



The Effect of Social-Emotional Learning and Differentiated Instruction on Students' Motivation to Learn English at Senior High School, West Sulawesi

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026 -06-08 Revised: 2026-09-11 Accepted: 2026-09-16 Keywords: social-emotional learning, differentiated instruction, English learning motivation, quantitative descriptive study, secondary school DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.11129 Corresponding Author: Arwin H. Aruji winwin1887@gmail.com English Education Study Program, Postgraduate Program Universitas Negeri Makassar	<i>This study investigated the effect of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI) on students' motivation to learn English at SMAN 1 Sesenapadang, West Sulawesi. The study was motivated by the low motivation of students in learning English, reflected in passive classroom participation, low confidence, and the tendency to learn English only for examination purposes. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, English learning is expected to be meaningful, student-centered, adaptive, and supportive of students' social-emotional development. This research employed a quantitative descriptive design to examine the patterns of influence between instructional and psychosocial variables and students' learning motivation without applying experimental treatment. The population consisted of all students of SMAN 1 Sesenapadang, while the sample consisted of 87 students selected through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across classes. The data were collected using validated Likert-scale questionnaires measuring Social-Emotional Learning, Differentiated Instruction, and motivation to learn English. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, classical assumption tests, multiple linear regression, partial t-tests, simultaneous F-test, and coefficient of determination with SPSS. The findings revealed that Social-Emotional Learning had a positive and significant effect on students' motivation to learn English, with a regression coefficient of 0.550, t-value of 4.771, and significance value of 0.000. Differentiated Instruction also had a positive and significant effect, with a regression coefficient of 0.592, t-value of 2.962, and significance value of 0.004. Simultaneously, SEL and DI significantly affected students' motivation, as indicated by $F = 18.451$ and $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$. The R Square value of 0.305 showed that 30.5% of students' motivation was explained by SEL and DI. The study concludes that integrating social-emotional support and differentiated instructional practices can meaningfully enhance students' motivation in English learning.</i>

1. Introduction

English has become one of the most important languages in the era of globalization. It functions as a lingua franca that connects people across education, technology, economy, culture, diplomacy, and international communication. In the Indonesian education context, English is not only taught as a school subject but also as a strategic competence that prepares students to participate in global academic and professional environments. Students who have good English proficiency are expected to access wider information, communicate across cultures, and develop twenty-first-century competencies such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. Richards (2015) argues that English language teaching should help learners use language for meaningful communication and real-life purposes, not merely for memorizing linguistic forms.

Despite its importance, English learning in Indonesian secondary schools still faces several challenges. Many students perceive English as difficult, irrelevant, and disconnected from their daily lives. They often feel anxious when speaking, lack confidence in expressing ideas, and participate passively in classroom activities. These conditions influence students' learning motivation. Motivation is a crucial factor in second and foreign language learning because it affects students' willingness to participate, persist, practice, and overcome learning difficulties. Gardner (2007) emphasizes that language learning motivation involves effort, desire, and positive attitudes toward learning the target language. Therefore, students' success in English learning depends not only on cognitive ability but also on motivational, emotional, and social factors.

The issue of motivation is also evident at SMAN 1 Sesenapadang, West Sulawesi. The thesis data show that students' motivation to learn English was still low. Many students tended to be passive and learned English mainly to fulfill examination requirements. Some students did not show strong enthusiasm in developing communicative skills, while others lacked confidence to participate actively. Students with higher ability sometimes felt bored because classroom activities did not provide appropriate challenges, while students with lower ability often felt left behind. This condition indicates that conventional and uniform English instruction may not fully address students' diverse academic and emotional needs.

Learning motivation can be understood through several theoretical perspectives. Keller's ARCS Motivation Model explains that motivation is influenced by attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (Keller, 2010). Students become more motivated when learning activities attract their attention, relate to their needs, build their confidence, and provide satisfying learning experiences. In English learning, this means that teachers should design activities that are meaningful, emotionally supportive, appropriately challenging, and relevant to students' future goals.

Another important theory is Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as basic psychological needs that support intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Students are more motivated when they feel that they have meaningful choices, believe they are capable of succeeding, and experience positive relationships with teachers and peers. In English classrooms, motivation can increase when students are allowed to choose tasks, receive suitable support, experience success, and learn in a caring social environment.

