

Motivational Factors in English Language Learning: A Study of First-Year Law Students at Tashkent State University of Law

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study investigates the factors influencing motivation among English language learners (ELLS) at Tashkent State University of Law, focusing on first-year students enrolled in the "English for Lawyers" module. The research explores how teaching methodologies, curriculum relevance, and assessment practices impact student engagement and contribute to the development of language skills necessary for academic and professional success. **Methods:** A mixed-methods approach was adopted, involving surveys completed by 40 students and semi-structured interviews with 10 randomly selected participants. The study assesses how interactive learning environments, real-world legal applications, and alternative assessment models affect students' motivation levels. Quantitative data from surveys is complemented by qualitative insights from interviews, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping student motivation. **Results:** Students demonstrated higher levels of engagement and motivation when participating in interactive classroom activities, real-world legal scenarios, and project-based assessments. Traditional memorization-focused assessments were found to negatively impact motivation, while creative, problem-solving tasks enhanced students' confidence and practical skills. Additionally, external factors such as sleep, social media use, and physical well-being played a significant role in influencing classroom performance and focus. **Novelty:** This study highlights the importance of contextualized and student-centered teaching approaches in boosting motivation among law students learning English. It emphasizes the value of incorporating practical, career-relevant materials and dynamic assessment models to create a more engaging and effective learning environment. The research contributes to the broader discourse on educational reform in Uzbekistan, advocating for pedagogical strategies that align with students' professional goals and foster long-term academic growth and success.

INTRODUCTION

Motivating students to learn English as a foreign language remains a significant challenge in many educational contexts, including Uzbekistan. As the country seeks to modernize its education system and integrate more closely with international academic and professional networks, English language proficiency has become increasingly important. However, traditional teaching methods, often characterized by rote memorization, passive learning, and teacher-centered instruction, frequently fail to engage students or develop the practical communication skills necessary for success in the 21st century.

This issue is particularly evident in specialized programs like the "English for Lawyers" module at Tashkent State University of Law, where students must acquire not only general language skills but also legal English proficiency relevant to their future careers. The challenges faced by these students mirror broader global trends, highlighting

the need for interactive, real-world, and contextually grounded teaching approaches. Existing literature underscores the importance of student-centered methodologies, collaborative learning, and authentic materials in fostering greater motivation and engagement among English language learners [1], [2].

Despite growing awareness of the limitations of traditional approaches, Uzbekistan's education system continues to rely heavily on standardized tests and memorization-based assessments. Such practices often discourage creativity and limit students' ability to apply their language skills in practical situations. As Uzbekistan continues to reform its education system, there is an urgent need to explore alternative pedagogical and assessment models that prioritize problem-solving, critical thinking, and real-world application.

This study aims to contribute to these efforts by examining the motivational drivers of English language learners at Tashkent State University of Law. By investigating how teaching practices, curriculum design, and assessment methods influence student motivation, the research seeks to identify effective strategies for enhancing engagement and improving learning outcomes. Additionally, the study explores how external factors, such as health, lifestyle, and social influences, impact students' ability to remain motivated and focused in their language studies.

Through a combination of surveys and semi-structured interviews, this research provides valuable insights into the perspectives of first-year law students and offers practical recommendations for educators seeking to create more dynamic and inclusive learning environments. The findings contribute to the broader understanding of language learning motivation within specialized academic programs and highlight the potential for innovative, student-centered approaches to transform English language education in Uzbekistan.

The challenges faced by English language learners (ELLs) in Uzbekistan mirror the global struggles of language education, where traditional approaches often fall short of preparing students for the linguistic and communicative demands of the 21st century. In many educational systems, heavy reliance on teacher-centered methodologies, rote memorization, and passive learning environments has been shown to hinder student engagement, limit critical thinking, and stifle language acquisition [3], [4]. Such methods prioritize accuracy over fluency, disregarding the interactive and communicative elements essential for mastering a second language. Consequently, there is growing recognition that these outdated pedagogical practices fail to equip students with the skills necessary to thrive in increasingly interconnected and globalized environments [5], [6].

