

Factors influencing English learning from different backgrounds of departments at a vocational school in Surakarta

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ABSTRACT

The era of globalization that is increasingly rapid requires someone to have English language skills, especially in vocational education where language skills have a direct impact on students' work abilities. Although many studies have explored motivation in learning English, few have specifically examined differences across departments. This study identifies factors influencing English learning motivation among 11th-grade students from various departments with a total of 208 participants from accounting, marketing, visual communication design, and office management at a vocational school in Surakarta, Indonesia. This quantitative study employed stratified random sampling; this study used a structured questionnaire based on the motivation strategy for learning (MSLQ). Data analysis used descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, and the Kruskal-Wallis test. The results of the study showed statistically significant variations in English learning motivation across all majors, with a P-value of 0.000 from the accounting department showing the highest motivation with an average of 4.24 and the marketing department showing the lowest average of 3.68. These findings indicate that career relevance, learning environment, teaching methods, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can significantly influence students' English learning attitudes. This research contributes to understanding the complex dynamics of motivation in vocational education and provides insights for developing targeted English language education strategies that are in line with student's professional aspirations.

Keywords: career relevance; department backgrounds; English learning motivation; language learning; student motivation; vocational education

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INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, English has become a crucial language for international communication, business, and education. This continues to have a significant impact on the education sector in Indonesia, especially in vocational schools where students are prepared for various career fields (Chang et al., 2024; Nugroho & Haghegh, 2021) English language skills are critical in vocational

education because they directly affect students' employability and future career prospects in an increasingly interconnected global landscape (Pratama, 2023; Widodo et al., 2020).

Vocational education plays a crucial role in shaping the skills and academic knowledge needed in the world of work. In Indonesia, vocational schools play an important role in preparing their students to meet the needs of existing industries (Rahman et al., 2021; Sari & Prasetyawan, 2023). Schools with various programs such as accounting, marketing, visual communication design, and office administration, where each department requires a unique level of English language competency and is in line with the developing standards especially in Indonesia (Fajaryati et al., 2020; Tambunan & Kurniawan, 2024). Previous studies have emphasized that motivation is a significant factor in language learning because it often determines the level of engagement and success of students in the end (Pratama, 2023; Rizal et al., 2022). Second language acquisition studies continue to show how learners' attitudes toward the target language have a significant impact on learning outcomes (Nugroho et al., 2022; Papi & Hiver, 2020). The form of motivation is very complex in vocational education because language learning is directly related to future professional aspirations and global competitiveness. The very diverse nature of each vocational program creates unique challenges and opportunities for English language learning. Some students view the importance of English differently depending on their understanding and perspective of each student. These perspectives directly influence students' motivation and learning approaches, which reflect the multifaceted nature of language acquisition in professional education (Pratama, 2023; Rahman et al., 2021).

In the rapidly developing global context in Indonesia, English has changed from an additional skill to a basic competency that students must have. Vocational schools have an important responsibility to prepare skilledworkers who are able to navigate local and global professional environments (Sari & Prasetyawan, 2023). Understanding the complex dynamics of English learning motivation is critical in developing targeted educational strategies that can meet the demands that must continue to grow and be on target (Widodo et al., 2020).

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the theory of second language acquisition or specifically emphasizes motivation and contextual learning. With the research on the interaction between department background, motivation, and English language learning, this study provides valuable insights to develop more targeted and effective English language education strategies in vocational settings (Papi & Hiver, 2020; Tambunan & Kurniawan, 2024). The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform curriculum design, teaching methodology, and institutional approaches to language education that align with students' professional aspirations and learning needs. The many different motivations for students in learning English have led to many previous studies discussing student motivation in learning English, but previous studies have emphasized more on general factors and at school levels such as Elementary School and Junior High School where this is only general without comparing various departments, while this study focuses on students' English learning motivation based on their department background in vocational schools where vocational schools have trained their prospects for the future in the world of work and the world globally.

