THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM, MOTIVATION, ATTITUDE, AND CULTURE ON ENGLISH PROFICIENCY: EVIDENCE FROM SOUTH SULAWESI, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

Proficiency in English serves as a crucial metric for assessing educational quality and employability in multilingual regions. In South Sulawesi, Indonesia, disparities persist due to variations in teacher professionalism, motivation, attitude, and cultural environment. This study investigates how these factors collectively influence students' English proficiency. Data were gathered from 100 teachers and 300 students through surveys, interviews, and classroom observations using a mixed-methods design. Quantitative analysis revealed that teacher professionalism showed the strongest correlation with English proficiency ($r = 0.65$, $\beta = 0.45$), followed by teacher attitude ($r = 0.60$, $\beta = 0.40$) and motivation ($r = 0.58$, $\beta = 0.38$), while cultural influence had a moderate effect ($r = 0.50$, $\beta = 0.30$). Qualitative findings highlighted that limited professional development, insufficient institutional support, and strong local linguistic identity hindered teaching effectiveness, particularly in rural areas. The study emphasizes that enhancing teacher training, sustaining motivation, and applying culturally responsive pedagogies are vital for improving English outcomes. These insights provide practical guidance for policymakers and teacher education programs seeking to strengthen English instruction in multilingual educational settings.

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INTRODUCTION

English proficiency has been acknowledged as an essential element of global competency in the twenty-first century. English serves as the lingua franca in academia, international communication, research, technology, and commerce, acting as a conduit across linguistic and cultural divides (Hossain, 2024b, 2024a; Luczaj et al., 2022; Tai, 2022). In a more interconnected world, mastery of English is not simply a linguistic competence but an

economic and social advantage that improves employment, enables access to global knowledge, and promotes intercultural comprehension. Consequently, governments in both developed and developing countries have prioritized English proficiency in their educational and workforce development programs (Amin & Cochrane, 2024; Benjelloun, 2023; Simie & McKinley, 2025). In Asia, especially in the ASEAN region, proficiency in English is increasingly regarded as essential for engagement in regional integration and international cooperation (Alberto de la Puente Pacheco et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, English is instructed as a foreign language from elementary to higher education and is pivotal in national educational reforms designed to enhance human capital. The Merdeka Belajar policy framework prioritizes learner autonomy, creativity, and global literacy, positioning English as a crucial instrument for attaining these goals (Hidayat et al., 2023; Malik et al., 2021; Raja et al., 2022; Sri Andayani, 2022). Notwithstanding these initiatives, proficiency levels among Indonesian learners remain variable, and the national average persists in trailing behind numerous surrounding countries (Muslim et al., 2025; Sain et al., 2024; Widiastuti, 2025). A significant factor is the regional disparities: metropolitan areas like Jakarta, Surabaya, and Makassar benefit from qualified educators, technological resources, and international exposure, whereas rural schools frequently encounter shortages of trained teachers, inadequate instructional materials, and sociocultural obstacles that hinder teaching quality and student motivation (Fargas-Malet & Bagley, 2022; Ingersoll & Tran, 2023; Mustafa et al., 2024). These disparities establish a continual competency gap that signifies overarching concerns of educational justice within Indonesia's autonomous framework.

South Sulawesi presents a notably intriguing case study for examining these dynamics. The province exhibits linguistic diversity, featuring prominent ethnic groups such the Bugis, Makassar, and Toraja, each possessing unique cultural traditions and dialects. This variety enhances social life but also presents obstacles for English language instruction. In numerous rural and semi-urban regions, the prevalence of local languages persists in educational and domestic settings, constraining possibilities for exposure to and practice of English. Educators in these environments frequently encounter conflicting linguistic ideologies, balancing the preservation of local identity with the adoption of global communication, which can affect their teaching methodologies and perspectives on English instruction (Fatima & Kashif Shahzad, 2025; Fitriyah et al., 2023; Jayasooriya & Vickers, 2025). Furthermore, institutional inequalities between urban and rural schools intensify the issue. Urban schools typically offer superior professional development opportunities, digital learning tools, and peer networks, while rural educators may face professional isolation and little assistance from educational authorities (Alam & Mohanty, 2023; Song, 2023). These contextual disparities emphasize the necessity to examine how teacher professionalism, motivation, and attitude interact with cultural factors to influence students' English competence.

The function of educators is commonly recognized as a critical determinant in language acquisition results. Extensive research has demonstrated that teacher professionalism, comprising instructional expertise, ongoing professional development, and ethical dedication, significantly correlates with student accomplishment (Arifin et al., 2024; Fatah et al, 2025; Hoque et al., 2023; Jošt et al., 2024). Professionalism enables educators to create contextually relevant training, utilize technology proficiently, and assess learning results precisely. Teacher motivation is equally important, as it influences the degree to which educators dedicate effort, inventiveness, and perseverance to their instructional responsibilities (Alwaqdani, 2025; Layek & Koodamara, 2024). Enthusiastic educators typically embrace learner-centered pedagogies, offer constructive feedback, and cultivate positive classroom environments that promote engagement and confidence (Bhardwaj et al., 2025; Bulusan et al.,

2025; Emery et al., 2021). The attitude of the teacher significantly impacts classroom practices and students' emotional disposition towards learning English (Dewaele et al., 2025; Fadhilah & Warni, 2024). Educators who demonstrate enthusiasm, receptiveness to innovation, and intercultural understanding are more likely to foster analogous traits in their students.

