

Factors Contributing to Low Interest in Learning English Among Junior High School Students

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This study aims to analyze the factors that influence the interest of seventh-grade students at NWDI Ajan Islamic Junior High School in learning English in the context of learning with limited facilities and minimal meeting frequency. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, this study involved seven students as key informants through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through a systematic process of reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

The results of the study show that students' interest in learning is influenced by four main aspects, namely emotional perception, learning motivation, difficulties encountered, and students' attitudes towards learning English. Students' emotional perceptions tend to be positive, characterized by feelings of enjoyment and comfort in attending lessons, which are reinforced by the teacher's teaching methods and a conducive classroom atmosphere. Student motivation is divided into intrinsic motivation, such as the desire to master the language for personal reasons, and extrinsic motivation, which comes from parental support and the learning environment. On the other hand, students face difficulties, especially in grammar and vocabulary, but these obstacles do not reduce their interest in learning thanks to strong social support.

Positive student attitudes, such as the courage to try, the willingness to practice, and the effort to apply English in daily life, play a significant role in maintaining interest in learning even though lessons are held only once a week. Overall, this study confirms that interest in learning is the result of interactions between emotional, social, and school environment factors, and can continue to develop despite limitations in the learning process.

Keyword : Learning Interest, Learning Motivation, Student Attitudes

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Abstrack

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi minat belajar Bahasa Inggris siswa kelas VII SMP Islam NWDI Ajan dalam konteks pembelajaran dengan fasilitas terbatas dan frekuensi pertemuan yang minim. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus, penelitian ini melibatkan tujuh siswa sebagai informan utama melalui teknik wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan melalui proses reduksi, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan secara sistematis.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa minat belajar siswa dipengaruhi oleh empat aspek utama, yaitu persepsi emosional, motivasi belajar, kesulitan yang dihadapi, dan sikap siswa terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. Persepsi emosional siswa cenderung positif, ditandai dengan rasa senang dan nyaman dalam mengikuti pelajaran, yang diperkuat oleh metode pengajaran guru dan suasana kelas yang kondusif. Motivasi siswa terbagi menjadi motivasi intrinsik, seperti keinginan untuk menguasai bahasa untuk kepentingan pribadi, serta motivasi ekstrinsik yang berasal dari dukungan orang tua dan lingkungan belajar. Di sisi lain, siswa menghadapi kesulitan terutama pada aspek grammar dan kosakata, namun hambatan tersebut tidak mengurangi minat belajar mereka berkat dukungan sosial yang kuat.

Sikap siswa yang positif, seperti keberanian mencoba, kemauan berlatih, dan usaha menerapkan Bahasa Inggris dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, berperan signifikan dalam mempertahankan minat belajar meskipun pembelajaran berlangsung sekali seminggu. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa minat belajar merupakan hasil interaksi antara faktor emosional, sosial, dan lingkungan sekolah, serta dapat tetap berkembang meskipun terdapat keterbatasan dalam proses pembelajaran.

Kata kunci: Minat Belajar, Motivasi Belajar, Sikap Siswa

INTRODUCTION

Education is a learning and teaching process that aims to develop knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes in individuals (Annaafi & Putri, 2024) so that they can become productive and responsible members of society. English language subjects teach language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students learn grammar, vocabulary, and expressions used in everyday situations (Salsabila & Megawati, 2024). English language learning at the junior high school level often faces the challenge of low student interest, which results in suboptimal learning outcomes and poor vocabulary mastery. This condition

not only hinders students' academic progress but also reduces the overall effectiveness of learning (Romodhon et al., 2023).

The phenomenon of low interest in learning reflects a more complex problem. Students face internal challenges such as the assumption that English requires long memorization and complicated pronunciation. Physical conditions that are not in good shape, as well as fatigue, also contribute to students' lack of interest in learning English. Lack of motivation to learn is also a significant factor, both internally from the students themselves and externally from factors such as the influence of the environment and teaching methods (Iswindarti et al., 2021).

The role of teachers is very important in motivating students and encouraging them to learn, especially in the classroom. With all these perspectives, teachers are required to create a comfortable classroom that can motivate and channel students' creativity in learning English. This is especially true for single teachers who face students with the same abilities in all three grade levels. This further burdens teachers with curriculum requirements and adjustments to the conditions or ability levels of their students. Considering the previous studies, there is a theoretical gap. Not many researchers have studied the main factors and specific solutions for the seventh grade of junior high school in terms of resource availability, especially the conditions of single teachers in schools with limited facilities.

