ENGLISH TEACHERS’ STRATEGIES TO MOTIVATE LOW-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan

Christian Bernard Nichols Djami
112014016

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER PROGRAM
FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND ARTS
UNIVERSITAS KRISTEN SATYA WACANA
SALATIGA
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Christian Bernard Nichols Djami
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ABSTRACT

Motivation is an important aspect for teachers to make the learning process becomes engaging. The purpose of this research was to investigate English teachers’ strategy in motivating low-achieving students. The participants of the study were two English teachers and twenty students at SMP Kristen Satya Wacana. The students were students who were considered as low-achieving students by the teachers. The data were collected by using semi-structured interview and direct observation. The interview consisted of five questions for teachers and three questions for students. Moreover, the study reveals that the teachers’ strategies in motivating their low-achieving students have an impact on the students’ comprehension.

Key words: motivation, English teachers, students

INTRODUCTION

Motivation is considered as an important factor in English learning. Motivation may affect students’ performance in understanding the material from the teacher. It usually affects students’ academic outcome. Students’ motivation may vary from one to another, some are highly motivated students and some are unmotivated students. The highly motivated students tend to have a better achievement rather than the unmotivated students. When students have high motivation in learning English, they usually get good grades. Meanwhile, students who are unmotivated in learning English, they usually get low grades. In order to motivate the
low-achieving students, English teachers need to find suitable strategies to deal with unmotivated students.

Motivation is considered to be one of the fundamental factors in language learning. In several decades, researchers have found that motivation is important for successful foreign or second language learning (Gardner, 1985; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Wharton, 2000; Noels, 2001). According to Gardner (1985), language-learning motivation is as important as language aptitude to predict achievement in foreign language learning. Motivation can be used as a tool to predict students’ achievement in foreign language learning. According to Dornyei (1998), motivated learners would be more successful at learning the second or foreign language than less motivated learners, and that without sufficient motivation even highly competent and cognitively capable individuals may be unable to accomplish long-term goals. Motivated students tend to get better achievement rather than unmotivated students because they have goals to achieve when they are learning English. Meanwhile, unmotivated students usually do not have any goals when they learn English. They just learn English because it is a compulsory subject in their school and they have to pass it with minimum criteria. Therefore, English teachers need to motivate their students so they can get better achievement and have some goals when they learn English so their teaching can be considered as a successful learning.

In Indonesia, English is a compulsory subject for students. However, there are some students who think that English subject is not important because they do not speak using English in their daily conversation and their learning environment may not give them an opportunity to practice the language. Therefore, students become unmotivated when they learn English. It may become a problem for the teacher because when students do not have a motivation, they tend to get low-achievement. On the other hand, a teacher’s successful teaching can be seen by their students’ achievement. When some of their students cannot get
good achievement, the teacher tends to be judged not successful in teaching the students. In order to be successful in teaching, teachers need to motivate their low-achieving students to get better achievement.

This research investigates how English teachers motivate low-achieving students. The research objective is to analyze English teachers’ strategies in motivating low-achieving students in learning English in high school at Salatiga. Motivation is considered as an important aspect in language learning so I would like to find out how exactly English teachers motivate their low-achieving students in learning English. Since English is compulsory in high school at Salatiga, English teachers should be able to motivate their students so their students can acquire the target language. This study is expected to assist English teachers in finding strategies to motivate low-achieving students. Meanwhile, for students, this study might be helping them in finding the solution for their low grades using motivation strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Motivation

A. Importance of motivation

Motivation has an important role in learning. In several decades researchers in the field of language learning have recognized the importance of motivation for successful foreign or second language learning (Gardner, 1985; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Wharton, 2000; Noels, 2001). Therefore, students need to be motivated to learn foreign language. According to Turturean (2013), all students are theoretically motivated to learn and to obtain the best performances.

Students need to be motivated in language learning so they can acquire the language. It is widely accepted that motivation plays an essential role in sustaining the process of mastering an L2 (Csizér&Dörnyei, 2005). Motivational teaching practice needs to be
established in order to create an effective learning environment (Dörnyei, 2001). Creating such an environment involves three phases: (a) generating initial motivation; (b) maintaining and protecting motivation; and (c) encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation.

B. Factors that reduce students’ motivation

Factors that reduce students’ motivation in language learning usually come from inside the students. Students tend to have reduced motivation in language learning as they mature (Anderman, Machr, & Midgley, 1999; Midgley & Edelin, 1998). According to the experts, maturity of the students makes them unmotivated because as they grow older, they tend to realize that the language that they want to learn is not used by their society so it can reduce their motivation in learning the language.

In addition, there are other factors that may reduce students’ motivation in language learning such as unsatisfied feeling and low self-motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). When students feel unsatisfied because they cannot find the benefit of the language learning, they tend have low self-motivation. The low self-motivation occurs when students do not know why they should learn the language.

