

**STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY AT ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
IN UNIVERSITAS ISLAM BATANG HARI**

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ABSTRACT

English plays a significant role as a global language and has become an essential subject in higher education. However, university students demonstrate different levels of motivation in learning English as a foreign language (EFL), which may influence their learning outcomes. This study aimed to explore students' motivation in learning English at the English Education Study Program of Universitas Islam Batang Hari. A qualitative case study design was employed involving three highly motivated students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation and analyzed using Creswell's qualitative data analysis procedures. The findings reveal that students' motivation was influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation emerged from students' personal interests, self-development, and future aspirations, whereas extrinsic motivation was strengthened through family support, lecturers, peers, digital media, and the academic environment. These findings indicate that meaningful learning experiences and supportive social relationships contribute significantly to sustaining students' motivation in learning English. This study provides insights for lecturers to create more motivating English learning environments in higher education.

Keywords: Foreign Language, Learning English, Students' Motivation.

ABSTRAK

Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing memiliki peran penting di era global, khususnya dalam pendidikan tinggi. Meskipun bahasa Inggris merupakan mata kuliah wajib di Indonesia, tingkat motivasi mahasiswa dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris masih beragam. Motivasi merupakan salah satu faktor utama yang memengaruhi keberhasilan dalam pembelajaran bahasa asing. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi motivasi mahasiswa dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing di Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Islam Batang Hari. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Tiga mahasiswa yang memiliki motivasi belajar tinggi dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling dan diwawancarai secara mendalam. Data dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Penelitian ini juga menerapkan Self-Determination Theory (SDT) yang dikemukakan oleh Deci dan Ryan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor motivasi intrinsik dan ekstrinsik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa motivasi mahasiswa dipengaruhi oleh

kombinasi faktor internal, seperti keinginan untuk mengembangkan diri dan minat terhadap bahasa Inggris, serta faktor eksternal, seperti dukungan sosial, lingkungan akademik, dan aspirasi karier di masa depan. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya memahami motivasi mahasiswa sebagai landasan dalam mengembangkan strategi pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang lebih efektif.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Asing, Motivasi Siswa, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris

A. Introduction

English has become one of the most important international languages used in education, communication, business, and technology. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) at various educational levels, including higher education. As globalization continues to increase the demand for English proficiency, university students are expected to develop adequate English skills to support their academic achievement and future careers. However, many students experience different levels of motivation in learning English, which consequently affects their learning engagement and achievement.

Motivation has long been recognized as one of the most influential factors in foreign language learning. Students who are highly motivated tend to participate more actively in classroom activities, demonstrate greater persistence when facing learning difficulties, and

achieve better language outcomes than those with lower motivation. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), where opportunities to use English outside the classroom are limited, motivation becomes even more essential because it encourages students to continue learning despite various challenges.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Deci and Ryan, explains that students' motivation develops through the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The theory distinguishes intrinsic motivation, which arises from personal interest and enjoyment, from extrinsic motivation, which is influenced by external factors such as family, teachers, peers, and future career expectations. Understanding how these motivational factors interact is important for improving English learning in higher education.

Previous studies have reported that students' motivation is influenced

by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Nevertheless, most of these studies employed quantitative approaches that primarily measured students' motivational levels through questionnaires. While these studies provide useful statistical findings, they offer limited explanations of how students develop and maintain their motivation throughout the learning process. In addition, studies focusing on students' motivation in regional universities, particularly in Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia, remain limited.

Therefore, this study aims to explore students' motivation in learning English as a foreign language at the English Education Study Program of Universitas Islam Batang Hari using a qualitative case study approach. By exploring students' experiences, perspectives, and learning journeys, this study provides a deeper understanding of how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation interact in shaping students' engagement in learning English. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more supportive and motivating English learning environments, particularly in similar higher education contexts.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach to explore students' motivation in learning English as a foreign language. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to gain an in depth understanding of students' personal experiences, perspectives, and motivational factors within their natural educational context. The case study approach was selected because it allowed the researcher to investigate a specific phenomenon intensively within a particular setting, namely the English Education Study Program at Universitas Islam Batang Hari.

