



# Interest and Enthusiasm in Learning English as Foreign Language in Senior High School and How Both Relate to English Achievement

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## Abstract

Interest and enthusiasm are internal factors known to an extent to have an influence toward learning in general. This study aims at checking these three variables relationship: interest, enthusiasm, and English achievement. It was conducted in Sungai Liat Regency, Bangka Belitung Islands, Indonesia, in a state senior high school which provided 70 students to be the sample of this study from the population of 183 students in the school. The instruments used were: Interest and Enthusiasm Questionnaire and Students' English score documentation. The data collected using the questionnaire were divided into two parts: interest and enthusiasm. Both data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to see the association of interest toward enthusiasm. Furthermore, data from each one of the two variables and combined data from both variables were also analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to find out how both variables as relate toward English achievement. The results show that interest in learning English had a strong significant association toward enthusiasm ( $r(70)=.77, p=0.00$ ). Furthermore, both interest and enthusiasm had a significant association toward English achievement (respectively:  $r(70)=.40, p=0.001$ ;  $r(70)=.24, p=0.046$ ). Moreover, the combination of both interest and enthusiasm also showed a strong association toward English achievement ( $r(70)=.343, p=0.004$ ). This study also provided some implications and recommendations for further research.

**Keywords:** achievement, enthusiasm, interest

## **Introduction**

Interest is the internal factor that heighten curiosity and desire to learn a new thing. It can push students to be involved in the course they are learning in general. Language learning is no exception to this. Interest, as Krapp (2007) explains, reflects how students enjoy their participation in a course activities (affective) and its importance (value). On the other hand, enthusiasm, which is also an internal factor, is the attitude toward anything in the form of positive repeated and affective related expression either verbal or non-verbal. As related to learning, it is the positive affective traits such as happiness and indulgence expressed in process of learning (Kunter et al., 2011). Learning is inseparable from this trait and it entails an enormous energy that the higher it gets the better the outcomes in the process of learning (Patrick et al., 2010).

In Indonesian context, especially in non-urban area context, many students find that learning English as a foreign language as burdensome and technically hard ((Panggabean, 2015); (Gunantar, 2016)). This is in line with what Laufer and Eliasson (1993) explain that foreign language learners are heavily influenced by their first languages that it is very hard for them to learn the language. This is not contradictory with what was observed in the senior high school in which the study took place. From a preliminary observation, it was reported that students' English achievement were not impressively satisfying and they were not eager to use English in their English class. From the interview with the English teachers, it was concluded that most of the students did not display positive attitude toward English class and did not show high internal motivation to engage in the class.

As discussed in the previous paragraph, and also as stated by Dimiyati & Mudjiono (2002), internal factors such as internal motivation, interest, enthusiasm, self-efficacy can contribute to learning both in positive and negative directions. Additionally, external factors, such as external motivation and environmental elements (Family, friends, etc.) also contribute in the process but not as much (Sullo, 2007). It has long been stated by Gardner (1985) in support of the strength of internal factors that one with positive attitude has the tendency to achieve success in learning, as compared to the one with negative attitude who tend to fail in learning. These statements that internal factors support successful learning, including language learning, were backed up by findings in some studies ((Kpolovie et al., 2014), (Maryati, 2014), (Cockburn, 2009)).

In a correlation study conducted by Mulyani et al. (2017) investigating the association between students' interest and their English achievement in a senior high school in Indonesia, its results showed that both variables showed a significant association. Hafsa (2016) in her study tried to seek whether or not interest and internal motivation had effects toward English achievement. She chose 84 students

from three vocational schools in Jakarta, Indonesia as the study sample. The results of this study indicated that both variables contributed significantly to English achievement. In relation to enthusiasm and learning achievement, Maryati, (2014) investigated the correlation among the student's learning enthusiasm and the utilization of learning media and sociology learning achievement in a vocation senior high school in Boyolali, Indonesia. The samples of the study were 40 students of year 11. One of the results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between student's enthusiasm and their sociology learning achievement.

In higher education setting, Kurniawan et al. (2020) in his experiment investigated the effect of cloud collaboration toward writing achievement and its relationship toward students attitude to learning in general. The study was conducted in an English Education Department in South Sumatra, Indonesia with 48 students as samples. The results of this study indicated that there was an increase in writing achievement before and after the treatment. The results also demonstrated that students with higher writing achievement have more positive attitude toward learning, including interest. Fitriani (2020) in a similar study investigating the relationship between internal factors, i.e. attitude and motivation; and English achievement in 53 pre-service teachers in a university in South Sumatra, found out that the internal factors showed no significant relationship with English achievement. Jaya, (2016) analyzed the relationship between internal factors, such as religiosity and motivation, and English competence. The study was also conducted in an English Education Department in South Sumatra, Indonesia. The data were taken from 221 students of the department. The results, similar to the previous study, showed that there was no significant correlation between the internal factors and English competence.

