

## EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ON ACADEMIC MOTIVATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### Abstract

*This study aimed at investigating the effect of English Language Proficiency (ELP) on Academic Motivation (AM) of university students in Lahore. In the global educational context, English language proficiency is regarded as vital and it is important in the students' academic performance, self-confidence, and learning motivation. The causal-comparative research design was used to investigate the effect of English language proficiency on university students' motivation in learning. The population consisted of all the enrolled students of public and private universities of Lahore District. The sampling technique used was two-stage sampling in public and private universities, and a quantitative approach was adopted to select the sample of 500 male and female students. Three standardized questionnaires were used for data collection. The Edgar R. Eslit English Language Competence Scale was employed to determine students' English language competency. The scale developed by Niazi and Zahid (2016) was used to assess academic motivation. The English language scale had a reliability of .946, and the motivation scale had a reliability of .926, meaning that they were very reliable internally. Data was analyzed by statistical analysis using IBM SPSS version 20.0 after the data was collected. Differences in responses were compared by independent sample t-tests based on demographic variables (gender, program) and mean differences were compared between institutions and departments using one-way ANOVA. The results showed that academic motivation is strongly positively influenced by English language competence. Academic motivation was high among students who were more proficient in English. This study suggests that the improvement of English language proficiency plays a vital role in motivating students and increasing their participation in the school activities. The universities are encouraged to have dedicated language support programmes including workshops, tutoring and digital learning materials, which are designed to enhance students' English proficiency and academic motivation.*

**KEYWORDS:** English language skill, academic motivation, university students, causal-comparative research.

## Introduction

The use of the English language is now part and parcel of the modern educational system in the world generally and higher education particularly where English is the medium of instruction. English proficiency is an important part of students' learning experiences, engagement, and motivation in today's academic world. English language proficiency plays a part not only in effective communication but also in enhancing students' confidence, participation in learning and achievement in university contexts. As Maslach and Leiter (2016) point out, language competence plays a key role in students' academic behaviours, motivation and resilience in the educational environment.

English is dominant in Pakistan in the field of education, administration and professional communication. Historically, English has been introduced in the colonial period and later has gained significance as an important language in the education system. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan but English is also an official language and is widely used in higher education institutions and government sectors (Manan & David, 2014). In recent years, English has come to play an increasingly important role in the world, as a result of globalization and the growing popularity of higher education. Still, students have difficulties in learning English, which may have a negative impact on their academic learning process and motivation (Shamim & Rashid, 2019).

Students in universities in Pakistan may have different educational backgrounds and exposure to English language learning may be different resulting in different levels of proficiency. This variation is problematic for academic content understanding, particularly in science and technical subjects which rely on English words being used in their academic field of study (Al-Qahtani, 2016). Limited proficiency students may have difficulties understanding lectures, readings, and assignments and this can either decrease academic engagement and motivation to learn or be a barrier. Students with better English language proficiency, however, are more likely to be actively involved in classroom activities and more confident in their academic skills.

In higher education, English language proficiency is regarded as one of the important factors in success. It helps students to grasp complex messages, communicate effectively, and engage successfully in written and oral academic texts. Richards (2018) stated that language competence consists of accuracy, fluency, complexity, and communicative competence which are all important in students' academic achievement and learning motivation. Pupils who show a good command of language are more likely to be actively involved in learning activities and to succeed academically.

The act of motivation is as a crucial psychological element that stimulates pupils to pursue their educational aims. Affects the direction, intensity, and duration of learning activities. According to Dörnyei and Ottó (2016), motivation is a dynamic process that triggers and guides goal-directed behaviors. In higher education, motivated students tend to stay in their educational institutions longer, to face their academic difficulties, and to be more involved in learning. Likewise, Ryan and Deci (2000) state that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are key in improving the performance of students and their involvement in the learning process. From the viewpoint of English language learning, motivation is closely related to language proficiency. Students who feel

confident about their English ability are more likely to be motivated, to join in with the subject matter and to engage in learning activities (Thomas, Khan & Ahmad, 2022). On the other hand, poor competence could create a sense of insecurity in students and decrease their willingness to engage in learning activities. Motivation is thus a key factor in influencing students' learning experiences and learning outcomes in EME systems.

