

PEER INTERACTION IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH AMONG GEN Z UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the role of peer interaction in enhancing English learning motivation among Generation Z students at the English Language Education Program of Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Kerinci. This study employed a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews with four students selected through purposive sampling. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to explore how peer interaction influenced students' motivation in learning English. The findings showed that peer interaction strengthened both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through collaborative discussions, emotional support, academic encouragement, and positive social relationships among students. These interactions increased students' self-confidence, active participation, and enthusiasm in learning English while also creating a supportive and comfortable learning environment. The study concludes that peer interaction plays a significant role in sustaining Generation Z students' motivation to learn English in higher education contexts.

Keywords: English learning, Generation Z, Higher education, Learning motivation, Peer interaction.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation is one of the key factors influencing the success of the learning process, including in English language learning (Widagdo, 2020). Motivation can be understood as an internal drive within an individual that directs them to engage in various activities to achieve specific goals. In an educational context, motivation serves as the primary driving force that encourages students to actively learn, develop their abilities, and achieve optimal academic performance (Setiyadi et al., 2025). According to (Fajrah, 2025), motivation plays a crucial role in the learning process as it fosters curiosity, a desire to learn, and students' willingness to continue developing within an academic environment. In English language learning, students' motivation is influenced by two primary factors: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation (Dewi et al., 2024). Intrinsic

motivation originates from within the student, such as personal interest and the desire to master English, while extrinsic motivation is influenced by external factors, such as instructor support, the learning environment, family, and peers (Rismayanti et al., 2023). Furthermore, Robert Gardner explains that motivation is closely related to language learning success because learners with high motivation tend to demonstrate greater engagement and perseverance in learning (Fajrah, 2025). Therefore, students' success in learning English is not only influenced by individual factors but is also closely related to their social environment.

One social factor that has a significant influence on learning motivation is peer interaction (Dewi, 2025). Peer interaction refers to social relationships that occur among individuals of relatively similar age and status, enabling mutual influence, the sharing of experiences, and the provision of social support within the learning environment. In the context of higher education, such interactions can manifest through group discussions, academic collaboration, the sharing of learning information, and emotional support throughout the learning process. The relationship between social interaction and the learning process can be explained through the theory of social constructivism proposed by Lev Vygotsky, which emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and collaboration with others (Lestari et al., 2024). In English language learning, peer interaction allows students to exchange knowledge, build shared understanding, and improve their language skills through active communication. Therefore, social interaction is an important aspect that can enhance student engagement and enthusiasm in the English language learning process.

The relationship between peer interaction and learning motivation can also be explained through the theory of motivation proposed by Deci & Ryan (2000). They explain that intrinsic motivation arises from an individual's internal interests and enjoyment, whereas extrinsic motivation is influenced by external factors in the surrounding environment. In the learning process, peer interaction can enhance intrinsic motivation when students feel interested and actively engaged in group discussions and collaborative learning. On the other hand, such interaction can also boost extrinsic motivation through social support, recognition, healthy competition, and encouragement from the peer group (Fajrah, 2025; Purwanti et al., 2025). In addition to boosting motivation, peer interaction also helps students reduce anxiety, boost self-confidence, and create a more comfortable and conducive learning environment. Thus, positive social interaction makes a significant contribution to students' academic engagement and the development of their English language skills.

The role of peer interaction in English language learning has been extensively studied in various research studies. (Santosa, 2017) found that social and academic interactions through collaborative learning have a positive effect on the learning motivation of English education students. However, this research still focuses on the general learning context and has not specifically examined the characteristics of Generation Z students. Furthermore, Ashnishalina (2025) demonstrated that peer interaction can boost students' confidence in speaking English and reduce anxiety when communicating in class. However, this study emphasized speaking skills and did not comprehensively discuss the influence of

social interaction on learning motivation. Meanwhile, Ardiansyah (2025) explains that peer support can enhance students' active participation in collaborative English language learning. These findings indicate that social interaction plays a significant role in English language learning. However, research specifically examining the influence of peer interaction on Generation Z students' learning motivation within the context of Islamic higher education remains limited.