This study is quite similar to other related previous studies. However, it tried to fill some gaps not explored yet. Most studies investigated internal factors, such as interest, enthusiasm, motivation, religiosity, etc. and tried to see their relationship with students learning achievement in school or university courses, including English course. This study attempted to provide more complex relationships between the internal factors and the learning achievement which the other studies did not provide. This more complex relationship can add more insights into how learning can be more successful. Aside from the relationship point, the study was conducted in a Madrasah Aliyah which is the equivalent of Senior high school but with more courses on Islam religious curriculum content, such Arabic Language, Fiqh, History of Islam, and Quran & Hadits. Compared to senior high school, this more religious education setting might give some contribution to a more positive internal factors of students, although this study did not examine this assumption.

This present study, thus, aimed at revealing the relationships among the internal factors, i.e. interest and enthusiasm, and English achievement. These aims

are formulated in the research questions: (1) to what extents were the students interest and enthusiasm in learning English; and to what extents were students English academic achievement? (2) what is the relationship between interest and enthusiasm in learning English, between interest and enthusiasm (both as individual variable and combined variable as internal factors) and English achievement?

## Method

This research is of correlational nature in which 3 variables, students' interest and enthusiasm; and their English achievement, are measured for their correlational relationships as described in figure 1. In this study, the correlational analyses among variables were done with the following order: between (1) interest and enthusiasm; (2) interest and English achievement; (3) enthusiasm and English achievement; and the combination of interest and enthusiasm and English achievement.

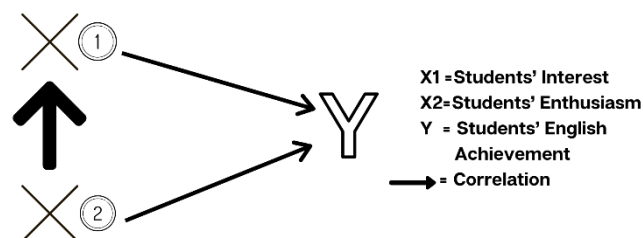


Figure 1. Design of Study

This study was conducted in a senior high school in Sungai Liat of Bangka Belitung province Indonesia. The students in the school, which were divided into three levels: ten, eleven and twelve, participated as subjects of the study.

As mentioned earlier, there were three variables in this study, students' interest and enthusiasm; and their English achievement. Interest in this study is defined as this willingness comes from students themselves without compulsion from the environment. It is related to students' engagement or involvement in learning English. When students are getting curious about what they learn, they start to find, study, and merely follow what in English lesson they have yet to study. It was measured by using interest questionnaire. Furthermore, enthusiasm refer to the students' attitude toward learning which can be in the forms of students' facial expressions, excitement, and happiness while learning and it is generally defined as their positive attitude toward learning English. the enthusiasm in this study was measured by using enthusiasm questionnaire. The English achievement the students' scores from their mid semester test administered by the English teachers of MAN

Sungailiat of Bangka Belitung Province.

The population of the study was 183 twelfth grade students of the school. There were 6 classes, two from natural sciences and four from social sciences majors. The population determination was set by the school that the study could not involved students from both tenth and eleventh grade. Seventy students from two different classes were selected purposively as samples with the following considerations: (1) taught by the same teachers, (2) had better English score than other classes, and (3) had the most experience in learning English in the school as they are in grade twelve after which they will graduate from senior high school and can continue to university. The population and sample distribution are described in table 1.

*Table 1 Distribution of Population and Sample*

<b>Class</b>	<b>Dept.</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Population</b>				
XII.1	Natural Science	21	14	35
XII.2	Natural Science	18	17	35
XII.1	Social Science	18	11	29
XII.2	Social Science	18	10	28
XII.3	Social Science	14	14	28
XII.4	Social Science	13	15	28
<b>Total Number</b>				<b>183</b>
<b>Sample</b>				
XII.1	Natural Science	21	14	35
XII.2	Natural Science	18	17	35
<b>Total Number</b>				<b>70</b>

There were three sets of data in this study. The first two, interest and enthusiasm of students which were measured by two different sets of questionnaires and the other one is documentation of students' English mid-semester test.