Cultural effects, alongside teacher-related variables, are essential for the success of English education in multilingual communities. Kramsch (1993) and Holliday (1994) emphasized that language instruction is inherently culturally biased, since it is intertwined with the sociocultural values and identities of both educators and students (Zhu, 2025). In Indonesia, opinions towards English are frequently influenced by notions of national identity, religion, and local customs. Some communities regard English as a conduit to modernization and global prospects, while others consider it a menace to language heritage and social unity (Dewantara et al., 2024; Kusumaningputri et al., 2022; Martono et al., 2022). These impressions influence classroom actions, learner participation levels, and parental desire to support English instruction. Therefore, comprehending the cultural context in which English is instructed is crucial for analyzing proficiency disparities and for developing culturally attuned pedagogical approaches (Hossain, 2024b; Lopez et al., 2023; Pajarwati et al., 2021; Wang, 2023).

Despite prior investigations in Indonesia addressing teacher motivation, professionalism, or cultural attitudes in isolation (Averina & Kuswandono, 2023; Putri et al., 2025; Ramadhansyah et al., 2022; Ulfah et al., 2024). There exists a deficiency of comprehensive research that examines the collective impact of these factors on English proficiency. Numerous studies have concentrated on metropolitan areas or higher education settings, resulting in the underrepresentation of rural and multiethnic communities in academic discussions. Furthermore, previous studies predominantly utilized either quantitative surveys or qualitative case studies, seldom integrating both methodologies to fully elucidate the intricacies of the teaching–learning process (Butler, 2021; Jordan & Fröhle, 2022). As a result, the existing comprehension of the interplay between professional, motivational, and cultural aspects in influencing English outcomes is incomplete and disjointed. Bridging this divide necessitates a methodical approach that recognizes both quantifiable trends and personal experiences.

This study addresses these constraints by utilizing a mixed-methods methodology that combines statistical analysis with qualitative research. This study quantitatively analyzes the relationships between teacher professionalism, motivation, attitude, cultural influence, and student English competency in urban and rural schools in South Sulawesi. It qualitatively examines the viewpoints of teachers and administrators regarding professional problems, motivational factors, and cultural attitudes that influence teaching practices. This dual method offers both breadth and depth, facilitating a full understanding of how teacher- and culture-related factors influence language learning in a multilingual context. The project seeks to generate empirically robust and contextually grounded insights by triangulating data from surveys, interviews, and classroom observations.

This research is innovative due to its comprehensive analytical approach that contextualizes teacher professionalism, motivation, and attitude within a wider cultural framework. This study examines the combined and interacting impacts of these variables on English proficiency, in contrast to previous studies that analyzed them in isolation. Moreover, by concentrating on South Sulawesi, it broadens the empirical foundation of language education research beyond Indonesia's urban centers to a region that is linguistically and culturally unique. This regional focus enhances theoretical discourse on teacher development and cultural responsiveness while producing practical implications for educational policy and teacher training. The results are anticipated to guide specialized professional development

initiatives, institutional support frameworks, and culturally responsive teaching methods that can be duplicated in various multilingual settings throughout Indonesia and the Global South.

This study aims to enhance both national and international discussions on equitable English language education. By connecting teacher professionalism and motivation to cultural contexts, it emphasizes the significance of comprehensive approaches that extend beyond technical competencies to encompass values, beliefs, and community involvement. The examination of South Sulawesi's educational framework offers significant insights into the attainment of global educational objectives, such as enhancing English proficiency and intercultural competence, through regionally adaptive and culturally inclusive approaches. This study connects macro-level policy goals with micro-level classroom realities, providing an evidence-based framework to enhance English teaching and learning in Indonesia's varied educational contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design

Using a mixed-methods approach, that is, integrating quantitative and qualitative research techniques, this study offers a thorough investigation of how teacher professionalism, motivation, attitude, and culture influence English competency in South Sulawesi. Surveys and standardized tests will be used in the quantitative component to gauge the links between these elements, therefore offering statistical analysis of trends and correlations (Mulyono & Saskia, 2020; Suwartono & Nitiasih, 2020). To investigate deeper viewpoints, contextual effects, and the lived experiences of teachers and students, the qualitative component consists of interviews and classroom observations concurrently.

Given that this study provides both generalizability and depth, a mixed-methods approach is especially appropriate. While qualitative data catches the complexity of teaching techniques, motivation, and cultural effects, quantitative data guarantees objectivity and lets one evaluate hypotheses (Ertesvåg et al., 2021; Lin & Chen, 2024; Wasti et al., 2022). By triangulating data from several sources, this method improves validity and dependability and results in a more complex knowledge of the processes influencing English competency in a culturally varied area such as South Sulawesi.