Research by Kaunain et al., (2024) only identified internal and external factors causing low motivation to learn English among students without exploring solutions that could be applied in learning. On the other hand, previous research by (Aulya, 2024) only identified internal and external factors causing low interest in learning English among students without measuring the level of interest quantitatively and did not describe the most dominant factor between the two.

In line with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes active, contextual, and relevant learning for student development, students are expected to master basic English skills from the beginning of junior high school (Widagdyo & Hakim, 2022). However, initial observations at NWDI Ajan Islamic Junior High School show that seventh-grade students still have a low command of vocabulary, so they often have difficulty understanding teachers' instructions and simple English texts. This condition has the potential to hinder student engagement in learning and reduce the achievement of learning objectives in accordance with the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The problem statement in this study focuses on the low interest in learning English among students at NWDI Ajan Islamic Junior High School, which is an obstacle to achieving learning objectives in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum. This study aims to reveal the factors that are thought to cause this low interest, such as intrinsic motivation, learning environment support, learning methods, and students' perceptions of English lessons. Using a qualitative approach, this problem is tested in a measurable manner to determine the extent to which each factor contributes to the low learning interest of students (Khatima et al., 2025).

This study aims to analyze the level of interest in learning English among students at NWDI Ajan Islamic Junior High School and to analyze the factors that influence it qualitatively. Through data collection by conducting interviews with seventh-grade students using a random sample of seven students, this study is expected to provide an objective picture of the most dominant variables affecting students' low interest in learning English in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum.

RESEARCH METHODE

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to identify factors that influence students' interest in learning English. This approach was chosen because of its ability to explore in-depth information related to students' learning experiences in a real context in the school environment, which is essential for understanding language learning motivation (Rajagukguk & Sibarani, 2023). The participants in this study were seventh-grade

students at NWDI Ajan Islamic Junior High School in the 2025/2026 academic year, selected through random sampling from a total of 14 students, with 9 of them becoming key informants in in-depth interviews (Rhepon, 2014). The composition of the seventh-grade students was 7 male students and 7 female students.

This research was conducted from October to November 2025 during the odd semester. The English learning process at this school took place once a week with a duration of 40 minutes for each meeting, located in an English classroom with limited facilities such as simple learning media and minimal technological devices. All research activities were carried out during regular class hours without disrupting the school schedule, and in coordination with the English teacher as a partner in conducting the research.

The data collection techniques in this study included observation, interviews, and documentation to obtain more comprehensive and reliable data. Observation was conducted to directly observe students' interest in the learning process. Interviews were used to explore internal and external factors that influence their interest in learning. These interviews, as part of the qualitative research method, aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions of learning motivation, which included factors of empowerment, usefulness, success, interest, and concern in the context of learning (Nofmiyati et al., 2023). This approach allows researchers to identify psychological and environmental variables that contribute to or hinder students' interest in learning (Siregar et al., 2024). The oral interview approach allows researchers to obtain rich qualitative data, which can reveal individuals' deep desires, personal experiences, and emotions that shape learning interest (Rahayuliana & Watini, 2022). Meanwhile, documentation is used as supporting data, such as photos of activities and notes on the learning process. All data are analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques through a process of data reduction, data presentation, and systematic conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Emotional Perceptions of English Language Learning

Based on in-depth interviews with seven seventh-grade students, it appears that students' emotional perceptions of English language learning tend to be positive and form an important basis for the emergence of stable learning interest. Most students stated that they felt happy, interested, and comfortable during English lessons. These positive responses arose from various factors, such as the teacher's delivery, support from peers, and a conducive classroom atmosphere. These findings indicate that the affective aspect, namely students' feelings towards the subject, plays a significant role in shaping their interest in learning.

Field findings show that teachers have succeeded in creating a classroom atmosphere that supports learning comfort. This is illustrated by Radit's statement that he feels relaxed because the teacher explains calmly and does not make students afraid to make mistakes. This opinion is reinforced by Maesa, who states that the teacher's interesting explanation method makes the classroom atmosphere more lively and not boring. In the context of learning theory, this is in line with the view (Nofmiyati et al., 2023) that positive experiences during the learning process can increase students' motivation and interest in the subject. An emotionally supportive learning environment contributes directly to an increase in the quality of interest in learning.