In the current implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, learning is expected to be more student-centered, meaningful, reflective, and adaptive. The curriculum encourages students to become active subjects in the learning process rather than passive recipients of knowledge. This orientation aligns with deep learning principles, where students are expected to build understanding, apply knowledge, collaborate, reflect, and develop character. However, the ideals of the curriculum may not be achieved if classroom practices

remain uniform, teacher-centered, and focused mainly on cognitive achievement. Students also need social-emotional support and instructional adaptation to develop sustainable motivation.

One approach that can address students' emotional and social needs is Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). SEL refers to the process through which students develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes to understand and manage emotions, build positive relationships, show empathy, make responsible decisions, and achieve meaningful goals. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning identifies five core SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). These competencies are relevant to English learning because students often face emotional barriers such as anxiety, fear of mistakes, low confidence, and reluctance to communicate.

SEL is particularly important in English classrooms because language learning is both cognitive and affective. Students need vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and comprehension skills, but they also need courage, confidence, emotional regulation, and social interaction. Krashen's affective filter hypothesis suggests that anxiety, low motivation, and low self-confidence can hinder language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). When students feel safe, supported, and emotionally ready, they are more willing to use English and participate in communicative activities. Therefore, SEL can help reduce affective barriers and create a classroom climate that supports motivation.

Previous studies have shown that SEL contributes to students' engagement, self-regulation, and academic achievement. Durlak et al. (2011) found that SEL programs improve students' social-emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic outcomes. In English learning, SEL can encourage students to manage speaking anxiety, cooperate with peers, and build confidence in communication. When students are aware of their emotions and supported by positive relationships, they may become more motivated to take risks in using English.

In addition to SEL, Differentiated Instruction (DI) is also important for increasing motivation. DI is a teaching approach that responds to students' differences in readiness, interests, learning profiles, and abilities. Tomlinson (2001) explains that differentiated instruction allows teachers to adjust content, process, product, and learning environment to match students' needs. This approach is based on the understanding that students do not learn in the same way or at the same pace. Uniform teaching may cause some students to feel overwhelmed and others to feel unchallenged.

In English learning, differentiated instruction can be implemented by providing different reading materials, varied speaking tasks, flexible grouping, choice-based projects, vocabulary support, and multiple forms of assessment. Students with lower proficiency may need simpler texts, guided practice, or sentence starters, while more advanced students may need open-ended projects, presentations, or analytical tasks. This strategy can increase motivation because students feel that learning is accessible, relevant, and appropriately challenging. Tomlinson (2014) emphasizes that differentiation is not lowering standards but providing multiple pathways to reach meaningful learning goals.

The integration of SEL and DI is especially relevant for students at SMAN 1 Sesenapadang. SEL addresses students' emotional and relational needs, while DI addresses their academic diversity. SEL can strengthen self-confidence, emotional regulation, and social connectedness, while DI can provide learning tasks that match students' readiness and interests. Together, these approaches can create a more adaptive, inclusive, and motivating English learning environment. This integration is also consistent with Self-

Determination Theory because SEL supports relatedness and emotional safety, while DI supports autonomy and competence.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the combined effect of SEL and DI on students' motivation to learn English in an Indonesian secondary school context, particularly in West Sulawesi. Many previous studies have examined SEL or DI separately, but fewer studies have investigated how both variables simultaneously influence English learning motivation. Therefore, this study is important because it provides empirical evidence on how social-emotional and instructional factors contribute to motivation in English learning.

Based on the background above, this study aimed to examine three research questions: whether Social-Emotional Learning affects students' motivation to learn English, whether Differentiated Instruction affects students' motivation to learn English, and whether SEL and DI simultaneously affect students' motivation to learn English. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the study of motivation, SEL, and DI, and practically to English teachers, schools, curriculum developers, and future researchers.

2. Method

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design. The design was selected because the study aimed to describe the relationship patterns and measure the influence of Social-Emotional Learning and Differentiated Instruction on students' motivation to learn English without applying experimental treatment. Creswell and Creswell (2018) explain that quantitative research is appropriate when researchers seek to test relationships among variables using numerical data and statistical procedures. In this study, the quantitative approach allowed the researcher to examine the partial and simultaneous effects of SEL and DI on students' motivation.

The research was conducted at SMAN 1 Sesenapadang, West Sulawesi. The population consisted of all students of SMAN 1 Sesenapadang. The sample consisted of 87 students selected through stratified random sampling. This sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation across classes. Stratified random sampling is suitable when the population consists of subgroups and the researcher wants each subgroup to be represented fairly in the sample (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012).

