

What Drives English Achievement: The Role of Teacher-Student Interaction and Learning Motivation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship among teacher-student interaction, learning motivation, and English language achievement among fifth-grade students at SDN Cimuning 5, Bekasi. A quantitative correlational design was used, with 58 students selected from a population of 137 using the Slovin formula. Data were collected through a validated and reliable questionnaire to measure teacher-student interaction and learning motivation, while English language achievement was obtained from school records (mid-semester and end-of-semester grades). Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis revealed three main findings: (1) a significant positive correlation between teacher-student interaction and learning motivation ($r = 0.360$, $p < 0.05$); (2) a significant positive correlation between teacher-student interaction and English learning achievement ($r = 0.266$, $p < 0.05$); and (3) There is no significant correlation between learning motivation and English learning achievement ($r = 0.032$, $p > 0.05$). These results highlight the critical role of teacher-student interaction in enhancing both student motivation and academic outcomes. The absence of a direct relationship among motivation and achievement suggests that motivation alone is insufficient for academic success at this level, a finding that is mediated by factors such as the quality of interaction. This study provides an empirical contribution to the understanding of elementary-level EFL classrooms and offers practical recommendations for teachers to facilitate positive interactions to enhance both student engagement and achievement.

I. Introduction

The effectiveness of English language acquisition in elementary education is not exclusively contingent upon the curriculum or instructional resources, but is significantly influenced by the caliber of interpersonal interactions within the classroom. Interactions between teachers and students are a key part of emotional support, constructive feedback, and behavior management. In the realm of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), which necessitates active and continuous practice, the caliber of this reciprocal interaction is crucial for augmenting student motivation and fostering communicative skills [17]; [9] Students who perceive support and maintain a positive rapport with their teacher are likely to cultivate intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, which subsequently correlate positively with their academic performance [12]; [18].

Nevertheless, the actual conditions in the field frequently expose more intricate dynamics. Initial observations at SDN Cimuning 5 in Kota Bekasi revealed disparities in student motivation and engagement in English language learning. Some students seemed eager, responsive, and willing to try to speak English even though they weren't very good at it. On the other hand, some students were more passive, didn't take the lead, and just followed instructions without really getting involved. This difference was also reflected in students' academic performance, where some students obtained high scores while others still struggled with vocabulary and speaking skills. One of the things that seemed to affect these differences was how well the students interacted with the teacher. Students who felt comfortable communicating with the teacher tended to demonstrate greater engagement in classroom

activities, actively participating in discussions, volunteering answers, and showing enthusiasm during learning tasks.

This phenomenon signifies the existence of challenges within the learning process that necessitate further comprehensive investigation. Prior research has established a correlation among teacher-student interaction, learning motivation, and academic performance. Fathi et al., [5] emphasize the significance of teacher immediacy in forecasting EFL student engagement, whereas Huang [8] identified a beneficial effect of autonomy support on intrinsic motivation. Wang et al., [22] illustrate that adversarial teacher-student relationships are associated with diminished motivation. Prahmana [11] established the mediating function of motivation between the learning environment and educational outcomes in Indonesia. Nonetheless, research specifically investigating the interrelationship among these three variables within the framework of English language acquisition at the Indonesian elementary school level, especially those that take into account the dynamics of student characteristics, such as levels of classroom engagement, are still relatively scarce. It is uncommon to find empirical studies conducted in public elementary school settings. This situation reveals a research deficiency that must be rectified to facilitate a more contextual and thorough comprehension of the dynamics of English language acquisition at the elementary level.

This study seeks to empirically investigate the relationship between teacher-student interaction, learning motivation, and English learning achievement among fifth-grade students at SDN Cimuning 5 in Kota Bekasi, given the disparity between theoretical frameworks and practical outcomes. This study aims to address the following inquiries: (1) Is there a significant correlation between teacher-student interaction and student learning motivation? (2) Is there a significant correlation between teacher-student interaction and student academic performance? and (3) Is there a significant correlation between learning motivation and student academic performance? This study concentrates on fifth-grade students during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, examining the quality of teacher-student interaction, levels of learning motivation, and academic achievement as assessed by test scores, task completion, and fundamental communication skills.