The main objective of this study is to investigate and identify factors that influence students' motivation to learn English across various study programs in Surakarta. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) identify variations in motivation among students from various study programs and (2) explore the perceived importance of English in various vocational education contexts. Based on the discussion of related studies, this study proposes a theoretical premise with the following research hypotheses: Alternative hypothesis (Ha): There is a significant difference in English learning motivation among students from different backgrounds of departments at a vocational school in Surakarta; null hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference in English learning motivation among students from different backgrounds of departments at vocational schools in Surakarta. Thus, this study attempts to uncover variations in students' motivation in learning English by considering the departmental background in one of the vocational schools in Surakarta.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Factors influencing student interest in learning English

Student interest in learning English refers more to the level of enthusiasm, curiosity, and involvement shown by students in learning English. Interest is the most important part of motivation because it has a significant impact on learning outcomes and can affect the quality and quantity of student learning behavior. Interest can be intrinsic, driven by a desire inherent in the activity, or extrinsic, influenced by external factors such as career goals or expectations of the outside community. Student interest in learning English is influenced by several factors these factors can be divided into two main categories, namely intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors.

Intrinsic factors

- a. Attitude towards English, including students' views, feelings, and tendencies towards English. [Yuriev et al. \(2020\)](#) in the theory of planned behavior emphasizes that a positive attitude increases the intention to behave, including the intention to learn a language because if someone has a positive attitude, they will be more motivated to learn.
- b. Self-confidence in language learning ability: is a person's perception of their ability to succeed in a particular task, including learning English. Students who are confident in their ability to master English are more likely to be highly motivated and more persistent in facing challenges ([Goetze & Driver, 2022](#)).
- c. Personal goals in learning English, someone who has a goal tends to have the motivation that drives them to learn English. As stated by [Bird et al. \(2024\)](#) in goal-setting theory, clear and realistic goals, especially long-term goals, can motivate someone to continue trying and achieve success.

Extrinsic factors

- a. Learning environment. The physical and social environment of the place of learning has a very important role in forming a conducive learning atmosphere such as the quality of adequate classroom facilities for learning, external noise and disturbances, and interactions between students and teachers in the learning environment. If these things make it comfortable, it will increase students' concentration and interest in learning, and vice versa if the environment is bad, it will hinder students' focus and concentration.
- b. Teaching methods. Learning methods greatly affect student involvement and motivation. If the learning method used by the teacher is very interactive and participatory, most students become more enthusiastic and this can increase student motivation and understanding. Conversely, if the method used is monotonous and does not match the student's learning style, it can hinder and reduce student interest in learning.
- c. Family and peer support. This is a very strong factor in motivating students in learning. Family and friends who provide encouragement and support a person or student in learning can increase self-confidence and become more interested in learning.
- d. Relevance of English to future careers. The relevance of English learning to future career goals can be a strong external motivation. When students see a direct relevance between English language proficiency and career opportunities, they tend to be more motivated to learn.

Characteristics of vocational school students'

Vocational school students tend to have unique characteristics that affect their motivation in learning English. According to [Andini \(2023\)](#), vocational school students tend to be oriented towards practice and work skills, have a strong interest in a particular vocational field, and seek direct relevance between learning and career prospects. Meanwhile, [Nurhayati and Apoko \(2024\)](#) found that vocational students in Indonesia often face challenges in learning English due to lack of exposure to the use of authentic English, the perception that English is less relevant to their vocational field, and limited time to focus on language learning due to the density of the vocational curriculum. Understanding these specific characteristics is important in designing effective learning strategies and increasing vocational students' motivation in learning English.

Vocational high school students learning English have several characteristics and are different from other public-school students. First, vocational school students tend to have a fairly strong orientation towards careers in the world of work, which triggers their motivation to learn English (Andini, 2023). Vocational high school students generally see English as a tool that can be used to improve future job prospects, in addition they tend to be more interested or enthusiastic when the learning materials they learn are directly related to the work situations they will face later. In general, vocational students have a stronger attraction to the use of technology in language learning that is in line with their vocation. Furthermore, vocational students tend to need more specific and varied English lessons that are in accordance with their departments. These characteristics emphasize the need for an English learning approach that is tailored to the vocational context and the specific needs of vocational school students.

METHOD

Research design and research type

This study uses a quantitative approach, the research emphasizes careful measurement and systematic data collection based on numbers to answer the research questions posed. This method allows for objective analysis of variables and their relationships through statistical procedures. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), quantitative research is very suitable for testing objective theories by studying the relationship between variables. This study emphasizes more on careful measurement and data collection based on numbers to answer the research questions posed. One of the advantages of quantitative research lies in its ability to produce data that can be measured numerically, making it easier to analyze the relationship between variables so that it can provide more valid and reliable results in answering questions that have been formulated by researchers.

