The Indonesian EFL Learners' Motivation and Autonomy

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Abstract. A successful autonomous learner is usually influenced by numerous factors. Motivation is one of the main factors that have a connection and the greatest influence associated with it. This study focuses to scrutinize the correlation between motivation and learner autonomy of Indonesian EFL learners. It also aims to identify the significant difference between gender and degree level of study in motivation and autonomy. The investigation was conducted using a sample of 40 university EFL learners from some regions in Indonesia. The data were collected through a questionnaire and analysed using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation and independent-samples T-test. The result of the study showed that there is a positive correlation between learning motivation and learner autonomy. Results of the independent sample T-test showed there was no significant difference between male and female learners in motivation and autonomy, and also there was no significant difference between undergraduate and postgraduate learners in motivation and autonomy. The result of the study recommends the vital role of motivation and autonomy in teaching and learning English especially in the EFL context. They should receive great attention, as they can lead to more effective teaching and learning.

Keywords: Autonomy · Correlational Study · EFL Learners · Motivation; Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students

1 Introduction

The English language is indeed indispensable for communication in this era of globalization. It uses for various purposes and situations [1]. For example, international trade, international education, intercultural relations, and business. This phenomenon clarifies the position of English has become one of the most international languages used by people around the world. In Indonesia, English is a well-accepted foreign language. It is spoken and learned not only by students but also by ordinary people. Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, learning English could be challenging for students. They often perceive that learning English is complicated process because of some factors, such as motivation and learning strategies [2].

It is undeniable that motivation plays a major role in language learning. Many researchers have examined that motivation is one of the factors determining the success of second or foreign language learning [2–5]. Motivation is also a major contributor to language achievement [6]. Learners who have strong motivation can learn a language better, tend to be successful, and can make good achievements. So, it can be said that motivation is pivotal in determining their success or failure in learning English.

In addition, motivation is one of the main factors that influence learner autonomy [7, 8] and determining how far learners are ready to learn autonomously [9]. Motivation, according to [10, 11] Cotterall and Lengkanawati, is necessary for the cultivation of learner autonomy. While [12] Ushioda contends that autonomous learners are motivated learners. Motivated learners are students who invest their time and pull out efforts in learning, responsible for a task in hand, have a specific goal, and use strategy in learning to achieve the goals [13, 14]. [15] Spratt et al., argue that motivated language learners are more responsible for their learning and have decision-making abilities. All of these features describe the autonomous learner. Autonomous learners know how to learn effectively. They perceive that their learning success is determined by their effort and strategies [16, 17]. It means that language learner puts effort into their learning and applies several learning strategies in purpose to succeed in their learning. So, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between autonomy and motivation.

Many research findings confirm that motivation correlates with students' achievement or academic performances [18–22]. Further, research investigating the association between motivation and learner autonomy has been conducted by many scholars in second or foreign language learning [4, 8, 9, 16, 23–25]. In Indonesia, research investigating the relationship between motivation and learner autonomy is still difficult to find out. If any, the study mainly focused on the relation learning motivation and the four English skills achievement, learning outcome, language learning strategies [18, 21, 22]. Taking this as the point, the present study focuses on investigating the university students' motivation and autonomy and its relationships.

1.1 Learning Motivation

Motivation can be defined as a thing that can elevate students' interest in learning the language. According to [26] Gardner, motivation is the mixture of effort plus desire to attain language learning goals. Besides, Motivation is something important to make students learn and keep them learning [27]. Motivation comes from the learners' inside and outside factors and can easily be linked to the social experience.

Motivation is categorized into integrative and instrumental [16]. Integrative motivation is an essential requirement for successful learning [27]. It refers to a learner's desire to learn the second language, to know more about the culture, and to make contact with the speaker of the language. Further, he explains that instrumental motivation is learners' motivation to acquire language for their career, reading technical material, translating a text, and so forth. Similar to [28], instrumental motivation is learners are motivated to study the second language because for several aims such as the motivation to get a good job and career, improve social status, and continue the study. Students' desire to acquire something practical or concrete from second language studies is a feature of instrumental motivation. Learners acquire English for different practical reasons such

as for a job application or meeting academic requirements when applying for higher learning institutions.

