

Exploring Learning Desire: Students' Intrinsic Motivation in English Language Mastery

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore students' intrinsic motivation in learning English and identify the key factors that contribute to their motivation in the English Education Study Program at Pattimura University. The subject of the research was the 6th-semester students in the English Education Study Program at Pattimura University, academic year 2022/2023. The method of this study was descriptive quantitative. Data were collected using a questionnaire. The result showed that students' intrinsic motivation for learning English was at a good level based on the responses. Motivation to learn English stems from various factors, such as fun in Learning English, Real-World Application, Increased Confidence, Language and Cultural Exploration, Passion to Complete Challenges, Relationship to Personal Growth, and Practical Implications. This research underscores the importance of creating a learning environment that is fun, practically relevant, and rich in cultural aspects to support students' intrinsic motivation. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct a study on the Influence of Different Learning Environments. Further research could explore how different learning environments (e.g. online, face-to-face, or hybrid learning) affect students' intrinsic motivation in learning English, as well as how each approach can be optimized to support students' motivation and engagement.

Keywords: *intrinsic motivation, English language, mastery*

INTRODUCTION

English plays an important role in various aspects of life and serves as the world's international language (Uddiniyah & Silfia, 2019). This makes it essential for everyone to communicate effectively in English, as it facilitates interactions in various situations. In addition, English as a foreign language is essential for advancing science, technology, culture, and global communication. For these reasons, English is a fundamental subject in education systems around the world, from primary school to university. Many countries include English in their curriculum, and some include it in national examinations. In Indonesia, English has become part of the school curriculum and has contributed to the national education assessment.

Learning a new language, particularly English, can sometimes feel challenging and unengaging for students (Putra, 2021). This highlights the importance of teachers adopting creative and innovative teaching methods to make the learning process more engaging and enjoyable. The lack of motivation is a crucial factor that influences students' intrinsic desire to master English.

When students find the learning process enjoyable and personally rewarding, their intrinsic motivation increases, leading to a stronger desire to master English and achieve fluency.

Motivation plays a crucial role in driving individuals to take action, and it is often seen as a key factor in determining one's success (Yunisari et al., 2019). It can be defined as the underlying reason or cause behind a person's behavior, such as a student's drive to learn English in order to achieve a particular goal. Motivation influences how individuals approach tasks, and in the case of language learning, it is shaped by both internal and external factors, including personal desires and external rewards.

Motivation is generally classified into two types: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation arises from external factors that encourage a person to reach their goals. For example, a student may be motivated to study hard for English because of the prospect of earning a prize for achieving the highest score. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation comes from within a person, driven by personal enjoyment or interest. In this context, a student may study English simply because they enjoy the language and the learning process itself. Intrinsic motivation is particularly powerful because it is fueled by internal rewards, such as satisfaction, growth, and personal fulfillment, which lead to sustained engagement and success in language learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The motivation that helps students to engage in behavior arises from the inside of the students because it is naturally satisfying intrinsic motivation became important in the teaching and learning process because it moves the students into action in achieving their goals. When students are intrinsically motivated, it helps them to develop their awareness in developing language skills and knowledge. Besides, they process the feeling of competence and skill development as well as a sense of personal control in the learning process.

Several studies have explored students' motivation in learning English, each providing unique insights into the factors that drive language learning. For instance, Uddiniyah and Silfia (2019) conducted a study on eleventh graders at SMAN 8 Kota Jambi, finding that the students exhibited higher levels of intrinsic motivation compared to extrinsic motivation in learning English. In contrast, Nuraeni (2020) examined EFL students at Universitas Muslim Maros, discovering that most students were motivated extrinsically, with only a few demonstrating intrinsic motivation. These studies reveal the varied motivational factors among students, with some being driven by internal factors like personal interest and enjoyment, while others are motivated by external rewards such as grades or recognition.

