

---

## PROMOTING STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN INDONESIAN EFL CLASSROOM: WHAT CAN A TEACHER DO?

---

**Priyatno Ardi**

*priyatnoardi@ukrida.ac.id*

**Author**

**Priyatno Ardi** is an English lecturer at UKRIDA Language Training Center (ULTC), he is pursuing a master's degree in Applied English Linguistics at Atma Jaya Catholic University, Jakarta. **Teaching/research interests:** learner autonomy, motivation, and language learning strategies.

**Abstract**

*This study presents the pedagogical implications of learner motivation in EFL classroom. It is undeniable that motivation plays a great role in EFL learning. Consequently, it is necessary for the teacher to consider it an indispensable aspect in EFL classroom. In other words, learner motivation is worth promoting during the teaching-learning activities. What can the teacher do in the classroom to enhance students' level of motivation? This study is to provide the discussion of motivational strategies the teacher may carry out so as to enhance students' level of motivation.*

**Keywords**

*motivation, motivational strategies, and English as a foreign language (EFL)*

### INTRODUCTION

The field of language teaching and learning has shifted its focus, from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness. This shift indeed suggests that the teaching-learning process should account for the individual characteristics of language learners which are critical to the second language learning. Among those influential characteristics is students' motivation.

Motivation unavoidably plays a critical role to bear successful language learners. Some researchers found that motivation has a positive correlation with the second language achievement and proficiency (Wang, 2006). Furthermore, they reveal that the motivated learners are more active than the unmotivated ones. In this respect, it is apparent that students' motivation contributes much to second language learning.

Regarding the importance of motivation in second language learning, Cohen and Dornyei (2002) maintain that most students' motivation can be consciously promoted in the classroom. Based on this statement, the writer wonders what kinds of efforts the teacher should make to promote language learners' motivation in the classroom, particularly in Indonesian EFL context. In other words, what are the motivational strategies the teacher should employ to increase students' learning motivation in the Indonesian EFL classroom? Why do they motivate the students?

The answer to the formulated questions is the main focus of the discussion of this paper. The discussion includes the synthesis of experts' ideas in promoting students' motivation through motivational strategies in the language classroom, contextualized in Indonesian

EFL context. For this reason, this paper aims to provide the possible implementation of motivational theory in Indonesian EFL classroom. Prior to the discussion, the writer intends to briefly present the theoretical review of the notion of motivation. The theoretical review basically provides the theoretical explanation and clarification about the idea of motivation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Second Language Learning Motivation**

The term 'motivation' is frequently articulated in day-to-day conversation. Regardless of its abstract and complex concept, having to do with human psychological construct, Dornyei and Otto (1988, as cited in Dornyei 2001: 9) defines motivation as "the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized and acted out." In this regard, they emphasize that motivation is a dynamic force which drives human to act. Needless to say, the motivation is not constant but it changes as the time goes by (Kaylani, 1996).

Related to the second language learning, Gardner (1985, cited in Liuoliene and Metiuniene, 2006: 94) defines motivation as "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity." This definition is considered to be goal-directed, or well-known as learner's orientation. Furthermore, Gardner (1985, cited in Dornyei, 2001: 49) proposes two kinds of orientation for learning a second language, namely integrative and instrumental. The integrative orientation refers to a desire to affiliate with the target community. Conversely, the instrumental orientation has to do with more practical concerns, such as getting good jobs or passing examination.

Gardner and Lambert (1959, cited in Spolsky, 1989: 149) points out that "an individual's motivation to learn a second language is controlled by his attitudes towards the other groups in particular and by his orientation to the learning tasks itself." In this respect, students' motivation comes from their attitudes. According to Gardner's socio-educational model, the level of students' motivation is influenced by two kinds of attitudes: integrativeness and students' attitude toward the learning situation as a whole. The former refers to the target community. The later corresponds to the language learning process, including language teacher, the textbook, classroom activities, and so on. Hence, the positive attitude brings about "greater enjoyment in the study of the language, desire to learn the language, and effort expended in learning the language" (op. cit.: 154).

