PONDOK PESANTREN STUDENTS MOTIVATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS IN ENGLISH: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract: This systematic literature review analyzes pesantren students' perceptions and motivations toward English learning. Four primary motivational factors are identified: instrumental, integrative, extrinsic, and intrinsic. Instrumental motivation, driven by career and academic aspirations, is the most dominant. Integrative motivation is weaker due to pesantren's religious focus, while extrinsic motivation is influenced by institutional policies, teacher encouragement, and peer support. Intrinsic motivation varies based on students' exposure and learning experiences. This study also explores pedagogical strategies such as communicative language teaching, task-based learning, and technology-enhanced instruction. Institutional challenges, including a shortage of qualified teachers, limited learning resources, and curriculum inconsistencies, are discussed. By synthesizing existing research, this study offers insights for educators and policymakers to enhance English education in pesantren. Future research should explore digital learning platforms and cross-cultural exchanges to improve English proficiency while preserving pesantren students' cultural and religious identity.

Keywords: Pondok Pesantren, English as a Foreign Language, Student Motivation, Pedagogical Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Pondok *Pesantren*, as a unique Islamic educational institution, provides a distinctive environment for learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Unlike formal schools where English is a core subject, in many *pesantren,* English is often treated as an elective or supplementary subject. This positioning significantly influences students' perceptions and motivations toward learning English. While some students recognize English as a valuable tool for communication and future opportunities, others may see it as secondary to religious studies (Suyanto, 2018). The need to understand these perspectives is crucial in developing more effective English teaching strategies within *pesantren.*

Several studies have explored *pesantren* students' attitudes towards English learning. Research has found that motivation among *pesantren* students varies widely based on factors such as personal goals, institutional policies, and exposure to English-speaking environments. Fakhruddin (2021) identified four key types of motivation among *pesantren* students: instrumental, integrative, extrinsic, and intrinsic. Instrumental motivation, where students learn English for practical benefits such as future careers, is the most dominant. Meanwhile, integrative motivation, which involves a desire to integrate with English-speaking communities, is less pronounced due to the *pesantren's* culturally insulated setting. Extrinsic motivation, driven by rewards or institutional pressures, also plays a role, while intrinsic motivation varies among individuals.

Another factor influencing English learning in *pesantren* is the teaching approach. Some *pesantren* implement structured English programs, often integrating communicative activities such as debates, public speaking, and interactive games. Sari & Lestaria (2023) found that using games in the classroom improved engagement and motivation among students, though challenges remained in maintaining structured learning outcomes. In contrast, other *pesantren* emphasize traditional rote learning methods, focusing on grammar and vocabulary memorization without sufficient practical application (Mustakim, 2021). The lack of a standardized curriculum across *pesantren* further contributes to inconsistencies in learning outcomes.

Perceptions of English among *pesantren* students are also shaped by religious and cultural factors. In some cases, students view English as a language associated with Western influence, which may conflict with the *pesantren's* religious identity. However, other studies indicate that *pesantren* leaders and educators increasingly recognize the importance of English as a global language, particularly for da'wah (Islamic propagation) and international (Andriani, 2024). This perspective has led to the gradual acceptance and institutional support for English learning in certain *pesantren.*

Despite the growing emphasis on English, challenges remain. Many *pesantren* lack sufficient resources, including qualified English teachers and access to modern language learning tools. Additionally, students often have limited exposure to real-world English communication, restricting their ability to develop conversational fluency. To address these challenges, researchers recommend incorporating more communicative and immersive learning experiences, utilizing digital tools, and aligning English programs with students' personal and professional aspirations (Fakhruddin, 2021; Sari & Lestaria, 2023).

This systematic literature review aims to synthesize existing studies on *pesantren* students' perceptions and motivations in learning English. By highlighting key motivational factors, pedagogical strategies, and institutional challenges, this review provides insights for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance English education in *pesantren.* Future research should explore how *pesantren* can integrate innovative teaching methodologies, such as digital learning platforms and cross-cultural exchanges, to improve students' language proficiency and engagement.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research methodology adopted in this study is a literature review. This approach involves systematically utilizing published sources to identify and analyze existing research from various credible references. These references include books, scientific journal articles, reports, and other relevant publications (Bungin & Moleong, 2007). Conducting a literature review involves several techniques, such as searching for relevant keywords in catalogs, indexes, and search engines to gather the necessary information. This method provides researchers with a comprehensive understanding of the research topic without the need to collect primary data. Additionally, literature reviews enhance the researchers' analysis by incorporating diverse perspectives and findings from previous studies related to the topic.

DISCUSSIONS

Pesantren Students' Perceptions in Learning English

Pesantren students' perceptions of learning English are shaped by various religious, cultural, and educational factors. In many traditional pesantren, English is viewed as a secondary subject, often overshadowed by the emphasis on Arabic and Islamic studies (Nasution et al., 2024). This prioritization can lead to mixed perceptions among students, where some recognize English as a valuable global language, while others see it as less relevant to their religious and academic goals (Sabiq et al., 2022).

