

# The Motivation of Learning English: A Descriptive Case Study of Indonesian Lecturers

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## Abstract

Although many scholars have conducted studies on the motivation of learning, little scholarly work reports the motives of lecturers learning English; the participants of previous studies are predominantly students. Further, a majority of those previous studies have been conducted using exclusively quantitative methods. To address these empirical and methodological gaps, the current research employed a qualitative descriptive case study method to examine Indonesian lecturers' motivation for learning English. This study utilised in-depth interviews to gather information from participants. The thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews presented that the lecturers' motivation for learning English included engaging in international scientific meetings, teaching, writing research articles, reading literature, and preparing for a doctoral program. The findings revealed that instrumental motivation dominated Indonesian lecturers' desires to improve their English. The implication of this study is that any language learners may adopt or adapt the motivations from the participants of this study to help succeed in learning English.

**Keywords:** English, Indonesian lecturers, Motivation

## Introduction

Among the many factors affecting English learners' success, such as language learning strategies, effort, ability and access to learning resources, their motivation proves to be significantly relevant for successful language learning (Dörnyei, 1994; Gardner, 1985). That is, the higher motivation learners have, the higher their achievements usually are. For this reason, it is crucial for language learners to understand and develop motivation with the assistance of other proficient learners. Further, their motivation will foster their commitment to learn the language (Noprival et al., 2021).

Proponents of the importance of motivation make a case for its value, especially in the field of learning language. Such major proponents include Gardner (1985), Deci and Ryan (1985), among others. Although these experts have their own models of motivation, they agree that motivation is deeply connected to learners' orientation toward the goal of learning a second language. Among numerous motivation models formulated by the experts, one model very frequently cited is the Gardner's (1985). Gardner (1985) proposes a socioeducational model, which categorised language learning motivation into two classes. The first is integrative motivation, which entails a favourable attitude toward the target language community, and possibly a wish to integrate and adapt to a new target culture through use of the language (Gardner, 1985). The second is instrumental motivation, defined as the learning motivation class that drives human beings to reach goals and objectives.

The increased focus on the concept of language learning motivation has drawn much interest among researchers (see Aladdin, 2013; Bateman & Oliveira, 2014; Chen, 2017; Giles, 2016; Marten & Mostert, 2012; Noprival, 2021; Pratt et al., 2009). For example, Chen (2017) conducted a study about students' motivation in learning English in a junior high school in Taiwan. The findings revealed that examinations encourage students to learn more English. Pratt et al. (2009) similarly conducted research concerning students' motivation in learning Spanish in an American senior high school in Texas. Pratt et al. (2009) found that students' main motivation to learn Spanish concerned its value as a skill to be used in a future workplace. Marten and Mostert (2012), meanwhile, investigated the motivation of beginner-level learners of Zulu in higher education in the UK. They found that many of the participants expected to use Zulu professionally, in particular for work or for further studies in South Africa. Additionally, Giles (2016) explored the motivation of North American students in learning Irish. One of their results indicated that a primary motivation for people was for pleasure. In addition, Noprival et al. (2021) scrutinised Indonesian polyglots' motivation for learning multiple languages. They found that the polyglots' motivation for learning multiple foreign languages included pleasure, social intercourse, as well as for professional and academic purposes.

Although there have been studies on language learning motivation based on the preceding literature review, little scholarly work reports the motives of lecturers learning English, as most of the participants included in previous studies were students. Further, most of the existing research has been conducted using exclusively quantitative methods. In response to these empirical and methodological gaps, the current research employed a qualitative descriptive case study method to examine Indonesian lecturers' motivations for learning English. This study is an attempt to fill a gap in the literature concerning language learning motivation in the Indonesian higher education context.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

Since the researchers sought a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting, a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2007; Gay et al., 2012; Nunan 2010) seemed to be more appropriate to achieve this study's purpose. This study sought to retrieve comprehensive information about Indonesian lecturers' motivation for learning English. Specifically, under the qualitative approach, I employed a case study methodology. Generally, Merriam (1998) stated that a qualitative case study was "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (p. xiii). In this study, I specifically used a descriptive case study because I wanted to focus on describing a phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Yin, 2018). As a result, I discussed in-depth information about the motivations of Indonesian lecturers for learning English.

### **Participant**

I invited the lecturers of a college of health and sciences in Indonesia to participate in this study. They were selected based on purposive sampling. The participants were categorised as adults, with ages ranging from thirty one to forty seven years old. All participants had experiences learning English through private language tutoring while they were lecturers, indicating that all participants were highly motivated to learn English. There were eight participants that voluntarily participated during the process

of collecting data; they were Cia, Dara, Heni, Kisno, Nisma, Seno, Tono, and Vina. I used pseudonyms to hide the participants' identities in order to preserve their rights and privacy. They are all Indonesian lecturers who have different backgrounds in health sciences, including: nursing, pharmacy, and public health.