In addition, some students showed mixed emotional responses. For example, Bintar said that he felt happy but sometimes found it difficult, especially when dealing with grammar or long vocabulary. However, he still showed positive emotions because he felt that the lessons enriched his knowledge. These findings indicate that academic challenges do not always reduce interest in learning, as long as students still feel support from the classroom environment. This is reinforced by (Siregar et al., 2024), who stated that positive emotional responses can minimize the negative impact of learning difficulties.

Social interaction is also one of the factors that shape positive emotional perceptions. Arinda, for example, emphasized that she felt happy because her friends always helped her when she encountered difficulties. The attitude of mutual assistance among students contributes to a sense of security and emotional connection in the learning process. This condition is in line with the theory of a supportive learning environment, which explains that social support can increase students' confidence and involvement in learning. In the context of English language learning, peer support is an important catalyst in maintaining student interest.

Other findings show that even though lessons only take place once a week, students still show high enthusiasm. This can be seen from Satrian's statement that he feels that every meeting always provides new learning experiences that keep him interested. Even Amel, who admits that lessons are often challenging, still expresses her joy because she knows the benefits of English for her personal development. This shows an intrinsic awareness of the importance of learning English, so that students' emotional responses remain stable despite the limited frequency of learning.

Overall, the results of this study show that students' emotional perceptions of English learning at NWDI Ajan Islamic Junior High School are greatly influenced by a conducive classroom atmosphere, engaging teaching methods, supportive social relationships among friends, and individual awareness of the benefits of the subject. These findings support the argument that affective aspects are a key component in shaping learning interest. A positive learning environment and pleasant emotional experiences have been proven to encourage deeper student engagement even when they face challenges such as limited facilities and learning time allocation. Thus, strategies to increase learning interest need to consider the emotional dimension as the main foundation for developing English language learning for seventh-grade students.

Student Motivation and the Factors that Drive It

The interview results show that the motivation of seventh-grade students to learn English is formed from a combination of internal and external factors. Internal motivation is evident in the students' desire to master English as a useful skill in everyday life, while external motivation comes from parental support, the classroom atmosphere, and the teaching methods used by teachers. In general, students show stable and fairly strong motivation, even though lessons only take place once a week.

Intrinsic motivation is clearly reflected in the responses of several informants. Dani stated that he learns English because he wants to use it in daily activities, such as understanding movies or online games. This statement shows that there is an internal drive that is personal and directly related to individual interests. The same can be seen in Bintar, who is interested in learning new vocabulary even though he admits that it is difficult. The interest in expanding linguistic knowledge shows strong intrinsic motivation and supports a more independent learning process. Theoretically, this condition is in line with the opinion of (Siregar et al., 2024), which states that intrinsic motivation plays a major role in increasing students' perseverance and interest in learning foreign languages because it comes from curiosity and personal drive.

In addition, intrinsic motivation also arises in students who want to develop personal skills, such as Radit, who aims to increase his confidence in speaking in front of the class. This factor is related to the concept of self-efficacy, which is the student's belief in their ability to perform certain tasks. According to Rajagukguk & Sibarani, (2023), self-efficacy plays a major role in determining student engagement in the learning process. When students believe that they are capable, their motivation to learn will grow naturally.

Meanwhile, students' external motivation is no less powerful. Arinda, for example, emphasizes that parental support is an important factor that keeps her motivated to study at home. This shows the influence of the family environment as one of the drivers of learning

motivation. This kind of support is relevant to social motivation theory, which states that encouragement from the surrounding environment—whether from family, peers, or teachers—can influence students' attitudes and interest in learning. Similarly, Amel states that even though lessons are only given once a week, she still tries to stay motivated because she understands the importance of English in her future life.

External motivation is also influenced by the teacher's teaching methods. Some students, such as Maesa, mentioned that the way the teacher explained the material in an interesting way made them more enthusiastic about following the lesson. This shows that a communicative and relaxed learning approach can significantly increase students' interest in learning. Research by Nofmiyati et al., (2023) confirms that engaging learning strategies can strengthen learning motivation because students find the learning process more enjoyable and easier to understand.

