

The Impact of Motivational Factors on Foreign Language Learning

Jonida Bushi¹ & Ilda Themeli²

¹ Head of German Language Department, University of Tirana, Albania

² German Language Department, University of Tirana, Albania

Correspondence: Jonida Bushi, Head of German Language Department, University of Tirana, Albania, Tel: 355-672-042-707. E-mail: jonida.bushi@unitir.edu.al

Received: December 4, 2024 Accepted: December 15, 2024 Online Published: December 23, 2024

Abstract

This study examines how teachers in Albanian high schools employ methods, techniques, and strategies to motivate students in foreign language classrooms. The research highlights the unique cultural and contextual factors influencing motivation within this setting, including students' adaptation to new academic environments and the interplay between teacher support and socio-cultural expectations. Drawing on interviews and survey data, the study explores both widely recognized and less commonly reported practices—such as localized teaching aids and contextualized storytelling—and clarifies how these strategies resonate with students at different proficiency levels. The findings underscore the importance of a supportive classroom climate, constructive feedback, and real-life connections to the lesson content. Ultimately, this work offers practical recommendations for educators seeking to enhance motivation and improve teaching practices on a global scale.

Keywords: student motivation, teaching strategies, classroom dynamics, Albanian high schools, foreign language learning

1. Introduction

In recent years, modern teaching practices in Albanian high schools have evolved to include an array of strategies aimed at engaging and inspiring students. Educators face the challenge of motivating learners who may experience diminished enthusiasm for academic activities due to cultural expectations, rigorous curricula, or unfamiliar learning environments. In particular, foreign language classes can highlight the interplay between local cultural values and global academic standards. (Bushi, J., 2021).

Within this context, motivation is not simply a theoretical concept; it is a critical component that energizes and sustains student engagement. Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering motivation by creating supportive classroom environments, employing culturally relevant teaching materials, and connecting lesson content to students' real-life experiences. As Albanian schools increasingly serve diverse student populations and prepare learners for international opportunities, understanding and enhancing motivation becomes ever more significant. (Pintrich, P. R., 2003).

2. Research Scope

This study focuses on elementary-level instruction in Albanian high schools, although the findings are applicable to secondary education as well. It examines teacher-student relationships, family-school dynamics, and various motivational strategies employed in foreign language classrooms. In doing so, it seeks to identify specific cultural or contextual factors—such as Albanian family expectations and the emphasis on academic achievement—that influence students' motivation. Ultimately, this research offers educators practical guidance for maintaining a motivating classroom environment adapted to both local and global teaching contexts.

3. Methodology

The research employed a qualitative design. Interviews and surveys were conducted with a clearly defined sample: 50 high school students (ages 15–17) and 10 teachers (Teachers for English and German) in Albanian high schools. Students were selected to represent a range of language proficiency levels and socio-economic backgrounds, while teachers varied in years of experience and training. Participants were assured of confidentiality to reduce any potential biases. The data collected included responses on classroom dynamics, teacher influence, and the cultural relevance of teaching strategies.

4. Hypotheses

- 1) Students who receive continuous, culturally sensitive motivation from teachers achieve higher learning outcomes.
- 2) Teachers who integrate context-specific teaching aids, localized storytelling, and real-life applications foster a more supportive environment that addresses students' individual needs.

5. Understanding Motivation

Motivation is an internal state that energizes, directs, and sustains behavior. In Albanian high schools, it can be shaped by socio-cultural factors, such as family expectations, community values, and the prestige associated with foreign language proficiency. Intrinsic motivation arises when students are genuinely interested in the learning material, while extrinsic motivation involves external incentives like praise or tangible rewards (Bushi, J., 2021).

Rather than repeating the definition of motivation throughout multiple sections, this study provides a single, concise understanding here. The focus then shifts to examining how teachers can nurture both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation, thereby helping students view learning as a pathway to personal growth and future opportunities—be it pursuing university studies abroad or improving career prospects. (Fisher, H. L., 2003). Teachers play a crucial role in recognizing and fostering both types of motivation, helping students to view learning as a lifelong journey toward self-fulfillment and autonomy. (Bushi, J., & Gjetani, N., 2023).