One key perception is that English is primarily associated with Western culture. This cultural association sometimes creates resistance among students who feel that learning English might influence their religious and cultural identity (Farid & Lamb, 2020). However, other students and teachers argue that English is a necessary tool for da'wah (Islamic propagation), enabling them to communicate Islamic teachings on a global scale (Solichin, 2018). This dual perspective reflects the ongoing negotiation between maintaining religious values and adapting to modern educational demands (Madkur & As'ad, 2024).

Additionally, students' experiences with English instruction affect their perceptions. Some pesantren integrate English-speaking activities such as debates, public speaking, and language immersion programs, fostering a positive perception of English as a useful and engaging subject (Sari & Lestaria, 2023). However, in pesantren where English is taught using outdated grammar-translation methods with little emphasis on communication, students often perceive English as

difficult and uninspiring (Sundari & Lutfiansyah, 2021). This highlights the need for a more dynamic and student-centered approach to English education in pesantren. A dynamic and student-centered approach to English education in pesantren requires innovative strategies that prioritize active engagement, contextual relevance, and modern pedagogical methods. To achieve this, the following activities can be implemented:

Teaching Approach	Implementation Steps	References
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)	o Encourage students to actively use English in everyday conversations. o Organize activities like role-playing, group discussions, and debates. o Use real-life scenarios, such as shopping or travel simulations, to make lessons practical	(Sari & Lestaria, 2023).
Task-Based Learning (TBL)	o Assign tasks where students must use English meaningfully, such as storytelling or writing a short play. o Encourage project-based learning where students present topics of interest in English. o Use pair or group activities to enhance interaction and teamwork	Sundari & Lutfiansyah (2021)
Technology Integration:	o Introduce interactive language apps like Duolingo or BBC Learning English. o Use video-based lessons and online quizzes to make learning engaging. o Implement virtual exchange programs for students to practice English with international learners.	Satri et al., (2025).
Contextualized English Instruction	o Incorporate Islamic content, such as translating Quranic texts or explaining hadiths in English. o Engage students in bilingual discussions on religious and cultural topics. o Use storytelling about Islamic history in English to make lessons more meaningful.	(Solichin, 2018).
Peer Collaboration and Immersive Environments	o Establish English-speaking zones where students can only communicate in English at designated times.	Sari, D. M. (2023).

	o Form English clubs where students participate in storytelling, reading groups, and cultural exchange programs. o Encourage group assignments where students create short videos or presentations in English.	
Gamification and Interactive Learning	o Introduce language-based games such as word puzzles, quizzes, and scavenger hunts. o Organize friendly competitions like spelling bees and public speaking contests. o Use interactive storytelling where students create and act out their own stories in English.	(Fakhruddin, 2021).
Teacher Training and Professional Development	o Provide regular workshops on modern teaching methodologies. o Encourage teachers to use more communicative and interactive approaches instead of rote memorization. o Introduce mentorship programs where experienced teachers guide newer instructors.	(Madkur & Nugroho, 2024).
Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms	o Shift from rote memorization assessments to performance-based evaluations. o Use self-evaluation tools where students reflect on their progress. o Provide constructive feedback focused on improvement rather than only correcting mistakes.	Lamb, M., & Arisandy, F. E. (2020).

Another factor shaping perceptions is peer influence. In pesantren communities, where students live and study together, their attitudes toward English are often influenced by their peers. If English is promoted as a prestigious skill within the pesantren, students are more likely to develop a positive perception and actively engage in learning. Conversely, if English is marginalized, students may lack the motivation to take it seriously.

Overall, pesantren students' perceptions of English vary depending on institutional policies, cultural beliefs, and the effectiveness of English instruction. Addressing these perceptions requires integrating English learning into the pesantren framework in ways that align with students' religious values and educational needs.

Pesantren Students' Motivations in Learning English

Motivation plays a crucial role in the language learning process, especially in the context of pesantren students who face unique educational and cultural settings. Research has identified four primary motivational factors influencing pesantren students' English learning: instrumental, integrative, extrinsic, and intrinsic motivations.

1) Instrumental Motivation

Instrumental motivation refers to the practical benefits of learning English, such as academic success, career opportunities, and global communication. Many pesantren students recognize that English proficiency can open doors to higher education and better job prospects. Given that English is an international language, students with strong instrumental motivation are often eager to learn it for future professional and economic advancement (Fakhruddin, 2021). This motivation is particularly evident in pesantren that emphasize modern education alongside religious studies, where students see English as a necessary skill for engaging with the global Muslim community and accessing international academic resources (Farid & Yusuf, 2022).