Student success has been and will be a topic of study for academic motivation. Motivated students are able to participate more actively in learning tasks, persist longer and perform better academically (Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece, 2014). Furthermore, Bond and Bedenlier (2019) remind readers that students who are motivated in the academic sphere are more likely to have a successful experience at college, because they are involved in the process of learning and are interested. Motivation also is a key role of the teachers, as they set up conducive learning environments and encourage students to participate in the learning process (Meece et al., 2003).

In spite of its significance, there is not much research on the direct relationship between English language proficiency and academic motivation of university students in Pakistan. The language learning outcome or academic performance is the focus of most existing studies with little emphasis placed on the motivational aspect of language learning in the ESL context (Andrade, 2009). Hence, the study is interesting in determining the effect of the English language proficiency on academic motivation in higher education institutions. This is because knowledge of the relationship between language and learning is critical, since it can not only have a direct impact on learning outcomes, but also on students' psychological and motivational condition. Students who perform well in English will be more likely to be academically motivated in an English medium of instruction education system and this is likely to affect their academic achievement. The present study, therefore, seeks to investigate the influence of English language competence on academic motivation of university students in Lahore.

In the context of globalization, in which communication, education, and professional development are taking place in English, the English language is playing a crucial role. It has been universally acknowledged as a business, science, technology and international communication language. Guilherme (2007) notes that English proficiency offers people a lot of economic and personal opportunities, which is why it is crucial to academic and professional success. Consequently, schools around the globe have tried to put measures in place to enhance the students' English proficiency. One of the most important ways of learning a language is by building up a language immersion system that exposes students to real communication. Lan (2020) states that immersion programs enable students to become fluent through real life English communication tasks. These programs can involve language clubs, exchanges, and interactive settings where students can listen and speak in meaningful contexts, as well as read and write. These strategies help to build students' self-confidence and language proficiency.

English language proficiency is made up of four key skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. All of these skills are interrelated and make up academic achievement and communication. Writing helps students to communicate ideas clearly in structured formats, and reading helps to understand texts related to academics (Dilshad, Shah, & Ahmad, 2023). The student will use both speaking and listening skills to communicate verbally and participate in

academic conversations, and will listen to learn what is being presented verbally. These skills are interwoven and vital to succeed academically in university environments. English proficiency is an important predictor of success in higher education with higher levels being related to better academic performance, particularly in non-native English-speaking nations. Richards and Renandya (2002) argue that students should have higher English proficiency to have better access to academic content, be able to join in with classroom conversation and to express their ideas. However, the ability to develop strong English skills is hindered by many students' lack of exposure and the disparities in educational backgrounds, which can impact their learning outcomes and school experiences.

English is increasingly becoming more important in Higher Education, especially in countries where English is not the first language. It is the medium of instruction in the universities and it is vital to academic knowledge. Academic engagement is hindered by students with limited English proficiency having trouble understanding the lecture, reading academic texts and assignments. Language difficulties have a profound impact on students' academic performance and experiences (Naeem, Ali, & Ahmed, 2022). Students with low proficiency may not be able to keep up with the coursework and experience lower academic confidence which may result in lower participation. However, students who are more proficient are more likely to engage in learning activities and have good learning outcomes.