C. Factors that improve students’ motivation

Factors that improve students’ motivation are self-efficacy, interest, teachers’ positive attitude, positive learning environment, and the usage of internet. First, self-efficacy is one of the most important adaptive motivational constructs in students’ learning. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is individual capabilities to organize and execute the required actions to produce given achievement. It is a factor that related to students’ ability in doing assignments that given by the teacher. If they can do the assignments, they tend to have higher motivation. Therefore, teachers should pay attention on the assignments’ difficulty.
Second, interest is an important construct in school settings. Interest reflects the potential of human nature and the inherent tendency to learn (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When students have an interest in learning the language, they tend to have higher motivation in learning the language. Therefore, teachers need to make their teaching interesting for students so they can have motivation in learning.

Third, teachers’ attitude can affect students’ motivation. Teachers need to generate positive attitudes in the classroom if students lack initial motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). Teachers need to create a relevant teaching material for learners. Teachers also can establish and maintain motivation for students by giving them the opportunity to be more goal-oriented (Koltai, 2012).

Fourth, learning environment has an impact in language learning. Researchers argued that the learning environment had a much stronger motivational impact than had been previously proposed (Koltai, 2012). A good learning environment that can promote students to practice and use the language can enhance students’ motivation. Therefore, teachers and students need to work together to make a friendly language learning environment.

At last, students are interested using material that promote online interaction. The data analysis indicates the middle school students were more engaged in their learning and were more motivated with online interaction (Thomas, 2014). The usage of technology, especially internet can make students to have higher motivation because students nowadays usually use internet in their daily life. If the learning process uses online interaction, it can motivate the students since they use internet every day.
2. Types of Motivation

A. Integrative and instrumental motivation

Integrative and instrumental are related to students’ willingness in learning a target language. Gardner and Lambert (1972) first made the well-known distinction between two types of motivation, instrumental and integrative. The motivation is instrumental if the learner is oriented toward instrumental goals: desire to study in the country where the target language is spoken or to get a better job. Students who are integratively motivated want to interact with members of the other community, get to know the target language culture better and even become part of it. Integrative motivation emphasizes that learners’ motivation to study the second language comes from a positive trait to members of the target language and a desire to interact with them. Gardner and his colleagues hypothesized that integrative motivation might have more influence on the long-term motivation necessary for most of the tasks in second language learning.

Meanwhile, Instrumental motivation is often characteristic of second language acquisition, where little or no social integration of the learner into the community using the target language takes place, or in some instances is even desired (Gardner, 1991). Instrumental motivation emphasizes that motivation comes from a belief that learning a second language can be helpful in getting a job or in furthering one’s education. Students who are instrumentally motivated usually are goal-oriented. Instrumental motivation is often characteristic of second language acquisition, where little or no social integration of the learner into the community using the target language takes place, or in some instances is even desired (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). The learners do not have desire to interact to the native speaker of the language. They learn the language only for education.

The experts found that integrative motivation is more important than instrumental motivation. In some of the early researches, conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1972)
integrative motivation was viewed as being more importance in a formal learning environment than instrumental motivation (Ellis, 1999). In later studies, integrative motivation has continued to be emphasized, although now the importance of instrumental motivation is also stressed. Integrative motivation usually underlies successful acquisition of a language (Finegan, 1999).

B. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation

In order to motivate the students, teachers should know the difference between extrinsic and intrinsic so they can analyze their students’ trait. Extrinsic motivation refers to motivation that exists because of the presence of “an externally mediated activity or constraint” (Deci, 1980, pp. 30–31). Students who are extrinsically motivated learns in order to get better grades as well as to be rewarded and recognized as a student who is very successful. The indicators of extrinsic motivation are: doing something to be rewarded, having interest only in outcomes, and the pursuit of public praise (Aydogan, 2016). It emphasizes on goal-oriented students.

Intrinsic motivation refers to motivation to fulfill a task that leads individuals to feel a sense of personal enjoyment and control when taking part in the task. Someone who is intrinsically motivated learns for the sake of learning itself (Aydogan, 2016). The indicators of intrinsic motivation are: getting enjoyment from a particular activity, doing something without thinking on recognition and showing sincere interest in a particular field (Kruglanski, 1978; Ryan & Deci, 2000). It emphasizes on students who does not focusing on goals, but focusing on process.
3. Teacher strategies

In order to motivate their students, teachers should find suitable motivational strategies. Teachers need to find strategies that can assist to be successful in their teaching. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) identified the strategies that successful language learners employed to facilitate their learning of the second language by classifying them into three main types: metacognitive, cognitive, and social strategies.

Cognitive strategies are focusing in exposing students with the target language. It is more directly related to students’ learning tasks and involve direct manipulation or transformation of information (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990). They focus on comprehension, acquisition, and retention. It is focusing on students’ experience in using the language. According to Krashen (1982), learners who are naturally exposed to second or foreign languages during childhood generally achieve higher proficiency than those beginning as adults. In order to make adult learners to acquire the language, teachers need to make the students to practice the language frequently. The examples of the strategies are: resourcing, translation, notetaking, elaboration, and inferring.

