

## PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TOWARDS COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AT CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT IN UNGKU OMAR POLYTECHNIC

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### ABSTRACT

*Communicative English is a significant approach in English language learning which is fundamental towards achieving conversational competence of students. However, students are often lack of motivation in learning the Communicative English courses/modules taught in higher learning institutes. This research sought to determine students' motivation level towards Communicative English language learning at Civil Engineering Department in Ungku Omar Polytechnic. This study also identified the psychological factors (perception, self-efficacy, and attitude) and sociological factors (learning environment, parental support, peer influence) which affect students' motivation towards Communicative English language learning at Civil Engineering Department in Ungku Omar Polytechnic. In addition, this paper also clarifies the relationship between psychological factors, sociological factors, and students' motivation level towards Communicative English language learning at Civil Engineering Department in Ungku Omar Polytechnic. This study adopted a quantitative methodology to identify the psychological factors (perception, self-efficacy, attitude) and sociological factors (learning environment, parental support, peer pressure) which affect students' motivation towards communicative English learning at Civil Engineering Department in Ungku Omar Polytechnic. A total of 125 students are selected as respondent through simple random sampling. A questionnaire using 4-point Likert items is used to collect data through an online survey, and data is subjected to descriptive and inferential analyses using SPSS version 25. The study's findings indicate that a number of psychological, sociocultural, and individual elements, including students' motivation, social context, and others, all have a significant impact on how effectively they can communicate in English.*

Keywords: Communicative English, Psychological Factors, Sociological Factors, Motivation.

### INTRODUCTION

Communicative English combines oral and written activities which include listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills with special attention on meaningful contents (Taridi & Sanjaya, 2018). When the context and examples used are meaningful to them, students would be able to develop a natural approach towards language learning, including outside the lecture hall. This may help to improve their fluency and confidence to interact in English. However, the learning of Communicative English is highly dependent on motivation level of students. According to Klimova (2011), motivation is essential to language learning. As such, adequate attention should be focused on factors that could influence the motivation of students to ensure successful learning of Communicative English.

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

A large proportion of students in Malaysian higher learning institutes are still struggling to communicate effectively in English despite spending more than 10 years in primary and secondary school learning the language. According to Rany Sam et al., (2013), one of the main factors that contributes toward poor English language learning among students is their lack of motivation as they do not see the immediate need to use the language. Nevertheless, motivation plays a vital role in language learning, especially English (Hayikaleng et al., 2016). This involves a set of closely related beliefs, perceptions, values, interests, and actions which trigger the learning behaviour of students.

Similarly in the context of this undertaken study, many students from the Civil Engineering Department of Ungku Omar Polytechnic have been found to lack the motivation in learning communicative English modules taught throughout their studies. This, too, is believed to stem from a constellation of psychological and sociological factors influencing their motivation level. The severity of this phenomenon was evident from the grades obtained by students during assessments, whereby only a small percentage of them were shown to be able to achieve a satisfactory level of communicative English proficiency.

This is not to be taken lightly as poor communicative English capability will result in students facing various problems during and after their studies. English is the tool to gain knowledge and information as most of the latest books, journals and references are available in English language. English is also the language of Internet, whereby majority of the materials and contents are created in English. Besides, English is being widely spoken by people to communicate their ideas and opinions. Most importantly, upon graduation, English proficiency of the students would be the utmost skill sought after by employers, apart from academic qualification. Thus, it is important to identify the psychological and sociological factors which may influence the motivation of the students from the Civil Engineering Department of Ungku Omar Polytechnic in learning the communicative English modules taught.