Motivation is one of the important psychological factors that affects students' learning behavior and learning achievement. It is defined as the internal and external forces that starts, guides, and maintains purposeful behaviors. Ryan and Deci (2002) have suggested that there are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is caused by one's own interest and satisfaction, while extrinsic motivation is affected by external rewards or pressure. Intrinsic motivation is the motivation to participate in activities for personal enjoyment and satisfaction, and is closely related to autonomy, competence and self-determination. Intrinsically motivated learners exhibit greater engagement, persistence and success in learning. Extrinsic motivation is doing something to get something from the outside, like a grade from a teacher, approval from others or a job promotion. The role of motivation in students' academic performance is very significant, and the level of students' performance in learning is directly influenced by their motivation. (Fidiastuti et al., 2021) Likewise, Christiana (2009) states that motivation plays a pivotal role in reaching the academic objectives, and Engin (2009) stated that motivation is one of the prominent motivational factors to be taken into consideration in language learning environments.

Motivation is particularly critical in the context of English language learning because it affects students' participation in learning activities (Ahmad, Bibi, & Imran, 2023). Motivated learners tend to be more involved in language practices, more involved in class activities and more persistent in solving learning difficulties. Students' academic motivation is directly related to their ability to speak English. Higher students are more confident and competent in doing academic tasks, and therefore have high intrinsic motivation. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) state that proficient learners are more interested and motivated, as they encounter less problem with understanding and using the language. The opposite of this is true, however, for students who are

less proficient; they may become frustrated and lose confidence, which is detrimental to their motivation and participation in academic activities.

There is evidence that better English is an intrinsic and extrinsic motivator. If students can learn the academic contents more easily, they feel good about themselves and motivate them to learn more. Following this, Yang and Zhai (2022) further propose that providing language support and better teaching methods will be helpful to boost students' motivation. There is a close relationship between motivation and academic achievement and learning success. Students who have a high drive to learn are more likely to be involved in academic pursuits, continue to work on difficult tasks and perform well. According to Schunk, Pintrich and Meece (2014), motivation has positive effects on engagement and achievement, while motivated learners are more successful at higher education because of their active involvement in the learning process (Bond & Bedenlier, 2019).

There have been a few studies that focus on the correlation between English language attainment and educational outcomes. In his study, Liu (2023) concluded that a growth mindset and a supportive learning environment positively impact students' motivation and engagement in learning. Likewise, Alavi and Abasi (2014) found that there is a close relationship between emotional regulation and motivation, with students showing higher levels of motivation having higher academic performance. But when coping strategies are ineffective, motivation is diminished and learning problems are increased. The studies findings underscore the role of motivation and factors in language learning success and the need for effective teaching strategies that increase students' engagement and ease their learning difficulties.

Numerous studies have been undertaken on English language proficiency and academic motivation but not much has been done on the university students in Pakistan. There is little existing research that directly explores the link between motivation and English proficiency in the Pakistani higher education context and majority of the research has focused on students' overall academic performance. In addition, few studies have examined the role of demographic variables like the sex of students and type of institution and academic program in the relationship. Limited studies also exist on the effect of English proficiency on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in ESL contexts. This study aims to fill these gaps and investigate the effect of English language proficiency on academic motivation of university students in Lahore.

### **Objective of the Study**

The study has been designed to serve the following purposes:

- 1) To determine the levels of English language proficiency of students at universities.
- 2) To find out the effect of the ability in English language on the students' motivation.

## Methodology

The methodological approach describes in detail the processes and scientific procedures used by the researcher to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. Research is the systematic process of collecting, analysing and interpreting data, through scientific methods, to find a solution to a problem and draw conclusions based on evidence. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) state that research methodology is a general course of action to be followed in conducting a research study and accomplishing its goals. It is a systematic research process that uses secondary and primary data to investigate educational problems and generate trustworthy findings and solutions to the problems. The method used in this study was quantitative research whose main method was to collect numerical data, quantitative research consists of 3 designs that are descriptive design, exploratory design, and causal-comparative design. The present study was of causal-comparative type of research to investigate the effect of English language proficiency on academic motivation of university level students. The study was conducted on all enrolled students of public and private universities of Lahore District. Two public and two private universities were sampled using a multistage random sampling. Two public and two private universities were selected using multistage random sampling technique with a sample of 500 students. A total of 146 students from University of the Punjab, 120 students from University of Education, 138 students from University of Lahore and 96 students from University of Central Punjab were selected as the sample. Out of the participants, 300 were women and 200 were men, and 360 students were studying BS programs and 140 students were studying MPhil programs. The participants were drawn from the various departments of English Literature, Education, Business and Social Sciences to bring about a wide representation across various academic disciplines. Students from the departments of English Literature, Education, Business and Social Sciences were also chosen to have a representation of academic disciplines.

