



Exploring Lecturers' Narratives on Promoting English Majors' Success in Language Learning: Case from a University in Gorontalo

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Abstract. In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, understanding the narratives of educators is crucial for enhancing language learning outcomes. This qualitative study, thus, explores the experiences of English language lecturers in promoting student engagement, motivation, and employability through their teaching practices. Using in-depth interviews with two experienced lecturers at a university in Gorontalo, Indonesia, and informed by a thematic analysis method, insights were gained into the strategies, beliefs, and challenges faced by educators in guiding language learners. The findings showed three key themes: (1) Supporting Student Engagement, (2) Enhancing Employability Skills, and (3) Cultivating Intrinsic Motivation. The findings also revealed the importance of interactive teaching methods, adaptive pedagogical strategies, and authentic learning experiences in promoting student success. While the study acknowledges its limitations, such as the small sample size and specific context, it offers valuable implications for future research and practices in the field of English language education.

Keywords: EFL, Employability Skills, Intrinsic Motivation, Students Engagement

1 Introduction

In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the narratives of educators serve as invaluable sources of the strategies and practices employed to enhance language learning outcomes. As English proficiency becomes increasingly important in our globalized world, the role of EFL lecturers in guiding and supporting language learners has attracted considerable attention in educational research. Effective language instruction goes beyond teaching grammar rules and vocabulary; it entails creating dynamic learning environments that promote students' engagement, motivation, and employability. Therefore, exploring how EFL lecturers address these challenges and opportunities in their teaching practices is crucial for advancing our understanding of effective language pedagogy.

Previous studies have extensively examined various aspects of language teaching and learning, including instructional methods, learner motivation, and language

acquisition processes [1], [2]. While these studies have contributed valuable insights to the field, there remains a research gap in understanding how EFL lecturers specifically address the intertwined goals of student engagement, motivation, and employability within the language classroom. Existing research often focuses on isolated aspects of language instruction or relies on quantitative measures, overlooking the nuanced experiences and perspectives of educators. Thus, there is a need for qualitative research that looks into the lived experiences of EFL lecturers, shedding light on the complex interplay between teaching strategies, student engagement, and broader educational outcomes.

This proposed study, therefore, aims to address this gap by exploring the narratives of EFL lecturers in promoting student engagement, motivation, and employability through their teaching practices. By conducting in-depth interviews with experienced EFL lecturers, this study seeks to uncover the underlying beliefs, strategies, and challenges faced by educators in their efforts to support language learners' success. Through a qualitative lens, this research aims to provide rich, contextually embedded insights into the multifaceted nature of language instruction, offering valuable implications for pedagogical practice and educational policy. The study asks the following research question: What experiences do English language lecturers share about promoting student engagement, motivation, and employability through their teaching practices?.

The quest to understand effective teaching methodologies and motivational factors has been an ongoing endeavour in the English language education context. Central to this pursuit are two key concepts: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and intrinsic motivation in language learning. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has emerged as a prominent pedagogical approach in English language education, emphasizing the importance of meaningful communication and interaction in the language learning process [14]. CLT prioritizes student-centred activities that promote authentic language use and foster active engagement in the classroom. By providing opportunities for learners to participate in communicative tasks, such as role-plays, simulations, and information gap activities, CLT aims to develop learners' communicative competence and fluency in the target language [14]. Research on CLT has demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing students' language proficiency, motivation, and confidence in using English for real-life communication [14].

Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, plays a crucial role in driving language learners' engagement and commitment to the learning process [6]. Unlike extrinsic motivation, which involves external rewards or incentives, intrinsic motivation arises from learners' inherent interest, enjoyment, or satisfaction derived from the learning activity itself [6]. Research in the field of language learning has identified various factors that contribute to intrinsic motivation, including the perceived relevance of the learning task, the sense of autonomy and control over one's learning, and the opportunity for self-expression and creativity [5], [6]. Understanding the dynamics of intrinsic motivation is essential for educators seeking to create supportive learning environments that nurture learners' intrinsic interest and enthusiasm for language learning [6]. By integrating motivational strategies that align with learners' needs and

interests, educators can cultivate a sense of ownership and engagement that sustains learners' motivation and promotes long-term language learning success [5].

Previous studies have extensively explored the role of communicative language teaching (CLT) and intrinsic motivation in language learning. For instance, Berezenko, Cherkhava, and Musiienko (2022) conducted a study to investigate the use of CLT approaches in promoting students' linguistic competence, especially in the area of grammar acquisition [2]. Uralova and Abuova (2021) investigated the relationship between students' intrinsic motivation and their engagement in language learning activities within the CLT framework [17]. Additionally, Abdukhayotovna (2022) explored the impact of integrating authentic materials into CLT-based language instruction on students' motivation and language proficiency [1]. While these studies have shed light on various aspects of CLT and intrinsic motivation, there remains a gap in understanding how EFL lecturers' personal experiences and instructional practices contribute to fostering student engagement, motivation, and employability in language learning contexts. Therefore, the proposed research aims to address this gap by exploring EFL lecturers' narratives and perspectives on promoting student success in English language learning through effective teaching practices.

