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# From Motivation to Engagement in ELT: Evidence-Based Strategies for Transformation

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## Abstract

Enhancing learner engagement in English Language Teaching (ELT) necessitates a comprehensive understanding of effective strategies that motivate and sustain active participation. This paper explores how secondary level English teachers enhance learner engagement through motivational strategies. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations of five experienced teachers. The study revealed six key strategies: personalizing learning content, creating supportive classroom environments, promoting autonomy, integrating technology, fostering peer collaboration and providing clear and timely feedback. The findings demonstrate that tailoring lessons to students' interests, using technology to create dynamic learning experiences and fostering collaboration and autonomy effectively re-engage unmotivated learners while encouraging ownership and sustained enthusiasm for language learning. By aligning instructional practices with students' interests and real-world contexts, the study offers practical insights for creating inclusive, learner-centered classrooms. Although context-specific, the study emphasizes the value of differentiated instruction and innovative approaches in addressing the diverse needs of learners, which, in turn, leads to more effective and inclusive engagement practices in ELT classrooms.

**Keywords:** Learner Engagement, Motivational Strategies, Personalized Learning, Peer Collaboration, Differentiated Instruction

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## 1. Introduction

Engaging learners in the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom requires a nuanced understanding of the factors that motivate and sustain their involvement. Learner engagement in ELT is an interactive process that encompasses emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions, aiming at fostering active participation and sustained interest in language learning (Mercer & Dornyei, 2020). Effective engagement strategies hinge on creating meaningful connections between instructional content and learners' interests, goals and real-world applications (Dornyei, 2001). As Gardner (1985) posits, motivation is a multifaceted construct that integrates cognitive, affective, and social dimensions, all of which are crucial in shaping learners' attitudes toward language learning. In the context of ELT, where learners often grapple with diverse linguistic and cultural challenges, implementing evidence-based strategies is essential for creating transformative learning experiences (Harmer, 2007).

Research in applied linguistics highlights the importance of adopting a learner-centered approach to engagement. Dornyei (2001) highlights the critical role of motivational strategies that align with learners' interests and goals, emphasizing personalization and relevance as key to fostering deeper connections with the material. Likewise, Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory points to the significance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in enhancing intrinsic motivation. These principles, when translated into classroom practices, enable teachers to engage learners and maintain their motivation over for conciseness for meaningful learning.

Research in applied linguistics highlights the importance of adopting a learner-centered approach to engagement. Dornyei (2001) highlights the critical role of motivational strategies that align with learners' interests and goals, emphasizing personalization and relevance as key to fostering deeper connections with the material. Building on these insights, Mercer and Dornyei (2020) argue for a holistic approach to engagement that integrates emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. They underline the importance of teacher immediacy, rapport-building, and the use of technology as vital tools for creating a connected and engaging classroom experience. Likewise, Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory points to the significance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in enhancing intrinsic motivation. These principles, when translated into classroom practices, enable teachers to not only capture learners' attention but also sustain their enthusiasm for meaningful learning.

Recent studies reaffirm the centrality of motivation in fostering meaningful engagement in ELT. For example, Alamer and Lee (2021) emphasize that motivational constructs such as intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy significantly influence learners' willingness to engage in language tasks. Furthermore, their findings suggest that a supportive classroom climate, combined with tasks tailored to individual needs, can positively impact both engagement and academic outcomes. Similarly, Lamb et al. (2020) highlight the dynamic nature of motivation in language learning, arguing that effective teaching practices must adapt to learners' evolving interests and socio-cultural contexts to maintain sustained engagement.

The transformative potential of language learning lies in its ability to empower students to navigate real-world challenges through improved communication and critical thinking skills (Ushioda, 2003). Teachers play a pivotal role in this process by designing instructional strategies that integrate technology, foster collaboration, and provide timely feedback. Alqahtani (2022) notes that integrating mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) tools in ELT classrooms has proven effective in boosting learner engagement and motivation, particularly among secondary-level students. Such evidence-based approaches not only address learners' immediate needs but also create a supportive environment that inspires long-term engagement and success.