For the English-learning interest questionnaire there were twenty items divided into four aspects: favorable impression, attention, activeness, and intensity. The items in favorable aspect were asking the students responses on whether (1) they thought activities in ELT were delightful, (2) they were pleased if the teachers were absent from the English class, (3) they felt deprived if they could not attend the English class, (4) they felt motivated in the English class, and (5) they thought ELT was not burdensome. As for the attention aspects, the items asked whether: (1) they took notes in the English class, (2) they had a lot of small talk discussing matters

other than the teaching and learning material with classmates when the English class is in progress, (3) they had the teaching and learning material and its supplement, (4) they did not feel excited with the English class for its monotonous activity and teaching strategy, (5) they often excused themselves from class for any reasons, (6) they had learned the English Language before, (7) they prepared themselves before class, and (8) they felt that learning English was important. Furthermore, in activeness aspects, the items asked whether (1) they were always on time to the English class, (2) they always had questions to the teacher when they missed something from the lesson, (3) they always jotted down explanation in class, and (4) they always did the assignments. Additionally, the last aspect, intensity, the items asked whether: (1) they spared their time to review English lesson at home, (2) they attended English Courses outside school and (3) they love learning English that they did activities related to English learning at or outside school.

The enthusiasm in learning English, on the other hand, has 8 aspects and 40 items altogether: (1) perseverance, asking whether the students: did their assignments seriously, finished and submitted them on time, did the assignments without any delays, thought that submitting on time was better than the result itself, were not serious in doing the assignments and exercises; (2) Resilience, asking whether the students: would seriously review the lesson outside the class to improve poorer scores if any, would feel delighted for better score, would very hard to solve very difficult questions, would not continue learning, if they had lower score, would stop working when they cannot do difficult exercises (3) display of interest, asking whether the students: always listened to teachers' explanation attentively, always asked questions concerning difficult material, always answers questions from the teacher, preferred to talk to a classmate than to listen to explanations from the teachers, were not active in asking questions to teacher about unclear material (4) tendency to work independently, asking whether the students: always did their assignment individually, copied peer work in doing assignments or exercises, finished their assignments using their own resources, never copied peers' work since their works were better, preferred to work in groups; (5) proneness to boredom toward routine activity, asking whether the students: were pleased with the varied learning activities, were delighted to participate in fun/game learning activity, were glad to work in group in class, thought the English class was boring for its monotonous activities, felt unexcited in the English class for its dominant note-taking activities (6) opinion defense, asking whether the students: always gave opinions on a discussion, gave response to different opinions, attempted to defend their view in a discussion, preferred to stay silent in a discussion, were nervous when putting forward their opinion to class; were uncertain in answering questions; (7) holding on to belief, asking whether the students: were not easily influenced with

peers' answers, were certain of the best results from assignments and exercises, always acquired optimum score in every assignment, would change their answers to exercise when they were different from those of their classmates, and (8) eagerness in problem-solving, asking whether the students: were delighted to have assignments from teachers, would do any unfinished exercise, were challenged to do difficult exercises, would find other source in doing assignment and exercises, preferred to do easier assignments and exercises. The distribution of the items of both questionnaires is described in table 2.

*Table 2 Questionnaires Distribution of Items*

Aspects	Items Distribution	Total
Questionnaire of Interest in Learning English		
favorable impression	1, 2, 3, 14, 18	5
attention	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 16, 19,15	8
activeness	9, 11, 12, 13	4
intensity	10, 17, 20	3
Questionnaire of Enthusiasm in Learning English		
perseverance	1,2,3,4,5	5
resilience	6,7,8,9,10	5
display of interest	11,12,13,14,15	5
tendency to work independently	16,17,18,19,20	5
proneness to boredom toward routine activity	21,22,23,24,25	5
opinion defense	26,27,28,29,30	5
holding onto belief	31,32,33,34,35	5
eagerness in problem-solving	36,37,38,39,40	5

The response to the items were of Likert-like scale with four options: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The range of scores for positive item are 4, 3, 3, 1 and for negative item are in reverse order. The questionnaires' instructions and item were written in the Indonesian Language to avoid students' misunderstanding of their contents.

The questionnaires were tried out for validity and reliability to 40 non-sample students. Several changes were made to some words used based on the suggestion given from two experts as to improve the face validity of the instruments. To check each item validity, every item score was correlated with the total score. The items which were significantly correlated with the total were considered valid. Two items from interest questionnaire and four from enthusiasm questionnaire were invalid. They were accordingly revised. The Cronbach's alpha for interest and enthusiasm were .75 and .84 which indicated that the both instruments were internally very

consistent and reliable.

The mid-semester test score result documentations were used to measure students' English achievement. This test was administered by the English teacher of the school. This the closest test to time of the data collection of the questionnaires. The questions of the test cover materials discussed until the test was administered.

