



## REVEALING TEACHERS' MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGY IN INDONESIAN EFL CLASSROOMS

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### **Abstract:**

This research seeks to reveal motivational strategies generally employed by teachers in Indonesian EFL classrooms. To obtain the data needed, this study made use questionnaire designed by Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) and distributed it to 159 selected Indonesian English teachers that acted as the participants of the study. The questionnaire consists of ten motivational clusters with two until seven motivational strategies in each cluster. This study applied mean and mean difference value as the basis of data analysis process. The analysis revealed that out of ten motivational clusters, four clusters appear to be mostly employed in the classroom and another three clusters seem to be underutilized. The mostly-employed motivational clusters are posing a desirable behavioural example, appreciating students' contribution, developing students' self-reliance, and creating pertinent classroom tasks, while the underutilized clusters are raising student' awareness toward learning goal, introducing students with the target language and cultural values, and encouraging students to become an autonomous learner.

**Keywords:** motivational strategy; Indonesian EFL classrooms; motivation; English language achievement

### **1. Introduction**

The last few decades have witnessed the significant growth of the importance of English in the global arena. One of the main reasons behind this occurrence that one can think of is the undeniable function of English as "*the crucial gatekeeper to social and economic prestige*" (Pennycook, 2013, p.256). It is widely believed that by speaking the language, one can have easier access to the social prestige through better education or a higher-paid occupation. Not only does this perceived function adds the significant

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value to the language, but it also at the same time creates a phenomenon where English become the most extensively- and widely-studied language in the world. The British Council (2013) claimed in their report that more than 1.70 billion people are speaking and studying English and the number will be continually growing to 2 billion in 2020. This figure indicates the undeniable popularity of English as the language of power in the world's linguistic ecology. With most of the speakers coming from a context where English is not the language spoken in the usual occasions or in another word, they have to learn the language before they can use it, the need to find a better teaching technique become evident. A vast number of researches have been conducted in the English teaching area for the last few decades. These various studies, while placing their substantial focus on finding suitable teaching technique, also tried to find the impacting factors that contribute to the success of learning English. One of the commonly-mentioned and -researched factors, as one could notice, is motivation.

Acting as a goal-driven and behavioural guidance, motivation is generally agreed as an innate psychological drive that stimulates a person to perform specific actions (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This stimulating ability, then, leads many to believe that motivation is the key determinant responsible for the achievement of a specific goal. People who are successful in attaining their goals are often perceived to possess a high level of motivation while those failed are blamed for having less or none of it. This perception has resulted in a phenomenon where the word motivation is often used interchangeably or regularly tied with the words like persistent, determined, and diligent.

In the academic environment, the importance of learning motivation has gathered its momentum and become the centre of many scholars' attention since the past few decades. Eccles and Roeser (2011), for example, emphasize the need for school practitioners to promote motivation-raising activities in the classrooms to encourage students to engage themselves in a meaningful manner so that they can be benefited the most from what they are studying. In a similar vein, Li and Pan (2009) imply that motivation is a predictive variable that determines the level of success (or failure) of a person in a language learning process. They further add that such a phenomenon is of possibility to happen because motivation can directly influence the amount of time a person will devote in the learning process and also the learning strategy that they will use to cope with challenges they might encounter along the process.

The significances of motivation in language learning, as stated above, have some scholars like Dörnyei (2005) and Dörnyei and Hadfield (2014) to argue that motivation has become inseparable aspect of language acquisition process and, taken to its extreme, the most overused term mentioned by English teachers to describe the success or the failure of students in the classroom. Teachers might easily answer a query asking why the students did a good job in an English test by simply casting "because he is motivated to learn." While the statement sounds to be exaggerated, it shows that the notion of motivation has been of importance in English teaching practices. The centrality of this psychologically-driven factor has received empirical supports from various studies (e.g., Long, Ming, & Chen, 2013; Othman & Shuqair, 2013; Muñoz &

Ramirez, 2015) which confirmed that motivation plays a vital role in contributing to students' desirable attainments in language learning by promoting various advantageous pedagogy-related outcome like positive attitude toward English language.