According to Gardner, there are three critical components of motivation, namely effort, desire and affect. The effort refers to the time the learners spent to study the language. The desire has to do with how much the learner wants to become proficient in the learned language. Finally, the affect shows the learner's emotional reactions related to language learning.

Dornyei (2001: 112) elaborates three motivational levels in the language classroom: language level, learner level, and learning situational level. First, the language level relates to various components having to do with second language learning, as well as "the intellectual and pragmatic values and benefits associated with it."

Second, the learner level accounts for individual characteristics that the learner brings to the learning process. Lastly, the learning situational level is associated with situation-specific motives rooted in various aspects of language learning within a classroom setting, such as the course-specific motivational components (syllabus, teaching materials, teaching method and learning tasks), the teacher-specific motivational components (teacher's personality, teaching style, and behavior), and the group-specific motivational components (group's structure, group's developmental level, group's cohesiveness).

It is also important to keep in mind that motivation to learn a second language is different from learning other subjects. Citing Gardner (1979), Dornyei (2001: 47) maintains that learning a second language is not simply learning new information of learners' culture but "acquiring symbolic elements of a different ethnolinguistic community." For this reason, Gardner (1985, in Spolsky, 1988) suggests that the dynamics of the language classroom and methodology should be seriously considered so as to increase students' level of motivation. In other words, the teacher's skill in motivating the learners is viewed as the heart of effective teaching.

### **Enhancing Students' Motivation in EFL Classroom in Indonesia**

In this section, the writer intends to present two main points: the status of English and English Language teaching in Indonesia, and the motivational strategies implemented in Indonesian EFL classroom. The former aims to give brief insight into the role of English in Indonesia, while the later elaborates possible motivational strategies the English teacher may carry out in Indonesian EFL classroom context so as to promote students' motivation.

#### **1. Status of English and English Language Teaching in Indonesia**

English is still regarded as the first foreign language in Indonesia. Due to its status, the national curriculum includes English as the compulsory subject to be taught in schools, starting from elementary schools to university level. In this respect, the elementary and secondary students are required to take and pass English to fulfill the requirement of the national educational system. Similarly, English is a compulsory subject and accredited as one of general courses.

The main rationale for including English in the national curriculum is because it is an international language, widely used for international communication. For this reason, the Indonesian students are required to master the working knowledge of English so as to get many types of global employments as well as to pursue further study (Bradford, 2007). As the writer observes, however, some students are still less motivated when they sit in the English classroom. Hence, the teacher should take into account this problem seriously.

The Indonesian Educational Law No.22/1999 stipulates that the educators are given ample opportunities to develop their teaching methods so as to meet students' needs (Bradford, 2007). Furthermore, Kaylani (1996) points out that motivation is influenced by the changing environment, such as teaching method, quality of materials, reward system, parental expectation, and peer group. Indeed, the teachers are encouraged to increase students' motivation during the

teaching-learning activities by modifying the learning environment.

## 2. Incorporating Motivational Strategies in EFL Classroom

To discuss the possible implementation of motivational strategies in Indonesian EFL classroom, the writer adopts a framework for motivational strategies proposed by Dornyei and Otto (1998, cited in Dornyei, 2001). Rather than merely adopting the theoretical explanation, the writer attempts to relate the framework to Indonesian EFL classroom. The general framework consists of four key units. They are as follows:

- *Creating the basic motivational conditions*, which involves setting the scene for the use of motivational strategies.
- *Generating student motivation*, which roughly corresponds to the pre-actional phase in the model.
- *Maintaining and protecting motivation*, which corresponds to the actional phase.
- *Encouraging positive self-evaluation*, which corresponds to the post-actional phase.

### 2.1 Creating the basic motivational conditions

In order to increase students' level of learning motivation, the teacher should create motivational conditions. The motivation conditions consist of three factors, namely appropriate teacher behavior and good teacher-student rapport, a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere, and a cohesive learner group characterized by appropriate group norms.

