

A Qualitative Inquiry on EFL Learners' Motivation during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Study of Undergraduate Students in Indonesia

Vidia Dewi Rismadayanti¹, Moh. Arif Mahbub²

¹English Education Department, Universitas Islam Jember, Indonesia, ²English Education Department, Universitas Islam Jember, Sanggar Menulis Manuskrip Jember, Indonesia

*) Correspondence: rijelbarzmahbub@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Student motivation is a major factor affecting on students' learning process. This study aims to investigate the EFL students motivation enrolled in Advanced Paragraf writing course in an Indonesian private university. A qualitative narrative reseach (Barkhuizen, 2014.; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) as a research design employed in the current study. We analyzed narratives produced by 2 EFL undergraduate students for their themes through thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). The findings indicate that the participants' learning motivation tends to be declined. The findings have practical implications for EFL teachers and course designers. Conclusions were then drawn as well as discussing recommendations.

Keywords: *advanced paragraph writing course; Covid-19; EFL; student motivation*

INTRODUCTION

The attack of Covid-19 (SARS-CoV-2) has seriously caused disruption in many sectors, including in education. Educational stakeholders must take a must-do action, shifting from traditional-lecture method to remote teaching mode, to prevent its transmission. In Indonesia, school closures has been also mandated by the government and online education is still being implemented until further notice. However, this online learning mode has caused many problems experienced by many educational stakeholders. Many case caused from online learning, such as crisis-response migration methods, challenges, Technology, Socio-economic factor, Human and pets' intrusions, Digital competence, Assessment and supervision, Heavy workload, Compatibility, Opportunities, Research innovations, Technological innovations, Socio-economic interventions (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020).

Indonesia had shifted their pedagogical practices from face to face learning to online learning as the aftermath of the Covid-19 crisis. Online learning is not just about online learners; for some students, this form of learning delivery is a strategic choice often to bring better balance to their lives. (Dabbagh, 2007; Farrel et al., 2018). Although for some students online learning bring advantage, but the biggest challenge in online learning is demotivated students. Numerous studies claimed that studies research on lack of motivation or loss of motivation to learn will weaken the teaching and learning process as well as decreasing the quality of students' performances (Emda, 2017; Sari, 2018). Motivation is a private subjective experience and engagement is more objective with observed effect. (Dabbagh, 2007). Differentiated location among lecture and students made the lecture can't handle and manage directly the condition to made students focus on what their described during online learning study.

Dickinson, (1995) defining about autonomy: as both an attitude toward learning and a capacity for independent learning. Dickinson's still proposed two theories of cognitive motivation : "attribution theory" and "self-determination theory". Self-determination theory differentiates between

intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by putting them on a continuum where learners choose to learn at their own will "in the absence of a reward contingency or control" or where they perform an activity simply for an external reward or to avoid punishment (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The term self-motivation learning has been traditionally polarized into two categories; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Vonkova et al., 2021). Intrinsic factor refers to factor from the inside of ourself such as such as engaging in a certain behavior related to make our feeling better in daily life (Tanaka, 2017). In another hand, extrinsic factor refers to factor comes from environment or the outside individual; in other words, it is based on external incentives such as receiving a reward or avoiding punishment (Ahmadi, 2012). Intrinsic factors include curiosity, preferred challenge, a preference for independent work (Harter, 1981). Meanwhile, still in the same reference, extrinsic factor includes a pleasing teacher, easy to work, dependence on teachers. These are the differentiate expression between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in motivational orientational.

A number of studies have interested to investigate self-motivation in many different settings. Diseth et al., (2020) how students perceived academic performance was related to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The findings of the current succeeded in reproducing the factor structure of an instrument measuring intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Chen et al., (2019) investigate about the integration of SDT and the achievement goal approach by examining the mediational function of achievement goals in the relations between psychological need support and both intrinsic and external motivation. The findings are research provided support for the proposition that the predictive relation between need support and intrinsic and external motivation are mediated by achievement goals.