## Data Analysis

*Table 1. 1 Mean and Standard Deviation of English Language Proficiency, Motivation.*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
English Language Proficiency	54.25	15.3
Motivation	31.8	10.55

This table presents the standard deviation and mean for the study's three primary variables: English language proficiency, academic burnout, and motivation. The mean score for English Language Proficiency is 54.25 with a standard deviation (*SD*) of 15.3, indicating relatively low variability and suggesting that most participants have similar levels of proficiency. Motivation shows a mean of 31.8 with a higher *SD* of 10.55, indicating a wide range of motivational levels in the sample.

*Table 1. 2 Low English Language Proficiency, Medium English Language Proficiency, and High English Language Proficiency of the Respondents about Motivation*

<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</i>		<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
				<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>		

Low English language proficiency	90	22.92	8.95	.944	21.04	24.79	15.00	56.00
Medium English language proficiency	410	33.05	9.13	.451	32.17	33.94	15.00	70.00
High English language proficiency	19	48.31	14.06	3.22	41.53	55.09	19.00	75.00
Total	519	31.85	10.55	.463	30.94	32.76	15.00	75.00

The table examines that students who have low English proficiency (N = 90) report the lowest mean motivation score (M = 22.92, SD = 8.96), whereas those with medium (N = 410) have a substantially higher mean motivation score (M = 33.06, SD = 9.13). Respondents with high proficiency (N = 19) reported the highest levels of motivation (M = 48.32, SD = 14.07). The overall average motivation score for all participants is 31.86 (SD = 10.56).

*Table 1.3 Single factor ANOVA for standard difference in motivation of students based on English language proficiency.*

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df.</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	12923.576	2	6461.788	74.394	.000
Within Groups	44819.156	516	86.859		
Total	57742.732	518			

This one-way ANOVA table analyzes the mean differences in Motivation in students with varied degrees of English Language Proficiency. The results demonstrate a statistically significant difference, as evidenced by an *F*-value of 74.394 and a *p*-value (Sig.) of .000, shows that the differences are significant at the 0.05 level. These data suggest that English language proficiency has a major impact on students' motivation levels. So, we reject the null hypothesis and infer that English language proficiency has a significant effect on motivation.

*Table 1.4 Independent t-test of sample for mean difference between male and female replies depending on English language proficiency.*

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df.</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Male	211	54.6	15.6	465.6	.647	.439
Female	308	53.9	14.9	515	.650	

Table 1.4 compares the mean English language proficiency scores of gender (male/female) learners used samples t-test independent. The value for men are (M=54.6, SD=15.6), while females

have ( $M=53.9$ ,  $SD=14.9$ ). The significant value is 0.439 indicates there is no significant difference in English Language Proficiency since it surpasses the threshold for significance. As a result, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the observed differences between groups are not statistically significant.

*Table 1.4 Independent sample t-test for mean difference between male and female responses based on motivation.*

Gender	N	M	SD	df.	t-value	Sig
Male	211	32.52	10.84	438.491	.226	.641
Female	308	31.37	10.37	.230		

This table shows the results of an independent samples t-test that examined variations in motivation between male and female pupils. Male students had a significantly higher average motivation score ( $M = 32.52$ ,  $SD = 10.84$ ) than females ( $M = 31.37$ ,  $SD = 10.37$ ). However, the p-value (Sig.) is .641, which is much greater than the standard significance level of 0.05. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in motivation levels between genders (male and female) students in this group. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected.