A significant body of research underscores the need for interactive, student-centered, and contextualized teaching approaches to foster greater motivation and engagement among ELLs [1], [2]. This shift in focus reflects broader educational trends emphasizing learner autonomy, collaborative learning, and the incorporation of real-world applications into the curriculum [7]. Interactive and participatory learning environments, where students are encouraged to take an active role in their education,

have been shown to enhance cognitive engagement, improve retention, and promote deeper levels of language processing [8]. By participating in dialogues, role-plays, and problem-solving activities, learners are better able to internalize new linguistic structures and develop greater communicative competence [9].

One notable advantage of dynamic teaching methodologies is their ability to contextualize language learning, allowing students to draw connections between classroom instruction and their everyday experiences [10]. When curricula incorporate authentic materials, such as news articles, podcasts, or workplace scenarios, students are more likely to perceive the relevance of their studies, leading to higher levels of intrinsic motivation [11]. This approach aligns with sociocultural learning theories, which emphasize the importance of situating knowledge within meaningful social and cultural contexts. Research has consistently demonstrated that contextualized and culturally responsive teaching can improve not only linguistic competence but also students' confidence and willingness to communicate in the target language [12].

Assessment practices also play a pivotal role in shaping student engagement and motivation in language learning. Traditional high-stakes assessments, which prioritize memorization and grammar accuracy, have been criticized for fostering anxiety and disengagement among ELLs [13]. In contrast, alternative assessment models that emphasize creativity, problem-solving, and practical application have been found to promote greater learner agency and motivation. Authentic assessments, such as project-based tasks, portfolios, and simulations, provide students with opportunities to apply their linguistic knowledge in meaningful and contextually rich environments [14]. These approaches align closely with communicative language teaching (CLT) principles, which prioritize fluency, adaptability, and real-world communication skills over mechanical correctness [15].

For ELLs in Uzbekistan, the limitations of traditional assessment practices are particularly pronounced, as standardized tests continue to dominate the educational landscape. This reliance on examinations that emphasize rote learning may inadvertently stifle creativity and critical thinking, further exacerbating the challenges faced by students seeking to develop practical language skills [16]. However, ongoing educational reforms in Uzbekistan present a unique opportunity to align language education with global best practices. By incorporating formative assessments, peer evaluations, and self-reflective practices, educators can foster more holistic and equitable learning environments that prioritize student growth and development [11].

The broader implications of these pedagogical and assessment strategies extend beyond the classroom, influencing students' long-term academic and professional trajectories [17]. As Uzbekistan seeks to expand its participation in international academic and economic networks, developing a generation of proficient English speakers is essential. Drawing from global research and adapting innovative teaching and assessment practices to the local context can significantly enhance the effectiveness of English language instruction across the country. By fostering environments where

creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking are prioritized, educators can empower ELLs to navigate diverse linguistic and cultural landscapes with confidence.

Ultimately, the challenges faced by Uzbek students reflect a microcosm of broader educational shifts occurring worldwide. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to move away from traditional paradigms and embrace pedagogical frameworks that place learners at the center of the educational experience. Through the integration of interactive teaching methods, contextualized learning materials, and innovative assessment practices, Uzbekistan can cultivate a more dynamic and inclusive language learning environment. This synthesis of global insights with local educational priorities offers a pathway toward more equitable and effective English language instruction, fostering greater student engagement, resilience, and communicative competence

RESEARCH METHOD

This research investigates the factors influencing motivation among English language learners at Tashkent State University of Law, focusing on freshmen students enrolled in the "English for Lawyers" module. The study aims to explore how teaching methods, curriculum relevance, and assessment practices shape student engagement and drive motivation. A mixed-methods approach is used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the students' learning experiences.

