

## STRATEGIES FOR MOTIVATING STUDENTS TO LEARN ENGLISH: TEACHERS' INSIGHTS IN RURAL AREAS

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**ABSTRACT:** Proficiency in the English language has become essential in this age of globalization. To achieve the goal, the Indonesian government has formally organized English language learning at various levels of education. Regrettably, several students, particularly those residing in rural areas, exhibit diminished motivation to acquire English proficiency. Nonetheless, numerous teachers in rural areas of North Aceh, Indonesia persist in motivating students to develop proficiency in English. This study investigated the methods employed by teachers to motivate students in the rural area to learn English. This study involved twelve English teachers from six senior and junior high schools in the area. The data were gathered via semi-structured interviews. The gathered data were subsequently analyzed using descriptive qualitative methods, encompassing data collection, condensation, presentation, and conclusion. The findings indicated that teachers motivate students to learn English by employing modeling, playing videos, organizing games, and giving rewards. As a result of these initiatives, teachers observed an enhancement in students' motivation to learn the English language. This study subsequently yielded numerous recommendations and suggestions for stakeholders and future researchers.

**KEYWORDS:** Classroom Interaction, Educational Motivation, Learning English, Pedagogical Competence, Rural Areas

### INTRODUCTION

English is presently a worldwide language with around two billion speakers and numerous unique variants shaped by the various communities that have adopted it over the years (Lin et al., 2018). English speakers are dispersed across several countries, enabling effective communication for those proficient in English while traveling internationally.

Proficiency in the English language has become essential in this age of globalization (Muslem et al., 2019). English is a significant component influencing the quality of human resources in the 4.0 age (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020). Mastering English enables individuals to communicate with numerous people from diverse countries, both online and offline. Proficiency in English facilitates access to information, as the majority of high-quality content is disseminated in

the language with the largest number of speakers, including English.

To address the need for English, Indonesia officially incorporates English education from junior high school through to university level. The issue is that certain students, particularly those residing in rural areas, have diminished exposure to English. They receive only restricted exposure to English within the educational setting. Upon exiting the classroom, students are invariably immersed in their local linguistic environment (Daflizar & Petraki, 2022). This circumstance leads to their neglect and diminishes their motivation to study English. During the execution of the learning process, students appeared to exhibit diminished enthusiasm for participating in English sessions (Pranawengtias, 2022). This reality diminishes their motivation to study English.

Researchers have been investigating how teachers enhance

student motivation to study English. Yusuf, Inayah, and Mutiarani (2020) examine teachers' endeavors to enhance English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' enthusiasm to learn English at the Methodist Junior High School in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. The findings revealed that teachers were a significant source of the students' motivation to study English. Pranawengtias (2022) also identifies the factors influencing the learning motivation of students at Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia and concludes that there is not a substantial difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for learning English among the students. Umam, Aini and Herdina (2023) examine how professional English teachers in Kediri City, Indonesia, engage their students. They discovered that teachers instructing students with low to average learning motivation prefer to employ more strategies to establish fundamental motivational conditions.

Current studies on teacher motivation of students predominantly concentrate on urban settings and involve professional teachers, whereas investigations into teacher motivation of students in rural areas for English language acquisition remain insufficient. In fact, the motivation of students in rural areas is lacking. Furthermore, motivating students to learn English proficiently poses a problem for all teachers, particularly for those who are predominantly non-native speakers, as is the situation in Indonesia (Ulfa & Bania, 2019). Encouraging students in rural areas to acquire proficiency in English presents a significant difficulty. They are infrequently exposed to English, necessitating intervention and encouragement from other sources to motivate their English learning.

Fortunately, our preliminary research indicates that numerous teachers in rural schools in North Aceh, Indonesia, persist in encouraging students to acquire English. This study then aims to address the deficiencies in

prior research and meet students' needs for learning motivation by investigating how teachers motivate English language acquisition among students in rural area. The findings of this study will benefit as a framework to enhance student motivation. The findings will also provide recommendations and considerations for teachers, administrators, and legislators in the advancement of future education.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Pedagogical Competence**

Education fundamentally constitutes an interaction characterized by a reciprocal relationship among students, teachers, and peers (Sudrajat, 2021). The educational process cannot occur without interaction between the two parties. When the interaction is favorable and supervised by the teacher, the participating students will undergo an attitudinal shift. Regulated interactions within educational institutions that engage both institutional members and the external community progressively cultivate a favorable disposition among students (Zulkhairi & Hajar, 2023).