*Table 1.5 t-test independent sample for mean difference among respondents' responses about study program on the basis of Motivation*

Program	N	M	SD	df	t-value	Sig
BS	374	31.90	10.53	517	.871	.194
M.Phil	145	31.73	10.64	259.0		

This table employs a t-test with an independent sample to compare the average motivation ratings of Bachelors and a Master of Philosophy students. The mean percentage of BS students is ( $M=31.90$ ,  $SD=10.53$ ), but that of Mphil students is ( $M$  is=31.73, variance=10.64). The probability value is .194 indicates no significant difference between the groups. As a result, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no statistically significant differences between the sections.

*Table 1.6 Descriptive of total differences in motivation depending on participants' institutions*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
University of Lahore	139	31.54	10.02	.850	29.86	33.22	15.00	58.00
University of the Punjab	152	30.61	9.65	.783	29.07	32.16	15.00	58.00
University of Education	126	32.03	10.04	.894	30.26	33.81	15.00	64.00
University of Central Punjab	102	33.91	12.78	1.26	31.40	36.42	15.00	75.00

Total	519	31.85	10.55	.463	30.94	32.76	15.00	75.00
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Table 1.6 presents descriptive data for mean differences in motivation at four universities.. The table shows the number of respondents (N), the mean motivation score, the standard deviation, the standard error, the mean's 95% confidence interval (lower and upper limits), and the minimum and maximum scores for each university.

*Table 1.7 Mean difference in Motivation based on university of respondents.*

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df.</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	681.410	3	227.137	2.050	.106
Within Groups	57061.322	515	110.799		
Total	57742.732	518			

Table 1.7 looks at the average difference in motivation based on the respondents' university. For differences between and within groups, the table displays the total amount of squares, flexibility of autonomy (df), mean oval, the F- ratio, and the importance (*p.*) value. The F-statistic (2.050) indicates no significant difference (*p*=1.06) in motivation levels between universities. As a result, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no statistically significant differences between the groups.

*Table 1.8 Descriptive of mean differences in Motivation depend on Departement of survey-takers*

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</i>		<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Minimum</i>
					<i>Lower Bound</i>	<i>Upper Bound</i>		
Education	102	31.39	9.62	.952	29.50	33.28	15.00	65.00
English Literature	262	31.58	10.21	.631	30.34	32.83	15.00	75.00
Business	95	32.03	11.78	1.20	29.63	34.43	15.00	70.00
Soical Sciences	60	33.56	11.55	1.49	30.58	36.55	15.00	75.00
Total	519	31.85	10.55	.463	30.94	32.76	15.00	75.00

Table 1.8 presents the descriptive statistics for the mean differences in motivation across four departments: Education, English Literature, Business, and Social Sciences. The table provides the number of respondents (N), the mean score of motivation, the standard deviation, the standard error, the 95% confidence interval for the mean (lower and upper bounds), and the minimum and maximum scores for each department.

*Table 1.9 Average variation in motivation by department of respondents.*

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df.</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	219.299	3	73.100	.654	.580
Within Groups	57523.433	515	111.696		
Total	57742.732	518			

Table 1.9 a one-way ANOVA table, investigates the mean difference in motivation based on respondents' departments. The table shows the total number, freedom (df), square, statistic, and (Sig.). The F-sum (0.654) is non-significant ( $p=0.580$ ), implying that there is no statistically significant variation in respondents' motivation levels across departments. As a result, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there are no statistically significant differences between the groups.