Metacognitive strategies are related with students learning process using activities and assessments. It focuses on planning for learning, monitoring of comprehension or production, and self-evaluation of learning (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990). This strategy is usually used by schools in Indonesia. The teachers plan their students’ learning process through class activities and assessments. Educational research has shown that students’ attitude toward a foreign language course (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991), their language teacher (Gardner, 1985), or about a particular foreign nation in which the foreign language is addressed (Gardner, 1985) has an effect on their acquisition/achievement in that language. Therefore, teachers need to make interesting class activities and fair assessments. The examples of this strategy are: advance
organization, direct attention, selective attention, self-management, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation.

Social strategies are related with students’ communication. It focuses on interaction with another learner (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990). The strategy emphasizes on group work between students. Therefore, the center of the learning is the students instead of teachers. The examples of this strategy are: questions for clarification and co-operation. A study of ethnic Chinese, bilingual Singaporean university students studying a foreign found that students reported a preference for social strategies (Wharton, 2000). The students find that social strategy is good for practicing pronunciation and fluency. However, this does not promote individual activities.

4. Previous studies

Motivational strategies are considered important for English teachers because it may help low-achieving students to get better grade. Therefore, there are experts that investigate motivational strategies. The previous studies that attempt to investigate motivational strategies are Bernaus and Gardner (2008) in Spain, Guilloteaux and Dornyei (2008) in South Korea, and Mokovsky et al. (2012) in Saudi Arabia.

The first study investigates language teaching strategies, as reported by teachers and students, and the effects of these strategies on students’ motivation and English achievement. The participants consisted of 31 English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers and 694 EFL students in Catalonia, Spain. The teachers and students rated the frequency of use of 26 strategies in their classes. In addition, the students were tested on their attitudes, motivation, and language anxiety with the mini-Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993) and completed objective tests of English achievement. Bernaus and Gardner (2008) found the teachers and students agreed on the relative frequency of some strategies but not on the frequency of other strategies and that,
although the teachers’ reported use of motivational and traditional strategies was not related to the students’ English achievement, attitudes, motivation, or language anxiety, the students’ perceptions of these strategies tended to be related to their attitudes and motivation at both the individual and class levels. In addition, when the students were the unit of analysis, there was a negative correlation between the students’ ratings of the frequency of traditional strategy use and English achievement.

The second study investigates the effectiveness of motivational strategies, which involved 27 EFL teachers and over 1,300 EFL learners in South Korea, has attempted to assess empirically the effects of motivational strategies on learners’ motivation in language classes, using a range of instruments, as follows: (a) a 20-item self-report questionnaire designed to measure the learners’ situation-specific motivational disposition (e.g., attitudes toward their current SL course, linguistic self-confidence, SL classroom anxiety, etc.); (b) a classroom observation instrument used to assess both the quality of the teachers’ teaching practices and the levels of the learners’ motivated behavior; and (c) a post lesson teacher evaluation scale developed to provide a post hoc evaluation of the teachers’ motivational practices. Guilloteaux and Dornyei (2008) found a strong positive correlation between teachers’ motivational teaching practices and their learners’ learning motivation in the actual classroom.

The third study investigates the effects of teachers’ motivational strategies on learners’ motivation. The participants are 14 EFL teachers and 296 EFL learners. The research reported here used a quasi-experimental design to assess the effects of motivational strategies used by EFL teachers on Saudi EFL learners’ self-reported learning motivation. The experimental treatment involved class-time exposure to 10 preselected motivational strategies over an 8-week period; the control group received traditional teaching methods. Multivariate analyses revealed a significant rise in learner motivation over time.
exclusively or predominantly among experimental vs. control learners, which held robust even when controlling for pretreatment group differences. Mokovsky et al. (2012) found the evidence that teachers’ motivational behaviors cause enhanced motivation in second language learners.

THE STUDY

Motivation is considered important in language learning. The study aimed to answer how English teachers motivate low-achieving students. The purpose of this study is to investigate English teachers’ strategy in motivating low-achieving students. This study was conducted qualitatively. In this research, the data was collected using interviews and observations.

Context of the Study

The setting of the study was in SMP Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga. The research was an attempt to investigate teachers’ strategy in motivating low-achieving students and the reason why low-achieving students were not motivated in learning English. SMP Kristen Satya Wacana was chosen because this school has a small number of students in a classroom so the low-achieving students will be easier to be observed.

Research Participants

The participants of the study were two English teachers and twenty low-achieving students of SMP Kristen Satya Wacana. The research focused on low-achieving students of seventh and eightieth grade students because tenth grade students were preparing for national examination. The research used semi-structured interview and direct observation.
Data Collection Instruments

The study used two data collection instruments. The data collection instruments were semi-structured interview and direct observation. Semi-structured interview was chosen because this study required flexibility in asking questions. Meanwhile, direct observation was chosen because during the study was being conducted the students would not be distracted that they were observed.