The variables in this study consisted of two independent variables and one dependent variable. The first independent variable was Social-Emotional Learning (X_1), which refers to students' social-emotional competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The second independent variable was Differentiated Instruction (X_2), which refers to instructional practices that adjust learning content, process, product, and learning environment based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. The dependent variable was students' motivation to learn English (Y), which refers to students' internal and external drive to participate in English learning activities.

The data were collected using Likert-scale questionnaires. The questionnaire items were developed to measure students' perceptions of SEL, DI, and English learning motivation. Before the main data collection, the instrument was tested for validity and reliability. Based on the thesis data, all questionnaire items across the three variables had Corrected Item-Total Correlation values greater than the r -table value of 0.404; therefore, the items were considered valid. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha showed that all variables had coefficients above 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

The data were analyzed using SPSS. The analysis began with descriptive statistics to provide a general overview of the distribution of each variable. Classical assumption tests were then conducted before regression analysis. The normality test was conducted using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with Monte Carlo significance. The multicollinearity test was conducted using tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor values. The heteroscedasticity test was conducted using the Glejser method, and the linearity test was conducted to examine whether the independent variables had linear relationships with the dependent variable.

After the assumptions were fulfilled, multiple linear regression analysis was applied. The regression model was $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$. Partial t-tests were used to determine the individual effect of SEL and DI on motivation. The simultaneous F-test was used to determine whether SEL and DI jointly affected motivation. The coefficient of determination was used to identify how much variance in students' motivation could be explained by SEL and DI. The significance level used in this study was 0.05. If the significance value was lower than 0.05, the hypothesis was accepted.

3. Result

The findings of this study are presented based on instrument testing, classical assumption testing, multiple linear regression analysis, partial effects, simultaneous effects, and coefficient of determination.

The instrument testing showed that the questionnaires used in this study were valid and reliable. The validity test using Pearson Product-Moment correlation showed that all questionnaire items across the Social-Emotional Learning, Differentiated Instruction, and motivation variables had Corrected Item-Total Correlation values greater than the r-table value of 0.404. This means that all items were valid and appropriate for measuring the intended variables. The reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha showed that all variables had coefficients above 0.70, indicating a high level of internal consistency. Therefore, the instrument was considered reliable for data collection.

The descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to describe the distribution of data for the three research variables. The analysis showed that the data from 87 students could be used to examine the relationship between SEL, DI, and English learning motivation. Although the thesis emphasized inferential analysis as the main basis for hypothesis testing, the descriptive analysis provided an initial overview that students' responses to SEL, DI, and motivation were measurable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

Before conducting regression analysis, the researcher performed classical assumption tests. The normality test was conducted using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The initial Asymp. Sig. value was 0.007, which was lower than 0.05. However, the Monte Carlo Sig. value was 0.194, with a 99% confidence interval from 0.184 to 0.204. Since the Monte Carlo significance value was greater than 0.05, the residuals were considered normally distributed. This means that the normality assumption was fulfilled and the data were suitable for regression analysis.

The multicollinearity test showed that the tolerance values for both SEL and DI were 0.975, while the Variance Inflation Factor values were 1.025. Since the tolerance values were greater than 0.10 and the VIF values were far below 10, there was no multicollinearity problem. This means that SEL and DI did not have strong intercorrelation and could be included together in the regression model. The absence of multicollinearity indicates that each independent variable could contribute separately to explaining students' motivation.

The heteroscedasticity test was conducted using the Glejser method. The significance value for SEL was 0.714, while the significance value for DI was 0.669. Since both values were greater than 0.05, the regression model did not have a heteroscedasticity problem. This indicates that the residual variance was constant across the levels of the independent variables. Therefore, the homoscedasticity assumption was fulfilled.

The linearity test showed that the relationship between SEL and students' motivation was linear. The significance value for Linearity was 0.000, which was lower than 0.05, while the significance value for Deviation from Linearity was 0.265, which was greater than 0.05. This means that there was a significant linear relationship between SEL and motivation and no significant deviation from linearity. The linearity test for DI also showed an acceptable linear relationship, with the Deviation from Linearity value greater than 0.05. Therefore, the data met the assumption of linearity.

The multiple linear regression analysis showed that SEL and DI together had a meaningful relationship with students' motivation to learn English. The Model Summary showed that the correlation coefficient (R) was 0.552. This indicates a moderate relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The R Square value was 0.305, meaning that 30.5% of the variance in students' motivation to learn English was explained by SEL and DI. The Adjusted R Square value was 0.289, indicating that after adjustment, 28.9% of the variation in motivation was explained by the two predictors. The standard error of the estimate was 2.89350.