Building on this, the current research aims to investigate the intrinsic motivation of students in the English Education Study Program at Pattimura University. By examining the key factors that influence their motivation, this study seeks to deepen our understanding of what drives

students to engage with and excel in English language learning, particularly focusing on the internal rewards that fuel their passion for mastering the language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of intrinsic motivation in language learning explores the drive that students possess internally to master a foreign language, such as English, without relying on external rewards. Understanding intrinsic motivation is essential, as it highlights how students' interests and goals can fuel language acquisition and ultimately lead to greater proficiency. This review examines current literature on intrinsic motivation in English language learning, highlighting key theories, influential factors, and implications for educational practices.

Definition of Motivation

Motivation has been described in various ways by researchers. It is often understood as an internal state that influences and directs human behavior. According to Hartini et al., (2018), motivation could be described as a reason or cause for someone to behave in a certain manner. Furthermore, Putri (2019) stated that motivation is viewed as a process that initiates and sustains goal-oriented behavior. It involves setting goals that provide individuals with the drive and direction to take specific actions. Heckhausen (2008) explained that a person's motivation to reach a goal is influenced by both personal factors and the situation they are in, including what they expect to gain or the results of their actions. This means that a student's motivation is key to encouraging them to take action, like learning English, and is shaped by their qualities as well as the environment around them. Motivation can be divided into two types: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation comes from external factors that drive someone to achieve their goals, while intrinsic motivation is driven by internal rewards. In simpler terms, intrinsic motivation encourages students to engage in activities because they find them naturally enjoyable and fulfilling (Hartini et al., (2018).

Intrinsic Motivation in Language Learning

Intrinsic motivation in language learning has its roots in several prominent theories, most notably Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes the role of competence and relatedness in promoting internal motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to Deci and Ryan, (1985), students are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation when they feel a sense of control over their learning, consider themselves capable of achieving mastery, and experience meaningful connections in the learning process.

Factors Influencing Intrinsic Motivation in English Language Learning

Research identifies several key factors that affect students' intrinsic motivation to learn English. These factors include:

1. Personal Interest and Relevance:

Students are more motivated to learn English when they see it as personally relevant or aligned with their goals, such as studying abroad or accessing global information. Research also shows that personal interest in language-related activities, such as reading or engaging with English media, boosts students' engagement and intrinsic motivation (Smith & Johnson, 2022).

2. Self-Efficacy and Goal Setting:

Beliefs about one's abilities, or self-efficacy, are essential in nurturing intrinsic motivation. High self-efficacy, supported by realistic and attainable goals, motivates students to put more effort into language learning and feel a sense of satisfaction from overcoming challenges. This connection highlights that effective goal-setting strategies can enhance students' intrinsic motivation by giving them a sense of accomplishment (Gregersen & Mercer, (2022).).

3. Learning Environment and Autonomy:

A supportive environment that promotes autonomy and gives students choices enhances intrinsic motivation. When students have more control over their language-learning tasks, such as choosing reading materials or speaking topics, they are more likely to engage meaningfully and show persistence in learning English (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

4. Feedback and Encouragement:

Positive feedback and recognition from teachers and peers help build students' confidence and make the learning experience more rewarding, thus boosting their intrinsic motivation (Gregersen & Mercer, 2022). Constructive feedback that highlights students' progress also fosters a growth mindset, which is crucial for maintaining long-term intrinsic motivation.

A study by Maulizar (2019) identified several key reasons for motivation in learning English, including the desire to communicate in an international language both at home and abroad, the ability to read various English-language materials for academic purposes, and improving chances for better employment, status, and financial rewards. Other reasons include the ability to enjoy and understand English-language media for both information and leisure, gaining knowledge about different people, places, and politics, pursuing a specific career, adapting successfully to life in a foreign country, and reading English-language literature.