## FINDINGS

This study was designed to explore the relationship between English language proficiency and academic motivation among university students with the major aim of examining the influence of English language proficiency on academic motivation among University students. Descriptive statistics, independent sample t tests and one-way ANOVA tests are used to come up with the findings of the study. The results of the descriptive analysis showed that the overall mean score of English language proficiency was 54.25 (SD = 15.3), and the overall mean score of academic motivation was 31.85 (SD = 10.55), which indicated that the academic motivation of the university students in this study was at moderate level.

The results also indicated that the students with low EFL proficiency level had the lowest motivation scores (M = 22.92, SD = 8.95), the students with medium EFL proficiency level had the medium scores of motivation (M = 33.05, SD = 9.13), and the students with high EFL proficiency level had the highest scores of motivation (M = 48.31, SD = 14.06). This is a clear statement that the more one improves his/her English language skills, the more he/she will be motivated. One-way ANOVA also found that the difference in motivation according to English language proficiency was statistically significant ( $F = 74.394, p = .000$ ). This shows that there is an obvious relationship between the English language proficiency and students' academic motivation.

The results of independent sample t-test, however, indicated that there was no significant difference in the students' motivation for learning by gender ( $p = .641$ ), implying that the students' motivation levels were similar. Likewise, there was no significant difference between BS and MPhil students for the motivation ( $p = .194$ ) which means there is no significant impact of academic level on the motivation. The results of ANOVA continued to reveal that there was no significant difference between university ( $p = .106$ ) and department ( $p = .580$ ) in relation to the students' motivation.

## DISSCUSION

The present study was designed to find out the effect of English language proficiency on academic motivation of the University students of Lahore. The results of the study clearly suggest that English language proficiency is significant in affecting students' academic motivation. The findings showed that there was strong positive correlation between Academic Motivation with English proficiency found that students who have a high level of proficiency in English showed a high level of Academic Motivation, students who have medium level of English proficiency showed a medium level of Academic Motivation, and students who have low level of English proficiency showed a low level of Academic Motivation.

Results of this study indicate that the students with low proficiency in English language showed the lowest level of motivation with a mean score of 22.92 and a standard deviation of 8.95, while the students with medium level in English language showed a moderate level of motivation with a mean score of 33.05 and a standard deviation of 9.13. The students with high English language proficiency, however, had the highest level of motivation ( $M = 48.31$ ,  $SD = 14.06$ ). The findings strongly support the idea that there is a gradation in academic motivation with the increase in English language proficiency. The trend implies that students' motivation in the classroom is very predictable with their language competence. The results in this study have aligned with Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) theoretical framework that stated that high level of language competency would improve learners' self-confidence and decrease anxiety which ultimately leads to increase in motivation. Students are more likely to take part in classroom activities, persist with learning and have a voice when they feel confident in the English language. At the same time, students who have low levels of language competence may find difficulties understanding lectures, reading and assignments, which may have a negative impact on their motivation and academic involvement (Ahmad, Sewani & Ali, 2021; Ali et al., 2023).

The results of the one-way ANOVA test further support this finding with the results indicating that there was a statistically significant difference in academic motivation as a function of English language proficiency ( $F = 74.394$ ,  $p = .000$ ). This important finding suggests that students' proficiency in the English language has a strong impact on their level of motivation. This result is consistent with Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece's (2014) research which highlights the importance of perceived competence and effectiveness in managing academic tasks in terms of academic engagement and motivation of students. This relationship can also be explained psychologically based on Self-Determination Theory by Ryan and Deci (2002). This theory states that one of the three fundamental psychological needs that foster intra motivation is competence. The students who have mastered the English language, have a high sense of competence, and thus they have high self-motivation for learning. Students who are not doing well in English, on the other hand, may feel inadequate, which may decrease their motivation and their involvement in academic tasks.