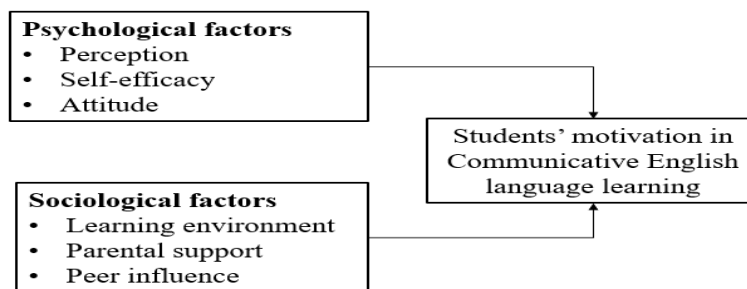
## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What is the students' motivation level towards Communicative English language learning at Civil Engineering Department in Ungku Omar Polytechnic?
- ii. What are the psychological factors (perception, self-efficacy, and attitude) which affect students' motivation towards Communicative English language learning at Civil Engineering Department in Ungku Omar Polytechnic?
- iii. What are the sociological factors (demographic background and learning environment) which affect students' motivation towards Communicative English language learning at Civil Engineering Department in Ungku Omar Polytechnic?
- iv. What is the relationship between psychological factors, sociological factors, and students' motivation level towards Communicative English language learning at Civil Engineering Department in Ungku Omar Polytechnic?

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The undertaken study is built on posits of Achievement Goal Theory. It has long been recognized that varying achievement goals elicit varying motivational patterns with varying behavioral consequences (Bardach et al., 2020).

Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework



According to Achievement Goal Theory, motivation can be linked to individual's orientation towards a goal. There are two forms of goal, namely performance goals and mastery goals. Performance goals are based on satisfying one's ego by appearing smart in front of one's peers or on achieving a sense of superiority. Performance-oriented individuals will most likely choose performance goals (ego-oriented goals), which are often observable since the focus is on an individual's ability or accomplishments. The purpose of a performance goal is to demonstrate ability, which is judged in terms of performance and how that performance compares with other (Ahmad et al., 2018). In an academic setting, this ability is reflected by students' grades. As such, an individual who adopts this type of goal determines his or her self-worth as a perception of ability to perform. On the other hand, those who choose mastery goals (learning goals) are often based on their own perception of knowledge or skill. Individuals who have a mastery goal orientation seek to use effective learning strategies for acquisition of knowledge and to master material or a specific task, in which the focus is on developing new skills and competence (Cheng et al., 2018). The emphasis is not on performing but on learning, wherein effort is seen as an important attribute of the learning process and as the ultimate success. In an academic context, this learning is not tied to an individual's grade, but rather whether the individual perceives that they have improved their own knowledge or skills pertaining to the subject matter (Tse et al., 2019). These individuals tend to put in a greater effort in learning have higher self-efficacy beliefs (Pérez et al., 2010), and persist in challenging tasks.

There are several obstacles to maintaining motivation when learning English at the tertiary level. students may experience a decrease in motivation due to several factors such as conflicting demands on their time, academic stress, and anxiety related to language (Russell-Pinson & Harris, 2019). Furthermore, students' motivation could decline if the teaching strategies and resources do not appeal to them or if they think English has nothing to do with their future professional pathways (Mohd Shahali et al., 2019).

Students' motivation is influenced by their perception, self-efficacy and attitude (psychological factors) towards Communicative English language learning (Pan, 2020). Perception refers to students' awareness on Communicative English and its benefits, self-efficacy refers to students' belief on their capability to learn Communicative English, while attitude refers to their behaviour in learning Communicative English. Meantime, students' motivation level is also affected by learning environment, parental support and peer influence (sociological factors) towards Communicative English language learning (Getie, 2020). Learning environment refers to instructional strategies used in teaching Communicative English, lecturer's teaching style and lecturer-student relationship; parental support refers to encouragement and assistance provided by parents to students in learning Communicative English; while peer influence refers to effects of peer interaction on students' Communicative English learning (Fang et al., 2018). On overall, positive relationship is hypothesized to exist between students' motivation level, psychological factors, and sociological factors.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research paper will be significant endeavour in teaching and learning Communicative English in Malaysia, especially in Ungku Omar Polytechnic. This paper aims to identify the psychological and sociological factors which may influence the motivation of the students from the Civil Engineering Department of Ungku Omar Polytechnic in learning the communicative English modules taught. The researchers believed that the result of the study will benefit the following:

**Students-** This study will help the students to identify the Psychological and Sociological factors that affects their motivation towards communicative English Language Learning. The students would become more responsible towards their learning.

