The Motivational Landscape of Indonesian ESP Students

Muhammad Rizky Rochmawan [1] **, Fitria Wahyu Nugraheni** [2]

[1] Universitas Ivet, Semarang, Indonesia

[2] ASM Santa Maria Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

Abstract

Recognizing the critical role of motivation in language learning, this mixed-methods study explored the primary sources of motivation among Indonesian ESP students and their impact on engagement, aiming to inform effective instructional practices. The research revealed a strong positive correlation between motivation and engagement. Intrinsic motivation, rooted in enjoyment, interest, and personal relevance, emerged as a particularly powerful predictor of active participation, consistent effort, and proactive learning behaviours. The study also highlighted the importance of supportive teachers and a positive learning environment in cultivating intrinsic motivation. These findings underscore the need for ESP educators to prioritize strategies that tap into students' inherent interests, provide opportunities for autonomy and competence, and foster a sense of relevance and connection to the subject matter. By creating a more motivating learning environment, ESP instructors can empower students to achieve their language learning goals and succeed in their chosen fields.

Keywords: ESP classes, students' motivation, students' engagement

INTRODUCTION

English language ability has become a vital skill for people who want to succeed in their chosen areas in the age of globalisation. English's importance as a lingua franca in Indonesia has increased dramatically, especially in specialised fields like commerce, research, and technology (Fauziati, 2020). English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become a vital strategy in meeting this need, providing students with the language skills and communication competence required to succeed in their chosen fields (Basturkmen, 2010). ESP training concentrates on building language abilities suited to particular communicative demands and settings, regardless of the field–engineering, business, medical, or tourism (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

The success of ESP programs, however, extends beyond the mere delivery of specialized language content. A wealth of research has consistently emphasized the critical role of motivation in language learning, particularly within the context of ESP (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Gil-Jaurena & Pascual-Argente, 2023). Motivation acts as the driving force that propels learners towards engagement, persistence, and ultimately, successful language acquisition (Gardner, 2010). In the Indonesian context, understanding and fostering student motivation in ESP classrooms is of paramount importance. Factors such as cultural nuances, educational practices, and societal expectations can significantly shape the motivational landscape of Indonesian learners (Mulyaningsih, 2018; Lamb, 2017).

While a substantial body of research exists on motivation in general language learning, there remains a need for more focused investigations into the specific motivational dynamics within Indonesian ESP classrooms. This study aims to contribute to this gap by addressing two core research questions:

1. What are the primary sources of motivation for Indonesian ESP students?

2. How does motivation impact student engagement in ESP courses?

By addressing these questions, this research aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on motivation in ESP contexts, particularly in Indonesia. The findings will provide valuable insights for ESP teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers, enabling them to create more engaging and effective learning environments that foster student motivation and success.

1. Motivation in Language Learning

The importance of motivation in second language acquisition (SLA) has long been acknowledged (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Gardner, 2010). It acts as the impetus behind the beginning, middle, and

continuation of language learning efforts (MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2019). A number of theoretical frameworks, such as the following, have been put up to explain the complexity of motivation:

a. Self-Determination Theory (SDT): SDT posits that intrinsic motivation, fuelled by inherent enjoyment and interest, is the most potent and sustainable form of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It emphasizes the importance of satisfying basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness to foster intrinsic motivation.

b. Attribution Theory: This theory explores how individuals explain their successes and failures, which in turn influences their motivation and future behavior (Weiner, 2010). Attributing success to internal, controllable factors (e.g., effort) is associated with greater motivation, while attributing failure to external, uncontrollable factors (e.g., bad luck) can lead to decreased motivation.

c. Goal Orientation Theory: This theory distinguishes between mastery goals (focused on learning and self-improvement) and performance goals (focused on demonstrating competence and outperforming others) (Ames, 1992; Elliot & McGregor, 2001). Mastery goals are generally associated with more adaptive learning strategies and greater persistence.

2. Lamb's Perspective on Motivation

Martin Lamb's extensive work on motivation in language learning offers valuable insights, particularly regarding the dynamic and contextual nature of motivation. He stresses the importance of understanding motivation as a complex and evolving phenomenon, shaped by a multitude of factors within the learning environment (Lamb, 2017). Lamb's research highlights the intricate interplay between individual learner characteristics, teacher behaviors, and the broader socio-cultural context in shaping motivation (Lamb, 2004, 2012). He underscores the significance of creating a supportive and empowering learning environment that fosters intrinsic motivation and facilitates the development of positive learner identities (Lamb, 2017).

