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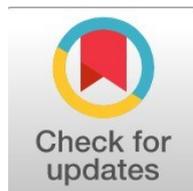
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Instrumental Drives in English Learning Among Non-English Majors

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Abstract

General Background: Motivation is a fundamental factor influencing success in foreign language learning, especially in contexts where English is a secondary academic subject. **Specific Background:** In Indonesia, non-English major students in smaller teacher training institutions often receive less attention in language motivation research. **Knowledge Gap:** Previous studies have largely focused on English majors or students from urban universities, leaving a lack of insight into motivation among non-English majors in peripheral regions. **Aim:** This study investigates the types and factors of English learning motivation among non-English major students at STKIP Muhammadiyah Pagar Alam. **Results:** Using a mixed-methods approach, findings reveal that most students demonstrate high extrinsic motivation—such as academic and career goals—while a smaller group, mainly from the Indonesian Language Education program, also show intrinsic interests like cultural appreciation and personalenjoyment. **Novelty:** This research highlights motivation dynamics in an underrepresented population, offering context-specific insights beyond mainstream university settings. **Implications:** The results suggest that English instruction in similar institutions should be tailored to students' dominant motivational drivers, using student-centered methods and digital tools to foster engagement and overcome learning anxieties.

Highlight :

- Non-English major students are generally motivated to learn English, mostly due to **instrumental reasons** like academic and career goals.

- **Intrinsic motivation** is more common among Indonesian Language students, who show interest in English media and global culture.

- **Supportive learning environments**—with interactive methods and digital tools—can boost motivation and reduce learning barriers.

Keywords : English Learning, Motivation, Non-English Major Students, Integrative Motivation, Instrumental Motivation

Introduction

Motivation is widely recognized as one of the key factors influencing success in learning a foreign language, including English. According to [1], individuals who possess a strong desire and derive enjoyment from the learning process are more likely to succeed in acquiring a second language. In the context of higher education, especially among non-English major students, motivation to learn English is essential, given the increasing demands for global communication skills and job market competitiveness.

Learning motivation is generally categorized into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation originates from within the individual, such as interest, personal need, and internal satisfaction, whereas extrinsic motivation is shaped by external influences such as social pressure, academic requirements, parental expectations, and career prospects [2] [3]. Furthermore, [4] emphasize the role of social and cultural contexts in shaping students' motivational orientations toward language learning.

Several previous studies have explored motivational factors in English language learning [5] [6], but most have focused on English major students or learners in urban, research-intensive universities. Compared to those settings, students at teacher training colleges in smaller regions—such as STKIP Muhammadiyah Pagar Alam—may face different motivational dynamics influenced by local socio-economic contexts, limited exposure to English, and differing institutional priorities. Thus, there remains a research gap regarding how non-English major students in peripheral higher education institutions perceive and experience English learning motivation[7].

This study aims to fill that gap by investigating the types of motivation—both intrinsic and extrinsic—among non-English major students at STKIP Muhammadiyah Pagar Alam and identifying key factors that influence their motivation. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on a geographically and institutionally underrepresented group in the field of language learning research. By doing so, it contributes context-specific insights that can inform English language teaching strategies, particularly in private teacher education institutions. This is in line with the *scope of Jurnal X*, which emphasizes research offering practical contributions to curriculum and instructional development in higher education[8] [9].

Method

A. Research Design

This study adopted an explanatory mixed-methods design, in which quantitative data collection through questionnaires was followed by qualitative interviews to explain and deepen the understanding of motivational patterns. The primary aim was to investigate the motivation of non-English major students in learning English at STKIP Muhammadiyah Pagar Alam by integrating both numerical trends and students' personal perspectives. The research framework was informed by Gardner's Integrative Motivation Theory, Deci & Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, and Dörnyei's L2 Motivation Framework [10].

B. Population and Sample

1. Population

The population comprised all fourth-semester students from two departments: [11]

a. Indonesian Language Education (Class A = 21, B = 19)

b. Mathematics Education (Class A = 23)

Total population = 63 students

2. Sample

A total sampling approach was used for the questionnaire (all 63 students), followed by purposive sampling for interviews with 15 students (10 from Indonesian Language, 5 from Mathematics).