To foster positive attitudes and passion among students, the role and function of teachers need to be enhanced. Teachers significantly impact students, particularly in influencing their views, motivation, and personalities (Hoerudin, 2020). The efficacy of the educational process in attaining its objectives is predominantly influenced by the teacher's attitude, which is shown in their overall demeanor and everyday conduct, particularly within the school environment. The teacher's attitude is significant for students, as they are at a developmental stage of identity formation.

To attain these objectives, teachers need to possess diverse competences. One of these qualities is pedagogical competence, specifically the capacity to facilitate learning and motivate students to attain educational objectives. Teachers need to employ

effective pedagogical strategies to motivate their students to acquire the target language (Salmani Nodoushan, 2020). Instructing English should address the enhancement of students' motivation and academic performance (Pranawengtias, 2022). Student motivation is a critical determinant of teacher effectiveness, influencing both engagement in the learning process and academic success (Leitão et al., 2022).

To excite and motivate, teachers need to exhibit curiosity about the reasons and mechanisms behind student learning and their adaptation to environmental learning situations. Teachers need to comprehend the essence of learning motivation and the methods to motivate students to engage in the learning process. By using this comprehension and expertise, teachers may motivate students to engage in learning and enhance academic performance.

### **Learning Motivation**

Human psychology significantly influences every learning context (Haidara, 2016). A student cannot formulate a plan for executing learning activities without intrinsic motivation. Consequently, teachers and students need to remain attentive and consistently cultivate motivation to maximally attain learning objectives and expectations.

Learning motivation is crucial for students as it 1) enhances their awareness of their status at the initial, process, and final stages of learning, 2) provides insight into the efficacy of their learning efforts relative to their peers, 3) guides their educational activities, 4) fosters an understanding of their educational journey and 5) amplifies their enthusiasm for learning.

Experts in educational psychology identified two primary factors that affect learning motivation; intrinsic factors and external factors (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic factors encompass motives that are inherently present within each individual. Intrinsic factors are internal

elements that motivate an individual to engage in learning activities. Intrinsic factors initiate and persist due to the recognition of a need and motivation associated with learning activities. Instances of intrinsic motivation include the desire to learn to resolve a problem, to comprehend the mechanisms of phenomena through rules and formulas, to want to become a professor, or to achieve expertise in a specific scientific discipline.

Extrinsic factors encompass motives that are activated and operate in response to external stimuli. Extrinsic motivation is a learning activity that arises from an individual's impulses and wants that are unrelated to the learning process. Examples of extrinsic factors include: (1) acquiring the ability to meet obligations; (2) acquiring the ability to evade anticipated punishment; (3) acquiring the ability to enhance prestige; (4) acquiring the ability to secure material rewards; (5) acquiring the ability to receive commendation from significant individuals such as parents and teachers; (6) acquiring the ability to satisfy the expectations of a designated role or to fulfill the criteria for advancement or administrative classification.

Among these two factors, intrinsic motivation is defined as participating in an activity for its inherent enjoyment, pleasure, or satisfaction, rather than for external benefits (Deci & Ryan 2004). Intrinsic characteristics enable an individual to recognize the significance of learning, experience joy, and focus on the educational process. Intrinsic factors are considered superior as they enable students to learn autonomously, without external guidance or reliance on others.

### **Motivating Students**

Fostering learning motivation is challenging but achievable. Teachers might employ various methods to motivate students to learn. Malone and Lepper (2021) identify seven variables that enhance motivation: challenge, curiosity, control, fantasy,

competitiveness, collaboration, and recognition, which are particularly applicable to a game-based learning context.

Teachers can motivate students by elucidating the significance of a discipline and its practical applications in life. Students will engage more effectively when the subjects they study are relevant and beneficial to their personal life. Teachers can leverage students' attitudes, goals, interests, and ambition as justifications for the necessity of learning a specific subject.

The establishment of goals that are acknowledged and embraced by students functions as a significant motivational instrument. Comprehending the objectives to be attained motivates students to reach these aims, fostering a love for ongoing learning. Learning objectives need to be explicitly articulated and communicated to students to ensure they understand the purpose of their education. Suhr (2018) identified goal setting, growth mindset, student belonging, and the establishment of a pleasant classroom environment as helpful ways for motivating middle school students.