2 Methods

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this present study. Data were collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews with two English language lecturers (Intan and Dian; pseudonyms) teaching English at a university in the Province of Gorontalo, Indonesia. The interview questions focused on eliciting information about how these participants share their experiences in promoting student engagement, motivation, and employability through their teaching practices. Conversations during the interviews were done in English and the Indonesian language. Participation in this research was voluntary. To ensure trustworthiness, the interview transcripts were shown to the participants for member-checking purposes.

To analyse data, a thematic analysis method was used. The first step of this data analysis included transcribing the interview transcripts, followed by a close reading to identify relevant and potential units of data that can be used to address the research questions. If the data was not in English, an English translation was carried out. Once the units of data were ready, manual coding began. This started with labelling categories, followed by generating the themes (grouping similar codes).

3 Findings and Discussion

3.1 Findings

Findings revealed three key themes: supporting student engagement, enhancing employability skills, and cultivating intrinsic motivation. The following paragraphs outline each of these themes.

Theme One: Supporting Student Engagement. Supporting student engagement involves employing teaching strategies and creating classroom environments that encourage active participation and interaction among students. Intan and Dian underscore the importance of fostering student engagement through various pedagogical approaches. Intan, for example, emphasizes the significance of interactive teaching methods to stimulate student involvement in the learning process. She states, “I saw that all the subjects taught in speaking classes are focused on speaking activities... Speaking activities become our main target so that they can be more courageous to speak English with anyone” (Int22). This highlights her commitment to designing activities that prioritize speaking practice and encourage students to communicate confidently.

Similarly, Dian stresses the importance of creating an interactive learning environment where students feel empowered to contribute. She mentions, “Teachers should be facilitators... besides being facilitators, teachers should also be their friends so that they can share any ideas or obstacles they face in the field” (Di29). This demonstrates her belief in the teacher’s role as both a guide and a supportive mentor, fostering an atmosphere conducive to active student participation.

Furthermore, both Intan and Dian recognize the importance of adapting teaching methods to suit the needs of their learners. Intan mentions, “The most important thing is that you have to speak... Put grammatical or vocabulary on the second place. The first thing is that you have to speak” (Int35). This reflects her emphasis on encouraging students to prioritize oral communication skills over linguistic accuracy, thereby promoting active engagement in speaking activities. Moreover, both Intan and Dian highlight the significance of creating supportive classroom environments. Intan emphasizes the importance of building students’ confidence through activities such as show and tell, where students share personal experiences and cultural insights. Similarly, Dian emphasizes the role of rapport-building and peer interaction in fostering a supportive learning atmosphere.

Theme Two: Enhancing Employability Skills. Enhancing employability skills encompasses preparing students for future career opportunities and equipping them with the necessary language proficiency and communication skills to succeed in diverse professional contexts. Intan, for instance, emphasizes the practical application of language skills in real-world settings, highlighting the relevance of speaking fluently and communicatively in various professional contexts. She notes, “Even if they want to become a tour guide, want to become a translator, they will still need these speaking skills” (Int25). By highlighting the versatility and applicability of speaking skills across different professions, Intan aims to motivate students to develop their communication abilities toward future career opportunities.

Dian also highlights the importance of preparing students for the demands of the professional world by integrating specific-purpose English courses tailored to different career paths. She mentions, “For specific purposes like teaching children or for tourism, tour guide, we have English for Young Learners, English for Tourism, and English for Business” (Di48). By offering specialized courses aligned with

students' career interests, Dian aims to provide targeted language instruction that enhances students' employability prospects in their chosen fields.

Both Intan and Dian also emphasize the role of practical learning experiences, such as presentations and group projects, in developing students' employability skills. Intan mentions activities like "show and tell" and exploring local cultural heritage to enhance students' presentation and communication abilities (Int31). Similarly, Dian incorporates activities that promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills, such as "cause-and-effect analysis" and "retelling exercises", to prepare students for the challenges of the professional world (Di49).

Moreover, both lecturers emphasize the importance of integrating authentic materials and resources that reflect real-world communication contexts. Intan mentions incorporating English movies to expose students to diverse linguistic and cultural expressions. Dian similarly emphasizes the use of authentic materials to provide students with exposure to authentic language use and cultural nuances relevant to their future careers. Through these strategies, they aim to prepare students for success in the global job market and empower them to achieve their professional aspirations.