Many reseacher investigate about student motivation in EFL learners, however there is limitate empirical evidence on that issues particularly in Indonesian setting. This study therefore as an effort to explore those issues from participant perspective that will contribute to extended the body of literature of that issues. Those, the research question in this study is as follow, "how is student academic motivation during covid-19 enrolled in Advanced Paragraf writing?"

METHODS

Drawing upon constructivism paradigm (Creswell, 2018; Schwandt, 2007), this interview study (Kvale, 2007) aimed to investigate the EFL students' motivation enrolled in Advanced Paragraph writing course situated in one of private universities in Jember, Indonesia. Kvale, (2007) argued that conversation is a basic mode of human interaction. Through conversations, we get to know other people, get to learn about their experiences, feelings and hopes and the world they live in (Kvale, 2007). This interview study was therefore appropriate to reflect the learners' experience and interaction between interviewer and interview. An interview is literally an interview, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of common interest. (Kvale, 2007)

To recruit the participants, we followed the ethical procedures of participants' recruitment as recommended by Hammersley & Traianou (2012). The participants voluntarily involved in this study were two undergraduate students from private university in Jember. Before starting the reseach, at the beginning reseacher will send a letter to institute who involve in the research. There were two participants (1male and 1 female) with age range between 20-23 years old. They were English education program students in private university in Jember that had finished their study in advanced paragraph course during a pandemic. All the identity from participants were assigned pseudonym.

As for data gathering we used semi-structured (Barkhuizen, 2014). We conducted face to face with participant. The interview needed to know the participant's experience and feeling, The reseacher ask the question who relate the condition about their motivation during attend teaching and learning

in pandemic situation. Interview will held between 50-60 minutes. We mainly adopted the interview questions from Hidi and Boscolo (2007), and Diseth et al., (2020) illustrated as follows: 1. Why are students so often not motivated to write? 2. How can their motivation to write be increased? 3. How students perceived academic performance was related to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation? 4. What are the dominant factors to increase self learning?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research was intended to explore the motivation level of undergraduate students' during online learning. The result of interview data extracted from the first participant Zainal indicated that he had ever experienced obstacles in writing subject. Similar condition has also occurred to Jennie that she encountered difficulties in her writing process. More specifically, those difficulties include using appropriate discourse markers, vocabulary in use, and writing coherently. This can be seen in thus following excerpt:

"...Building coherence and connecting ideas between one sentence and another sentence, making me so frustrated while writing" (Interview Zainal, via WhatsApp, 25 August 2022)

"...Actually, I found difficulties in choosing the appropriate dictions, choosing appropriate discourse markers, and jumping ideas." (Interview Jennie, via WhatsApps 23 August 2022)

In addition, to get many obstacles while they start to write, both participants (Zainal and Jennie) argued that writing is the difficult skills. Yet, Zainal confessed that listening is the most difficult one. Jennie also felt similar thing arguing that writing is also considered as the difficult one to master, as described in this following excerpt:

"In my opinion, writing makes me so stressed for some reasons... But, I feel (that) listening is more difficult (than writing)" (Interview Zainal, via WhatsApp 25 August 2022)

"...So difficult. When I want to write, I often get stuck. ... No ideas easily come to my mind. ... (Interview Jennie, Via WhatsApp, 23 August 2022)

In the next session the participants explain that they ever feel lack of motivation. Zainal stated that tiredness, boredom and personal problem are combination to make his feel lack motivation. On the other hand, Jennie feels lack motivation when she get bad feedback about what her write from lecturer. They illustrated follow:

"Usually when I was tired or feel bored..... sometimes there is a problem from the (learning) environment so influencing me." Interview Zainal via WhatsApp, 25 August 2022

"I have ever feel so frustrated and demotivated, particularly when I receive a bad comment from the lecturer...." Interview Jennie via WhatsApp, 28 August 2022