This descriptive and comparative study analyzes variations in English learning motivation across multiple vocational departments, grade 11 all departments in vocational schools in Surakarta, including accounting, marketing, visual communication design, and office administration. The purpose of descriptive research is to accurately describe the characteristics that help in the understanding of certain aspects of the subject matter. Comparative studies are essential for analyzing differences between groups, variables, correlations, or trends in order to understand their impact on the research outcomes. Comparative research facilitates the investigation of how and why variations in group characteristics may affect outcomes. The main objective of this study was to characterize and evaluate the level of interest that different groups of students have in learning English. Specifically, the objectives of this study were to compare and evaluate the motivation levels of Grade 11 students in a vocational school, as well as to identify and investigate the factors that influence their interest in learning English.

Population of the research

The population of this study was all students at a vocational school in Surakarta who were enrolled in grade 11 of all departments, where the departments consisted of accounting, marketing, visual communication design, and office administration. In addition, participants will be selected for this study using stratified random sampling techniques, which will ensure proportional representation of each program and grade level. Stratified sampling is a technique that ensures that each subgroup in the population is fairly represented in the sample, thereby increasing the accuracy of the estimate. In addition, the intended sample size will be determined through the application of appropriate statistical techniques to ensure the dependability and applicability of the findings.

Data collection techniques and instruments

In this study, data was collected using a structured questionnaire. This instrument is based on a 5-point Likert scale, which is a common measurement method used in a study. This 5-point Likert scale allows respondents to choose their level of agreement with the questions asked, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from an established

instrument, namely the motivation strategy for learning questionnaire (MSLQ)(Garcia & Pintrich, 1991). Respondents or grade 11 vocational high school students of all departments were given a questionnaire containing 18 questions where the questions were aimed at comparing and analyzing the motivation to learn English among students from various vocational backgrounds and to identify and examine key factors that influence students' motivation to learn English in the context of vocational education. To ensure suitability with the language of the respondents, the questionnaire will be translated into Indonesian and back translated to ensure its accuracy. A preliminary study will be conducted to test the reliability and validity of the instrument. The results of this preliminary study will be used to make necessary adjustments or improvements to the questionnaire before it is used in the main data collection, this can help improve the quality of the data collected and strengthen the methodological basis of the study.

Data analysis techniques

Data analysis performed using SPSS, employing the following techniques:

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics be used to summarize the characteristics and provide measures of central tendency and variability for each variable which include; measures of central tendency such as mean, median, and mode; measures of variability such as standard deviation, range, and variance; frequency and percentage distribution; data visualization through graphs and charts. These descriptive statistics will help provide an overview of the data and allow the researcher to identify possible patterns in the data.

One-way ANOVA

One-way ANOVA be used to compare the level of motivation among different departments. This analysis allows the researcher to test whether there is a significant difference in the level of motivation between different departments. If the ANOVA results show significant differences, post-hoc analysis (such as the Tukey HSD test) may be needed to determine specifically between which departments the differences occur.

Figure 1

Formula one-way ANOVA

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares (MS)	F
Within	$SSW = \sum_{j=1}^k \sum_{i=1}^l (X_{ij} - \bar{X}_j)^2$	$df_w = k - 1$	$MSW = \frac{SSW}{df_w}$	$F = \frac{MSB}{MSW}$
Between	$SSB = \sum_{j=1}^k (\bar{X}_j - \bar{X})^2$	$df_b = n - k$	$MSB = \frac{SSB}{df_b}$	
Total	$SST = \sum_{j=1}^n (\bar{X}_j - \bar{X})^2$	$df_t = n - 1$		

Testing data analysis requirements

Before conducting One-way ANOVA, several prerequisite tests need to be performed to ensure that the statistical assumptions are met. These tests include: test for normality and test for homogeneity of variance. Normality test is a statistical procedure used to determine whether the data obtained is normally distributed or not. Homogeneity test is used to test whether the variance between data groups is the same and is an important assumption in parametric tests such as ANOVA and t-test.

