

Motivational Teaching Strategies and Their Impact on Students' Writing Performances

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Abstract: *This study investigated the effect of motivational teaching strategies on the writing abilities of EFL students. This study involved 15 students in the English Education study program of Universitas Muslim Maros, Indonesia. By employing a qualitative approach, the study utilised semi-structured interviews and classroom observations to gather data, which were then analysed using thematic analysis. The results showed that lecturers' use of motivational teaching strategies had a major effect on students' writing, including increased confidence and willingness to write, enhanced engagement and interest in writing, developed critical thinking and creativity, as well as improved writing proficiency. Direct observation in the classroom also demonstrated how lecturers' strategies encouraged students to write critically and creatively, which enhanced their writing performances. The findings of this study concluded that motivational teaching strategies act as a key role in enhancing EFL students' writing performance. It offers valuable insights for teaching practices in Indonesian higher education contexts.*

Keywords: *EFL Students, Impact, Motivational Teaching Strategies, Writing Performances*

INTRODUCTION

Motivation plays an important role since it has become one thing that should be considered in achieving learning goals, and it is assumed to be the determinant of the success or failure of students. Astuti (2013) points out that success in learning a second or foreign language is greatly influenced by motivation. It can be characterized as an impetus that compels someone to act. Therefore, motivation is indeed significantly playing an important role since it has become one thing that should be considered in achieving learning goals, and it is assumed to be the determinant of the success or failure of students. As Weda (2018) highlighted, the success of students in studying English as a foreign language (EFL) depends heavily on their level of motivation.

Writing is universally acknowledged as one of the most complex and challenging skills in second and foreign language learning. This multifaceted skill requires learners to seamlessly integrate various components such as vocabulary, grammar, organization, and critical thinking, all while actively constructing meaning for a distinct audience. Writing, as well, requires both linguistic

competence and significant motivation from learners (Fachrunnisa et al., 2024). In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), learners frequently face additional hurdles, including limited linguistic resources, cultural disparities in rhetorical conventions, and heightened anxiety that arises when tasked with producing written texts in a language that is not their own. As a result, writing is often perceived as a daunting endeavour and, consequently, is less enjoyable for many students. This negative perception can adversely affect students' writing performance as well as their willingness to engage in writing tasks, ultimately hindering their overall language acquisition process.

Understanding the role of motivation becomes essential in addressing these challenges. According to Dörnyei (2001), motivation serves as the primary driving force that not only initiates but also sustains language learning endeavours. Building on this notion, Self-Determination Theory was proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985) and further elaborated by Ryan and Deci (2020) posits that enhancing learners' writing performance can significantly benefit from educators employing strategies that promote intrinsic motivation, such as fostering interest, curiosity, and opportunities for self-expression, as well as extrinsic motivation through mechanisms like rewards, constructive feedback, and recognition.

Within this theoretical framework, the implementation of motivational teaching strategies emerges as a practical means of translating motivational theory into effective classroom practice. Various approaches, including positive reinforcement, scaffolding, collaborative writing tasks, technology-enhanced activities, and goal-setting techniques, have demonstrated efficacy not only in enhancing student engagement but also in alleviating writing apprehension and promoting greater autonomy among learners (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014; Ushioda, 2011). However, despite the extensive literature on the general impact of motivation on second language acquisition, a noticeable gap exists in empirical research specifically examining how motivational teaching strategies translate into measurable improvements in learners' writing performance.

Much of the existing research tends to focus on the relationship between motivation and overall language proficiency or oral communication skills, thus leaving a significant void in our understanding of how motivational strategies relate to writing outcomes. Furthermore, in EFL contexts such as Indonesia, there is an urgent need to investigate how lecturers implement motivational strategies and the ways in which students respond to these strategies in writing classrooms. Addressing these gaps not only holds the potential to enhance pedagogic practices but also aims to contribute meaningfully to the broader discourse on effective language teaching methodologies in challenging learning environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation remains a major topic in education, and it has been described as one of the most complex and difficult problems for teachers to address today (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013). Motivation in educational areas has been the most influential factor in learning and teaching practice. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011)

interpreted motivation as a move, what motivates a person to make specific decisions, take action, exert effort, and persist in an activity.