Studies on peer interaction and learning motivation are important because Generation Z possesses distinct social characteristics compared to previous generations. Generation Z refers to individuals born between 1997 and 2012, who grew up as digital natives in an era dominated by rapid technological advancement (Twenge, 2017). This generation is characterized by high digital literacy, constant connectivity through social media platforms, a preference for collaborative and interactive communication, and a tendency to form social relationships both in person and through digital media. Unlike previous generations, Generation Z perceives peer relationships not only through direct face-to-face interaction but also through technology-mediated communication, such as messaging applications, social media, and online discussion platforms. In the context of English language learning, these characteristics shape a unique pattern of peer interaction in which students engage with their peers both inside the classroom and through digital channels to exchange learning resources, provide emotional support, and maintain academic motivation. These conditions encourage students to interact more actively and share experiences with peers across both physical and virtual settings. On the other hand, the extensive use of technology also has the potential to reduce the quality of direct social interaction and affect student engagement in the learning process. Therefore, understanding how peer interaction—whether face-to-face or digitally mediated—contributes to English learning motivation is particularly relevant in the context of Generation Z university students.

Against this background, this study offers a contextual contribution by examining the intersection of peer interaction, English learning motivation, and the social characteristics of Generation Z within the specific context of Islamic higher education. While prior studies have explored peer interaction and motivation separately, relatively few have specifically examined how these two dimensions interact within a Generation Z framework in English language learning, particularly within Indonesian Islamic universities. Most previous studies have focused either on general learning motivation or on social interaction without paying sufficient attention to the characteristics of Generation Z students and the context of Islamic higher education. This study was conducted among students in the English Language Education Program at the State Islamic Institute of Kerinci (IAIN Kerinci), a setting that has received limited scholarly attention in relation to peer interaction and English learning motivation. By focusing on this underexplored context, this study seeks to enrich existing discussions regarding social interaction and language learning motivation among Generation Z students and to offer practical insights for instructors in designing collaborative learning environments that effectively support students' motivation. Based on this

foundation, the present study seeks to analyze how peer interaction shapes Generation Z students' motivation in learning English.

LITERATUR REVIEW

1. Peer Interaction

Peer interaction is a reciprocal relationship between two or more individuals who share a similar age range, social status, and developmental level (Azzarah, 2021). In this process, individuals influence one another, exchange experiences, and build dynamic social relationships. Revalanza et al. (2023) explain that peer social interactions play a crucial role in shaping individuals' behavior and social development in daily life. In an educational context, peer interactions can be observed through group discussions, academic collaboration, the exchange of learning information, and the provision of emotional support during learning activities (Nuraeni et al., 2025). Positive interactions not only help students improve their self-confidence and communication skills but also encourage more active engagement in the learning process.

The relationship between peer interactions and the learning process can be explained through the theory of social constructivism proposed by Lev Vygotsky. This theory emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and collaboration with others within a learning environment (Lestari et al., 2024). In English language learning, peer interaction allows students to exchange ideas, build shared understanding, and improve language skills through active communication. The quality of peer interaction is influenced by several aspects, such as age similarity, social situation, level of familiarity, group size, and students' cognitive development (Purwanti et al., 2025). These aspects can influence students' comfort, openness, and effectiveness in participating during the learning process. Therefore, peer interaction is one of the social factors that contribute to students' academic development.

2. Learning Motivation

Learning motivation is an internal or external drive that prompts individuals to engage in learning activities to achieve specific goals. According to Makhmuri & Andini (2020), motivation is defined as the inner drive within a person to act and achieve desired goals. In an educational context, motivation plays a crucial role in enhancing students' engagement, enthusiasm, and perseverance throughout the learning process. Robert Gardner explains that motivation is closely linked to language learning success because learners with high motivation tend to be more active and consistent in their studies (Kholid, 2017). Thus, motivation is one of the primary factors influencing students' success in learning English.

Generally, learning motivation is categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation originates from within the individual, such as interest, curiosity, and the desire to succeed, while extrinsic motivation is influenced by external factors, such as rewards, the learning environment, and social support. According to Deci & Ryan (2000), these two types of motivation are interrelated in influencing an individual's engagement in the learning process. Kaltsum (2021) explains that intrinsic motivation is reflected in the desire to

succeed, the drive to learn, and one's hopes and aspirations, whereas extrinsic motivation is influenced by rewards in learning, engaging learning activities, a supportive learning environment, and positive social relationships. Thus, learning motivation is influenced not only by internal individual factors but also by social conditions and the surrounding learning environment.