To see the extents of both interest and enthusiasm of the students, percentage from the results was counted with the following intervals and criteria: 86-100 (very high), 71-85 (High), 56-70 (medium), 41-55 (low) and 26-40 (very low). The English achievement the intervals and the criteria are following the schools' intervals and criteria: 90 – 100 (A, very good), 80 – 89 (B, good), 70 – 79 (fair), 60 – 69 (poor), and 0 – 59 (very poor). Furthermore, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was utilized to see the relationship among the variables.

## Results

### *The Extents of Interest, Enthusiasm and Students' English Academic Achievement*

The summary of the results from the two questionnaires and the documentation are presented in table 3.

*Table 3 Summary Results Interest, Enthusiasm and Students' English Academic Achievement*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<b>Interest</b>	70	41	91	72.43	8.12
<b>Enthusiasm</b>	70	52	89	71.10	6.97
<b>English Academic Achievement</b>	70	36	80	60.00	11.73

As can be seen from the table, both interest (M=72.43 SD=8.12 Max=91 Min=41) and enthusiasm (M=71.10 SD=6.97 Max=89 Min=52) were high. While for the English achievement it was poor (M=60.00 SD=11.73 Max=80 Min=36). Table 4 displays a more complete distribution of every variable.

*Table 4 Distribution of Interest, Enthusiasm and English Achievement*

<b>Interest and Enthusiasm</b>			<b>English Achievement</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>N (Interest)</b>	<b>N (Enthusiasm)</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>N</b>
Very High	2	1	A (very good)	-



High	38	39	B (good)	2
Medium	29	29	C (fair)	15
Low	1	1	D (poor)	19
Very Low	-	-	E (very poor)	34

As we can see from table the dominant category for both interest and enthusiasm are high and medium in which high is significantly higher. This leaves only few in very high, low and very low. As for the English achievement although the majority of students were in poor and very poor category, there were acceptable number of students in good and fair category. Additionally, the distributions of all the variables, interest, enthusiasm and English achievement, were considered normally distributed and homogeneous since the number of samples was more than adequate.

The summary of results of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient are displayed in table 5.

Table 5. Summary Correlation Coefficient

Pearson

Correlation Coefficient (figures in brackets are the sig. (2-tailed))

	Interest	Enthusiasm	Interest + Enthusiasm	English Achievement
Interest	1	.77 (.001)**		.40 (.001)**
Enthusiasm	.77 (.001)**	1		.24 (.046)**
Interest + Enthusiasm			1	.343 (.004)**
English Achievement	.395 (.001)**	.239 (.046)**	.343 (0.004)**	1

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

The correlations of the variables as displayed in the table were all positive and significant (2-tailed). Interest and enthusiasm were found to have a strong correlation ( $r(78) = .77$ ,  $p = .001$ ). As for interest and English achievement, the correlation was medium ( $r(78) = .40$ ,  $p = .001$ ), while for Enthusiasm and English achievement, it was weak ( $r(78) = .24$ ,  $p = .046$ ). Interest + Enthusiasm is the addition of interest score to enthusiasm score. In other words, it is the combination of both variables. The combination of the variables had a weak yet a significant positive correlation.

## **Discussion**

From the results, several points need to be discussed. First, the extents of the students' interest and enthusiasm in learning English in the school were at almost the same level. This almost similar level might show a relationship from both variables. Interest might spark enthusiasm in learning English. The two variables also had a strong positive correlation which means that students' interest level significantly predicted their enthusiasm. In line with this, Keller et al. (2014) in their study investigating the relationship between teachers' enthusiasm toward students' interest. Through multilevel structural equation modeling, they revealed that teachers' enthusiasm predicted students' interest. Furthermore, it was also revealed that the prediction was also mediated by the students' enthusiasm. Furthermore, Kim and Schallert (2014), in a similar study delving into mediating effects of students' perceptions of teacher enthusiasm and of peer enthusiasm on the relation between students' interest. The results indicated that both teachers' enthusiasm and students' enthusiasm had a direct association with students' interest. Although these two similar studies checked the predictability of teachers' enthusiasm toward Students' interest in learning, the involvement of students' enthusiasm as moderator variable and the indications of its significant mediating effect showed strong association between students' interest and their enthusiasm. If the results of current study are taken into account, the association between interest and enthusiasm in students can be in both directions, either interest predicts enthusiasm or the other way around.