A total of 40 first-year students participate in the research. The participants represent diverse levels of language proficiency, but all are currently studying English within the specialized legal context of their academic program. This sample is selected to ensure that the findings reflect the experiences of students navigating a legal-focused language curriculum, which may present unique motivational challenges.

Data collection involves the use of surveys and interviews. All 40 participants complete a survey designed to assess their motivation levels across key areas related to teaching methods, curriculum content, and assessment styles. The survey consists of six Likert-scale questions, each with five response options ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The questions aim to evaluate the extent to which interactive and student-centered approaches, real-world applications, and alternative forms of assessment contribute to students' motivation.

The survey includes the following questions:

1. *I feel more motivated to learn English when classes include group discussions and interactive activities.*
2. *Lessons that focus on real-world legal scenarios make learning English more engaging for me.*
3. *I am more motivated when teachers use authentic materials like legal cases, articles, and podcasts.*
4. *Assessments that allow creativity and problem-solving (e.g., presentations and projects) motivate me more than traditional exams.*

5. *I feel discouraged when assessments focus mainly on memorization and written tests.*
6. *The opportunity to apply what I learn in mock legal situations makes studying English more interesting and motivating.*

Following the survey, 10 students are randomly selected for semi-structured interviews. The interviews are conducted to provide deeper insight into the factors affecting their motivation. Each interview lasts approximately 20 to 30 minutes and allows for more nuanced responses to open-ended questions. Students are encouraged to elaborate on their survey answers, offering personal reflections on their learning experiences.

Some of the interview questions include:

1. *Which classroom activities make you feel most motivated to participate in English lessons?*
2. *Do you find the "English for Lawyers" curriculum relevant to your future career? How does this affect your motivation to study?*
3. *How do different types of assessments (e.g., tests, presentations, or group work) influence your willingness to engage with course material?*
4. *What aspects of the course do you find least motivating, and what changes would you suggest to improve your experience?*
5. *How do you think the teaching style of your English instructor affects your motivation to learn?*

Additionally, students are asked open-ended questions about their general perceptions of motivation, allowing them to express their opinions freely:

1. *In your opinion, what motivates you the most to improve your English skills?*
2. *What aspects of the course could be improved to increase your motivation?*
3. *How motivated do you feel overall to continue developing your English language skills within this module?*

The data collected from both the surveys and interviews is analyzed to identify common themes and patterns. Quantitative data from the surveys is examined using basic statistical analysis, while qualitative data from interviews is coded and categorized to highlight recurring ideas and diverse perspectives. This mixed-methods approach allows for a well-rounded exploration of the motivational factors at play, providing insights that can inform more engaging and effective teaching practices in the "English for Lawyers" module at Tashkent State University of Law.

By integrating student voices and experiences, the research seeks to offer practical recommendations for enhancing motivation through innovative teaching strategies, relevant curriculum design, and meaningful assessment practices. The findings aim to contribute to the broader understanding of language learning motivation within specialized academic programs, ultimately supporting the development of more effective English language instruction in legal education contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The survey results provide valuable insights into the motivational drivers for freshmen students enrolled in the "English for Lawyers" module at Tashkent State University of Law. The data highlights the significance of interactive teaching methods, real-world applications, and innovative assessments in enhancing student engagement and motivation to learn English within a legal context.