6. Teacher Behaviors and Classroom Techniques

6.1 Feedback as a Motivational Tool

Teachers who give timely, constructive feedback can help students understand their strengths and pinpoint areas for improvement. By acknowledging efforts and providing clear guidance, teachers encourage resilience and continuous growth. For instance, a teacher might say, "Your pronunciation has improved since last week; let's now focus on refining your sentence structure." (Bushi, J., & Aliaj, A., 2024).

6.2 Role of Classroom Aesthetics and Localization

A well-organized, visually appealing classroom significantly enhances student motivation. In Albanian schools, localized teaching aids—such as maps of Albania, culturally relevant proverbs, or examples drawn from local traditions—can reinforce students' connection to the learning material. Ensuring that the physical environment reflects students' cultural backgrounds can create a sense of belonging and encourage active participation. (Bushi, J., 1970).

6.3 Innovative, Culturally Relevant Techniques

Teachers reported incorporating storytelling that relates lesson content to students' everyday lives. For example, a German language teacher compare a traditional Albanian festival to a German cultural event, helping students see the relevance of foreign language skills. These localized narratives and real-life applications differentiate this study from existing research by showing how culturally contextualized content can heighten engagement. (Mohamoud, A. M., 2024).

6.4 Encouraging Autonomy and Collaborative Learning

When teachers invite students to suggest activities or topics, they foster a sense of autonomy. Group work, peer collaboration, and discussions allow students to learn from each other's experiences and perspectives, building a supportive learning community. Teachers can implement strategies step-by-step:

- 1) Introduce a discussion topic related to a local event.
- 2) Group students and assign each group a role (note-taker, presenter).
- 3) Encourage each group to present its findings, then provide constructive feedback. (Zawacki-Richter, O., Marín, V. I., & Bond, M. et al., 2019).

7. Empirical Findings

7.1 Student Surveys: Results and Discussion

The surveys included questions on how often students feel motivated, whether storytelling and interactive activities increase comfort, and how classroom aesthetics influence motivation. Many students reported feeling more at ease when teachers incorporate stories related to local culture or personal experiences. Such culturally grounded approaches appear to boost engagement and make abstract content more approachable.

While most students appreciated feedback, some noted they rarely received it. This discrepancy suggests a need for more consistent feedback practices. Additionally, students expressed a preference for interactive activities, personalized guidance, and the integration of real-life scenarios--strategies that can address varying student demographics, from beginners to more advanced learners.

7.2 Students Questionnaire. Data Analysis and Discussion

Question 1: How often do you feel motivated to learn in class?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Always	15	(30%)
Often	20	(40%)
Sometimes	10	(20%)
Rarely	3	(6%)
Never	2	(4%)

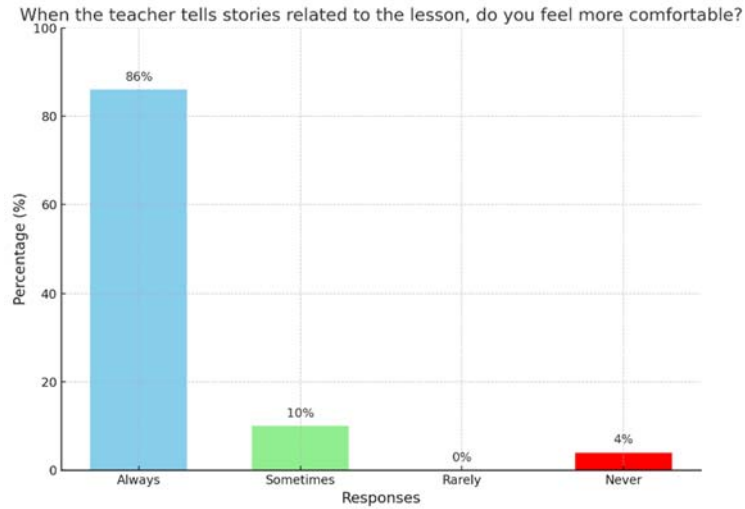
The data suggest that while most students experience motivation at least "often," a focus on tailored motivational strategies could support those in the "sometimes," "rarely," and "never" categories to increase overall classroom engagement.