3. The Relationship Between Peer Interaction and Learning Motivation

Peer interaction has a close relationship with students' learning motivation, particularly in English language learning. Through positive social interaction, students can gain emotional support, exchange knowledge, and build self-confidence during the learning process (Aqilah et al., 2024). Group discussions, academic collaboration, and active communication with peers can enhance student engagement while creating a more comfortable and collaborative learning environment. These findings align with the research by Nuraeni et al. (2025), which indicates that social interaction in collaborative learning contributes to increased learning motivation among English language students. Research (Afriadi, 2024) also explains that peer support can enhance students' active participation in collaborative English language learning. Furthermore, peer interaction can strengthen intrinsic motivation by fostering a sense of joy and interest in learning, as well as enhance extrinsic motivation through social support, recognition, and healthy competition among students. Thus, peer interaction can be understood as a key social factor contributing significantly to enhancing students' motivation in English language learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach to understand the role of peer interaction in enhancing English language learning motivation among Generation Z students. This approach focuses on exploring the experiences and meanings constructed by participants within the natural context of learning without manipulating variables. Creswell (2009) explains that qualitative research aims to deeply understand social phenomena through the collection and interpretation of data in natural settings. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to capture the dynamics of social interaction and learning motivation contextually within an academic environment. Thus, this design is relevant for exploring the role of peer interaction in English learning motivation among Generation Z students at an Islamic university.

The research participants consisted of four Generation Z students from the English Language Education Program at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Kerinci during the 2025/2026 academic year. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that selects individuals based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Rasyid, 2022). The selection criteria were as follows: (1) students born between 1997 and 2012, thereby falling within the Generation Z cohort; (2) active students currently enrolled in the English Language Education Program; (3) students who consistently and actively engaged in peer interactions during the learning process, including group discussions, collaborative assignments, and English-speaking activities; and (4) students who had experienced both face-to-face and digitally mediated peer interaction in their

academic context. The selection process was conducted through initial observation and consultation with the course lecturer to identify students who best met these criteria. The four participants were selected to represent diversity in terms of academic engagement level and peer interaction patterns, thereby ensuring that the data obtained were rich, varied, and contextually meaningful. Although the number of participants is limited, qualitative research prioritizes depth of information over breadth, and the selection of four participants was grounded in the principle of information richness, a fundamental tenet of qualitative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, data collection was stopped after thematic saturation was achieved, as no substantially new themes or perspectives emerged from subsequent interviews. To uphold research ethics and protect participant anonymity, all participants were pseudonymized using the initials TAP, RA, AT, and ZP.

Each participant brought rich and directly relevant experiences related to peer interaction in English language learning. TAP demonstrated a strong pattern of collaborative engagement, consistently completing tasks on time through peer discussions and drawing motivation from classmates' enthusiasm and mutual encouragement during the learning process. RA exhibited purposeful and goal-oriented peer interaction driven by her aspiration to become an English teacher, actively sharing learning strategies, participating in discussions, and practicing speaking English with peers to develop her professional competence. AT showed a particularly strong role of peer modeling, as observing classmates who had progressed from struggling to becoming fluent significantly boosted her self-confidence and commitment to mastering English for future professional use, including aspirations for international internships and further study abroad. ZP demonstrated consistent engagement in peer-supported learning.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for flexible yet focused exploration of the participants' experiences. The interviews were conducted individually for 30-40 minutes and recorded with the participants' consent. This technique enabled in-depth information gathering based on the participants' responses, resulting in rich and contextual data. All interviews were conducted in Indonesian to ensure clear communication and avoid language barriers. The interview instrument was developed based on the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in language learning, drawing on the language learning motivation theory proposed by Gardner (2010). The interview guidelines were adapted from learning motivation indicators proposed by Uno (2016), including desire and willingness to succeed, drive and need in learning, hope and aspirations, rewards in learning, engaging learning activities, and a supportive learning environment. In addition, the indicators of teacher–student relationships and student–student relationships were developed based on the social interaction theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978) and supported by previous studies on peer interaction and English learning motivation, such as studies conducted by Amiruddin et al. (2024) and Fitriyah and Indawati (2024). Furthermore, the instrument was developed by the researcher to suit the context of peer interaction among Generation Z university students. Overall, the interview guidelines covered eight indicators, namely desire and willingness, drive and need in learning, hope

and aspirations, rewards in learning, engaging learning activities, supportive learning environment, teacher–student relationships, and student–student relationships. The indicators and sample interview questions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview Guidelines