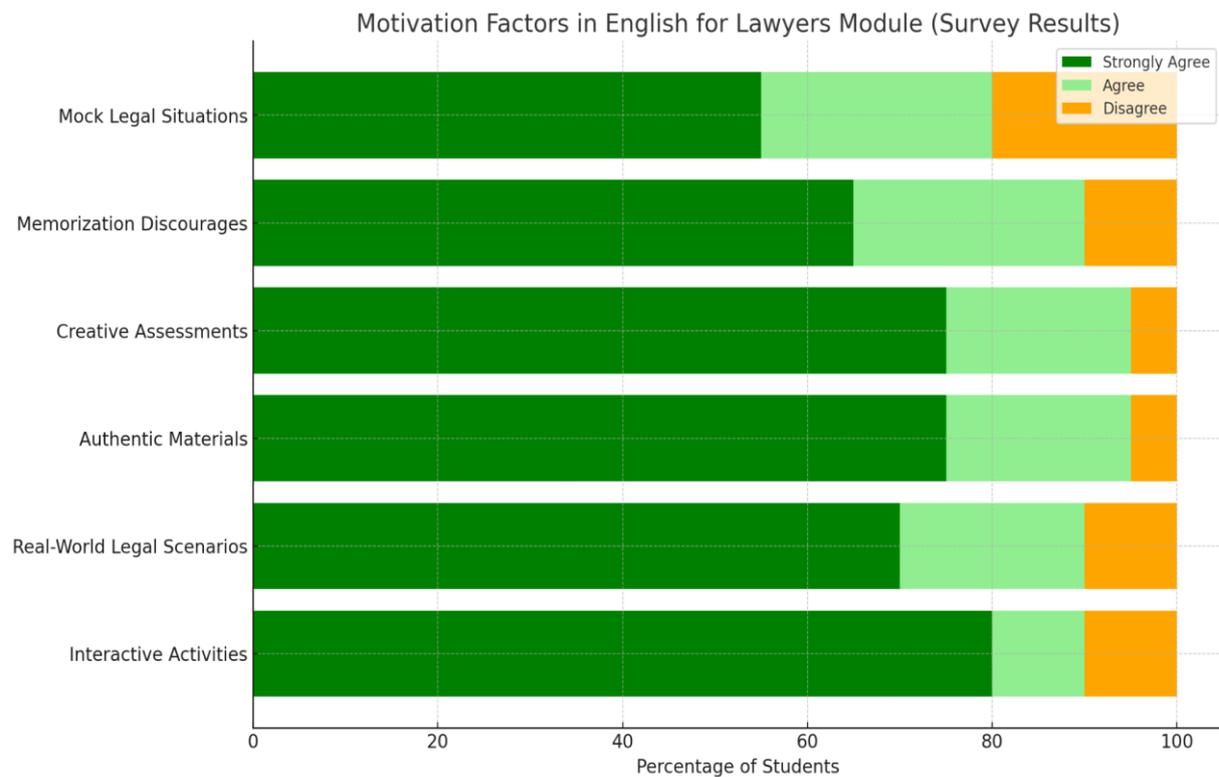


Figure 1. Motivation factors in English for lawyers module (survey result).

1. Interactive and Group-Based Learning

The overwhelming response to the first survey question underscores the powerful impact of interactive classroom environments on student motivation. With 80% of students strongly agreeing and an additional 10% agreeing, it is evident that collaborative and participatory learning experiences are essential for maintaining high levels of interest and enthusiasm. The remaining 10% who disagreed suggest that while most students thrive in interactive settings, a small portion may prefer more individualized or traditional approaches to learning.

This finding aligns with broader educational research, which consistently highlights the benefits of active learning strategies in second-language acquisition. Activities such as group discussions, debates, and peer feedback not only enhance language retention but also build essential communication skills critical for legal practice. The strong preference for interactive activities reflects the importance of creating opportunities for students to engage directly with the material, fostering a sense of ownership over their learning process.

2. Real-World Legal Scenarios

The second question revealed that the majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that lessons focused on real-world legal scenarios were more engaging and motivating. This result emphasizes the need for practical, career-oriented content in language instruction. By incorporating mock trials, legal case studies, and simulations, educators can create a more immersive learning experience that directly connects to students' future professional aspirations.

The data suggests that students are more motivated when they see clear connections between classroom activities and real-life applications. This highlights the importance of designing curricula that are context-specific and tailored to the unique demands of legal education. Legal English, as a specialized field, benefits greatly from teaching methods that allow students to apply their language skills in authentic legal contexts.