The questions for the interview are adapted from Dislen (2013). The questions are divided into two categories, there are questions for teachers and low-achieving students. The interview questions for teachers are:

1. Who are the students that considered as low-achieving students?
2. What are the reasons of the lack of motivation of the students?
3. What time the students feel unmotivated towards the lesson?
4. What are the strategies that you use to motivate the students?
5. Do the strategies work for the students?

The interview for the low-achieving students are:

1. Did you have any difficulties during the English subject?
2. What will you do to overcome the difficulties?
3. Did your strategies work?

In order to gather more information, the research proceeded to observation. The observation was expected to support and give some addition to the data from the interview. The observation was used to prove the answers from the interview.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedures took several steps. First, the English teachers were interviewed to find out the low-achieving students and their motivational strategies. Second,
the low-achieving students were interviewed to find out the reason why they got low achievement. Third, observation was conducted to prove the data and find additional data.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The data analysis involved reading collected transcripts from the interviews and notes from the observation. The interview transcripts and the observation notes were gathered and classified into categories. The purpose was to identify the teachers’ strategies in motivating low-achieving students and low-achieving students’ motivation in learning English. The study used thematic analysis because it was a flexible method to conclude the result from the study.

**FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

The following section presents findings and discussions of the study which provide the answer to the research question. The data were analyzed to find out teachers’ strategy in motivating their low-achieving students. The data was divided into two perspectives both from the teachers and the students. The discussion shows the teachers’ motivation strategies and the low-achieving students’ strategies to be able to understand the lesson.

I. English Teachers

This section presents the findings and discussions of teachers’ strategies in motivating low-achieving students. It focuses on teachers’ strategies and its effectiveness toward students’ comprehension. This section shows the characteristic of low-achieving students, the reasons of lack of motivation of the students, the time when the students feel unmotivated toward the lesson, strategies that the teachers use to motivate students, and the effectiveness of the strategies toward students.
1. Characteristics of low-achieving students

Every class in the school had several students who were considered as low achieving students. According to the English teachers, the students who were considered as low-achieving students were lazy, shy, noisy, not creative, and weak in language skills. The low-achieving students had low grades, low motivation, and lack of confidence.

**Personality**

The first characteristics of low-achieving students were usually lazy and shy. They were lazy to listen to the English teachers and do some exercises in the class. These students did not have the willingness to learn so it made them have bad grades. They were also shy to speak in front of the class. When the teachers asked them to speak, they would refuse. They liked to talk with their friends during the lesson and did not pay attention to the teacher. Furthermore, a few students liked to go outside during the lesson and also fell asleep during the lesson. Below is the teacher’s comment. She said,

The low-achieving students are the students who are lazy, shy students, who have low grades and do not have the motivation to be able to understand the lesson.

(Teacher 1)

Based on the observation, these students did not seem to enjoy the subject. They were rarely paying attention to the teachers’ explanation. Lazy and shy students tend to follow their friends who were better in English subject. In order to make the students became motivated, the teachers need to create positive attitudes in the classroom if students lack initial motivation (Dörnyei, 2001).

On the other hand, there were also low-achieving students who were not shy but they were noisy. In contrast with lazy and shy students, noisy students had the confidence to talk in front of the class. However, they still had low grades because they did not take the lesson
seriously since English is not a compulsory subject in the new curriculum. According to the teachers, they tended to become noisy to hinder their weaknesses in language skills by making their friends laugh. Noisy students liked to talk with their friends during the lesson that may distract the teacher. When the teacher told the noisy student to keep silent, other students were laughing which made the class noisy because their friend was scolded.

**Low-achievement**

The second characteristic of low-achieving students was they have low-grades. The students were weak in language skills. These students did not have the willingness to learn which made the students have a low grade. The students could not pass the minimum criteria which were greater than or equal to 70 and they had low comprehension in language skills. The low-achieving students usually only got 50 to 65 on their tests and exercises. They also could not speak fluently because they did not know how to pronounce some vocabulary and they did not know the meaning. Below is the teacher’s explanation. She said,

We have KKM, it’s minimum criteria for students to pass a lesson and we have 70. The KKM is 70 and if there are students achieved under 70 then they will be considered as low-achieving students. In my opinion, there are many low-achieving students, I see them as students who cannot speak English fluently and other skills are listening, writing, and reading.

(Teacher 2)

Based on the observation, they tended to distract their own attention during the lesson. They did not have the willingness to study English and the learning environment also did not support them in learning English. The low-achieving students tended to be noisy during the class. They tended to talk with their friends instead of listening to the teacher. Instead of helping their low-achieving friends, the other students looked enjoy to talk with the students.
during the lesson. When they were mispronouncing some words and their friends were laughing at them which made them become unmotivated to learn English. Learning environment has a motivational impact toward student (Koltai, 2012). Therefore, the teachers need to make a good learning environment so the students may have the willingness to learn English.

2. The reasons for lack of motivation of the students

There were various reasons why the students did not have the motivation to learn English. According to the English teachers, the reasons were the students were lazy to study at home, did not have the confidence to ask, and naughty to cover their weaknesses. The students did not seem to have the initiative to ask the teacher when they had difficulty in understanding the material. The students were shy to ask because they were afraid because their friends would make fun of them.

