

# Impact of ipad use in the language classroom on student motivation



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[Date]

Motivation, stemming from the Latin *morere* meaning ‘to move’, is consistently defined as a human behaviour that directs, or moves, the organisation and persistence of one’s own actions (Brown, 2007; Deci and Ryan, 2008; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013; Peters, 2015). Motivation is abridgedly conceptualised as either intrinsic, deriving from the person’s own volition; or extrinsic, proceeding influence from other factors such as rewards (Benabou and Tirole, 2003; Lepper and Henderlong, 2000; Sansone and Harackiewicz, 2000). This paper focuses solely on the latter.

Theoretical perspectives extensively consider various justifications for levels of student motivation, including individual beliefs about abilities and intelligence; persistence; and self-expectancy of success (Wentzel and Miele, 2009). According to Baumeister and Leary (2017), motivation stems from a need for “belongingness” and concluded that it does, in fact, have significant influence the human psyche such as on patterns within emotions and cognitive processes that result in behavioural consequences consistent with motivation. Moreover, Pomerantz et al. (2005) suggest that parents can have a positive impact on their child’s motivation, contingent upon them keeping their interactions “fun and loving” while assisting with their child’s homework. Furthermore, Ryan and Deci (2000) assert that when exposed to conditions that supported autonomy and proficiency, motivation was facilitated. Finally, Grant and Dweck (2003) contend that learning goals increase student motivation. Williams and Williams (2011) condense these

theories into five determinants and postulate that “ student, teacher, content, method/process, and environment” are what impact student motivation. Indeed, there exists an abundance of studies that posit various influences on motivation, but what is its importance?

Motivation is viewed in literature as imperative for the enhanced learning outcomes of all students. Learner motivation as a point of interest has shifted from peripheral to central in pedagogical research in recent years, with inquiry into differing levels of success between pupils being pertinent (Pintrich, 2003). As a result, studies indicate that there is a positive correlation between student motivation and achievement (Dörnyei and Clément, 2001; Lin, McKeachie and Kim, 2003; Masgoret and Gardner, 2003). Furthermore, learner motivation significantly influences attention spans and how effectively a student may cognitively process information (Pintrich and Schunk, 2002; Pugh and Bergin, 2006). With regards to motivation within a language classroom, specifically, both Gardner (2007) and MacIntyre (2002) speculate that pupil motivation may promote second language acquisition. Moreover, Vero and Puka (2017) affirm that a lack of motivation in one’s own education can be detrimental to the process of learning.

With motivation crucial to one’s achievements, such as language acquisition, it is important to note the current levels of motivation, or lack thereof, in foreign language study within the UK school system. In fact, both MFL GCSE and A Level uptake has been steadily decreasing for years. In 2002, the proportion of students taking a language GCSE dropped from 76% to 40% in 2011. However, this rose to 48% in 2013 before dropping again to 47% in <https://assignbuster.com/impact-of-ipad-use-in-the-language-classroom-on-student-motivation/>

2017 (Tinsley and Doležal, 2018). This increase was a result of the EBacc (English Baccalaureate), which is a set of ‘core’ GCSE subjects that the government believe best equip a student to progress in further education and work (Long and Bolton, 2017). These subjects include English language and literature, maths, science, geography or history and a language (Long and Bolton, 2017). Nonetheless, “no significant change” in Year 9 pupils who have opted to study either an individual subject or the full combination has been reported by the Department for Education (Greevy, Knowx, Nunney and Pye, 2013). As a result, the government’s original plans to make 90% of KS4 students in England study the Ebacc have been abandoned, with new plans from the Department for Education expecting 75% of pupils to study the Ebacc by 2022, reaching a 90% target by 2025 (Department for Education, 2017).

With such low levels of motivation to study languages at school, it can be expected that motivation levels within the language classroom are also purportedly low. One important factor to consider is the impact of ‘Brexit’ on students and their opinions. In fact, ‘Brexit’ has reportedly been named as having a negative impact on student motivation by over a third of state schools (Tinsley and Doležal, 2018). With the UK’s impending withdrawal from the European Union, there seems to be less impetus to continue learning languages. This could be as a symptom of a greater mindset of withdrawal from the international community on the part of the UK, and consequently the feeling that languages are not necessary. However, Mitchell (2010) also suggests that other factors may also be culpable, for

example, fewer teaching hours when compared to averages in the EU, and exam-focused curriculums.