Indicators	Question
Motivasi Intrinsik	
Desire and willingness	How does peer interaction affect students' desire and willingness to succeed in learning English?
Drive and need in learning	How far does peer interaction impact students' drive and need in learning English?
Hope and aspiration	What is the role of peer interaction in shaping students' hope and aspiration in learning English?
Motivasi Ekstrinsik	
Reward in learning	How important is peer interaction in motivating students through rewards or recognition in the learning process?
Engaging learning activities	How does peer interaction affect students' interest in engaging learning activities in English classes?
Supportive learning environment	How far does peer interaction impact the creation of a supportive learning environment?
Teacher student relationships	What is the role of peer interaction in building teacher–student relationships?
Student student relationships	How important is peer interaction for fostering relationships among students in learning English?

Data analysis employed the thematic analysis approach outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006), which comprises six stages: data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and reporting of results. Interview transcripts were read repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding before the systematic coding process began. The codes that emerged were then grouped into themes relevant to the research focus and reviewed to ensure their alignment with the research objectives. To enhance data credibility, this study employed a member checking technique by asking participants to verify the interview transcript results. This step was taken to ensure consistency between the analyzed data and the experiences reported by participants, thereby ensuring the academic validity of the findings.

FINDING

The findings indicate that peer interaction plays a central role in shaping and reinforcing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among Generation Z

university students learning English. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation emerged not as separate and independent constructs, but as interconnected dimensions reinforced through interpersonal relationships within the academic environment.

Regarding intrinsic motivation, all four participants reported that peer interaction significantly strengthened their desire and willingness to succeed, their drive and need to learn English, as well as their academic and professional aspirations. TAP explained that completing tasks seriously was motivated not only by personal goals but also by encouragement from peers who continuously supported one another during the learning process. As TAP stated:

“My motivation to learn comes not only from my own desire to succeed but also from the encouragement and support of peers who motivate each other. I feel happy when I can complete tasks with maximum results, and when my friends also succeed, it pushes all of us to study English more diligently.”

This finding demonstrates that peer relationships not only strengthen individual motivation but also create collective encouragement among students in learning English. Similarly, RA emphasized that observing classmates’ active participation and academic progress strengthened her motivation to study consistently and pursue her aspiration of becoming an English teacher. RA stated:

“When I see my friends actively participating in discussions and making progress, I feel a strong urge to do the same. I need to be able to communicate in English well, especially since my goal is to become an English teacher.”

This response indicates that social interaction contributes to students’ professional aspirations and strengthens their internal motivation to improve their English competence. Furthermore, AT described how peer modeling became a powerful source of self-confidence and academic motivation. She explained:

“When I see a friend who also struggled at first but eventually became fluent, I start to believe that I can achieve the same thing. The interaction and mutual support among peers make me more confident that I am also capable of succeeding.”

This finding highlights that observing peers’ progress can strengthen students’ self-belief and encourage greater persistence in the language learning process. Likewise, ZP emphasized that interaction with highly motivated classmates encouraged greater discipline and learning consistency. ZP stated:

“When I see a friend studying diligently and getting good results, I feel embarrassed if I do not make the same effort. There is a sense of not wanting to be left behind that keeps pushing me to keep improving.”

This result demonstrates that peer interaction can create positive academic pressure that motivates students to participate more actively and consistently in learning English.

Regarding extrinsic motivation, peer interaction shaped students’ motivation through social recognition, engaging collaborative activities, and a conducive learning environment. TAP stated that appreciation from peers, such as

verbal praise after presentations, felt more sincere and motivating than formal grades. As TAP explained:

“When my peers say something like ‘great presentation’ or give a thumbs up when I speak English in front of the class, it makes me more confident. Small recognition like that from fellow students sometimes feels more meaningful than a grade from the lecturer, because it feels more genuine and motivates me to keep working harder.”

This finding indicates that social appreciation from peers plays an important role in strengthening students’ confidence and learning enthusiasm. RA also emphasized that encouragement from classmates after discussions or presentations reinforced her effort and commitment in learning English. RA stated:

“When classmates say my answer was good during a discussion or encourage me after a presentation, I feel like my efforts are valued. That kind of recognition from fellow students pushes me to keep striving to perform better.”