To motivate students, teachers can connect learning materials to their experiences in diverse contexts. Teachers can motivate students to perceive learning as an endeavor devoid of stress, thereby fostering the enthusiasm necessary for optimal task performance and engagement. To motivate students, teachers need to cultivate a classroom environment that aligns with student needs.

Teachers can enhance motivation in learning activities by assigning numerical values to students. In this context, numbers represent the significance of educational endeavors. A multitude of students engage in study to attain favorable grades. For students, excellent grades serve as a significant motivator. However, some students pursue their studies only for the sake of advancing to the next grade. This indicates that the significance of

motivation is lower than that of students who desire high grades.

For a student to thrive academically, it is essential to get commendation, acknowledgment, accolades, or rewards. This will incentivize the student to exert greater effort in their studies. Conversely, if students breach learning activities, they need to be penalized to instill fear and deter recurrence of their behavior. Imposing penalties on students who breach academic protocols deters other students from committing similar infractions. The punishment simultaneously incentivizes the guilty student and encourages compliant students to engage in the learning process. When administering rewards or punishments, it is important to recognize that praise and rewards are generally more effective than punitive measures; nonetheless, there are instances where punishment is necessary.

Teachers might utilize rivalry or competition as a motivational instrument to enhance student learning. Competition in both individual and group learning can enhance student performance. Teachers can also motivate students by cultivating awareness, enabling them to recognize the significance of learning and embrace it as a challenge to be pursued. Teachers can further motivate students by conveying the outcomes of their learning. Awareness of learning outcomes, particularly regarding progress, will motivate students to engage more actively in their education.

To effectively motivate students, teachers need to consider individual differences, including differences in abilities, backgrounds, and attitudes toward school or specific courses. Every student possesses their approach to recognizing and analyzing their potential. Students possess varied motivations for their educational decisions (Meens et al., 2018), and these disparities substantially influence their learning experiences (Almasri, 2022). Those with distinct learning style

preferences exhibit differing behaviors in their perception, interaction, and response to the learning environment (Wulandari et al., 2023).

Each student has unique academic talents, physical skills, and behavioral tendencies. The implication is that numerous students face difficulties in the learning process. Learning problems are sometimes triggered by particular variables that act as obstacles to their actions. When students may learn like their peers, devoid of hazards, obstacles, and disorders, academic success becomes achievable, resulting in favorable learning outcomes. The comfort and well-being of students are essential considerations in the learning process.

Within the instructional framework of schools, a teacher requires an array of strategies, methodologies, and resources to adeptly address the unique attributes of students. Teachers and instructional designers need to account for students' variances to develop successful and efficient educational experiences (Almasri, 2022). A clear understanding of student diversity in learning styles and effective management can enhance academic accomplishment (Yotta, 2023). The teacher's creativity and inventiveness in classroom management are crucial for enabling effective learning activities and mitigating challenges or learning disabilities. Teachers need to endeavor to address students' needs by considering their physical well-being, fostering a sense of security, and demonstrating genuine concern for their welfare.

The process is essential for attaining success in education. Fundamental priorities in the learning process include active involvement, innovation, creativity, and effectiveness. Should a teacher comply with the specified standards, he is prepared to become a professional teacher. Proficient teachers will develop versatile and outstanding students, as students will have increased autonomy to refine

their abilities through various innovative methods utilized by an engaging instructor. By structuring the learning experience accordingly, each student derives satisfaction and rewards that guide the educational journey towards success, accomplishment, and self-assurance.

## **METHOD**

This study seeks to examine the methods employed by English teachers in rural areas to motivate students to learn English. This study was confined to English teachers in rural educational institutions. This area was selected because of the limited exposure of students to foreign languages, particularly English, resulting in diminished motivation to acquire such languages. This situation undoubtedly presents an extra burden for English teachers in these areas.

This study employs a qualitative methodology, an investigative procedure aimed at comprehending social or human issues through certain methodological traditions (Creswell, 1998). This study is descriptive and centers on foundational concepts that have underpinned various human endeavors. The primary objective of the descriptive research approach is to provide an objective factual representation of a situation (Kountur, 2005). The data supplied by the respondents was systematically analyzed to evaluate and derive conclusions from the study's findings, thereafter presented in narrative style.

Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data, since the researcher aimed to limit the question breadth while allowing respondents to freely convey information. The interviews were done informally in a one-on-one format and encompassed inquiries regarding the methods employed by English teachers to motivate students in learning the language. The data supplied by interviewees was documented,

transcribed, and subsequently presented for analysis.

