



Tutor Support and Motivation in EFL Learning: A Conceptual Overview

Seirra Ammara Nur Rabbani¹, Seful Bahri²

^{1,2}Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Negeri Semarang

Article Info

Received: 2025-06-23

Revised: 2026-04-23

Accepted: 2026-04-24

Keywords:

Tutor support;

Motivation;

EFL learning;

Non-formal education

DOI:

10.24256/ideasv14i1.7191

Corresponding Author:

Seirra Ammara Nur Rabbani

seirraanr@students.unnes.ac.id

Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris,

Universitas Negeri Semarang

Abstract

Even after years of formal instruction, many EFL learners find it difficult to build confidence and fluency in speaking. Issues like the excessive number of students in a classroom, lack of teaching time and inadequate one-to-one attention frequently become barriers to good learning. This leads to a high number of learners resorting to non-formal learning settings, including individual tutoring and English classes, which are more personalized and flexible. Nonetheless, the role of tutor support in learner motivation and the effects of tutor-learner interaction on the learning process have received little research. The objective of the present study is to determine how tutor support helps to improve the motivation of learners based on three major motivational theories: Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the Socio-Educational Model (SEM), and Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT). This paper uses a conceptual research design to synthesize the existing literature to investigate how these theories can explain the motivational processes in non-formal EFL settings. The results suggest that tutors are important in promoting the motivation of learners by helping them feel autonomy, competence, and relatedness, developing positive attitudes towards the target language, and improving expectations towards success and perceived value of the tasks by learners. In this regard, tutors not only give linguistic knowledge but also act as motivational facilitators, emotional supporter and cultural mediators.

1. Introduction

In our globalized society, English stands as a crucial tool for communication across diverse cultures and professions (Crystal, 2003) in (Fernandes, 2018) It serves as the world's lingua franca, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and information in critical areas such as science, business, education, and the international relationships (Chen et al., 2019). As Rao (2019) notes, the English language is no longer considered as a foreign language but an essential commodity globally.

This makes English proficiency no longer a luxury, but a basic necessity of people who want to succeed in the modern, globalized social and professional life. Due to this significance, most countries, including Indonesia, have incorporated studies on English language in their education curriculums (Lauder, 2008). Nevertheless, even with formal education, not all students can build confidence and fluency in speaking English (Poedjiastutie et al., 2018). Challenges such as large class sizes, time constraints, and inflexible curricula often prevent students from receiving the individualized attention they need (Shamim & Coleman, 2018).

To overcome these shortcomings, informal educational settings including English based courses and one-on-one tutoring has gained popularity between formal school. These contexts usually provide interactive, flexible, focused at students techniques that connect learning in class and application of language in the real world (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Individual goals also form a great influence on English fluency, and students are guided by their aspirations, such as exploring the culture, learning about it via movies, social networks, or expanding foreign studies or increasing job opportunities. Motivation is the key as it defines how much effort, persistence, and resilience a learner is going to demonstrate (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). However, it is not always easy to stay motivated, with the typical problems being grammar problems, confidence problems, fear of errors, or just boredom (Dörnyei, 2005).

Although there is broad literature about the role of teachers in motivating students in formal learning, there still exists a big gap on the role of tutors in non-formal education and most importantly how students perceive their relationships with tutors and effect this has on their learning experiences. Some of the research gives highlights on the positive impact of the tutors on the student engagement and performance (Faroa, 2017), the nuanced perceptions of students themselves regarding tutoring experiences are often underexplored.

This gap is particularly significant given the increasing reliance on non-formal English learning in countries like Indonesia, where Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System acknowledges the complementary nature of formal, non-formal, and informal education. Students often opt for English courses due to perceived limitations in formal schooling, seeking more personalized attention and practical language application (Azmi, 2020; Lie, 2007). Despite the proven impact of student-tutor interaction on motivation and learning outcomes (Zainullah et al.,

2023), tutors are often undervalued, and non-formal learning environments are frequently considered secondary to formal classrooms (Rahayu, 2020). There is also a lack of research on how tutoring programs can move beyond traditional approaches to leverage their inherent flexibility for greater student motivation.