Low Motivation

The first reason why the low-achieving students lack of motivation was they had low motivation to learn English. The teachers said the low-achieving students were too lazy to study the material given by the teacher at home. If the students wanted to study the material at home, they might have better comprehension toward the lesson. However, the students tended to choose other activities rather than study when they at home. Below is the teacher’s comment. She said,

Usually, they are too lazy to study, they are not motivated to ask if they do not know, and they seem not to review all the lesson they have taught so they cannot cope well with the other friends. And some of them are too shy to ask a question or to say something.

(Teacher 1)
Based on the observation, the low-achieving students did not seem to enjoy the lesson. They looked just take notes without understanding what they had written on their books. The students looked to have some questions to ask the teachers, but they were shy to ask the teachers because their friends would be laughing at them because they did not understand the material. Therefore, the teachers usually needed to approach them and asked whether they had difficulty or not. However, some of the low-achieving students still did not want to ask the teachers. Some of them also did not want to do the exercise given by the teachers because they did not understand the material. They tended to cheat by copying their friends’ work. Instead of helping to teach their low-achieving friends, they just gave their answered exercise to the low-achieving students.

**Low Self-confidence**

The second reason why the low-achieving students lack of motivation was they had low self-confidence. They did not have the initiative to ask the teachers when they had difficulty. If the students wanted to ask the teacher, they had to use English. On the other hand, the students needed to use English when they wanted to ask the teachers. They were also afraid to talk when the teachers asked them to tell something in front of the class. Below is the teacher’s description. She said,

They just like to keep silent in the class and they have no contribution to discussing or when answering my questions. When they have group discussion the high-achieving students always take control of the discussion. They seem afraid to talk/to ask all of them and they don’t feel confident as I ask them to come forward to have a presentation or just to tell something.

(Teacher 2)

Based on the observation, the low-achieving students tended to be passive during the class. They just kept silent so the teachers could not tell whether the students could
understand the lesson or not. The teachers needed to move around the class to check their students’ understanding. However, there were also low-achieving students who liked to be active in class. On the other hand, these students were naughty and hard to be controlled. They could make the students in the class become noisy and hard to control because they were doing or asking something unrelated to the lesson. The naughty students were doing the disruptive behavior to cover their weakness because they did not want to be labeled as low-achieving students. They preferred to be called as a troublemaker instead of low-achieving students because they thought they would look cool and popular with their rebellious behavior. Unfortunately, the other students thought that these students were good.

Moreover, the other students tended to make fun of the low-achieving students if they asked about some difficulties. The other students were also making fun of them if the low-achieving students asked the teacher. Therefore, some of the low-achieving students tended to be silent during the lesson. According to Wharton (2000), a social strategy can be used to make the silent students want to talk. The teachers usually used group work to make the shy students to talk with their friends. However, the high-achieving students tended to take control of the group without giving the low-achieving students a chance to give their opinion. Therefore, the teachers needed to monitor their students whether their students could cooperate with their group member or not.

3. The time when the students feel unmotivated towards the lesson

When the lesson started, the students usually had high motivation to learn. However, students’ motivation tended to decrease during the lesson. It might happen because the teacher gave difficult material and spoke English too much. This might make the students become silent during the lesson that might confuse the teachers whether their students could understand the lesson or not.
**Difficult Materials**

The first reason that caused students’ motivation to decrease during the lesson was difficult materials. During the lesson, usually, the students were paying attention to the teachers when they had difficult material. However, they only looked motivated at the beginning of the lesson. Gradually, they became unmotivated and did not pay attention to their teachers’ explanation. Below is the teacher’s comment. She said,

> Usually when they got difficult materials, especially exercises they do not really understand not all. Usually, during the beginning, they still motivated.

(Teacher 1)

The difficulty of a material had an impact toward the students’ motivation. If the material was difficult, it might discourage the low-achieving students to be able to understand the material. They did not pay attention to the teacher because the material is difficult and they would ask their friends whether they could understand the material or not. As a result, the class would become noisy and hard to control for the teachers. Difficult materials tended to make the students cheat by copying their friends’ work when the teacher gave them exercise.

**Frequently Using English**

The second reason that caused students’ motivation to decrease during the lesson was the teachers frequent use of English as the instruction. When the English teacher spoke English too much during the lesson, it made the low-achieving students unable to understand the teacher’s explanation. According to the teachers, they needed to use both English and Indonesian to make the students able to understand. The low-achieving students had low comprehension toward English so the teachers needed to use Indonesian to make their explanation clearer. Below is the teacher’s explanation. She said,
At first, when I speak English in the beginning and they just keep silent and maybe they don’t understand what I’m saying up until I dismiss the class, they don’t have development from start to the end. But, some students outside the class, they feel brave or encourage to talk with me. Although it’s Indonesian, then I ask them to speak English then they want. They follow my instructions, but sometimes some of them still not talking any words.

