

Students' motivation in learning english in urban and rural schools.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate students' motivation in learning English in urban and rural schools and to identify the factors influencing their motivation. The research employed a sequential explanatory mixed-method design, in which quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire based on Keller's ARCS motivation model, consisting of Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction, followed by qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews. The participants were 40 students, consisting of 20 students from SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase as the rural school and 20 students from MTs YMPI Rappang as the urban school. The findings showed that students in both schools had a high level of motivation in learning English. SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase obtained a mean score of 4.17, while MTs YMPI Rappang obtained a mean score of 4.09. The results also revealed differences in ARCS components, where rural students scored higher in Attention, while urban students scored higher in Relevance. The interview findings indicated that students' motivation was influenced by internal factors such as interest, future goals, confidence, and satisfaction, as well as external factors such as teacher support, classroom activities, learning resources, and school facilities. These findings suggest that students' motivation in learning English is not solely determined by school location but also by learning experiences, personal aspirations, and the perceived benefits of English.

INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential language in the era of globalization because it functions as an international medium of communication in education, technology, business, and global interaction. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and is included as an important subject at secondary school levels. The mastery of English is expected to help students access wider knowledge, communicate internationally, and prepare themselves for future academic and career opportunities. Therefore, English learning should not only focus on language knowledge but also on encouraging students to develop motivation and confidence in using the language.

Motivation plays a crucial role in the success of English language learning. Students who have strong motivation tend to be more active, persistent, and willing to participate in classroom activities. They are more likely to practice vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, speaking, reading, and writing even when they face difficulties. On the other hand, students with low motivation often become passive, less confident, and less interested in learning activities. This condition shows that motivation is one of the determining factors in students' achievement in learning English as a foreign language.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language, motivation becomes even more important because students do not use English as their daily language. Most Indonesian students only encounter English in the classroom, while outside the classroom they use Indonesian or local languages. As a result, students need strong internal and external encouragement to continue learning English. Without motivation, students may perceive English as difficult, unfamiliar, and unrelated to their everyday lives.

Students' motivation in learning English can be influenced by various factors, including learning environment, teacher support, school facilities, classroom atmosphere, peer interaction, and students' personal goals. A supportive learning environment can help students become more interested in English, while limited resources may reduce their enthusiasm. Teachers also play an important role because their teaching strategies, feedback, encouragement, and classroom management can influence students' interest and confidence in learning English.

Differences between urban and rural schools may also affect students' motivation. Urban schools generally have better access to learning resources, technology, libraries, internet facilities, and extracurricular activities. These conditions can support English learning and help students understand the relevance of English for their future. Meanwhile, rural schools often face challenges such as limited facilities, lack of English exposure, and fewer learning resources. These challenges may influence students' confidence and opportunities to practice English.

However, motivation is not always higher in urban schools. Students in rural schools may also have strong motivation due to personal aspirations, teacher encouragement, and the desire to improve their future opportunities. Some rural students may see English as a pathway to scholarships, employment, and broader social mobility. Therefore, the comparison between urban and rural students' motivation needs to be examined carefully and empirically rather than based only on assumptions.

Keller's ARCS model provides a useful framework for analyzing students' motivation in learning English. The model consists of four components: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. Attention refers to students' interest in learning activities, Relevance relates to the usefulness of learning for students' goals, Confidence refers to students' belief in their ability to succeed, and Satisfaction refers to positive feelings after learning. These components can help explain how students experience motivation in different school contexts.

Based on this background, this study investigates students' motivation in learning English in urban and rural schools. The study focuses on comparing motivation levels between students of SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase and MTs YMPI Rappang and identifying factors that influence their motivation. The findings are expected to provide insights for English teachers, schools, and policymakers in designing more effective and equitable English learning strategies for students in different educational contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation is one of the most important psychological factors in language learning. Dörnyei (2001) states that motivation determines why learners decide to learn, how much effort they invest, and how long they continue learning. In English learning, motivation encourages students to participate actively, complete tasks, practice language skills, and overcome learning difficulties. Therefore, motivation is closely related to students' engagement, persistence, and achievement.

Gardner (1985) defines language learning motivation as a combination of effort, desire, and positive attitude toward learning a language. He introduces two important types of motivation, namely integrative and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation refers to learners' desire to understand and connect with the culture and people of the target language. Instrumental motivation refers to practical purposes such as passing examinations, getting a job, obtaining scholarships, or communicating in academic and professional contexts.

Deci and Ryan (2000) classify motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from within the learner, such as personal interest, enjoyment, curiosity, and satisfaction in learning. Students who are intrinsically motivated learn English because they enjoy the language and feel interested in the learning process. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, comes from outside the learner, such as grades,

rewards, teacher praise, parental encouragement, and future career demands. Both types of motivation are important in English learning.