In secondary-level English classrooms, understanding how teachers employ motivational strategies to re-engage unmotivated learners is a critical area of inquiry. This study aims to investigate how ELT teachers employ motivational strategies to re-engage unmotivated learners in secondary-level classrooms. It plans to explore the interplay of personalized instruction, collaborative activities, and innovative tools in fostering transformative learning experiences. Innovative tools, such as digital platforms, interactive applications, and multimedia resources, play a pivotal role in fostering transformative learning experiences by enhancing interactivity, creativity, and real-world applicability in the classroom. These tools enable teachers to create dynamic and engaging lessons that cater to diverse learner needs and preferences. The research will address issues such as the potential role of differentiated instruction, the impact of technology integration, and the importance of creating supportive classroom environments. By aligning teaching practices with students' interests, autonomy, and real-world applications, the study seeks to identify strategies for addressing key challenges in learner engagement. Additionally, it will examine how clear feedback and peer collaboration might contribute to building confidence, motivation, and sustained participation. Through a qualitative approach, this research intends to bridge theoretical frameworks with practical strategies, offering insights to support meaningful engagement and effective language learning.

## 2. Motivation and Engagement in ELT: Theories and Strategies

Motivation and engagement are essential factors influencing the academic performance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Hiver, Al-Hoorie, & Mercer, 2021). Over the past few decades, these constructs have garnered significant attention, with numerous studies exploring their relationships with other psychological factors (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). Some research has examined how different types of motivation and engagement affect EFL learners' academic outcomes (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001), while other studies have investigated interventions aimed at enhancing learners' motivation and engagement (Afzali & Izadpanah, 2021).

Despite the substantial research on motivation and engagement, three critical gaps remain. First, most studies employ variable-centered methods, such as correlation analysis, regression analysis, and structural equation modeling, while research using person-centered approaches is limited. Variable-centered methods typically assume that the influence of motivation and engagement on academic performance is consistent across the population. In contrast, person-centered approaches highlight individual differences in how motivation and engagement are configured (Laursen & Hoff, 2006).

Motivation has been widely recognized as a cornerstone of effective language learning, deeply influencing learners' engagement and success. Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model of motivation emphasizes the interplay between cognitive, affective, and social dimensions, framing motivation as an essential driver of second language acquisition. Dornyei's (2001) L2 Motivational Self System further enriches this understanding by integrating learners' ideal self, ought-to self, and learning experience, which together shape their motivation to persist and achieve in language learning.

Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) highlights three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness that foster intrinsic motivation and sustainable engagement. In language education, these principles have been applied to explore how learner centered practices, such as autonomy supportive teaching and goal setting, encourage deeper involvement and self-driven learning. Additionally, Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory contributes a critical dimension by linking motivation to perspective change, emphasizing that meaningful engagement occurs when learners can relate classroom experiences to real world challenges.

The role of social interaction in shaping motivation is underscored by Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which highlights the importance of collaboration and scaffolding in learning environments. Ushioda (2003) further reinforces this by emphasizing motivation as a socially mediated process, wherein teacher-student relationships and peer interactions significantly influence learners' attitudes and efforts. These theoretical perspectives collectively inform the design of motivational strategies that align with learners' needs and contexts, forming the foundation for this study.

Extensive research has explored strategies for enhancing motivation and engagement in English Language Teaching (ELT). Dornyei (2001) identifies personalization as a critical factor, arguing that connecting learning materials to students' interests and goals significantly improves engagement. Harmer (2007) supports this, highlighting the importance of contextualized and relevant content that resonates with learners' experiences. Empirical studies have shown that personalized instruction not only fosters motivation but also facilitates deeper cognitive engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Creating a supportive classroom environment is another well-documented strategy. Positive teacher-student interactions, characterized by empathy, encouragement, and humor, have been shown to enhance learners' sense of safety and willingness to take risks (Ushioda, 2003). Collaborative activities, such as group discussions and peer-led projects, further reinforce engagement by promoting mutual respect and accountability (Vygotsky, 1978). Research also underscores the value of feedback, with Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) asserting that timely, actionable feedback serves as scaffolding for learning, enhancing students' competence and motivation.

The integration of technology has emerged as a transformative tool in ELT, offering innovative ways to engage learners. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) emphasize the potential of digital tools to break down traditional classroom boundaries, enabling interactive and dynamic learning experiences. Studies by Harmer (2007) and others reveal that multimedia resources, language learning apps, and virtual collaboration platforms not only make lessons more engaging but also cater to diverse learning styles. Finally, fostering autonomy through goal-setting and self-assessment has been identified as a powerful motivator. Deci and Ryan (2000) argue that autonomy-supportive practices enable learners to take ownership of their learning, creating a positive cycle of effort and achievement. This aligns with Dornyei's (2001) call for learner responsibility as a cornerstone of long-term engagement.