Question 2: When the teacher tells stories related to the lesson, do you feel more comfortable?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Always	43	86%
Sometimes	5	10%
Rarely	0	0%
Never	2	4%

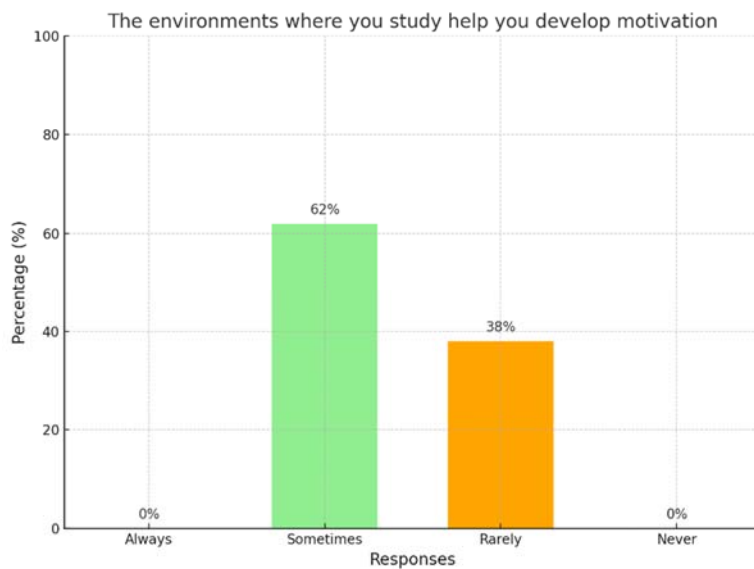
Most respondents (86%) feel more comfortable when teachers incorporate relevant stories into the lesson. This highlights the value of storytelling in creating a relaxed and engaging learning environment.



Question 3: The environments where you study help you develop motivation.

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Always	0	0%
Sometimes	31	62%
Rarely	19	38%
Never	0	0%

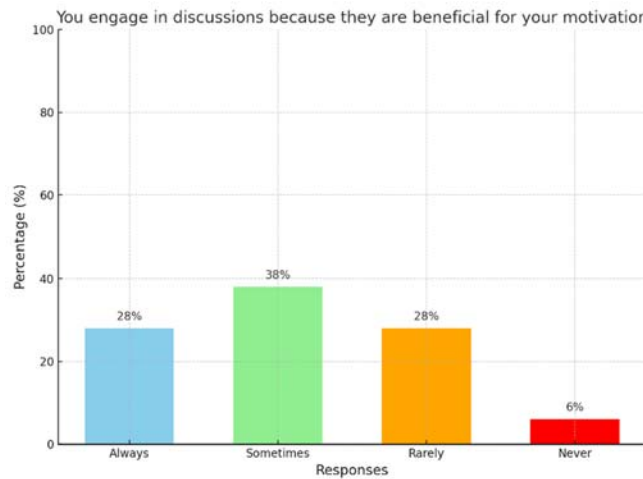
Most respondents (62%) feel that their learning environment only sometimes aids their motivation, while 38% chose "rarely." This indicates that many schools may lack the resources or atmosphere necessary to foster motivation effectively.



Question 4: You engage in discussions because they are beneficial for your motivation.