Using motivational teaching strategies is essential for improving students' writing skills. Dewi et al. (2021) highlight that applying various motivational strategies greatly boosts students' motivation, which then leads to better essay writing abilities. They classify these strategies into four main categories: creating motivated conditions, sparking initial motivation, sustaining motivation, and encouraging positive self-assessment. These categories give teachers a clear framework to increase motivation among students, effectively connecting motivational tactics to real improvements in writing skills. Additionally, Liu (2023) expands on this idea by recommending promoting student autonomy and fostering a positive classroom environment as key parts of effective motivational strategies in language teaching.

Motivational teaching strategies are connected to the cognitive processes involved in writing. Rocha et al (2024) reveal that cognitive and motivational variables interact significantly, suggesting that increasing students' motivational beliefs can enhance writing outcomes. The research supports a holistic approach that combines cognitive strategies with motivational frameworks to improve writing effectiveness, thereby enriching pedagogical practices in writing instruction.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how motivational teaching strategies influence students' writing performance in an EFL context. The design was selected to allow an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences regarding the motivational practices applied by their lecturers. The analysis was guided by the thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which provides a systematic approach for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting recurring patterns (themes) within qualitative data.

The study was conducted in the English Education Department of Universitas Muslim Maros, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The participants consisted of undergraduate English students who had completed at least one semester of academic writing courses. They were purposefully selected to ensure that participants had sufficient experience with writing instruction and exposure to various motivational teaching strategies. A total of 15 students participated in this study. They were chosen using purposive sampling, based on their willingness to participate and their ability to articulate their experiences in English writing classes. This small but focused sample allowed for in-depth exploration of individual and collective perspectives on how motivation influenced their writing performance.

To ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative research, the data triangulation method was employed. Triangulation involved collecting data from multiple sources, such as interviews and classroom observations, to validate the findings and minimize potential researcher bias. The use of triangulation also provided a more comprehensive understanding of how motivational teaching strategies were implemented by lecturers and perceived by students in EFL writing contexts. Therefore, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather rich, descriptive data about students' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward the motivational strategies used by their lecturers. The interview questions focused on how lecturers motivated them during writing activities, the types of strategies that were most effective, and how these strategies affected their confidence and writing outcomes. All interviews were conducted in a relaxed and open-ended manner, either in English or Bahasa Indonesia, depending on participants' preference. While classroom observation was used to observe the interaction between lecturers and students, and to assess how students received the motivation strategies employed by lecturers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study analysed the impact of using motivational teaching strategies on students' writing performances. It aims to see how significant the strategies used by lecturers are in fostering students' motivation to write so that students' academic performances increase as well. The findings of this study are obtained through semi-structured interviews with English major students who have been taught by the three English writing lecturers. Therefore, this study generates several themes, including *increased confidence and willingness to write*, *enhanced engagement and interest in writing*, *developed critical thinking and creativity*, and *improved writing proficiency*. Each theme represented the impact that students experience when lecturers implement motivational teaching strategies in the EFL writing classroom.

1. Increased Confidence and Willingness to Write

The findings of this study presented that most students consider the three lecturers have taught the English writing subject effectively, as evidenced by students' reports of gaining confidence in their ability to write and a progressive growth in their interest in writing. Motivational strategies, such as giving positive reinforcement and personalized feedback, instill confidence in students. As S7 stated:

“My lecturer uses various strategies to motivate us, such as creating a supportive and interactive classroom atmosphere. This strategy is effective because it gives me confidence and encouragement to continue improve my writing skills.” (S7)

Additionally, positive reinforcement such as praise and advice in the form of encouraging words that lecturers contribute to students is highly significant to improve students' motivation in their writing performances. S11 and S12 argued that:

“It seems that when they appreciate or praise me, it motivates me to be more active in class and try to do better.” (S11)

“The lecturer gave me words of encouragement to continue learning and improving my English skills, encouraged us to raise our learning standards, and generally made the classroom teaching atmosphere enjoyable.” (S12)

She emphasized that an enjoyable classroom atmosphere makes her willingness to write increase.