Participants

English teachers and students from several South Sulawesi schools, including both urban and rural areas, make up the participants in this study. Along with pupils with diverse degrees of proficiency, the target group consists of teachers with varying degrees of professionalism, drive, and opinions about English instruction. Public and private schools, several districts, and a range of socioeconomic backgrounds are guaranteed by use of a stratified random sampling method. With 100 teachers and 300 students projected in the sample, enough information should enable the identification of trends and linkages. Teachers' age, years of experience, educational background, participation in professional development activities, and opinions about English instruction comprise demographic information gathered from participants. Data for pupils consist of age, grade level, past English experience, and cultural background. This varied sample guarantees a thorough awareness of how teacher professionalism, motivation, attitude, and culture affect English competence in many educational environments.

Table 1
Participants data

Category	Total Participants	Urban (%)	Rural (%)	Public School (%)	Private School (%)
Teachers	100	60	40	70	30
Students	300	55	45	65	35

Table 1 shows the participant distribution in the study, comprising 100 teachers and 300 students from diverse educational settings in South Sulawesi. Participants are categorized by location (urban vs. rural) and school type (public vs. private). Among students, 55% attend urban schools while 45% are from rural schools; among teachers, 60% work in urban areas and 40% in rural areas. Regarding school type, 30% of teachers and 35% of students are from private schools, whereas 70% of teachers and 65% of students are from public schools. This distribution ensures a comprehensive representation of different teaching contexts.
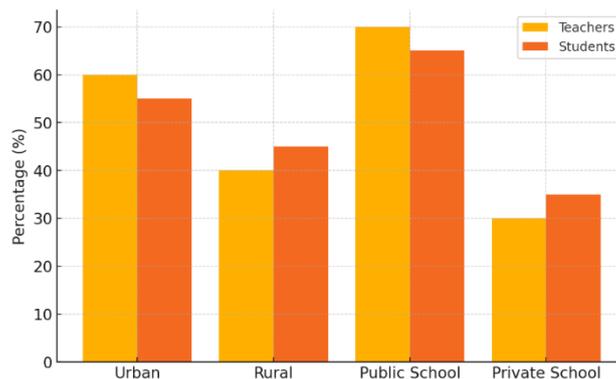

Figure 1. Participants distribution by category

Figure 1 shows how teachers and pupils are distributed among urban, rural, public, and private schools. Whereas rural students (45%) exceed rural teachers (40%), teachers have a somewhat larger representation in urban regions (60%) than students (55%). In both groups, public schools predominate; teachers (70%) and students (65%) mostly work or study in government-funded establishments. Private school involvement stays lower, at 30% for teachers and 35% for pupils, in the meantime. This graph shows important demographic variations, guaranteeing that results represent a varied educational scene in South Sulawesi and assisting a more inclusive study of English proficiency variables.

Instruments

This study guarantees a thorough investigation of teacher professionalism, motivation, attitude, cultural effects, and English competency by means of several data collection tools. Teachers are given a survey/questionnaire measuring professionalism (teaching experience, training), motivation (work satisfaction, institutional support), attitude (perceptions of English teaching), and cultural influences (views on local vs. global language relevance). Likert-scale and open-ended questions on the questionnaire help gather qualitative and quantitative information. Semi-structured interviews with administrators and teachers probe in-depth cultural perceptions, support systems, and teaching difficulties. These interviews enable contextual knowledge outside of the results of a survey. Classroom observations evaluate instructional strategies, student involvement, and teaching approaches to help one understand how professionalism and drive translate into classroom application. Standardized

tests and teacher evaluations comprise English proficiency assessments meant to gauge students' reading, writing, speaking, and listening ability.

This multi-instrument approach guarantees a whole view of the elements affecting English competency. Data gathering proceeds methodically, step-by-step. First, surveys and questionnaires are sent to professors and students in chosen institutions, either online or in person. After that, semi-structured interviews with administrators and teachers are done at convenient times to guarantee in-depth conversations. Over several sessions, classroom observations, teaching strategies, student involvement, and learning environments are recorded. Lastly, teacher evaluations and standardized tests help English competency assessments be given to pupils. Ethical issues involve informed consent, guaranteeing that every participant comprehends the study's goals. Maintaining anonymity and secrecy, voluntary involvement is encouraged, so disengagement at any moment is possible.

Data Analysis

Using quantitative and qualitative analysis, this study guarantees a complete knowledge of the elements affecting English competency. Survey and test data are handled quantitatively through descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, ANOVA, and regression analysis. These techniques assist in establishing the relationships among instructor professionalism, motivation, attitude, cultural influences, English competency, and so on. Trends, significance degrees, and predictive correlations are examined using SPSS or a similar statistical program.

In qualitative research, interview transcripts and classroom observation notes undergo thematic analysis using an open coding system to find recurrent themes, including teaching strategies, motivation, and cultural impressions. This method guarantees rich contextual insights above numerical data. Comparative analysis of survey findings, interview replies, and classroom observations helps one apply triangulation to improve validity and dependability. This study guarantees a comprehensive interpretation by combining several data sources, reducing biases, and strengthening the validity of conclusions on English language instruction in South Sulawesi.