Cultivating Intrinsic Motivation. Cultivating intrinsic motivation involves fostering students' internal desire and enthusiasm to engage with the English language and their learning journey. Intan and Dian both highlight the significance of intrinsic motivation in driving students' engagement and commitment to language learning. Intan underscores the importance of creating a supportive and encouraging learning environment that empowers students to take ownership of their learning. She emphasizes, "The most important thing is that you have to speak... You should be brave. That's the most important thing" (Int35). By prioritizing speaking practice and encouraging students to overcome their fear of making mistakes, Intan aims to cultivate a sense of confidence and autonomy that motivates students to actively participate in speaking activities.

Dian similarly emphasizes the need to create meaningful and relevant learning experiences that resonate with students' interests and developmental needs. She highlights, "You should provide information about the characteristics of young learners and how to manage the class... critical thinking for young learners" (Di49). By incorporating activities that tap into students' intrinsic interests and encourage critical thinking, Dian aims to foster a sense of curiosity and ownership in the learning process, thereby enhancing student motivation.

Both lecturers also recognize the importance of setting clear goals and expectations to motivate student engagement. Intan emphasizes the need for students to prioritize speaking practice and set achievable goals for themselves. By providing students with a clear roadmap for their language learning journey, Intan aims to empower them to take proactive steps towards achieving their goals. Moreover, both Intan and Dian underscore the role of positive reinforcement in nurturing intrinsic motivation. Intan mentions, "Sometimes in the class, there are various skills from students... I also ask students who have more courage to communicate" (Int36). By acknowledging

students' efforts, Intan aims to create a supportive and encouraging learning environment that fosters intrinsic motivation.

3.2 Discussion

Previous research has highlighted the importance of student engagement in language learning outcomes. Engaged students are more likely to actively participate in language learning activities, interact with course materials, and collaborate with peers, all of which are essential for language development [9], [18]. In English language learning, where communication skills are paramount, student engagement facilitates opportunities for practice, feedback, and language use in authentic contexts. Engaged learners are motivated to explore and experiment with the language, leading to improved proficiency and confidence in speaking, listening, reading, and writing [13]. Moreover, engagement fosters a positive learning experience, creating a supportive environment where students feel motivated to overcome challenges and persevere in their language learning journey. Research has consistently shown that high levels of student engagement are associated with better academic outcomes, including increased language proficiency, higher achievement levels, and greater satisfaction with the learning process [7]. Therefore, promoting student engagement in English language learning is essential for creating meaningful learning experiences and empowering students to become proficient and confident communicators in English.

Integrating strategies aimed at enhancing students' employability skills is paramount in preparing them for success in the professional world. By emphasizing the practical application of language skills in various professional contexts, educators like Intan and Dian equip students with the communicative competence necessary to navigate real-world scenarios effectively. Furthermore, offering specialized courses tailored to students' career interests ensures that they acquire industry-specific language proficiency and knowledge relevant to their chosen fields. Through hands-on learning experiences such as presentations and group projects, students develop essential skills like critical thinking and problem-solving, essential for career advancement [8], [15]. Additionally, the integration of authentic materials and resources exposes students to genuine language use and cultural nuances [3], [11], enriching their understanding and readiness for the complexities of professional settings. By adopting these multifaceted approaches, educators play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world application, thus enhancing students' employability prospects and empowering them to thrive in their future careers.

Intrinsic motivation serves as a powerful catalyst in driving students' engagement and commitment to English language learning, fostering a genuine passion for acquiring language skills. When students are intrinsically motivated, they exhibit a deep-seated desire to engage with the language beyond external rewards or pressures [4], [16]. Intan and Dian's emphasis on creating supportive classroom environments and interactive teaching methods not only cultivates students' intrinsic motivation but also sustains their interest and enthusiasm throughout the learning process. By incorporating activities that address students' personal interests, goals, and

aspirations, educators can harness intrinsic motivation to fuel students' language learning journey. Moreover, fostering a sense of autonomy and ownership over their learning empowers students to take initiative, set goals, and monitor their progress, further enhancing their intrinsic motivation [10], [12]. As such, nurturing intrinsic motivation emerges as a cornerstone in promoting meaningful engagement and fostering enduring commitment among students in their pursuit of English language proficiency.

4 Conclusion

This present study explores the narratives of English language lecturers, uncovering valuable insights into their approaches to promoting student engagement, motivation, and employability through teaching practices. The findings reveal the significance of interactive teaching methods, adaptive pedagogical strategies, and authentic learning experiences in fostering English language learners' success. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research, such as the small sample size and the focus on a specific context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could explore the experiences of both students and educators across diverse educational settings to provide a more comprehensive understanding of effective language teaching practices. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine the long-term impact of these teaching approaches on students' language proficiency and career outcomes, further contributing to the field of English language education.

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