

Describing Students' Motivation and Attitude in Self-Directed Learning English as a Foreign Language: A Survey Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe junior high school students' attitudes and motivation toward learning English in a self-directed learning context. Employing a descriptive quantitative design, this study involved 142 eighth-grade students from a junior high school in West Bekasi. Data were collected through a questionnaire adapted from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery, covering five motivation indicators: interest in learning English, attitudes toward learning English, integrative orientation, instrumental orientation, and English class anxiety. Descriptive statistical techniques, including mean scores and norm-referenced category distribution, were used to analyze the data. The findings indicate that students' overall motivation toward learning English falls within the moderate category, with a tendency toward medium to high levels. Interest in learning English emerged as the strongest indicator, reflecting students' enthusiasm and positive affect toward the language. Instrumental motivation, related to academic achievement and future career opportunities, was found to be stronger than integrative motivation, which is associated with social interaction and cultural engagement. In addition, students demonstrated generally positive attitudes toward learning English, while experiencing a moderate level of anxiety that did not substantially hinder their motivation. These findings support Gardner's motivation theory, highlighting the role of both intrinsic interest and pragmatic goals in sustaining students' motivation to learn English. The study underscores the importance of fostering supportive learning environments and structured self-directed learning opportunities to strengthen students' motivation and engagement in English learning beyond the classroom.

Keywords:

Self-Directed Learning,
EFL,
Motivation,
AMTB

1. Introduction

English's role in promoting international communication, especially in social, professional, and academic situations, highlights the language's growing significance as a global language. English has become a vital tool for cross-cultural communication as a result of growing globalization, allowing people to strengthen their skills and successfully navigate a variety of contexts (N. Sari et al., 2024).

Since English is the most widely used language in the world, its significance cannot be downplayed or overlooked in this globalized society. One of the languages spoken most frequently worldwide is English. People all across the world choose to learn English as a second language because it is vital. English is taught in schools in many nations as a second language, and young children begin studying it. As a result, knowing English is beneficial and may even be required (Aziza, 2020).

Although many languages are spoken throughout the world, proficiency in English remains crucial for global competitiveness. Students need to learn English as a foreign language to keep up with

the times and technological advancements. Students have the opportunity to improve their education, careers, and society by learning English. English is a language that many people use to communicate with individuals from other countries. English proficiency is required of Indonesian pupils. Speaking English allows pupils to interact with strangers and form new relationships (Panjaitan et al., 2021).

However, (Lohans Kumar Kalyani, 2024) said student-centered learning in which students actively participate in their education through group projects, interactive conversations, and hands on activities is heavily emphasized in today's curriculum. Technology is essential to modern education because it provides access to a vast array of digital resources, online courses, and interactive learning platforms. Additionally, today's education, which recognizes the variety of student requirements and learning styles, promotes individualized learning pathways tailored to each student's strengths and shortcomings. This method prepares students for the fast-paced, technologically driven world of today while fostering their creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Access to a universe of genuine English information is made possible by technology. Learners have easy access to movies, TV series, podcasts, and news articles online. By immersing themselves in these resources, they can learn to recognize various dialects and speaking styles and experience natural English in authentic settings. All English language learners and educators need to be conversant with contemporary technology for some reasons. Additionally, we must stress that new technologies are developing and spreading so quickly that we are unable to completely escape their fascination and impact (Gres & Meisa, 2024).

Through enhanced access to real world resources, tailored learning opportunities, real-time feedback, and the promotion of greater student interaction, technology greatly improves the EFL learning experience. For example, websites like YouTube provide a variety of educational films that captivate students and enhance their comprehension of English, increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of learning (Sari et al., 2024).

Additionally, social media has become widely used in many facets of people's lives due to modern technology. Students also benefit from this platform because of its captivating features, which they may utilize outside of the classroom. The use of social media in the classroom has been the subject of numerous studies. For instance, several social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp were also used. Both inside and outside of the classroom, these have all aided in the learning process (Sitorus, 2023).

Although the students were sufficiently motivated to study English through e-learning, there were a few factors that occasionally could lower or influence their motivation, since they had a significant influence on the learning process (Datu et al., 2023).

Students have many possibilities to obtain information, practice their language skills, and participate in interactive educational platforms that facilitate self-directed learning when they use technology in the classroom. With the help of technology, learning can become more flexible, interesting, and individualized. Examples of this include virtual classrooms, online videos, and language apps. But this accessibility also comes with a duty to utilize technology responsibly. Students need to effectively manage their screen time, choose trustworthy sources carefully, and stay away from distractions from non educational content. To make sure that technology is a useful learning tool rather than a source of distraction or false information, it is imperative to be digitally literate and to practice self-control.

However, a contrary phenomenon has evolved among Indonesian youth, particularly in metropolitan areas where code-mixing has become common. The process of switching between two or more languages during a single statement or conversation is known as "code-mixing." Many students in this context, particularly in casual settings, effortlessly combine English and Indonesian, frequently phrase by phrase. Teenagers who often use English in their daily conversations, especially in social circles impacted by urban trends like the "Jaksel" (South Jakarta) lifestyle, have become especially accustomed to this linguistic habit (Humaira, 2024).