(Teacher 2)

However, the teachers frequently used English from the start of the lesson until the end. The students who were exposed to English frequently would be able to acquire the language faster (Krashen, 1982). Therefore, the teachers tried to expose the students using the target language by using English so the students might acquire the language. However, the teachers tended to use English too much which make the students confuse and could not understand. This situation made the low-achieving become silent because they did not understand and did not want to be pointed by the teachers to answer the questions that related to their comprehension.

4. The English teachers’ strategies to motivate the students

Motivated students made the learning process easier. In order to motivate the students, English teachers needed to use some strategies that could encourage the students to learn English. The strategies were being used by the English teachers were giving bonus score for being active, making a personal connection to the students, and telling the students the advantages of learning English.

Giving Bonus Score

The first strategy was giving the students a bonus score for being active. The new curriculum had some attitude assessments so the teacher was using it as an advantage to make the students become active. In order to get a good attitude score, the low-achieving students
had to be active. The teacher gave bonus score to the students, especially the low-achieving students if they wanted to be active during the lesson. Below is the teacher’s explanation. She said,

It is the advantages of the new curriculum because there is some attitudes assessment so I can emphasize on the assessment to make them active so I will give more grade for the students.

(Teacher 1)

Based on the observation, the teachers really tried to make the low-achieving students become active during the lesson. The teachers tried to expose the students to English frequently by giving them bonus score for being active. The teachers frequently asked the low-achieving students to answer the questions to check their comprehension, when the low-achieving students could answer the questions they would get bonus score. The teachers also gave bonus score if the students had the courage to ask questions and share their opinion. The bonus score needed to be given because the low-achieving have a low grade. The bonus score helped the low-achieving students to pass the minimum criteria for the lesson. In addition, the teachers also marked up the students’ grade if it is considered just a little bit less than the minimum criteria.

**Making A Personal Connection**

The second strategy was making a personal connection to the low-achieving students. The teacher frequently talked to the low-achieving students to find out their difficulties. The teacher usually talked with the students during and outside the class. The students felt that their teacher cared with them that might create a personal connection so the students did not need to be afraid to ask the teacher. Below is the teacher’s comment. She said,

I usually get closer personally with them. Sometimes after class or during the class. When I have time, I will do it out of the class just for chit-chat.
Based on the observation, the teachers tended to talk with the low-achieving students outside the class because they tended to be silent during the class. The teachers usually asked the students about their difficulty about the lesson. However, not all students wanted to share their difficulty with the teachers. When the teachers asked them outside the class, they looked afraid. Maybe they felt that they were being scolded by the teachers because they could not understand the lesson.

**Telling the Advantages of Learning English**

The third strategy was telling the students the advantages of learning English. The teachers convinced the students that English is important because it is an international language. The teachers encouraged the students that English was not a difficult lesson. The teachers also related the low-achieving students who were good at sport to learn English because it can be used when they are playing in the international event. Below is the teacher’s comment. She said,

I say that English is not a scary thing, is not the end of the world. It is important, it is more important than money. In the future, we have to use English so I give them the advantages of English for their future. Many my low-achieving students, they are good in sports so I relate English with their future. If you want to be a professional footballer, you have to use English.

Based on the observation, the teacher always started the class by asking the students to say ‘English is easy and fun’. According to the teacher, it was a good technique to make the students become motivated to learn English. The sentence motivated the students during the lesson started, they always looked motivated at the beginning. However, they still became unmotivated in the middle of the lesson because they did not understand and they did not
have the initiative to ask if their teachers did not ask them. On the other hand, it was a good strategy because if we could relate it with the emergence of globalization, people needed to learn English as an international language.

5. The effectiveness of the strategies toward the low-achieving students

The teachers had mentioned their strategies in motivating the low-achieving students. Their strategies were giving bonus score for being active, making personal connection to the students, and telling the students the advantages of learning English. The teachers said that their strategies were effective to be used on low-achieving students.

The First Teacher

The first teacher said that the strategies could work. It could work if the high-achieving students wanted to cooperate with the low-achieving students. Usually, the high-achieving students were making fun of the low-achieving students because they did not understand the lesson and always asked the teacher. Thus, the teacher asked the high-achieving students to help the low-achieving students which made the strategies work. Below is the teacher’s comment. She said,

They can be motivated. But, sometimes their friends, the high-achiever students, make them unmotivated. Some of the high-achievers mock them. High-achiever needs to work low-achiever to make the strategy works.

(Teacher 1)

Based on the observation, the strategies worked on low-achieving students. The strategy that really worked was giving the students a bonus score. It could help the low-achieving students to pass the minimum criteria and motivate them to be more active in a class. The teacher tried to motivate the students to use English during the lesson that gave them exposure so they might acquire the language and were able to understand the lesson.
The Second Teacher

The second teacher said that the strategies also worked before the mid-term test. She said that many of the low-achieving students became more confident to speak English. The low-achieving students who always silent during the lesson wanted to speak and share their opinions. They were not afraid to ask the teacher when they had difficulty. Although their pronunciation was not good, they had willingness to use English during the class. Below is the teacher’s answer. She said,

Yeah, it works lately. I see many students feel encouraged to speak in English, to do the exercise in English. They feel more confident although it’s not highly confident, but at least they want to open their mouth.

