



Classroom Fatigue and Second Language Acquisition: A Study on English Learning Among Evening Class Students

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ABSTRACT

A considerable number of night-class students and workers encounter significant challenges related to their physical and mental well-being, which has been demonstrated to influence their motivation and focus. This study demonstrates that fatigue resulting from professional obligations leads to a significant decrease in motivation and concentration levels in students enrolled in night classes. The impact is also evident in their speaking and writing skills, attributed to the difficulty in selecting vocabulary and arranging sentences coherently when experiencing fatigue. However, listening and reading skills tend to exhibit greater stability or minimal impact. To cope with fatigue, students implement strategies such as taking brief rests, recalling academic principles, and utilizing interactive technology. Consequently, it is imperative for lecturers and institutions to implement more interactive, flexible, and relevant teaching approaches that align with real-life contexts, to assist student workers in managing fatigue and achieving optimal learning outcomes.

Keywords: *Students Motivation, Students Focus, Classroom Fatigue, Language Acquisition*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, higher education has undergone significant changes, particularly with the increasing number of evening class students or working individuals pursuing further studies. This transformation indicates that access to education has become more inclusive, especially for individuals who bear work responsibilities outside of academic activities Daumiller et al. (2020). However, alongside this expanded access to higher education, new challenges have emerged—one of which is learning fatigue experienced by evening students or working learners, a topic that remains underexplored in academic research, particularly in the context of learning English as a foreign language.

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Fatigue in this context refers to a state of physical and mental exhaustion caused by accumulated workload, time pressure, and limited energy. Evening students typically spend most of their time and energy working before starting their academic activities at night. This situation makes them vulnerable to chronic fatigue, which not only affects their physical condition but also impacts cognitive aspects such as memory, focus, and the ability to absorb learning material Liu (2023). In the context of English language learning—which demands high concentration, active participation, and continuous practice—this condition presents a significant barrier.

This study focuses on how fatigue experienced by evening students or working individuals affects their mastery of English language competencies across all areas of language learning. In addition, this research also highlights the impact of fatigue on their learning motivation and focus. A decline in motivation and concentration will certainly affect the quality of learning processes and outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to uncover the root problems faced by evening students or workers—namely, the imbalance between professional workload and academic demands—which led to physical and mental strain that ultimately hinders the optimal development of English language competence.

Various previous studies have addressed the issue of fatigue in educational contexts; however, they have largely focused on the general student population. Li (2022) revealed that academic fatigue negatively affects students' motivation and academic performance. Similarly, Jaekel et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of psychological balance in supporting effective learning. However, very few studies specifically examine the experiences of evening or working students, especially in the context of learning English as a foreign language. This indicates a significant research gap that warrants further investigation.

Studies from applied linguistics and educational psychology further reinforce the understanding of the relationship between psychological conditions and effective language learning. For instance, Seven (2020) found that language learning motivation is closely linked to success in acquiring a foreign language. In the case of students experiencing fatigue, this motivation can be significantly disrupted. Eragamreddy (2024) also argues that affective factors such as stress, fatigue, and emotional pressure greatly influence the language learning process. Thus, these findings support the assumption that students' physical and psychological conditions play a critical role in the effectiveness of English language learning.

The novelty of this research lies in its approach of positioning fatigue as a key variable affecting English language ability, learning motivation, and focus among evening or working students. Its originality is also reflected in the selection of research subjects—individuals who juggle dual roles as employees and students—an increasingly common group that remains underrepresented in academic discourse on language education.

This research becomes increasingly urgent in light of the growing demand for English language proficiency in the workplace and the importance of institutional support for students who hold dual roles. In the context of globalization, English language skills are a vital asset for enhancing individual competitiveness. However, if learning processes fail to consider the students' real-life circumstances, educational objectives will be difficult to achieve optimally. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the barriers faced by evening or working students can serve as a foundation for developing more adaptive and supportive learning strategies.

The main goal of this study is to identify and analyze the impact of fatigue on English language competence, learning motivation, and concentration among evening or working students. Furthermore, the study explores students' daily experiences in managing dual roles and seeks to identify strategies to reduce the negative impact of fatigue on their English learning.

