

THE INFLUENCE OF K-POP IDOLS ON THE STUDENTS' ENGLISH LEARNING MOTIVATION: DOES GENDER MATTER?

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Abstract: Amid globalization and technological advances, the Korean Wave, or Hallyu, the so-called Korean popular culture, significantly impacts Indonesian youth lifestyles. Hallyu spreads rapidly through global fan participation, with social networking services becoming a common communication medium among K-pop fans. Hallyu influences lifestyles, cultures, and motivations to learn English. This study examines the influence of K-pop idols on students' motivation to learn English and the role of gender. The research employed a mixed-method approach with a sequential explanatory design. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v25, utilizing the independent sample t-test on questionnaire responses. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 60 participants, 30 fanboys, and fangirls from Java. Qualitative data were analyzed by transcribing Zoom interviews with the four participants who had the highest motivation scores. Findings indicated no significant gender difference in motivation to learn English through K-pop idols, with both fanboys and fangirls showing similar motivation levels. Interviews revealed that K-pop idols positively influence their fans' English learning, inspiring and motivating them. Future researchers should expand their network to local and international K-pop fan communities through social media, online forums, or K-pop events, clearly explaining research objectives and inviting more fans to participate in interviews. This approach will enrich research analysis and yield more comprehensive findings.

Keywords: English learning, Motivation, K-pop Idol, Gender

INTRODUCTION

Cultural changes in Indonesia are occurring quite rapidly due to rapid technological advances in the current era of modernization (Sakinah et al., 2022). Apart from that, we must realize that technology also has positive and negative impacts. With the help of technology, which can help us learn more about the world and increase access to information, we can even observe other cultures without traveling far. In this period, various cultures entered Indonesia and changed everything significantly, from thought patterns and behavior to lifestyle patterns. Amid globalization and technological advances, the impact of the Korean Wave or Hallyu can be felt in Indonesia.

K-pop, or "Korean pop music," refers to various genres of popular music from South Korea (Yenti et al., 2022). Hallyu, often known as the Korean Wave, is the name given to the global spread of Korean popular culture. Korea began exporting pop culture through entertainment and competing with countries such as the United States and Europe. K-pop is

another term often used to define the type of music, songs, and dances produced by South Korean idols, including girl bands, boy bands, and solo singers. These K-pop idols are usually not only talented musicians and dancers but also idols with aesthetic and charming figures. Addictive melodies, distinctive musical styles, sleek choreography, and attractive singers are the key elements of K-pop that have helped it quickly conquer the world (Faiza, 2020).

According to Hayanda (2022) and Nisrina et al. (2020), K-pop is a significant factor in increasing motivation to learn English among its fans. K-pop content presented in various forms such as magazines, interviews, reality shows, and fictional stories often uses English subtitles. This provides an opportunity for K-pop fans to deepen their English skills. The video content they upload also often uses English, so fans can increase their vocabulary by watching K-pop videos. In addition, fanbase accounts that update and share news about their favorite idols mostly come from foreign English-speaking fanbases (Hayanda, 2022). This shows that K-pop fans have the opportunity to deepen their English to get the latest information about their idols.

In the research findings of Faiza (2020), 70% of participants agreed that K-pop stimulates them to learn English, and 30% of participants said no. It shows that most K-popers feel that their interest in K-pop motivates them to learn or get to know English more. Interest in K-pop encourages K-pop fans to improve their understanding of English because English links them and their idols. Learning English allows them to communicate fluently and gain more in-depth information about their idols. In her research, Faiza underlines that the main factors that motivate them to learn English are interest, fascination, and curiosity to get as much information about their K-pop idols as possible. In the context of K-pop idols' motivation to learn English, this motivation tends to fall into the integrative motivation category.