Dornyei (2001: 120) contends that teacher behavior is a powerful "motivational tool." This means that the teacher's behaviors have strong influences on the students' learning. In Indonesian culture, the teacher is regarded as an example. An enthusiastic teacher, thereby, will affect students' commitment in learning as long as he/she is committed to the teaching. In this respect, the teacher is important to show their good and positive behaviors in the classroom so as to foster students' motivation. Additionally, maintaining a good relationship with the students is also indispensable to bear students' motivation. It is necessary for the teacher to have a personal talk with the students related to their learning, letting them know that the teacher cares and really thinks of their learning progress. As a result, the students will feel that they are humanized by the teacher. Indeed, the extent to which the teacher makes a personal relationship with the students is decisive to enhance students' motivation in language learning.

A relaxed and supportive classroom atmosphere is a vital factor to foster students' motivation. For this reason, the teacher is required to create the relaxed and supportive classroom. Without a doubt, the tense classroom brings about students' anxiety. The affective filter hypothesis proposed by Krashen and Terrel (1983) reveals that learning takes place if the affective filter is lowered. It is undeniable that anxiety hinders students' motivation and learning. Hence, it is necessary for the teacher to create a relaxed classroom which also provides the students with

opportunities to express their ideas. Besides, the teacher should not make the students feel embarrassed when they make mistakes (Wang, 2006). Once the students feel embarrassed, their motivation is getting lower. Moreover, a pleasant and relaxed classroom can also be created by the teacher's humor and patience.

The idea of the cohesive learner group has to do with the system or rules that governs the class members. It is often found that the English teacher in Indonesia comes to the classroom with his/her fixed and unchangeable rules. Yet, the rules are not negotiated with the students. Instead, the students should strictly follow the rules. It is important to include students in policy making so that they feel involved in the teaching and learning activities. As a result, the students are committed to their learning and such a feeling of being involved stimulates their motivation to learn English.

## **2.2 Generating student motivation**

In this motivational strategy, the teacher is encouraged to generate students' positive attitudes towards the English learning. Spolsky (1988) contends that motivation comes from attitudes. Hence, generating students' positive attitudes plays a critical role to bear motivation. Dornyei (2001) proposes four strategies employed in this phase, namely enhancing the learners' language-related values and attitudes, increasing the learners' goal-orientedness, and making the curriculum relevant for the learners.

It is necessary for the teacher to enhance students' English-related values by providing them with "chances of succeeding in English learning or with some verbal rewards" (Wang, 2006: 36). As the students have their own values in learning English, either utility or intrinsic, the teacher should account for such values in teaching-learning activities. Regarding the utility value, the activities hence should provide the students with ample opportunities to use functional English, such as how to ask for help, and so on. Since intrinsic value is related to students' interest in learning activities, the teacher should think creatively to create teaching-learning activities, such as incorporating games, songs, movies, and picture in language classroom. Indeed, the activities that meet students' values are critical to increase motivation.

Additionally, the teacher who intends to generate students' motivation should also encourage the learners to set their own goals in learning English. The determined goal serves as students' personal criteria for success. To establish their personal criteria, the students are likely to consider their strengths and weaknesses related to English language learning. As a result, achieving their goal, the students are motivated to further learning and encouraged to set further goals.

Learning materials are also decisive to foster students' motivation. Accordingly, the teacher needs also to select the learning materials which are valuable and desirable for the learners. In so doing, needs analysis should be conducted

prior to implementing the teaching-learning materials in the classroom. Since Indonesian teenagers are interested in the popular culture, for example, the teacher might include the biography of American singer as one of the English learning materials.

### **2.3 Maintaining and protecting motivation**

The main idea of maintaining and protecting motivation is primarily to encourage the students to increase their self-confidence in the English learning. Dornyei (2001) suggests five ways to increase students' self-confidence. First, it is necessary for the teacher to foster the belief that competence is a changeable aspect of development. Second, the favorable self-conceptions of second language competence can be promoted by providing regular experiences of success and emphasizing what the learners can rather than cannot do. Third, everyone is more interested in a task if they feel that they make a contribution. Hence, hard-to-reach learners can be motivated by giving them feeling of making a useful contribution. Fourth, a small personal word of encouragement is sufficient. When the students finish their work, for instance, it is important for the teacher to give encouragement by saying: "Great, you have done a good job." It seems trivial but its effect is so powerful to build students' positive self-perception. Finally, the teacher can reduce classroom anxiety by making the learning context less stressful. Most English language classrooms in Indonesia are designed in a traditional setting, which make the students feel bored. To cope with this problem, the teacher may redesign the classroom in such a way that maximizes students' interaction.