Table 1. Interview Sample Distribution

Department	Sampling Method	Description	n
Indonesian Language	Random (within dept.)	From Class A & B, total = 40 students	10
Mathematics	Random	From Class A, total = 23 students	5
Total			15

3. Variables

a. Independent Variable: Motivation to learn English (Intrinsic, Extrinsic, Integrative)

b. Dependent Variable: English learning engagement and perceived outcomes

Motivational Types:a. Intrinsic – interest, confidence, internal goalsb. Extrinsic – career needs, academic requirements,

parental pressurec. Integrative – cultural curiosity, interaction with English-speaking communities

4. Operational Definitions

a. Motivation: Internal or external factors that encourage students to engage in English learning.

b. English Learning: The development of skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English.

c. Non-Major Students: Learners enrolled in non-English departments (e.g., Indonesian Language, Mathematics).

5. Instruments and Data Collection

a. Questionnaire:[12]

1) Distributed to all 63 students

2) Contained Likert-scale items, and open-ended questions

3) Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha (α = 0.812), indicating good internal consistency

4) Descriptive statistics (mean, SD) were used to identify motivational trends

b. Interview:[13]

1) Semi-structured interviews with 15 students

2) Questions were developed based on key motivational theories

3) Interviews were transcribed and analyzed for thematic patterns

6. Data Analysis

Following Miles and Huberman's (1994) model: [14]

a. Questionnaire Distribution →

b. Quantitative Analysis (Mean, SD, α) →

c. Interview Selection →

d. Qualitative Analysis (Thematic, Content, Narrative) →

Techniques Used:

a. Thematic Analysis*: Identifying dominant motivation themes*

b. Content Analysis*: Frequency of motivational terms*

c. Narrative Analysis*: Individual learning journeys to trace motivational shifts*

7. Validity and Triangulation

a. Content Validity: Ensured by aligning instruments with Gardner, Deci & Ryan, and Dörnyei's frameworks

b. Reliability: Cronbach's α = 0.812

c. Methodological Triangulation: Combining questionnaire and interviews for data depth

d. Theoretical Triangulation: Integration of three major motivational theories (Gardner, Deci & Ryan, Dörnyei)

Result and Discussion

A. Results

This study aimed to investigate the learning motivation of non-English major students in learning English at STKIP Muhammadiyah Pagar Alam. The research focused on identifying the factors that drive students' motivation—both intrinsic and extrinsic—in engaging with English as a foreign language, especially among those whose primary academic focus is not on English itself[15]. Understanding these motivational factors is crucial to enhancing English learning strategies in higher education, particularly in institutions where English is a compulsory yet often secondary subject[16].

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the students' motivation, this study employed a mixed-method approach. Data

collection was conducted through two main techniques: semi-structured interviews and the administration of a structured questionnaire. The interview phase involved 15 fourth-semester students selected through purposive sampling, consisting of 10 students from the Indonesian Language Education program and 5 students from the Mathematics Education program.

These interviews provided qualitative insights into personal experiences, beliefs, and challenges students faced in learning English[17].

In addition to the interviews, a questionnaire was distributed to a broader sample of 56 fourth-semester students from both programs. The questionnaire consisted of several statements related to English learning motivation, which were measured using a Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The aim of the questionnaire was to quantify motivational tendencies among the wider student body, allowing the researcher to identify trends and general attitudes toward English learning across disciplines[18].

The combination of interview and questionnaire data allowed the researcher to triangulate findings and gain a well-rounded picture of student motivation. While interviews offered depth and nuance, the questionnaire provided breadth and statistical reliability. This methodological approach was essential for analyzing the dominant types of motivation—whether intrinsic or extrinsic—that influence students' engagement and persistence in learning English as a foreign language[19].

1. Interview Findings

The interviews revealed different motivational tendencies: [20]

a. Indonesian Language Education Students showed a blend of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Some expressed personal interest in English, while others emphasized its importance for careers, academics, and cultural understanding.

b. Mathematics Education Students mostly exhibited extrinsic motivation, focusing on the necessity of English for thesis writing and job opportunities, with limited personal interest.

Common challenges included: [21]

a. Limited vocabulary

b. Difficult pronunciation

c. Low speaking confidence

d. Anxiety about making mistakes

Table 2. Summary Table of Interview Themes

Respondent	Statement Summary	Initial Code	Motivation Type
R1–R5 (Indo)	Career preparation, academic needs, personal hobbies	Career, thesis, interest	Mixed: Extrinsic & Intrinsic
R1–R5 (Math)	Thesis requirement, global access, future jobs	Academic & job needs	Mainly Extrinsic

2. Questionnaire Findings

A Likert-scale questionnaire was distributed to 56 students. The overall response trend showed a positive motivation toward learning English.