3. Motivation and Engagement

Research on second language acquisition is based on the fundamental finding that motivation and engagement in language learning are positively correlated. Motivated students are more likely to be fully engaged in the learning process because they are driven by a desire to learn and do better. Students show increased focus, active participation in class activities, and a persistent attempt to meet linguistic objectives (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). This increased involvement shows itself in a number

of discernible behaviours. Motivated students are more likely to show up to class on a regular basis, indicating that they are dedicated to studying. They demonstrate their desire to communicate with the language and their classmates by actively participating in conversations, posing questions, and working in groups. In addition, they pursue assignments with zeal and diligence, aiming for comprehension and mastery. Motivated students aggressively seek out assistance from friends or professors when they encounter difficulties, demonstrating a willingness to get beyond setbacks and keep moving forward. According to research, motivation and engagement have a good link that is reciprocal. More motivation can result in more engagement, and involvement in the learning process itself can further motivate oneself (MacIntyre et al., 2019). This dynamic interaction highlights how crucial it is to design learning environments that support motivation and engagement, giving students the chance to succeed, feel competent, and relate what they are learning to their interests and personal objectives.

4. Motivation in ESP

Although the basic ideas of motivation are still relevant in all language learning environments, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) adds special factors that have the potential to have a big impact on students' motivation. One of the main draws of ESP courses is their specialised concentration on language skills relevant to particular academic or professional domains. Pupils frequently see how ESP directly relates to their long-term objectives and ambitions, which helps them feel purposeful and motivated (Cangır, 2013; Alrabai, 2016). Students may become more involved and tenacious in their studies as a result of the link established between language acquisition and future achievement. However, ESP's distinct qualities might also make it difficult for students to be motivated. Some students may find the challenging and frequently technical material of ESP courses intimidating, which might result in feelings of inadequacy or dissatisfaction (Gilakjani, 2013). Inconsistencies between the curriculum and students' perceived requirements can also occur, which can cause a detachment and lower motivation (Al-Tamimi & Al-Kaabi, 2015). Learners may become less motivated to participate in the course if they believe that the material does not relate to their own interests or ambitions. As a result, it is critical that ESP teachers are aware of these particular factors and take proactive measures to resolve any possible motivational issues. Teachers may create a more engaging learning environment that maximises student performance by ensuring that the curriculum is aligned with students' needs, promoting a feeling of relevance, and offering enough assistance.

5. Motivation in the Indonesian Context

Studies on motivation in Indonesian EFL/ESL classrooms have shed light on the complex interactions between cultural norms, pedagogical approaches, and society expectations that influence students'

motivation. Research has indicated that the drive among Indonesian students to acquire English is frequently impacted by a blend of internal elements, like a personal interest and satisfaction, and external elements, like social and familial expectations to succeed academically and improve future employment opportunities (Fauziati, 2016; Djiwandono, 2018). Additionally, studies have shown how important it is for different social agents and the learning environment to have an impact on students' motivational orientations. Instructors have a significant impact on whether or not students are motivated through their teaching strategies, feedback, and encouragement (Mulyaningsih, 2018). Through their attitudes, actions, and interactions with their peers, peers can also have an impact on motivation (Hidayat & Setiyadi, 2021). Students' motivation to learn English can also be influenced by the larger school environment, which includes the school's culture, rules, and resources (Lamb, 2007, 2017). There is still a relative lack of research that focusses especially on motivation in Indonesian ESP classes, despite the fact that these studies have shed important light on the complexity of motivation in these EFL/ESL classrooms. Considering the distinct qualities and requirements of ESP classes, more research on the motivating dynamics in this particular setting is important. It is possible to improve student engagement and learning results by developing more effective teaching strategies and support systems by taking into account the elements that influence motivation in Indonesian ESP classrooms.

METHOD

This study employs a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) to investigate student motivation in Indonesian ESP classrooms. This design involves the concurrent collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, with the aim of merging the findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative strand will examine the prevalence and relative impact of various motivational factors, while the qualitative strand will offer nuanced insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of Indonesian ESP students, enriching the quantitative findings with contextual depth.

The participants in this study consist of 45 Indonesian private university students in Semarang City enrolled in three distinct ESP classes: English for Nursing (15 students), English for Engineering (15 students), and English for Pharmacy (15 students). This purposeful selection ensures representation across diverse ESP fields, allowing for an exploration of potential variations in motivational dynamics across different disciplines.