This response suggests that recognition from peers contributes positively to students’ persistence and engagement in academic activities. In addition, AT highlighted that collaborative activities such as debates, group discussions, and paired conversation practices created a more active and enjoyable learning atmosphere. AT explained:

“When studying alone I get bored quickly, but when there are friends to discuss with, I actually become more focused and enthusiastic. The positive energy from active friends is contagious and makes the class feel more alive.”

This finding demonstrates that collaborative interaction increases students’ participation and motivation in English learning activities. Similarly, ZP noted that interactive classroom activities supported by peers reduced anxiety and increased confidence in speaking English. ZP stated:

“When friends are involved in those activities, I feel braver to try and less afraid of making mistakes. The support and laughter from friends during small errors actually make the learning atmosphere more relaxed and enjoyable.”

This response indicates that supportive peer interaction helps students feel emotionally comfortable and more willing to participate actively in English communication practices.

Beyond the individual dimensions of motivation, the data also revealed that peer interaction strengthened both student–student and teacher–student relationships within the classroom. TAP described her classmates as a “second family” who created a deep sense of belonging and comfort in learning. TAP stated:

“My classmates feel like a second family to me. This close relationship makes it comfortable to study together, correct each other’s pronunciation, or ask for help understanding material.”

This finding suggests that close peer relationships contribute to a supportive learning environment that sustains students’ motivation in learning

English. RA, AT, and ZP collectively emphasized that a lively classroom atmosphere generated by peer interaction also made lecturers more approachable, responsive, and engaged with students' learning needs. RA explained:

“When class discussions are lively because students are willing to express their opinions, the lecturer also becomes more responsive and open.”

Similarly, AT stated:

“When students actively ask questions and discuss in class, the lecturer finds it easier to understand each student and adjust their teaching approach.”

In line with this, ZP explained:

“When the class is active and full of discussion, the lecturer becomes easier to interact with and appears closer to the students.”

These findings indicate that positive peer interaction not only strengthens relationships among students but also contributes to more constructive teacher–student interaction within the learning environment.

The findings support previous studies highlighting the importance of social interaction in foreign language learning. Mayendi (2025) revealed that classroom social interaction significantly contributes to students' motivation and engagement in language learning. In addition, the framework of Self-Determination Theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000) emphasizes that the need for relatedness is an essential factor in supporting learning motivation. Most previous studies have focused more on individual aspects of motivation rather than its social dimensions. In contrast, the present study highlights peer relationships as active social factors shaping Generation Z students' motivation to learn English. In this context, the social environment becomes an inseparable part of the process of developing learning motivation. Thus, English language learning occurs not only through cognitive processes but also through interpersonal relationships among students.

Furthermore, the findings contribute to existing discussions within the framework of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) by emphasizing the importance of relatedness in shaping Generation Z students' motivation to learn English. Peer interaction not only fulfills students' social needs but also becomes an important pathway in the internalization of learning motivation. This process demonstrates that motivation develops through dynamic interactions between individuals and their social environments. A supportive social environment helps students become more confident, actively engaged, and consistent in learning English. Therefore, the social environment plays a strategic role in shaping the quality of students' academic motivation. Consequently, learning motivation should be understood as both a social and psychological process.

Moreover, the findings strengthen the view that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are not dichotomous concepts but rather exist along a continuum that interacts with one another. Peer interaction serves as an important link integrating these two forms of motivation in English language learning. The findings indicate

that emotional support, social appreciation, and collaborative activities work together in sustaining students' motivation. Therefore, Generation Z students' learning motivation should be understood more holistically within the social ecosystem of modern education. Hence, social interaction becomes one of the primary aspects that should be considered in English language learning in higher education.

DISCUSSION

1. Peer Interaction as a Catalyst for Intrinsic Motivation

The analysis shows that Generation Z students' intrinsic motivation is not entirely formed individually, but is also influenced by the social environment within the learning process. This motivation is reflected in students' desire to succeed, their need to learn, and their academic and professional aspirations in learning English. Collaborative social relationships provide emotional support, models of academic behavior, and a sense of belonging within study groups. These conditions contribute to increasing students' sense of competence and self-confidence during the English learning process. In addition, students become more active and confident in using English during discussions and classroom activities. Therefore, intrinsic motivation can be understood as the result of interactions between internal factors and the surrounding social environment.

