual's prior level of English proficiency, their willingness to practice and engage with the language, and the quality and quantity of language support available (Wang et al., 2018). Nonetheless, overall, being an international student in an English-speaking country can be a powerful tool for improving spoken English skills.

He then appeared to be using this tool as a means of assimilating himself into the social setting where English is spoken. He benefited from the fact that he was forced to learn English in addition to Arabic at his boarding school.

*Q: How did you handle that challenge?*

*A: At that time, English was the only language allowed in our boarding school. Speaking was the first ability I successfully cultivated at that time because it is a necessity for communication. Additionally, the Boarding School offered services like a language lab. Therefore, we have set hours each week to use that lab.*

*Q: Have you been made to take English classes?*

*A: Certainly, back when I was a boarder. because we must speak in both English and Arabic for two weeks while attending boarding school. Two weeks for learning Arabic and two weeks for learning English. There will be repercussions if we use the Indonesian language.*

Ahmad was able to demonstrate a propensity to engage in the language he was learning in anticipation of avoiding the discipline (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). This kind of approach is widely used in some pesantrens called immersion. In this approach, pesantrens may have English-speaking teachers or volunteers who live with the students and provide language instruction through immersion. This approach involves surrounding students with the English language and encouraging them to use it in daily interactions (Nur et al., 2021).

Moreover, like in many Indonesian learning setting, Ahmad experienced less-supporting infrastructures in the former study. The boarding school setting was not particularly conducive to his English skill development.

*Q: Did you encounter any problems?*

*A: Sure. I wasn't being taught by a native speaker at the time, but most of the instructors were from Indonesia. Consequently, it is challenging for me to improve my English. The resource shortage is another factor. Finding resources from the UK and the US, such as the limited multimedia that we have, seems to be quite challenging.*



He learned through instructor instruction in the years before the internet became widely used. He became a little bit too reliant on his teacher as a result.

*Q: Could you briefly describe the steps you took to learn English?*

*A: Since the second grade?*

*Q: Whatever. You can start from the beginning and tell me.*

*A: I really was a passive learner when I decided to learn English since I was so reliant on my teacher. But because it was 2000 and the English resources were getting better than they had been when I was an undergraduate, I studied to actively learn on my own. I so frequently study alone and with my pals outside of class.*

It was not particularly dominant, though. He used the neighborhood library near his boarding school to support himself.

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This use was not particularly widespread. Because of this, the school used a different technique to fill the library.

*Q: What steps did you take to overcome that challenge? Did you come up with a solution to the problem you encountered when you first chose to learn English?*

*A: I want to make the most of my time in the lab because there aren't many resources at my boarding school. So, outside of our schedules or morning classes, my friend and I typically use the library more than once per week. But because we live in a boarding system, we typically use the lab at night.*

Limited English learning resources is another issue he found in his boarding school. The anticipated resources were available in multimedia format. He anticipated that his boarding school would have access to the tools necessary for him to broaden his understanding of the English language.

*Q: Did you encounter any problems?*

*A: Sure. I wasn't being taught by a native speaker at the time, but most of the instructors were from Indonesia. Consequently, it is challenging for me to improve my English. The resource shortage is another factor. Finding resources from the UK and the US, such as the limited multimedia that we have, seems to be quite challenging.*



*Q: How come you didn't just Google it?*

*A: The internet is not very well known at that time. In or around 1997. It is very challenging.*

*Q: How did you handle that challenge?*

*A: At that time, English was the only language allowed in our boarding school. Speaking was the first ability I successfully cultivated at that time because it is a necessity for communication. Additionally, the Boarding School offered services like a language lab. Consequently, we have set hours each week to use that lab.*

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English language proficiency is increasingly important for success in today's globalized world. However, many Indonesian schools, particularly those in rural areas and with limited resources, face challenges in preparing English language programs due to a lack of support (Malik et al., 2021).

The major challenge that Indonesian schools face in preparing English language programs is a lack of resources. Many schools, particularly those in rural areas, may not have access to adequate teaching materials, such as textbooks, audiovisual aids, or computer labs. This lack of resources can limit the ability of teachers to provide engaging and effective English language instruction to their students (Azami, 2021).