Empowering students' positive attitude is crucial in learning a language. Attitude, mainly shaped by students' external factors such as teachers, peers, culture, and environments, can exert a significant influence on students' target language mastery. Brown (2000), after comprehensively studying the effect of attitude on language learning, concludes that "*positive attitudes towards the self, the native language group, and the target language group [could enhance] proficiency [of the target language]*" (181). What Brown asserts seems to be universally rationale. One can easily argue that if students do not have a positive attitude toward the target language (i.e., thinking that the language is difficult to learn, having a perception that the language is not important to their future), they will develop undesirable habits in the classrooms such as rejection to participate in the learning activities. While motivation is an internal process, it is still subject to modification. Students' attitude toward the target language can be modified by, in the first place, altering their motivation in learning the language. And as argued by Elyıldırım & Ashton (2006), students can develop a good motivation in the classroom if stimulated by effective teaching strategies. That said, teachers can pose a great impact in developing students' motivation by designing classroom activities that challenge students' determination to learn.

The role of teachers in shaping learning enthusiasm of students in the classroom has been postulated by many studies (e.g., Bieg, Backes, & Mittag, 2011; Esmaeili, Mohamadrezai, & Mohamadrezai, 2015; Hornstra, Mansfield, van der Veen, Peetsma, & Volman, 2015). As one of the main participants in EFL classroom, teachers are often regarded to hold a potential role in ensuring the quality of teaching and learning engagements. As English classrooms become one of the places where students spend most of their time learning and practicing English and the main factor that actuates students' motivation (Pintrich, Marx, & Boyle, 1993), it becomes a vital need for teachers to ensure that the activities they are doing in the classroom will not deteriorate students' enthusiasm for learning. Teachers, in this case, need to make sure that they invest motivational strategy into their teaching and lesson planning.

Motivational strategy itself refers to "*techniques that promote the individual's goal-related behaviour... that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect*" (Dörnyei, 2001). Motivational strategy comes in various pedagogical forms, from teacher behaviour to classroom assessments. Despite reaching a somewhat global consensus regarding its significance, motivational strategies can vary greatly in each educational setting. As reported by Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), some motivational strategies like encouraging student autonomy and exposing students with real target language source like native speaker can appear to be utilized in one context and underused in another. It is, as they further argue, worth to analyse the societal and cultural factors of a specific pedagogical setting to reveal the utilization tendency of specific motivational strategy. Following the idea, this study is primarily aimed to

discover the appliance frequency of each motivational strategy in Indonesian EFL classrooms settings, while at the same time also attempts to discuss the possible grounds underlying the revealed phenomenon.