The ANOVA test showed that SEL and DI simultaneously had a significant effect on students' motivation. The regression sum of squares was 308.954, the residual sum of squares was 703.276, and the total sum of squares was 1012.230. The F-value was 18.451 with a significance value of 0.000. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05, the simultaneous hypothesis was accepted. This means that SEL and DI jointly influenced students' motivation to learn English.

The partial test showed that Social-Emotional Learning had a positive and significant effect on students' motivation. The regression coefficient for SEL was 0.550, the t-value was 4.771, and the significance value was 0.000. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05, the effect was statistically significant. This means that an increase in students' social-emotional learning was associated with an increase in their motivation to learn English.

The partial test also showed that Differentiated Instruction had a positive and significant effect on students' motivation. The regression coefficient for DI was 0.592, the t-value was 2.962, and the significance value was 0.004. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05, DI had a statistically significant effect on motivation. This means that more effective differentiated instructional practices were associated with higher student motivation in learning English.

Overall, the findings show that SEL and DI are important predictors of students' motivation to learn English at SMAN 1 Sesenapadang. Both variables contributed positively and significantly, both partially and simultaneously. The R Square value of 0.305 indicates that SEL and DI explained a meaningful portion of motivation, although other factors such as teacher competence, classroom environment, parental support, students' prior achievement, learning anxiety, and digital learning resources may also influence motivation.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Social-Emotional Learning and Differentiated Instruction have positive and significant effects on students' motivation to learn English at SMAN 1 Sesenapadang. These results support the assumption that students' motivation is influenced by both affective-social factors and instructional factors. Motivation does not emerge only from students' internal desire but is shaped by classroom environment, emotional support, learning relevance, teacher strategies, and opportunities for success. This finding is consistent with Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which states that motivation develops when students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled.

The first finding shows that Social-Emotional Learning significantly affects students' motivation to learn English. The regression coefficient for SEL was 0.550, with a t-value of 4.771 and a significance value of 0.000. This indicates that SEL is a strong predictor of motivation. When students develop self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, they are more likely to become motivated in English learning. SEL helps students understand their emotions, manage anxiety, build confidence, and interact positively with peers and teachers.

This result is relevant to Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, which explains that emotional barriers such as anxiety and low self-confidence can block language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). In English learning, students often feel afraid of making mistakes, especially in speaking or classroom interaction. SEL can reduce these barriers by creating a supportive classroom climate. When students feel emotionally safe, they become more willing to participate, ask questions, and use English. Therefore, SEL contributes to motivation not only through emotional regulation but also through increased engagement.

The result also supports CASEL's framework, which positions SEL as a foundation for academic and personal development (CASEL, 2020). Students who have strong self-management skills can persist when English tasks are difficult. Students with social awareness and relationship skills can cooperate in group activities and receive peer support. Students who can make responsible decisions can choose better learning strategies. These competencies are directly connected to motivation because they influence how students respond to challenges in English learning.

The second finding shows that Differentiated Instruction significantly affects students' motivation to learn English. The regression coefficient for DI was 0.592, with a t-value of 2.962 and a significance value of 0.004. This means that DI positively contributes to students' motivation. Differentiated Instruction increases motivation because it recognizes that students have different abilities, interests, readiness levels, and learning profiles. When teachers adjust content, process, product, and learning environment, students are more likely to experience learning as accessible and meaningful.

This finding is consistent with Tomlinson's theory of differentiation. Tomlinson (2014) argues that students learn better when instruction is responsive to their needs. In English learning, students may differ in vocabulary mastery, reading ability, speaking confidence, listening comprehension, and writing competence. If all students receive the same task and the same level of difficulty, some may feel frustrated while others feel bored. Differentiated Instruction helps solve this problem by providing suitable challenges and support. This condition strengthens students' sense of competence, which is one of the basic psychological needs in Self-Determination Theory.

The result also supports the ARCS Motivation Model. DI can increase attention because varied tasks and materials make learning less monotonous. It can increase relevance because students receive tasks connected to their interests and learning needs.

It can increase confidence because students are given tasks at an appropriate level of difficulty. It can also increase satisfaction because students can demonstrate learning through different products and experience success. Therefore, DI supports all four components of Keller's motivation model (Keller, 2010).