### **Data Collection**

In this research, the data collection consisted of in-depth interviews. First, I arranged a list of interview questions as the protocol. As recommended by Yin (2018), a protocol was developed to guide data collection for the case study. The interview data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted individually at a location of each participants' choice. The language used during data collection was Indonesian. I assured my participants their participation was voluntary, and their statements would be treated confidentially. Additionally, they had the right not to answer any interview questions and to stop their participation in my study any time they wanted. Fortunately during the interviews, all our participants were helpful and cooperative in providing information.

### **Data Analysis**

After conducting interviews with the participants, I immersed myself in the data. To explore the Indonesian lecturers' motivations for learning English, I analysed and reanalysed transcripts of the individual interviews line by line. After this stage, I created coding categories, which came from words and phrases which represented the patterns and topics that the data covered (Saldaña, 2009). Along with coding category development, I also employed a thematic analysis. This process looked like a second round of coding very similar to my search for categories; however, I focused on how the participants' answers fell into categories when they were analysed thematically. By building up themes, I threaded my draft with themes, categorising answers and evidence from the analysed data.

### **Trustworthiness**

To ensure the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of my study, I returned the Indonesian transcripts to my participants for verification. I sent raw transcribed interviews to them via WhatsApp, then asked them to provide feedback whether the data of interview conversations were accurate or not. This was done to check from the standpoints of both the researcher and the participants that the interview transcriptions were as accurate as possible. Another important rationale behind having the interviewee check a transcription is to allow the participants to provide additional information beyond the first interview.

## **Results**

The findings in this study were presented based on the answers of the research question: "What motivates Indonesian lecturers to learn English?" The data analysis revealed that the lecturers' motivation for learning English included engaging in international scientific meetings, to improve their teaching, to help them in writing research articles, so they could read more literature, and in preparation for applying to a doctoral program.

### **Learning English for Engaging in International Scientific Meetings**

The participants in this study, the Indonesian lecturers, indicated that one of their motivations for learning English was for engaging in international scientific meetings. The lecturers are given time to present their papers in international seminars. For example, Tono reported that he was motivated to learn English because he wanted to present an article in an international seminar: "When presenting a research paper in an international seminar, using English is mandatory. It encourages me to learn English." Similarly, Heni reflected, "I am really motivated to learn English because I use it in oral presentations [when joining international conferences]." In addition, the lecturers stated that their motivation to learn English is not only for presenting papers in an international conference but also for understanding other presenters who speak in English. For instance, Dara reported, "As a participant of [an international] conference, we should know what the speakers are talking about. This is the reason why I am learning English."

### **Learning English for Teaching**

In this study, learning English for their teaching also emerged from the data analysis. For instance, Vina stated that her motivation was to prepare teaching materials: "For a lecturer, the ability to use English is important because it makes it easier to prepare teaching materials [finding resources written in Indonesian but also English]." In addition, Cia informed me that she was learning English for teaching public health material in English: "One of my motivations is that I want to teach [public health materials] through English [It is mixed with Indonesian. At the same time, my students gain English exposure]. It is more useful for them in the globalisation era." Additionally, Dara said that she learned English for her children too: "For me, English is not only used for myself in academic fields but also for teaching to my children."

### **Learning English for Writing a Research Article**

In this study, the participants shared with us that an additional motivation for learning English was for writing research articles. For instance, Tono stated that they used English for reporting their work in international journals, "One of the lecturers' obligations is research. To report a research to an international journal, English is a medium. Meaning that a lecturer must learn English." Additionally, Kisno informed that he learned English in order to publish his research internationally, "My motivation is to write a research article in English. As we know, academic writing used in international journals is English as a standard. Also, when writing using English, my research paper is more likely to be read worldwide." Similarly, Cia said, "Research is one of the lecturers' responsibilities. English is a platform for research reports to be submitted to international journals so learning English would support my career."

### **Learning English for Reading Literature**

The participants in this research informed me that they also learned English for understanding literature. For example, Seno stated that he learned English for understanding research articles as his reading references, "To enrich my academic knowledge, I should read and understand international research articles [written in English]. This is one of my motivations to learn English." In addition, Nisma reflected that she wanted to understand books as teaching resources written in English, "Many good

books as teaching resources are written in English. I do not like translated books [from English to Indonesian], I want to read the original version. At the same time, it encourages me to learn English.” Similarly, “My motivation is to understand references about occupational health and safety [my expertise], books that are mostly written in English. I like to read the original form of the books rather than ones that have been translated from English to Indonesian,” Cia reported.

### **Learning English for Preparing a Doctoral Program**

In this study the participants confirmed the motives of learning English also included preparation for applying to doctoral programs. Now that they have obtained a master's degree in health sciences, the participants wanted to pursue a higher degree of education. English is one of the tests for doctoral enrollment, and is a skill that would help support them academically when completing a doctoral program. For instance, Tono said that his motivation for learning English is to pursue a doctoral program, “My main motivation in learning English is to continue my study to a doctoral degree.” Also, Seno stated that he wanted to improve his English for preparing his study to a doctoral degree, “I am determined to improve my English because I want to continue [prepare] my study to a doctoral degree.” Similarly, “My primary driving force behind learning English is to pursue a doctoral degree,” Nisma reflected.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study concerning the motivations of Indonesian lecturers' English skills is important to be discussed in an academic context. In this section, the findings of the motivations of Indonesian lecturers for learning English that emerged from data analysis were interpreted by the researchers. Moreover, this discussion confirms and aligns with the findings of previous studies and theories. As found in this study, the lecturers' motivation for learning English included engaging in international scientific meetings, improving their teaching, writing research articles, reading literature, and preparing for a doctoral program.