Although the participants ever feel demotivated. Both of them explained that they have own effective ways to increase or returning their motivation to write. More details, such as go to hiking, waterfall, or only read another articles to get an inspiration. Jennie has different condition to grow back her motivation as when in positive vibes and gets good feedback. Their explanation follows at the transcript below:

"If I really feel bored I will go hiking or go to the waterfall or gathering with my friends who have high motivation...." Interview Zainal via WhatsApp, 25 August 2022

"I get motivation when I was in positive vibes, and when the lecturer gets a good feedback... such as I know what I must to do or I can read another articles...." Interview Jennie via WhatsApp, 25 August 2022

In the next item, the participant provided example about intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Zainal and Jennie agreed that intrinsic motivation is the motivation is sources from inside of their soul. Zainal described about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. He claimed that the intrinsic motivation is a desire to succes. On the other hand, Jennie pinpointed that intrinsic motivation is she's like to do her homework alone and feels challenging. The interview can follows:

"For me, it is motivation to be a successful person...." Interview Zainal via WhatsApp, 28 August 2022

"In my opinion, I am so motivated when my lecturer gave me a course assignment. It is so challenging for me to do the best". Interview with Jennie via WhatsApp, 25 August 2022

On the opposite, the participants also agreed if extrinsic motivation if from the invironment. Zainal explained that extrinsic motivation can be a source of the great desire to be a sucessful learner. Meanwhile, Jennie confessed that the big motivation for her is the support from surroundings including her parents, fellows, and teachers, narrated as follows:

"...I also want to be a successful learner due to influence from the environment.." Interview Zainal via WhatsApp 28 August 2022

"An extrinsic motivation can provide me to write such as motivate from teacher, parents and classmate." Interview Jennie via WhatsApp 28 August 2022

After all the question has been answer by participant, the last interview question is about dominant factors who influence their motivation. Both of them (Zainal and Jennie) agreed that intrinsic factor can dominate our motivation. But they also explained that extrinsic motivation important to encourage their motivation. Zainal state that the percentage of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is 60% compared 40%. More details the interview as follows below:

"Both of them (Intrinsic and Extrinsic factors)...It could be 60% for intrinsic factor, and 40% for extrinsic factor." Interview Zainal via WhatsApp, 28 August 2022

"If I personally internal factor, althought honestly both of them has impotant role to increase motivation to learn. But personally I feel that intrinsic factor is more dominate" Interview Jennie via WhatsApp, 25 August 2022

The aim of this current study is to investigate EFL students motivation enrolled in Advanced Paragraf writing course in an Indonesian private university. Data gathering used interview. Question of the interview mainly addopted by Hidi and Boscolo (2007) and Diseth et al., (2020) contain five questions. Regarding to the writing difficulties experienced by the both participants, the data illustrated that they encountered difficulties in arranging ideas coherently, deciding the appropriate dictions and discourse markers. Those difficulties has also been experienced by the participants worldwide. Dominant contribution concerning students' lack motivation to write originate from studies, generally from a cognitive approach, present the complexity of writing process and the difficulties students, percise novice ones. Amid literate practices, writing is generally considered difficult for children, including beginner writer. (Hidi and Boscolo, 2007)

In the next item, participants were asked to narrate their perceptions about the difficult skills to be mastered. After conducting thematic analysis, the data showcased that Zainal confessed listening is more difficult subject than writing. Similar with what Rooy & Rooy, (2015) stated that listening comprehension is underlined as one of the most challenging subject for teachers as well as learners and important skills of language. The poor of competence listening ability will be synchronous with the result in poor performance in EFL and ESL contexts. As we believed that individuals who rarely strive practise listening will get many obstacles and need much activities relate in listening and full of concentration. Otherwise, Jennie has a similar feels, she also argue that writing is one of difficult subject can make her frustrated and confused, which is congruent with the finding of Hidi and Boscolo's (2007) study claiming that writing is considered as most difficult skill to be mastered. These difficulties can hugely influence student to be demotivated. Hidi and Boscolo (2007) state the "will" (or lack of will) to write is closely connected to a writer's self-perception of ability, as well as to the ways and tools he or she can adopt for self-regulating.