**Teachers-** Teachers could help each other in implementing plans in helping students in communicative classrooms. Teachers could also prepare effective and creative activities to encourage students to express themselves in communicative classrooms.

**Parents-** Parents could create a more conducive environment at home for the students to learn communicative English. On the other hand, parents also would often interact using Communicative English with the students.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING OF COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH

Ideally, language learning does not only include language skills but also the ability to communicate. According to Rahman and Pandian (2018), communicative language teaching is one of the most successful ways of teaching and learning English language. This is because Communicative English does not only view language in terms of structure (grammar and vocabulary), but also its communicative functions (Kaharuddin, 2018). According to Nan (2018) Communicative English is focused on oral and written activities which combines the four language skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing). Communicative English is taught mainly using meaningful contents to develop communicative competence of students. According to (Dos Santos, 2020) communicative competence includes knowledge on language symbols such as grammar and vocabulary (language skill), ability to handle language skills in daily life environment (social language skill), ability to handle grammatically correct language in meaningful structure (textual competence) and skill to communicate effectively in the target language, verbally and non-verbally (strategic competence). As such, instruction of Communicative English utilizes more authentic resources. Communicative competence is achieved when students are able to use a language correctly while interacting with their social environment (Alamri, 2018). It refers to ability to use language in different situations and culture. This may require much practice through social interactions. Nevertheless, Communicative English is an effective way for students to express themselves with fluency and confidence, as quick as possible.

## MOTIVATION

In the context of higher education, motivation is crucial, especially when it comes to studying English. It serves as the impetus for students to actively participate in the process of gaining language knowledge and skills. Students' motivation to learn English in higher education is influenced by a variety of factors, such as their own objectives and aspirations as well as the perceived importance of the language. Studies show that learning outcomes that are more effective and long-lasting are typically produced by intrinsic motivation, which results from a real want to learn and a personal interest (Kaiser et al., 2020). However, motivation in postsecondary education is not a universal term. The perceived importance of English competence in their chosen fields of study, prior experiences with language acquisition, and the teaching strategies used can all have a significant impact on students' motivation levels (Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2021). Therefore, teachers need to implement tactics that address the various motives of their students. Motivation triggers the behaviour and decisions of human. It is the reason to do something or to pursue a goal (Murayama, 2018). According to Purmama et al. (2019), motivation is the combination of attempt plus desire which explains the reason for students' action in achieving the objective of learning. Therefore, motivated students will be spirited in learning. Motivation is important for orientation of students towards learning as it affects when, what and how students learn. Students who are motivated can decide on what they want to learn and the length of time that they want to spend on it. Students who are motivated to learn about a topic are keen to engage in activities they believe will help them to learn, such as participating actively during instruction, checking their level of understanding, and asking for help whenever they do not understand a content (Jesionkowska et al., 2020). The development of curricula and instructional tactics are essential for reducing these difficulties. Maintaining and enhancing motivation in English language learning can be achieved through dynamic, student-centered teaching methods that prioritize real-world applications and practical language skills (Barham & Clarke, 2022).

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING LEARNING MOTIVATION

Motivation is often described as a dynamic blend of internal and external factors which sustain students' interest in learning (Papi & Hiver, 2020). There are various psychological factors that may affect learning motivation of students. One of the factors is perception of students towards learning. Perceiving that language learning would be a successful and enjoyable experience enhance students' curiosity and motivation to learn. A positive perception may enhance students' motivation and this would encourage learning behaviours (Licorish et al., 2018).