### **2.4 Encouraging positive self-evaluation**

This strategy encourages the students to self-evaluate their learning in a more positive light, encouraging them to take credit for their learning progress. Dornyei (2001) defines this strategy as postactional strategies, which comprise promoting attributions to effort rather than to ability, providing motivational feedback, and increasing learner satisfaction and the question of rewards and grades.

To promote attributions to students' effort, the teacher should emphasize to the students that their failure in learning English is due to their low effort. The teacher is then to encourage the students that English competence can be changed and controlled as long as they undergo effortful learning (Wang, 2006). This kind of strategy is suitable to be implemented in Indonesian EFL context since most of the students tend to see their failure in the English learning as a result of their inability.

The teacher should also provide the students with motivational feedback. In this respect, he/she may suggest what the students need to do or continue in order to improve their learning progress. Furthermore, it is important for the teacher to give a positive persuasive feedback. He/she may say, "I believe you are able to speak English fluently." This kind of motivational feedback will certainly encourage the

students to learn so as to reach their goals of learning English.

A feeling of satisfaction toward the English learning is an important factor to increase motivation as well. To increase learner satisfaction, the teacher may focus on "allowing students to display their work, encouraging them to be proud of themselves and celebrate success, as well as using rewards" (Dornyei, 2001: 136). This strategy is a challenging task for English teacher in Indonesia since the educational system gives much emphasis on grades, rather than the learning process itself. In doing so, the teacher may incorporate reflective journals in the classroom so that at the end of the course the students are able to track their own learning process. This track facilitates the students to self-evaluate their learning process during the course. In his undergraduate research on learner autonomy, Ardi (2007) finds that administering students' self-evaluation in the English language classroom assists the students to find their satisfaction on their effortful learning process. Accordingly, the awareness of their satisfaction on their effortful learning influences their level of motivation.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study provides a brief overview of the importance of motivation and the discussion of the implication of motivational strategies in the Indonesian EFL classroom. The Indonesian EFL teacher should be aware that students' motivation is the heart of English language learning. This awareness entails the teacher to think of motivational strategies implemented in the EFL classroom so as to solve students' learning problems related to the second language motivation. Even though the teacher is not the primary locus of students' motivation, he indeed plays a critical role to enhance students' motivation by implementing the motivational strategies in the classroom. It is also important to keep in mind that promoting students' motivation is not necessary by saying words but showing exemplary attitudes in daily behaviors. A saying goes "a mediocre teacher tells, a good teacher explains, a superior teacher demonstrates, a great teacher inspires."

## REFERENCE LIST

- Ardi, P. 2007. *Enhancing Students' Learning Autonomy through the Collaborative Audio-Journal Project in Listening Comprehension III*. Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis, Sanata Dharma University Yogyakarta.
- Bradford, A. 2007. Motivational Orientations Under-researched FLL Contexts: Findings from Indonesia. *RELC Journal*, 38 (3), 302-323.
- Cohen, A. D and Dornyei, Z. 2002. Focus on the Language Learner: Motivation, Styles, and Strategies. In Norbert Schmitt (ed.) *An Introduction to Applied Linguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dornyei, Z. 2001. *Teaching and Researching Motivation*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

- Kaylani, C. 2006. The Influence of Gender and Motivation on EFL Learning Strategy Use in Jordan. In Rebecca Oxford (ed.) *Language Learning Strategies around the World: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, 75-88. Hawaii: Second Language Teaching & Curriculum, University of Hawaii.
- Krashen, S. and Terrel, T. 1983. *The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Lioliene, A. and Metiuneine. 2006. Second Language Learning Motivation. *Santalka Filologija Edukologija*, 14 (6), 93-98.
- Spolsky, B. 1989. *Condition for Second Language Learning: Introduction to a General Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wang, Y. 2006. The Factors in L2 Learning Motivation and their Pedagogical Implications in English Classroom. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 3 (7), 32-37.