When asked about the reasons causing the participants felt so demotivated to write, they reported about many things who caused them demotivated such as tiredness, boredom, personal problems, and teacher's negative feedback. Hyland et al., (2001) classified teacher's feedback in terms of its functions as praise, criticism, and suggestion. Indeed, the provision negative feedback from teacher tend to cause demotivation for some learners since teacher feedback is crucial to development self-regulated learning (Tang & Liu, 2018) and also one main function of teacher feedback is to motivate student learning (Bangert-drowns et al., 1991). So negative feedback can influence for student motivation.

In items 4, participants discuss about the effective ways to increase their motivation. Also same in before, they have different ways. Zainal confessed the effective way to get back his motivation is going to hiking, going to waterfall or only gathering with friends who have high motivation to write. And then, Jennie, she get back her motivation when she feels positive vibes and get positive feedback from lecturer. It is same way with what Zimmerman & Risemberg, (1997) state "a self-regulated writer should have positive feelings, interest and self-initiated thoughts that would lead him/her to activities that attain various literary goals, such as improving their writing skills and the quality of the text they create."

Describe about intrinsic motivation, participants have their perception about the example of intrinsic motivation. Arnold, (2000) stated that intrinsic motivation is learning itself that has its own reward. Many kind of intrinsic motivation that participants feel in writing process. According Harter, (1981) intrinsic motivation can divided into five dimension, 1) Learning motivated by curiosity 2) Incentive to work for one's own satisfaction 3) Preference for challenging work 4) Desire to work independently 5) Internal criteria for success or failure. During an interview, Zainal confessed that biggest his motivation to write one of them is a desire to be succes person. It can be include five dimension, internal criteria for success or failure. On the otherhand, Jennie state that intrinsic motivation is when she's like to do her homework by herself and it make her feels challenging. That statement inculde in intrinsic factor in three dimension.

Next item, participants narrated about extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is the motivation to work primarily in response to something apart from the work itself, such as reward or recognition or the dictates of other people (Amabile et al., 1994). Harter, (1981) state extrinsic motivation also divided into five dimension such as 1) Learning in order to please the teacher, 2) Working to please the teacher and get good grades, 3) Preference for easy work, 4) Dependence on the teacher for help, and 5) External criteria (e.g., grades, teacher feedback) to determine success or

failure. Zainal explained source of his extrinsic motivation is to be a successful learner. It can include in five dimension. Meanwhile, Jennie confessed the big motivation for her is the supporting from surrounding including her parents, fellows, and teachers. Harter, (2009) reported classmates serve as potential companions and friends, meeting important social needs of the developing child.

The last items tried to explore the dominant factor who made the participants highly motivated to write. Both of participants (Zainal and Jennie) agreed that intrinsic factor is the most dominate than the extrinsic motivation. However, they also explained that extrinsic motivation is important to encourage their motivation. Zainal state that the percentage of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is 60% compared 40%. Although, participants state that intrinsic motivation can dominate. But, according Wong, (2014) claimed that there is no single motivation was viewed as effective across different EFL context. This can be explained by the fact that motivational strategy effectiveness is culturally dependent: one motivational strategy may be viewed as effective by one group of EFL learners and as ineffective by another.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the result of this current study tried to answer the research question about the EFL students' motivation enrolled in Advanced Paragraph Writing course situated in one of private universities in Jember, East Java, Indonesia. To answer the research question reseacher we employed narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen, 2014; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The results indicated that the intrinsic motivation can significantly affect their desire to learn. Second, the provision of teachers' feedback have also affected on their motivation to wite. Thirdly, arranging ideas in coherent way, choosing appropriate dictions and discourse markers have become the participants' major obstacles when composing writing.

This research has several limitations such as this study still has limited participants (n=2). Also this present study only conducted in eastern java Indonesia. Further, the topic of the research only focused on learners writing skill. Therefore it is suggested for future researched to involved in large skill of participant in another skills.

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