[29] Ryan & Deci (2000) distinguish motivation between intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is learners' internal desires to do any kind of activity because they like it or enjoy it. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is learners do any activities, not for enjoyment but maybe they are pressured to do them. For instance, learners taking part in several learning activities to obtain a prize or elude a sanction.

Students' who have high motivation enjoy their learning compared with who have less motivation. They actively take part in any activities, able to manage their study time, and tend to make the best results [8].

1.2 Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy was introduced by Holec [30] along with a task he was working on for the Council of Europe. After that learner autonomy has been a prominent theme in the field of foreign languages and teaching and learning. Holec [30] delineates learner autonomy as the ability to take responsibility for one's learning. In this case, students are responsible for their own learning. For example, setting their learning goals, determining content and procedures, selecting methods and techniques that will be employed, and evaluating learning. Lee [28] explains the definition of Holec is focuses on the selection of content and methods in learning to achieve learning objectives. It can be said that autonomous learners know how to learn effectively. Besides, students have the power and right to learn on their own [31]. Littlewood [32] defines autonomous learning as the ability and willingness to take responsibility for learning. Besides, Dickinson [16] says that autonomy can be seen as an attitude towards learning in which students are prepared to take, or does take, responsibility for their learning. It can be understood that the key point of learner autonomy is that students must be responsible for their own learning.

According to [14, 33, 34] (2014), in autonomous learning, learners use language-learning strategies to make them become autonomous learners. Learners who can use various strategies in language learning will help them have better learning outcomes. In a similar vein, Wang and Ryan [23] mention that autonomous learners have the capacity for being active and independent in the process of learning. Further, they explain that autonomous learners can identify and formulate goals, change goals to suit learning needs and interests, and able to use learning strategies and to monitor learning.

Learner autonomy leads the learner to learn independently. Holec [30] as cited in DIckinson [16] explains that to carry out an independent learning program, autonomous learners need capacities such as critical reflection and decision making. Not only have those capacities but also must have skills such as the ability to determine learning objectives, define content and methods, etc. Similarly, learner autonomy helps students to learn independently with little support from teachers because they can make decisions about how they learn [33, 35, 36]. In conclusion, several key concepts of learner autonomy including the learner's independence, learner responsibility, and learner choice. Incorporated with these, such as decision making, critical reflection, and detachment.

1.3 Links Between Motivation and Autonomy

Several researches have been led to discover the relationship between motivation and autonomy. Spratt et al., [9] conducted a study on the relationships between autonomy and motivation in language acquisition. They found that there were strong relationships between motivation and frequency of engagement in autonomous learning activities outside the classroom. Also, they further explained that motivated learners were more ready and able to take responsibilities in the language learning process. Deci and Ryan [29] held that intrinsic motivation comes from circumstances where learners have the opportunity to take responsibility for learning, and taking responsibility is one of the key concepts of student autonomy. Vandergrift [37] argues that autonomy precedes motivation. While, [38] found that learning motivation can help to promote learner autonomy. Cheng [39]; Salehi &Daleli [40]; Liu [8] showed that learning motivation and autonomy were significantly and positively correlated with each other.

The review of the previous literature shows that there exist close relationships between learning motivation and learner autonomy. The previous research has been conducted by many researchers in a second and foreign language. In Indonesia, research examining the relationship between motivation and autonomy are still rare. This study attempts to fill in this void through three research questions: (1) Is there any significant relationship between motivation and autonomy of Indonesian University EFL learners? (2) Is there any significant difference between male and female learners in motivation and autonomy? (3) Is there any significant difference between undergraduate and postgraduate learners in motivation and autonomy?

2 Methods

The participants of the study comprised 40 Indonesian EFL male and female undergraduate and postgraduate learners majoring in English Language Teaching. They came from some regions in Indonesia such as West Sumatera, North Sumatra, Aceh, Riau, West Java, East Java, and Jakarta. There were 7 males and 33 females. Undergraduate learners were 29 and post-graduate learners were 11. They were recruited based on a convenience sampling procedure (Table 1).

Table 1. Participants' Profile

	Frequency	Percent
Male	7	17.5
Female	33	82.5
N	40	100.0
Undergraduate	29	72.5
Postgraduate	11	27.5
N	40	100.0

The participants filled out a questionnaire, which was divided into three parts. The first part was the demographic background and asked information about gender, city of the living, university, and degree. The second part asked the participants about learning motivation. The third part was the learner autonomy. The motivation questionnaire was adapted from Noels, Pelletier, Clement, and Valler [6]. There were 18 items with a five-point Likert scale, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. While the learner autonomy questionnaire was adapted from Zhang and Li [41]. It consisted of 11 statements with a five-point Likert scale (never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always.