1. Data Collection Instruments

a. Quantitative Data:

1) Motivation Questionnaire: A validated questionnaire, adapted to the Indonesian context and tailored to the specific nuances of ESP learning, is administered to all 45 participants. The questionnaire encompasses items designed to assess both intrinsic motivation (e.g., enjoyment, interest, personal relevance, sense of competence, autonomy) and extrinsic motivation (e.g., grades, career goals, teacher expectations, external rewards). The questionnaire utilizes a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

2) Student Engagement Survey: A concise survey is employed to gauge students' self-reported engagement in their respective ESP courses. The survey encompasses items pertaining to attendance, participation in class activities, and completion of assignments, utilizing a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Never" to "Always."

b. Qualitative Data:

1) Semi-structured Interviews: In-depth interviews are conducted with a purposefully selected subsample of 6 students (2 from each ESP class), ensuring representation across different motivational levels and backgrounds. The interview protocol comprises open-ended questions aimed at eliciting detailed responses and fostering an exploration of students' motivations, experiences, and perceptions related to ESP learning. Interviews are audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis.

Classroom Observations: Non-participant observations are carried out in each of the three ESP classes for a duration of two to three sessions per class. An observation protocol is utilized to systematically record relevant behaviours and interactions, focusing on indicators of student engagement such as attentiveness, participation, and interaction with the teacher and peers.

2. Data Analysis

a. Quantitative Data:

1) Descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, frequencies) are computed to summarize the questionnaire and engagement survey data.

2) Correlational analysis (e.g., Pearson's r) is employed to examine the relationships between motivation scores and student engagement.

3) Regression analysis is conducted to predict student engagement based on motivation scores, while controlling for other pertinent variables such as prior English proficiency and field of study. Statistical analysis will be performed using SPSS or a similar software package.

b. **Qualitative Data:**

1) Thematic analysis is utilized to identify recurring themes and patterns within the interview and observation data. Transcripts and observation notes will be carefully read and coded to identify meaningful units of analysis.

2) Content analysis is employed to systematically code and categorize responses, facilitating the identification of salient motivational factors and their influence on student engagement.

The quantitative and qualitative findings are merged and interpreted together to provide a comprehensive understanding of student motivation in Indonesian ESP classrooms. Triangulation of data is used to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. The integrated results are discussed in relation to relevant motivation theories, particularly Lamb's perspective on the dynamic and contextual nature of motivation, and previous research. The implications of the findings for ESP teaching and learning in Indonesia are explored, and practical recommendations are offered to enhance student engagement and success.

FINDINGS

1. Quantitative Findings

The quantitative analysis provided valuable insights into the relationship between motivation and student engagement. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Motivation and Engagement*

Construct	Mean (out of 5)	Standard Deviation
Overall Motivation	4.1	0.6
Intrinsic Motivation	4.3	0.5
Extrinsic Motivation	3.8	0.7
Overall Engagement	3.9	0.8

According to Table 1, Indonesian ESP students had a high level of motivation overall, scoring an average of 4.1 out of 5 on the motivation questionnaire. After more investigation, it became clear that intrinsic motivation—which comes from things like enjoyment and a personal interest in the topic—was especially high, scoring an average of 4.3 out of 5. Extrinsic motivation, which is influenced by outside variables like grades and employment prospects, was marginally lower, with an average score of 3.8, but it was still significant. The total mean score for student involvement was 3.9 out of 5, indicating that participants' levels of engagement were generally favourable.

Table 2. *Correlation and Regression Analysis Results*

Relationship	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Beta (β)	p-value
Overall Motivation & Overall Engagement	0.75	< .001	0.6	< .001
Intrinsic Motivation & Overall Engagement	0.82	< .001	0.45	< .001
Extrinsic Motivation & Overall Engagement	0.55	< .01	0.28	< .05

A statistical investigation confirmed the important connection between engagement and motivation. Overall motivation and engagement showed a substantial positive link, suggesting that students with higher motivation levels also tended to be more involved in their education. It's interesting to see that engagement was even more strongly correlated with intrinsic motivation than extrinsic incentive. Student involvement was found to be significantly predicted by motivation, as proven by regression analysis, which also took other possible contributing factors into consideration. Interestingly, it was shown that intrinsic motivation was a stronger predictor than extrinsic motivation, supporting the notion that encouraging internal desire and interest is essential to raising student engagement in ESP classes.