3. Use of Authentic Materials

Similarly, the survey responses regarding the use of authentic materials such as legal cases, podcasts, and articles revealed strong positive feedback. Most students expressed agreement or strong agreement, indicating that exposure to real-world texts and multimedia content enhances their motivation to engage with the language.

Authentic materials provide students with language input that reflects actual usage in professional settings, which is crucial for developing both linguistic competence and cultural awareness. This approach helps bridge the gap between textbook knowledge and practical application, reinforcing the relevance of the course to students' career goals. By integrating contemporary legal issues and case studies, instructors can create a dynamic learning environment that resonates with students and keeps them actively involved in their studies.

4. Creative and Problem-Solving Assessments

The strong preference for creative, project-based assessments was another clear trend, with 75% of students strongly agreeing and 20% agreeing that these types of assessments are more motivating than traditional exams. This result reflects a broader shift away from rote memorization and toward skills-based assessment models. Students value assignments that allow them to think critically, collaborate with peers, and apply their knowledge in innovative ways.

By emphasizing presentations, case analyses, and mock legal scenarios, educators can cultivate higher-order thinking skills while simultaneously improving language proficiency. This approach not only boosts motivation but also prepares students for real-world legal practice, where problem-solving and analytical thinking are key competencies. The 5% who disagreed may reflect students who feel more comfortable with structured, predictable exam formats, suggesting the need for a balanced assessment strategy that accommodates diverse learning preferences.

5. Negative Impact of Memorization-Based Assessments

When asked about the impact of memorization-heavy assessments, 60% of students agreed or strongly agreed that such exams negatively affect their motivation. This finding highlights a widespread dissatisfaction with traditional, high-stakes testing formats that

prioritize grammatical accuracy and recall over practical skills. Students feel that these assessments fail to capture their true abilities and may undermine their confidence in using English in real-life scenarios.

This suggests a pressing need to rethink assessment practices by incorporating more formative and performance-based evaluations. By providing opportunities for continuous feedback and self-reflection, instructors can create a more supportive learning environment that encourages growth and reduces anxiety. Additionally, the 30% who disagreed or remained neutral highlight the diversity of student experiences, suggesting that some learners may still benefit from structured memorization as part of their overall learning process.

6. Mock Legal Situations

The final survey question revealed a more diverse range of opinions regarding the use of mock legal situations as a motivational tool. While many students agreed or strongly agreed that these activities enhance their interest, a significant portion (30%) disagreed. This result suggests that while role-playing and simulations are effective for some learners, others may find them challenging, intimidating, or less engaging.

This disparity points to the importance of offering a variety of learning activities that cater to different preferences and comfort levels. For some students, mock legal scenarios may feel too demanding or unfamiliar, particularly if they lack confidence in their language abilities. Instructors can address this by gradually increasing the complexity of such activities, allowing students to build confidence over time. Overall, the survey results reveal a strong preference for interactive, real-world, and creative learning experiences. However, the diverse range of responses also suggests that a flexible, multi-faceted approach to language instruction is necessary to accommodate varying student needs and learning styles.

7. Interview Insights

The interviews revealed a wide range of perspectives on the factors influencing student motivation in the "English for Lawyers" module. A consistent theme across multiple interviews was the value of modern, interactive teaching methods and meaningful, practical assignments in sustaining student engagement. Many students expressed a preference for activities that simulate real-world legal tasks and provide opportunities for creativity and collaboration.

One student emphasized the importance of interactive environments, noting: *"When we have group projects or role-plays, I feel like I'm actually learning something useful. Sitting through lectures doesn't motivate me as much because I don't see how it applies to real-life situations."*

Another student echoed this sentiment, adding: *"I like when teachers ask us to work on mock cases or debates. It feels like I'm preparing for my future career, and that makes me want to try harder."*

Several students highlighted how real-world relevance and authentic materials positively influence their motivation. One student shared: *"When we analyze real legal cases*

or listen to podcasts about famous trials, I pay more attention because it's interesting and feels connected to what I'll be doing as a lawyer."