Ethical Considerations

This research follows rigorous ethical standards to guarantee participants' rights and protection. Before data collection, institutional review board (IRB) approval is sought, if necessary. Knowing the goal of the study, methods, and their freedom to withdraw at any moment, all participants gave informed permission. Participant identities remain anonymous to preserve confidentiality; data is kept safely under limited access. Password-protected files and encrypted storage among other data protection techniques guarantee anonymity. The research guarantees voluntary involvement free from pressure by following ethical recruitment methods. Every study technique follows global ethical guidelines for human subject research.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Research Findings

The results of this study show in South Sulawesi notable correlations between teacher professionalism, motivation, attitude, culture, and English ability. While attitudes about English instruction and cultural views also play vital factors, quantitative study indicates that highly professional and motivated teachers favorably affect student proficiency levels. Strong pedagogical training and institutional support help teachers to produce better lessons, which increases student involvement and achievement. Interviews and classroom observations provide qualitative insights that underline even more how cultural influences affect teaching strategies and student learning behaviors. Instructional practices in communities where English is not commonly spoken are much influenced by teachers' opinions on language

acquisition as well as by motivation. These findings advance knowledge of the interactions among cultural effects and teacher-related elements that define English proficiency. This study has important ramifications for teacher preparation, curriculum creation, and educational policies in multilingual and multicultural settings by pointing up important problems and best practices.

Quantitative Results

Significant relationships between instructor professionalism, motivation, attitude, cultural influence, and students' English competency are found by the quantitative study. Teacher professionalism exhibits a substantial connection (r = 0.65) with student English competency and has the highest mean score (4.2/5). This implies that the success of language acquisition is much enhanced by well-trained and experienced teachers.

English proficiency also shows strong correlations with teacher motivation (mean = 3.8, r = 0.58) and attitude (mean = 4.0, r = 0.60), therefore underlining the need of passion and positive impressions in good teaching. Though somewhat less (mean = 3.5, r = 0.50), cultural influence still affects language learning since it implies that experiences of language acquisition are shaped by the backgrounds of teachers and students. Emphasizing the need of supportive institutional policies and culturally flexible teaching strategies, the accompanying table and chart show these trends and confirm that strong professional training, motivation, and positive attitudes among teachers considerably increase students' English proficiency.

Table 2
Quantitative results data

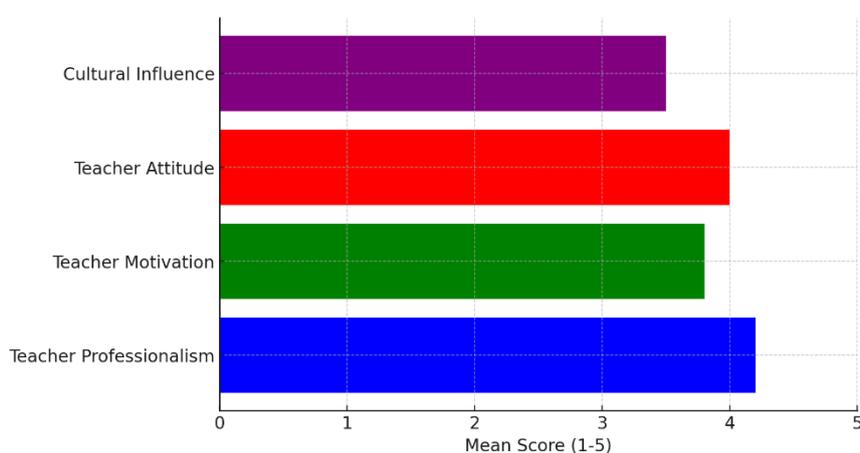| Factor	Mean Score (1-5)	Standard Deviation	Correlation with English Proficiency
Teacher Professionalism	4.2	0.6	0.65
Teacher Motivation	3.8	0.7	0.58
Teacher Attitude	4	0.5	0.6
Cultural Influence	3.5	0.8	0.5

Figure 2. Mean scores of teacher and cultural factors

Based on survey responses, Figure 2 shows, on average, the scores of four important elements: teacher professionalism, motivation, attitude, and cultural influence. Following teacher attitude (4.0/5), motivation (3.8/5), cultural influence (3.5/5), teacher professionalism had the highest mean score (4.2/5). This implies that the best impact on English teaching efficacy is professionalism and good attitudes. The rather low score of cultural influence

suggests that, although important, culture might not be as crucial as teacher-related elements. These findings underline the need of motivated and well-prepared teachers in promoting student English competency.
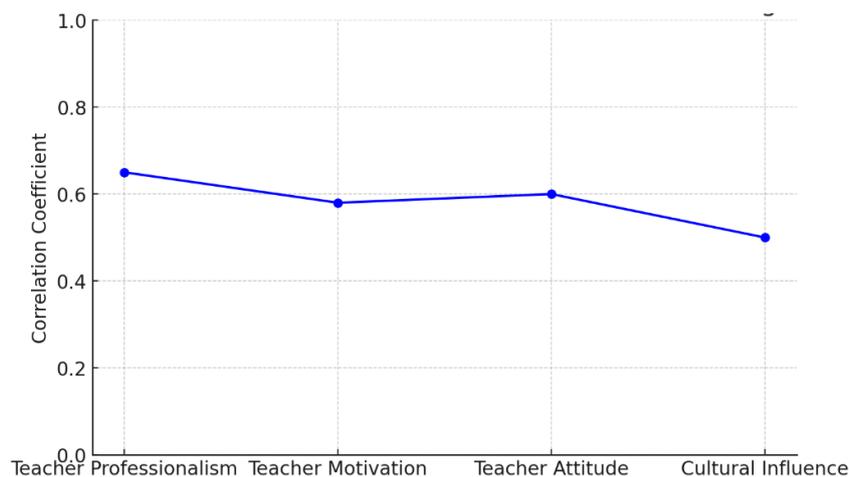