“The teaching atmosphere seemed pleasant and there was no feeling of tension, which motivated me to continue learning to improve my English skills, especially in the writing aspect.” (S12)

Furthermore, some students mentioned that the lecturers frequently provide examples of inspirational stories to encourage them to study diligently. Students indicated that Lecturer 1 inspires them to pursue learning opportunities abroad. Based on statement from S3, S4 and S10 below:

“Our lecturers motivate us by giving advice and often telling stories about their experiences, that's what motivates me.” (S3)

“Our lecturers always give us motivating stories to keep learning from mistakes in writing and our lecturers always tell us about their experiences in learning to write well and correctly.” (S4)

“In terms of learning, my lecturers often share their experiences, which makes me more motivated to develop myself and makes learning more relaxed and enjoyable.” (S10)

The results of these findings reveal that positive reinforcement, such as giving praise or appreciation, as well as telling inspiring stories, can encourage students to be motivated. Additionally, by applying motivational strategies that lead to creating a pleasant atmosphere, it can reduce students' writing anxiety and their readiness to explore concepts and confront demanding writing assignments. When students possess confidence in their writing abilities, they are more inclined to take risks and demonstrate creativity in their assignments.

2. Enhanced Engagement and Interest in Writing

Engaging students in writing tasks should be done to improve students' motivation. Several activities implemented by lecturers, for example, integrating real-life contexts in writing and incorporating collaborative activities in the classroom. The three lecturers have given students real-life contexts in writing tasks that produce different impacts felt by students. S6 explained:

“My lecturer provides motivation by giving feedback on our writing, creating interesting writing topics, and holding interactive class discussions. These strategies make learning in English writing class more fun and relevant”. (S6)

The other students noted as well that:

“The lecturer often gave me relevant and challenging assignments, such as writing essays on controversial topics or in-depth analyses of literary works. This method was effective because it made me feel valued and motivated to continue improving.” (S13)

S14 explained also in the interview session:

“The lecturer motivated me by using real-life examples, providing constructive feedback, and encouraging class participation. These strategies were effective because they made the material easier to understand, helped me understand my mistakes, and created a supportive learning environment.” (S14)

Through these findings above, it can be seen that students are more engaged in the writing subject if the lecturers provide real-life contexts that make it easier for students to express their thoughts and ideas on the writing topics. Another statement from S8, who has similar thoughts, is that writing on related topics to daily life or using hot topics to be discussed in a writing essay helps him to be more engaged and increases his motivation to be better. Likewise, he also asserted that the most interesting activity applied by the lecturer is group discussion, which incorporates collaborative activities.

“Group discussion is the most interesting activity for me. In group discussion, I can exchange ideas with friends and get new perspectives.” (S8)

By looking at these results, through creating writing activities that are relevant and pleasant, motivational teaching strategies maintain students' engagement, fostering regular practice and diligence. This, therefore, promotes a more profound comprehension of writing conventions and styles.

3. Developed Critical Thinking and Creativity

Critical thinking and creativity are needed to perform effectively in writing. Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 3 have implemented motivational strategies to develop students' critical thinking as well as sharpen students' creativity. As S13 explained during the interview session:

“I really enjoy creative writing activities and literary text analysis. These activities allow me to develop my imagination and critical analysis.” (S13)

Another statement from S7, she articulated that the activities given by lecturers, enhancing her creativity, are highly engaging, motivating her to do better in writing performances.

“Activities that interest me in learning English writing include writing essays on interesting topics and discussing famous works. Creative writing exercises such as writing short stories or poems are also very interesting to me.” (S7)

Similar opinion from S14 and S10, she explained the activities that make her participate effectively if the essay topic is interesting, so that it will expand her creativity. As stated below:

“The activities that make me interested in learning English writing are writing essays on topics that I find interesting, and participating in group discussions. These activities allow me to express my ideas creatively and learn from my classmates.” (S14)

“For me, when my lecturer gave me a topic about Palestine and then with that topic, I made 5 paragraphs and put forward my opinions and arguments, this made me able to develop my creativity in thinking and expressing my feelings on paper.” (S10)

Different from S9, S12, and S15, the activity that is specifically employed by lecturer 1 enables them to explore their ability, which enables them to generate original ideas and develop their ability to express the ideas correctly. The activity is in the form of self-reflection that allows students to reflect on their writing works.