The simultaneous finding shows that SEL and DI jointly affect students' motivation to learn English. The F-test result showed $F = 18.451$ and $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$, indicating that both variables together have a significant effect. This means that motivation is best supported when emotional-social support and instructional adaptation are integrated. SEL creates emotional safety and relational support, while DI provides academic accessibility and suitable challenge. When combined, these approaches create a classroom environment that is both supportive and responsive.

The integration of SEL and DI is particularly important in English learning at SMAN 1 Sesenapadang because the thesis data show that students' motivation was still low. Some students were passive, some lacked confidence, and others did not find English relevant. SEL addresses the emotional side of these problems, while DI addresses the instructional side. For example, a student who feels anxious about speaking English may benefit from SEL-based confidence building and peer support. At the same time, the student may benefit from DI through gradual speaking tasks, sentence starters, or small-group practice. Thus, SEL and DI complement each other.

The coefficient of determination showed that SEL and DI explained 30.5% of students' motivation. This is a meaningful contribution, especially in educational research where motivation is influenced by many factors. However, the remaining 69.5% indicates that other variables also affect motivation. These may include teacher competence, classroom atmosphere, parental support, learning facilities, peer influence, previous achievement, personality, English anxiety, digital media, and students' future goals. Therefore, SEL and DI should be viewed as important but not exclusive factors in improving motivation.

The findings have several practical implications. First, English teachers should integrate SEL into daily classroom routines. This can be done through reflective activities, emotional check-ins, collaborative tasks, respectful communication, and feedback that builds confidence. Second, teachers should implement DI by adjusting texts, tasks, groupings, assessment products, and learning support based on students' needs. Third, schools should provide teacher training on how to combine SEL and DI in English learning. Fourth, curriculum implementation should not focus only on material completion but also on student motivation, emotional readiness, and differentiated learning experiences.

The findings also suggest that the Merdeka Curriculum can be strengthened through SEL and DI. The curriculum emphasizes meaningful learning, student agency, and differentiated learning. However, these principles require concrete classroom implementation. SEL and DI provide practical pathways for teachers to make learning more student-centered. SEL helps students become emotionally ready and socially engaged, while DI helps teachers respond to diverse learning needs. Therefore, integrating both approaches can help transform curriculum ideals into classroom practice.

Although the findings are positive, several limitations should be considered. The study used self-report questionnaires, so students' responses may be influenced by social desirability. The study was also conducted in one school, which limits generalizability to other contexts. In addition, the R Square value shows that many other factors affecting motivation were not included in this study. Future research may use mixed-method designs to explore students' experiences more deeply and include additional variables such as teacher support, classroom climate, parental involvement, and speaking anxiety.

Overall, this study confirms that Social-Emotional Learning and Differentiated Instruction significantly contribute to students' motivation to learn English. The findings show that students are more motivated when they receive emotional support, positive relationships, suitable challenges, and instruction that respects their differences. Therefore, effective English learning should combine academic strategy with social-emotional awareness.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the effect of Social-Emotional Learning and Differentiated Instruction on students' motivation to learn English at SMAN 1 Sesenapadang, West Sulawesi. Based on the descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, the findings show that both variables had positive and significant effects on students' motivation, both partially and simultaneously.

First, Social-Emotional Learning had a positive and statistically significant effect on students' motivation to learn English. This was shown by the regression coefficient of 0.550, t-value of 4.771, and significance value of 0.000. This means that students with stronger social-emotional competencies tended to have higher motivation in learning English. SEL supports motivation by helping students manage emotions, build confidence, develop positive relationships, and participate more actively in the classroom.

Second, Differentiated Instruction also had a positive and statistically significant effect on students' motivation. The regression coefficient was 0.592, the t-value was 2.962, and the significance value was 0.004. This shows that instructional practices that respond to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles contribute to higher motivation. DI helps students feel that English learning is more accessible, relevant, and appropriately challenging.

Third, SEL and DI simultaneously had a significant effect on students' motivation, as shown by $F = 18.451$ and $\text{Sig.} = 0.000$. The R Square value of 0.305 indicates that 30.5% of students' motivation was explained by the combination of SEL and DI, while the remaining 69.5% was influenced by other factors.

In conclusion, integrating Social-Emotional Learning and Differentiated Instruction is an effective strategy for enhancing students' motivation to learn English. English teachers are encouraged to design emotionally supportive, inclusive, adaptive, and student-centered learning environments. Future researchers may examine additional variables and use mixed-method designs to obtain deeper insights into students' motivational experiences.

6. References

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