



Exploring Motivation and Self-Efficacy in English Language Learning : A Case Study of Fourth-Semester Students at IAIN Takengon

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Abstract. *This study investigates the role of motivation and self-efficacy in English language learning among fourth-semester students majoring in English at IAIN Takengon. Employing a quantitative method, data were collected from a limited population of five students using a validated Likert-scale questionnaire designed to assess levels of motivation and self-efficacy across key language skills. The results revealed that while students demonstrated high levels of motivation—driven by academic and career goals, as well as personal inspirations—their self-efficacy levels varied, with some showing a lack of confidence in their language abilities. This finding suggests a discrepancy between students' motivational drive and their self-perceived competence. The study recommends the integration of mentoring programs, engaging classroom strategies, and exposure to authentic language environments to enhance learners' self-efficacy. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of affective factors in second language acquisition and provide practical recommendations for language instructors and institutions.*

Keywords: *Affective factors, English language learning, IAIN Takengon, motivation, self-efficacy*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, English proficiency has become a crucial skill, especially for students aiming to pursue higher education or professional careers internationally. In Indonesia, although awareness of English's importance is growing, many students still struggle with language mastery due to various internal and external challenges. Two prominent psychological constructs that influence second language acquisition are motivation and self-efficacy. Motivation refers to the internal and external forces that drive individuals to initiate and persist in learning activities, while self-efficacy pertains to one's belief in their capability to perform specific tasks effectively.

Bandura (1977) conceptualized self-efficacy as a vital factor affecting how individuals approach goals, tasks, and challenges. In the context of English language learning, students with higher self-efficacy are more likely to engage in learning tasks confidently, use effective strategies, and persist in the face of difficulties. On the other hand, motivation determines the level of effort and the direction of students' learning behavior. Previous research (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Mills et al., 2006) has shown that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play a crucial role in language learning success.

Despite the theoretical significance of these constructs, there is a lack of empirical studies that explore how motivation and self-efficacy influence English language learning

among students in Islamic higher education institutions, particularly in rural regions like Aceh. This study addresses that gap by focusing on fourth-semester English education students at IAIN Takengon.

Limited access to English-speaking environments and varying institutional support may further complicate the issue. This study addresses that gap by focusing on fourth-semester English education students at IAIN Takengon, aiming to offer context-specific insights into these affective variables.

The purpose of this research is to examine the levels of motivation and self-efficacy among these students, identify influencing factors, and explore how these psychological constructs correlate with their English learning experiences. The findings aim to inform language teaching practices and institutional strategies that support student success.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Motivation in Language Learning

Motivation is a key determinant in the success of language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1959) introduced two main types of motivation in language acquisition: *instrumental motivation*, which refers to practical reasons such as employment or academic requirements, and *integrative motivation*, which involves the desire to integrate into the culture of the target language. According to the Expectancy-Value Theory by Eccles and Wigfield (2002), students' motivation is influenced by their expectations of success and the value they place on a given task. In the context of learning English, motivated learners tend to engage more actively and show greater perseverance.

Self-Efficacy in Language Learning

The concept of self-efficacy was developed by Bandura (1977), who defined it as an individual's belief in their capability to perform specific tasks. In language learning, students with high self-efficacy are more likely to adopt effective learning strategies, persist through difficulties, and maintain confidence in their speaking, writing, reading, and listening skills (Mills et al., 2006). Bandura (1997) identified four major sources of self-efficacy: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states.

The Relationship Between Motivation and Self-Efficacy

Motivation and self-efficacy are interrelated constructs. Learners who believe in their abilities are more likely to be intrinsically motivated, as they anticipate positive outcomes from their efforts (Zimmerman, 2000). Conversely, high levels of motivation can

also foster stronger self-efficacy by encouraging learners to engage in challenging tasks and persist until they succeed. This reciprocal relationship highlights the importance of addressing both factors in language learning interventions.

Strategies to Enhance Motivation and Self-Efficacy

Various strategies can be employed to foster motivation and self-efficacy among language learners. These include providing constructive feedback, designing achievable yet challenging tasks, and encouraging active engagement through project-based or experiential learning (Tuckman, 1999; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Additionally, the integration of technology, such as language learning apps, and participation in student exchange programs can provide real-world language exposure that boosts learners' confidence and interest.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design using a survey method to investigate students' motivation and self-efficacy in learning English. The target population consisted of fourth-semester students majoring in English Education at IAIN Takengon. A total of five students participated in the study, selected through purposive sampling based on their enrollment in the program and willingness to participate.

The limited sample size reflects the actual number of English Education students in the fourth semester during the academic year, making it a complete population sample rather than a subset. While this small number restricts generalizability, it allows for a focused and representative exploration of the students' motivation and self-efficacy.