The interview data revealed that peer support significantly influenced students' enthusiasm in achieving their academic goals. TAP explained that support from peers motivated the participant to complete assignments seriously and avoid falling behind academically. Similarly, ZP stated that seeing classmates study diligently encouraged greater discipline and consistency in learning English. In addition, RA associated social relationships with the aspiration to become an English teacher in the future. Meanwhile, AT emphasized that interaction with ambitious peers encouraged stronger commitment to mastering English for professional purposes. These findings indicate that the social environment strengthens students' future orientation, persistence, and commitment in learning English.

Peer relationships also increased students' self-confidence in using English during the learning process. AT and ZP explained that supportive classmates made them unafraid of making mistakes during speaking practices and classroom discussions. AT stated that observing peers who had successfully improved their English abilities strengthened personal confidence and belief in achieving similar success. Such conditions helped students feel more comfortable expressing their ideas in English. RA also emphasized that practicing speaking with peers strengthened self-confidence and encouraged more active participation in classroom activities. This suggests that emotional support and a sense of belonging formed through social interaction create a more positive learning environment. Therefore, peer relationships not only improve academic abilities but also strengthen students' psychological readiness in learning English.

These findings are consistent with Deci and Ryan (2000) and Utomo (2026), who argued that intrinsic motivation develops when basic psychological needs such as competence and relatedness are fulfilled. Furthermore, studies by Khoirunnisa (2025) and Aqillah (2024) indicate that peer relationships significantly contribute to increasing intrinsic motivation and engagement in English language learning. Some previous studies viewed intrinsic motivation as a relatively stable individual construct. However, the findings of this study demonstrate that intrinsic motivation is dynamic and socially influenced within the learning context. A supportive learning environment encourages students to grow and develop together with their peers. Therefore, intrinsic motivation can be understood as the result of reciprocal relationships between internal factors and the surrounding social environment.

2. Peer Interaction as a Driver of Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation among Generation Z students emerges through academic recognition, engaging learning activities, and a conducive learning environment. Appreciation from lecturers and peers serves as a stimulus that encourages students' active participation in English language learning. In addition, collaborative activities such as discussions and role-plays strengthen students' engagement during the learning process. Social support within this context also functions as reinforcement for sustained learning consistency. The presence of a positive social environment motivates students to participate actively in various English learning activities. Therefore, extrinsic motivation functions not only as an external factor but also as a mechanism that strengthens students' academic engagement.

The findings revealed that recognition from peers had an important psychological impact on students' learning enthusiasm. TAP explained that praise and positive feedback from classmates after presentations or speaking practices increased confidence and motivated continuous improvement in learning English. Interestingly, peer recognition was perceived as more meaningful than formal grades because it felt more sincere and emotionally supportive. Similarly, RA and AT emphasized that positive comments and encouragement from classmates strengthened classroom participation and speaking confidence. These findings indicate that social appreciation plays an important role in sustaining students' motivation and emotional engagement in learning activities. Therefore, interpersonal support among students becomes one of the important factors in English language learning.

In addition to social appreciation, collaborative learning activities also increased students' enthusiasm for learning English. RA explained that interactive activities such as role-plays, quizzes, and conversation simulations made learning more enjoyable and meaningful. Likewise, AT and ZP emphasized that group discussions and collaborative speaking activities reduced boredom and created a more active classroom atmosphere. AT noted that learning with peers made classroom activities feel more engaging compared to individual learning

situations. Social interaction during these activities encouraged students to use English more confidently without fear of making mistakes. This indicates that collaborative learning helps students maintain emotional engagement throughout the learning process. Therefore, learning activities involving social interaction can increase students' participation and motivation in a more sustainable manner.

These findings align with the study conducted by Hairunnisa'Annuri et al. (2024), which showed that extrinsic motivation significantly influences engagement in English language learning. Moreover, according to Deci and Ryan (2000), extrinsic motivation can gradually be internalized when supported by a positive social environment. However, several previous studies still viewed extrinsic motivation as temporary and less sustainable. The findings of this study demonstrate that, within the context of peer relationships, extrinsic motivation can develop into deeper and more meaningful learning engagement. Social support and collaborative activities help students maintain learning consistency over time. Therefore, extrinsic motivation should be understood as an important component of the social learning process among Generation Z students.