Impact of Intrinsic Motivation on Language Mastery

Intrinsic motivation is associated with several positive outcomes in English language learning, including increased persistence, active engagement, and higher proficiency. For example, intrinsically motivated students often seek out self-directed language learning opportunities beyond the classroom, resulting in more consistent practice and exposure. Research also shows that these students tend to use more effective learning strategies, such as self-monitoring and reflection, which aid in long-term retention and mastery (Chen & Lee, 2020).

Educational Implications and Strategies for Enhancing Intrinsic Motivation

Educators can enhance intrinsic motivation in English language learners by using strategies that align with students' interests and promote their autonomy. Some recommended approaches include:

1. Incorporating Student-Centered Activities:

Activities that allow students to explore personally meaningful topics help maintain their motivation (Gregersen & Mercer, 2022). For instance, project-based learning or integrating current events into lessons can boost engagement.

2. Promoting Autonomy through Choice:

According to (Gregersen & Mercer, 2022) giving students the freedom to choose their reading materials, writing topics, or research subjects makes learning more engaging and tailored to their interests.

3. Providing Constructive and Encouraging Feedback:

Positive feedback reinforces students' efforts and builds confidence. Emphasizing progress rather than solely focusing on outcomes can foster a more positive and motivating learning experience (Gregersen & Mercer, 2022).

Intrinsic motivation plays a pivotal role in English language mastery, impacting students' engagement, persistence, and achievement. Literature shows that when students find personal relevance and enjoyment in language learning, they are more likely to attain higher levels of proficiency. By fostering a supportive learning environment, offering choices, and providing meaningful feedback, educators can help enhance students' intrinsic motivation, paving the way for successful English language acquisition. Future research should explore more specific methods for developing intrinsic motivation in diverse language-learning contexts, contributing to more effective teaching practices.

METHOD

Research Design

This study used a descriptive quantitative research design to explore students' intrinsic motivation in learning English and identify the main factors that contribute to their motivation in the English Education Study Program at Pattimura University. A descriptive quantitative approach is appropriate as it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data on student's motivation levels, making it possible to gain objective insight into their learning behavior.

Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Pattimura University. This setting provides an ideal environment for researching intrinsic motivation in English language learning, as it is home to a diverse range of students who are actively engaged in the study of English. The target population consisted of 6th-semester students with a total of 40 students (32 females and 8 males) enrolled in the English Education Study Program at Pattimura University for the academic year 2022/2023.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through a 15-question questionnaire to measure intrinsic motivation in learning English and reflect factors that influence their motivation, such as personal interest in English, enjoyment of learning activities, and perceived value of English proficiency. The items in the questionnaire were rated on a Likert scale (ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”), thus allowing quantification of the level of intrinsic motivation among the participants. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation) to summarize the level of intrinsic motivation, and factor analysis was also conducted to identify the main motivational factors that influence student learning.

FINDINGS

The research findings stated that many students strongly agreed and agreed to the questions relating to students' intrinsic motivation and the factors that influence it. This research finding relates to the classification of questionnaire ratings for each item of students' intrinsic motivation in learning English. Data analysis of the average score shows that students' intrinsic motivation in learning English in 6th semester students in the English Education study program at Pattimura University is at a good level based on responses collected from 40 people (32 female and 8 male). This can be seen from the following table.

Table 1. The Data of The Questionnaire

No.	Items	Percentage				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Learning English is enjoyable for me	42.50%	52.50%	5%	-	-
2	I feel a sense of accomplishment when I improve my English skills	7.50%	60%	7.50%	-	7.50%
3	I find satisfaction and using English in real-life situations	27.50%	67.50%	-	-	-
4	Learning English helps me feel more confident about myself	40%	45%	15%	-	-
5	I am motivated to learn English because it opens up new opportunities for me	47.50%	45%	7.50%	-	-
6	I enjoy challenging myself with complex English tasks and materials	25%	57.50%	17.50%	-	-
7	Learning English is a personal goal that I am passionate about	32.50%	50%	15%	-	-
8	I find intrinsic satisfaction in the process of learning English, rather than just focusing on the result	20%	60%	17.50%	-	-
9	I enjoy exploring English language and culture beyond what is taught in the classroom	27.50%	65%	7.50%	-	-
10	I am motivated to learn English because it helps me connect with people from different parts of the world	55%	40%	5%	-	-
11	I feel successful when I make progress in learning English	55%	40%	5%	-	-