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Always	14	28%
Sometimes	19	38%
Rarely	14	28%
Never	3	6%

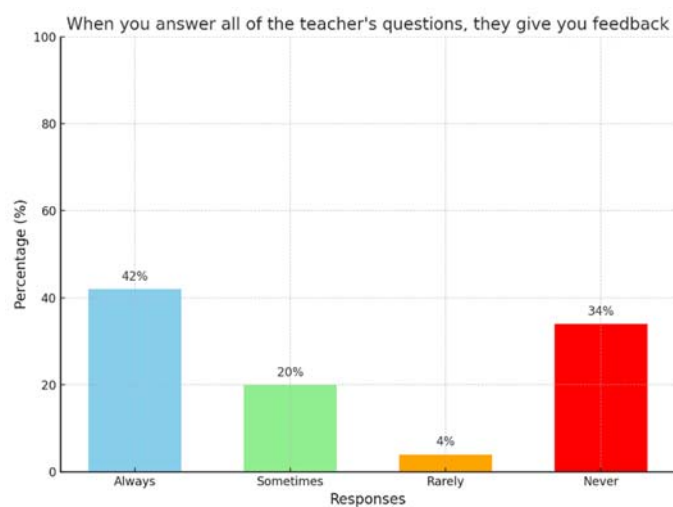
Responses show a balanced distribution across "always," "sometimes," and "rarely." While some students find discussions motivating, others may feel less engaged in this method.



Question 5: When you answer all of the teacher's questions, they give you feedback.

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Always	21	42%
Sometimes	10	20%
Rarely	2	4%
Never	17	34%

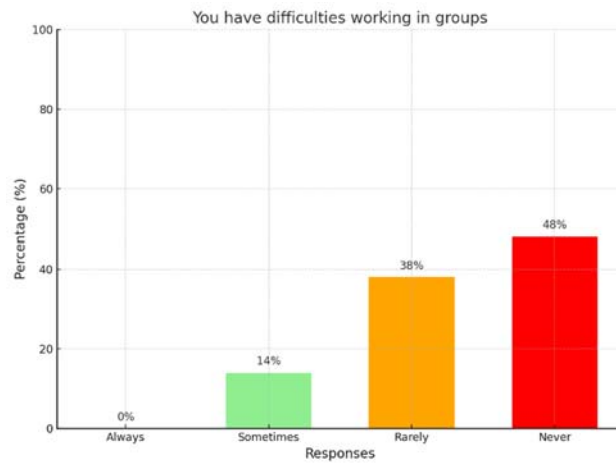
The majority of students report that they regularly receive feedback (42% "always," 20% "sometimes"), although 34% say they "never" get feedback. This may suggest that some teachers only give feedback on correct answers or refrain from giving critical feedback.



Question 6: You have difficulties working in groups

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Always	0	0%
Sometimes	7	14%
Rarely	19	38%
Never	24	48%

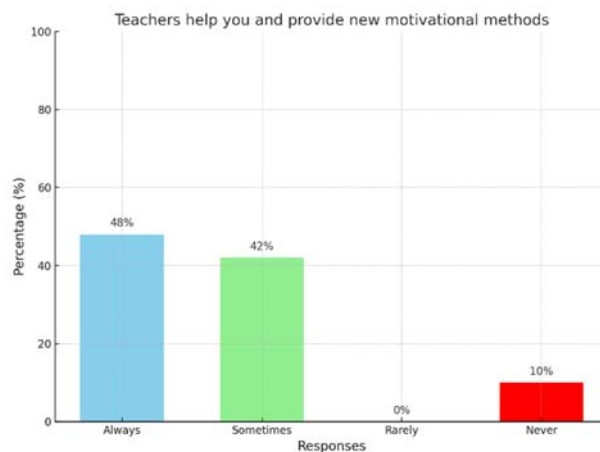
Most respondents (48%) report no issues working in groups, with an additional 38% indicating "rarely." This suggests that many students feel comfortable with group work, while others prefer working individually.



Question 7: Teachers help you and provide new motivational methods.