In addition, most tutoring programs follow the traditional approach, which is quite surprising considering that flexibility is one of the greatest merits of private tutoring. When tutors know the influence that their teaching method has on the motivation of students and their individual attitude to students, they can better adjust to the demands of the learners. It will also enable course providers learn how to train and supervise tutors in a way that the learning environment does not only teach but is also motivating and affirming to the students.

Besides this global trend, a local context in Indonesia is also characterized by a growing interest in studying English as a language. A report issued by the Indonesian ministry of education reveals that the number of students taking English courses out of the school system has continued to increase steadily. This pattern is particularly observable in cities, like Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya, where there is increased presence of language schools that may provide diverse classes, based on various learning attitudes, including academic preparation, professional interaction, etc. These courses tend to give more focus on interactive and communicative methods which might not be present in formal classrooms.

Building upon these identified issues and gaps, this conceptual chapter aims to answer two primary research questions: What is the role of tutors in motivating EFL learners within non-formal education settings? And what are the principles of Self-Determination Theory, Expectancy-Value Theory, and Socio-Educational Model that can explain tutor support in language learning? Correspondingly, the objectives of this study are to determine how tutors can be the role to motivate EFL learners in a non-formal education environment, to consider the impact of tutor help using the Self-Determination Theory, Socio-Educational Model, and Expectancy-Value Theory, and to suggest a conceptual knowledge on the role of tutor-student interaction on the motivation of English language learners.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on the student's perception of tutor support in non-formal EFL contexts, aiming to bridge the existing research gap by synthesizing theoretical frameworks to propose a comprehensive understanding of how effective tutor-student dynamics foster motivation and enhance learning outcomes.

The proposed study will be meaningful as it will synthesize Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the Socio-Educational Model (SEM), and Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) to create a comprehensive conceptualization of learner motivation in non-formal EFL tutoring settings.

2. Method

The research design used in this study is conceptual research aimed at developing a theoretical understanding of learner motivation in non-formal settings of tutoring EFL learners. However, the present study is not founded on empirical data but a systematic review and synthesis of the literature on the topic.

The literature was chosen according to the relevance to three significant theories of motivation: Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the Socio-Educational Model (SEM), and Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT). Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and seminal research in language learning and educational psychology were used as sources. Preference was also placed on highly referenced and significant publications especially those published in the last 20 years, 2000-2023, to guarantee a depth of theory and relevance.

The analysis was carried out in a conceptual procedure in steps. To determine the main constructs of each theory and the way they apply to the EFL learner motivation, each theory was analysed separately. Second, an attempt was made to compare the theories with an aim of finding out their similarities, differences and their individual contributions. Lastly, an integrative synthesis was created to describe how they put together can give a more accurate picture of the role of tutor support in non-formal language learning situations.

This method enables the research to go beyond the descriptive explanations to the development of a critical and multidimensional framework that brings out the psychological, social, and cognitive aspects of motivation.

3. Result & Discussion

Building upon the multi-step conceptual analysis outlined in the previous section, this part presents the findings and theoretical interpretations derived from the synthesis of Self-Determination Theory, the Socio-Educational Model, and Expectancy-Value Theory. These findings are organized in response to the two research questions: the first examines the role of tutors in motivating EFL learners in non-formal education settings, and the second explores how each motivational theory helps to explain tutor support mechanisms. The discussion concludes with a reconceptualization of the tutor's role, integrating theoretical insights with practical implications to propose a broader understanding of tutor-student interaction in the Indonesian EFL context.

A. The Role of Tutors

In non-formal EFL education, the role of tutors extends far beyond delivering instructional content. Tutors operate within a more intimate and flexible learning context that allows them to interact with learners on a personal level (Wanner & Palmer, 2015). This setting provides a unique opportunity for tutors to tailor their strategies to individual needs, ultimately increasing learners' motivation and engagement. Based on the observation and reflection during

informal teaching activities, learners tend to show greater willingness to participate and persist when they feel their voices are heard and their needs are acknowledged—something that private tutors are particularly able to offer.