Based on the above background, it can be concluded that fatigue experienced by evening or working students is an important issue that requires further investigation—particularly in relation to English language learning. This issue is not merely about time management, but also concerns the quality of education and equitable access to inclusive higher education. By exploring how fatigue influences both cognitive and affective aspects of English language learning, this study is expected to contribute meaningfully to the development of policies and teaching practices that are more responsive to the needs of working evening students.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design using a narrative inquiry approach, aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of evening class students who also work, particularly regarding the fatigue they experience in the process of learning English. This approach was chosen due to the complex and contextual nature of the issue, where fatigue is viewed not merely as a physical phenomenon but also as a psychological and academic one. The data in this study consists of quotations or key notes obtained from interviews. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, with the following main criteria: (1) active students of the English Education program at a university in Surabaya, (2) enrolled in evening classes, and (3) working either full-time or part-time. The researcher selected 5 participants considered to meet the research needs.

Data collection was conducted through two main techniques: classroom observation and interviews. The type of interview used was in-depth interviews. Classroom observations were conducted systematically to identify the impact of fatigue on students attending evening classes. The steps in the observation process included: (1) observing students' physical conditions before and during class, including posture, facial expressions, and interpersonal interaction that may indicate fatigue, such as yawning, restlessness, or a decline in interaction; (2) observing classroom dynamics, particularly how students engage in discussions and interact with the lecturer; and (3) assessing students' focus and motivation during class sessions—for instance, whether they appear distracted, struggle to understand material, or frequently use personal devices such as mobile phones.

The interview questions were developed based on several main themes, such as daily workload, learning motivation, learning strategies, and perceptions of their English language abilities. The interview questions included: (1) How do physical and mental fatigue after a full day of activities affect your experience in attending evening English classes? (2) Have you ever felt a decline in motivation to learn English due to fatigue? How do you usually cope with it? (3) How would you describe your level of focus during evening classes, and how do you deal with losing focus? (4) In your opinion, does fatigue affect your English skills, such as speaking or writing? Could you provide an example? (5) What do you think the university or lecturers could do to help evening students deal with fatigue in learning English?

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed the researcher to

identify and categorize major themes that emerged from the interviews and classroom observations. The process began with thoroughly reading the data to understand the context, then assigning codes to relevant data segments, identifying themes from those codes, and verifying that the resulting themes accurately represented the collected data. To ensure data credibility, the researcher employed triangulation by combining multiple data sources, such as interviews and observations, to enhance the accuracy of the findings. In addition, member checking was used to validate that the researcher's interpretations aligned with participants' experiences, and the researcher engaged in self-reflection to minimize personal bias during analysis. Through this approach, the study aims to produce valid findings that accurately represent the lived reality of evening students who work while learning English. The full transcript and audio recording of in-depth interviews with the five participants can be accessed at the following link: <https://acesse.one/iAz2Q>

RESULTS

1. The Impact of Fatigue on Learning Motivation and Focus

All participants reported that physical and mental fatigue after working throughout the day affected their motivation and focus in attending evening classes. Most participants stated that their mood was heavily influenced by exhaustion, which disrupted their learning experience. For instance, Participants 1 and 3 explained that after a full day of work, they felt extremely tired and experienced negative moods that affected their concentration during class.

Most participants also revealed that their level of motivation was highly dependent on their physical condition. When they felt very tired, their motivation to learn decreased significantly. Participants 2 and 4 emphasized difficulty in maintaining focus, especially when the learning materials were perceived as heavy or unengaging. This decrease in motivation made them less interested in studying and hindered their ability to absorb the learning materials effectively.

2. The Effect of Fatigue on English Language Proficiency

Fatigue affected students' English language skills, particularly speaking and writing. Most participants stated that fatigue interfered with their ability to speak in English during class. Participants 4 and 5 mentioned that they often felt confused in choosing appropriate vocabulary and organizing sentences when speaking, especially when they were extremely tired.

However, the effect of fatigue varied across language skills. In writing, some participants, such as Participant 3, reported that they were still able to complete writing assignments despite feeling tired. This indicates that writing tasks were still manageable under fatigued conditions.

Listening skills were reported to be less affected by fatigue. Participant 5 stated that they could still follow lectures or seminars, especially when recorded materials were available and could be replayed. This suggests that receptive skills such as listening were easier to maintain compared to productive skills under conditions of fatigue.