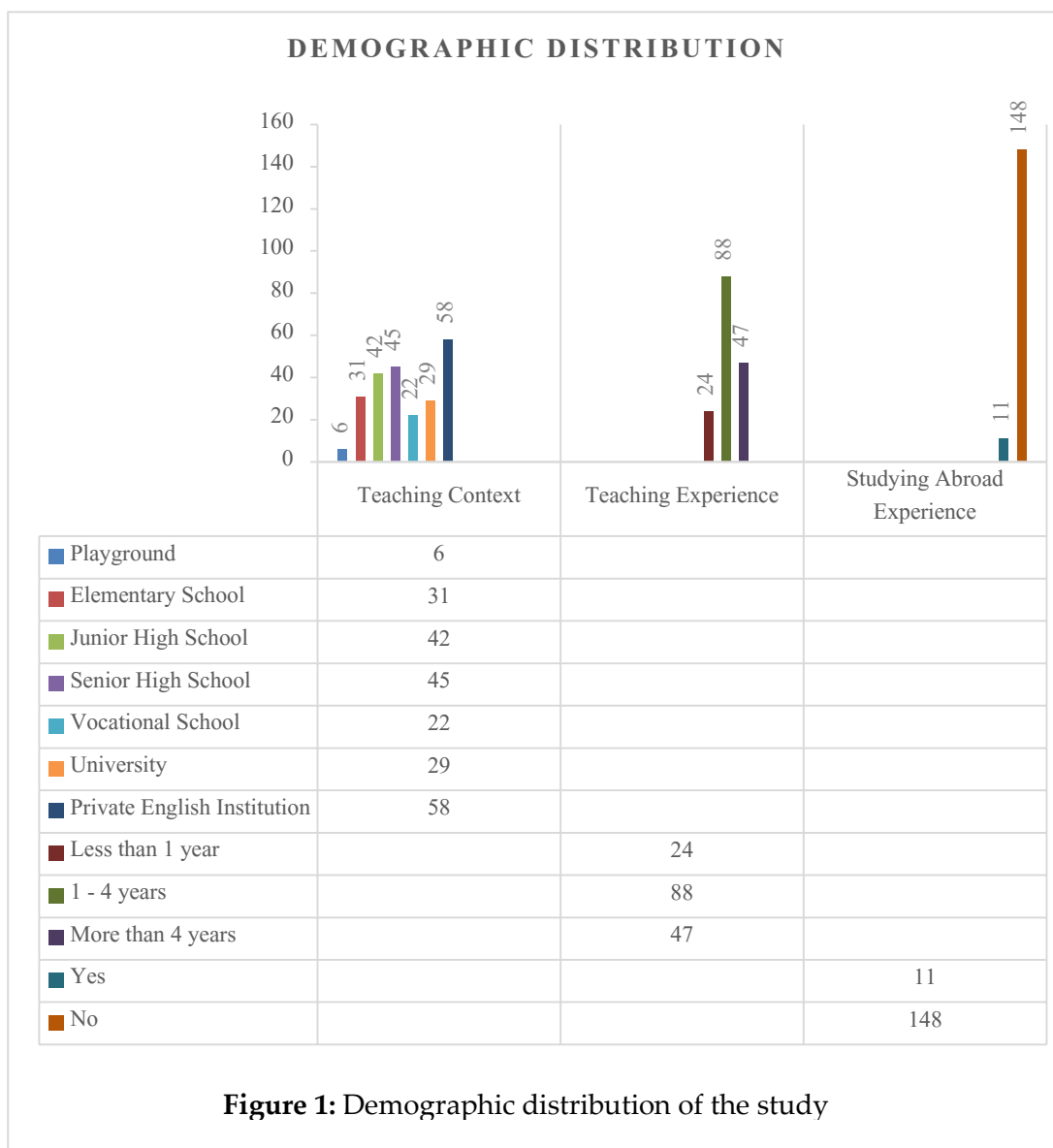
## **2. Method**

### **2.1 The Nature of the Research**

This research is primarily designed to reveal the occurrence frequency of motivational strategies employed by Indonesian English teachers in the classrooms. In so doing, this study employs descriptive quantitative as its research design. The rationale of employing this research design is because it allows the researches to describe the attribute of the participants and examine the situation based on the information collected in the observation (Williams, 2007). With questionnaire become the only data collection instrument and the aim of the study that focuses on examining motivational strategy situation, the researcher is of a belief that quantitative descriptive research fits the best with the study.

### **2.2 Context and Participants of the research**

159 Indonesian English teachers act as the participants of this study. To gather all the participants, this study employed snowballing sampling approach. Snowballing, as described by Tracy (2013) is a sample selection approach in research whose main purpose is to enlarge the study data by asking the existing participants to recommend other potential people to join the study. The rationale of using this sampling approach is due to the fact that finding and gaining approval from potential participants can, at times, turn into a time-taking process (Walford, 2001). This sampling approach facilitates the researcher to tackle such an issue by allowing the study to gather as many English teachers in Indonesia willing to participate as possible without having to ask their agreements on a personal basis directly. The collected data reflects that the participants in this study come from various educational backgrounds, teaching, and studying experience. The detailed information is displayed in the figure that follows:



**Figure 1:** Demographic distribution of the study

### 2.3 Data Collection Method

This study administered questionnaire as a data collection method. The main attraction of questionnaire that offers an efficacy in material and time allocation (Dörnyei, 2010) has benefited this study to collect a considerably large amount of data in a short period of time. The questionnaire consists of 48 close-ended questions from which information regarding teaching strategies to encourage students to learn the target language will be derived. As the entire participants speak Bahasa Indonesia as their first language, the original questions were translated into the language prior to the administration process. The researcher sees the need to regulate this action as using an understandable language becomes a salient aspect in questionnaire conduct and play a paramount part in prevailing participant to give scrupulous answers by minimizing ambiguity on sentences whose presence even at the slightest level can have a profound effect on participants' interpretations and answers (Bradburn, Sudman, & Wansink, 2004; Willis, 2004).