The participants of this study consisted of three fifth semester students from the English Education Study Program who were identified as highly motivated learners. They were selected through purposive sampling based on several criteria, including active participation in English learning activities, positive attitudes toward learning English, and their willingness to share their learning experiences openly. The

selection of these participants was intended to obtain rich and meaningful information regarding the factors influencing students' motivation in learning English as a foreign language.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed the researcher to explore participants' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation while providing flexibility for them to express their experiences in their own words. The interview questions focused on students' reasons for learning English, their learning experiences, the factors influencing their motivation, and their future aspirations. All interviews were conducted in a comfortable environment to encourage participants to share their perspectives openly. With the participants' consent, the interviews were audio recorded to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the collected data.

The interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data

reduction process, the researcher carefully reviewed the interview transcripts, coded meaningful statements, and grouped similar responses into several themes representing students' motivation. The categorized data were then organized systematically to facilitate interpretation before drawing conclusions based on the emerging patterns. Self-Determination Theory served as the theoretical framework for interpreting the findings, particularly in identifying intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the researcher applied data triangulation by comparing information obtained from interviews with supporting data collected through observations and documentation conducted during the research process. Furthermore, the interview transcripts were reviewed carefully, and the findings were interpreted systematically to ensure that the conclusions accurately represented the participants' perspectives. These procedures enhanced the credibility and

trustworthiness of the research findings.

C. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that students' motivation in learning English as a foreign language is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Based on the interview data, three major themes emerged: students' personal goals, the influence of social environment and significant others, and learning experiences supported by digital media.

The first finding indicates that students were motivated by their personal goals, including improving their English proficiency, pursuing future careers, studying abroad, and communicating with people from different countries. Some participants also expressed that English would help them access international academic resources and achieve their personal aspirations.

Participant A expressed this motivation by stating: "I want to challenge myself because I didn't like English before. When I entered university, I started from zero. I realized that English is very

important, especially for future careers."

This quotation indicates that the participant viewed learning English as a personal challenge and an opportunity for self-improvement. Although the participant initially disliked English and lacked confidence, she chose to overcome these difficulties because she realized the importance of English for future career opportunities and personal development. This demonstrates that motivation can emerge from an individual's willingness to grow and achieve long-term goals.

Similarly, Participant B explained: "I want to achieve my dream. Because from junior high school I was interested in English and I want to be a writer, novel, short story, and others."

This quotation shows that the participant's motivation was closely connected to a clear personal aspiration. Becoming a writer encouraged the participant to continuously improve English proficiency because language skills were perceived as essential for achieving future ambitions. Having a specific goal also helped sustain the

participant's interest and commitment to learning English over time.

Both participants demonstrated that having clear future goals encouraged them to invest greater effort in learning English. Their motivation extended beyond academic achievement and reflected a long-term commitment to personal and professional development.

According to Self-Determination Theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), this reflects intrinsic motivation, in which learners voluntarily engage in learning activities because they perceive them as meaningful and beneficial for their personal development. The participants' aspirations encouraged them to remain committed to improving their English competence.

This finding is consistent with Husna and Murtini and Thuan, who found that students with clear personal goals tend to demonstrate stronger motivation and greater persistence in learning English.

The second finding shows that external factors also contributed significantly to students' motivation. Parents, lecturers, friends, and admired public figures encouraged students to continue learning English.

Supportive lecturers motivated students through positive feedback and engaging teaching methods, while family and peers provided emotional encouragement throughout the learning process.

Participant C explained: "The biggest motivation comes from my K-pop idols and, of course, my parents. I want to achieve my dreams and make my parents proud."

The quotation demonstrates that the participant's motivation was strongly influenced by emotional support from family and inspiration from admired public figures. Parents became an important source of encouragement, while K-pop idols motivated the participant to pursue personal dreams. These external influences strengthened the participant's confidence and commitment to continue learning English.

Participant B also shared: "RM motivates me to keep learning English because he inspires me to improve myself."