In the interest of reducing this negative impact on language students, and as a teacher of MFL, a large part of my professional practice concerns exploring methods to increase extrinsic motivation in students. One such method currently being scrutinised, and which is the main focal point of this paper, is the use of technology within the language classroom, more specifically the use of iPads to implement and emphasise language practice.

Technology is ever more present in daily life: from the smartphones far more powerful than that of the Apollo 11 (Quesada-González and Merkoçi, 2007) that sit in the pockets of 74% of the UK population (Ofcom, 2018); to the 469.6 million transactions made by contactless cards in June 2017 (UK Finance, 2017); to the robot workers operated by Amazon once you place an order (Bhasin and Clark, 2016). Concerning young people, 78% of those aged 12 to 15 have access to a tablet and 55% have their own tablet (Ofcom, 2017). As a consequence of these statistics, given the apparent reliance on technology of younger generations, it is imperative that the use of technology within the language classroom is explored. As teachers, engaging the minds of young learners is key for teacher-student success. We are the ones that directly connect with students in the classroom and therefore have a responsibility to be innovative in our methods for the benefit of the younger generation. Further use of technology in the classroom could be one such innovation.

Not only does the investigation of language learning through different mediums, such as iPads, help maintain its relevance to young learners; it also opens many doors to different methods of teaching or learning. For example, teachers are increasingly applying *flipped learning* or using a *flipped classroom* : a didactic approach using an interactive learning environment to gain knowledge. In place of the traditional classroom where the teacher acts as an instructor, students are given access to technology, typically with the opportunity to use the internet, and teachers act more as coach offering communal guidance. Capitalising on the availability of technology in order to create a flipped classroom has many pedagogical benefits, for instance, according to a Sophia survey (2014) nine out of ten teachers noticed a positive change in student engagement since establishing a flipped classroom. Furthermore, quantitative data shows that 71% of teachers states that student grades had improved (Sophia survey, 2014). Finally, flipped classrooms also have advantages for those with special needs, EAL (English as an Additional Language) students and students from low income households, as the Sophia survey (2014) found that these students particularly benefitted. Ultimately, this demonstrates that the increased usage of technology in the classroom, as evidenced by experiments with the flipped classroom dynamic, has proven validity in modern pedagogy and merits further research.

Not only is the access to technology valuable with regards to student progression, it also prepares students for future careers, as the aforementioned aims of the Ebacc also suggest. In fact, according to a report by Muro et al (2016), 30% of all jobs require at least low amounts of digital

skills, 48% of all jobs required a medium level, and 23% required a high level. Furthermore, the report found that the average annual wage for those jobs that required a high level of digital skills earned more than double than those that worked in jobs requiring lower digital skills (Muro et al, 2016). Moreover, another report (House of Lords, 2015) found that 37% of the UK workforce (10.8 million people) are currently classified as *digital citizens*, meaning they have the ability to use technology in a purposeful and confident manner for communication, sourcing information and purchasing goods and/or services. However, almost everyone in the UK workforce will soon need to have the skills to be identified as digital citizens in order to fulfil their job role (House of Lords, 2015). Clearly then, there exists a precedent for the introduction and use of technology in the classroom, as it becomes an ever-more valid and requisite skill in the post-education workplace.

In order to effectively investigate the efficacy of iPad use in the language classroom on student motivation, this paper will first critically evaluate an educational research paper focusing on how language students discerned the impact of the use of iPads on their engagement with classroom activities (Mango, 2015). The examination of this paper and its findings will unpack such concepts as *reliability*, the extent to which the results are both consistent and accurate as a representation of the populace, and *validity*, the extent to which the research accurately measures that which it intended to measure (Silverman, 2016). The concepts explored in this research paper will then be deliberated alongside personal small-scale research of iPad use in a language classroom and their influence on student drive during individual professional practice at a placement school. Ultimately, based on

insight garnered from both personal observations and research paper analysis, this paper will reflect on how future professional practice may be adjusted accordingly.

Mango, O. (2015). iPad use and student engagement in the classroom.

For clarity, the critical evaluation of the research conducted by Mango (2015) is divided into three sections:(I) Research context, exploring the aims and hypothesis and situating the paper in the context of the literature associated with the topic,(II) Methodology, examining data, sample and research analysis, validity and reliability,(III) Conclusions, encompassing the significance and practical uses of the findings.

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