This study aims to offer a theoretical contribution to the advancement of research regarding the interplay between teacher-student interaction, motivation, and academic achievement within the realm of English language learning in elementary schools. This study's findings can enhance the theoretical framework that underscores the significance of the quality of classroom interaction in influencing student motivation, which subsequently affects their academic performance. In practical terms, the results of this study can provide useful information for English teachers to change how they teach, how they talk to students, and how they manage the classroom to make it a better place for both active and passive students to learn. This study can be a reference for future researchers who want to look into similar relationships at different levels of education or use a wider range of methods. Therefore, understanding teacher-student interaction becomes a crucial starting point in explaining how these variables are interconnected.

Teacher-student interaction is a fundamental element that reflects the quality of communication and reciprocal relationships between teachers and students. Rahayu & Kala'lembang [13] explain teacher-student interaction as a continuous educational social process that shapes the learning climate. Hamre & Pianta, [6] emphasize that the quality of these interactions has universal characteristics that support learning. Sinaga [17] emphasizes that an effective interaction model can enhance participation and learning motivation. Positive interaction facilitates two-way communication where students feel safe to participate actively. According to Hamre & Pianta [6] and Pianta et al., [10], teacher-student interaction is not only a means of conveying information but also the foundation for building relationships that support learning. Sun et al., [19] show that the quality of interactions is significantly correlated with improvements in students' psychological well-being and cognitive engagement.

Structurally, teacher-student interactions are analyzed through three aspects, namely emotional support, instructional support, and classroom organization. Emotional support reflects the teacher's ability to show empathy and responsiveness to students' needs, which has proven crucial in the post-pandemic context [14]. Instructional support relates to the quality of academic guidance, clarity of material, meaningful feedback, and scaffolding strategies, including guiding students in navigating digital content [1]. Classroom organization refers to the structured management of time and student behavior, which is directly proportional to students' self-efficacy [21]. The synergy of these three

aspects does not only enhance academic performance but also the psychological well-being of students [14]. Besides interaction, another important factor that influences students' learning process is learning motivation.

Learning motivation is the driving force that determines the direction, intensity, and persistence of students' behavior. Wu [23] shows that students' motivation is influenced by their identity as global citizens (L2 Motivational Self-System). Motivation is divided into intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation arises from personal interest and intellectual satisfaction, becoming the key to sustained engagement [7]. Extrinsic motivation, such as academic pressure, serves as an initial trigger before students discover intrinsic interest [4]. The success of motivation is measured through a positive attitude, clear goal orientation, and perseverance. Dörnyei [3] states that perseverance is the most valid indicator in predicting long-term success. Motivation functions as a sustainable energy that enables students to remain persistent in facing linguistic complexities [4]. This motivation is closely related to students' learning outcomes, which are reflected in their academic achievement.

Learning achievement is a representation of the level of mastery of student competencies. Huang [8] emphasizes that English learning outcomes are more focused on communicative competence measured through actual performance. Kasatkina [16] explains that systematic assessment is essential for providing an accurate picture of literacy skills and language proficiency. In this context, systematic assessment serves as a vital tool for evaluating student progress, as it provides measurable evidence of learning outcomes. By implementing structured assessment, teachers can identify areas where students excel and where they need additional support, thereby enabling targeted learning interventions. Furthermore, assessment results provide valuable feedback that can guide both teaching practices and student learning strategies. Learning achievement is measured through three indicators; cognitive mastery reflected in test scores, the quality of English-based tasks demonstrating language application ability, and active engagement in oral communication as an indicator of skill integration [33]. Academic achievement also serves as a strategic evaluation tool for teachers and students [32]. In the context of English language learning, these outcomes are influenced by how the learning process is designed and implemented in the classroom.

English learning at the elementary school level, particularly within the context of English as a Foreign Language, necessitates a student-centered communicative approach focused on developing basic literacy skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Research by Copland & Garton, [2] indicates that the success of language teaching in early childhood significantly relies on teachers' abilities to cultivate a low-pressure learning environment rich in language input. Psychological challenges, notably "foreign language anxiety," can inhibit progress; however, Alsswey & Malak [15] argue that game-based learning and interactive methods can effectively alleviate this anxiety [2]. Further, they assert the importance of integrating visual media and technology to enhance emotional engagement, fostering a natural internalization of the language. Therefore, English instruction should prioritize not just grammatical accuracy but also a supportive and enjoyable classroom ambiance that encourages student communication. The emphasis should be on balancing language skill mastery with effective management of students' emotional barriers, thereby laying a robust foundation for communicative competence from an early age. These conditions highlight the importance of examining how teacher-student interaction and learning motivation contribute to students' English learning achievement, which becomes the main focus of this study.