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire comprising two main sections: one measuring students' motivation and the other measuring their self-efficacy. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The motivation section included items related to students' goals, attitudes, and interest in English learning. The self-efficacy section assessed their perceived competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Before full implementation, the questionnaire was pilot-tested to ensure its reliability and validity. Data collection was conducted in March 2025. All participants were informed about the objectives of the study and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary and anonymity was guaranteed.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the participants' responses, including frequency and percentage distributions. Furthermore, inferential statistics such as

correlation analysis were applied to explore the relationship between motivation and self-efficacy. Ethical considerations were strictly followed throughout the research process.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide insights into the levels of motivation and self-efficacy among fourth-semester students of English Education at IAIN Takengon. According to the survey results, all five participants reported being motivated to improve their English language skills, with 100% of them selecting "Motivated" on the scale. Motivational factors included academic aspirations, future career goals, and personal interests such as admiration for English-speaking role models.

Table. 1 of Result Students' Motivation

Respondent	Motivation Level	Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing
S1	Motivated	High	High	Medium	Low
S2	Motivated	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
S3	Motivated	High	High	Medium	Medium
S4	Motivated	High	High	Low	Medium
S5	Motivated	Medium	High	Medium	Low

Despite the high levels of motivation, the data showed variations in students' self-efficacy. While some students expressed confidence in their reading and listening abilities, others reported lower self-efficacy in speaking and writing skills. This discrepancy suggests that while motivation is present, the belief in their ability to perform language tasks varies significantly.

The literature supports these findings, as Bandura (1977) emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy in maintaining perseverance during challenging tasks. Students with strong self-efficacy are more likely to adopt effective learning strategies and maintain consistent effort. Similarly, Gardner and Lambert (1959) highlight the role of motivation in language learning, noting that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation significantly affect performance outcomes.

The findings also align with Bai and Wang (2023), who found that learners with a growth mindset and higher perceived value of tasks show better self-regulation and academic achievement in language learning. Therefore, to bridge the gap between motivation and self-efficacy, educators should design interventions such as peer mentoring, interactive tasks, and opportunities for authentic communication practice.

An interesting observation was that students who regularly engaged in English-related hobbies—such as watching English videos, reading stories, or participating in group

discussions—tended to report higher levels of self-efficacy. This supports the idea that regular exposure and active use of the language contribute positively to learners' confidence and competence.

Overall, the data suggest that motivation alone is not sufficient to ensure success in language learning. Institutional support should be directed not only at inspiring students, but also at empowering them with the tools and experiences necessary to build self-efficacy across all language skills.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

This study examined the roles of motivation and self-efficacy in English language learning among fourth-semester students at IAIN Takengon. The results indicated that all participants demonstrated a high level of motivation, driven by academic ambitions, career goals, and personal inspiration. However, their self-efficacy levels varied across different language skills, particularly in productive areas such as speaking and writing. The findings confirm that while motivation is a crucial factor in initiating and sustaining language learning, it must be complemented by strong self-efficacy to achieve meaningful progress. Students who lack confidence in their abilities are less likely to take risks, engage actively in tasks, or persist through difficulties, even when they are highly motivated. To address this gap, educational institutions must implement targeted interventions that enhance students' self-efficacy. These include providing opportunities for authentic communication, offering regular and constructive feedback, involving students in peer mentoring programs, and incorporating engaging, student-centered learning strategies. Ultimately, improving both motivation and self-efficacy is essential for maximizing student potential in English language learning. This study contributes to the growing body of research on affective factors in second language acquisition, particularly within the context of Islamic higher education in Indonesia. Future research with larger sample sizes and mixed-methods approaches is recommended to further explore these dynamics and inform more comprehensive pedagogical practices. While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The most notable limitation is the small sample size, which, although reflective of the total population of the target semester, limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research involving larger and more diverse samples is recommended to validate these findings. Additionally, employing mixed-

methods approaches could provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' motivational and psychological dynamics in English language learning.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can be proposed to enhance students' motivation and self-efficacy in learning English:

Implement Mentoring and Peer Support Programs: Educational institutions should initiate mentoring programs that allow students to receive guidance and encouragement from more experienced peers or faculty members. This can help boost their confidence and provide a supportive learning environment.

Increase Practical Language Use Opportunities: Students should be given more opportunities to practice English in real-life contexts, such as through student exchange programs, English clubs, debate teams, or presentation competitions. These experiences can significantly improve both motivation and self-efficacy.

Incorporate Interactive and Engaging Learning Methods: English lecturers are encouraged to use creative teaching methods, such as multimedia tools, gamification, and project-based learning, to make lessons more engaging and meaningful for students.

Provide Constructive Feedback and Positive Reinforcement: Teachers should regularly provide constructive, specific, and motivating feedback to students. Recognizing even small improvements can increase students' belief in their capabilities and foster a growth mindset.

Integrate Psychological Support and Motivation Sessions: Workshops or counseling sessions on self-confidence, goal setting, and stress management may help students overcome language learning anxiety and develop resilience in the face of challenges.

By addressing these areas, educational institutions can help maximize students' language learning potential and prepare them to meet academic and professional demands more confidently.

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