(Teacher 2)

Based on the observation, the students were preparing for a mid-term test. Therefore, they needed to understand the lesson because they had to pass the test. If they could not pass the past, they needed to do a remedial test. If they could not pass the remedial test, there might be a chance that they could not proceed to the next grade. When the students were focusing on their goal to pass the test, they could be motivated.

II. STUDENTS

This section presents the findings and discussions of the low-achieving students’ point of view toward English as a subject and their teachers’ teaching strategy. It focused on the low-achieving students’ behavior when they were learning English. This section shows the students’ difficulties in learning English, how the students overcome the difficulties, and the effectiveness of the students’ strategies to overcome the difficulties.
1. Students’ difficulties in learning English

Every student had their own difficulties in learning English. Students’ common difficulties were vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. There were also other difficulties related to students’ comprehension of the lesson and teachers’ behavior in teaching their students.

**Common Difficulties**

Most of the students had common difficulties in learning English. The difficulties were vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. If the students could not understand vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, it might be difficult for them to comprehend the lesson. Below is the student’s explanation. He said,

Since I was in elementary school, I could not understand English. I have difficulty on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

(Student 1)

Vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are the basic elements of English lesson. If the students could not understand the basic of English, it would be difficult for them to have better understanding of the lesson. Therefore, teachers needed to motivate the students to have the willingness to learn English.

The first difficulty was vocabulary. According to the low-achieving students, vocabulary was difficult because they had to memorize a lot of vocabulary given by the teacher. During English lesson, the teachers gave the students a set of vocabulary to students. Then, the students had to memorize the vocabulary so they can comprehend during the lesson. Below is the student’s comment. She said,

I am struggling with memorizing vocabulary and pronunciation. I wish I can understand, but I can’t.

(Student 9)
Based on the observation, the students tended to memorize vocabulary instead of understanding it when it should be used. Usually, they memorized a set of vocabulary during English lesson. However, they only remembered the set of vocabulary for a day since they only memorized it during the lesson. The low-achieving students became silent when they were asked about the last meeting’s vocabulary by the teacher because they already forgot about it. It would be better if the students want to understand the usage of the vocabulary so they can understand when to use a certain word in the certain situation.

The second difficulty was grammar. The low-achieving students said that learning grammar was very hard because it had a lot of patterns that needed to be memorized. A lesson about grammar tenses taught the students to learn three grammar patterns, it is a positive, negative, and interrogative form which made the low-achieving students difficult to comprehend. Below are the students’ answers. They said,

I have difficulty in grammar. There a lot of patterns that need to be memorized, it makes me confused
(Student 6)

I don’t understand grammar. There are a lot of patterns, it is hard to memorize. The teachers are cool, but I do not understand the lesson.
(Student 7)

Based on the observation, the teachers did not always focus on their students’ grammar. The teachers were paying attention to students’ pronunciation and fluency when the students were speaking in English. The teachers focused on grammar when they gave the students a written exercise. English is a language that people use to communicate so it was good that the teachers focused on pronunciation and fluency instead of grammar. However, grammar was also needed when the students are doing a written exercise.
The third difficulty was pronunciation. Many of the low-achieving students were afraid to speak English because they did not know how to pronounce some words. According to them, it was difficult because the words that were written had a different way to pronounce. Since the students did not use English as their first language, it was hard for them to understand the pronunciation. Below are the students’ comments. They said,

I have difficulty with grammar and pronunciation because I can’t speak English.
(Student 11)

I have difficulty in pronunciation. It is difficult because the written and the spoken form are different.
(Student 12)

Based on the observation, the low-achieving students seemed afraid to speak English during the class because they did not want to make mistakes. They were afraid if they made a mistake their friends would be laughing at them. It made the students become unmotivated to learn English. On the other hand, the teachers motivated the students by telling that it was okay for them to make mistakes so they could learn from their mistakes to get a better understanding. Therefore, it would be better if the students who understand English wanted to cooperate with their low-achieving friends so they had the courage to speak English.

**Students’ Comprehension**

Furthermore, another difficulty that students face was their comprehension of the lesson. Most of the time, low-achieving students did not understand and confuse in learning English. The students needed to comprehend so they could understand the material. According to them, it was difficult to memorize vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Since there were a lot of things to memorize, it made the students become unmotivated to learn. Below are the students’ explanation. They said,
Since in elementary school, I never have English lesson so I do not understand anything. That is the reason why I am lazy to learn English. The teachers are cool, but still, I can’t understand the lesson.

(Student 15)

I did not get English during the elementary school. I am not only having difficulty in English, but also the other lessons.

(Student 18)

Most of the low-achieving students said that they did not have English lesson when they were in elementary school. Therefore, they were confused when they had English in junior high school. Based on the observation, the students did not seem to enjoy to learn English. They looked unmotivated and did not have the willingness to learn. Most of the low-achieving students preferred to talk with their friends or fall asleep during the lesson.