No.	Items	Percentage				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12	I often sought opportunities to practice English voluntarily	22.50%	57.55	17.50%	-	-
13	I was involved in learning English because of curiosity and personal pleasure	22.50%	67.50%	10%	-	-
14	I was prompted by the desire to be a better communicator in English	27.55	50%	22.50%	-	-
15	I enjoyed the challenge and set a goal to improve my English skills	27.50%	60%	12.50%	-	-

The results show that the majority of students feel pleasure and satisfaction in learning English and recognize the personal and professional opportunities that English proficiency brings. The first finding from the questionnaire revealed that students strongly associate learning English with pleasure (42.5% strongly agree, 52.5% agree), in addition, many expressed a sense of accomplishment when they improved their English language skills (60% agree and 7.5% strongly agree). A significant number of students also found satisfaction in applying English in real-life situations (67.5% agreed and 27.5% strongly agreed), while on the aspect of learning English because it provided new opportunities for them (40% strongly agreed, 45% agreed). The desire to seek challenges was also evident, with 57.5% of students agreeing and 25% strongly agreeing to enjoy complex English tasks.

In addition, most students also showed interest in learning English, with 50% agreeing and 32.5% strongly agreeing. Furthermore, regarding enjoyment in exploring the English language and culture, most students agreed (65%) and strongly agreed (27.5%). Students value English as a means to connect with diverse people globally, as seen in the high response rate for this item (55% strongly agree, 40% agree). In addition, 55% of respondents strongly agreed and 40% agreed that they feel successful and accomplished when they make progress in their English language skills.

In addition, the students also look for opportunities to practice English with 57.55% agreeing and 22.5% strongly agreeing. Regarding personal curiosity and enjoyment in learning English, 67.5% of the students agreed with it, and 22.5% strongly agreed. A total of 50% agreed and 27.5% strongly agreed that students are motivated and driven by the desire to become better

communicators in English. Finally, about enjoying challenges and setting goals to improve English language skills, 60% of students agreed with this and 27.5% strongly agreed.

In conclusion, this data suggests that intrinsic motivation among students at Pattimura University is strong, driven by factors such as the desire for self-improvement, enjoyment, confidence building, and the practical benefits of language learning. The findings highlight the importance of fostering a learning environment that encourages personal satisfaction, real-world application, and exploration beyond the academic environment, thus supporting sustained motivation in language acquisition.

DISCUSSION

Findings from this study revealed strong intrinsic motivation among sixth-semester students in the English Language Education program at Pattimura University, indicating an exhilarating level of engagement and personal satisfaction in learning English. Intrinsic motivation, defined by Deci and Ryan (1985) as motivation driven by internal rewards, plays an important role in language acquisition, where personal enjoyment and internalized goals are essential for sustained learning. Results from this study indicate that the majority of students not only enjoy learning English, but also realize broader benefits, such as personal growth, confidence building, and potential career opportunities.

One of the most prominent aspects of the findings was students' enjoyment of learning English. More than 95% of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that learning English is fun, and almost 70% felt a sense of satisfaction when they made progress in their English language skills. This is in line with Hartini et al.'s (2018) view that intrinsic motivation encourages students to engage in activities because they find them naturally enjoyable and fulfilling. Pleasure and satisfaction are essential for maintaining motivation in language learning, as these feelings strengthen the learner's commitment to the learning process. Pleasure also serves as positive reinforcement, encouraging students to invest more effort and engage in challenging tasks.

