

# Scrutinizing Students' Motivation to Learn English in Higher Education Context

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## Abstrak

Penelitian ini dikategorikan sebagai penelitian campuran yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui motivasi mahasiswa dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris dan faktor yang mempengaruhi tingkat motivasi mahasiswa. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa dari enam fakultas berbeda di Universitas Jenderal Soedirman yang mengambil kelas Bahasa Inggris sebagai Mata Kuliah Dasar Umum (MKDU). Teknik pengambilan sampel yang digunakan adalah atas tujuan tertentu. Terdapat 115 mahasiswa sebagai subyek dalam penelitian ini. Data dikumpulkan melalui tiga teknik, yaitu kuesioner, wawancara, dan diskusi kelompok terarah. Datanya kemudian dianalisis melalui empat tahapan, yaitu pengurangan, presentasi, analisis, dan pengambilan simpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa motivasi ekstrinsik sangat mempengaruhi mahasiswa dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris. Dosen dan mahasiswa harus membangun sinergi baik untuk membuat proses pembelajaran berlangsung dengan baik. Hasilnya dapat digunakan sebagai pertimbangan dalam proses pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai MKDU. Kebijakan yang tepat akan mempengaruhi luaran proses pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Jenderal Soedirman.

**Kata kunci:** *Motivasi, Pembelajaran Bahasa, Pendidikan Tinggi*

## Abstract

This research can be categorized as mixed research which aims to unpack students' motivation to learn English as well as the factors that contribute to students' motivation level. The population in this research are students from six different faculties at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman who take English course as General Basic Course (MKDU) in the first semester. The purposive sampling technique employs in this research. There are 115 students worked as the subject on this research. The data are collected through three techniques, namely questionnaires, interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The data are analyzed through four stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, data analysis and conclusion drawing. The result shows that extrinsic motivation highly affects students in learning English. Students and lecturers need to build good synergy to make the process of learning English successful. The result can be used as a consideration regarding the process of learning English as a General Basic Course (MKDU). The right policy is going to affect the outcome of the English learning process at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman.

**Keywords :** *Language Learning; Motivation; Higher Education*

## INTRODUCTION

Motivation is one of the important elements in carrying out an activity. With a high motivation, it is likely that people are going to find it easy to carry out an activity. The most influential motivation is the one that grows from within ourselves or intrinsic one. For instance, when someone decides to master a branch of martial arts because it is based on internal preferences and impulses, then s/he is not going to be negatively affected when

practicing alone or encountering other less supportive factors e.g., unfriendly partners, hard training, and complicated moves.

The same thing also happens to language learning activity—a long and complicated activity in the sense that language learning cannot be done instantly. It is a complicated process due to the differences in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and culture between the language that has been mastered and the language being studied. In addition, this activity also requires great physical, intellectual and emotional effort. In addition, there are many variables involved in these activities such as learning methods, learning media, learning materials and the environment that greatly affect the achievement level of a language learner (Brown, 2000:1).

Based on the preliminary research, it is found that the majority of students at Jenderal Soedirman University have a low motivation in improving their English language skills, especially in reading and writing skills. This has an impact on the low achievement of English language competence after they finish attending lectures.

The aforementioned findings encourage the researchers to find out more comprehensively on the level of learners' motivation and its causal factors. The results of the research related to these factors can be used as input or consideration for policy making regarding the process of learning English as a General Basic Course (MKDU). The researchers argue that the right policy formulation surely affects the outcome of the English learning process, particularly at Jenderal Soedirman University.

## **METHOD**

This research was mixed research. It was a combination of quantitative and qualitative researches to create a better understanding of the research problem than single research (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The population in this study were students of the Faculty of Health Sciences (FIKES), Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (FMIPA), Faculty of Agriculture (Faperta), Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP), Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB), and Faculty of Law (FH) taking English course in the first semester. The sampling technique employed in this study was purposive sampling because of the researchers' considerations (Sugiyono, 2008:85). The respondents involved in this research was 120 students enrolled in the six faculties mentioned above.

There were two kinds of data on this research. They were quantitative data in forms of numbers and qualitative data in forms of respondents' opinions. The quantitative data were obtained by using closed questionnaire using Likert scale comprising 5 options on Agreement category, namely Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree (Assessment and Research The University of Arizona, 2021), while the qualitative data were collected by employing Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Focus group discussion was chosen because it possessed advantages. They are "it is comparatively easier to drive or conduct, it allows to explore topics and to generate hypotheses, it generates opportunity to collect data from the group interaction, which concentrates on the topic of the researcher's interest, it has high "face validity" (data), it has low cost in relation to other methods, it gives speed in the supply of the results (in terms of evidence of the meeting of the group), it allows the researcher to increase the size of the sample of the qualitative studies" (Mello et al., 1998). The result of questionnaires and focus group discussion were regarded as the data of this research. After the data were collected, they were analyzed using four steps. They were data reduction, data presentation, data analysis, dan drawing conclusion (Creswell, 1998). In the data reduction stage, the data were selected between relevant and less relevant data so a valid data set was obtained. After completing the data reduction set, the data were presented in the forms of matrix or table according to the categorization. It would facilitate the interpretation of the data. The data were then analyzed based on the theories used and compared with the assumptions that had been formulated. Conclusion was drawn as the final step. The conclusion was expected to answer the formulation of the problem. It should be an unbroken and inseparable series of the research steps

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter was divided into two parts. The first part was going to discuss the result of the questionnaires, while the second part discussed the result of focus group discussion.

The questionnaire was given to respondents as one technique in collecting the data. There were six questions on the questionnaire. They were: 1) I join English class because I want to be able to speak and write English, 2) I join English class because it is a compulsory subject, 3) I join English class to get a good mark, 4) I join English class because I like it, 5) I join English class because the lecturer delivers it interestingly, and 6) I join English class to understand the English references.