Keller's ARCS model is one of the most relevant theories for analyzing students' learning motivation. The model consists of Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. Attention focuses on gaining and maintaining students' interest. Relevance emphasizes the connection between learning materials and students' needs or goals. Confidence relates to students' belief that they can succeed in learning. Satisfaction concerns students' positive feelings after achieving learning outcomes. This model is useful for examining motivation in classroom learning.

In English as a Foreign Language learning, students often face challenges because English is not used in daily communication. They may have limited exposure to authentic English input, limited speaking opportunities, and difficulties in vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. These challenges can influence students' motivation, especially their confidence. Students who find English difficult may become afraid of making mistakes, while students who receive support and positive feedback may become more confident and motivated.

The learning environment also contributes to students' motivation. Urban schools usually provide better infrastructure, learning materials, internet access, libraries, and opportunities to join English-related activities. Such facilities may help students understand the importance of English for education and career development. In contrast, rural schools may experience limitations in facilities and English exposure. However, rural students can still develop high motivation when they receive teacher support, meaningful learning activities, and encouragement to pursue future goals.

Previous studies have shown that students' motivation in learning English is influenced by teaching methods, learning resources, and school contexts. Yuzulia (2023) found that students' motivation varied depending on the availability of learning materials and their perceptions of English usefulness. Fu et al. (2024) reported differences between urban and rural students in learning approaches and English exposure. Tseng (2025) emphasized that multimodal teaching could increase rural students' motivation, while Yolanda (2025) highlighted the role of teacher support and learning strategies in rural English learning.

Based on these theories and previous studies, students' motivation in learning English can be understood as a complex interaction between internal and external factors. Internal factors include interest, confidence, personal goals, and satisfaction, while external factors include teacher support, learning facilities, classroom activities, and school environment. Therefore, this study applies Keller's ARCS model to compare students' motivation in urban and rural schools and to identify the factors that influence their motivation in learning English.

METHOD

This research used a sequential explanatory mixed-method design. Quantitative data were collected first through a questionnaire, and qualitative data were collected afterward through interviews to explain and support the quantitative findings. The participants were 40 students, consisting of 20 students from SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase and 20 students from MTs YMPI Rappang. The questionnaire was based on Keller's ARCS model and consisted of 20 items covering Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. The responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students to explore the factors influencing their motivation in learning English. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first finding shows that students in both schools had a high level of motivation in learning English. Based on the questionnaire results, SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase obtained a total score of 1667 with a mean score of 4.17. Meanwhile, MTs YMPI Rappang obtained a total score of 1636 with a mean score of 4.09. Both mean scores fall into the high category, indicating that students in rural and urban schools generally had positive motivation toward English learning.

Although both schools were categorized as having high motivation, SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase showed a slightly higher mean score than MTs YMPI Rappang. The difference between the two schools was 0.08 points. This difference is relatively small, but it indicates that rural students in this study demonstrated slightly stronger overall motivation in learning English compared to urban students. This finding suggests that school location alone does not fully determine students' motivation.

The results based on ARCS components show different patterns of motivation between the two schools. In the Attention component, SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase obtained a mean score of 4.32, categorized as very high, while MTs YMPI Rappang obtained 3.76, categorized as high. This indicates that students in the rural school showed stronger interest and attention during English learning activities. Many students stated that English was interesting because they could learn new vocabulary and foreign cultures.

In the Relevance component, MTs YMPI Rappang obtained a higher mean score of 4.46, categorized as very high, while SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase obtained 4.19, categorized as high. This finding indicates that urban students perceived English as more relevant to their future goals and daily lives. Students associated English with education, jobs, international communication, travel, and scholarships. This shows that urban students had strong instrumental motivation in learning English.

In the Confidence component, both schools obtained similar scores. SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase obtained 3.74, while MTs YMPI Rappang obtained 3.69. Both scores were categorized as high. However, the interview findings revealed that many students still experienced low confidence when speaking English. They were afraid of making mistakes, had limited vocabulary, and faced difficulties in pronunciation and fluency. This shows that high questionnaire scores do not always mean that students are fully confident in practical language use.

In the Satisfaction component, both schools achieved very high scores. MTs YMPI Rappang obtained 4.45, while SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase obtained 4.42. These findings indicate that students in both schools felt satisfied with their English learning experiences. Students felt happy when they understood the lesson, received praise from the teacher, obtained good scores, and were able to use English successfully. Satisfaction became an important factor that encouraged them to continue learning English.