Gardner (1985) suggested two main motivations in language learning, instrumental and integrative, as referred to by Root (2009). Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) described these motivations as orientation towards learning, emphasizing that depending on the focus of the learner (either career-related or academic, called "instrumental," or socially or cultural, known to be "integrative"), a variety of requirements must be met in Foreign Language Teaching. Integrative motivation reflects a positive attitude towards the target language community, indicating a desire to absorb and adapt to the new culture through language use (Gardner, 1985).

On the other hand, instrumental motivation is related to the practical reasons for learning a language, such as career advancement or fulfilling language requirements (Gardner, 1985). Therefore, the motivation to learn English through K-pop idols is a clear example of integrative motivation. In this case, K-pop fans not only learn English to communicate but also to understand and immerse themselves in the culture and community behind the K-pop industry. By following their idols, fans become emotionally and culturally engaged, so learning English allows them to engage better and understand the world they love. Thus, learning English allows them to understand their world better.

In addition to motivation, the role of gender in the lives of individuals also appears to be significant in many aspects. Catalan (2003) emphasized that gender differences have a strong influence on educational development, especially learning preferences and interactions within an educational environment. In addition, Catalan highlighted that an understanding of gender roles broadly contributes to the development of the field of psychology by providing a deeper understanding of behavioral patterns and emotional responses that are often different between men and women. In accordance with that, research by Ajlouni et al. (2020) adds a dimension related to motivational differences between genders. The research found significant differences in the types of motivation based on gender, where female students tend to have a higher motivation to learn than male students.

Research conducted by Cahyati and Abdulrahman (2020) used a qualitative approach method with a case study design and used five female participants using interviews. They found that reading fanfiction that uses idol characters can unconsciously increase knowledge in writing, reading comprehension, and informal vocabulary. The same method and approach were also used by Faiza (2020), namely, a qualitative method with a case study design. The research found that interest in K-pop encourages K-pop fans to learn English because English helps fans to support and connect with their interests, and curiosity about K-pop encourages fans to learn more English. Apart from that, research by Hayanda (2022) used a quantitative method by distributing relevant questionnaires. The results show that K-pop and K-drama not only have a negative impact but there are many positive things we can take from this fangirling activity. One example is learning English indirectly. Hayanda (2022) suggested that future research use both female and male respondents.

Related to the previous explanation, although various previous studies have investigated several things regarding motivation to learn English through kpop idols, this topic is still interesting to discuss because the current research will focus on differences in participants, regions, and methods used. This research aims to investigate whether there are

significant differences in students' learning motivation through Kpop idols based on gender and how Kpop idols can motivate fans to learn English. Therefore, there are two main research questions discussed in this research.

1. Is there any significant difference in students' English learning motivation among K-pop Idols across genders?
2. How do K-pop idols influence students' motivation to learn English?

METHOD

Research Design

This research employed a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research to address complex questions. According to Creswell (2002), a mixed method is a research approach that combines quantitative research with qualitative research. Specifically, this study follows a sequential explanatory approach. It first collects and analyzes quantitative data, then follows up with qualitative data to explore the findings in greater depth. The main goal is to determine if there is a significant difference in students' English learning motivation influenced by K-pop idols across genders and to understand how K-pop idols affect this motivation. Quantitative data is the main focus, with qualitative data adding more detail and context.

Participants

In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling to select participants. Sugiyono (2013) states that purposive sampling is a sampling technique with specific considerations. This means that sampling is based on certain considerations or criteria formulated by the researcher in advance. The population of this study was taken from the K-poppers community on WhatsApp and Twitter in Indonesia. In this study, the sample criteria are K-pop fans around Java aged 15 to 24 years who have the following characteristics: they actively participate in K-pop content, such as listening to music and watching vlog videos, with an estimated time of at least 5 hours a day. In addition, K-poppers who meet the criteria are involved in English learning activities. Additional criteria are those who have been K-pop fans for over two years. The total samples from this study were 30 females and 30 males.