Self-efficacy is another psychological factor that affects motivation. In learning, self-efficacy reflects students' belief in their own capacity to achieve a goal (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Students develop different levels of self-efficacy based on their personal traits, prior experience, and social support. As they learn, they constantly realize how well they are doing. This will enhance their motivation for continued learning. According to Bandura self-efficacy affects people's choice of activities, level of effort and their determination (Rasheed et al., 2020). In this regard, people who have high self-efficacy are often motivated of performing a task or demonstrating a behaviour as they believe that they are capable, whereas those with poor self-efficacy will most probably avoid doing so as they usually think negative of their capabilities and thus, feel demotivated. In the context of learning, students with

high self-efficacy are highly motivated to learn, and shall therefore, participate with high enthusiasm during lessons. They commonly work harder and persistent in learning even if they face difficulties. Attitude is also a psychological factor which influence motivation.

Motivation in learning a language is a combination of desire to learn the language, positive attitudes towards learning the language, and also the effort invested in learning the language (Papi & Hiver, 2020), while attitude refers to the nature to responding towards an object, person or event, either favourably or unfavourably (Getie, 2020). Language learning motivation and attitude are two inter-related factors affecting language acquisition of students (Dey, 2021). Attitude refers to a pattern of beliefs developed over time which play a critical role in the learning process. (Getie,2020) stated that students' attitude towards language learning is one of the key factors which increases their motivation to learn a language, and this is agreed by Ebadi and Ebadijalal (2022) who also highlighted that motivation results from attitude. Similarly, Cocca and Cocca (2019) also stated that students who have positive attitude towards learning English are generally motivated to learn it regardless of their proficiency level.

### **SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING LEARNING MOTIVATION**

Various sociological factors can affect people's motivation in doing something. According to Bal-Taştan et al. (2018), social context is believed to have great influence on students' attitude and motivation by providing learning opportunities that will enhance their academic outcomes. One of the main sociological factors is learning environment. Learning environment may have a profound influence upon whether, what and how any individual learns a language. A positive learning environment which promotes motivation of students includes appropriate instructional strategies, learning goals and assessments (Kiatkheeree, 2018). Parental support also has an impact on students' motivation in learning. It has long been established that parents play a key role in educational achievement of students including in language learning (Mitchall & Jaeger, 2018). In this regard, parents may help to motivate students to learn English by adopting different strategies such as developing positive attitude towards English learning and providing financial assistance to their children.

Apart from that, peer pressure is another factor which may affect students' motivation in language learning. It has been shown by previous studies that students feel most anxious when they must speak in front of their peers. According to Habrat (2018), peer pressure often works against success in language learning as it produces negative attitudes and feelings of embarrassment and insecurity. Besides, the pressure to conform to the norms of the peer group also leads to students getting demotivated and rejecting language learning.

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The undertaken research intends to determine the psychological and sociological factors which affect motivation of students, which is measured numerically. Research design is primarily determined by the research questions and the type of data analysis involved (Ghuri et al., 2020). Based on this, the undertaken research is conducted as a quantitative study using survey approach. Surveys are generally easy to conduct, especially when data is collected from larger sample (Jones et al., 2013). For this research, the survey is conducted online via Google Form. Link to the questionnaire is sent to respondents through their e-mail and they are given 3 days to complete and submit the survey.

### **SAMPLING**

The study population comprised of students of Civil Engineering Department in Ungku Omar Polytechnic aged between 18 to 25. Simple random sampling is used to select 125 students as respondents to participate in the survey. This method is commonly used when the whole population is accessible to researcher. Simple random sampling indicates that every member of the population has an equal probability of being selected as sample (Ghuri and Gronhaug, 2005).

### **RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

A self-administered questionnaire is used for data collection. Questionnaires are a very useful survey tool that allow large populations to be assessed with relative ease (Jones et al., 2013). Part A of the questionnaire contains items to describe the socio-demographic profile of students, while Part B, C and D are made up of 4-point Likert scale items on motivation of students, psychological factors, and sociological factors, respectively. The scale ranges from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree.