3. Peer Interaction as a Construct of Collective Motivation

The findings reveal that peer interaction functions as a social construct that integrates intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in English language learning. Such interaction creates a collaborative learning space that encourages knowledge exchange, social validation, and the strengthening of students' academic identities. Within this environment, the learning process occurs not only individually but also through mutually reinforcing collective experiences. These conditions contribute to more sustainable learning engagement among students. Furthermore, students become more motivated because they feel supported by a positive social environment. Therefore, social interaction can be viewed as an important foundation in the dynamics of students' learning motivation.

Several participants emphasized that social relationships among students create togetherness and emotional closeness in learning English. TAP described classmates as a "second family" who continuously support one another during learning activities. Meanwhile, RA explained that close peer relationships created a comfortable learning atmosphere in which students were not afraid of making mistakes. AT and ZP also emphasized that harmonious friendships increased self-confidence, active participation, and consistency in learning English. Positive social relationships made students feel safer, more confident, and emotionally comfortable during the learning process. Therefore, peer interaction becomes an important factor in building students' collective motivation.

The data analysis also revealed that social relationships among students strengthened not only peer relationships but also relationships between students and lecturers. TAP, RA, and AT explained that active classroom interaction encouraged lecturers to become more responsive, approachable, and supportive toward students. Group discussions and collaborative activities created a more lively and communicative classroom atmosphere. These conditions increased

students' confidence in communicating with lecturers regarding their learning difficulties. In addition, positive relationships with lecturers made students feel more comfortable during the learning process. Therefore, classroom social interaction has a broader impact on the quality of students' academic relationships.

In the context of Generation Z, which is characterized by digital and collaborative traits, peer interaction becomes an important factor in sustaining learning motivation. Studies by Affandi (2025) and Fitriyah and Khotimal (2023) showed that peer interaction positively affects engagement and self-efficacy in active learning. However, these studies did not specifically emphasize the integration of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation within a single social framework. This study contributes to existing discussions by demonstrating that these two types of motivation are interconnected through social interaction in the learning environment. Generation Z students' preference for collaboration makes social relationships an essential part of their learning process. Therefore, English language learning should be designed by considering the importance of interaction among students.

4. Theoretical Implications

The findings contribute to existing discussions within the framework of Self-Determination Theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), particularly regarding the importance of relatedness in shaping students' learning motivation. The study demonstrates that peer interaction not only fulfills students' social needs but also supports the internalization of motivation in English language learning. Motivation develops through dynamic interactions between individuals and their social environment, especially within collaborative learning contexts. In this study, emotional support, social appreciation, and positive peer relationships became important factors that strengthened students' confidence, engagement, and consistency in learning English.

Furthermore, the findings strengthen the view that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are interconnected dimensions rather than completely separate constructs. Peer interaction functions as an important social mechanism linking these two forms of motivation within the learning process. Social appreciation from peers encourages external motivation, while emotional support and collaborative experiences strengthen students' internal desire to learn English. This finding implies that learning motivation should not only be understood as an individual psychological process but also as a socially constructed experience shaped through interpersonal interaction within the academic environment. Therefore, collaborative social interaction becomes an essential aspect that should be considered in English language learning among Generation Z students in higher education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that peer interaction plays a crucial role in enhancing Generation Z students' motivation to learn English in Islamic higher education settings. Such interaction not only functions as social support but also serves as an important mechanism in fostering and reinforcing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation simultaneously. Intrinsic motivation develops through increased self-confidence, social connectedness, and competence gained through collaborative interaction among students. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation is strengthened through academic recognition, emotional support, and a conducive and interactive learning environment. These two forms of motivation interact and reinforce one another within the dynamics of English language learning. Therefore, peer interaction can be understood as an important social factor that sustainably shapes Generation Z students' motivation to learn English.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the characteristics of Generation Z students, who are closely connected to digital technology and collaborative communication, influence patterns of social interaction in English language learning, both through face-to-face interaction and technology-mediated communication. This finding highlights the importance of creating collaborative, participatory, and supportive learning environments that encourage openness and active engagement among students. The findings also contribute to existing discussions regarding the importance of relatedness in shaping learning motivation. Practically, this study demonstrates that success in English language learning is influenced not only by individual factors but also by the quality of social relationships within the academic environment. Therefore, fostering positive peer relationships can become an important strategy for enhancing students' motivation, confidence, and engagement in English language learning in a sustainable manner.

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