Instruments

The researcher used a five-scale questionnaire adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) to answer the first research question. The researcher took 25 question items relevant to the research objectives. The statements in the questionnaire are measured using a Likert scale. The 5-point scale, ranging from 'Strongly

Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree' (Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5).

Meanwhile, to answer the second research problem, the researcher used interviews. The researcher employed semi-structured interviews to gather data, tailoring the participants' experiences to the writer's purpose and intent for the research (Yulianti & Mukminin, 2021). The informants of this qualitative approach were four students selected as interview participants for this study. Two of them were fangirls with the highest English learning motivation in their group, and the other two were fanboys with the same motivation. The interview questions are designed to explore various aspects of how K-pop influences its fans, particularly focusing on their motivation to learn English.

Data Collection

The quantitative data collection began with adapting and translating Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) questionnaire into Indonesian to enhance respondent understanding and participation. The translated questionnaire was validated by an expert and then created as a Google Form with instructions. The form was then distributed to respondents. For qualitative data, interviews were conducted via Zoom. Participants were introduced, and each 15-minute interview was conducted in Indonesian to ensure comfort and accuracy. Interviews were recorded with permission, and key points were noted and later transcribed.

Data Analysis

In this study, to address the research questions, the researcher used a Causal Comparative design approach to analyze the quantitative data with the help of IBM SPSS v25 statistical software. The data were analyzed using the T-test to compare variable X and variable Y. For the qualitative data analysis, Content Analysis was employed, following the procedure proposed by Renz et al. (2018). This procedure involved transcribing interview results, reading the transcripts, taking notes on the transcripts to include various information, defining the unit of analysis using themes that represent pertinent ideas or issues, developing a coding schema to organize the data, coding all texts, concluding the coded data, and summarizing and interpreting the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

Is There Any Significant Differences in Students' English Learning Motivation Among K-pop Idols Across Genders?

The findings of this study are based on data analysis obtained through questionnaires from K-pop fans learning English. The research focuses on identifying the differences in English learning motivation between the two gender groups. The table below presents the results of the analysis:

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Learning Motivation	Equal variances assumed	.240	.626	.133	58	.895	.400	3.005	-5.616	6.416
	Equal variances not assumed			.133	57.029	.895	.400	3.005	-5.618	6.418

The IBM SPSS v25 analysis results show a significance score (sig) of 0.895, indicating that the score is much greater than the commonly used significance level of 0.05. This suggests that there is no significant difference between gender and motivation to learn English through K-pop idols in the sample that has been studied. This result implied that both male and female students are equally motivated to learn English through their interest in K-pop idols.

How Do K-pop Idols Influence Students' Motivation to Learn English?

In addition, to answer the second research question, "How do K-pop idols influence students' motivation to learn English?", the researcher used interviews with 4 participants, two females and two males, who have been K-pop fans for five years. Through this interview, these participants shared positive perspectives on how K-pop idols influence students' motivation to learn English.

All participants saw that they used Twitter to stalk their idols, and the information they got came from various sources using various languages, such as Indonesian and English. Many international fans share news about K-pop idols in English. From this information, participants preferred to read news in English instead of Indonesian. As the first participant said, she said:

"If there is an update about bias or idols on Twitter, I usually use English, but if it is a bit confusing, I translate it, but if I can understand the meaning and intent, I do not translate it" (P1).

The first participant stated that he usually prefers to read information about his idols in English. Unless the meaning needs to be clarified, he will translate it. The fourth participant reinforced this statement; he said that BlackPink's official account tends to post news in English, but if the information is written in Korean, he will translate it into English. He stated:

"On Twitter, Blackpink's official account, most of the news is in English, but sometimes if the information is written in Korean, exactly I translated it into English" (P4)

On Twitter, there are many fictional stories written by fans using K-pop idols as the main characters. Many of the stories are in English or a mixture of Indonesian and English. Participants 1 and 3 agreed that reading fiction stories with idols as the main characters can improve their English language skills. The first participant stated:

"I really like reading fiction stories on Twitter or other platforms where the main character is a K-pop idol, especially if there is Mark Lee and the language is mixed with English. I feel like my English vocabulary has improved without having to study formally" (P1)

The same statement as what the third participant said, he said:

"I have read several fiction stories on Twitter that use both English and Indonesian languages, and whenever I encounter unfamiliar words, I make sure to look up their meanings" (P3)

From their statements, they are more enthusiastic about learning English instead of using their idols as motivation to study. The first participant stated:

"My bias is Mark Lee and he is from Canada. He is good at English. So the motivation is " my bias can speak English so I should speak English too" (P1)

As the first participant stated, the second participant gave the same answer when fans see an idol proficient in English, it will indirectly increase fan motivation to learn English. Moreover, she stated:

"If the fan is interested in English, indirectly when he sees an idol with good English or other motivating things, then his subconscious will also generate motivation to learn English. Then I found that K-pop idols who are good at English or can speak more than one language are idols who can be considered smart and have broader insights (compared to idols who can only speak Korean), so I see evidence that language can also support my confidence to expand relationships and insights. Lastly, I want to be more comfortable and fluent when interacting with international fans, and maybe I can meet the K-pop idol. There is an intermediary to interact using English, which means using the international language, namely English" (P2)

The third participant (P3) is a fanboy and his answer is not much different from the previous answers of fangirls (P1 and P2), he said:

"I was motivated by one of the idol groups, New Jeans. They are still teenagers, and almost all are fluent in English. Apart from those born speaking English, the purely Korean members are no less proficient in English when they are still teenagers. Therefore, as a teenager, I also felt compelled to learn English like them" (P3)

Another fanboy, the last participant (P4) said the same perspective as P2 that English is an international language and this language can be a bridge for interacting with fellow fans and Kpop idols. He stated:

"I was very impressed with Lisa BlackPink's ability to speak multi-languages when she performed at her concerts. Her ability to adapt to the language spoken in each place she visits, such as Japan, Dubai, or Singapore, shows me how important English language skills are in interacting with international fans" (P4)

Similarly, the four participants also said they were pleased when their K-pop idols motivated them to learn English. As mentioned in the first participant:

"I'm thrilled because English is also beneficial and also because of Mark Lee, my English in class gets good scores, and I often take part in English speech competitions representing the school" (P1)

Meanwhile, the second participant also felt happy because of the motivation to learn English from K-pop idols, which added positive motives and reasons for becoming a fan. She said:

"Of course, happy! "In my opinion, I should feel that way because it motivates me to learn something good so that I can add one good motive and reason to become a K-pop fan while looking for fun through hobbies and things that I like" (P2)

The third participant also felt happy. He got to know these K-pop idols because he could learn many things from them, including how they overcame the challenges of learning English amidst their busy schedules as international artists. Thus, engagement with K-pop has become a source of inspiration and motivation for them in their learning and pursuit of pleasure. He said:

"My feelings, I am happy to get to know them. Through them, I can learn and gain knowledge that may be insignificant for non-fans. Like how they started their debut and learned English with a schedule that coincides with the world of entertainment, they must have struggled to learn it because they have practically become an international artist. They must be able to cope if they communicate with foreigners" (P3)

The fourth participant also felt the same joy as previous participants because they received positive encouragement from their K-pop idols. He said that the motivation from Kpop Idol encouraged him to continue improving his English skills. He mentioned:

"Yes, of course, I am very happy because they give a good booster to their fans. It also motivated me to improve my English because Lisa couldn't go on a tour again, and I still used Sundanese. That's why I have to keep learning English so that in the future, I can interact with Lisa in English. English is a universal language, right?" (P4)

The last participant realized that English language skills were essential when joining an Idol tour or interacting with other K-pop idols because English is a universal language for cross-cultural communication. Thus, the enthusiasm and motivation of K-pop idols encourage personal growth in learning English.