### **RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF INSTRUMENT**

Validity refers to the extent to which a concept is accurately measured by a research instrument in a quantitative study while reliability, or the accuracy of an instrument is the extent to which a research instrument consistently produces the same results every time it is used (Heale & Twycross, 2015). In this undertaken study, the researcher conducted content validity of the questionnaire by seeking two experts' opinion on whether the instrument measures the research concepts accurately. For reliability, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is the most used test to determine the internal consistency of an instrument. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value ranges between 0 and 1 but an acceptable reliability score is one that is 0.7 and higher (Lobiondo-Wood & Haber, 2013). Nevertheless, lower Cronbach alpha values can be expected and accepted depending on conditions, especially when there are too few items under a construct. A pilot study involving 30 students from Ungku Omar Polytechnic is conducted to test the reliability of questionnaire. Cronbach alpha values for the different constructs (motivation, psychological factors, and sociological factors) are determined. Items with acceptable level of reliability are included in the final questionnaire, while items with poor reliability are removed.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involves interpreting data which is gathered using analytical tools to determine patterns, trends, and relationships. In this regard, data from completed questionnaire in the undertaken study is subjected to descriptive and inferential analysis using SPSS version 25.

### DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Table 1.1 shows the descriptive analysis of all the aggregated independent variables. All the variables have a mean of above 2.5 (moderate) with the lowest mean of 2.5147 and the highest mean of 3.4260. A conclusion can be made that most of the participants agreed with the questionnaire statements addressing each variable.

**Table 1.1 Independent Variable Analysis**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perception	125	1.00	4.00	3.4260	.57240
SelfEfficacy	125	1.00	3.00	2.5147	.68849
Attitude	125	1.00	3.40	2.6992	.37298
Environment	125	1.00	3.63	2.9160	.25978
Support	125	1.00	3.80	2.8176	.46212
Pressure	125	1.00	4.00	3.1632	.47477
Valid N (listwise)	125				

### DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Table 1.2 shows the descriptive analysis of the dependent variables. The queries under this dependent factor has a lowest mean of 2.30 and the highest mean of 3.48. When queried “I want to learn communication English because it will enhance my status among my friends”, it is notable that less than half of the participants agreed with this statement.

**Table 1.2 Dependent Variable Analysis**

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I want to learn Communicative English because it will enable me to carry my tasks more efficiently.	125	1	4	3.45	.628
2. I want to learn Communicative English because it will enable me to get a job easily.	125	1	4	3.48	.590
3. I want to learn Communicative English because I hope to further my education.	125	1	4	3.46	.589
4. I want to learn Communicative English because it is a university requirement.	125	1	4	3.34	.634
5. I want to learn Communicative English for my personal development.	125	2	4	3.42	.526
6. I want to learn Communicative English because it will enhance my status among my friends.	125	1	3	2.30	.873
7. I want to learn Communicative English to integrate with the western culture.	125	1	3	2.34	.899
8. I want to learn Communicative English because it will improve my overall English proficiency.	125	1	4	3.48	.590
Valid N (listwise)	125				

### PEARSON’S CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Table 1.3 shows that all factors have a Pearson correlation, indicating that they are perfectly linearly related. As a result, the components have a perfect positive linear correlation.

**Table 1.3: Pearson’s Correlation of the Factors**

		Correlations						
		Perception	SelfEfficacy	Attitude	Environment	Support	Pressure	Motivation
Perception	Pearson Correlation	1						
	N	125						
SelfEfficacy	Pearson Correlation	-.186	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.038						
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	-.096	.467	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.289	<.001					
Environment	Pearson Correlation	.258	.261	.465	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.003	<.001				
Support	Pearson Correlation	.331	-.046	.211	.303	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.614	.018	<.001			
Pressure	Pearson Correlation	.546	-.180	-.130	.328	.497	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.044	.147	<.001	<.001		
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.731	-.106	.064	.341	.343	.501	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.007	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	125	125	125	125	125	125	125

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1.4 focuses solely on the relationship between independent and dependent variables. All four relationships are significant because their p-estimate is less than 0.05.

