

# Learning Climate Support and EFL Students' Autonomy and Motivation in Online Learning in Indonesia

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## Article History

Received: 08 August 2023

Reviewed: 13 September 2023

Accepted: 03 October 2023

Published: 25 November 2023

**Keywords:** learning motivation, learning climate support, learning autonomy, online learning, EFL

**Abstract:** Autonomy, motivation, and learning climate are significant factors in online learning. This study aims to determine the students' motivation and autonomy in online English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. It also classifies the Learning Climate Support (LCS). This quantitative study used the Perceived Locus of Causality Scale for academic motivation in university (PLOC-U) and the Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ 15). It involved 134 students from nine universities in Java, Indonesia. The results show that most students were on a moderate level in intrinsic motivation ( $m=5.25$ ), regulated identification ( $m=5.74$ ), regulated introjection ( $m=4.85$ ), and external motivation ( $m=4.95$ ). The mean of motivation loss was at a low level of 2.73. Most students were 'regulated identification' learners, which showed that most students were one step closer to being intrinsic or autonomous learners. Furthermore, LCQ indicated moderate acceptance of lecturers' empathy and engagement in classes but a lower level of students' assertiveness. The findings suggest that students did not experience demotivation in online learning, and students' goals highly motivated students in online learning. The perceived LCS implies the need to improve learning instructions in online classes.

## INTRODUCTION

Motivation is the most critical variable in classes and learning outcomes (Iftanti et al., 2023, p. 97; Zeynali et al., 2019). Hence, evaluating students' motivation and learning climate support in online courses is essential to provide data for the sustainable development of online learning, particularly in EFL classes. The data on students' motivation can indicate autonomous learners, and learning climate support shows aspects to improve in EFL online learning.

Online learning has played a significant role in education development since 2020 in Indonesia. It is a learning method adopted from the beginning of COVID-19 in 2020 until 2021 by most schools and universities in Indonesia. COVID-19 has laid a foundation for online learning in education despite its massive impacts on social, health, and economic spheres.

Iftanti et al. (2023) found that learning climate support, such as teachers and infrastructure, contributed to conducting effective online learning.

The use of online courses in language learning can be traced to three decades ago (Alberth, 2011, pp. 16-17; Fukushima, 2006, p. 76). Before the emergence of COVID-19, online learning was experiencing an annual growth rate of 15.4% within educational institutions (Alqahtani & Rajkhan, 2020, p. 1). The pandemic identified in December 2019 (Skar et al., 2021, p. 1553) necessitated educational institutions' adoption of online learning platforms. As a result, approximately 60% of students worldwide resorted to online learning platforms (Alqahtani & Rajkhan, 2020, p. 1).

In the last two or three years, studies have linked online courses to many aspects of education. Skar et al. (2021) found that students obtained lower grades for handwriting fluency, attitude toward writing, and writing quality in Norway. Other studies show that instructors' technological proficiency, online instructional practices, and course quality affect motivation (Teodorescu et al., 2022). Alqahtani and Rajkhan (2020) scrutinized success factors in online learning, including technology management, support, and students' awareness of the systems. Okada and Sheehy (2020) stated three types of motivation in class: groups of students who experienced fun in socio-constructivist learning, no fun in traditional transmissive, and disturbing fun in constructivist learning. Some studies stated negative aspects and students' perceptions of online classes. Pamungkas (2021) found the loss of local values indicating negative aspects of online learning. Regarding perception, Rojabi (2020) studied the use of Microsoft Teams, which can motivate students to participate in online classes. Utama et al. (2020) showed that medical students viewed several learning platforms positively.

Purwaningsih and Dardjito (2021), who observed using the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model in a middle school in Indonesia, discovered that grades seven and eight did not meet the basic criteria for accomplishment, but grades nine and ten did. Nuzulia and Kepirianto (2020), using a quasi-trial non-equivalent control group design, showed that board games could reduce students' anxiety levels in online dialogue. Ferdiansyah et al. (2020) observed online literature circles and found that the method mediated university students to engage in reading tasks in a meaningful way despite the challenges of remote learning. Furthermore, some studies were related to online classes in teaching media. Algiovan and Roza (2020) found that most English teachers in vocational schools in Lampung used WhatsApp to deliver material in online classes. Sari and Putri (2022) stated various teaching media in

Yogyakarta, including chat and messages, assessment tools, video conferencing, learning management systems, content makers, video learning, and sharing platforms.