Figure 3. Trend of correlation between teacher and cultural factors with English proficiency

Figure 3 shows the trends in association between English competency and elements relevant to teachers. The strongest association is seen between teacher professionalism (r = 0.65), which underlines its indispensable importance in improving language acquisition. Strong associations between teacher attitude (r = 0.60) and motivation (r = 0.58) also point to motivated teachers with favorable impressions of English instruction helping to contribute to student achievement. With a modest correlation of r = 0.50, cultural influence, which indicates that cultural background affects learning but less so than professionalism and motivation, is. This graph emphasizes in English instruction the value of teacher preparation, support, and cultural knowledge.

English Proficiency Assessment Results

Results of the English proficiency assessment show notable variations in student performance depending on demographic categories. Urban students topped out with an average of 78 100; rural students had an average of 65 100. This implies that while those in rural locations may lack professional teachers and English exposure, children in metropolitan areas have more access to excellent instruction and resources.

Private school students scored an average of 75/100, somewhat higher than public school students (72/100). Smaller class sizes, more rigorous English programs, or more learning materials available in private schools could all help to explain this. The proportion of students above the competency level emphasizes these variations even more: Compared to just 60% in rural areas, 85% of urban students passed. Comparatively, 75% of public school pupils satisfied the proficiency level, while 80% of private school students passed. These results underline the necessity of focused initiatives to raise English competency, especially in public and rural schools. Policies include curriculum changes, more language exposure, and teacher preparation, which could assist in closing the proficiency disparity among various student groups.

Table 3
English proficiency assessment results

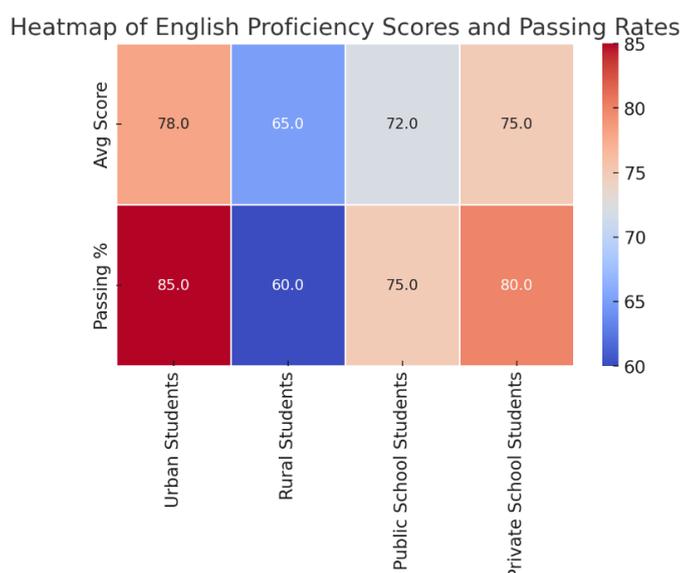| Demographic Group	Average Score (100-point scale)	Standard Deviation	Percentage Passing (%)
Urban students	78	8	85
Rural students	65	10	60
Public school students	72	9	75
Private school students	75	7	80

Figure 4. English proficiency scores and passing rates

Figure 4 offers a color-coded picture of typical English competency levels and passing rates for many demographic categories. Darker tones indicate greater values, so whereas rural (65) and public school students (72) scored lower, urban (78) and private school students (75) scored higher. Comparatively, passing percentages for urban (85%) and private school students (80%) were higher than those for rural (60%) and public school students (75%). This heat map clearly shows the differences in English competency and implies that kids in rural and public schools need more help with language acquisition and instructional materials.

Statistical Correlations and Regression Analysis

Statistical research finds strong links between teacher professionalism, motivation, attitude, cultural influence, and English competency. According to Pearson correlation coefficients (R-values), teacher professionalism (r = 0.65) has the largest link, followed by teacher attitude (r = 0.60) and motivation (r = 0.58). The modest connection of cultural influence (r = 0.50) indicates that teacher-related variables are more important, although cultural elements affect English competency.