The interview featured responses from twelve English teachers. They teach at six senior and junior high schools in the rural area of North Aceh Regency, Indonesia. They were selected as respondents because of their expertise in motivating students in the rural area to acquire English language skills. They have been apprised of the study and have expressed their willingness to join, provided their identities remain confidential. The identities of respondents in this study were coded as R1, R2, etc., to ensure confidentiality. The interview questions focus on strategies for motivating students in the rural area to learn English. The data supplied by respondents will underpin an investigation of the challenges related to motivating students in the rural area to acquire English language skills.

The collected data were analyzed utilizing the methodology proposed by Miles et al. (2018). The data analysis was performed in three phases: data condensation, data display, and data conclusion. Data condensation is the process of simplifying and clarifying collected data. This phase encompasses the selection, categorization, and coding of data. Data display is the method of displaying condensed data in a more organized and comprehensible format. The conclusion of data involves synthesizing the supplied information. This phase entails the analysis and interpretation of data to comprehend the significance and ramifications of the research results.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study investigated the methods employed by English teachers in a rural area to motivate students to learn English. The findings indicate that they motivate students through various means. This description will elucidate these methods.

### **Modeling**

The results of the data analysis show that respondents motivate students to learn English through modeling. In the interview session, one respondent, R7 narrated: "To encourage students to learn English, I often tell stories in class, especially stories about people around students who have achieved certain grades because of their English skills." In more detail, R11 also narrated: "I tell them how students in other schools in Aceh won speech competitions and English debate competitions. They were able to achieve these achievements because they learned and mastered English."

In addition to telling stories, respondents also admitted to presenting characters as models. On separate occasions, respondents R2, R3, and R5 said: "At certain times such as during the graduation event of third-grade students, our school often presents alumni or people who are considered successful, including success due to mastery of English. They are asked to tell the story of their success. Their presence and stories serve as inspiration and models for students."

The interview results indicate that the respondent motivates students by providing exemplary models for emulation. This strategy effectively motivates students by providing models that motivate them and opportunities for imitation. Emulating and adjusting the conduct of others, regardless of their failures or successes, constitutes learning, since it cultivates the imitator through the experiences of others. Adaptive learning systems can improve education by tracking significant attributes and implementing suitable modifications in the learning process (Orji & Vassileva 2021).

Modeling also discourages students from adopting trial-and-error approaches, as they possess a definitive path to follow without necessitating exploration or experimentation. Modeling exercises facilitate the student's learning process, enabling

them to freely construct their knowledge (Salisu & Ransom, 2014). Students will be motivated when they can observe or emulate anything. Learning will be more effectively internalized and applied if the teacher employs modeling behavior rather than solely relying on lectures or oral narratives. Employing modeling, students will be motivated to attain success akin to the exemplar they are emulating.

### **Playing Videos**

In addition to telling stories and presenting models, respondents also motivate students by playing videos containing success stories of people who are proficient in English. Teachers also play learning videos containing conversations or other materials. Two respondents, R9 and R12, separately said, "I often show videos of people who have physical disabilities but are still enthusiastic about living and learning." Another respondent, R6 said, "I often show videos of native speakers speaking English. In this way, students feel like they are in England and experience the English-speaking environment firsthand. When I played the video, I saw that they were very happy and excited. They also asked for this kind of learning to be repeated."

Viewing videos that showcase success stories motivates students to attain similar accomplishments as those depicted in the video. The utilization of video as an educational medium also motivates students to exert greater effort in their studies. The utilization of video media in education enhances engagement and encourages sustained attention to teachings (Widahyu, 2021).

The utilization of video as a teaching instrument enhances student motivation across all disciplines (Bravo et al. 2011). In the context of English language acquisition, Hajar, Helmiyadi, and Mawardi (2024) discovered that video clips and audio serve as useful mediums for enhancing students' enthusiasm to study English. Moreover, animated video media has

demonstrated to be both effective and suitable for promoting independent student study, thereby substantially enhancing motivation and improving learning results (Utaminingsih et al. 2024).

Videos can enhance student motivation due to the engaging and comprehensible nature of the content offered. Video media is the most suitable and precise medium for imparting messages, significantly enhancing students' comprehension. The presence of video media enhances students' comprehension of the subject presented by teachers through the video (Widahyu, 2021).

### **Organizing Games**

Respondents in this study also admitted that they used games as one of the activities to motivate students to learn English. Two respondents, R4 and R10, separately said: "I often organize games in the teaching and learning process. In this game, I ask questions about certain materials that need to be answered or completed by students." Another respondent, R8 said: "I encourage students' enthusiasm through games. When they are bored or feel tired of learning English, I change learning into games. This activity provides a fresh environment in the learning process."