Evaluations of online learning indicated loss and some aspects of motivation. Meanwhile, the Indonesian Ministry of Education reported a learning loss in literacy (Kemdikbud, 2021), and students' literacy levels have declined. Furthermore, a recent study evaluating motivation levels showed that individuals learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) experienced a sense of demotivation during online learning sessions (Iftanti et al., 2023). The study approached students' demotivation using Dörnyei and Ushioda's theory (2011) with an open-ended questionnaire. The result obtained during the peak season of the COVID-19 pandemic found that online learning experiences were the main factor affecting EFL students' demotivation in learning English. Furthermore, Iftanti et al. (2023) stated some factors affecting the learning procedures: teachers, infrastructures, family, and student-related demotivators.

Some studies analyzed autonomous learning in university contexts in Indonesia. Ariebowo (2021, p. 72) classified Indonesian students as moderately autonomous learners, even though the data collection instruments focused on students' learning objectives and preferences. Mulyati (2022) found that students in a university had inadequate learning autonomy. The study used three learning autonomy aspects: planning, monitoring and organizing, and evaluation of learning. Susanti et al. (2023) studied a university in East Java, Indonesia, and found that "the capacity of EFL student teachers during online learning was moderate."

This study analyzed students' motivation, autonomy, and the learning climate support in online EFL classes. However, this study used different approaches to collect data: the causality orientation scale of self-determination theory and the Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ). The approaches can give different perspectives in describing students' motivation, autonomy and learning climate. This study collected the data from nine universities.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Online Learning**

Online learning is "the use of various technological tools that are web-based, web distributed, or web capable for education" (Alqahtani & Rajkhan, 2020, p. 2). The delivery of learning materials through technology without physical contact between students and teachers, known as online modes, can be employed with blended learning, which combines both virtual and face-to-face classes (Muhammad et al., 2016, p. 285).

Volery and Lord (2000, pp. 217-218) identified three critical success factors in online learning: effectiveness, technology, and instructor-student characteristics. Furthermore, Alberth (2011, p. 18) proposed six success factors: the characteristics of students and teachers, instructional design, provision of support, technology, and language skills. Other factors that influence successful classes are motivation and learning climate support. Motivation can affect students' engagement in the classroom (Oga-Baldwin, 2019; Sanjaya et al., 2022, p. 149). Williams and Deci (1996) found that a learning climate in which the instructors are more "autonomy-supportive" encouraged students to be more autonomous.

Iftanti et al. (2023, p. 104) stated six aspects that demotivate students about online learning. The first factor was teachers' behaviors, such as insufficient teaching strategy and materials and unfair assessment. The second was students' attitudes, which included bad time management and an inability to understand learning materials. Some unsupported factors were an unfriendly study environment and learning ecosystem, unstable internet connection, and bad supporting facilities, such as gadget error.

### **Learning Motivation and Autonomy**

Deci and Ryan (1985) proposed the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to measure students' motivation in learning, which indicates autonomous learners. SDT has "a general causality orientation scale" (Deci & Ryan, 1985) to determine external, introjection, identification, and intrinsic motivations (Ryan & Connell, 1989, p. 752). "[SDT] posits that the regulation of behavior varies in the extent to which it is controlled versus autonomous" (Williams & Deci, 1996, p. 768). Even though it was proposed more than two decades ago, it is the reference for current studies to analyze students' motivation.