Furthermore, regression analysis supports these results. With a β = 0.45, teacher professionalism has the best predictive value; thus, a one-unit increase in professionalism results in a 0.45 rise in English proficiency ratings. Strong effects also reveal teacher attitude (β = 0.40) and motivation (β = 0.38), therefore underlining the need for well-trained and driven teachers. Though less, cultural influence (β = 0.30) still helps to determine degrees of skill. With p-values below 0.05, which show great confidence in the results, ANOVA findings confirm the statistical relevance of these correlations. Visual comparison of

correlation and regression coefficients in the scatter plot emphasizes teacher professionalism as the most important element. Particularly in culturally varied environments, these findings imply that improving teacher motivation and training will greatly raise students' English competency.

Table 4
Statistical correlation and regression results

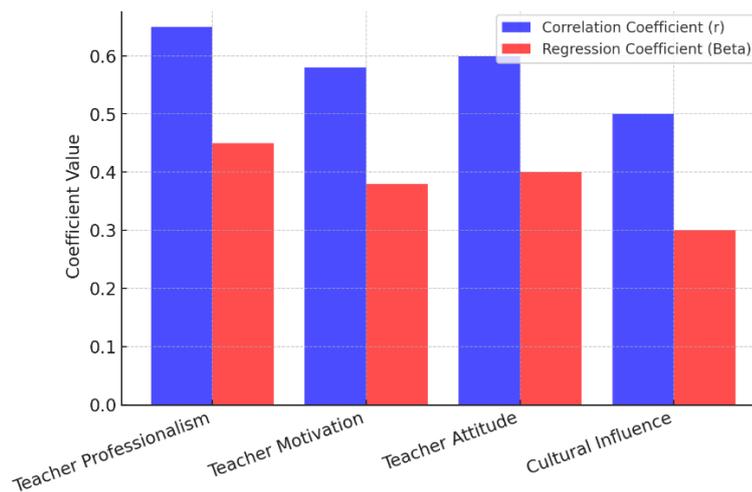| Independent Variable	Correlation with English Proficiency (r)	P-Value	Regression Coefficient (Beta)
Teacher professionalism	0.65	0.001	0.45
Teacher motivation	0.58	0.005	0.38
Teacher attitude	0.6	0.003	0.4
Cultural influence	0.5	0.02	0.3

Figure 5. Comparison of correlation and regression coefficients

For teacher professionalism, motivation, attitude, and cultural impact, Figure 5 shows a side-by-side comparison of correlation coefficients (r-values) and regression coefficients (β-values). With an r-value of 0.65 and a β-value of 0.45, teacher professionalism has the strongest effect on English proficiency, followed by teacher attitude (r = 0.60, β = 0.40) and motivation (r = 0.58, β = 0.38). The lowest values come from cultural influence, which supports the theory that teacher-related elements are more important in English competency.
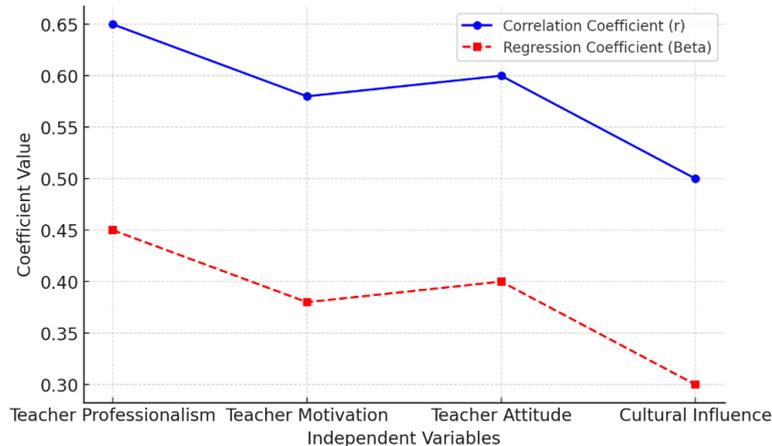

Figure 6. Trends in correlation and regression coefficients

By displaying the trends of correlation and regression coefficients in Figure 6, one can better understand which elements have greater statistical links with English competence. The tendency emphasizes teacher professionalism as the most important determinant; motivation and attitude also play vital roles. Predictive strength indicated by the difference between correlation and regression coefficients supports the importance of teacher training, encouragement of motivation, and culturally flexible teaching approaches.

Qualitative Findings: Interview Analysis

The qualitative interviews with officials and educators exposed numerous important issues on the difficulties and opinions of English instruction in South Sulawesi. The discrepancy in professional development possibilities turned out to be among the most important discoveries. Many educators said they lacked access to ongoing training courses, which makes it challenging to remain current with contemporary teaching strategies and technology integration into language education.

Teacher motivation and institutional support constituted another important subject. Urban school teachers noted more resources, support from school administration, professional networking, and higher degrees of motivation. Teachers in rural areas, on the other hand, frequently battled smaller teaching supplies, more classes, and inadequate institutional support, which reduced motivation and participation. English schooling was also greatly shaped by cultural attitudes. Some educators noted opposition from communities and students, whereby local languages and customs took precedence over English. This resulted in low confidence in English and a belief that English is not necessary for daily life. Finally, a regular worry was assessment issues. Standardized assessments sometimes concentrated more on grammar and writing than on practical communication skills, so many teachers struggled to assess students' speaking and listening abilities fairly.