FINDINGS

The research was conducted on October 22-30, 2024 at SMK N (State Vocational High School) 1 Surakarta with respondents from grade 11 of all departments, namely accounting, marketing, visual communication design, and office management. Respondents were given a questionnaire containing 18 questions where the questions were aimed at comparing and analyzing the motivation to learn English among students from various vocational backgrounds and to identify and examine key factors that influence students' motivation to learn English in the context of vocational education. Based on the results of the data that have been obtained and processed by the researcher, the following results can be presented:

Table 1

Total scores by departments

Department	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% CI For Mean (Lower)	95% CI For Mean (Upper)	Min	Max
Accounting	100	4.24	0.716	0.072	4.10	4.38	1	5
Marketing	55	3.68	0.646	0.087	3.51	3.85	2	5
Visual communication design	22	3.90	0.652	0.139	3.61	4.19	3	5
Office Management	31	3.95	0.800	0.144	3.66	4.25	3	5
Total	208	4.01	0.739	0.051	3.91	4.12	1	5

Table 1 shows the results of vocational high school students in grade 11 in Surakarta where the results show that students in accounting students demonstrated the highest motivation ($M = 4.24$), indicating strong enthusiasm for learning English. Furthermore, students in Marketing have the lowest average score (3.68), this shows that students in Marketing show lower motivation compared to other departments. Then the visual communication design and office management have medium scores, (3.90) and (3.95) respectively.

Table 2

Testing for significant differences

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.(p-value)
Between Groups	11.728	3	3.909	7.866	0.000
Within Groups	101.388	204	0.497		
Total	113.117	207			

Table 2 presents the results of the ANOVA test which shows a statistically significant difference in departments, this can be seen from the p value = 0.000. This finding identifies that there is a significant variation in students' motivation to learn English based on their departments. Or in other words, the motivation to learn English is not uniform and is influenced by the students' academic background as reflected in the significant differences between department groups.

Table 3

Post hoc test Tukey HSD

Comparison	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)
Accounting – Marketing	0.562	0.118	0.000	0.26	0.87
Accounting – Visual communication design	0.342	0.166	0.170	-0.09	0.77
Accounting – Office Management	0.287	0.145	0.198	-0.09	0.66
Marketing – Visual communication design	-0.220	0.178	0.604	-0.68	0.24
Marketing – Office Management	-0.275	0.158	0.308	-0.68	0.14

Table 3 shows the results of the comparison between the four departments, where accounting students showed significantly higher learning motivation compared to marketing students, as evidenced by the results ($p = 0.000$). On the other hand, no significant difference was found between

the motivation of accounting students and students from the visual communication design or office management, indicating that the level of learning motivation of the three departments is relatively comparable.

Table 4

Normality test result

	Department	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Total_Score	Accounting	.151	100	.000	.865	100	.000
	Marketing	.163	55	.001	.916	55	.001
	Visual communication design	.096	22	.200*	.964	22	.583
	Office Management	.174	31	.018	.872	31	.002

From [Table 4](#), the results of the Normality test show that most departments except the visual communication design department show an abnormal data distribution, so a non-parametric test such as Kruskal-Wallis can be used to ensure the validity of the analysis results.

Table 5

Homogeneity of variance test

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.334	3	204	0.264

[Table 5](#) shows the p-value results are 0.264. These results indicate that the homogeneity of variance meets the assumptions for conducting one-way ANOVA.

Table 6

Kruskal-Wallis test

Department	N	Mean Rank
Accounting	100	124.88
Marketing	55	75.60
Visual communication design	22	92.77
Office Management	31	98.34

Table 7

Test statistics

	Total Score
Chi-Square	25.686
df	3
Asymp.Sig. (2 tailed)	0.000

This Kruskal-Wallis table is used because the data obtained is not normally distributed so that Kruskal-Wallis is needed to validate the analysis results. [Table 6](#) and [Table 7](#) explains the significant Asymp.Sig. (2 tailed) and confirms the differences in motivation levels between departments.