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Always	24	48%
Sometimes	21	42%
Rarely	0	0%
Never	5	10%

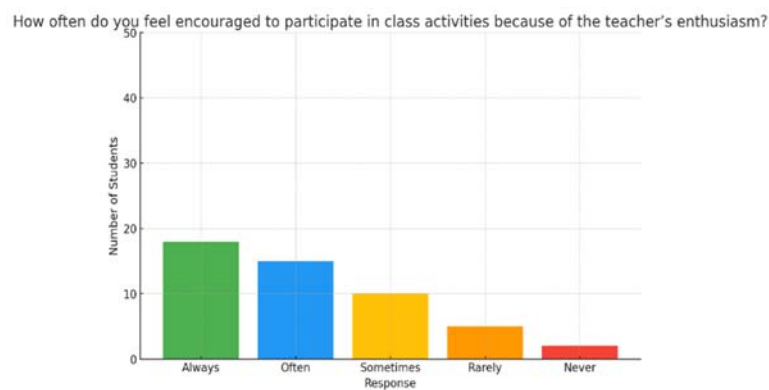
The data shows that most teachers actively try to use new methods to motivate students (48% "always" and 42% "sometimes"). This demonstrates a positive teacher commitment to motivating students, though a few may feel unsupported due to potential teacher workload constraints.



Question 8: How often do you feel encouraged to participate in class activities because of the teacher’s enthusiasm?"

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Always	18	(36%)
Often	15	(30%)
Sometimes	10	(20%)
Rarely	5	(10%)
Never	2	(4%)

The bar chart illustrates this distribution, showing that most students feel encouraged by the teacher's enthusiasm to varying degrees, with a notable percentage consistently motivated.



Question 9: Does receiving constructive feedback from your teacher motivate you to improve in your studies?"

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Yes, always	22	-44%
Most of the time	14	-28%
Sometimes	8	-16%
Rarely	4	-8%
Never	0	0%

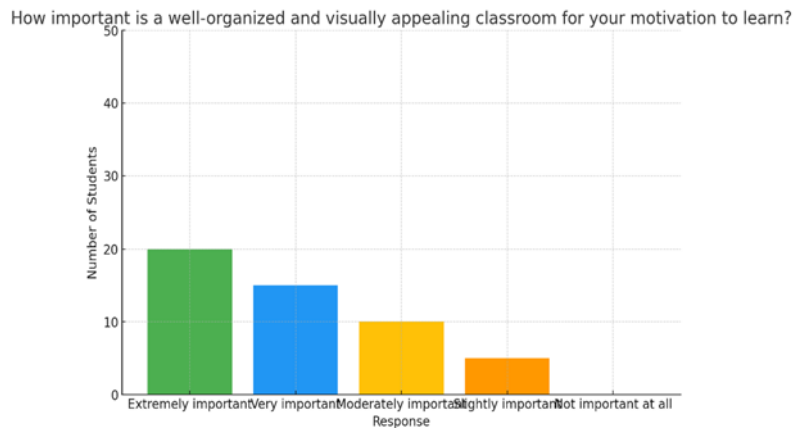
These results reflect that no students report a complete lack of motivation from constructive feedback, suggesting that feedback is a universally valued motivational tool, though its impact varies in intensity.



Question 10. How important is a well-organized and visually appealing classroom for your motivation to learn?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Extremely important	20	(40%)
Very important	15	(30%)
Moderately important	10	(20%)
Slightly important	5	(10%)
Not important at all	0	(0%)