This review highlights the interplay of theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence in informing effective motivational strategies. By integrating these insights, the current study aims to explore how ELT teachers apply these approaches to re-engage unmotivated learners, contributing to a deeper understanding of best practices in transformative language learning.

### 3. The Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how ELT teachers create positive and stimulating learning environments that foster active student involvement and meaningful participation in secondary-level classrooms. It aims to understand the practical and contextual factors that enable teachers to inspire sustained engagement and interest in learning. By examining these approaches, the study highlights strategies that promote dynamic, inclusive, and student-centered classrooms, aligning with learners' needs and aspirations. Through the integration of theoretical perspectives and real-world teaching practices, this research seeks to provide actionable insights for educators, supporting the development of innovative methods that empower students to thrive academically and socially while achieving their full potential.

### 4. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore how ELT teachers motivate unmotivated learners in their classrooms. A qualitative approach was chosen to provide in-depth insights into the strategies employed by teachers and the contextual nuances influencing their practices. The research design included two primary methods: semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. These methods complemented each other, with interviews capturing teachers' reflective experiences and observations documenting real-time classroom dynamics.

#### 4.1. Participants

The participants comprised five ELT teachers from secondary-level schools, selected through purposive sampling. This sampling approach ensured the inclusion of teachers with extensive teaching experience of 10 or more years, allowing for in-depth insights into motivation and engagement strategies. The selected teachers were recognized for their innovative and effective teaching practices, making them highly suitable for the objectives. Their backgrounds provided rich data on how motivation and engagement strategies are implemented in secondary education across various learner profiles.

#### 4.2. Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The semi-structured interviews, lasting approximately one hour each, were guided by open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed accounts of the teachers'

strategies, challenges, and reflections on motivating unmotivated learners. Sample questions included inquiries about specific strategies, the integration of student interests, and the influence of external factors on teaching practices. Classroom observations were conducted over three sessions for each teacher, with each session lasting 45 minutes to one hour. Observations focused on teacher-student interactions, the implementation of motivation and engagement techniques, and student engagement. Field notes were meticulously recorded to capture contextual factors and instructional methods. This combination of data collection methods provided a triangulated understanding of the motivation and engagement practices employed in ELT classrooms. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly adhered to throughout the study.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal key strategies that effectively enhance learner engagement and motivation and engagement in English language teaching (ELT) contexts. Central themes emerging from the data include personalizing learning, creating supportive classroom environments, promoting autonomy, leveraging technology, fostering peer collaboration, and providing clear feedback. These strategies were not only instrumental in engaging unmotivated learners but also in cultivating a sense of ownership, accountability, and enthusiasm among students. Insights from teacher narratives and classroom observations emphasize the transformative power of tailoring instruction to students' interests, fostering trust and rapport, and integrating innovative tools and methods. This section discusses these findings in relation to established theoretical frameworks, highlighting their practical implications for creating inclusive, student-centered learning experiences in ELT classrooms.

### 5.1. Personalizing Learning

Personalized learning is an educational approach that tailors instruction to individual learners' needs, preferences, and interests, thereby making learning more relevant and engaging (Tomlinson, 2001). This approach aligns with motivational theories that emphasize the importance of connecting instructional content to students' lives and real-world contexts, ultimately enhancing engagement and academic success. Personalized learning proved to be a powerful approach for motivating disengaged students by aligning lessons with their interests and real-life applications. Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of tailoring activities to make content relatable and meaningful for learners. P1 observed that "using topics like social media or music made lessons immediately engaging because students could connect with the material." P2 highlighted how "linking grammar exercises to practical tasks, such as drafting text messages or preparing job applications," encouraged greater attentiveness and investment. P3 shared a similar experience, stating, "Incorporating football-related themes into reading comprehension activities sparked enthusiasm in a previously uninterested student." Observations reinforced the effectiveness of this approach, showing that adapting lessons to reflect students' lives not only boosted engagement but also helped maintain an appropriate challenge level by matching tasks to individual proficiency.