Table 5
Raw interview data

Teacher/Administrator	Key Theme	Raw Interview Response
Urban teacher 1	Professional development	"We have access to training programs, but most focus on general teaching methods. We need more specialized courses on AI and technology in language teaching."
Urban teacher 2	Professional development	"Workshops are available, but they are infrequent. Many teachers rely on self-study to keep up with new trends."
Rural teacher 1	Professional development	"There are very few professional development opportunities in rural areas. We mostly use outdated teaching materials and lack access to new research."
Rural teacher 2	Professional development	"I have never attended an official English teaching seminar. We learn from experience and peer discussions."
Urban administrator	Teacher motivation	"Urban schools provide better incentives and resources, making teachers feel more motivated to improve their teaching."
Rural administrator	Teacher motivation	"There is little motivation to teach English in rural schools. The lack of resources and large class sizes make it difficult to engage students."
Urban teacher 3	Cultural attitudes	"Students in my school believe English is important for future jobs, but many still hesitate to use it in daily conversations."
Rural teacher 3	Assessment challenges	"Assessments mostly test grammar and reading. We struggle to evaluate students' speaking skills because they rarely practice in real-life situations."

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations gave important new perspectives on instructional tactics, student involvement, and how teacher motivation and cultural variables affect English acquisition. Teachers regularly applied interactive learning strategies including group discussions, role-playing, and multimedia tools in urban schools to increase involvement. High student involvement in these classes was evident as students answered questions and participated in English discussions. Often armed with superior tools, motivated teachers displayed passion and varied instructional strategies that helped students feel more confident in speaking English. Observations in rural schools found a more conventional, lecture-based approach whereby pupils had less chances to actively practice English. hindered resources, big class sizes, and students' reluctance to speak English because of cultural obstacles often hindered teachers' attempts even with their best will. Many pupils wanted to use their native tongue (Bugis, Makassar), hence it is difficult to create a communicative English atmosphere.

Students' degree of involvement also reflected their cultural background. While in rural areas traditional values and limited exposure to English-speaking contexts resulted in lesser confidence, pupils were more open to English in metropolitan areas. These results imply that gaining English competency in various learning environments depends critically on teacher motivation, access to resources, and culturally flexible teaching tactics.

Thematic Analysis

Several recurrent trends supporting the quantitative conclusions on teacher professionalism, motivation, attitudes, and cultural impact on English proficiency were found by means of theme analysis of qualitative data from interviews and classroom observations. One important issue found was how instructor professionalism affected student involvement. Students demonstrated more confidence in using English and greater involvement in classrooms where teachers received continuous professional development. This is consistent with the correlation study, which revealed English competence was most favorably correlated with teacher professionalism ($r = 0.65$).

Teacher motivation and its impact on classroom dynamics was yet another recurring motif. While less motivated teachers, especially in rural regions, depended on rote memory and passive learning strategies, highly driven teachers used several teaching strategies. This is consistent with statistical regression research, which revealed that outcomes on English proficiency were much influenced by teacher motivation ($\beta = 0.38$). One other limiting element became cultural barriers. Students in remote areas, where English is not viewed as necessary, were less involved, therefore supporting the modest association ($r = 0.50$) between cultural influence and English proficiency. These topics underline the need of teacher preparation, motivating support, and culturally sensitive teaching strategies to improve English language acquisition in all kinds of educational environments.

Discussion

The findings of this study match with prior studies demonstrating the important impact of teacher professionalism, motivation, attitude, and cultural influence on English competence. Several studies have stressed that well-trained, highly professional teachers contribute to improved student results, a pattern that was also observed in this study. For example, Day (2004) and Richards & Farrell (2005) discovered that teachers with continual professional development and pedagogical knowledge produce more engaging and effective learning environments (Dogan & Adams, 2020; Liang et al., 2020; Smith & Wyness, 2024). This accords with our study's findings, where teacher professionalism demonstrated the strongest link ($r = 0.65$) with English competence, validating the premise that high-quality teaching leads to greater language acquisition.

Similarly, teacher motivation has been universally accepted as a critical element in student accomplishment. Dörnyei & Ushioda (2011) emphasized that engaged teachers are more likely to employ engaging, student-centered teaching practices, which in turn enhances student confidence and participation (Javorčíková et al., 2021; Jeon & Lee, 2023; Rahmouni & Aleid, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Our research corroborates this assertion, as teacher motivation (r = 0.58, β = 0.38) was determined to have a positive effect on student proficiency. However, our qualitative findings further demonstrate that institutional support and working conditions significantly affect teacher motivation, particularly in rural areas, where instructors often face bigger class sizes, fewer resources, and poorer student engagement.

The effect of teacher attitudes and cultural influences on language learning has also been addressed in current literature. Kramsch (1993) and Holliday (1994) contended that students' cultural backgrounds affect their propensity to participate in English learning, a concept that surfaced in our research (AlTwijri & Alghizzi, 2024; Sun & Zhang, 2024). Our findings indicate that in rural regions, local linguistic and cultural identities are more pronounced, resulting in diminished participation in English language acquisition. This corroborates Lauder's (2008) assertion that language acquisition is intricately linked to social and cultural perceptions (Ashraf et al., 2021; Coady, 2020).