Tutors support learner autonomy by allowing students to choose materials, set goals, and explore topics aligned with their interests (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This freedom fosters a sense of ownership, which according to previous studies suggest that makes them more committed to learning English for their own purposes rather than external pressures. Additionally, competence is developed as tutors deliver feedback that is both encouraging and constructive, helping learners recognize their progress and identify areas of improvement (Goldman et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In non-formal tutoring contexts, where time can be allocated more flexibly, tutors can adjust their scaffolding and pacing based on real-time learner needs—something not always feasible in formal classrooms.

Furthermore, relatedness emerges as a key motivational driver. Tutors often establish rapport and empathetic relationships with learners, creating a psychologically safe space (Herawati, 2023). In researcher tutoring experiences, students frequently express that they feel less judged and more confident in asking questions or making mistakes. This highlights the emotional aspect of motivation that is often overlooked in more rigid academic environments.

Tutors also play an important role in shaping learners' perceptions about English. By connecting learning to real-life applications—such as preparing for job interviews, understanding song lyrics, or traveling—tutors help learners see the practical value of English (Gardner, 1985; Ushioda, 2009). This relevance enhances both integrative motivation (the desire to identify with English-speaking cultures) and instrumental motivation (the desire to gain specific benefits). This suggest when learners understand how English connects to their aspirations; their motivation shifts from passive compliance to active engagement.

B. Theoretical Explanation

To understand more about tutor support, we need to come to learn about principles that explain why and how tutor support motivates learners. A strong theoretical framework exists through the combination of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Socio-Educational Model, and Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) designed by Deci and Ryan (2000) is a psychological theory that explains the motivation process basing on satisfaction of three primary needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. SDT is specifically applicable in the context of EFL tutoring since it explains how tutor-student relationships can lead to intrinsic motivation by discussing these needs in a less rigid and individualized learning context.

In comparison to formal classroom tutoring, non-formal tutoring implies more flexibility of instruction methods, which allows tutors to assist students in terms of their autonomy by providing options in learning tasks and promoting the development of goals. This feeling of command in learning can help to increase the involvement and ownership of learners. Likewise, competence may be trained by means of challenging tasks and positive feedback that will allow the learners to understand their progress and be able to feel confident about their language skills. Also, relatedness is vital, in that positive, supportive, and understanding tutor-student relationships can provide a psychologically safe environment and decrease language anxiety and foster active engagement.

Past studies have demonstrated that by supporting these psychological needs, learners tend to become more intrinsically motivated and have self-regulated learning behaviors (Reeve, 2002) in (Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017). This is especially significant in EFL situations when emotional aspects like anxiety and lack of confidence tend to impair language performance.

Yet, as much as SDT is effective in explaining the internal psychological processes that drive motivation, it does not emphasise much on the external social and contextual factors. The aspects of cultural attitudes, social identity, and perceived value of the language also play an important role in language learning. Thus, applying SDT alone might result in an incomplete picture of learner motivation. This shortcoming underscores the need to consider SDT alongside other theories, including the Socio-Educational Model and Expectancy-Value Theory, to have a more holistic understanding of tutor support in EFL learning.

Socio-Educational Model

The Socio-Educational Model (SEM) offered by Gardner (1985) offers a more comprehensive approach to understanding the motivation of language learning as it focuses on the importance of social and cultural conditioning. In contrast to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the emphasis of which is on the internal psychological needs, SEM emphasizes the way in which the attitudes of learners towards the target language, its speakers, and the context of the learning process influence their motivation. This renders SEM exceptionally applicable in EFL context, where language exposure can be restricted, and subject to outside influences.

One of the main ideas of SEM is the difference between integrative and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation is the urge by learners to be part of the culture, and community of the target language on the other hand, instrumental motivation is the one which is based on practical interests like academic success or professional growth. Both these motivation types can be affected in tutoring situations by the way tutors make it clear to students the importance of English in their lives. Connecting the process of learning language to the aspects of real life and culture, tutors will be able to enhance the positive

attitude of learners and make them more willing to get involved into the process of language learning.