**Table 1.4 The Correlation Between Independent Variables and Dependent Variable**

Correlation	Pearson’s Correlation	P-value
Perception > Motivation	0.731	<0.001 (Correlation is significant)
Self-Efficacy > Motivation	-1.06	0.007 (Correlation is significant)
Attitude > Motivation	0.064	0.005 (Correlation is significant)
Learning Environment > Motivation	0.341	<0.001 (Correlation is significant)
Parental Support > Motivation	0.343	<0.001 (Correlation is significant)
Peer Pressure > Motivation	0.501	<0.001 (Correlation is significant)

In Table 1.4, all the variables have a sigma of below 0.05. This means that all the variables have a very high significance with the dependent variable.

**SIMULTANEOUS REGRESSION TEST (F TEST)**

The basic goal of the simultaneous regression test is to see if the independent factors have a simultaneous effect on the dependent component. Researchers frequently use a significant level of 0.05 to judge the results of this test. As a result, if the P-value is less than 0.05, the independent factors have a simultaneous effect on the dependent component. The results of the simultaneous regression test are shown in the table below.



**Table 1.5 Simultaneous Regression (ANOVA) Test (F Test)**

		ANOVA <sup>a</sup>				
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.687	6	1.448	26.750	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	6.387	118	.054		
	Total	15.074	124			

a. Dependent Variable: Motivation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Pressure, Attitude, SelfEfficacy, Perception, Support, Environment

From Table 1.5, the researcher shows that the estimate of the F count is 26.750 and P-value is <0.01. As the P-value is less than a significant level of 0.05 (below 0.001 < 0.05), the independent variables are concluded to have a simultaneous influence on the dependent variable (motivation towards communicative English learning).

### LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The limitation of the study lies on the fact that it used only one polytechnic. Reaching all polytechnic students in Malaysia would have been challenging and it was necessary to select a suitable target population. Ungku Omar Polytechnic was chosen for this purpose with students at the polytechnic serving as the target population for the study.

### CONCLUSION

The findings for the first hypothesis show that there is a high level of students' motivation towards Communicative English language learning at the Civil Engineering Department in Ungku Omar Polytechnic. Freud founded psychoanalytic theory in 1900, which centred on the idea of wants as primary motivators for human behaviour. Clark Hull presented Drive theory later in 1940. (habit strength, four biological needs). B.F. Skinner initially mentioned the concept of reinforcement and stimulus after some time had passed, in 1948. The next year, in 1960, Rotter introduced his Social Learning theory, while Atkinson provided his idea of Achievement Motivation. Focus has been narrowed on motivation and success alone. However, students in Department in Ungku Omar Polytechnic experience difficulties in acquiring English, which discourages them from pursuing education in general. Although students from English-speaking backgrounds have fewer obstacles to overcome when studying at a university, individuals from other backgrounds face significant challenges that might dampen their enthusiasm for education. Most students who try to study English do so to improve their academic standing. Students are more likely to master a language if they have pleasure in the process of studying it. Thus, they require intrinsic drive, which allows them to experience the language as they learn it. Having the drive to study abroad is the most important component in your success. Those who keep their spirits up and their internal drive to study strong will undoubtedly reach their destination. According to Gardner, motivation is "the sum of one's desire to learn a language, one's willingness to put up the work required to do so, and one's attitude toward the language.

The findings for the second hypothesis also show there is a significant relationship between psychological factors, sociological factors, and students' motivation level toward Communicative English language learning at Civil Engineering Department in Ungku Omar Polytechnic. Learners of English may be influenced in many ways by their mental state. Age, intellect, IQ, personality, focus, interest, self-confidence, and motivation are all examples of such variables. To maximise English-language acquisition, it is crucial that we are aware of these influences and take steps to either eliminate or significantly reduce their impact. The importance of intrinsic motivation in language acquisition has led to the development of novel approaches of inspiring students to study. This requires an understanding of motivation prior to implementing any method aimed at inspiring the student. The most efficient starting point is the integrative and instrumental drive. However, researchers emphasise the importance of instrumental drive over integrative motivation in language learning and retention.

According to the findings of the study, students' motivation, social setting, and several other psychological, sociocultural, and individual factors all play key roles in the development of their communicative English skills.

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