Second, the extent of students' English achievement is quite poor yet in quite normal distribution. The school's policy for the students' distribution is not to group students based on their academic achievement. The quite varied results are to be expected. The school has also set a little too high a category for the exams, sixty percent of correct answers from the exam is categorized as very poor. As compared to the category set by a state university in South Sumatra, 60 percent is categorized in middle category with two upper levels and two lower levels. Apart from the category, the results also showed that more than half of the students scored more than 60 with more than half of them scored between 70 – 89. This score distribution were not much different from what Avvisati et al. (2019) reported in Programme for international student assessment (PISA) results from PISA 2018: Country Note, Indonesia that in reading skill students in Indonesia scored lowered that of OECD average (371 to 487). Furthermore, the report also described that only negligible numbers of students were able to achieved level 5 or 6 (the top level). This description more or less describes the situation in the school.

Third, the correlation between interest and English achievement was quite

strong and in positive direction. This shows the strong predictability of interest toward English achievement. This results is expected since interest, as Krapp (2007) described, reflects how students enjoy their participation in a course activities. Additionally, interest entails an enormous energy that the higher it gets the better the outcomes in the process of learning (Patrick et al., 2010). On the other hand, Romainah (2018) in their study investigating the correlation between reading interest and reading achievement found out a contrasting result that there was no significant association between the two variables. They argued that interest is not an influencing factor toward achievement. However, A lot of studies' results showed a similar findings. Dimiyati & Mudjiono (2002) argue internal factors such as interest can contribute to learning either in negative or positive way. Additionally, Sullo (2007) states that external factors also contribute but in much less weight. Kpolovie et al. (2014), and Cockburn, (2009) also supports these findings. Other studies also found out the same predictability of interest toward English achievement in particular ((Mulyani et al., 2017), (Hafsah, 2016)). in Interest in the learning of English proves to be an influential factor toward students' achievement in learning the subject. It is important that teacher do what it takes to keep students' interest in English learning, as also recommended by Kpolovie et al. (2014). They suggested that teachers should use up-to-date teaching procedures to increase students' interest in learning. They even extended their recommendation toward parents in collaboration with teachers to help students build their self-confidence which eventually would assist them in increasing their interests.

Fourth, the correlation between enthusiasm and English achievement is significant and in positive direction yet not so strong as that of interest and achievement. This findings is quite similar with what Maryati (2014) has found out in her study investigating the predictability of student's learning enthusiasm and the utilization of learning media and sociology learning achievement in a vocation senior high school. Its results of correlation analysis between enthusiasm and achievement were quite comparable with this current study in terms of predictability strength. In other study by Mahler et al. (2018) in which the association of enthusiasm and learning achievement were examined, they found out that there was a positive direction in the association between enthusiasm and performance. However, it did not see the enthusiasm of the students but of the teachers instead. As discussed earlier, interest has stronger association toward learning achievement as compared to enthusiasm. Interest might have more powerful influence toward achievement. It is, as Renninger and Hidi (2019) state, a potent tool for more in-depth learning the existence of which can have a positive impact on people's attention and memory, as well as motivation and meaningful involvement. Additionally, Schweder and Raufelder (2021) also state that interest promotes elaboration, perseverance, and control strategies.

Fifth, interest and enthusiasm are both internal in learning. It makes sense to see how the combination of both associate with learning achievement. The results show that the correlation coefficient was significant and in positive direction. The predictability of the combination is quite fair stronger than enthusiasm yet somewhat weaker than interest. These findings are quite contrast with what Fitriani (2020) has found out that internal factor (attitude and motivation) and English achievement have no significant correlation. This is quite similar with the finding of Jaya (2016) that internal factors (religiosity and motivation) and English achievement did not correlate significantly. However, Kurniawan et al. (2020) found out that positive attitude toward learning which is one of the internal factors have a positive influence toward learning achievement. Furthermore, Suryadi & Santoso (2017) also concluded that self-efficacy and the adversity quotient as internal factors have significant influence on students' academic achievement. The varied results of study might reflect the multitude of factors influencing learning achievement.

### **Conclusion**

This study has shown that interest and enthusiasm in learning are two determining factors for students' English achievement. Additionally, the combination of both as internal factor also showed a significant association toward English achievement. Interest has stronger association toward English achievement compared to enthusiasm and the combination of both.

Therefore, an implication of the study is that we must investigate how to improve students' interest and enthusiasm in learning English. The results may be of interest to other region in Indonesia that share similar concerns regarding English achievement. This study investigated only two internal factors, further researches investigating other factors are strongly suggested. They can include internal and external factors.

Despite the findings of this study, this study has some limitations. There were only two internal factors as independent variables investigated. The study did not take into account other internal factors and the external factors. Furthermore, the sample size of the study is limited to 70 which might also limit the generalizability of the findings of this study into other situations.

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