II. Method

This study utilized a quantitative correlational design to investigate the relationship between teacher-student interaction, learning motivation, and students' English learning achievement. The study took place at SDN Cimuning 5 Kota Bekasi, in West Java, during the 2025/2026 school year. The group was made up of 137 fifth-grade students. The Slovin formula, with a 10% margin of error, was used to choose 58 students as the research sample.

Data were collected using questionnaires and documentation. Teacher-student interaction was measured using a 15-item questionnaire covering three indicators: Emotional Support (5 items, e.g., "My teacher listens to my feelings"), Instructional Support (5 items, e.g., "My teacher explains the lesson clearly"), and Classroom Organization (5 items, e.g., "My teacher manages the class well"). Learning motivation was measured using a 15-item questionnaire covering Intrinsic Motivation (5 items), Extrinsic Motivation (5 items), and Perseverance and Engagement (5 items). Meanwhile,

students' English learning achievement was obtained from school documentation, specifically the ASTS (Mid-Semester Assessment) and ASAS (End-Semester Assessment) scores. The average of these scores was used to represent students' learning achievement.

Since data collection was conducted using a questionnaire, it was necessary to ensure that the items used were valid. Therefore, a validity test was conducted before the questionnaire was distributed. The analysis results indicated that all 30 items were valid, with corrected item-total correlations ranging from 0.325 to 0.722, indicating that all items met the required criteria and were suitable for use in this study.

Furthermore, the reliability test showed a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.854, indicating that the instrument was reliable and appropriate for use in this study.

Table 1. Reliability Test Result

<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>N of Items</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
0.854	30	Highly Reliable

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the distribution of teacher–student interaction, learning motivation, and students' English learning achievement. Meanwhile, Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship among the research variables. Additionally, hypothesis testing was conducted using Pearson's product-moment correlation to determine whether the proposed hypotheses were accepted or rejected based on the significance level ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$). The strength and direction of these relationships were also interpreted based on the correlation coefficient values.

III. Results and Discussion

A. RESULT

1. Descriptive Statistic Analysis

This study involved 58 fifth-grade students at SDN Cimuning 5 Kota Bekasi as the research sample. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to provide an overview of the distribution of data for each variable: teacher-student interaction (X_1), learning motivation (Y_1), and English learning achievement (Y_2). The complete descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TOTAL X1	58	34	42	41,17	1,580
TOTAL Y1	58	37	48	45,38	2,441
TOTAL Y2	58	70	100	89,69	7,481
Valid N (listwise)	58				

The descriptive statistics for all variables are presented in Table 2. The teacher-student interaction variable (X_1) had a mean score of 41.17 and a standard deviation of 1.580. The lowest score given by respondents was 34, and the highest was 42. This indicates that students tend to think that the quality of their interactions with their teachers was relatively high and favorable.

The average score for the learning motivation variable (Y_1) was 45.38, with a standard deviation of 2.441. The lowest score was 37, and the highest score was 48. This distribution showed that most students were moderately to highly motivated to learn English, although there were some differences among them. The standard deviation was relatively low, indicating that the students' motivation levels were fairly similar across the sample.

The average score on the ASTS (Mid-Semester Assessment) and ASAS (End-Semester Assessment) tests was 89.69, with a standard deviation of 7.481. This was used to measure the English learning achievement variable (Y_2). The scores were between 70 and 100, which means that

most fifth-grade students at SDN Cimuning 5 did well in school. The standard deviation is larger than the other variables, which shows that there is a lot of variation in academic performance.

2. Hypothesis Testing

The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix Among Research Variables

		Correlations		
		TOTAL X1	TOTAL Y1	TOTAL Y2
TOTAL X1	Pearson Correlation	1	,360**	,266*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,005	,044
	N	58	58	58
TOTAL Y1	Pearson Correlation	,360**	1	,032
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,005		,809
	N	58	58	58
TOTAL Y2	Pearson Correlation	,266*	,032	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,044	,809	
	N	58	58	58

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Relationship Between Teacher-Student Interaction and Learning Motivation

The results showed a positive and significant correlation between teacher–student interaction (X_1) and learning motivation (Y_1) ($r = 0.360$, $p = 0.005$). This indicates a moderate relationship, suggesting that better teacher–student interaction is associated with higher learning motivation. Therefore, H_0 is rejected.