The researchers distributed the questionnaire to University EFL learners through Google form. The data collection process took two weeks. The participants were asked to fill the questionnaire within two weeks. The researchers sent a second message via WhatsApp to thank those who had responded and also to remind those who had not responded to the survey three days before the deadline. A total of 40 (7 males and 33 females) respondents from the regions of West Sumatera, North Sumatra, Aceh, Riau, West Java, East Java, and Jakarta completed the questionnaires. After the data had been collected, they were categorized in terms of motivation, autonomy, gender and degree.

IBM SPSS statistic Version 20 was utilized to analyze the data collected from the survey. To answer the first research question, analysis of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was employed in finding the correlation between motivation and autonomy. An Independent sample t-test was employed to answer the second and the third research questions.

3   Finding and Discussion

3.1   The Relationship Between Learning Motivation and Learner Autonomy

In order to find out the relationship between learning motivation and learner autonomy, the researchers applied the Pearson product-moment correlation. The result is shown in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, the correlation value between motivation and autonomy was moderate with r = 0.530. The significant value (2-tailed) was 0.000 which was lower than 0.05. Based on this result, there was a positive and significant correlation between

Table 2. Correlations between Motivation and Autonomy

		Motivation	Autonomy
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	.530[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	40	40
Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	.530[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	40	40

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

the two variables. This result indicated that students who were motivated in English learning they would have better learning autonomy. The result of the present study was in line with the result of the studies conducted by [42], Liu [8], Chen [43], Salehi & Daleli [40], and Jianfeng et al., [24] which showed the positive correlation between learning motivation and learner autonomy. Motivation plays a dominant role in affecting learner autonomy in learning a language. Some researchers [44–46] agree that students most likely will not become autonomous learners if they are unmotivated. Besides, they argue that enhancing intrinsic motivation is necessary to foster autonomous learners. Similar to the results of Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan's [9] study, they concluded that language teachers need to develop learning motivation first, especially in cases where the situation students refuse to be actively involved in autonomous practices or situations where students avoid learning opportunities. Thus, language teachers are advised to develop motivation for learning and help students to believe in the effectiveness of their efforts. They also recommend language teachers to include a selection of motivating activities where learner-centeredness as a precursor to learner autonomy can be integrated.

3.2   The Differences Between Gender in Motivation and Autonomy

To find out the differences between male and female learners in motivation and autonomy, the researchers used an independent sample-t-test. In the initial, the researchers tried to find out the mean score of male and female learners' motivation and autonomy.

As shown in Table 3, the mean score of male learners was 63.00 and the mean score of female learners was 72.91. Based on this result, it can be concluded that female learners had a higher level of motivation. Further, the result of the t-test showed there was no significant difference between male and female learners' motivation. The sig. (2-tailed) value was 0.056 which was higher than 0.05. Accordingly, there was no significant difference in motivation between male and female learners. It implied that male and female learners' motivation in English learning was at the same level, particularly, in this sample. It indicated that learning motivation did not depend on the learners' gender. Furthermore, it can be argued that both male and female learners are interested in what they are learning and then they make significant efforts to do it. Thus, their motivation in learning the language is at the same level. This finding is compatible with the results of the studies conducted by [47] in which they found that both male and female learners tended to have the same level of motivation in learning English. However, the result was in contradiction with the findings of [48] who revealed in their studies that female students demonstrated a higher level of foreign language learning motivation than male students.

Table 3. Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Motivation	Male	7	63.00	18.403	6.956
	Female	33	72.91	10.462	1.821

Table 4. Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Autonomy	Male	7	34,43	8,541	3,228
	Female	33	37,94	7,267	1,265