This study's findings demonstrate that teachers can enhance students' learning motivation using games. This discovery reinforces other studies indicating that gaming positively influences students' motivation to learn (Ilić, Ivanović, & Klašnja-Miličević, 2024) and serves as an effective method to enhance intrinsic motivation (Hamari & Koivisto, 2015). Gamification positively influences students' willingness to participate in class, study, enhance their self-confidence, engage in healthy competition with peers, and learn from their errors (Hellín, 2023). This study corroborates Huseinović (2023), demonstrating a substantial influence of gamification tactics on students' willingness to learn English as a foreign

language, alongside their overall success in EFL learning and academic performance.

Games can motivate students as they foster creativity and critical thinking, thereby motivating them to address the challenges posed inside the game. Students would be motivated due to a sequence of learning activities that prioritize critical and analytical thinking processes to identify and resolve the posed problem (Wahyuni & Bhattacharya, 2021). The obstacles given in the game stimulate students to independently engage in problem-solving.

Games stimulate student motivation as they typically entail interaction and teamwork among students within specific groups. Motivation for learning in educational activities is enhanced by interactions and partnerships among students (Waite & Davis, 2006). Students exhibited heightened motivation to acquire and transfer knowledge when collaborating in groups, effectively engaging in the recognition and management of group dynamics, thereby fostering more than mere subject expertise (Tomar et al., 2024).

Interaction and collaboration in games necessitate that students cooperate to compete and showcase their group as the victor. This state motivates students to persist in their efforts and enhances their motivation to study more diligently. The incorporation of games can also incentivize students, as they promote increased engagement and equip them to confront and succeed in challenges. Games foster student interest by mitigating monotony in the learning process. Students, being human beings, exhibit a preference for novel or challenging experiences. The incorporation of games would fulfill students' desire for novelty while enhancing their excitement for studying.

### **Giving Rewards**

The study's results indicated that respondents motivated students by

providing rewards upon their successful achievements. During an interview, R1 stated: "I frequently utilize games to learn English. Upon each victory, I shall bestow a reward upon them." Another respondent, R8, stated: "I provide rewards to students who achieve victory in competitions. The awards vary in value, ranging from significant worth to minor items such as a pack of chocolates, notebooks, or pens."

Rewards are thought to enhance students' academic motivation. Students, as human beings, will engage in movement when presented with enjoyable rewards. Rewards would enhance students to engage in learning and exert greater effort (Sidin, 2021). Extrinsic motivation, encompassing rewards and punishments, along with the quality of the teaching and learning process, are the two primary components that might enhance students' learning motivation (Pranawengtias, 2022). Providing rewards will motivate students who have not yet received one to engage in learning to attain a reward, while those who have already gotten a reward will strive to obtain a comparable or greater reward. This situation enhances students' motivation to learn.

### **CONCLUSION**

Proficiency in the English language has become essential in this age of globalization. To achieve the goal, the Indonesian government has formally organized English language learning at various levels of education. Regrettably, several students, particularly those residing in rural areas, exhibit diminished motivation to acquire English proficiency. Nevertheless, numerous teachers in rural areas of North Aceh persist in motivating students to acquire proficiency in English. This study seeks to investigate how these teachers motivate students in rural areas to acquire proficiency in English. The study's findings indicate that teachers motivate students to learn English by employing modeling, playing videos,



organizing games, and giving rewards. As a result of these initiatives, teachers observe an enhancement in students' motivation to acquire English proficiency.

The findings of this research hold implication for English teachers in both rural and urban educational settings. By employing engaging activities, together with supportive teaching materials and rewards, teachers can enhance their students' enthusiasm to learn English. The findings of this study serve as an alternate recommendation for teachers, administrators, and policymakers in the educational sector.

Nonetheless, this study is constrained by the restricted number of teachers involved in the interviews. Consequently, subsequent studies may encompass a more extensive sample to amass a more substantial data set. Subsequent study may also engage both teachers and students concurrently to ensure that the study's outcomes are equitable and thorough. This study was also restricted to teachers teaching in rural areas of North Aceh, Indonesia. Additional study is advised to investigate the same issue in urban or rural settings in different regions. Investigating a broader sample with diverse views will certainly yield more accurate insights into our comprehension of learning motivation.

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