“...for example, makes a self-reflection. I can express what I know and of course I can also learn about what I need to learn and I also gained new knowledge about how to write well and correctly. From writing this I have noted that I have to know a lot of vocabulary so that I can write a piece of writing.” (S9)

S12 also added:

“In some meetings, I had to make a self-reflection about the learning that day, by entering what we had done and how we assessed it at the end. I think it was interesting because it made us have to read the journal to be included in the writing and become self-introspective. Like making a daily diary, we entered our feelings during the learning process.” (S12)

Encouraging students’ self-reflection pushes students to analyse the weaknesses as well as the strengths of their writing works. As stated in S15:

“...when we review our writing together, I can learn from the mistakes and strengths of my writing and my friends' writing.” (S15)

4. Improved Writing Proficiency

The analysis of impacts on the students’ writing using motivational teaching strategies has indicated an improvement in students’ writing proficiency. A number of students reveal that the strategies employed by lecturers have

escalated their proficiency in writing. Besides, lecturers constantly give valuable feedback to students' writing works. As S6 mentioned that:

“My lecturer provides motivation by giving feedback on our writing. The feedback given by the lecturer helped me understand the strengths and weaknesses of my writing.” (S6)

More specifically, several students explained that the feedbacks offered by lecturers are detailed and specific, which helps students perform effectively on their writing tasks. It is emphasized on the statements from S8, S13, and S15, they said:

“The lecturer also provides detailed and personalized feedback, which helps me understand my strengths and weaknesses. This method is effective because it makes me feel confident and motivated to continue learning and improving my writing.” (S8)

“..the lecturer also gave me specific and in-depth feedback, which helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses.” (S13)

Then, S15 explained more that:

“The lecturer often gives clear and specific feedback on each writing assignment. She also always gives examples of good writing and explains what makes it good. I think this strategy is effective because I know what needs to be fixed and how to write properly.” (S15)

Furthermore, S7 and S14 underscored that lecturers have given constructive feedback that can help students focus more on their errors in writing tasks. As stated below:

“...constructive feedback helps me understand areas for improvement, while the supportive classroom atmosphere makes the learning process more enjoyable.” (S7)

“The lecturer motivated me by using real-life examples, providing constructive feedback, and encouraging class participation. These strategies were effective because they made the material easier to understand, helped me understand my mistakes, and created a supportive learning environment.” (S14)

These findings indicate that lecturers' feedback on students' writing is crucial for identifying errors and enabling students to enhance their writing skills over time. Hence, the findings also generate positive impacts on students in developing their writing performances.

Discussion

Writing, frequently regarded as a formidable skill, necessitates more than mere technical training; it also requires cultivating a mindset in which students are motivated to articulate their thoughts and persevere through challenges. However,

most students struggle to develop and sharpen their ability to write. Motivational strategies, such as positive reinforcement and constructive feedback from lecturers, assist in overcoming these apprehensions. In this study, the analysis of impacts on students by implementing motivational teaching strategies in English writing classes produced several key aspects that described the positive impacts on students' writing performances.

The first impact that students experience when lecturers employ motivational strategies is that students' confidence and willingness to write are increased. The enhancement of students' confidence occurred since lecturers provided effective positive reinforcement. Lecturers frequently praise and appreciate students when their work is correct. Besides, the attempt of lecturers to create an enjoyable and pleasant classroom atmosphere generates positive responses from students. Students are motivated when lecturers give encouraging words and tell inspiring stories. Studies have shown that when teachers employ techniques such as telling motivational stories, providing inspiring quotes, and selecting reading texts with engaging topics, students tend to be more motivated and, consequently, demonstrate better writing skills (Wati, 2017). The findings of this study align with the motivational teaching strategies proposed by Dornyei (2001). One of the framework strategies is creating basic motivational conditions, which emphasise how lecturers have appropriate behaviour by creating a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the class. Dewi et.al also pointed out in their research that creating basic motivational conditions, such as establishing a positive learning environment and building rapport with students, could provide students with positive feedback on writing tasks and assignments (Dewi et al., 2020). Moreover, studies have indicated that when teachers create a supportive and engaging learning environment, students are more likely to be intrinsically motivated, which can lead to better writing performance (Machingambi, 2013).

Another impact on students is the enhancement of engagement and interest in writing. In writing classes, lecturers frequently give topics that relate to real-life contexts. It is proven by the classroom observation that the lecturers implement motivational teaching strategies in the writing class. It also showed that the three lecturers assigned students to write an essay using trending topics or current issues. Studies demonstrate that designing writing tasks that are relevant, meaningful, and connected to students' interests and real-life experiences can increase their motivation and engagement (Moreno-Murcia et al., 2021; Myhill et al., 2023). Furthermore, some students acknowledged that when lecturers integrate related topics into collaborative learning, such as group assignments or discussing topics in a group, it has improved their motivation to perform well. These findings are in line with previous research, which highlighted that creating a positive, collaborative writing community and employing motivational strategies that address students' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness can foster increased confidence and willingness to write (Baker & Lastrapes, 2019; Utami & Kuswandono, 2023).