In addition to family and teachers, peer support is also an influential external factor. Arinda mentioned that her friends' help was very beneficial when she faced difficulties. Social support from peers directly strengthens learning motivation because it creates a sense of togetherness and comfort in the learning environment. In the context of this case study, positive social interactions helped students remain enthusiastic despite limited school facilities and learning intensity.

The overall findings indicate that the learning motivation of seventh-grade students reflects a mutually supportive relationship between internal and external factors. Students have personal interests that grow alongside strong environmental support. This combination keeps them enthusiastic even though classes are held only once a week with limited facilities. Thus, strategies to increase learning interest must consider both aspects of motivation in order to make the English learning process more effective and sustainable.

Difficulties in Learning English for Seventh Grade Students

The interview results show that seventh graders face various difficulties in learning English, even though they generally have sufficient interest and motivation. These difficulties mainly lie in understanding grammar, mastering a large vocabulary, and limited resources available at school. However, some students said that these challenges could be overcome thanks to the support of teachers, peers, and a conducive classroom atmosphere. These findings indicate that learning difficulties do not completely hinder students' interest, but rather encourage them to find coping strategies in the learning process.

One of the most dominant difficulties is understanding grammar. Maesa explained that grammar rules often confuse her because there are so many and they vary. Students must master sentence patterns, tense usage, and other structures that they have not yet mastered well. Similar difficulties also arise for other students, although not all of them mention it explicitly. This is in line with research showing that grammar is one of the most challenging components in foreign language learning, especially at the elementary education level. According to Rahayuliana & Watini, (2022), understanding grammar is closely related to abstract thinking skills, so it takes longer for junior high school students to understand.

In addition to grammar, students also face difficulties in mastering vocabulary. Dani said that he found it difficult to learn a large number of vocabulary words. Other students also experience this challenge, especially when the vocabulary words taught have complex pronunciations or spellings. A large vocabulary load is one of the common obstacles in learning English at the junior high school level. Siregar et al., (2024) explain that vocabulary mastery is a key foundation in language skills, so when students experience limitations in this aspect, their ability to read, listen, and speak is significantly affected.

On the other hand, students' difficulties do not only stem from the material, but also from internal factors such as lack of confidence, the time needed to understand the material, and the ability to adapt to learning methods. For example, Bintar admits that even though he feels challenged, he still tries to be confident when he has to speak in class. Meanwhile, Amel

mentions that she often needs more time to understand the lesson, especially when the lesson feels challenging. This condition shows that psychological aspects also influence the level of difficulty felt by students.

External factors such as limited learning facilities also have an impact on the level of difficulty experienced by students. Amel revealed that school facilities are quite helpful, but still limited. This is relevant to the research context, which states that schools have simple learning media and minimal technological devices. These conditions certainly affect teachers' ability to facilitate visual or audio-based learning, which is actually very much needed for English language learning. Thus, limited resources can slow down students' understanding of the material.

Despite facing various difficulties, students showed good adaptability. Satrian emphasized that a comfortable classroom atmosphere helped him overcome his feelings of burden, while Arinda revealed that help from friends was an important factor that enabled her to continue understanding the material. The support received from the learning environment proves that learning challenges can be minimized through positive social relationships. This is in line with social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of interaction between students in the process of constructing understanding.

Overall, the difficulties faced by seventh-grade students in learning English include linguistic aspects (grammar and vocabulary), internal factors (self-confidence and slow comprehension), and external factors (limited facilities) (Angraeni et al., 2024). However, students continue to demonstrate a positive and adaptive attitude, so that these difficulties do not become a major obstacle to their interest in learning. These findings emphasize the importance of responsive learning approaches, access to more varied learning media, and strengthened social support in improving the English learning experience in schools.

Student Attitudes and Efforts to Increase Interest in Learning in the Context of Limited Learning

Students' attitudes toward English language learning are an important indicator in understanding their interest in learning, especially in the context of schools with limited facilities and a learning frequency of only once a week. The interview results show that all informants have a positive attitude towards the learning process, characterized by the courage to try, the desire to continue practicing, and the willingness to use English in their daily lives. This positive attitude is also evident in the form of peer support and their ability to enjoy the learning process despite encountering various challenges (Rofiqi et al., 2023). This shows that affective and social aspects play an important role in shaping the stability of students' interest in learning. This shows that affective and social aspects play an important role in shaping the stability of students' interest in learning. The positive attitude of these students reflects high intrinsic motivation, where the tendency to pay attention and remember information consistently becomes a major driving factor in the learning process (Tanjung et al., 2022).

