

WHAT MOTIVATES INDONESIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO LEARN ENGLISH?

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Abstract

This multiple case study investigated how teachers implemented motivational teaching strategies and the impact of these strategies on students' motivation in an Indonesian high school context. The participants were four teachers and four groups of their students. The data were collected by conducting semi structure interview for teachers, classroom observation, stimulated recall and focus group interviews for students. Each teacher had unique strategies to motivate their students and these strategies impacted on students' motivation. The students reported that the strategies influencing their motivation can be categorised into five main groups: teachers' classroom behaviours, supportive classroom atmosphere, selection of learning resources and activities, the usefulness of English, and the way feedback is given. These findings suggest that teachers of English in an Indonesian high school context can influence their students' motivation by understanding the impact of motivational teaching strategies on students' learning and behaviour.

Key words: motivation, motivational teaching strategies, EFL

Introduction

Teachers' motivational strategies are one of important factors in teaching and learning, especially for learning a foreign language. English is a first foreign language taught in Indonesian schools (Mattarima & Hamdan, 2011a). Unlike other foreign languages which are optional, learning English is mandatory in Indonesian high schools. Students learn English for three years in junior high school and for three years in senior high school.

Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, most students mainly engage with English as a language in the classroom. This places a premium on the quality of classroom teaching and learning. In line with this, students' classroom learning motivation is a central element in the teaching and learning process (Dornyei, 2001; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Therefore, teachers need to understand what motivates students to learn English in the classroom.

Literature Review

Research that has been conducted on second/foreign language motivation can be traced back to an early leading theory in language learning motivation; it arises from the seminal work of Wallace Lambert and Robert Gardner (Gardner & Lambert, 1959) who studied motivation in second language learning in a Canadian context. They classified motivation into two basic types: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation relates to the learner's positive attitude toward the target language community and the desire to integrate into that community. Instrumental motivation refers to students' goal of learning a target language because of the usefulness for this learning, such as getting good mark in a test, winning a prize, or getting a good job.

As research in motivation developed, the source of students' motivation to learn a second or foreign language was more complex. Researchers who are interested in how students are motivated to learn a second language have utilised different theories, for example reinforcement theory, self-determination theory, self-efficacy theory, expectancy value theory, and goal theory (Dornyei, 2010). Self-determination theory divided motivation into two categories based on reasons or goals that lead to action. These are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the excitement or enjoyment of doing an activity while extrinsic motivation refers to the outcome or reward of doing the action such as good grades (Dornyei, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The third phase of research on motivation is based on Dornyei and Otto's (1998) research on second language learning motivation: this is referred to as the process-oriented period. This research groups motivation into three temporal segments (Dornyei & Otto, 1998): pre-actional stage, actional stage, and post-actional stage. In support of the process oriented model; Dornyei and Csizer's (1998) conducted a survey in Hungarian second language learning which identified the most important factors that teachers should consider in motivating students. They proposed that ten major strategies or "Ten Commandments" underpinned motivation for second language learners.

Based on his research on second/foreign language motivation, Dornyei (2001) developed a total of 102 motivational strategies, called motivational teaching practice (MTP). Motivational teaching practice systematises the application of motivation into a circular system composing four phases: creating motivational conditions; generating student motivation; maintaining motivation and protecting motivation; and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. This cycle implies that student motivation should be built, generated, maintained and encouraged (Dornyei, 2001, p. 29).

Figure 1. The Component of motivational teaching practice in the L2 classroom



Since my study focuses on how teachers motivate their students, the MTP framework is an appropriate model for gathering research data in the present study.

The studies of motivational teaching strategies generally found that there is a correlation between teacher motivational teaching strategies and students' motivation (Guilloteaux & Dornyei, 2008; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2011). However, the teachers were not necessarily aware that their motivational teaching strategies impacted on learners' motivation (Kassing, 2011). Furthermore, Sugita and Takeuci's (2010) study indicates that only a few motivational teaching strategies have a correlation with students' motivation and the effectiveness of these strategies varied based on students' language level. Cheng and Dornyei (2007) in a Taiwan context reveal that some motivational teaching strategies are transferable across cultural and ethno-linguistic contexts but some strategies are culture-sensitive or even culture-dependent. This finding is supported by Nugroho's study (2007) in an Indonesian university context and Xavier's (2005) study in a Brazilian high school context.

