
English Teachers' Strategies To Motivate Students To Learn English At Madrasah Aliyah In Blitar

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Article History:

Received: 05 Juli 2025

Revised: 04 Agustus 2025

Accepted: 16 Agustus 2025

Keywords:

Teachers' Strategies, Motivation, Madrasah Aliyah Students

Abstract: *This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the strategies employed by teachers to motivate students at madrasah aliyah in learning English, as well as how these strategies are applied in a madrasah aliyah located in Blitar. Data were collected through interviews with several English teachers and through direct classroom observations. The interview data were analyzed using a structured process involving transcription, familiarization, coding, theme identification, and reporting, as outlined by Darlington and Scott (2002). The findings revealed four key themes related to motivational strategies: creating a relaxed classroom environment, recognizing students' individual characteristics, connecting the learning process to real-life situations, and utilizing more creative teaching methods. This research offers valuable insights for both current and prospective educators in developing effective approaches to increase motivation among senior high school students in learning English.*

Introduction

Teaching is fundamentally about creating an environment that fosters and supports the teaching and learning process (Sardiman, 2012). In the educational context, a strategy can be defined as a well-structured plan comprising a series of actions aimed at achieving specific learning goals (Hartono, 2013). Since each student engages in the learning process differently to fulfill their individual objectives, it is essential for teachers to establish a classroom atmosphere that is both comfortable and conducive to active participation. Such an environment enables students to feel more involved and enjoy the learning journey. Considering the diversity in students' characteristics and their varying degrees of prior knowledge, teachers must thoughtfully select and apply strategies that effectively motivate students, helping them achieve their academic goals. With these points in mind, this research seeks to investigate the strategies employed by teachers to motivate students at MA Assalam Jambewangi a *madrasah aliyah* in Blitar and one of the oldest institutions of its kind in the region. The study aims to explore and understand how

English teachers at this school implement motivational strategies to support students in successfully learning the English language.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate the strategies used by teachers to motivate senior high school students at a *madrasah aliyah* in Blitar to learn English. This approach aligns with Creswell's (2008, p. 46) assertion that qualitative methods are appropriate when research variables are not clearly defined and require in depth exploration. As described by Fraenkel and Wallen (2009, p. 422), qualitative research aims to provide a comprehensive and detailed account of a specific activity or situation. The research was conducted at a *madrasah aliyah* in Blitar, East Java. This school was selected due to its English subject average score being below 80, suggesting a potential need for enhanced motivational strategies. The selected participants were two English teachers at the school one male and one female both of whom have relevant experience in applying strategies to increase student motivation in English learning.

Data collection involved interviews and classroom observations. The researcher prepared eleven interview questions to guide the interview sessions. After completing the interviews, classroom observations were conducted to complement the data. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained informed consent from the participants, ensuring their willingness to be involved in the study. To enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings, member checking was employed. After transcribing all collected data, the researcher verified the accuracy of the information with the participants, ensuring that their perspectives were accurately captured and represented.

Findings and Discussion

To address the research questions, the researchers designed a set of interview questions grounded in a review of relevant literature. These questions focused on several key areas: teachers' understanding of instructional strategies, the significance of motivation in English language learning, the teacher's role in fostering student motivation, challenges faced when teaching, particularly in vocational settings, and methods for motivating students as well as how those strategies are applied in practice. In order to collect data, the researchers visited the schools where Teachers A and B were teaching. During the interview process, there were occasional interruptions caused by various distractions. Despite this, the researchers were able to gather comprehensive information. The findings below present a summary of the strategies employed by Teachers A and B, as revealed through both interviews and classroom observations.

Table 1. Teachers' Strategies to Motivate the Students

Major Themes	Subthemes (Teachers' Strategies)	Teacher A	Teacher B
Creating a More Relaxed Classroom Environment	• Being more friendly to the students	✓	✓
	• Using humor		✓

Major Themes	Subthemes (Teachers' Strategies)	Teacher A	Teacher B
Understanding Students' Characteristics	Using a personal approach (one-on-one interaction)	✓	
	Being a kind teacher	✓	
	Motivating students by giving rewards	✓	
Connecting Teaching to Real Life Contexts	Explaining the usefulness of English in real life	✓	
	Giving topics related to students' daily lives	✓	✓
Being More Creative in the Teaching Process	Using various teaching media	✓	✓
	Introducing new vocabulary	✓	
	Using games in the classroom	✓	✓

The Way Teachers Apply the Strategies

A. Creating a More Relaxed Classroom Environment

- Being Friendly Toward Students**

Both Teacher A and Teacher B preferred to maintain a friendly demeanor rather than being overly strict during their teaching.