Personalizing learning has proven to be an effective strategy for motivating unmotivated learners by aligning lessons with students' interests and real-world contexts. Teachers emphasized the importance of relatable content, such as P1's use of topics like social media and music to make lessons instantly engaging. P2 highlighted the practicality of connecting grammar exercises to real-life tasks, like writing text messages or job applications, which noticeably enhanced students' attentiveness. Similarly, P3 shared how incorporating football-related themes into reading passages reignited enthusiasm in a disengaged learner. Observations confirmed that tailoring lessons to reflect students' lives and adapting tasks to individual proficiency levels significantly boosted classroom engagement while reducing frustration or boredom.

Personalizing learning aligns closely with Dornyei's (2001) motivation and engagement framework, which advocates for relevance in instructional materials to sustain engagement. Harmer (2007) similarly emphasizes the importance of context-driven teaching to ensure content resonates with learners. This study extends these ideas by showing that personalization not only increases engagement but also helps overcome barriers of disinterest and apathy, particularly for unmotivated learners. By tailoring lessons to individual needs, teachers facilitate an intrinsic connection between the learner and the material, fostering sustained motivation and engagement.

### 5.2. Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

A supportive classroom environment was repeatedly cited as crucial for sustaining student motivation and engagement. Teachers fostered positive relationships through empathy, encouragement, and humor, creating a space where students felt safe to take risks and make mistakes. For instance, P1 emphasized the importance of "building trust by remembering small personal details about students and greeting them warmly." P2 highlighted the role of positive reinforcement, recounting how "public acknowledgment of a struggling student's efforts inspired the entire class." P4 observed that "group activities and peer support were effective tools for reducing anxiety and promoting collaboration." Furthermore, P4 also noted that humor was used strategically to "diffuse tension and foster a relaxed atmosphere, making learning more enjoyable for students." These practices contributed to a classroom dynamic where students felt valued and supported.

A supportive classroom environment was identified as vital for sustaining student motivation and engagement, with teachers emphasizing empathy, encouragement, and humor to foster positive relationships. P1 highlighted the importance of building trust by remembering personal details about students and greeting them warmly, creating a welcoming atmosphere. P2 underscored the role of positive reinforcement, recounting how publicly acknowledging a struggling student's efforts inspired the entire class. P4 observed that group activities and peer support effectively reduced anxiety and promoted collaboration, while humor was strategically employed to diffuse tension and create a relaxed, enjoyable learning environment. Collectively, these approaches cultivated a classroom dynamic where students felt valued, safe, and motivated to engage in their learning.

The emphasis on creating a supportive environment supports Ushioda's (2003) assertion that motivation and engagement is socially mediated and heavily influenced by teacher-student interactions. Positive reinforcement and a safe learning space reflect Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory, which highlights the need for relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation and engagement. This study builds on these concepts by demonstrating how trust and emotional support contribute to a cohesive and inclusive learning environment, encouraging risk-taking and active participation.

### 5.3. *Promoting Autonomy and Responsibility*

Encouraging autonomy and responsibility was identified as a powerful motivator. Teachers reported that allowing students to set personal goals and make choices about their learning paths increased their commitment and engagement. P1 explained how "project-based learning enabled students to explore topics they were passionate about, leading to exceptional presentations." P2 highlighted the effectiveness of "self-assessment tasks, which allowed students to reflect on their progress and feel a greater sense of control over their learning." P4 noted the impact of providing students with flexibility in lesson pacing as a strategy to "minimize frustration and enhance engagement." Observations supported these findings, showing that autonomy-supportive practices not only motivated students but also cultivated a sense of ownership and accountability in their learning journey.

Encouraging autonomy and responsibility was identified as a powerful motivator, with teachers emphasizing practices that allowed students to set personal goals and make choices about their learning paths, thereby increasing their engagement and commitment. P1 highlighted how "project-based learning enabled students to explore topics they were passionate about, leading to exceptional presentations." Similarly, P2 emphasized the value of "self-assessment tasks, which allowed students to reflect on their progress and feel a greater sense of control over their learning." P4 noted that providing flexibility in lesson pacing helped to "minimize frustration and enhance engagement." Observations supported these insights, demonstrating that autonomy-supportive strategies not only motivated students but also fostered a sense of ownership and accountability in their learning journey.