However, some students pointed out that traditional, lecture-based classes often lead to disengagement. A participant explained: *"When classes are just about taking notes and listening, I find it hard to stay focused. I prefer classes where we can ask questions, have discussions, and work together to solve problems."*

Beyond classroom experiences, students frequently mentioned personal habits and lifestyle factors as critical to their ability to stay motivated. One interviewee remarked: *"Honestly, how I perform in class depends a lot on how much sleep I get. If I'm tired, I can't focus, no matter how interesting the lesson is."*

Another student brought up the impact of social media and technology on their motivation:

"Sometimes I lose focus because I check my phone too often during breaks. If I stay off social media while studying, I feel much more productive and motivated."

Interestingly, physical health and exercise were also cited as contributing to motivation. One student commented: *"I've noticed that when I exercise regularly, I feel more energetic in class. It helps me concentrate better and stay engaged for longer periods."*

A few students stressed the importance of diet and mental well-being, suggesting that a holistic approach to student support could improve overall engagement: *"When I eat well and stay healthy, I feel like I can manage my workload better. The days I skip meals or feel stressed are the hardest to stay motivated."*

Collectively, these insights suggest that while innovative teaching methods and practical, real-world tasks are crucial for enhancing motivation, external lifestyle factors also play a significant role in shaping students' ability to stay focused and engaged in their language learning journey. Educators may benefit from incorporating wellness strategies and addressing these broader influences to create a more supportive and motivating learning environment.

Discussion

The findings from this study provide important insights into the factors influencing the motivation of freshmen students at Tashkent State University of Law enrolled in the "English for Lawyers" module. The combination of survey and interview data highlights the critical role of interactive teaching methods, real-world applications, and innovative assessments in fostering engagement and driving motivation. These results align with broader educational research, reinforcing the notion that active, practical, and contextually relevant learning experiences significantly enhance language acquisition and overall academic performance.

Interactive Learning and Group Activities. The overwhelming preference for interactive, group-based learning underscores the value of student-centered teaching approaches. With 90% of participants expressing strong agreement or agreement that interactive activities increase their motivation, it is clear that students benefit from

participatory learning environments that encourage collaboration and dialogue. This reflects the shift away from traditional teacher-led instruction toward methods that emphasize peer interaction, discussion, and hands-on learning.

These findings support the growing body of literature advocating for active learning strategies in language education, particularly within specialized disciplines like law. Group discussions, role-plays, and debates not only promote language retention but also help students develop critical thinking and communication skills essential for their future careers. However, the 10% who disagreed suggest that a portion of the student body may still prefer more structured, lecture-based formats. This highlights the importance of flexibility in instructional design, allowing educators to blend interactive and individualized approaches to cater to diverse learning preferences.

Real-World Legal Scenarios and Practical Application. The strong positive response to the use of real-world legal scenarios and authentic materials reflects the motivational power of curriculum relevance and practical application. Students are more engaged when they perceive a direct link between their studies and future professional endeavors. The integration of legal case studies, podcasts, and mock trials bridges the gap between theoretical learning and real-life legal practice, reinforcing the value of context-specific language instruction.

This finding aligns with constructivist educational theories, which emphasize the importance of connecting new knowledge to real-world experiences. By situating language learning within practical, career-oriented contexts, educators can cultivate intrinsic motivation and sustain long-term engagement. The positive feedback on authentic materials highlights the need for curricula that reflect contemporary legal issues, ensuring that students remain interested and see tangible benefits from their language development.

Creative and Alternative Assessments. The preference for creative, problem-solving assessments over traditional exams underscores the limitations of memorization-based evaluation methods in language learning. With 95% of students agreeing that creative assessments boost their motivation, it is evident that students value project-based tasks, presentations, and simulations that allow for practical application of knowledge. This aligns with competency-based learning models, which emphasize skills development over rote recall.