Table 3. Response Distribution Table

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	9.3%
Agree	41	72.2%
Disagree	10	18.5%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%
Total	**56**	**100%**

Most students agreed that English was important for communication, job prospects, academic success, and cultural understanding.

Table 4. Selected Questionnaire Results

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
1	English is interesting	5	39	10
2	To communicate in English	12	41	1
3	To get a better job	12	36	6
4	To succeed academically	9	39	7
9	To understand foreign cultures	11	36	7
15	To enjoy songs, films, etc.	12	35	5

B. Discussion

Based on the findings of both the interviews and the questionnaire, several significant points emerge regarding the

motivation of non-English major students in learning English.

First, the study reveals a dominant pattern of extrinsic motivation among the participants, particularly among students in the Mathematics Education program. These students primarily study English not out of personal interest but due to external demands such as the need to pass exams, fulfill thesis requirements, and meet institutional academic obligations[22] [23]. Additionally, many students expressed that their motivation to learn English was strongly influenced by the desire to secure better job opportunities after graduation. This indicates that their engagement in English learning is largely instrumental, focused on achieving concrete academic or professional outcomes rather than driven by internal satisfaction or curiosity[24].

Second, while extrinsic motivation was predominant, a number of students—especially those from the Indonesian Language Education program—demonstrated a higher degree of intrinsic motivation. These students expressed genuine interest in learning English, citing reasons such as personal enjoyment, curiosity about other cultures, and enthusiasm for consuming English media like songs and films. This group of students perceived English not only as a tool for academic and career advancement but also as a means of personal development and intercultural communication. Their intrinsic motivation contributed to a more positive attitude toward the learning process, suggesting a deeper level of engagement[25] [26].

Third, the learning environment played a vital role in influencing students' motivation. Many participants highlighted that their motivation was enhanced by supportive lecturers, engaging and interactive teaching methods, and the availability of digital learning resources. Additionally, peer encouragement and a collaborative classroom atmosphere contributed significantly to their willingness to participate and persist in learning English. These findings underscore the importance of creating a positive, resource-rich, and learner-centered environment in order to nurture and sustain student motivation, especially among non-English majors who may not see immediate relevance in the subject [27].

Lastly, despite relatively high levels of motivation, students reported facing several challenges in learning English. The most frequently mentioned difficulties included limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes when speaking, lack of confidence in expressing themselves in English, and difficulty with pronunciation[28]. These barriers often hinder students from practicing English actively and can diminish their motivation over time. Therefore, it is crucial for educators to adopt strategic teaching approaches that not only build linguistic competence but also boost learners' self-confidence. Techniques such as role-playing, group discussions, and the use of multimedia tools can make learning more interactive and reduce students' anxiety about speaking[29].

In conclusion, while non-English major students at STKIP Muhammadiyah Pagar Alam show a generally positive attitude toward learning English, their motivation is shaped by a combination of external demands and internal interests. Educators should strive to balance both dimensions by creating meaningful, enjoyable, and supportive learning experiences that can accommodate diverse motivational profiles[30].

Conclusion

Addressing the objectives of this study, it was found that non-English major students at STKIP Muhammadiyah Pagar Alam generally exhibit a positive attitude and moderate to high motivation in learning English. The findings indicate that extrinsic motivation—such as the need to pass examinations, complete thesis requirements, fulfill university obligations, and prepare for future employment—dominates, particularly among students from the Mathematics Education department. Meanwhile, students from the Indonesian Language Education department demonstrated stronger intrinsic motivation, including personal enjoyment, interest in English-language media, and a desire to engage with global cultures.

The study also revealed that supportive learning environments, such as encouraging instructors, engaging teaching methods, and the integration of digital learning tools, significantly enhance students' motivation. However, common challenges such as limited vocabulary, fear of speaking, lack of confidence, and pronunciation difficulties continue to hinder student participation and performance.

In response to these findings, it is recommended that institutions provide targeted interventions such as faculty workshops on student-centered English teaching strategies and the development of integrative learning modules that align with students' academic and professional goals. Additionally, interactive digital tools should be optimized to foster intrinsic motivation and reduce common psychological barriers.

Future studies are encouraged to expand the scope by including students from other departments or exploring additional variables such as learning styles or peer influence, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of English learning motivation in higher education contexts.

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