In revealing the selected participants' motivational strategies, a set of questionnaires designed by Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) acts as the main reference. The questionnaire will focus on finding the strategies Indonesian English teachers use in the classroom setting. Following its original structure, the questionnaire uses the Likert scale as the rating response displaying six frequency options (never-almost always) and is distributed into ten different motivational clusters based on the similarities of the strategy content. Each cluster consists of a different number of strategies range from two as the least and seven strategies as the most. The ten motivational clusters are posing a desirable behavioural example, appreciating students' contribution, developing students' self-reliance, promoting supportive climate in the classroom, creating pertinent classroom tasks, raising students' awareness toward learning goals, presenting challenging classroom activities, introducing students with target language and culture values, upholding the value of cohesiveness in the classroom, and encouraging students to become an autonomous learner.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The analysis will focus on calculating the occurrence frequency of every motivational cluster and strategy from the questionnaire data. The mean value of each strategy and motivational culture will be calculated to define the tendency of Indonesian English teachers to employ certain motivational strategies while the mean difference will be treated as the key principle to outline possible perceptions the selected participants have toward the importance of each motivational cluster; which strategies are perceived as the most important and which one is the least. Into the bargain, this study will link the statistical finding with cultural, economic, and political phenomena in Indonesia to build a more in-depth finding discussion.

### 3. Finding and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the study will carry out a statistical calculation to help explain the likelihood of motivational procedures employed by the selected participant in their professional conduct. The final calculation of the data is presented in the following table.

Motivational Clusters	Mean	Mean difference
Posing a desirable behavioural example	5.335	0.626
(23) Establish good rapport with students	5.716	1.007
(2) Show students you care about them	5.415	0.706
(47) Be yourself in front of students	5.144	0.405
(17) Show your enthusiasm for teaching	5.490	0.781
(40) Share with students that you value English as a meaningful experience	4.911	0.202
Appreciating students' contribution	5.181	0.472
(46) Recognise students' effort and achievement	5.427	0.718
(42) Promote effort attributions	4.974	0.265
(15) Make sure grades reflect students' effort and hard work	5.081	0.372
(8) Monitor students' progress and celebrate their victory	5.245	0.536

Developing students' self-reliance	5.043	0.334
(34) Provide students with positive feedback	5.415	0.706
(36) Teach students learning techniques	4.654	-0.055
(28) Encourage students to try harder	5.301	0.592
(11) Design tasks that are within students' ability	5.213	0.504
(33) Make clear to students that communicating meaning effectively is more important than being grammatically correct	4.635	-0.074
Promoting supportive climate in the classroom	4.840	0.131
(30) Create a supportive classroom climate that promotes risk-taking	5.421	0.712
(41) Avoid social comparison	5.150	0.441
(1) Bring and encourage humour	4.383	-0.326
(21) Use a short and interesting opening activity to start the class	4.408	-0.301
Creating pertinent classroom tasks	5.367	0.658
(6) Give clear instructions by modelling	5.610	0.901
(25) Give good reasons to students as to why a particular task is meaningful	5.125	0.416
Raising students' awareness toward learning goals	3.993	-0.716
(20) Help students develop realistic belief about English learning	4.138	-0.571
(10) Encourages students to set learning goals	4.232	-0.477
(26) Find out students' need and build them into curriculum	4.830	0.121
(31) Display the glass goal in a wall chart and review it regularly	2.773	-1.936
Presenting challenging classroom activities	4.556	-0.153
(18) Break the routine by varying the learning format	4.767	0.058
(45) Present various auditory and visual teaching aids	4.886	0.177
(12) Introduce various interesting topics	4.578	-0.131
(43) Make tasks attractive by including novel and fantasy element	4.905	0.196
(13) Make tasks challenging	4.301	-0.408
(27) Encourage students to create products	3.899	-0.810
Introducing students with the target language and cultural values	4.023	-0.686
(9) Remind students of the benefit of mastering English	5.150	0.441
(39) Increase the amount of English you use in the class	5.106	0.397
(4) Familiarise students with the cultural background of L2	4.433	-0.276
(32) Introducing authentic cultural materials	4.364	-0.345
(38) Encourage students to use English outside the classroom	5.006	0.297
(7) Invite senior students to share their English learning experiences	2.270	-2.439
(19) Invite English-speaking foreigners to the class	1.836	-2.873
Upholding the value of cohesiveness in the classroom	4.542	-0.167
(5) Explain the importance of the class rule	4.855	0.146
(44) Encourage students to share personal experience	4.345	-0.364
(3) Allow students to get to know each other	4.798	0.089
(35) Ask students to work toward the same goal	4.327	-0.382
(16) Let students suggest class rules	4.389	-0.320
Encouraging students to become an autonomous learner	4.217	-0.492
(37) Adopt the role of facilitator	4.943	0.234
(24) Encourage peer teaching and group presentation	4.610	-0.099
(14) Teach self-motivating strategies	4.591	-0.118
(48) Allow students to assess themselves	4.163	-0.546
(29) Give students choices in deciding how and when they will be assessed	3.672	-1.037
(22) Involving students in designing and running the English course	3.327	-1.382
Mean all strategies: 4.709		