Moreover, SEM is a supplement of SDT especially in the aspect of relatedness. Although SDT conceptualizes relatedness as a psychological need to relate to others, SEM takes the concept to a larger scope that incorporates the feeling of social belonging to the language community. This implies that tutor support is not reduced to interpersonal relationships alone, but also includes molding the perceptions of the learners towards English as a language that is meaningful and socially relevant.

Nevertheless, even having its strong points, SEM is a method with lower priorities given to inner processes of cognition and personal attitudes to success among learners. It does not describe comprehensively how learners assess their capabilities and how they perceive the worth of learning activities. Thus, SEM might not be adequate in elucidating the multifaceted nature of motivation in EFL learning. A combination of SEM and SDT and Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) makes it possible to have a more complete picture of motivation, considering psychological, social and cognitive aspects of the process.

Expectancy-Value Theory

The Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) formulated by Eccles and Wigfield (2002) is used to describe motivation in reference to the beliefs held by learners regarding their chances of success (expectancy) and the values that they have attached to an activity. EVT offers a helpful framework through which EFL tutoring situations can be interpreted in a way that would help a tutor to determine how they can make a student feel confident and recognize the importance of learning English.

In this sense, the role of tutors is very significant to create the expectancy of success in learners by setting the suitable challenging tasks and giving positive feedback. Learners will have more confidence in their abilities when there is gradual progress. Meanwhile, tutors are able to increase the value of the tasks by relating them to the personal interests of the learners, i.e. academic success, career, or cross-cultural communication. Such fit between learning activities and goals of learners will enhance their readiness to participate and continue with the learning process.

EVT is more concerned with cognitive assessments of success and value than Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which has been used to emphasize psychological needs and the Socio-Educational Model (SEM) which has been used to emphasize social and cultural effects. This mental orientation supplements the other frameworks by describing how learners make choices about the need to invest effort in learning activities.

But EVT puts less weight on emotional and relational aspects of learning (sense of belonging and interpersonal connection) that SDT and SEM focus on. Consequently, the complexity of motivation in EFL contexts might not be adequately reflected by EVT alone, as affective and social elements are very important here. Thus, EVT in combination with SDT and SEM can be used to understand the impact of tutor support on learner motivation in a more comprehensive manner, covering psychology, social, and cognitive aspects.

C. Reconceptualization of Tutor Role

Integrating the conceptual findings above, it is noticeable that nowadays the traditional idea about tutors as support teachers is not enough. Non-formal EFL tutors can do much more than impart linguistic knowledge; they act as motivators, supporters of emotions, and cultures. This is in line with recent demands for more holistic methods of language teaching and learning that focus on the well-being of the learning population and their long-term interest and participation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021).

This is not just a theoretical reconceptualization. This re-conceptualization is more symbolic of wider language learning contexts where learners need not just knowledge but emotional support, encouragement and engagement. The tutors who are aware of this transformation can adopt a wider variety of professional identities, where they are equally concerned about interpersonal connection, motivational awareness, and learner-focused approach as they are with subject mastery.

This is why tutor training must not be limited to teaching methods but must include motivational psychology, training of empathy, and sensitivity to intercultural differences. The tutors should be prepared to view the various profiles of motivation and adapt to them. This increased role is a necessity in the changing world of language education, especially in post-pandemic settings where flexibility, customization, and emotional security are all becoming particularly important.

These theoretical revelations holistically answer the research questions and meet the goal of the study, which is to create a holistic framework that will reconceptualize tutor support as a multidimensional construct- one that intersects psychological, social, and pedagogical aspects in order to sustain learner motivation within non-formal settings of EFL settings.

D. Synthesis and Application of Motivational Theories

A combination of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the Socio-Educational Model (SEM) and Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT) provides a multidimensional perspective of motivation in EFL learning, especially in non-formal tutoring. These theories do not serve as alternative explanatory models, but they complement each other by covering different, but interrelated aspects of learner motivation.