External motivation indicates controlled learners (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Williams & Deci, 1996) in which external authority (such as punishment, rule compliance, etc.) motivates students' behavior. "The control orientation involves people's behavior being organized with respect to controls in the environment or inside themselves" (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Introjection is the beginning of internalization, in which an individual takes in unaccepted external regulations (Williams & Deci, 1996). Ryan and Connell (1989) called it "esteem-based pressures to act," in which one's actions are motivated by "avoidance of guilt" or "other approval." Identification involves goals or values driving one's actions (Ryan & Connell, 1989). It is the closest level to autonomous learners, and students know that "it is important for

general education and professional and personal future” (Sánchez de Miguel et al., 2017). Integration brings external regulations into harmony with the self (Williams & Deci, 1996). The last motivation is intrinsic, in which enjoyment or fun motivates student actions (Ryan & Connell, 1989). These motivations encourage students to study to increase their competence based on personal interests. It indicates autonomous learners, and Deci and Ryan (1985, p. 132) introduced ‘amotivation’ indicating “non-motivated behavior” (Goudas et al., 1994, p. 454). The other four motivations have positive values, while amotivation has negative values. “Individuals do not aim at internal or external rewards, and feelings of incompetence and uncontrollability are prevailing” in amotivation (Goudas et al., 1994, p. 454).

Based on the self-determination theory, Goudas et al. (1994) developed the Perceived Locus of Control (PLOC) (Sánchez de Miguel et al., 2017, p. 3). ‘Locus’ is the degree of one’s control over behavior (Rotter, 1966; Sánchez de Miguel et al., 2017). Sánchez de Miguel et al. (2017) then adapted the PLOC into the university context (PLOC-U), which includes students’ possible career of joining a particular class in a university department. Meanwhile, the PLOC-U questionnaire has 20 items and comprises intrinsic, regulated identification, regulated introjection, external motivations, and amotivation (Sánchez de Miguel et al., 2017, p. 4).

Sánchez de Miguel et al. (2017, p. 4) classify the PLOC-U as follows: intrinsic motivation consists of four reasons: (1) “Because <subject name> is fun,” (2) “Because I enjoy learning new things,” (3) “Because <subject name> is interesting,” and (4) “Because I find satisfaction in acquiring new knowledge and written-oral skills.” The four loci of causality of regulated identification are (5) “Because I want to learn and acquire an understanding of <psychology>,” (6) “Because it is important to do well in <subject name>,” (7) “Because I want to improve my training as a <psychologist>,” and (8) “Because I learn things which I can then apply in other areas of my life.” Furthermore, regulated introjection, which is students’ dependency on lecturers and classmates, is (9) “Because I want the professor to think of me as a good student,” (10) “Because I would feel bad if I did not,” (11) “Because I want my fellows to think of me as a good student,” and (12) “Because I fret when I do not go.” External motivations indicate students’ fear of punishments, namely (13) “Because I will have problems if I do not,” (14) “Because it is what I am supposed to do,” (15) “the professor does not single me out,” and (16) “Because I believe the system requires me to go to this class even though attendance is optional.” Finally, amotivation, indicating a loss of student motivation, consists of four items, (17) “But I do not know why I do,” (18) “But I do not understand why we have to study <subject

name>,” (19) “But I think I am wasting my time in <subject name>,” and (20) “But I do not think I am getting much out of <subject name>.”

### **Learning Climate Support**

Learning climate support (LCS) can affect students' autonomy. LCS comprises students' perception of teachers' instructions. Susanti et al. (2023) argue that learning instruction can foster students' autonomy. The Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ) is an instrument to measure LCS. It has fifteen items and measures students' perception of lecturers as supporting their autonomy (Simon & Salanga, 2021, p. 4; Williams & Deci, 1996, p. 770). Williams and Deci (1996) adapted LCQ from “The Health-Care Climate Questionnaire.” A test among 131 students indicated that all items loaded .66 or higher on the single factor with an alpha reliability scale of .96 (Núñez et al., 2012, p. 1467; Williams & Deci, 1996, p. 770).