However, there was also another factor that comes from inside the students which made the students difficult to learn English. The factor was students’ laziness in learning English. The low-achieving students were usually lazy students that did not have the willingness to learn. They were lazy because they thought that English was not important since it was not a compulsory subject. Below is the student’s comment. He said,

I have never learned English since elementary school. At that time, the government gives regulation that English is not a compulsory subject, I do not understand lesson so I am lazy to learn it.

(Student 13)

In the new curriculum, English was not a compulsory subject. English was a local content so it was up to the school whether they wanted to have English or not. Therefore, most of the low-achieving students never learned English when they were in elementary school. When these students had English in junior high school, most of them were confused
because they had never learned English. In this globalization era, it would be better if English become a compulsory subject because it is an international language.

**Teachers’ Behavior**

In addition, teachers’ behavior during teaching also had an impact on students’ comprehension. The teachers did not answer students’ question directly, but they would ask other students help. On the other hand, the students wanted the teacher to answer their questions directly. When the teacher asked the other students to help to answer, the student who asked the question thought that their teachers did not give them decent explanation of their question. Below is the student’s explanation. He said,

I always during the lesson, because the teachers do not answer my question directly. They always said ‘anyone can help?’. What I want is the teachers give me a direct answer, not answer from my friends

(Student 3)

The curriculum focused on student-centered learning environment. Therefore, the teachers always asked the other students first before giving the right answer. It was a good method to maintain the interaction between teachers and students. However, there were also particular students who wanted the direct answer from the teacher because they thought their teachers were always right.

The teachers also scolded the noisy students that made them did not like the teacher and also gave them a lot of homework. It made the students became unmotivated because they were labeled as low-achieving students. When the students did not like the teacher, they tended to become unmotivated to learn. Below is the student’s comment. He said,

I don’t like the teachers. They always give me difficult homework. That is the reason why I am never paying attention to them. The teachers always motivate me, but it won’t work.
(Student 19)

Based on the observation, this particular student was a naughty student. This student was hard to control during the lesson. He always made the class noisy, but he felt offended when he was scolded. Most of the time, the student was being called to the teachers’ room.

2. The effectiveness of the strategies

Yes

Based on the interview, forty percent students said that their strategies to overcome the difficulty in English were working. They did not say that their strategy worked one hundred percent. They said that their strategy only worked a little bit. However, they said that it was better than not to understand at all. Below are the students’ answers. They said,

Yes, a little bit. At least I understand rather than not at all.
(Student 7)

A little bit. I can understand it today, but I will forget it tomorrow.
(Student 9)

Their understanding of the lesson usually was temporary. Most of the low-achieving students could understand the material for today, but they would forget it tomorrow. It happened because they tended to memorize rather than understand the material.

No

Based on the interview, sixty percent students said that their strategy to overcome the difficulty in English was not working. Most of the students were unmotivated in learning English. They thought that English was a difficult lesson to understand. Below are the students’ answers. They said,

No, I still don’t understand English until now
(Student 1)

No. I have to study at home, but I choose to play games when I get home
(Student 2)

Generally, they thought that English was not important because it was not a compulsory subject and they did not speak the language as their first or second language. Therefore, most of the low-achieving students did not have the willingness to learn English.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to answer how English teachers motivate low-achieving students. The purpose of this study was to investigate English teachers’ strategy in motivating low-achieving students. The study finds that teachers’ motivational strategy has an impact on low-achieving students’ result during the lesson.

Motivation is an important factor in English learning because it affects students’ performance in understanding the material from the teacher. Students’ motivations are various from one to another, some are highly motivated students and some are unmotivated students. Students who are unmotivated in learning English, they usually get low grades. Therefore, English teachers need to find suitable strategies to deal with unmotivated low-achieving students.

The strategies that the English teachers used are giving a bonus score, making a personal connection, and telling the advantages of learning English. The most effective strategy is giving a bonus score to the students because it can help low-achieving students to get a better grade. Furthermore, it also motivates the low-achieving students to become active during the class. Therefore, the low-achieving students can understand the lesson.

In addition, the other strategies are also effective to motivate the low-achieving. Making a personal connection with students can make the teachers understand their students’ difficulty. When the teachers were able to make a personal connection, the students will feel comfortable to tell their difficulties in understanding the lesson. Telling the advantages of
learning English can also make the students understand why they should learn English. When the students know that English is important in this globalization era, they can become motivated to learn English.

Teachers need to motivate their students when they are teaching in a class because the students can have better comprehension when they are motivated to learn. Teachers need to have strategies to motivate their students so the students can understand the lesson. Therefore, an English teacher should have the spirit to teach their students so the students can be motivated and they are able to comprehend the lesson.

The study is limited to some parts even though it provides some findings and discussions. The result of this study cannot be generalized for all levels of students and teachers because it investigates only seventh and eightieth grade students as the participants. Therefore, for the further research, it is better to use the larger participants so the result of the study will be more detail.
REFERENCES


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