The Relationship Between Teacher-Student Interaction and English Language Achievement

The analysis revealed a positive and significant correlation between teacher–student interaction (X_1) and English language achievement (Y_2) ($r = 0.266$, $p = 0.044$), indicating a weak to moderate relationship. This suggests that better interaction is associated with higher English achievement. Therefore, H_0 is rejected.

The Relationship Between Learning Motivation and English Language Achievement

The analysis revealed no significant correlation between learning motivation (Y_1) and English language achievement (Y_2) ($r = 0.032$, $p = 0.809$), indicating a very weak relationship. This suggests that learning motivation is not significantly associated with English achievement. Therefore, H_0 is accepted.

B. DISCUSSION

The Relationship Between Teacher-Student Interaction and Learning Motivation

This research showed a strong positive correlation between teacher-student interaction and learning motivation. This result is in accordance with the results of research conducted by Satriani & Aslam [27], Nuryati, [26] and Lasut et al., [24] which also confirms that pleasant interactions between professors and students are related to the high level of student motivation and learning interest. The results confirm the opinions of Rahayu & Kala'lembang, [13] and Hamre & Pianta [6] that excellent interactions lead to a conducive learning climate and increased student involvement. There are various interconnected mechanisms that can be used to elaborate the important function of teacher-student contact in enhancing motivation. Firstly, instructors provide emotional support through empathy, careful listening, and sensitive responses to students' needs to establish a safe and loving classroom atmosphere. Such an environment makes students feel appreciated and respected, which lessens their level of anxiety and dread of making mistakes that is particularly important in EFL environments where students commonly experience foreign language anxiety [15]. This sense of emotional stability motivates students to take risks in using English and to be more actively involved in classroom conversations. Second, instructional assistance helps teachers to offer clear direction, meaningful feedback, and appropriate scaffolding tactics. Students develop a sense of competence

and self-efficacy when they get constructive comments and feel that their teacher is genuinely invested in their success. This feeling of competence drives their internal incentive to interact with the learning material, as they can see their efforts contributing to real progress. Third, successful classroom organization, where teachers deliberately manage time and student behaviour, generates a controlled and predictable learning environment. This kind of framework enables students to understand expectations and helps to eliminate uncertainty so that students may put their energy into studying and not a chaotic classroom. Thus pupils are more likely to acquire a higher internal motivation and tenacity in their English learning efforts when they encounter these three components of good connection, emotional support, instructional direction and organised framework.

The Relationship Between Teacher-Student Interaction and Learning Achievement

The study findings also showed that there was a substantial beneficial association between teacher-student contact and English learning outcomes. This result is in line with the meta-analysis by Tao & Chen [28] and experimental study by Li & Zhou [25] which show that meaningful teacher-student interactions can have a positive effect on academic achievement. Such findings are also in line with other research [12], [18] suggesting that teacher support is a factor in academic progress. The mechanisms of teacher-student interaction affecting learning achievement are complex. First, good interaction supports the clear and understandable presentation of instructional content. Two-way communication allows professors to monitor students' knowledge in real time, detect misconceptions, and adapt their explanations accordingly. This adaptive teaching ensures that students are challenged and supported at the right level and helps to prevent them from falling behind or becoming distracted. Second, meaningful feedback, a key component of instructional support, provides students with specific, actionable information about how they are doing. Instead of just getting a grade, students understand what they did well and where they need improvement. This feedback loop allows children to continuously improve their language skills, be it vocabulary, grammar or spoken communication. Thirdly, strong teacher-student interactions motivate students to actively seek aid when they face difficulties. Students who feel safe approaching their teacher are more likely to ask questions for clarification, ask for further explanation or practise speaking without fear of judgement. This active behaviour speeds up their learning process since they are given rapid direction, instead of having to fend for themselves. Finally, the planned learning experiences given by classroom organization guarantee that instructional time is utilised effectively to optimise possibilities for both solo practice and collaborative activities. Students who are engaged in well-structured learning activities are more likely to stay on track and acquire the information well. However, it is crucial to note that while interaction is an important factor in achievement, it is not the only factor. The active participation of students and their utilisation of possibilities for learning and receiving support at home are also important factors in academic success.