**Figure 2:** The statistical calculation of the data finding

### 3.1 The Commonly-used Motivational Cluster

The above table shows that out of ten motivational clusters four clusters come with mean values higher than the scale of five. While the maximum of mean value that could be gained is in a scale of six, reaching five indicates that the clusters are frequently attended by the selected participants in motivating their students to learn English. These motivational clusters are posing a desirable behavioural example, appreciating students' contribution, developing students' self-reliance, and creating pertinent classroom tasks.

The questionnaire result signifies that Indonesian English teachers tend to subscribe to the idea that they must become a good example for students. One of the motivations behind this occurrence that this study could argue is the fact that the philosophical principle of Indonesian education requires students to respect and follow what their teachers say. As a noun in the English language, the word 'teacher' has an equivalent in Bahasa Indonesia as 'guru.' Although linguistically derived from Sanskrit, it is generally believed in Indonesian context that the word 'guru' is a Javanese shortened form of a phrase 'digugu lan ditiru' or (must be listened and followed) (Harrendita, 2013). This philosophical value has exerted an influence in the country's academic world that leads to a far-reaching and somewhat cemented conception where students should trust and respect their teachers because they are the most knowledgeable figure in the classroom and the teachers, at the same time, should also behave properly in front of their students. While such a belief has helped create a respectful atmosphere in the classroom, it has also brought some unintended aftermaths into the open in today's evolving education system. As reported by some scholars (e.g., Zulfikar, 2009; Chang et al., 2014; Abbott, 2017) this traditional teacher-student power relationship has shaped undesirable learning condition such as teacher-centred situations, students' passive participation, and limited spaces for students' aspiration.

The next motivational clusters that show a sign of being mostly utilized in the classroom are appreciating students' contribution, developing students' self-reliance, and creating pertinent classroom tasks. The data analysis shows that almost all motivational strategies under these three clusters reach the mean value that is higher than five. The value demonstrates that to develop students' motivation in the classrooms, the majority of the participant will give recognition to students' effort and construct language tasks that are suitable to students' ability and deliver them in a comprehensible instruction. Acknowledging students' achievement in the classroom is, indeed, critical and provides paramount pedagogical implications. As put forward by Felder and Brent (2005) and Price, Handley, Millar, and O'Donovan (2010), giving feedback can conclusively shape students' interest in classroom activities and often times also increase learning attainments. The feedback, as they further describe, should be practical and clearly articulated as delivering in a poor and ambiguous manner will only deteriorate students' motivation by putting them in a state of confusion. Students will not accurately perceive equivocal comments and cannot make the most out of them to support and enhance their achievements. It, therefore, becomes illustrative that prior to giving oral or written evaluations, teachers should familiarize themselves with



students' conditions and needs as it will help them build constructive comments that will develop students' learning enterprises.

### 3.2 The Underused Motivational Cluster

While the above section deals with the motivational clusters often used by the participants, this part is primarily dedicated to narrating the underused clusters found from the study. As the table depicts, raising student' awareness toward learning goal, introducing students with the target language and cultural values, and encouraging students' to become an autonomous learner are the three lowest clusters among all. Interesting insights toward general English learning situations can be drawn from the finding.

Communicating learning goals is as of significant as any other motivational strategies. Setting up definable and achievable learning targets not only providing clear instructions of what academic criteria classroom participants should arrive by the end of the program but also, as expressed by Jones (2005), preventing classrooms from having lessons that are build up "*without anything specific being achieved*" (p.7). However, as the end result of the calculation appraises, it seems that Indonesian teachers fail to acknowledge the academic benefit that the defining clear learning goals strategy could offer to their students. Developing and exposing students with realistic beliefs have not yet become the main priority in Indonesian English teaching academia.

What comes to the researcher's surprise is the next motivational cluster namely introducing students with the target language and cultural values. With the mean value of 4.023 and the mean difference score of -0.686, this cluster is among motivational strategies underutilized by the majority of the participants. As the inseparability of learning a target language and its culture becomes a commonly accepted pedagogical maxim (Kuo & Lai, 2006), the obtained statistical result has intrigued the researcher to find the ground behind this occurrence. After conduction a deeper analysis, this study found that out of seven motivational strategies under this cluster, five strategies achieved considerably high and average scores while last two strategies show a very low mean score; invite senior students to share their English learning experience and Invite English-speaking foreigner to the class gain 2.270 and 1.836 mean values respectively.