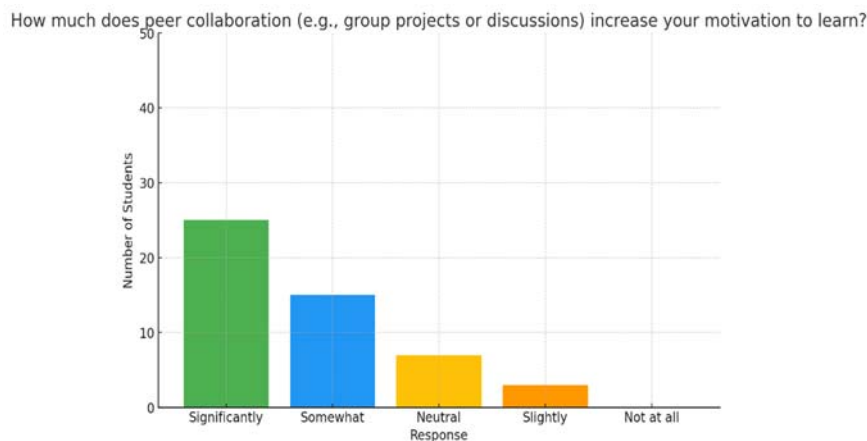
The results highlight that a majority of students view a visually appealing classroom as significantly impactful for their motivation, with no students indicating that it lacks importance. This suggests the value of classroom aesthetics in fostering a motivational learning environment.



Question 11. How much does peer collaboration (e.g., group projects or discussions) increase your motivation to learn?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Significantly	25	(50%)
Somewhat	15	(30%)
Neutral	7	(14%)
Slightly	3	(6%)
Not at all	0	(0%)

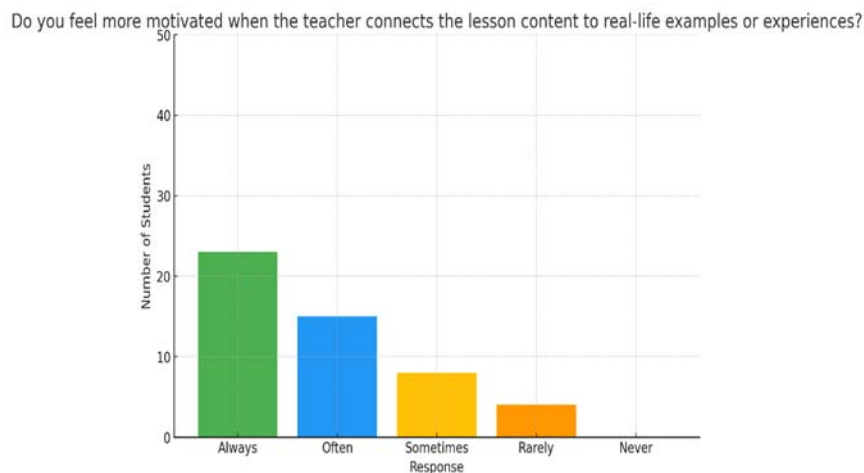
Half of the students find peer collaboration to be a significant motivational factor, with very few feeling it has minimal or no impact on their motivation. This highlights the importance of collaborative learning environments in fostering engagement.



Question 12. Do you feel more motivated when the teacher connects the lesson content to real-life examples or experiences?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Always	23	(46%)
Often	15	(30%)
Sometimes	8	(16%)
Rarely	4	(8%)
Never	0	(0%)

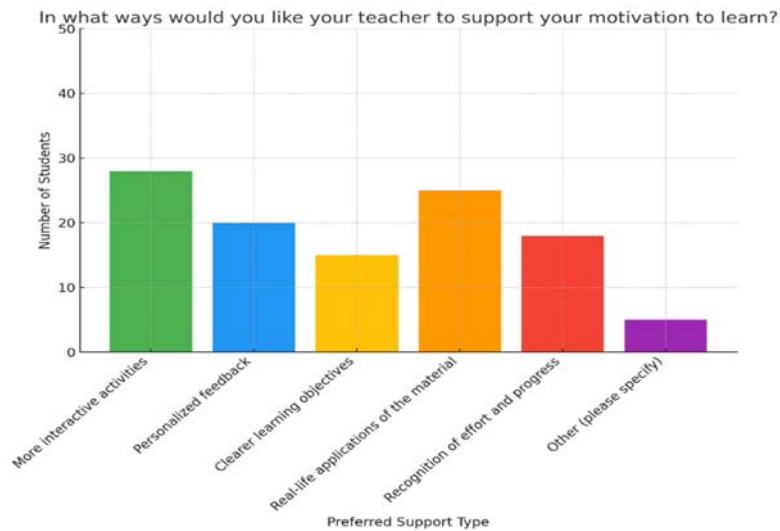
A majority of students find real-life connections in lesson content to be a strong motivator, with very few feeling minimal or no motivation from this approach. This underscores the effectiveness of using practical, real-life applications in teaching to enhance student engagement.