Promoting autonomy is deeply rooted in Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory, which underscores the role of autonomy in intrinsic motivation and engagement. Dornyei (2001) also highlights the significance of learner responsibility in sustaining long-term engagement. This study contributes to these perspectives by showing that autonomy-supportive practices not only enhance motivation and engagement but also foster accountability and a sense of achievement among learners. Providing choice and flexibility empowers students to take an active role in their education, creating a mutually reinforcing cycle of effort and reward.

### 5.4. *Using Technology to Enhance Engagement*

Teachers noted that integrating technology into lessons was highly effective in engaging learners. P1 described how "using language learning apps helped students practice vocabulary and grammar in a fun and interactive way." P2 shared their experience of "incorporating multimedia tools, such as videos and animations, to illustrate complex concepts." This approach made abstract topics more accessible and relatable. P5 emphasized the value of "virtual collaboration platforms, where students worked on group projects in real-time." Observations showed that students were more attentive and motivated when technology was seamlessly integrated into their learning experiences.

Integrating technology into lessons was highlighted by teachers as an effective strategy for engaging learners and enhancing their motivation and engagement. P1 shared how language learning apps provided students with a fun and interactive way to practice vocabulary and grammar. P2 emphasized the benefits of incorporating multimedia tools, such as videos and animations, to simplify complex concepts and make abstract topics more relatable. Similarly, P5 highlighted the value of virtual collaboration platforms, enabling students to work on group projects in real time, fostering teamwork and active participation. Observations confirmed that students were more attentive and motivated when technology was seamlessly integrated into their learning experiences, making lessons more dynamic and engaging.

The integration of technology aligns with Harmer's (2007) emphasis on the importance of tools that resonate with contemporary learners. Technology provides an interactive and dynamic platform that enhances engagement and supports active learning. This study corroborates findings by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), who highlight technology as a means of breaking down traditional classroom boundaries. By fostering interactivity and collaboration, technology serves as both a motivator and an enabler of deeper learning experiences.

### 5.5. *Encouraging Peer Collaboration*

Peer collaboration emerged as a key strategy for sustaining motivation and engagement. Teachers facilitated group activities that encouraged students to learn from and support one another. P1 shared how "pairing stronger and weaker students helped build confidence and mutual respect." P3 described organizing "group debates and discussions, which not only improved communication skills but also fostered a sense of teamwork." P5 emphasized that "peer-led activities, such as student presentations, gave learners a sense of ownership and accountability." Observations confirmed that collaborative tasks created an inclusive and dynamic classroom atmosphere, motivating students to engage actively.

Peer collaboration emerged as a central strategy for sustaining student motivation and engagement, as highlighted by multiple participants. P1 emphasized the value of pairing stronger and weaker students, noting how this approach built confidence and mutual respect among learners. Similarly, P3 described organizing group debates and discussions, which not only enhanced communication skills but also fostered teamwork and a sense of community. P5 underscored the benefits of peer-led activities, such as student presentations, which gave learners a sense of ownership and accountability in their learning

process. Observations further confirmed that collaborative tasks created an inclusive and dynamic classroom environment, encouraging active engagement and motivating students to participate fully in their learning journey.

Encouraging peer collaboration reflects Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Collaborative activities also align with Dornyei's (2001) framework for group dynamics in language learning. This study adds to the literature by illustrating how collaboration fosters mutual respect and accountability, transforming the classroom into a supportive community of learners. Peer collaboration not only improves linguistic competence but also instills confidence and a sense of belonging.

#### 5.6. *Providing Clear and Timely Feedback*

Feedback was highlighted as a crucial element in sustaining student motivation and engagement. Teachers emphasized the importance of providing clear, actionable, and timely feedback to help students understand their progress. P1 shared how "immediate feedback during class activities helped students correct mistakes and build confidence." P4 described "using detailed written comments to guide students in improving their writing skills." P5 emphasized the motivation and engagement impact of "highlighting small achievements, noting that recognizing incremental progress encouraged students to persevere." Observations revealed that constructive feedback created a positive learning environment where students felt supported in their growth.