This quotation indicates that role models can positively shape students' learning motivation. Observing RM's success in learning English inspired the participant to believe that English

proficiency could be achieved through consistent effort and self-directed learning. As a result, the participant became more motivated to improve English skills by following the learning strategies demonstrated by the role model.

The findings also indicate that social support functioned not only as external encouragement but also as a source of confidence that helped students persist in learning English. Positive interactions with family members and inspiring public figures gradually became internalized into personal goals, strengthening students' long-term commitment to learning.

According to Self-Determination Theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), this finding reflects the concept of relatedness, which refers to individuals' need to feel connected to and supported by others. When students experience positive relationships with parents, lecturers, friends, and role models, they are more likely to maintain their motivation and actively engage in learning activities.

This finding is in line with Umpung et al. (2022), who found that support from significant others plays

an important role in sustaining students' motivation in learning English. Similarly, Husna and Murtini reported that encouragement from family and teachers positively influences students' motivation and learning engagement.

Another important finding is that learning experiences and digital media strengthened students' motivation. Participants reported that watching English movies, listening to English songs, reading English materials, and using social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok helped them improve their language skills while making learning more enjoyable.

Participant C described how movies and music supported independent learning: "I usually learn through movies and music. Watching English movies such as Frozen and Coco and listening to English songs makes learning more enjoyable."

This quotation illustrates that the participant preferred audiovisual learning because it provided enjoyable and authentic exposure to English. Watching movies and listening to English songs enabled the participant to practice listening skills naturally while maintaining interest in

the learning process. These enjoyable experiences encouraged independent learning and increased the participant's motivation to continue improving English proficiency.

Participant B also explained: "I use writing and watching some videos, some movies, or just reading. The most method is writing and reading because I like it. I'm more guided from writing and reading than watching or listening."

The quotation indicates that the participant adopted learning strategies that matched personal learning preferences. Writing and reading were considered the most effective methods because they helped organize information and deepen understanding of English materials. By selecting learning strategies independently, the participant became more confident and actively engaged in the learning process.

This finding suggests that students were aware of their own learning preferences and actively selected strategies that best suited their individual needs. Such self-directed learning behavior enabled them to become more responsible for

their learning process and maintain their motivation despite various learning challenges.

According to Self-Determination Theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), these findings reflect the psychological needs of autonomy and competence. Students demonstrated autonomy by independently choosing learning methods that suited their preferences, while the improvement in their English proficiency strengthened their sense of competence. As students experienced success in understanding English through enjoyable activities, their motivation to continue learning became stronger.

These findings are consistent with Fandino et al. (2019), who reported that meaningful learning experiences supported by digital media can enhance students' motivation in learning English as a foreign language. Similarly, Thuan (2021) emphasized that positive learning experiences and learners' attitudes play an important role in sustaining motivation in language learning.

Taken together, these findings indicate that students' motivation is dynamic and develops through

continuous interaction between personal aspirations, supportive relationships, and meaningful learning experiences. Each factor reinforces the others, enabling students to maintain their engagement in learning English over time.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that students' motivation in learning English as a foreign language is shaped by the interaction of intrinsic motivation, external social support, and meaningful learning experiences. Rather than operating independently, these factors complement one another in sustaining students' engagement and persistence in learning English. The fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as proposed by Self-Determination Theory, enabled students to develop stronger motivation and greater confidence throughout their learning process.

D. Conclusion

This study explored students' motivation in learning English as a foreign language at the English Education Study Program of Universitas Islam Batang Hari. The findings indicate that students'

motivation is influenced by the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation emerged from students' personal interests, self-development, and future aspirations, while extrinsic motivation was strengthened through the support of lecturers, family, peers, and the learning environment.

The study also found that meaningful learning experiences and the use of digital media contributed to maintaining students' motivation and encouraged them to become more autonomous and confident learners. These findings support the Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering students' motivation.

Therefore, creating a supportive learning environment and providing meaningful learning experiences are essential to sustaining students' motivation in learning English as a foreign language. Future studies are encouraged to involve a larger number of participants and different educational settings in order to provide a broader understanding of students' motivation in learning English as a foreign language.

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