Overall, the lack of support for English language programs in Indonesian schools is a significant challenge that needs to be addressed in order to ensure that students are adequately prepared for the globalized world. Without adequate support, many schools will continue to struggle in providing high-quality English language instruction to their students, which can limit their opportunities for future academic and professional success (Malik et al., 2021).

### ***Learning Setting***

Another issue faced by Ahmad in his learning setting is dissatisfaction over the fact that none of his teachers were English native speakers because they were all Indonesian. He would grudgingly insist on having instructors who are native English speakers.

*Q: Did you encounter any problems?*

*A: Sure. I wasn't being taught by a native speaker at the time, but most of the instructors were from Indonesia. Consequently, it is challenging for me to improve my English. The resource shortage is another factor. Finding resources from the UK and the US, such as the limited multimedia that we have, seems to be quite challenging.*





He thought that learning from an English-speaking teacher would help him improve his English. It might demonstrate the requirement for teacher motivation in second-language acquisition (Wang & Fang, 2020). The motivation of the teachers may be a significant element that is closely tied to the understanding of why the student has to learn a language, what learning process he may commit to, and what goals he may seem to achieve. This encounter might represent Ahmad's extrinsic model of motivation. He might rely on the evaluation and opinion of the professors, or he might ask them to identify any problems he might be experiencing (Chun, 2014). His statements, in which he stated that he believed it to be extremely difficult to improve his English-language abilities, provided support for this.

In addition, his desire to connect with others and grow his community was another important motivation. In addition, it was also the first thing he took into account when writing an academic piece for his master's thesis. He thought that improvements in language use and proficiency would give him more opportunities to express his ideas in writing.

*Q: Do you believe that a change in motivation will have an impact on how you learn?*

*A: Yes, I believe so. Since I already mentioned, my primary motivation for learning English is so that I can communicate with a wide range of people worldwide. I also want to study outside of Indonesia, particularly in English-speaking nations. In actuality, there are two primary drives. But I also want to share my ideas with a wider audience when I study for my master's degree, especially through scholarly writings. So that was another inspiration for me to study.*

In order to reach a wider audience and potentially gain criticism or suggestions that would help him improve, he put out an idea. Such a goal would encourage him to become a part of a bigger community in order to meet his needs. Gardner and Lambert's (1972) concept of learner integration in language learning highlighted the idea of learner integration that logically depends on circumstance and desire. He was inspired to learn in an integrative way because of the need to grow the community (Andrade, 2006).

The rector of the institution where he presently works encouraged him to seek funds to pursue his doctoral studies in order to broaden his experience and intelligence.

*Q: Why did you choose Australia over Indonesia to study in?*

*A: Because I truly had an ambition to complete my degree in a country other than Indonesia. My boss and rector encouraged me to hunt for scholarships, so I now have the chance to pursue my doctorate abroad.*

In addition to the benefits of immersion in an English-speaking environment, studying abroad can also provide access to high-quality English language instruction. Many universities and colleges offer English language courses specifically designed for international students, which can help students improve their language skills before or during their academic program (Wu & Veronis, 2022).

Studying overseas can also provide opportunities for cultural exchange and interaction with people from diverse backgrounds (Peng & Patterson, 2022). This can help students gain a deeper understanding of different cultures and perspectives and improve their communication skills in English with people from different countries and backgrounds.



Later, his goal came true when the Australian Government granted him financing to pursue his PhD at The University of Sydney.

*Q: Do you have access to that chance?*

*A: Yes, the Australian Government sent me one.*

Finally, the interview demonstrates how various long-term objectives and teaching strategies for second languages can influence and control one another. The shift of each provides a clear explanation of how second language acquisition tactics might change based on the learner's intended learning goals. The shift of learning English motivation can provide a useful framework for understanding how second language acquisition tactics might change based on the learner's intended learning goals, as well as for designing effective language learning programs that cater to the diverse motivations of learners (Galloway & Rose, 2018; Ma et al., 2018; Sung, 2014). Additionally, the goal of language learning may have a big impact on the learners' approach to the language and how they develop a mindset toward it.