Feedback emerged as a pivotal factor in maintaining student motivation and engagement, with teachers underscoring the need for clear, actionable, and timely input to support student progress. P1 highlighted the value of "immediate feedback during class activities," which enabled students to correct errors and build confidence in real-time. Similarly, P4 emphasized the role of "detailed written comments" in guiding students to improve their writing skills, providing specific direction for growth. P5 focused on the motivation and engagement benefits of recognizing incremental achievements, noting that "highlighting small successes" inspired students to persevere in their efforts. These practices collectively fostered a constructive and supportive learning environment where feedback served as both a tool for improvement and a source of encouragement.

Providing feedback aligns with Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) assertion that formative feedback serves as scaffolding for learning. Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory also emphasizes feedback's role in fostering competence and autonomy. This study extends these findings by demonstrating that feedback, when delivered constructively and promptly, not only guides improvement but also reinforces students' belief in their capabilities. Celebrating small successes further builds resilience and sustained effort.

#### 5.7. *Engaging the Unmotivated: Practical Strategies for ELT Success*

The findings from this study highlight several practical implications for ELT practitioners aiming to enhance student motivation and engagement through personalized and context-sensitive approaches. First, integrating relatable content that reflects students' interests, such as social media, music, sports, or other contemporary topics, can transform lessons into engaging experiences. Teachers should make deliberate efforts to understand their students' passions and incorporate them into the curriculum. For example, using real-life scenarios for grammar exercises or reading comprehension tasks can demonstrate the relevance of language learning in everyday contexts. By aligning instructional materials with students' lived experiences, educators can bridge the gap between the classroom and the outside world, fostering greater enthusiasm and participation.

Second, designing tasks that are appropriately tailored to students' proficiency levels is critical to maintaining motivation and engagement and ensuring positive learning experiences. Overly difficult tasks can lead to frustration, while overly simple ones can result in disengagement. Teachers should assess students' individual capabilities and adapt the difficulty of activities to strike a balance between challenge and attainability. Differentiated instruction, where tasks are customized to address diverse learning needs within the same classroom, can be a particularly effective strategy in this regard. This approach not only supports students at various skill levels but also creates a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Creating a supportive and collaborative classroom atmosphere is another vital implication for practice. Teachers should prioritize building trust and rapport with students through empathy, encouragement, and humor. A welcoming environment where students feel safe to take risks and make mistakes fosters confidence and reduces anxiety. Incorporating group activities and peer-led tasks can further enhance engagement by promoting teamwork and a sense of belonging. Teachers are encouraged to use positive reinforcement to acknowledge student efforts, celebrating incremental progress to maintain motivation and engagement and resilience.

The use of technology offers additional opportunities for engaging learners. Language learning apps, multimedia tools, and virtual collaboration platforms can make lessons more interactive and enjoyable. Teachers should explore technological tools that align with their instructional goals and students' interests, ensuring they are seamlessly integrated into the learning process. Finally, providing clear, actionable, and timely feedback is essential to guide students' progress and reinforce their sense of achievement. Constructive feedback helps students identify areas for improvement while celebrating their successes, building confidence and fostering a growth mindset.

By implementing these strategies, ELT practitioners can create a dynamic, student-centered learning environment that addresses the diverse needs of their students. Personalizing lessons, leveraging technology, fostering collaboration, and delivering thoughtful feedback not only enhance motivation and engagement but also promote a deeper and more meaningful engagement with language learning. These practices serve as a foundation for cultivating a supportive and effective educational experience that inspires even the most unmotivated learners.

## 6. Conclusions

This study aimed to explore how ELT teachers foster engagement among secondary-level learners by implementing motivational strategies. Using qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, the study identified key practices such as personalizing learning content, creating supportive classroom environments, promoting autonomy, leveraging technology, fostering peer collaboration and providing timely feedback. These findings demonstrate that aligning instructional practices with students' interests, abilities, and real-world contexts can transform classrooms into dynamic, inclusive spaces. Additionally, these strategies not only re-engaged unmotivated learners but also nurtured a sense of ownership and enthusiasm, reinforcing the transformative potential of a learner-centered approach.

The contributions of the study extend both the theoretical and practical dimensions of ELT. By drawing on frameworks such as Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, it enriches understanding of how motivation and engagement are interconnected in language learning. However, the limited sample size and contextual focus pose challenges to the generalizability of the findings. Practically, the study offers actionable strategies for ELT practitioners, emphasizing the importance of differentiated instruction, technology integration and constructive feedback. Further investigation into the longitudinal impacts of these practices and their application across varied educational settings could advance the field and inform more robust engagement strategies.

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