However, the 5% who disagreed may represent students who feel more comfortable with structured, exam-based formats. This suggests that while alternative assessment practices are generally more engaging, a balanced approach that incorporates both traditional and innovative methods may be necessary to accommodate all learners. Formative assessments, continuous feedback, and portfolio-based evaluations could offer a more comprehensive view of student progress while maintaining elements of familiarity for students who prefer conventional testing.

Challenges with Memorization and High-Stakes Testing. The survey also revealed significant dissatisfaction with memorization-focused assessments, with 60% of students

indicating that such tests negatively impact their motivation. This finding reinforces longstanding critiques of high-stakes testing environments, which can foster anxiety, disengagement, and surface-level learning. Students expressed a preference for assessments that emphasize application, creativity, and critical thinking, reflecting a broader desire for practical, skills-based evaluation methods.

These results highlight the importance of rethinking assessment practices in language education, particularly within specialized academic modules. By shifting away from recall-heavy exams and incorporating performance-based assessments, educators can create a more supportive and motivating learning environment. This aligns with formative assessment models, which prioritize student growth and self-reflection over final grades.

Diverse Reactions to Mock Legal Scenarios. The mixed responses regarding mock legal situations point to the varying preferences and comfort levels among students. While many students found these exercises engaging, 30% disagreed, suggesting that some may find simulations intimidating or irrelevant to their learning process. This divergence highlights the need for scaffolded learning experiences that gradually build students' confidence in participating in realistic legal tasks.

Providing additional support, clear instructions, and incremental challenges can help students overcome their hesitations and gradually embrace mock scenarios as valuable learning tools. This finding also suggests that offering multiple forms of practical exercises—such as written case analyses, debates, and smaller-scale simulations—can ensure that students with different learning styles remain engaged and motivated.

External and Lifestyle Factors. The interview data revealed that external factors, such as sleep, diet, exercise, and social media habits, significantly influence student motivation. Many students indicated that lack of rest, distractions from technology, and poor physical health can negatively impact their ability to focus and engage in class. These findings suggest that holistic approaches to student well-being could play a crucial role in enhancing motivation and academic performance.

Educators and institutions may consider integrating wellness initiatives, time management workshops, and mental health resources into their academic programs. By addressing these external influences, educators can create a more supportive and conducive learning environment that encourages students to stay engaged and motivated.

Implications for Teaching and Curriculum Design. The findings from this study have several important implications for teaching practices and curriculum design within the "English for Lawyers" module:

1. Integrate Interactive and Collaborative Learning – Expand the use of group work, discussions, and interactive activities to sustain student motivation.
2. Emphasize Real-World Application – Incorporate authentic legal materials and practical exercises that align with students' career goals.

3. Diversify Assessment Practices – Shift toward project-based, creative assessments while maintaining a balance with structured exams to accommodate diverse preferences.
4. Provide Holistic Support – Recognize the role of external factors in student motivation and integrate wellness strategies into the learning process.

By aligning teaching practices with student needs and preferences, educators can foster a more engaging, inclusive, and effective learning environment, ultimately enhancing motivation and improving language acquisition in specialized academic programs.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Findings : The study highlights that interactive teaching, real-world legal applications, and innovative assessments are pivotal in motivating students in the "English for Lawyers" module. It underscores the necessity of aligning learning experiences with career relevance and practical applications while accommodating diverse student preferences. **Implications :** These findings advocate for a shift towards inclusive, student-centered teaching methods in specialized education. Educators should consider adopting innovative approaches while balancing traditional models to meet varied needs, fostering motivation and engagement. **Limitations :** The study is limited by its focus on a single institution and specific module, which may restrict the generalizability of its findings. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases that affect the accuracy of the insights. **Future Research :** Expanding research to encompass diverse institutions, academic backgrounds, and stakeholder perspectives would provide broader insights. Comparative and longitudinal studies could deepen understanding, while exploring external factors like mental health and technology use would aid in developing holistic educational strategies.

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