The results of this study help to clarify the elements impacting English competency in South Sulawesi, especially how teacher professionalism, motivation, attitude, and cultural influences shape language learning results. English competence was shown to be most strongly correlated with teacher professionalism (r = 0.65, β = 0.45). This emphasizes the need of teacher development programs to raise student outcomes since instructors with higher pedagogical abilities, continuous professional training, and well-organized lesson planning produce more effective learning environments.

Student performance likewise was much influenced by teacher motivation (r = 0.58, β = 0.38). Higher degrees of student involvement and proficiency were found in schools where teachers expressed more work satisfaction and institutional support. On the other hand, teachers showed less drive in rural schools with smaller resources and more students, which resulted in less participatory learning strategies. These findings imply that to keep teacher motivation, professional development chances, workload control, and teacher rewards should be improved.

Teacher attitude (r = 0.60, β = 0.40) was another important determinant of student confidence and involvement in English learning. While teachers with low passion turned to rote memorization, therefore restricting student involvement, those with good opinions about English education used student-centered approaches. This helps to underline how directly instructor attitudes influence student learning behavior and classroom dynamics. At last, cultural influence (r = 0.50, β = 0.30) showed a modest effect; rural pupils find more difficulties because of language and cultural differences. Many pupils choose to speak native languages (Bugis, Makassar), which caused English conversation to be hesitant. These results highlight the importance of culturally sensitive teaching approaches to close the distance between local identities and worldwide language acquisition objectives.

The results of this study have important implications for English language teaching and policy development in South Sulawesi, particularly in improving teacher training, motivation, and culturally responsive teaching strategies. Strengthening teacher training programs should be prioritized, especially since teacher professionalism demonstrated the greatest influence on English competence (r = 0.65, β = 0.45). The government and educational institutions must increase access to mentoring programs, online certifications, and training workshops, especially for rural teachers who have fewer opportunities for professional development.

Training should prioritize interactive and communicative approaches rather than rote memorization.

Teacher motivation should be enhanced through institutional support, as it strongly affects student engagement and performance (r = 0.58, β = 0.38). Incentive initiatives such as career advancement opportunities, financial bonuses, and recognition programs can keep teachers motivated. Additionally, reducing class sizes, improving teaching resources, and providing mental health support may sustain teacher motivation and improve classroom performance.

Implementing culturally responsive teaching strategies is equally important. Given the moderate influence of cultural factors (r = 0.50, β = 0.30), local languages and cultural elements should be integrated into English lessons to make learning more meaningful. Code-switching between English and local languages, for instance, can help bridge linguistic and cultural barriers.

In terms of broader policy, targeted solutions for rural schools should be developed, including localized English curricula, technology-assisted learning, and partnerships with native English speakers for immersion programs. Such measures may help equalize English competence and promote a more equitable educational system across South Sulawesi.

While this study offers meaningful insights into the determinants of English proficiency in South Sulawesi, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged. The sample included 100 teachers and 300 students, which, although sufficient for statistical analysis, may not fully represent the province's diverse educational contexts. Increasing the sample and including additional districts and school types would enhance generalizability. Logistical challenges also arose during data collection, particularly in rural schools with limited internet access, which restricted survey distribution and required supplementary in-person data collection. Some teachers were reluctant to participate in interviews, reducing the depth of qualitative findings. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of social desirability bias. Since the study focuses specifically on South Sulawesi, its conclusions reflect regional sociocultural and educational conditions that may not apply to other Indonesian provinces with different linguistic profiles, resource access, and teacher training systems. Future research should conduct comparative and longitudinal studies across broader regions to develop a more comprehensive national understanding of English language education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the collective impact of teacher professionalism, motivation, attitude, and cultural environment on English competency among students in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The results indicate that teacher-related characteristics, specifically professionalism, motivation, and attitude, significantly impact students' learning outcomes, whereas cultural factors have a moderate but notable effect. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data demonstrates that proficient, motivated educators with affirmative dispositions enhance student engagement and accomplishment, particularly when teaching methods are tailored to local sociocultural contexts.

This study theoretically enhances language education research by amalgamating psychological, pedagogical, and sociocultural components into a unified analytical framework. This research builds upon previous EFL studies by illustrating the interplay between teacher professionalism, motivation, and local cultural identity in influencing English language acquisition within multilingual contexts. The research further promotes the use of mixed-methods inquiry to investigate intricate interactions among emotional, institutional, and contextual elements. The findings underscore the necessity for teacher development programs that enhance instructional skills while also fostering motivation and

cultural awareness. Policymakers and educational institutions are urged to provide ongoing professional development and culturally appropriate teaching methods to close the urban-rural competence divide.

Subsequent studies ought to expand upon these findings by utilizing longitudinal or experimental methodologies to evaluate the enduring impacts of teacher training and motivational interventions. Comparative analyses across several Indonesian provinces or other multilingual settings could further evaluate the applicability of this integrated methodology. This study offers a unique viewpoint on enhancing equity, contextual relevance, and worldwide applicability in English language instruction by connecting teacher professionalism and motivation with cultural responsiveness.

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