2. Quantitative Findings

The qualitative information provided a detailed and complex picture of how motivation affected student participation in Indonesian ESP classes. Pupils who were motivated to learn because they enjoyed it and had a sincere interest in the subject matter they were studying usually participated actively and worked diligently. An ardent nursing student, for instance, enthusiastically participated in conversations regarding medical jargon and actively pursued chances to hone her English communication abilities in preparation for her future career. Likewise, students of engineering enthralled with technological developments were inclined to read

more deeply into intricate technical literature and work together passionately on projects, exhibiting a high degree of involvement motivated by their innate curiosity.

Perception of ESP's significance to future objectives was another important factor influencing involvement. Pupils who perceived a direct link between their professional goals and the ESP coursework were more likely to be proactive in asking for assistance when needed and to be more conscientious about finishing their projects. For example, students studying pharmacy who wanted to work for multinational pharmaceutical corporations were especially driven to get better at communicating in English since they knew it was essential to their field.

More importantly, a key element in encouraging higher levels of involvement was the development of a sense of competence and autonomy in the learning process. Students were more likely to actively participate in class and put effort into their studies when they felt competent and empowered to take charge of their education. A group of engineering students served as an excellent example of this; given the opportunity to select a project topic that matched their interests, they shown extraordinary inventiveness and dedication, going above and beyond the call of duty.

a. *Extrinsic Motivation and Varied Engagement*

Although students acknowledged the importance of extrinsic motivators like grades and career ambitions, their effects on engagement were more nuanced and diverse. A strategic approach to learning was demonstrated by a few extrinsically driven students, who mostly participated in activities that they believed were essential to improving their professions or getting good marks. Some pupils, on the other hand, consistently showed effort and interest even in the absence of immediate external rewards, which may indicate that they are internalising extrinsic goals or that they are gradually developing new intrinsic drives.

b. *The Teacher's Pivotal Role*

The qualitative statistics made clear how important the teacher is in influencing students' motivation and involvement. Students emphasised time and again how important it was to have teachers who were encouraging and helpful and who fostered a welcoming environment in the classroom. Students felt more driven and involved in their education when teachers acknowledged their accomplishments, gave helpful criticism, and created a feeling of community. An engineering student, for example, reported feeling very inspired when his teacher complimented him on his creative approach to a project, giving him more self-assurance and encouraging him to keep pushing the envelope.

c. Observations in Action

The relationship between motivation and engagement was further supported by observations made in classrooms. The learning environment was clearly lively and interactive in courses where students demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm, with students actively engaged, posing questions, and working together with their peers. On the other hand, a more somber atmosphere with less interactions and passive behaviors predominated in classrooms with lower reported motivation.

DISCUSSIONS

This study presents a convincing picture of the critical role motivation plays in promoting student involvement in Indonesian ESP classes through the integration of quantitative and qualitative data. The substantial positive relationship shown between overall motivation and engagement is consistent with other studies (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020) that highlight the significance of motivation in language acquisition. Self-Determination Theory, which emphasises the importance of internalised drives like enjoyment, interest, and personal relevance in maintaining deep and meaningful engagement, is consistent with the finding that intrinsic motivation emerged as a more potent predictor of engagement than extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

The qualitative results deepen our understanding of the lived experiences of Indonesian ESP students by offering complex perspectives. The testimonies of students who are genuinely passionate about the subjects they are studying, along with the evidence of their involvement and perseverance, demonstrate the transformational potential of intrinsic motivation. These results are consistent with Lamb's (2017) research, which highlights the contextual and dynamic aspect of motivation as well as the value of encouraging a feeling of purpose and connection to the subject matter.

The study also clarifies the vital role that educators play in creating an inspiring and stimulating learning environment. The qualitative data showed that when professors were encouraging, supporting, and acknowledged their students' accomplishments, the pupils felt more involved and driven. This is consistent with studies showing that instructional strategies and teacher behaviours have a favourable effect on students' motivation (Mulyaningsih, 2018; Hidayat & Setiyadi, 2021). It also aligns with Lamb's (2017) focus on the need of establishing a positive learner identity and encouraging intrinsic motivation in the context of a supportive and empowered learning environment.

Although students acknowledged the importance of extrinsic motivators like grades and career objectives, the results indicate that these sources of motivation can have erratic and short-lived effects on

engagement when compared to intrinsic motivation. This finding emphasises how crucial it is to go beyond material rewards and concentrate on teaching methods that draw on students' innate passions and interests in order to encourage a more profound and long-lasting engagement with the learning process.