Simon and Salanga (2021, p. 5) listed the LCQ-15, which indicated aspects of class engagement, such as academic and emotional management. (1) “I can be open with my instructor during class,” (2) “My instructor encouraged me to ask questions,” (3) “My instructor answers my questions fully and carefully,” (4) “My instructor listens to how I would like to do things,” and (5) “My instructor handles people's emotions very well.” The next ten items are (6) “I feel understood by my instructor,” (7) “I feel that my instructor accepts me,” (8) “I feel a lot of trust in my instructor,” (9) “I feel that my instructor cares about me as a person,” (10) “I don't feel very good about the way my instructor talks to me,” and (11) “I feel able to share my feelings with my instructor,” (12) “I feel that my instructor provides me choices and options,” (13) “My instructor conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the course,” (14) “My instructor made sure I [...] understood the goals of the course and what I need to do,” and (15) “My instructor tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way.”

### **METHODS**

This quantitative study used questionnaires distributed using Google Forms to nine universities in Java, mediated by WhatsApp, to collect the data when the threat of COVID-19 decreased, and EFL students began to take offline lectures. This study used random sampling to choose the universities and students. A questionnaire link was sent to universities' lecturers, and they were asked to share the link with master's degree students and third and fifth-semester undergraduate students of the English Education Department. The students experienced online

learning for four semesters during 2020-2021. One hundred thirty-five students in nine universities in Java, Indonesia, filled out the Google forms, and one respondent was eliminated for not agreeing with the research consent.

This study used the Perceived Locus of Causality Scale for academic motivation in university (PLOC-U) (Sánchez de Miguel et al., 2017) and the Learning Climate Questionnaire of 15 items (Simon & Salanga, 2021; Williams & Deci, 1996). PLOC-U has four positive motivations: intrinsic motivation, regulated identification, regulated introjection, external motivation, and negative behavior, i.e., amotivation. All items were on a seven-point Likert scale, as suggested by Deci and Ryan (1985, pp. 117-118). The scale was divided into three levels: 1-2 indicated low motivation, 3-5 was moderate, and 6-7 showed high motivation. This study translated English questionnaires into Bahasa Indonesia to provide better clarity to students, e.g., *Karena saya ingin belajar dan memperoleh pemahaman tentang calon guru* 'Because I want to learn and acquire an understanding of being a teacher candidate.'

The adaptation process combined forward and backward translation designs (Hambleton, 2005, p. 12). The forward and backward-translation design involved four steps. First, a translator adapted English versions to Indonesian questionnaires, and another translator judged the translation. Revisions were made in the process, and the Indonesian versions were brought to the second step: professional translators and proofreaders back-translated the questionnaires in the target language into English. Third was Expert judgment, in which four EFL experts rated the degree of similarity and difference between the original and back-translated questionnaires. Some problems arise and affect the assessment in this process. Therefore, this study decided to have the fourth action, discussing the original questionnaire, the Indonesian version, and the reversed translation with the evaluators to bridge the problems.

The analysis procedures involved a descriptive statistic test to obtain students' motivation and perceived learning climate support. The statistic showed the degree of students' motivation and learning climate support. The mean (m) of each type of student motivation was compared to classify students' autonomy in online learning. For example, the higher the m score of intrinsic motivation, the higher the degree of students' autonomy in online learning. Meanwhile, the data on extrinsic motivation showed controlled learners, i.e., students join the class because of external factors, such as obeying rules or fear of punishments. Other types of motivation indicated "[i]nternalization, ... the process through which external regulations are transformed into internal regulations ... It is thus the means through which initially controlled behaviors can become autonomous" (Williams & Deci, 1996, p. 768). The mean (m) is

calculated in two steps: first, the number of respondents' answers to each questionnaire item is divided by the number of respondents; second, the average of all items in one type of motivation is added up and then divided by the number of items in that type of motivation. Furthermore, the statistical data of LCS indicated students' perception of learning climate support of online learning.