3. Strategies for Overcoming Fatigue and Improving Focus

Participants reported several strategies to cope with fatigue and maintain focus during evening classes. Many students adopted simple routines before class, such as washing

their face, resting briefly, or taking short walks. Participant 1 frequently washed their face or took short breaks to refresh themselves before entering class.

Some participants also relied on internal motivation strategies. Participant 2 stated that reminding themselves of their academic goals and reasons for studying helped them remain motivated despite exhaustion.

Technology was also used as a learning support strategy. Participant 5 reported using English learning applications such as Duolingo to continue learning in a more enjoyable way when feeling tired.

4. The Role of Lecturers and Institutions in Reducing Fatigue

Participants suggested that lecturers and institutions could play an important role in reducing fatigue among evening-class students. Many participants hoped that evening classes would be more interactive and less monotonous. Some suggested that lecturers use online learning platforms such as Zoom for certain sessions to provide more flexibility.

Participants also expressed a desire for learning materials to be more closely related to their real-life experiences or work contexts. They believed that contextualized materials would increase their motivation and willingness to participate, even when feeling physically exhausted.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that physical and mental fatigue significantly affect students' motivation and focus in evening English classes. This supports previous research suggesting that fatigue reduces learners' emotional engagement and willingness to participate in learning activities (Song, 2024; Gu et al., 2024). When students are emotionally and physically exhausted, their mood tends to decline, which directly influences their concentration and learning readiness.

In terms of language proficiency, fatigue was found to affect productive skills more severely than receptive skills. Speaking was the most affected skill, as students reported difficulties in vocabulary retrieval and sentence construction when tired. This finding aligns with Carranza Esteban et al. (2023), who stated that cognitive fatigue reduces spontaneous language production. Writing, although still affected, was more manageable because it allows more time for thinking and structuring ideas, as also noted by Mahshanian and Shahnazari (2020). Listening skills remained relatively stable, particularly when students had access to recorded materials, supporting Yu et al. (2022), who emphasized that receptive skills are more resilient under cognitive load.

The coping strategies used by students demonstrate their active efforts to manage fatigue. Physical refreshment routines, such as resting or light movement, reflect basic recovery strategies that help restore cognitive readiness (Nurani et al., 2022). Meanwhile, internal motivation, such as recalling personal goals, supports the role of intrinsic motivation in sustaining learning engagement under challenging conditions (Bureau et al., 2022). The use of educational applications also suggests that interactive digital tools can make learning feel lighter and more engaging, even when students are physically exhausted (Pérez-Juárez et al., 2023).

Importantly, this study highlights the critical role of lecturers and institutions in supporting working students. Flexible learning formats, including partial online

instruction, can reduce physical strain and improve accessibility, as suggested by Carmi (2024). Moreover, contextualizing materials to students' real-life and work experiences can strengthen relevance and motivation, which is consistent with Johansen et al. (2023), who found that meaningful and context-based learning increases students' psychological energy and engagement.

Overall, these findings suggest that fatigue is not merely an individual problem but also a structural issue that requires pedagogical adaptation. Without instructional flexibility and emotional sensitivity, working students in evening classes remain at risk of disengagement and reduced learning outcomes, especially in productive language skills.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the physical and mental fatigue experienced by working evening-class students significantly affects their motivation, focus, and ability in learning English. Fatigue from working all day before attending evening classes leads to decreased learning motivation, disrupted concentration, and a decline in speaking and writing skills in English. Although certain skills such as listening and reading are relatively easier to maintain, the overall mastery of material is still disrupted by the students' exhausted physical and mental condition. To cope with this, students apply various strategies such as resting before class, using technology for learning, and reminding themselves of their academic goals to stay motivated.

The suggestions provided by the students emphasize the importance of more flexible and enjoyable teaching, by reducing monotonous teaching methods and prioritizing interaction as well as the relevance of course materials to their personal and professional lives. Therefore, it is crucial for lecturers and educational institutions to adapt their teaching approaches to be more responsive to the needs of evening-class students. This includes utilizing flexible learning technologies, implementing more dynamic methods, and providing materials that are relevant to students' real-life contexts. In doing so, adaptive learning approaches can help students cope with fatigue while still achieving optimal learning outcomes, maintaining a balance between their academic responsibilities and professional duties.

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