The interview findings also revealed that students' motivation was influenced by internal factors. These factors included interest in English, future aspirations, self-confidence, and learning satisfaction. Students who liked English tended to be more active and enthusiastic in learning. Several students also stated that they wanted to continue learning English because it would help them achieve their goals, communicate with people from other countries, and prepare for future education and employment.

External factors also influenced students' motivation. These factors included teacher support, learning materials, classroom activities, peer encouragement, and school facilities. Students felt helped by teachers who explained lessons clearly, provided textbooks, gave encouragement, and created enjoyable learning activities. School facilities such as dictionaries, textbooks, and libraries also supported students' English learning. Therefore, students' motivation was shaped by the interaction between personal factors and the learning environment.

Table 1. Students' Motivation Based on Overall Score and ARCS Components

Aspect	MTs YMPI Rappang	Category	SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase	Category
Overall Motivation	4.09	High	4.17	High
Attention	3.76	High	4.32	Very High
Relevance	4.46	Very High	4.19	High
Confidence	3.69	High	3.74	High
Satisfaction	4.45	Very High	4.42	Very High

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that students in both urban and rural schools had high motivation in learning English. This result shows that English was perceived as an

important subject by students from both school contexts. Although the rural school obtained a slightly higher overall score, the difference was not large. Therefore, the findings suggest that motivation is not determined only by school location but also by students' personal interests, goals, learning experiences, and support systems.

The high motivation found in both schools is consistent with Dörnyei's view that motivation plays a central role in language learning. Students who are motivated tend to invest effort and persist in learning, even when they face difficulties. In this study, students from both schools showed positive attitudes toward English because they believed that English could help them communicate, continue their studies, obtain scholarships, and prepare for future jobs.

The higher Attention score in SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase is an important finding. It shows that rural students were highly interested in English learning activities. This may be influenced by the novelty of English, teacher encouragement, and students' curiosity about vocabulary and foreign cultures. According to Keller's ARCS model, attention is the first step in building motivation because students must be interested before they can become deeply engaged in learning.

The higher Relevance score in MTs YMPI Rappang indicates that urban students had stronger perceptions of the usefulness of English. They viewed English as important for future education, international communication, and employment. This finding supports Gardner's concept of instrumental motivation, in which students learn a language because they see practical benefits. Urban students may have more exposure to information about higher education, technology, and career opportunities, which makes English feel more relevant to their lives.

The Confidence component showed that both groups were categorized as high, but interview findings revealed that many students still lacked confidence in speaking English. Students mentioned difficulties in vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and speaking fluency. This indicates that students may believe they can learn English, but they still feel anxious when using it orally. Therefore, teachers need to provide more speaking practice in a supportive classroom environment so that students can build confidence gradually.

The Satisfaction component was very high in both schools. This means that students generally felt happy and satisfied when learning English. Satisfaction was influenced by positive experiences such as understanding lessons, receiving praise, getting good scores, and being able to use English. Keller explains that satisfaction helps maintain motivation because students who feel successful are more likely to continue learning. Therefore, positive feedback and meaningful learning outcomes are important in English classrooms.

The qualitative findings strengthen the quantitative results by showing that students' motivation was influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors

included enjoyment, curiosity, personal goals, and the desire to improve oneself. Extrinsic factors included teacher support, school facilities, classroom activities, grades, and future career opportunities. This supports Deci and Ryan's theory that motivation can come from within the learner and from the external environment.

Overall, the study shows that students' motivation in learning English is complex and multidimensional. Although urban schools may have more learning resources, rural students can also demonstrate strong motivation when they have clear goals, supportive teachers, and positive learning experiences. Therefore, English teachers in both urban and rural schools should design engaging, relevant, confidence-building, and satisfying learning activities. Schools should also provide adequate learning resources and create supportive environments that help students maintain their motivation in learning English.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that students in both SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase and MTs YMPI Rappang had a high level of motivation in learning English. SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase obtained a mean score of 4.17, while MTs YMPI Rappang obtained a mean score of 4.09. Although the difference was relatively small, the rural school students showed slightly higher overall motivation than the urban school students.

Based on the ARCS components, different motivational patterns were found. SMP Negeri 4 Pitu Riase scored higher in Attention, indicating that rural students showed strong interest in English learning activities. MTs YMPI Rappang scored higher in Relevance, indicating that urban students perceived English as highly useful for their future goals. Both schools showed high Confidence and very high Satisfaction, although interview findings revealed that many students still faced difficulties in vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and speaking confidence.

Students' motivation in learning English was influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors included interest, future goals, confidence, and learning satisfaction. External factors included teacher support, teaching methods, classroom activities, learning materials, and school facilities. Therefore, English teachers and schools should provide engaging learning activities, positive feedback, adequate resources, and opportunities for students to practice English confidently.

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