## FINDINGS

### Students' Motivation

PLOC-U questionnaire resulted in five types of student motivation. The highest motivation was regulated identification, followed by intrinsic motivation, external motivation, regulated introjection, and amotivation or demotivation. Table 1 shows that each motivation has four questions, 134 respondents, minimum and maximum scores, mean, and standard deviation. It can also be used to determine students' autonomy in class.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of students' motivation

	K	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Intrinsic	4	134	2	7	5.25	.96
Identification	4	134	2.5	7	5.74	1
Introjection	4	134	1.25	7	4.85	1.33
External	4	134	1	7	4.95	1.23
Amotivation	4	134	1	6.75	2.73	1.29
			<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>4.71</b>	

### Perceived Learning Climate Support

LCQ indicates three aspects, namely students' assertiveness in class (i.e., LC1 and LC11), perceived lecturers' empathy (i.e., LC6 and LC9), and engagement in classes (i.e., LC2-5, LC7-8, LC10, and LC12-15). In general, Table 2 shows students perceived LCS moderately (m=4.1–m=5.6), except LC10 (m=3.1). Lecturers' support for teaching management (m=5–5.6) is higher than empathy for students (m=4.5– 4.8) and their openness (m=4.1–4.4). Lecturers were able to manage questions and answers in class through the two highest LCSs.

**Table 2.** Students' perception of LCS

No.	LCS	M	Description
1.	LC2	5.6	My instructor encouraged me to ask questions
2.	LC3	5.5	My instructor answers my questions fully and carefully
3.	LC7	5.3	I feel that my instructor accepts me



4.	LC12	5.3	I feel that my instructor provides me with choices and options
5.	LC14	5.3	My instructor made sure I [...] understood the goals of the course and what I needed to do
6.	LC8	5.2	I feel a lot of trust in my instructor
7.	LC4	5.1	My instructor listens to how I would like to do things
8.	LC5	5.1	My instructor handles people's emotions very well
9.	LC13	5	My instructor conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the course
10.	LC15	5	My instructor tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way
11.	LC6	4.8	I feel understood by my instructor
12.	LC9	4.5	I feel that my instructor cares about me as a person
13.	LC1	4.4	I [can be] open with my instructor during class
14.	LC11	4.1	I feel able to share my feelings with my instructor
15.	LC10	3.1	I don't feel very good about the way my instructor talks to me
<b>Total average</b>		<b>4.9</b>	

## DISCUSSION

### Students' Motivation and Autonomous Learners

Table 1 shows the relationship between EFL students' motivation and autonomous learners. The mean of regulated identification is the highest at 5.7, which indicates that most of the students are goal-oriented motivation. Therefore, students' goals, such as becoming good teachers, acquiring new knowledge, and the awareness to do well in the subjects, significantly affect the motivation to take EFL classes. Comparing intrinsic ( $m=5.25$ ) and external motivations ( $m=4.95$ ) shows that the tendency to be autonomous learners is higher than controlled students (those who joined the class because of external factors). The regulated identification value at 5.74 is higher than the regulated introjection at 4.85, strengthening this tendency. Identification motivation is one step closer to intrinsic, which indicates independent learners. Regarding goal-oriented students, lecturers should inform the students' learning outcomes to convince them to attend the classes.

Online learning did not make English Education students lose motivation to attend EFL classes, and the mean of amotivation was 2.73 on the seven-point Linkert scale. Amotivation is "the absence of motivation or intentionality typically where a student can find no reason for the behavior concerned" (Sánchez de Miguel et al., 2017). Even though the students did not lose interest in learning, they had moderate enthusiasm in all aspects of motivation. The average student motivation scale ranges from 4.95-5.74 (see Table 1).

The finding on students' amotivation or demotivation differed from the previous study. According to a study conducted during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant

majority of EFL university students, namely 97.4%, reportedly experienced demotivation (Iftanti et al., 2023, pp. 101-102). The results indicated that online learning had a negative impact on students' enthusiasm, resulting in passive learning and low self-regulated learning. A subsequent survey conducted by this study after the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, when students had returned to university, did not show any significant instances of demotivation among the participants. The two different findings of Iftanti et al. (2023) and this study on EFL students' amotivation in two different time settings can indicate successful adaptation to online learning.

Furthermore, online learning posed a significant challenge for English lecturers and EFL students in the initial stages and at the peak of the pandemic. The low perception of students' learning behavior and lecturers' strategies indicated they were adequately prepared to engage in online learning (cf. Iftanti et al., 2023, p. 104). While Iftanti et al. (2023) found demotivation students at the university level, Nuzulia and Kepirianto (2020, p. 272) showed similar experiences among Junior high school (*SMP*) students who were passive and afraid of speaking English. The successful adaptation was indicated by the increased motivation of students to attend online learning when the survey was conducted after the students returned to offline classes. Table 1 shows an intermediate level of motivation.