From an emotional perspective, students show a tendency to be optimistic about learning English. This optimism is often driven by high motivation, even when facing difficulties, and is reflected in their willingness to ask questions and help their peers (Mutiah et al., 2020). Dani's statement encouraging students to "not be afraid to try" shows an awareness that mistakes are part of the learning process. This attitude is very important in foreign language learning, where the courage to try is a key requirement for developing communicative competence. Meanwhile, Maesa's message emphasizing the importance of continuous practice is in line with the concept of self-regulated learning, which is the ability of students to regulate their learning process independently. According to Nofmiyati et al., (2023), this kind of proactive attitude can increase self-control in learning and strengthen intrinsic motivation.

From a social perspective, several informants expressed appreciation for the role of peers in facilitating the learning process. As stated by Radit and Arinda, assistance from friends and

teachers provided a sense of security and confidence when they encountered difficulties. This social support has a strong connection with collaborative learning theory, which explains that interactions between students can accelerate language acquisition, broaden understanding, and increase engagement in learning. In the context of NWDI Ajan Islamic Junior High School, the students' social environment plays a major role in counteracting the fear or anxiety that usually arises when learning English.

Another attitude that emerged was the students' ability to appreciate the learning process. Satrian's message to "enjoy the process, not just the end result" reflects an awareness of the importance of the learning process itself. This view shows that students can see English lessons not only as an academic obligation but also as a self-development experience. This understanding greatly influences learning persistence, especially in learning environments with limited facilities (Arpizal & Fahirah, 2022). This situation also shows that even though lessons are held only once a week, students still consider this subject to be valuable.

Efforts to increase interest in learning can also be seen in students' encouragement to use English in their daily lives, including the integration of technology and a variety of teaching approaches to strengthen the connection between learning concepts and the real-life contexts of students (Christina Sitohang, 2023), as stated by Arinda and Amel. This shows the emergence of a practical attitude towards language, an indicator that students have seen the benefits of English in a real context. Application in daily life is one of the important strategies in language learning, as it provides opportunities for students to practice continuously outside of class hours. In previous studies, the use of language in real-life contexts can improve vocabulary retention and reduce learning anxiety (Fengyu, 2023).

Although learning only takes place once a week and the facilities are not fully supportive, students still demonstrate positive, adaptive, and progressive attitudes. These attitudes show that affective and social factors can compensate for the structural limitations of the school (Utomo et al., 2022). Therefore, teachers can harness the potential of these positive attitudes through learning strategies that encourage group work, continuous practice, and consistent motivation. The interview results prove that when the learning environment is supportive, minimal frequency and limited facilities are no longer major obstacles to students' interest in learning.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of qualitative research using the case study method on seventh grade students at NWDI Ajan Islamic Junior High School, a comprehensive picture of the factors that influence interest in learning English was obtained. This study shows that emotional aspects, motivation, learning difficulties, and student attitudes are strongly related to shaping their interest in learning, especially in the context of learning with limited facilities and low frequency of meetings.

Emotionally, students showed a positive response to English language learning. A comfortable classroom atmosphere, engaging teaching methods, and peer support played a major role in creating an enjoyable learning experience. Student motivation came from two main sources, namely intrinsic motivation in the form of a personal desire to master English, and extrinsic motivation in the form of parental support, the role of teachers, and the benefits of language for the future.

Although students face difficulties in grammar, vocabulary, and understanding the material, these challenges do not hinder their interest in learning. On the contrary, these difficulties are mitigated by social support and the students' ability to adapt to learning conditions. The students' positive attitudes, such as the courage to try, consistency in practicing, and the willingness to use English in everyday life, are the main strengths that support the continuity of learning.

Overall, this study confirms that interest in learning is not only influenced by academic ability, but also by emotional, social, and learning environment factors. The combination of these factors shows that despite limitations in learning resources and time, students still have great potential to develop in English language learning.

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