SDT describes the way that tutors can encourage the intrinsic motivation of learners by satisfying their psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Meanwhile, SEM builds on this point of view, stressing the impact of social and cultural factors, and the way the attitude of learners towards the English language and the communities that they are part of influences their readiness to learn. In the meantime, EVT adds a cognitive component to explain how learners estimate their chances of success and perceived value of learning activities.

When integrated, these frameworks indicate that successful tutor support is used in three vital dimensions: psychological (meeting internal needs of learners), social (forming positive attitudes and a sense of belonging), and cognitive (increasing confidence and value of tasks in learners). This combined view shows that the motivation in EFL learning is not predetermined by a single factor, but the dynamic interplay of internal needs, social context, and personal beliefs.

This in application implies that tutors have a multidimensional role. They do not only help in the learning process by offering guidance in the learning process, but also serve as motivational agents who at the same time foster the confidence of learners, construct their views about English and provide them with meaningful learning experiences. Thus, the concept of tutor support can be explained more thoroughly and in more detail by incorporating SDT, SEM, and EVT in the analysis, as motivation formation and maintenance in non-formal EFL learning can be described.

This combined approach points out that the motivation of learners in non-formal EFL environment is a dynamic process that is a result of interaction of psychological needs, social factors, and cognitive assessments. Thus, the concept of tutor support in this multidimensional perspective offers a more detailed description of the process of formation and maintenance of motivation throughout the time.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that tutors play a significant role in advancing learner motivation particularly in non-formal English programs. In blending the three major theories of motivation, which include the Self-Determination Theory, the Socio-Educational Model and the Expectancy-Value Theory, this paper has demonstrated that tutors do much more than teaching the contents of languages. They assist in coming up with meaningful learning experiences, which fulfill psychological needs of the learners, influence positive attitudes and develop confidence in their capabilities and objectives.

In the non-formal context, tutors in private courses or community programs may be in a position to more readily meet students on a more personal and responsive foundation. The present study provides an additional perspective on tutor support as a multi-dimensional concept since it is a meaningful combination

of emotional encouragement, pedagogical support, and motivational understanding. This research provides a helpful conceptual framework through the application of the very well-established motivation theories to allow tutors, educators, and program designers to gain insight into what effective motivational support will practically be.

Recommendations

This study provides a solid theoretical framework, but there are no empirical data, so additional studies should be undertaken to support and expand the ideas formulated. It is recommended that the following be done based on the insights agreed:

1. To Tutors and Educators of English: The Tutors are requested to view themselves not only as language teachers but also as members of the motivation and growth of their students. Training programs should prepare tutors to understand basic motivation theories, communicate effectively to build trust, and give feedback that supports learners' sense of progress and confidence. It is also important that tutors spend some time getting to know what individual learners desire to achieve and develop learning activities that will see them towards the achievement of their aims.
2. Course Providers and Learning Center: English tutoring institutions are expected to be designed in such a way that they include motivation. These are providing learners with greater choice, providing personalized or small-group tutoring, and recruiting tutors with both teaching skills and good interpersonal skills. The programs must be dynamic, thus able to accommodate the diverse backgrounds and needs of the learners, and the programs must provide tutor support through frequent training, which is not only based on teaching the language but also on how to inspire and engage the learners.
3. Future research:
To build on this study, future research should focus on collecting real-world data. This could include:
 - a. Interviews or case studies exploring how students perceive motivational support from tutors,
 - b. Surveys or experiments measuring the link between tutor strategies and student motivation or progress,
 - c. Pilot programs testing tutor training based on motivational theory,
 - d. Long-term studies tracking how tutor support affects learners over time.
4. Policymakers and Education Planners: Policy efforts should begin to recognize non-formal English education—especially tutoring—as a valuable part of national language development. This includes setting clear standards for tutor qualifications, investing in training and development programs, and supporting research that helps improve the quality of non-

formal learning. Encouraging more learner-centered and motivation-focused tutoring can strengthen the overall education system and help ensure more equitable access to meaningful English language learning opportunities.

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