### **Learning Climate Support of EFL Online Classes**

The improvements in learning climate change also indicated the adaptation process to online learning. Meanwhile, Iftanti et al. (2023, p. 104) found a negative perception of lecturers' teaching strategies, which were less interesting and effective, as well as lacked explanation and feedback. Table 2 shows intermediate improvement in the perceived lecturers' teaching strategies and behaviors. It indicated ten aspects of lecturers' behavior were at moderate levels ( $m=5.6-5$  of 7 scales). Among the moderate levels of LCS, the highest learning climate was how lecturers promote active learning (LC2), followed by effective feedback (LC3, LC12, and LC 14). Other effective learning climates were psychological factors, such as how lecturers showed acceptance and trust to students (LC7, LC8, and LC13), listened to students (LC4), and handled their emotions (LC5) and ideas (LC15).

In addition to addressing the issue of students' motivation, lecturers facilitating online learning must also pay attention to assertiveness, specifically LC1 and LC11, currently ranked as the lowest. Failure to address these factors may impede students' ability to actively engage

in online teaching and learning. According to Table 2, in EFL online class engagements, students' assertiveness is at lower levels (LC1:  $m=4.4$  and LC:  $m=4.1$ ) among the general moderate means. LC1 can be categorized as behavioral engagement, indicating effort and persistence in seeking knowledge and avoiding misinformation (Fredricks et al., 2004, p. 62), and LC11 shows emotional engagement, showing "affective reactions in the classroom" (cf. Fredricks et al., 2004, p. 62). The conditions indicate that the students were not fully open to learning involvement, and there were higher barriers to expressing feelings, moods, misunderstandings, and other related class activities.

LC10 must be interpreted differently as a negative statement (i.e., 'do not'), which differs from the others. The negative value indicates that the lower the student's perception, the better the lecturer's performance. Even though LC10 ( $m=3.1$ ) has a lower mean, it indicates the moderate or acceptable performance of how lecturers talked to students.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study found a moderate level of motivation. Goal-oriented students dominated the type of online learners, in which students tended to have regulated identification motivation. It was followed by intrinsic motivation (where students enjoyed the learning processes and were also capable of independent learning), controlled and regulated introjection students. The regulated identification motivation indicated students' internalization of being autonomous learners; they were one step closer to becoming independent learners (intrinsic motivation). To motivate the 'regulated identification' students, the lecturers, instructors or professors must explain the relationship between the classes and students' future careers, e.g., the contribution of 'Critical Reading' Class to a student's career as a teacher.

Tables 1 and 2 show that EFL students perceived the learning climate moderately ( $m=4.89$ ). The moderate level of perceived LCS among moderate motivation levels of goal-oriented students implies that the lecturers should improve the LCS quality and offer more attractive outcomes. Another aspect that can be a barrier to EFL online learning is the lower level of students' assertiveness, which can prevent students from being active in class. Students' unwillingness to share feelings and be open to lecturers, instructors, or professors can have some implications on learning. Students are reluctant to raise questions or inform an uncomfortable learning climate. Hence, the lecturers, instructors, or professors needed help identifying students' achievement and learning climate supports, which attract students and make them enjoy the learning process.

## LIMITATIONS AND STUDY FORWARD

This study was only able to reach Universities in Java. For further research, it is suggested to cover more universities outside Java, Indonesia.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was funded by the Center of Research and Social Services of IAIN Salatiga. The research team is deeply grateful to the expert team from the English Education Department of UIN Salatiga, who evaluated the adapted questionnaires and Colleagues and students from UIN Salatiga, Unissula Semarang, UIN Raden Mas Said, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, UIN KH. Abdurrahan Wahid, UIN Maliki, UIN KH. Syaifudin Zuhri, Universitas Tidar, IAIN Kediri, and IAIN Kudus, who participated in data collection.

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