In Table 4, it can be seen that the mean score of male learners was 34.43 and female learners was 37.94. Based on this computation, female learners' autonomy scores were higher than male learners' scores, even though it was only a slight difference. To clarify the difference between male and female learners' autonomy, independent sample t-test was run. The results of the independent sample t-test showed that the sig. (2-tailed) value was 0.267 which was higher than 0.05. Based on the statistical results it can be said that there was no significant difference in autonomy scores between male and female learners. It means that both of them are at the same level. Both males and females consider themselves to have the ability to learn independently. Besides, it seems that they realize the importance of learner autonomy for life-long learning which can help them to compete in the global world after graduating from university. Hence, there is no significant difference between males and females in the level of autonomy. The result is consistent with Cabugsa [49] and Varol and Yilmaz [50] result. They report that there were no significant differences between males and females related to their learning activities as autonomous learners. Additionally, Abdel Razaq [51] found that there was a discrepancy between male and female students related to their learning activities as an autonomous learner. In contrast to this, Mardjuki [52] reports that there are no obvious gender-based differences related to learning experiences and challenges as autonomous learners.

3.3 The Differences Between Undergraduate and Postgraduate Learners in Motivation and Autonomy

In this study, the researchers also investigated the relation of motivation and autonomy of undergraduate and postgraduate learners through independent sample t-test.

Table 5 showed the mean scores of undergraduate learners were 70.83 and the mean scores of postgraduate learners were 72.09. It is pictured clearly that the mean scores of postgraduate learners were higher than undergraduate learners even though the difference was not too high. The results of the independent sample t-test showed that the sig. (2-tailed) value was 0.780 which was higher than 0.05. Accordingly, there was no

Table 5. Group Statistics

	Degree	N	Mean	Std. Devitation	Std. Error Mean
Motivation	Undergraduate	29	70.83	12.734	2.365
	Postgraduate	11	72.09	12.446	3.752

Table 6. Group Statistics

	Degree	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Autonomy	Undergraduate	29	36,00	6,682	1,241
	postgraduate	11	40,82	8,739	2,635

significant difference in motivation between undergraduate and postgraduate learners. Both undergraduate and postgraduate learners have the same level of motivation, particularly in this present study. This is probably because of the importance the using English to communicate or solve problems in the future. However, the results of this study were quite different from the results of studies reported by Sarani and Shirzaei [53], which revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between highly-motivated and low-motivated undergraduate and postgraduate EFL learners' use of vocabulary learning strategies. Meanwhile, Fazey & Fazey [44] agree that mature students look to be at an advantage in that they are more intrinsically motivated than are younger students.

Table 6 showed the mean and standard deviation scores for undergraduate learners were 36.00, 6.682; and the mean and standard deviation scores for postgraduate learners were 40.82, 8.739. Based on this computation, postgraduate learners' autonomy scores were higher than undergraduate learners' scores even though it was only a slight difference. Then, the sig. (2-tailed) value was 0.069 which was higher than 0.05. Based on the aforementioned statistical results that sig. (2-tailed) 0.069 > 0.05 it can be said that there was no significant difference in autonomy scores between undergraduate and postgraduate learners. This finding is compatible with the results of the studies conducted by Yan [54], in which she found that postgraduate students generally held strongly positive attitudes towards autonomous English learning but exhibited only a moderate frequency of autonomous learning. Meanwhile, Gürses [55] argues that undergraduate students have the potential to be autonomous in their learning. Here, teachers have the responsibility to structure the learning environment to nurture undergraduate potential. So, it can be said that University students can learn autonomously if allowed to do so. It is supported by Stephenson & Laycock as cited in [44], who stated that the capacity to think, learn and behave autonomously is often claimed as an outcome for students in higher education. Therefore undergraduate and postgraduate students who arrived at university are potential to be autonomous learners. In this case, teachers have to assist and guide them to enhance their autonomy as much as possible and to develop the ability to take responsibility for their own learning.

4   Conclusion

This present study investigated the correlation between learning motivation and learner autonomy of Indonesian EFL Learners. In addition, the study also tried to find out the significant difference between gender and degree level of study. The results revealed that learning motivation has a positive correlation with learner autonomy. It indicates that learning motivation influenced Indonesian EFL learners' autonomy. The findings of the study answered the research questions that there was no significant difference

between male and female learners in motivation and autonomy, and there was no significant difference between undergraduate and postgraduate learners in motivation and autonomy. Considering the relationships between motivation and autonomy it is crucial to pay attention to these factors in foreign language learning and teaching. In conclusion, the current study suggests language teachers to include a series of motivating activities in teaching and learning English. Also, they should more focus on how to help learners to motivate themselves rather than motivate learners. Therefore, motivation is the key to foster successful autonomous learning.

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