Discussions

Is There Any Significant Differences in Students' English Learning Motivation Among K-pop Idols Across Genders?

This research showed no significant differences in the motivation to learn English across genders. So, this research is in line with research conducted by Rengganis (2015). She found that there was no significant difference between gender and motivation. The score obtained is 0.498, indicating that the correlation between the overall motivation score and gender shows that the strength of the correlation is relatively weak, which illustrates that there is no significant relationship between gender and overall motivation.

This study also supports research by Abu-Rabia (1997), which found differences without mentioning gender. Men have more vital integrative reasons for learning English due to work, college, and international travel. This can be explained by the high belief in Pakistani society that women are not destined to pursue careers in specific fields such as teaching (Ghani, 2003). These differences have more to do with social norms than gender itself.

In the context of the instrumental and integrative motivation theory developed by Gardner (1985), these results can be explained by understanding that both instrumental and integrative motivation apply equally strongly to male and female students. Instrumentally, practical needs such as better career opportunities and higher educational requirements can motivate both genders equally. Likewise, integrative motivations that include the desire to understand and interact with the English-speaking community may be felt equally by men and women, given increasing globalization and broader access to information. In this modern era, access and opportunities to learn foreign languages, especially English, no longer seem to be limited by gender factors but are more influenced by other factors, such as awareness of the practical benefits and appreciation of global culture.

However, several findings contradict the results of this study, the first research from Saaty (2022). He found an interesting conclusion from his study: female participants were generally more motivated to learn English, underlining the fact that participants of different genders had different attitudes towards learning English. One of her research participants, aged 26, answered an open-ended question by writing that her main motivation for speaking English well was a desire to learn more about American culture and introduce her culture in a good way to others. This shows that socialization and interaction with English speakers influence their motivation to learn English.

In addition, research conducted by Sukri et al. (2021) showed a difference in the level of motivation between female and male students in learning English. Female students tend to learn English to understand the language in terms of literacy and culture. On the other hand, male students are sometimes less motivated to learn English because they are more interested in practical benefits such as broadening horizons, getting a good job, and improving social status. Males showed a higher level of instrumental motivation orientation, with a total percentage of 72.50%, while females had a rate of 67.50%. In addition, women achieved a higher level of integrative motivational orientation, with a percentage of 92.50%, compared to men, who only reached 80%. From these results, men and women have different motivational orientations when learning English.

Correspondingly, Azar et al. (2020) found that most students with bachelor's degrees were instrumentally motivated toward ESL learning. This finding illustrates how students prioritize concrete gains in learning English, placing instrumental motivation above intrinsic or integrative motivation. In another comparable study by Makesavanh and Low (2022), the results provide important insights into the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) in environments with traditional collectivist values, such as Laos. The study found that female learners have a more excellent integrative drive to learn English than male learners. Strong integrative motivation in female students suggests that they are more likely to see learning English as a way to understand the culture and society around them. This could provide a foundation for a more culturally and socially focused approach to English language teaching, enhancing students' learning experience and encouraging better cross-cultural understanding.

How Do K-pop Idols Influence Students' Motivation to Learn English?

The K-pop phenomenon is not only famous in Asia but also throughout the world, causing K-pop fans to spread across various parts of the world with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This encourages Indonesian K-pop fans to change or mix languages in

their interactions. K-Pop fans enjoy interacting publicly through tweets and comments features on Twitter, where they usually exchange the latest information, photos, videos, etc. This platform indirectly encourages them to learn several languages, one of which is English, if they want to experience a globalized experience on Twitter (Febrianti et al., 2022).