Question 13. In what ways would you like your teacher to support your motivation to learn?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
More interactive activities	28	(56%)
Personalized feedback	20	(40%)
Clearer learning objectives	15	(30%)
Real-life applications of the material	25	(50%)
Recognition of effort and progress	18	(36%)
Other (please specify)	5	(10%)

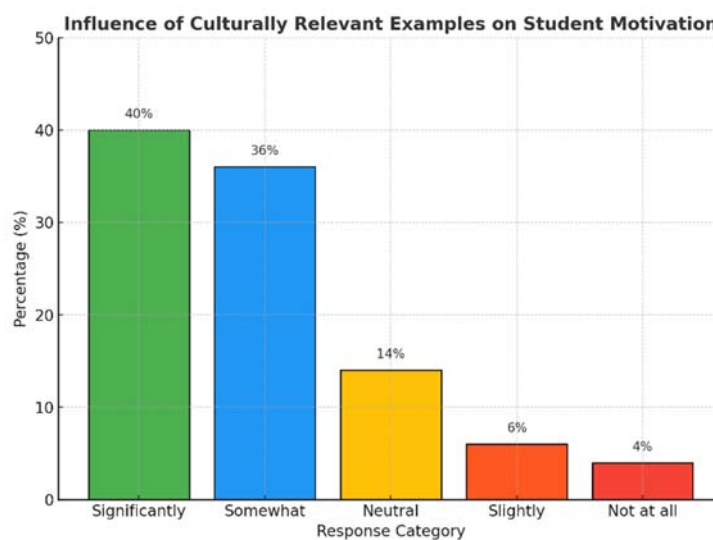
The results show that students value interactive activities and real-life applications most, highlighting a preference for engagement and practical relevance in learning. Personalized feedback and recognition are also key motivators for many students, pointing to the importance of individual acknowledgment in educational support.



Question 14: Does the use of culturally relevant examples (e.g., local traditions, events, or cultural references) by your teacher influence your motivation to learn?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Significantly	20	(40%)
Somewhat	18	(36%)
Neutral	7	(14%)
Slightly	3	(6%)
Not at all	2	(4%)

The results show that a substantial majority (76% combining “Significantly” and “Somewhat”) feel positively influenced by culturally relevant examples in the classroom. This suggests that integrating local traditions, events, and other contextual elements into lessons can enhance student engagement and motivation.



7.3 Teacher Interviews: Insights and Analysis

Teachers recognized that certain students may struggle due to fear of not meeting expectations or due to classroom noise. They emphasized the importance of effective classroom management and personalized support. Teachers described using localized examples to spark interest, introducing motivational stories connected to students’ cultural backgrounds, and employing visual aids like posters depicting regional traditions.

Several teachers acknowledged that their presence and influence could shape how openly students express their views. This potential bias underlines the importance of creating a trusting environment and possibly using anonymous surveys to gain more honest feedback.

8. Addressing Potential Biases and Limitations

This study acknowledges the potential for **response bias** during interviews, particularly due to the presence of teachers or the influence of the interview environment. Although efforts were made to ensure neutrality—by using open-ended, non-leading questions—some students might have tailored their answers based on perceived expectations.

Additionally, the findings reflect the perspectives of a **specific group of teachers and students** in Albanian high schools. While the sample was diverse, it may not fully capture variations across other regions, school types, or age groups. Future research could consider extending the sample size and including observational methods to corroborate interview findings and reduce response bias.