It appears that there has been few published studies of motivational teaching strategies conducting in an Indonesian high school context. It is important therefore to research motivational teaching strategies in Indonesian high schools to understand whether the classroom context, the school context, and the cultural context influence student motivation. There is a need for this research so that Indonesian teachers of English may understand the source of students' motivation and help them to enhance their motivation by implementing suitable motivational teaching strategies.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative methodology which used a case study approach. They allow the researcher to collect detailed, in-depth data, using multiple sources of information. In this study the data were gathered from semi-structured interviews, teachers' teaching materials, classroom observations, stimulated recall, and student focus group interviews. The analysis of the data enabled each case to be described and themes to be identified.

The participants are:

Case 1 Moza & a group of her students
Case 2 Harry & a group of his students
Case 3 Yuke & a group of her students
Case 4 Arfan & a group of his students

Findings

This study finding indicates that most of students held a similar perception that learning should involve enjoyable learning activities such as jokes, games or funny stories. They also like learning materials from the internet. They enjoyed doing activities involving body movement such as drama or role play. Additionally, they said that they enjoyed learning in a relaxed classroom atmosphere. In the following section, factors influenced students' motivation will be presented and the findings will be discussed in relation to Dornyei's (2001) framework.

Teachers' classroom behaviors

Most of the students in the focus group interviews said that a key factor that motivates their classroom learning is the teacher. The students reported that a teacher is the one that makes learning interesting or not. The way a teacher explains lessons and how the teacher creates the learning atmosphere is very important.

I think the most important thing is the teacher. If the teacher is interesting the learning will be interesting too. But if the teacher is boring the learning will be boring too (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

Moza's student stated a similar view that she loved the teacher warm facial expression and smile.

She smiles a lot. It makes me feel comfortable, not afraid of making mistakes. Previously my English teachers are very strict so I experience that English is a very difficult subject for me and I am afraid to talk in the classroom (Focus group B, 18/2/2012).

Harry's students also mentioned a similar opinion that for them the most important thing in learning English was the teacher. He built an understanding and respectful relationship with students:

I like studying English because I like the teacher especially the way the teacher interacts with us. He makes jokes but we still respect him as our teacher. I do not like teacher with serious face or no jokes at all (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Yuke's students' also stated a positive response towards her classroom behaviours. She said that:

She is open and warm so it makes us feel comfortable, not afraid of delivering our ideas. She does not angry if we make mistakes. She listens to our opinion and expressions. It is so interesting (Focus group B, 18-2-2012).

Arfan's students reported a similar point of view about their teacher's classroom manners. He is friendly and approachable. The students can talk to him inside and outside the learning period.

I like the teacher. He is friendly. When I have a problem and I ask him, he will answer it promptly. He explains the lesson enthusiastically. It makes us motivated (Focus group 14/3/2012).

Overall, the four teachers showed their warm, enthusiastic, and friendly manners. These behaviors influenced students' motivation. The students even stated that the first important factor influencing their motivation was the teacher behaviors.

Classroom atmosphere

Moza's students indicated that they appreciated the teachers' attempt to build a warm and friendly relationship with them. They reported that they enjoyed learning because the teacher was not irritable and listened to their opinions carefully.

The data from Moza's students point out that the key idea in creating a successful environment in the classroom is the development of a warm and a supportive relationship between teacher and students. Moza mentioned that the establishment of trust between teacher and students makes students feel free and safe to express their ideas and opinions in the classroom. The students seemed to be encouraged to be autonomous learners by giving them to choose discussion topics in the classroom. The students said that they enjoyed learning with Moza because they learnt in a relaxed and encouraging atmosphere.

In the focus group, Harry's students reported that they liked the teacher's informal style in teaching. It made the learning atmosphere relaxed and they felt free to express their ideas and opinions. It made the learning condition lively and encouraging.

The students enjoyed learning with Harry because they did not feel any pressure within the classroom environment. The students reported that Harry is a great teacher and easy to deal with.

I like the way the teacher interact with us. He has a great sense of humour. We laugh a lot in the classroom. It is very relaxed. I do not like a serious teacher. I will be afraid to talk when the teacher is so strict (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

The students also talked about the possibility of learning outside the classroom. One of the students mentioned the enjoyment of learning in a language laboratory. He stated that he never experienced learning in a language laboratory. Another student stated that it would be motivating if they could learn with English native speaker.