In terms of types of motivation, Ahmad showed some qualities to motivate him learning English as a second language. Considering Dörnyei's ((Dörnyei, 1990, 1994; Dörnyei, 2001)specification of motivation, Ahmad phased four categories of motivation. That was summed up from his answers upon the questions. Categorizing the participant's response into themes could help to depict of how the process of learning the language powered up by the motivations and how those motivations were relevant to the language acquisition. The response is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Types motivation demonstrated by the participant.

	Types of motivation			
	Integrative	Instrumental	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Participant's	<p><i>...My first specific goal actually is I want to be able to speak with foreign people...</i></p> <p><i>...I want to learn English because I want to be able to communicate with many people</i></p>	<p><i>Because actually I had a dream to pursue my degree outside Indonesia in foreign country.</i></p> <p><i>...to look for the scholarship...</i></p>	<p><i>I have passionate in English since I was in secondary school...</i></p> <p><i>I have self-motivation of study</i></p>	<p><i>it is compulsory for us to speak.</i></p> <p><i>...the surrounding people who live around me also set the goal for me because I have a brother also a big brother who studied in Boarding School.</i></p>



**answers**

*around the  
world...*

*...I will be  
able to speak  
with many  
people  
around the  
world...*

*...I loved watching  
movie, Hollywood  
movie and also like  
to listen English  
song...*

*I studied to  
actively learn  
by myself*

*I am really  
dependent on my  
teacher.*

*...I want to  
communicate  
my idea  
especially in  
scholarly  
articles to  
broader  
audience...*

*...another motivation  
is because I want to  
study outside  
Indonesia especially  
in English speaking  
countries...*

*I usually  
study by  
myself and  
my friends  
not only from  
the class...*

*...we speak  
Indonesia language  
there will be a  
punishment.*

*...I want to study  
outside Indonesia  
especially in English  
speaking countries...*

*...study more  
especially in  
undergraduate  
level...*

*I want to study  
outside Indonesia  
especially in English  
speaking countries...*

*I also at that time  
wanted to study my  
master's degree in  
Arabic countries  
because I learn*



*Arabic also so yes  
that it is...*

### ***Insight and Personal Reflection about Motivation in Language Learning***

The area of studies about learning motivation may be the most extensive because the study of how humans learn and acquire second languages draws researchers' interest (Cheung Matthew Sung, 2013; Fakhruddin, 2021; R. Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Lanvers, 2017). To bridge the vacuum and the void of definition and comprehension that other academics could miss, experts in this discipline developed their own definition. Several integrative and practical ideas have been put forth. Some other extrinsic and intrinsic motivations have been proposed. Experts, though, were arguing over what had happened to various motivational styles.

For instance, when Gardner (1985) proposed the concept of integrative motivation (a socio-educational learning method) for learning a second language, other Belmechri & Hummel, (1998); Crookes & Schmidt, (1991); Dörnyei, (1990 & 1994); Oxford, (1996); Oxford & Shearin, (1994) criticized it harshly and in-depth. The researchers' ideas and perspectives on how to define the terms would differ, and they occasionally would be at odds with one another. The idea of integrative motivation is thought of as a learner's purpose to acquire a second language in order to blend into its community. When asked whether the "desire to travel" should be categorized as integrative or instrumental, this concept could confuse some people. Furthermore, Shaw (1981) thought that any region of the world where English is taught as a second language could see that the learner's integration into the language does not significantly affect the role of popularity in English because English has become a global language with no specific country associated with it. Additionally, as many academics have noted (Dörnyei, 2001; Krashen, 1981) the length of exposure to the language may differ greatly in different areas.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, motivation plays a crucial role in English language acquisition. Different types of motivation, such as integrative, instrumental, personal interest, and identity-related motivation, can impact the way learners' approach second language acquisition and influence the strategies they use to learn the language. Learners who are motivated by integrative reasons may focus more on developing their speaking and listening skills, while learners who are motivated by instrumental reasons may focus more on developing their grammar and vocabulary. Additionally, learners who are motivated by personal interest may seek out opportunities to engage with the language through hobbies or cultural activities, while learners who are motivated by identity-related reasons may seek to identify with the culture of the language community by adopting cultural practices and customs.

It is important for English language teachers to recognize the different types of motivation that learners may have and to design language learning programs that cater to these diverse motivations. By doing so, teachers can help to enhance learners' motivation, engagement, and success in English language acquisition.

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