A conclusive statement that the study can draw from this result is while the majority of Indonesian teachers still acknowledge the need to provide students with authentic English material; they find it difficult to provide an authentic instructional English learning environment. Instructional authenticity refers to the situation where learning activities in an English as Foreign Language (EFL) classroom is turned into situations that students possible encounter when engaging in target language interactions (Ellis, 2013). Employing authentic material or hiring a native English speaker is often seen as one of the ways facilitates such a condition. While using authentic materials posits no considerable obstacles thanks to the advancement of technology, where authentic texts and videos can be retrieved in a matter of seconds, inviting or hiring a native English speaker as a teacher in the classroom still appeals a

great amount of hindrance. The fact that English is a foreign language in the country and that Indonesia, as mentioned in Azzizah's (2015) article, is still experiencing unequal distribution scheme regarding educational access and teachers' salary makes it almost impossible for every school in this archipelago nation to hire a native speaker because not only that they are not widely available but also hiring them will only broaden the existing social gap because in a real practice native teachers will earn much more money than the local counterparts.

As having been written in the earlier paragraphs, the philosophical value of education in Indonesia has resulted in a teacher-centred atmosphere in many, if not all, academic environments. This traditional educational value also appears to be the reason behind the underusing phenomenon of encouraging students to become an autonomous learner cluster. What is shown by the mean values for questions number 29 and 22 becomes an empirical proof to support the assertion. It has been widely claimed by many studies around Indonesian education (e.g.,) that teacher-centred learning style has exerted a big disparity on the teacher-student relationship in the classroom. The relationship gap has created a situation where students are limited to express their opinions toward teaching materials and classroom activities. The selected English teachers are more likely to be of the opinion that teachers hold the sole and highest authority in the class and therefore oppose the idea of giving students choices in deciding how and they will assess and involving them in designing and running the English course. This will later lead to a situation where students are highly dependent on their teachers or in another word; they are not an independent learner. A lot of studies, however, dispute this traditional pedagogical practice and claim that giving students' freedom in the classrooms can affect their achievement in many different ways. Broad (2006), in his article, concludes that learning freedom will likely provide students with a sense of responsibility with which they develop their own learning strategy and pace that help the, tackle the difficulty they face along the academic ventures. David (1991) approaches the issue in a similar way by defining that the autonomy nature in the academic conduct will benefit students with the ability to think critically and the capacity to detach from a learning dependency. Nevertheless, one should remember that being an independent or autonomous learner does not necessarily mean that students completely disengage themselves from their teachers and peers. As suggested by Trahar (2007), pedagogic practitioners should be aware of the contextual landscapes where teaching activities take place prior to the implementation of independent learnings. As for Indonesian context, the research is in the position that argues independence learning should be applied in the sense that students are given freedom in the classroom to learn by themselves or in a group without having to listen to teacher's explanation for the whole classroom's process. Besides that, students must, also, be given a portion of space to voice their thoughts over the learning material, how they will learn and be assessed.

#### 4. Reflection

The previous sections of this paper have discussed how Indonesian teacher employ their motivational strategies in the classrooms. The calculation data has helped us draw an insight that in the real practice, Indonesian English teachers are of the tendency to present themselves as a good example in the classrooms by behaving, teaching and assessing appropriately. While behaving in a proper manner should not raise the issue, the last two factors (teach and assess appropriately) has left enough spaces for an evaluation. It appears that the conception of teaching and assessing appropriately in many Indonesian academic contexts is still in the traditional scheme where teachers become the centre of knowledge and authority. This phenomenon, surprisingly, is also witnessed in the Taiwanese context, as reported by Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), where the majority of teachers chose not to give flexibility to students regarding what and how they will learn and appeared to not in align with developing students' autonomy strategy.

Besides the issue of autonomy, another interesting conclusion this study finds are that the general participants are not of aptness to invite the native speakers or inspirational figures that have been successfully learning English to motivate the students. While this study argues that availability of native speakers becomes the guilty party to blame, other contributing factors are still likely to reveal. Involving teachers' personal voices through in-depth interview might help us to examine better the problem in the future.

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