Yuke's students reported that they felt relaxed when they studied with Yuke. They said that this helped them to understand and use their English. They stated that:

I like when my teacher speak English with me, she does not force me. She invites me to speak and if I have a problem with vocabulary she allows me to use Indonesian and she helps me with the English words that I do not know (Focus group A, 10/2/2012).

Some students in a focus group commented that they wanted to learn in a different setting.

I have a dream to learn outside the classroom, in the school park maybe. I think learning outside the classroom will be nice and we will have a different learning atmosphere (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Another student wished she could learn English in a language laboratory.

I think learning in language laboratory will be interesting. It is a new experience. I suppose we can practise our listening skill (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Some of the students wanted to experience learning with English native speaker,

It will be cool if we can learn with an English native speaker, or at least practise talking with them (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Similarly, Arfan students in the focus group said that they liked Arfan's way of creating a relaxed classroom atmosphere. They said that Arfan was easy going and approachable. The students could talk and discuss with him inside or outside the classroom. He even offered many opportunities to his students to ask questions. He allowed a discussion of the problems faced by students in learning English (Classroom observation, 7/3/2012).

A variety of learning resources and activities

The students reported that they preferred particular learning materials and activities such as some language examples that were related to a teenager's life. Such material was easy to understand and would remain longer in their memory. They enjoyed a range of learning activities during lessons.

I work harder when the topic is interesting. I am so happy if I can do the exercise well or answering teacher question (Focus group a, 18/2/2012).

One student reported that he is more motivated when a teacher gives the class a challenging activity. This kind of activity makes him think and this motivates him to find out an answer.

I like games especially games with challenging activity. I like crossword puzzle or quiz games (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

Moza's students enjoyed listening to her stories. This was one of the ways used by Moza to attract her students' attention. The students said:

The teacher tells us interesting stories and sometimes the ending surprises us. She usually starts the lesson by telling a story. I think some of the stories are her real life experience (Focus group, 18/2/2012).

Another student also mentioned that he enjoyed learning with Moza because of her way of explaining the lesson. He said that Moza used simple sentences that were easy to understand.

I like the teacher because I understand her language she does not use difficult words. I can understand what she is saying or explaining in the classroom (Focus group B, 18/2/2012).

The data from Harry's students indicated that learning by using games, songs, poems, and jokes are motivating. His students enjoyed songs, games and varied learning activities. In the focus group they reported:

I like songs and games but in my opinion the classroom activities should be varied. Any activity that we do too much in the classroom makes us bored. So far I enjoy learning English in the classroom (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Yuke's students found "cycle stand" activity interesting. It was a fun activity for them. Besides practising the language the students also moved their body by standing-up each time they express their ideas. A student commented:

I like cycle stand or other activity that make me use English. It is interesting activity because everyone shares ideas. For me it is a new way to practise English (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

Additionally, Yuke's students stated that they liked activities involving body movement; the cycle stand activity was effective for this because students moved their bodies when standing. They also enjoyed activities like games or drama.

I enjoy practicing English in my class. I like cycle stand because it is new to me. I usually practice language expressions by making a dialogue and after that perform it in front of my classmates (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

Arfan's students reported that they enjoyed learning by watching a video as the learning media. They said it was a new learning experience for them, especially if there was an activity that allowed them to answer questions by pressing the right button to answer.

I like learning by using games or activity from video. It is new experience for me. It is fun because I can directly know whether I give right or wrong answer (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

It reveals that Arfan tried hard to find ways of motivating his students to learn and he found using audio learning resources are interesting for his students. Another student said that Arfan uses a range of strategies in explaining lessons. He gives many examples. This helps his students understand what they are being taught.

I like the teacher's way of explaining the lesson. He has many different ways of explaining the topic and gives many examples. He is so patient answering my questions (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

The students enjoyed having various learning resources and activities especially activities involving body movement, materials from the internet, playing challenging games, listening to English songs, watching movies, or listening to the teacher's stories.

The usefulness of English

The other way to generate students' motivation is by introducing the instrumental value of the language. The instrumental value of learning a second language can be getting a good job, earning extra money, pursuing further study, improving social position, pursuing hobby like using computer which generally use English (Dornyei, 2001). Yuke's students mentioned the benefit of learning English for their future. They understood that they need to study hard to improve their English for their future. They also realized that they needed English for their university study.

Student seemed to be motivated when teachers explain the usefulness of English for their study and future careers. The students from the international standardized school understood that in high school they also needed English to learn mathematics and science. They appear to study hard to improve their English. One of the students in the focus group commented:

I realize that I need English for my future career and university study. It motivates me to learn English. My brother told me that at university level text book mostly written in English (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

However, some students still thought that English is difficult to learn. Most students learn English in the classroom only; this does not support their English communicative skills both in spoken and written language (Field note, 23/1/2012).