On Twitter, Indonesian K-pop fans actively interact with their idols' content through comments or retweets. Sometimes, idols hold mention events that allow them to answer fans' comments. Considering that their favorite idols come from different countries and languages, they must switch or mix their languages to be understood and noticed by the idols. Based on the research by Febrianti et al. (2022), fans often switch and mix English and Korean in their comments to get the idols' attention. In her research, Faiza (2020) also noted that K-pop fans are encouraged to tweet and follow K-pop-related content on Twitter to improve their English language skills.

Aside from being a source of the latest news about K-pop idols, Twitter also serves as a popular platform for reading fiction stories where K-pop idols are cast as main characters. Many of these stories use English or a mix of Indonesian and English, creating an engaging reading experience. At this time, fans' reading ability in English has increased due to the addition of new vocabulary that they have acquired. The finding from Alhadad et al (2021) showed that reading novels or something fun in English can improve students' English skills. Similarly, the study conducted by Abdulrahman and Cahyati (2020) revealed that the motivation driving young people to read fanfiction in English, although Indonesian fanfiction is equally good. Stems from their interest in topics they are passionate about, unconsciously, this activity facilitates their learning of English. The participants in the study indicated that although they primarily learn grammar and structure through formal instruction in an academic setting, skills such as applying this knowledge in writing, reading comprehension, informal vocabulary, and overall English proficiency are largely acquired through reading fanfiction.

This study shows that K-pop idols can motivate K-pop fans to learn English. A study by Hayanda (2022) found that we can take many positive things from this fangirling activity. One example is learning English indirectly. Many K-pop idols use English to interact with international fans. This exposes fans to learning English and encourages them to understand it. As findings from Amalia (2023), her research shows that Indonesian K-pop fans are encouraged to learn English because they pay attention to their idols' English skills and their songs. Fans want to interact with their idols, which leads to the goal of learning English. In addition, Amalia also found that interaction with international K-pop fans via social media

also had a positive impact on Indonesian fans, one of which was that most of them had a strong motivation to learn English.

This aligns with previous research which indicates that Indonesian K-pop fans and international fans from English-speaking countries are more approachable in terms of conversation than fans from other countries such as South Korea, China, or Japan. This is due to the high level of English mastery among Indonesians, who have been learning the language since an early age. In addition, both Indonesian and English also use the same alphabetical system, so they have no difficulty in typing their messages (Febrianti et al., 2022).

The third participant's statement describes his motivation from one of the idol groups, New Jeans. He was inspired by the English language skills of almost all group members, including those from Korea. This admiration encouraged him, as a teenager, to learn English and aspire to be like them. This is in line with research by Rohaliya and Kuntari (2023) highlighted the hard work of K-pop idols and their extensive language skills, especially since some group members come from outside Korea and must master Korean. This inspiration is also felt by fans, who are driven to learn foreign languages such as English and Korean to quickly understand what their idols are saying. This shows that fans are not only interested in the idols' music and performance but also appreciate their hard work and dedication in mastering the language as part of their appreciation of the K-Pop idols they admire. Therefore, involvement with K-pop is not just a hobby but also positively impacts one's personal growth and achievement. Participants feel happy to learn from the struggles and successes of their idols and are encouraged to improve themselves and achieve their individual goals. As such, engagement with K-pop has enriched their lives, from improving their English skills to increasing their motivation to learn.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research found that there was no significant correlation between motivation to learn English through K-pop idols and gender. This means that both female and male students have the same level of motivation when learning English through their K-pop idols. The interview results also showed that K-pop idols can positively influence their fans to improve their English because they feel inspired and motivated by their idols. Through the interviews, it can be concluded that the participants gave a positive perspective regarding the motivation to learn English through K-pop idols. They said that being involved in the world of K-pop not only makes them happy to support their idols and provides inspiration and motivation for various aspects of life.

Future researchers should adopt a proactive approach by expanding their network to local and international K-pop fan communities through social media platforms, online forums, or K-pop events. By clearly explaining research aims and inviting more K-pop fans to participate in interviews, researchers can gather diverse experiences from fans to enrich their analyses and produce more comprehensive findings.

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