"I want my students to see me as a friend. I treat them as such both inside and outside the classroom. This allows me to support them, help with various issues, and share my knowledge of English." (Teacher A)

"Sometimes I ask them to play games or tell jokes. Teaching English shouldn't always be rigid. We need to be approachable so students feel comfortable asking questions." (Teacher B)

This indicates that being approachable and friendly was a key strategy used by both teachers, helping students feel more at ease and willing to engage in the learning process without fear of asking questions.

- Using Humor**

Humor was a specific strategy adopted by Teacher B to create a relaxed and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, as observed during classroom sessions.

B. Understanding Students' Individual Characteristics

- Applying a Personal Approach**

Teacher A emphasized using a personal, one-on-one approach when students appeared unmotivated.

"Every student is different. When a student lacks motivation, I call them individually to understand their problem and try to help solve it." (Teacher A)

- **Being a Kind Teacher**

Teacher A also applied small but thoughtful actions, such as bringing extra pens for students who forgot theirs, as a way of showing care and removing barriers to participation.

“I always bring extra pens in case students don’t have any. Sometimes students don’t write simply because they didn’t bring a pen.” (Teacher A)

- **Motivating Students by Giving Rewards**

Rewarding students who perform well was another strategy frequently used by Teacher A.

“I often give my students small rewards, such as pens, especially if they answer all questions correctly. It’s a way to appreciate those who score highly.” (Teacher A)

From these findings, it can be concluded that tangible rewards can positively impact student motivation.

C. Connecting Lessons to Real-Life Contexts

- **Explaining the Practical Usefulness of English**

Teacher A frequently reminded students about the real-world importance of learning English.

“One of my main strategies is to explain how learning English is essential, particularly for securing a job after graduation.” (Teacher A)

- **Providing Real-Life Topics Relevant to Students**

Teacher A often personalized lessons by using topics related to the students' everyday experiences.

“Sometimes I use real-life examples from the students’ lives. For instance, in Islamic schools, students often participate in projects outside the classroom like making videos. I encourage this kind of practice to help them understand the material better.” (Teacher A)

D. Enhancing Creativity in the Teaching Process

- **Using Teaching Media**

Both Teacher A and Teacher B incorporated various media to enhance the learning experience.

“If I want to assess speaking or listening skills, I play a video.” (Teacher A)

The use of media such as videos, flashcards, and images helped make learning more engaging and accessible for students.

- **Introducing New Vocabulary**

Teacher A frequently gave students new vocabulary to memorize, which he believed enhanced their motivation to learn English.

“Sometimes I ask students to memorize vocabulary and explain words with similar meanings.” (Teacher A)

This shows that vocabulary-building is a foundational and motivating part of the English learning process.

- **Incorporating Games into Lessons**

Both teachers used games as a tool to increase student engagement and reduce

stress during learning.

“I sometimes use games like vocabulary memorization, but not every day.” (Teacher A)

“We occasionally play games to help students relax and enjoy the topic.” (Teacher B)

Games, in this context, serve as both a motivational tool and a method to enhance classroom enjoyment.

Conclusions

Based on the discussion in the previous chapter, it was found that English teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Assalam Jambewangi applied ten different strategies to motivate their students to learn English. These strategies included being approachable, presenting topics relevant to students' daily lives, incorporating humor, using a personal approach, explaining the importance of learning English, utilizing various media, introducing new vocabulary, including games in the learning process, offering rewards, and demonstrating kindness in teaching. These strategies can be categorized into four broader themes: (1) creating a relaxed and supportive classroom environment, (2) understanding the individual characteristics of students, (3) connecting the learning process to real-life contexts, and (4) adopting more creative and engaging teaching methods.

Among all the strategies observed, the most commonly applied by both teachers were *being friendly toward students* and *using topics related to students' lives*. These were evident during classroom observations, indicating that both teachers relied on these approaches to engage their learners. Ultimately, the findings reveal that each teacher employed different motivational strategies based on the unique needs and characteristics of their students. This highlights the importance of adapting motivational approaches to suit the diverse backgrounds and learning styles of students.

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