These opposing phenomena declining formal English instruction and the rise of code-mixing in everyday conversation emphasize the complexities of students' motivation to study English in Indonesia. This type of motivation is based on social dynamics and the desire for social acceptability, whereas the former may hinder intrinsic motivation (Maulidar et al., 2020).

Middle school students are interested in learning English on their own. They are motivated to study both within and outside of the classroom by a variety of sources, such as books, digital media, and social connections. It is great for students to comprehend the importance of English and develop their speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities.

In addition, this research is similar to the studies by Rayani Siregar & Siregar (2020) as the evidence from statistical analysis and the histogram supports that students generally maintain moderate motivation despite facing difficulties. In conclusion, the students' motivation in learning English is predominantly in the medium category, highlighting the need for strategies to further enhance motivation. As (Dwi Yuliani et al., 2023) point out, despite some anxiety, students are encouraged to practice and engage because they enjoy studying English and feel confident. From a cognitive standpoint, they think that studying English will help them learn more and expand their knowledge. The results emphasize the significance of cultivating positive perceptions to improve English learning outcomes by indicating a correlation between these positive attitudes and enhanced motivation and improved language achievement.

Therefore, what attitudes and motives do the students have regarding studying English independently as a foreign language? With an emphasis on how students take the initiative to study outside of the classroom as part of their efforts to enhance their language skills, this study attempts to characterize students' motivation and attitudes when learning English independently as a foreign language.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive quantitative survey design to examine junior high school students' motivation and attitudes toward self directed learning in English as a Foreign Language. The population consisted of 142 eighth-grade students from a junior high school in the West Bekasi District. Using simple random sampling, students were selected to ensure equal opportunities for participation.

Data were collected using an adapted version of Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery. The adaptation focused on linguistic simplification to ensure suitability for junior high school students while preserving the original constructs of the instrument. As the study aimed to describe students' motivational tendencies rather than to develop or validate a new instrument, formal validation and reliability testing were not conducted.

The questionnaire consisted of 55 items measuring students' attitudes and motivation toward self directed English learning. Data were collected through digital questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and percentage distributions, to provide an overview of students' learning experiences and motivational patterns.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

This section presents the key findings of the descriptive quantitative analysis regarding students' motivation, attitudes, and experiences in self-directed learning of English as a Foreign Language. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify general tendencies across several motivational indicators adapted from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Motivation Indicators

Indicator	Percentage	Category
Interest in English	82%	High
Attitude toward English	76.42%	Positive
Integrative Orientation	79.19%	High
Instrumental Orientation	81.19%	High
English Class Anxiety	67.60%	Moderate

Overall, the results indicate that students demonstrated moderate to high levels of motivation toward learning English independently. Most responses clustered around the Agree and Strongly Agree categories across indicators, suggesting generally positive attitudes toward English learning.

Students' Interest in Learning English

The analysis of the *Interest in English* indicator revealed a high level of student interest, with an achievement score of 82% of the maximum possible score. Most students expressed enjoyment in learning English and perceived it as relevant to both academic and everyday contexts. This finding

indicates that English is viewed not only as a school subject but also as a meaningful language for daily use.

Attitude toward Learning English

Students' attitudes toward learning English were predominantly positive. The positive attitude indicator achieved 76.42%, while responses to negative statements showed a tendency toward Neutral and Disagree categories, indicating low resistance toward English learning. These findings suggest that students generally hold favorable attitudes and experience minimal negative perceptions of English in the classroom.

Integrative Orientation

With an achievement percentage of 79.19%, the integrative orientation results demonstrate that students are motivated to learn English for social and cultural reasons. Most students agreed that English enables them to communicate with people from different backgrounds and understand other cultures, reflecting a relatively strong integrative motivation.

Instrumental Orientation

Instrumental motivation emerged as the strongest component, with a percentage of 81.19%. Students strongly agreed that English is important for future academic pursuits, employment opportunities, and social mobility. This indicates that students perceive English as a practical and valuable tool for achieving personal and professional goals.

English Class Anxiety

The analysis of English class anxiety showed a moderate level of anxiety, with an achievement percentage of 67.60%. Most students responded in the Neutral to Disagree categories for anxiety-related items, suggesting that although some anxiety exists, it does not significantly hinder students' learning experiences.

Overall Motivation Level

Descriptive statistics indicated a moderate level of overall motivation among students. The analysis yielded a mean score of 48.21, with both the median and mode at 48, suggesting a relatively consistent distribution of motivation levels.