The Relationship Between Learning Motivation and Learning Achievement

This study did not uncover a significant association between learning motivation and academic learning outcomes, which is different from the two prior results. Likewise, Wani [30] and the study of Malang [29] indicated that motivation alone could not significantly predict academic achievement. Additionally, a longitudinal study by Zhu et al., [31] showed that managed motivation is not connected with academic achievement. The fact that the motivation and achievement have no direct relationship in elementary schools must be explained carefully. First, it is important to understand that motivation is an internal psychological state, whereas academic achievement is an external, measurable outcome that is influenced by many circumstances. At the basic stage, children are still developing self-regulatory capabilities. The student may be very intrinsically motivated to learn English, but lacks the metacognitive mechanisms (e.g., effective study habits, time management, self-monitoring) to turn motivation into concrete academic outcomes. Second, the very nature of English language learning is a complicated skill development that needs consistent practice, exposure and reinforcement. Motivation is the first step to get the ball rolling, but without the right kind of direction, frequent practice, and the right learning methodologies, motivation alone doesn't inevitably lead to mastery. Third, elementary school pupils are susceptible to outside forces which may interfere with the motivation-achievement relationship. Even when they are highly motivated, their performance may be affected by foreign language fear, social pressure and the dynamics of the classroom. In certain situations, the level of teacher-student engagement is a key mediating factor. A motivated student who does not receive enough instructional assistance or emotional reinforcement

may nonetheless be at risk of poor academic performance. On the other hand, a student with moderate motivation but good instructor support could do better with the scaffolding and feedback they receive. Thus, motivation is a crucial asset in the learning process, but it works in tandem with, not separate from, other contextual and instructional aspects. These results imply that teachers and educators should not only focus on motivation, but also provide supportive learning environments, teach students effective learning practices and address emotional barriers to optimise student accomplishment.

Overall, the study's findings support the idea that interactions between teachers and students are critical to motivating students and promoting academic success. In addition to providing a secure environment for students to express their emotions, the quality of classroom interactions also gives them the direction and criticism they require to achieve academic success. The lack of a significant relationship between learning motivation and learning outcomes suggests that academic performance, particularly in elementary education, cannot be predicted only by motivation. Put another way, a good learning process necessitates more than simply internal motivation; students' emotional states, the effectiveness of learning procedures, and the quality of interactions with teachers are all equally crucial. Initiatives to improve student learning outcomes must therefore be approached holistically by strengthening teacher-student interactions as a fundamental foundation while also fostering learning motivation, making sure that both components work in concert to support academic achievement.

IV. Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the correlation between teacher-student interaction, learning motivation, and English language proficiency among fifth-grade students at SDN Cimuning 5, Bekasi. From the analysis of the data and the discussion of the results, it is possible to reach a number of conclusions.

A strong positive link was found between teacher-student interaction and learning motivation. This means that when teachers encourage supportive and responsive interactions, students are more likely to want to learn English. In the same way, a strong positive link was found between teacher-student interaction and English language learning achievement. This means that meaningful interaction leads to better academic results, but only to a moderate degree. Nonetheless, no significant correlation was identified between learning motivation and English language achievement, indicating that motivation alone does not directly influence higher performance; other factors, including language anxiety, learning strategies, and notably the quality of teacher-student interaction, may exert a more direct impact at the elementary school level.

In conclusion, teacher-student interaction is a key factor that has a strong connection to both motivation and achievement. This shows how complicated the learning process is because there is no direct link between motivation and achievement. Merely promoting motivation is inadequate; a comprehensive strategy that emphasizes constructive teacher-student relationships is crucial.

These results suggest that teachers need to intentionally create positive interactions, since this not only boosts motivation but also helps students do well in school. Schools should, therefore, encourage professional development that focuses on skills for building relationships. This study has several limitations. First, the correlational design prohibits causal inferences. Second, the sample was limited to one elementary school, which may restrict generalizability. Third, achievement was measured only through test scores, potentially overlooking other dimensions of English proficiency. Fourth, the use of self-reported questionnaires may introduce social desirability bias. Future research should employ longitudinal or mixed-methods designs, incorporate classroom observations, and explore mediating variables such as language anxiety or learning strategies. In practice, educators are encouraged to incorporate interaction-enhancing strategies in conjunction with motivational support to promote significant learning outcomes.

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