9. Comparative Analysis of Motivational Strategies

Comparing different demographics revealed that younger students benefited more from visually appealing classrooms and simple storytelling, while older or more advanced students appreciated detailed feedback and real-life applications relevant to future career goals. This suggests that certain motivational strategies may be more effective for specific age groups or language levels.

10. Recommendations for Teaching Practices

Teachers can enhance motivation by:

- Incorporating culturally relevant materials, such as local stories or traditions.
- Using step-by-step examples of real-life applications (e.g., practicing language skills through role-plays that simulate everyday interactions in Albanian and international settings).
- Implementing a variety of motivational techniques (games, discussions, student-led activities) to meet the diverse needs of all learners.
- Providing regular, constructive feedback that acknowledges effort and improvement.
- Proposing strategies to address current limitations, such as reducing classroom noise through clear rules and seating arrangements, or training teachers to offer more targeted, individualized support.

11. Conclusions

Motivation in Albanian high schools is influenced by cultural context, classroom environment, and teacher behavior. Teachers who create welcoming atmospheres, incorporate localized materials, and connect lesson content to real-life situations can significantly enhance student motivation. While current practices show promise, they also face limitations. By employing a broader range of strategies, addressing biases, and continuously seeking student feedback, educators can foster more meaningful and lasting motivation.

Ultimately, these findings have global relevance. As classrooms worldwide become more diverse, the importance of understanding and nurturing student motivation through culturally responsive teaching increases. By learning from this context-specific research, educators elsewhere can adapt similar strategies to their unique environments, thus improving learning outcomes and strengthening the teacher-student relationship on an international scale.

References

- Bushi, J. (1970). The educational transformation in Albania and an analysis of the teacher role. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science*, 24(G4), 21–26. Retrieved from <https://socialscienceresearch.org/index.php/GJHSS/article/view/104042>
- Bushi, J. (2021). Motivation in the learning of foreign languages. *ICSNS XVI – Sixteenth International Conference on Social and Natural Sciences – Global Challenge 2021* (pp. 150–161). Vienna, Austria. ISBN: 978-9928-259-14-7. Retrieved from <https://iipcccl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ICSNS-XVI-2021.pdf.pdf>
- Bushi, J. (2021). New forms and techniques in foreign language teaching. *International Paris Conference on Social Sciences-VI* (pp. 322–330). Paris, France. ISBN: 978-625-7464-00-0. Retrieved from https://www.iksadparis.org/_files/ugd/614b1f_10474d521a3b429c97d7a5134d7c7d86.pdf
- Bushi, J., & Aliaj, A. (2024). A review on the role of feedback in foreign language teaching. *10th International European Congress on Advanced Studies in Basic Sciences* (pp. 705–715). Amsterdam, Holland. ISBN: 978-625-367-799-2. Retrieved from

https://www.iksadeurope.org/_files/ugd/614b1f_50ee4d97dbd84e4f827f4c50da4fc027.pdf

- Bushi, J., & Gjetani, N. (2023). Learner autonomy and the role of this competence in learning foreign languages in Albanian schools. *European Journal of Economics, Law and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 101–112. Retrieved from <https://iipcccl.org>
- Fisher, H. L. (2003). Motivational strategies in the elementary school setting. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 39(3), 118–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2003.10516389>
- Mohamoud, A. M. (2024). The impact of growth mindset interventions on students' motivation, resilience, and academic achievement. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Horseed International University (MJHIU)*. Retrieved from <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/5fa5ab3e37a8aa0989f8cef7c3bb5b2e25276826>
- Pintrich, P. R. (2003). A motivational science perspective on the role of student motivation in learning and teaching contexts. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(4), 667–686. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.95.4.667>
- Zawacki-Richter, O., Marín, V. I., & Bond, M. et al. (2019). Systematic review of research on artificial intelligence applications in higher education – where are the educators? *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 16, 39. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-019-0171-0>

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).