From the perspective of Gardner's (1985) motivation theory, the participants' statements concerning learning English for engaging in international scientific meetings revealed that the Indonesian lecturers' motivation included “instrumental motivation.” In particular, as found in this study, they were motivated to learn English to gain proficiency in English to use as a presenter at an international conference as well as to be an audience member to other English presentations. Also, English was employed and expected frequently as a public speaker, especially when presenting a paper at an international conference. Given the data from the participants, this study is in line with previous studies; for example Yee and Abidin (2014) claim that public speaking would be useful in improving ESL students' speaking skills as they will be given opportunities to practice speaking in front of others in order to reduce their speech anxiety when speaking English. This finding is also relevant with practising English, which is one of the most popular strategies used by language learners once learning a foreign language (Nasrollahi-Mouziraji & Nasrollahi-Mouziraji, 2015).

The next finding revealed from the study considered learning English for teaching, which is also categorised as instrumental motivation (Gardner, 1985). As found in this study, lecturers were motivated to learn English to better teach their students as well as

their children at home. Moreover, since their profession is teaching in a higher educational institution, this motivation can be captured as learning for professional purposes. The results of this study were consistent with what Marten and Mostert (2012) discovered in their research, which indicated that one reason people in the United Kingdom chose to learn Zulu as a second language was for professional reasons. Furthermore, Bateman and Oliveira (2014) discovered that students of Spanish-speaking backgrounds were mostly motivated to learn Portuguese in order to advance their professional lives. Similar to this, Pratt et al. (2009) stated that the motive to learn Spanish as a foreign language was for future job benefits in a study conducted at various high schools in the racially diverse urban west Texas.

Additionally, the findings confirmed that the participants have an instrumental motivation (Gardner, 1985) when learning English to write a research article. This finding is relevant with prior research; for example Delaney (2008) explored the extent to which the reading-to-write construct is the sum of one's reading and writing abilities by examining students at a university in the United States. Results indicate that the test tasks were different dimensions of the reading-to-write ability, and that the reading-to-write ability seems to be a unique construct weakly associated with reading for comprehension and disassociated from writing an essay without the support of prior background knowledge. In addition, the importance of reading for academic purposes, especially in composing an academic paper has become the focus of several previous studies (Delaney, 2008; Almansour & Al-shoram, 2014; Zhao & Hirvela, 2015).

Further, the interviews with the participants revealed their motivation in learning English included for being able to read more literature. This strategy is under the instrumental motivation (Gardner, 1985). In reading, there are three kinds of strategies: content strategies, function strategies, and rhetorical strategies. In analyzing reading references, a reader is using rhetorical strategies since it involves a process of understanding by activating constructs while reading a text, and while considering the author, context, content, and function of the text (Hass & Flower, 1988 in Zhao & Hirvela (2015). Further, this finding is relevant with learning English to write a research article because reading is key to generating and developing ideas through enriching readers' knowledge, a writer's reading strategies determine the quality of their academic writing (Almansour & Al-shoram, 2014).

The last form of the participants' motivation in learning English involved preparing for a doctoral program. This motivation is also under instrumental motivation (Gardner, 1985). A foreign language for academic purposes was a common issue for Indonesian students, especially to those who wanted to study abroad. They might experience difficulty due to foreign language ability, as Mukminin (2012) found in his study where Indonesian graduate students in the US higher education system encountered language problems in their first term. Furthermore, in an Indonesia context and in response to the importance of foreign language, the government of Indonesia implemented English as a medium of instruction at schools labelled international. One of the motives behind this language policy was to motivate either students or teachers to get used to English as a means of international communication in the field of education. Unfortunately, this policy failed due to teachers' and students' readiness in terms of foreign language skills (Haryanto & Mukminin, 2012). Finally, this language policy was stopped due to complicated curriculum problems in an international standard school.

## Conclusion

Using a qualitative case study method, this research has shown Indonesian lecturers' motivation in learning English. I found five forms of the motivations participants have for learning English. All themes emerged under an umbrella of instrumental motivation (Gardner, 1985). First, the motive of the participants to learn English included engaging in international scientific meetings. They were encouraged to learn English for joining an international conference, either as a participant or a presenter. Second, they learned English for teaching their students and children. Third, the participants' motivation for learning English concerned writing research articles. This is in line with lecturers' obligation who are not only as a teaching staff but also as a researcher. Fourth, the participants' motivation to learn English also included the ability to understand more literature, for example books or research articles written in English. Finally, the motivation of the Indonesian lecturers in learning English was also for preparing a doctoral program. Findings in this study contribute to our understanding of Indonesian lecturers' motivation in English. It is hoped that any language learners adopt or adapt the motivations from the participants of this study and succeed in learning English.

## Acknowledgment

I would like to say many thanks to all participants in this study who have given their time for the interviews.

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