Hypothesis testing

Based on the results of the one-way ANOVA test, the results obtained were $F = 7.866$, $P = 0.000$ and the Kruskal-Wallis test obtained the results of Chi-Square = 25.686, $P = 0.000$. These results indicate that H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted, meaning that there are significant differences in English learning motivation among students from different departments. This finding is further supported by the Kruskal-Wallis test results, which confirm that the differences in learning motivation between departments are statistically significant. In other words, students' motivation to learn English varies substantially depending on their department of study.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results, the current research revealed a very significant variation in English learning motivation between accounting and marketing. The most striking finding was the statistically significant difference in English learning motivation across departments. Accounting students demonstrated the highest level of motivation ($M = 4.24$), whereas marketing students exhibited the lowest ($M = 3.68$). These results are in line with several existing theories in second language acquisition and learning motivation research. The theory of planned behavior (Yuriev et al., 2020) reveals a critical perspective on understanding this variation. The theory emphasizes that attitudes toward a particular activity significantly influence behavioral intentions. In this context, the significant difference of Asymp.Sig.2 tailed with a result of 0.000 in the Kruskal-Wallis test, shows that motivation across departments with students' perceptions and attitudes toward learning English are not the same but are greatly influenced by academic background and perceived career relevance. The variation is associated with several interrelated factors such as career relevance, learning environment and methods, and motivation.

Accounting students may perceive English as more directly relevant to their future career prospects, which potentially involves international business and financial reporting. Conversely, marketing students may perceive English as less directly applicable to their more specific fields. This is in line with goal setting theory (Bird et al., 2024), which states that long-term career goals directly influence language learning motivation.

The results of the research indicated that the variation obtained reflects differences in teaching approaches, classroom dynamics, and the perceived relevance of English materials by each student from various majors at a vocational school in Surakarta. Contextual learning theory supports these findings, stating that learning is most effective when embedded in meaningful real-world contexts.

The results of the differences are in line with the theoretical framework of the study, which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic factors such as personal goals, self-confidence, and extrinsic factors such as career prospects and learning environment in English learning motivation. While accounting and marketing majors showed very significant differences, visual communication design and office management majors showed more moderate levels of motivation. This shows a varied landscape of language learning motivation in vocational education. Students majoring in visual communication design obtained a total score of 3.90 and students majoring in office management obtained a score of 3.95. Both of these majors certainly have higher total scores than marketing, which showed the lowest level of motivation among other majors, namely, with a score of 3.68.

This finding shows that although there are differences between majors, not all majors show extreme variations in English learning motivation. The dimension of self-confidence (Goetze & Driver, 2022) emerged as a significant factor, with different departmental backgrounds having the potential to foster different levels of self-confidence in language. This supports previous research by (Andini, 2023; Nurhayati & Apoko, 2024), which emphasized the unique motivational landscape of vocational students and the close relationship between language learning motivation and perceived future career paths.

These findings challenge the traditional approach that is generally applied to English language education in vocational schools. These findings underscore the critical need for more diverse and department-specific language learning strategies. Educational institutions should develop targeted English curricula that are in line with the specific needs and professional contexts of each department, incorporating discipline-specific English language materials and emphasizing relevant professional communication skills. Methodologically, the research approach using parametric (ANOVA) and non-parametric (Kruskal-Wallis) tests strengthens the robustness of the findings. Consistent results from statistical analysis provide strong evidence for significant variation in motivation across departments. Future research could expand on these findings by exploring the underlying mechanisms driving these differences in motivation. Qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into students' perceptions, while longitudinal research could track how these motivation patterns develop throughout academic and early professional careers.

CONCLUSION

This current research revealed significant variations in English learning motivation across different departments. Students' academic backgrounds notably influence their attitudes and engagement in English learning, with accounting students demonstrating the highest motivation (average 4.24) and marketing students showing the lowest motivation (average 3.68). These variations are linked to several interrelated factors, including career relevance, learning environment, teaching methods, and both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational elements.

The findings emphasize that students' motivation levels are strongly influenced by their perceptions of English's usefulness in their future careers. However, since this study was limited to one vocational school in Surakarta, future research should expand to include more schools and a wider range of vocational departments to enhance the generalizability of results. For practical implementation, educational institutions can use these insights to develop tailored English curricula that address the specific motivational needs of different departments. Additionally, teacher training programs should be enhanced to include strategies that emphasize the relevance of English in various career paths, thereby improving student engagement and learning outcomes across all vocational departments.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors of the manuscript affirm that they have no conflicting interests.

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