Interestingly, the results of independent sample t-test showed that there is no significant difference in academic motivation between male and female ( $p = .641$ ). The level of motivation of male and female students was almost the same. This means that gender differences do not play a role in motivation but it is more related to academic and linguistic competence. This discovery is

in agreement with earlier research indicating that motivation is a universal human phenomenon which is not influenced by biological features but by educational experiences and learning environments. Likewise, there was no significant difference between the two academic programs (BS and MPhil) and the motivation  $p=.194$ . This means that the motivation of students from the undergraduate and postgraduate level are at similar levels. This may be because both groups are required to use English in their studies in a similar way: in lectures, in assignments and in research. As a result, their motivation is not that high or low in different grade levels.

The ANOVA results also showed that there were no statistically significant differences in motivation based on university ( $p = .106$ ). This indicates that the students from various institutions have similar motivational patterns. There were only minor differences in the mean scores that were not significant. The result shows that there is not a strong influence to the level of motivation of students in relation to English proficiency based on the differences of their institutions, which is public or private universities. Similarly, there were no significant differences between departments in terms of motivation ( $p = .580$ ). There was virtually no difference among students from Education, English Literature, Business and Social Sciences, in terms of motivation. This might be because all these disciplines employ English as a medium of instruction, so that language ability is widely required in all disciplines of study. Thus, the influence of motivation seems to be more related to the language ability than academic subject.

The overall conclusion of this study clearly indicates that proficiency in English language is one of the factors that motivates students in university education. Pupils with a good level of English feel confident, active and motivated in learning (Imran et al., 2023; Jabeen, Ali, & Ahmad, 2023). Students whose English language skills are less strong, however, may feel challenged in comprehending academic language and therefore their motivation is lowered. These findings also indicate the relevance of the English language in HEI. English is the medium of instruction in the majority of universities in Pakistan, which means that students must learn English for academic purposes, and this can have a positive impact on their academic motivation and learning outcomes as it can help them to improve their English language skills. Thus, language support programs, communication skills training and interactive learning environments are all critical to enhance students' academic engagement.

Based on the findings discussed, it is evident that English language proficiency is a predictor of academic motivation, and it is clear that this relationship is mediated by the students' academic engagement. The better they are at English, the more motivated they are towards their academic goal. This underscores the importance of strengthening students' English language skills, thereby enhancing their motivation, academic participation and overall academic performance or success, in educational institutions.

## Conclusion

From these findings, it may be concluded that there is a significant positive relation between English language proficiency and academic motivation of University students in Lahore. The findings clearly suggest that students with higher levels of English language proficiency have higher academic motivation, academic confidence, and participation in academic activities.

Students with lower English proficiency, on the other hand, exhibited lower motivation, which could stem from the fact that they struggled with academic content, effective expression, and active engagement in learning in class. This clearly marks the importance of English language skills as an influential factor in students' academic motivation in the context of higher education.

In addition, the study found that the differences among the academic motivation for the four demographic variables (gender, study program, university, academic department) were not statistically significant. This indicates that the motivation of students is not affected by their own or institutional background, but by their English language competence. That is, students' English proficiency has a greater influence than demographic or contextual factors on academic motivation. The results indicate the significance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for university students' academic growth. English is used as the medium of instruction in most of the higher education institutions, particularly in Pakistan, and students' mastery of English contributes positively to increasing their motivation, confidence and involvement in learning process. As such, it is important to further develop students' English language skills as a basic educational goal to ensure their academic achievements and continued participation in higher education.

## Recommendations

To summarize the results of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- The universities should have a program on English language support like workshops, tutoring sessions, and communication skill courses to enhance the proficiency of students.
- In English medium classrooms, teachers should adopt student-centered teaching and learning approach and promote active learning, enhance students' motivation and interest.
- Remedial classes and extra learning support should be given to students with low English proficiency as special focus.
- Discipline curriculum developers should create language integrated discipline curricula to enable the students to develop their knowledge of the subject and their English language proficiency.
- Colleges must foster a motivational learning atmosphere enabling students to have confidence and encourage students to use English in academic activities.
- Further studies are needed in other academic motivation factors like learning environment, teaching style, and psychological factors.

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