**Table 1. Result of Questionnaire**

No	Statement	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Neutral (N)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)
1	I join English class because I want to be able to speak and write English	66	45	40	0	0
2	I join English class because it is a compulsory subject	47	57	8	2	1
3	I join English class to get a good mark	58	50	4	2	1
4	I join English class because I like it	22	55	32	6	0
5	I join English class because the lecturer delivers it interestingly	19	59	32	5	0
6	I join English class to understand the English references	50	56	8	1	0

Based on the results of the questionnaire distributed to 115 respondents, most of the respondents wanted to acquire English language skills by attending English lecture. This could be seen that from 115 respondents, there were 66 or around 57.39% who chose the option on strongly agree (SA) on statement number 1. This data showed that most respondents had high motivation to have English language skills both oral and written which could be categorized as productive skills.

Meanwhile, students' motivation in learning English was also influenced by external factors, in this case the teacher factor. In learning English, lecturers could have an influence on the level of student motivation. From 115 respondents, there were 19 or around 16.52% of respondents who stated strongly agree (SA) with statement number 5. Most of the respondents (51.30%) agreed with the statement. The number of respondents who strongly agree (SA) with statement number 3 "I attended English lectures to get good grades" was 50.43% or 58 respondents. This table showed that the number of students who had external motivation was quite high. The wish to have the ability to speak English was also influenced by the heed to be able to understand various English references. The number of respondents who stated strongly agree (SA) with this statement was 50 respondents or approximately close to 43.48%.

Next analysis was the analysis on the result of focus group discussion. The result of focus group discussion came in seven most mentioned opinion about learning English as General Basic Course (MKDU).

**Table 2. Result of Focus Group Discussion**

No	Opinion
1	Speaking skills became motivation in learning English as a requirement to get a job. Learning to speak encouraged students to learn other skills (writing,

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	reading, and listening).
2	Speaking was a motivation to learn English. The speaking aspect was more needed at workplace.
3	Motivation increased with English presentations. The courage to speak English also increased.
4	With limited time with a large number of students, it became less effective. Advanced English was needed to keep students motivated.
5	Reading and listening increased motivation to learn English. This was because the teaching materials used English. Likewise with information that used English.
6	Lecturers should use authentic materials.
7	Inviting tourists to the class could increase motivation.

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Learning to speak was one of the activities that could enhance students' motivation in learning English in general because this skill involved several linguistic aspects, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. The more vocabulary mastered, the more facilitated students will be in expressing their ideas in verbal English. The next aspect that was no less important in speaking skills was pronunciation because this aspect was related to the accuracy of the meaning of words. For example, the words "made" and "mad". The two words had very different meanings. If these two words were pronounced incorrectly, it would cause misunderstanding. If that happened, communication in English could not take place effectively.

As in other languages, English also has grammatical rules. This aspect was often considered as a skeleton of language. In English, this aspect contributed significantly to the clarity of the meaning of words and sentences. For example, to state that an activity was carried out in the past, English language used a verb form that was not the same as an activity which is a routine that is carried out until now. For example, the phrase "I came to the office" with "I come to the office".

Another insight from students related to learning English was the opportunity for them to have hands-on practice. To give you an idea, when a lecturer explained about the Simple Past Tense topic, the lecturer should give the opportunity for students to use the grammar rules when they expressed their ideas or opinions through exercises both oral and written using the grammatical rules set out in the tense. Through this method, students did not only learn theory, but they also had the opportunity to apply it.

Other findings in the focus group discussion (FGD) also unveiled the ideas about advanced English lecture activities. In general, English given in the first and second semesters intended to equip students with basic English skills, except at the Faculty of Economics and Business in which English was offered up to semester 6. The idea of advanced English was a very appropriate idea because by giving English lectures at the upper semester, students' motivation and English skills would increase. In addition, advanced English was very useful for them when they were writing thesis, applying for jobs, and when they were going to occupy a position in either government or private institutions that obligated a high frequency of interaction with foreigners.

In addition to speaking skills, reading and listening skills were two skills that were correlated with increasing student motivation in learning English because by mastering these two skills, students' English skills became more complete, not only productive abilities, but receptive abilities ones as well.

Besides the inputs above, there were other suggestions that were quite good to harness student motivation in learning English. The input was related to the use of authentic materials in English lectures. The material was obtained from mass media, both printed and electronic media, such as newspapers, bulletins, brochures, advertisements, and news from Youtube.

These materials could motivate students in learning English because the content of these materials was contextual and up to date. Things that needed to be pondered by lecturers when using authentic materials were the selection process and the provision of materials that could enhance curiosity about the content, for example information related to the world of entertainment, sports, arts, culture, and the like.

Another strategy was by inviting foreigners or expatriates. The presence of foreigners coming from English-speaking countries could motivate students. They could share about English in natural way as they were native speakers who possessed many interesting things, especially related to cultural differences and language factors. They were able to motivate students in learning English, especially related to speaking activity because when they greeted or asked questions to students, the students tried to respond to greetings and also addressed their questions in English. If this happens repeatedly, then their English skills and also their confidence could be enhanced gradually.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that students have a fairly high motivation in English course, especially with regard to extrinsic motivation, which is an encouragement that comes from external factors such as teaching factors, institutional rules, achievements, and others. These factors are able to encourage students to partake in the lecture. To maintain and improve their motivation, good synergy is needed between teachers (lecturers) and learners (students). The cooperation and openness between the two parties create a positive impact on the atmosphere of learning English in the classroom in which in the end it also determines the success of teaching and learning enterprise. If this aspect has been formed, students do not easily give up when they experience obstacles in learning English.

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