Table 2. Overall Motivation Category Distribution

Norm Formula	Interval	Frequency	Percentage	Category
$X < (\mu - 1.08)$	$X < 42.28$	24	16.90%	Low
$(\mu - 1.08) \leq X \leq (\mu + 1.08)$	$42.28 \leq X \leq 54.14$	97	68.30%	Medium
$X > (\mu + 1.08)$	$X > 54.14$	21	14.78%	High
Total		142	100%	

As shown in Table 2, the majority of students (68.30%) fell into the medium motivation category, while 14.78% demonstrated high motivation and 16.90% were classified as having low motivation. These results confirm that the overall motivation of eighth-grade students toward learning English can be categorized as moderate.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study provide insights into the motivational characteristics of eighth grade students learning English as a Foreign Language within a self-directed learning context. Overall, the results indicate that students demonstrate a moderate level of motivation, supported by positive attitudes, strong instrumental and integrative orientations, and manageable levels of anxiety. These findings suggest that students possess a sufficient affective foundation to engage in independent English learning, although targeted support is still needed to optimize learning outcomes.

Students' interest in learning English emerged as one of the strongest indicators. High interest reflects students' enjoyment and intrinsic engagement with the language, which plays a crucial role in initiating and sustaining self-directed learning. When students find English meaningful and enjoyable, they are more likely to take initiative, seek learning resources independently, and practice beyond classroom requirements. From a practical perspective, this finding highlights the importance for teachers to maintain students' interest by using engaging learning activities such as games, project-based tasks, and authentic materials related to students' daily lives.

In terms of attitudes toward learning English, the predominance of positive attitudes and minimal resistance suggests that the classroom environment is generally supportive. Positive attitudes are closely

linked to students' willingness to set learning goals, monitor progress, and evaluate their own learning key components of self directed learning. Teachers can strengthen these attitudes by providing constructive feedback, recognizing students' efforts, and creating a non-threatening learning environment where making mistakes is treated as part of the learning process.

The results also reveal a relatively high level of integrative orientation, indicating that students are motivated to learn English as a means of communication and cultural connection. This finding aligns with Gardner's (1985) theory, which emphasizes the importance of integrative motivation in language learning. In practice, teachers can enhance integrative motivation by incorporating cultural content, cross-cultural communication activities, and opportunities for authentic interaction, such as virtual exchanges or exposure to English media. These activities can help students perceive English not merely as an academic subject but as a tool for global communication.

Meanwhile, instrumental motivation was identified as the strongest motivational component. Students clearly recognize the practical value of English for future education and career opportunities. This suggests that students are motivated by tangible goals, such as academic success and employability. Teachers and schools can capitalize on this motivation by explicitly linking English learning activities to real-world applications, including career-oriented tasks, simulations, and discussions about future aspirations. Integrating English for specific purposes (ESP) elements at the junior high school level may further strengthen this orientation.

Regarding English class anxiety, the findings indicate a moderate level of anxiety, suggesting that while some students experience apprehension, it does not severely hinder learning. Nonetheless, anxiety remains a critical factor that can limit participation in self-directed learning, particularly for students with lower confidence. Teachers are therefore encouraged to implement anxiety-reducing strategies, such as cooperative learning, gradual exposure to speaking tasks, and supportive peer interaction. Creating a safe and encouraging classroom atmosphere is essential to ensure that anxiety does not prevent students from taking initiative in their learning.

In terms of overall motivation, most students fell into the medium motivation category, with a smaller proportion demonstrating high or low motivation. This distribution suggests that while many students are sufficiently motivated, some may struggle to maintain consistent engagement. For students with lower motivation levels, targeted interventions such as individualized goal-setting, mentoring, and motivational feedback may be necessary. Teachers can also provide differentiated support by offering varied learning pathways and allowing students greater autonomy in selecting learning tasks.

Consistent with Gardner's (1985) motivation theory and supported by previous studies (e.g., Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Rayani Siregar & Siregar, 2020; Datu et al., 2023; Purmama et al., 2019; Amelia et al., 2024), the findings confirm that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influence students' motivation to learn English. Interest, attitudes, and clear future-oriented goals collectively shape students' engagement and persistence in language learning.

From an educational perspective, these findings suggest that fostering self-directed learning in EFL classrooms requires a balanced approach that nurtures both instrumental and integrative motivation. Schools and curriculum designers should support instructional practices that promote learner autonomy, relevance, and emotional well-being. Teachers play a central role in translating students' motivation into sustained learning behaviors by designing meaningful tasks, encouraging reflection, and supporting students with varying motivational levels.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations, including its focus on a single school and reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce response bias. Future research is encouraged to adopt mixed-methods approaches to explore students' motivational experiences more deeply and to involve broader populations across different educational contexts.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that junior high school students demonstrate moderate to high levels of motivation toward learning English, supported by positive attitudes, strong interest, and clear learning goals. Students are motivated not only by academic demands but also by personal interest and instrumental considerations, such as future education and career opportunities. Although some level of classroom anxiety is present, it remains within manageable limits and does not significantly hinder students' motivation to learn English.

Overall, students show a positive disposition toward self directed English learning, particularly when supported by appropriate learning environments and access to technology. The findings suggest that self-directed learning can serve as a valuable complement to classroom instruction, especially when students are encouraged to explore learning resources independently and engage with English beyond formal lessons.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers and schools support students' self-directed learning by providing flexible learning materials, integrating educational technology, and fostering a supportive and low anxiety learning environment. Future research is encouraged to explore students' self-directed learning practices in greater depth through mixed-methods approaches and to involve broader populations across different regions and educational levels to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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