I like English but I still find that it is hard for me to learn English. I know it is important but I do not understand why it is very difficult for me. Some of my friends just enjoy learning it (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

Among strategies from phase two of the framework two strategies influenced students' motivation, interesting learning materials and increasing student's goal-orientedness by understanding the usefulness of English. By understanding the usefulness of English increased students' motivation.

Group-work activities

The students enjoy working in groups. They said that it helped them to protect their self-esteem and increasing their confidence. The smart student could act as the moderator and lead the discussion in the group. The weak students could learn from their peers. The students' self-confidence was enhanced when they worked in mixed ability groups so they could practice in their groups before presenting in the class discussion. This also helped them to be autonomous learners. Harry did not mention that he taught his students to be self-motivated or helped them to find out the best way for them to learn English.

The students enjoyed working in groups. However, some students said that they felt a little bored when weak students could not understand the activities and did not want to practise in the group. A student mentioned:

I feel upset when my friends do not know what they should do. It is tiring to explain if they do not understand (Focus group a, 10/2/2012).

Generally, students liked to work in group. They felt more confident. They could ask questions to their friends in the group. They said that it was easier to understand their friend's explanation. Harry believed that mixed-ability group composition would benefit his students more.

I enjoy working in group because if I have problems, I can ask my friend how to do it. It is easier to understand my friends' explanation (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

It seems that in general most students like to work in group, so they can share ideas and opinion and help one another.

Opportunity to practice English

The students indicated that they enjoyed having much time to practise their English. They liked practising their English rather than just listening to their teacher explaining a lesson. A student commented:

I like using English, especially if there is someone that I can talk to. Sometimes my friends tease me if I use English. Many of them will say that I show off if I use English. I just enjoy practising my English. It is fun (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

Her students enjoyed the opportunity to practise their English. They tried hard to use English as much as possible, especially outside the classroom. This was to make them familiar to use English for daily communication. A student reported that:

I like speaking English. My teacher supports me to use English with her and with my classmates in the classroom or outside the classroom (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

Another student added:

I enjoy practicing a lot. I understand English when my teacher explains clearly and gives examples after that she allows us to practice the language in pairs or in a group (Focus group a, 18/2/2012).

The more talented students are keen to use and practice their English. They try hard to communicate in English with their teacher in the English learning period. Outside of school hours, some students enroll in extra English courses. They realize that they need to be able to speak English, not only for their university study but also for their future careers. They reported that their classroom learning does not give them enough knowledge and skills in English (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

Learning assessment

The four teachers said a similar thing that they did not do direct correction on their students' speaking practice. This way of correcting mistakes and the teachers' view toward mistakes made students feel free to talk. Even with their half English and half Indonesian, they talked actively in the classroom. The teachers appreciated and encouraged their students' attempt to communicate in English. The students enjoyed this opportunity too.

I like the opportunity to speak English. To be fluent in English is my learning goal. The teacher really supports me. He does not laugh at any mistake. He even reminds my classmates not laugh at others' mistakes. The learning atmosphere is really fun and relaxed (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

A student from Harry class did not like it when the teacher passed the question into other students to answer. She wanted the teacher to answer her question too.

I like the teacher but I don't like the teacher when he does not answering questions. When I ask a question, the teacher asks other classmates to answer it but he does not give his answer. It is a kind of uncertainty to me, which one is the correct answer (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Moza's students talked a similar thing that they appreciated their teacher's way of evaluating their learning.

I like the way my teacher evaluate us. She does not just consider the test but also our classroom participation (Focus group B, 18-2-2012).

Yuke and Arfan did a similar thing, they did not do direct correction on their students' mistake and they also assess their students learning by students' classroom participation during the learning.

Summary

The findings indicate that the key factor to motivate students' learning in the classroom was the teacher. The students reported that the teacher was the main factor that made the classroom learning process interesting. The teacher's ways of explaining the lesson and how the teacher created a learning atmosphere were very important factors.

The students said that another important factor to enhance their motivation was a relaxed classroom atmosphere, allowing a lot of time to practice, realizing the importance of English, having various learning activities, and encouraging feedback. There were no significant differences in factors influencing students' motivation among the students from different types of schools, international, national, and local schools.

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