To sum up, this mixed-methods study adds to the expanding corpus of knowledge on motivation in ESP settings, especially in Indonesia. It offers insightful information about the complex nature of motivation and its significant influence on student involvement. ESP educators can create more effective teaching strategies that encourage intrinsic motivation, encourage active engagement, and ultimately provide students the tools they need to succeed in their chosen fields and meet their language learning objectives by having a thorough understanding of the intricate interactions between intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as well as the critical roles played by teachers and the learning environment.

CONCLUSION

This mixed-methods study provided compelling evidence of the crucial role of motivation in fostering student engagement within Indonesian ESP classrooms. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between motivation and engagement, with intrinsic motivation emerging as a particularly powerful predictor. Highly motivated students, especially those driven by enjoyment, interest, and personal relevance, demonstrated greater active participation, consistent effort, and a proactive approach to their learning. The study also underscored the importance of supportive teachers and a positive learning environment in cultivating intrinsic motivation. These insights highlight the need for ESP educators to prioritize strategies that tap into students' inherent interests, provide opportunities for autonomy and competence, and foster a sense of relevance and connection to the subject matter. By creating a more motivating learning environment, ESP instructors can empower students to achieve their language learning goals and thrive in their chosen fields.

REFERENCES

Al-Tamimi, A., & Al-Kaabi, S. (2015). Motivation and attitudes towards learning English: A study of petroleum engineering undergraduates in Abu Dhabi. *Learning and Motivation*, *50*, 32-44.

Alrabai, F. (2016). The influence of motivation on English language learning of EFL learners: A case study of Saudi Arabia. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, *7*(5), 133-142.

Ames, C. (1992). Classrooms: Goals, structures, and student motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *84*(3), 261–271. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.84.3.261

Basturkmen, H. (2010). *Developing courses in English for specific purposes*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Cangır, H. (2013). Motivation types and language learning strategies of Turkish students attending English medium universities. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, *1*(1), 1-10.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, *11*(4), 227-268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01

Djiwandono, P. I. (2018). Students' perceptions of the importance of English and their motivation to learn English. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *8*(2), 339-349.

Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2009). *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*. Multilingual Matters.

Dudley-Evans, T., & St. John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for specific purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge University Press.

Elliot, A. J., & McGregor, H. A. (2001). A 2 × 2 achievement goal framework. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *80*(3), 501–519. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.80.3.501

Fauziati, E. (2016). EFL teaching and learning in Indonesia: A closer look at the teachers, the learners and the classrooms. *TEFLIN Journal*, *27*(1), 1-16.

Fauziati, E. (2020). The urgency of English as a lingua franca in Indonesia in the era of globalization 4.0. *Jurnal Pendidikan Humaniora*, *8*(3), 230-236.

Gardner, R. C. (2010). *Motivation and second language acquisition: The socio-educational model*. Peter Lang.

Gilakjani, A. P. (2013). Factors contributing to the difficulty of ESP coursebooks: The case of English for medical purposes textbooks. *International Journal of Linguistics*, *5*(4), 74-87.

Gil-Jaurena, I., & Pascual-Argente, M. (2023). The role of motivation in English for specific purposes (ESP): A systematic literature review. *Revista Electrónica Interuniversitaria de Formación del Profesorado*, *26*(1), 101–114.

Hidayat, D. N., & Setiyadi, A. B. (2021). The impacts of school environment on students' motivation and learning outcomes. *Jurnal Pendidikan: Teori, Penelitian, dan Pengembangan*, *6*(8), 1188-1196.

Lamb, M. (2004). Integrative motivation in a globalizing world. *System*, *32*(1), 3-19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2003.04.002

Lamb, M. (2007). The impact of school context on EFL learning motivation in Indonesia: An ecological perspective. *System*, *66*, 110–124. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2017.04.004

Lamb, M. (2012). A self system perspective on young adolescents' motivation to learn English in urban and rural Indonesia. *Language Learning*, *62*(4), 1009-1047.

Lamb, M. (2017). The motivational dimension of language teaching. *Language Teaching Research*, *21*(3), 301-318.

MacIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T., & Mercer, S. (2019). *Positive psychology in SLA*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Mercer, S., & Dörnyei, Z. (2020). *Engaging language learners in contemporary classrooms*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Mulyaningsih, D. (2018). Students' motivation in learning English: A case study in a junior high school in Indonesia. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, *165*, 416–420.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Publications.

Weiner, B. (2010). The development of an attribution-based theory of motivation: A history of ideas. *Educational Psychologist*, *45*(1), 28-36. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520903433596