This study further presented the impacts of using motivational teaching strategies on students in developing their critical thinking and creativity. Lecturers implemented various activities such as writing essays, short stories and even

poems to encourage students in expressing their ideas in writing. Particularly, writing essays, for students can push their critical thinking because they have to analyse deeper into the essay topic and support it with a strong argument from experts. The process of this writing activity can hone students' critical thinking and creativity to express their thoughts and ideas adequately. By engaging in the writing process, students are required to think critically to produce high-quality work, as the results of their writing reflect their intellectual and cognitive abilities (Mehta & Al-Mahrooqi, 2015; Suteja & Setiawan, 2022). Other responses from students that pointed out the activities done by lecturers enhance students' critical thinking are through self-assessment. Self-reflection has significantly encouraged students to be motivated in writing as they can analyse their writing works. Enables students to reflect on their weaknesses and strengths, and self-reflection is considered adequate to expand their ability to write. Furthermore, research suggests that the relationship between motivation and self-assessment is bidirectional. Improving students' self-assessment and self-regulatory skills can also enhance their writing motivation (Ning & Downing, 2010; Shirdel et al., 2018).

The last key aspect of the impacts on students' writing using motivational teaching strategies is improving writing proficiency. Motivational strategies are most efficient when combined with systematic assistance. Feedback is essential. Lecturers who deliver feedback emphasizing enhancement, rather than merely identifying mistakes, foster a growth-oriented educational atmosphere. In this study, the three lecturers constantly give feedback to students. Positive feedbacks are given in the form of constructive feedback or clear and detailed feedback so that students feel motivated to perform well in their writing tasks. As previous research showed, strategies that support students' sense of competence, such as providing constructive feedback and setting attainable goals, can also boost their motivation and confidence in writing (De Smedt et al., 2020; Sabet et al., 2014). In contrast, studies conducted in Western contexts (e.g., De Smedt et al., 2020) often highlight peer feedback and self-regulation as dominant motivations, while in Indonesian contexts, teacher feedback remains the most influential factor due to the cultural emphasis on authority and guidance from educators. This contextual contrast highlights the importance of adapting motivational strategies to local educational cultures.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The sample is small and only in one institution, which cannot be generalized to other educational contexts. Moreover, the study focuses solely on writing courses, whereas motivational teaching strategies may function differently in other language skills, such as speaking or reading. Therefore, future research could expand the participants' scale across different universities and regions to explore variations in motivational teaching strategies. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to examine how motivational strategies influence writing development over time. In summary, the reviewed literature indicates that the use of motivational teaching strategies, such as providing feedback, encouraging students, and implementing specific instructional models, can positively impact students' writing performance, motivation, and self-assessment. Adopting a comprehensive approach that

addresses both motivational and self-reflection aspects of writing instruction appears to be the most effective way to support students' writing development.

CONCLUSION

The impact of using motivational teaching strategies in teaching English writing is significant and varied. The impacts refer to long-term improvements or changes in students' writing skills resulting from the motivational teaching strategies. These strategies foster a positive learning environment, enhance student engagement, and build confidence in their writing abilities. By focusing on individual needs, offering constructive feedback, and incorporating creative and relatable activities, motivational teaching not only improves students' writing skills but also their attitudes toward the subject. This approach encourages perseverance, critical thinking, and self-expression, equipping students with essential skills for academic and personal growth. Overall, motivational teaching strategies empower students to overcome challenges in English writing and cultivate a lasting appreciation for effective communication. This study is limited by its small sample size and focus on a single institution, which may restrict the applicability of the findings to other educational contexts. The use of interviews also relies on participants' perceptions, which may be affected by individual bias or memory limitations. Future research could involve a larger and more diverse sample across multiple universities to provide broader insights. Also, it is recommended for future research to do a mixed-methods approach or include the lecturers' viewpoints to gain a better understanding of how motivational teaching strategies work in various EFL contexts.

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