Besides that, Study also show that students perceive English as an important tool to boost self-confidence and self-expression. Recent research reveals that confidence in language learning is closely related to factors such as social support, mastery of learning strategies, and a supportive learning environment. Saidah (2024) noted that a supportive learning environment, including positive feedback and safe speaking opportunities, contributed significantly to students' academic confidence in English. Confidence not only improves academic performance but also opens up career opportunities and cross-cultural interactions. A total of 95% of students expressed satisfaction in using English in real-life situations. This supports the idea that language learning

becomes more effective when applied in practical contexts. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), a supportive environment that promotes autonomy and gives students choices enhances intrinsic motivation.

Related to goal Oriented learning and Challenge, most students view English learning as a personal goal and enjoy setting challenges for themselves. More than 82% of the respondents agreed that they enjoy working on complex English tasks, indicating a preference for challenging content that demands higher cognitive engagement. This is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the “Zone of Proximal Development”, where students are motivated by tasks that are slightly beyond their current abilities, as this encourages them to improve their abilities.

This study also found that 92.5% of students enjoyed exploring the English language and culture, suggesting that incorporating cultural elements into the curriculum can increase engagement. In addition, 95% of students expressed motivation to connect with people globally through English, indicating that the language serves as a medium to expand their social horizons and understand diverse perspectives. Recent studies highlight the role of cultural engagement in enhancing students' intrinsic motivation for learning English (Yang et al., 2024). For instance, exploring cultural aspects and using language for real-world communication fosters deeper motivation and self-sustained learning. Students with higher intercultural communicative skills and a strong growth mindset toward language learning often demonstrate a positive "L2 self," which significantly supports sustained motivation and engagement. Incorporating cultural elements and interactive tasks into the curriculum can further increase learners' motivation by making lessons more relevant and meaningful.

The high level of intrinsic motivation demonstrated in the study aligns with recent research emphasizing the importance of creating a learning environment that fosters engagement and practical application of skills. For instance, educators who integrate real-world scenarios and encourage personalized learning experiences effectively support intrinsic motivation. This aligns with findings showing that tailored learning environments, which include interactive activities and collaborative problem-solving tasks, significantly enhance students' motivation and engagement (Ling Wei et al., 2023; Press, 2023).

A study has shown that intrinsic motivation drives better academic results, as it encourages students to actively engage with the material, leading to deeper understanding and retention. This is especially true in environments where students view learning as an opportunity for self-improvement and personal growth, rather than as a task driven by external rewards or pressures. (Marzalek et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2024) Further supporting these findings, recent research highlights the role of emotional engagement in enhancing motivation. In language learning, emotional

engagement has been linked to the “L2 self” or language learner's aspirational identity, where students visualize themselves using the language in real-life situations, such as communicating globally or exploring a new culture. This vision helps sustain motivation as it aligns personal goals with practical applications of language skills. (Liu et al., 2024)

Strong intrinsic motivation among Pattimura University students indicates a solid basis for their success in English. Their motivation is driven by self-development, personal satisfaction, confidence building, and the tangible benefits they attribute to English proficiency. In line with scholars' theories on motivation and language learning, these findings underscore the importance of fostering an engaging, practical, and culturally rich learning environment that not only supports but also enhances students' intrinsic desire to learn. By nurturing this internal drive, educators can encourage students to embrace language learning as a lifelong journey, which empowers them personally and professionally.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the intrinsic motivation of sixth-semester students of the English Education program at Pattimura University is quite high. This motivation is driven by several factors such as Fun in Learning English, Real-World Application, Increased Confidence, Language and Cultural Exploration, Passion to Complete Challenges, Relationship to Personal Growth, and Practical Implications. This research underscores the importance of creating a learning environment that is fun, practically relevant, and rich in cultural aspects to support students' intrinsic motivation. For future research, it is recommended to conduct a study on the Influence of Different Learning Environments. Further research could explore how different learning environments (e.g. online, face-to-face, or hybrid learning) affect students' intrinsic motivation in learning English, as well as how each approach can be optimized to support students' motivation and engagement.

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