2) Integrative Motivation

Integrative motivation involves learning English to connect with English-speaking communities or cultures. However, in pesantren settings, this motivation is less pronounced because students often prioritize their religious and cultural identity over integration with Western cultures. Nevertheless, some students develop integrative motivation through exposure to English-speaking Muslim scholars or international Islamic discourse. In pesantren that promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue, students may view English as a tool for fostering understanding and engagement with diverse communities (Farid & Lamb, 2020). Research suggests that pesantren students may view English as a means for global da'wah, using it to spread Islamic teachings rather than assimilate into Western culture (Sabiq et al., 2022).

3) Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards, such as grades, teacher encouragement, or parental expectations. In many pesantren, English learning is often encouraged through structured programs where students are rewarded for their progress. Some pesantren create competitive environments with language contests, scholarships, or recognition for high-performing students (Wilcox & Angelis, 2011). The influence of teachers and peers also plays a crucial role in extrinsic motivation, as students often strive to meet expectations set by authority figures. School policies and institutional support can significantly impact students' motivation by creating an environment where English learning is valued and encouraged (Farid et al., 2022).

4) Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation refers to learning English for personal satisfaction, enjoyment, or intellectual curiosity. Some pesantren students develop an intrinsic interest in English through exposure to literature, media, or personal experiences that inspire them to learn the language (Sari & Lestaria, 2023). However, intrinsic motivation is highly individualized and often depends on the teaching approach used. A dynamic, interactive, and engaging learning environment can help foster intrinsic motivation, encouraging students to explore English beyond the classroom. Additionally, students who view English as a tool for self-expression or as a means to achieve personal goals tend to exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation (Husnaini, Bukhori, 2024).

Among these, instrumental motivation is often the most dominant, as many students recognize the practical benefits of learning English for future career prospects, higher education opportunities, and global communication (Fakhruddin, 2021). Some pesantren students view English as a necessary skill for accessing international knowledge and resources, particularly in science, technology, and business.

Pedagogical Strategies

The effectiveness of English instruction in pesantren largely depends on the teaching methodologies and strategies used by educators. Various pedagogical approaches have been explored to enhance motivation and engagement among students. One common approach is communicative language teaching (CLT), which emphasizes interaction and real-world language use. This method has been found to increase student participation and confidence in speaking English, particularly when combined with activities such as debates, storytelling, and role-playing (Pratiwi, 2020).

Another effective strategy is game-based learning, which incorporates interactive and enjoyable activities to reduce anxiety and increase motivation. Research has shown that pesantren students respond positively to English learning when it includes elements of play, as it creates a more relaxed and engaging classroom atmosphere (Sari & Lestaria, 2023). Additionally, some pesantren integrate Islamic content into English lessons, making the subject more relevant to students' religious and cultural backgrounds. For example, using English translations of Islamic texts or engaging students in discussions about Islamic values in English helps bridge the gap between religious education and language learning (Solichin, 2018).

Technology-enhanced learning is also gaining traction in some pesantren, with digital tools such as language learning apps, online courses, and multimedia resources being used to supplement traditional instruction. These tools provide additional exposure to English outside the classroom and cater to different learning styles. However, the implementation of technology remains inconsistent due to limited resources and infrastructure in many pesantren (Fakhruddin, 2021).

Institutional Challenges

Despite the various motivational factors and pedagogical strategies employed, pesantren students face several institutional challenges that hinder their English learning progress. One of the most significant challenges is the perception of English as a secondary subject. In many pesantren, religious studies take precedence, and English is often seen as less essential compared to Arabic, which is the language of Islamic scholarship (Anshori, 2006). This prioritization results in limited instructional hours for English, reducing students' exposure and practice opportunities.

A related challenge is the shortage of qualified English teachers who are well-versed in both language pedagogy and the pesantren context. Many pesantren rely on teachers with limited formal training in English language instruction, leading to inconsistencies in teaching quality. Additionally, traditional teaching methods such as rote memorization and grammar translation remain prevalent, making it difficult for students to develop communicative competence (Solichin, 2018).

Resource limitations also pose a significant barrier to effective English learning. Many pesantren lack access to modern teaching materials, language laboratories, and digital learning tools. Without sufficient resources, students have fewer opportunities to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing in meaningful contexts. Addressing these challenges requires institutional reforms, including curriculum development, teacher training programs, and increased investment in educational resources (Fakhruddin, 2021).

Conclusion

Understanding pesantren students' perceptions and motivations in learning English is essential for developing effective teaching strategies that align with their cultural and educational contexts. While instrumental motivation remains the primary driver, integrating relevant pedagogical approaches and addressing institutional challenges can significantly enhance students' learning experiences. Future research should explore innovative teaching models, including blended learning approaches and culturally responsive pedagogy, to further improve English proficiency among pesantren students.

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