



FROM FEAR AND ANXIETY TO MOTIVATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING: THE INTEGRATION OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

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Abstract:

Low motivation in English language learning remains a persistent challenge. I explored pre-service language teachers' perceptions of this problem. I purposively selected eight study participants for a qualitative descriptive study and thematized their perceptions. Consequently, I ascertained that, apart from personal, environmental, and behavioral factors of learning, the affective factor, directly linked to the latter, emerged in the study, thereby modifying the Social Cognitive Theory. School leaders may implement programs that build pre-service teachers' self-efficacy, goal orientation, and support while reducing fear as a hindrance to motivation, confidence, and resilience in English learning. Future research may examine how these factors predict and mediate motivation in English learning, while developing questionnaires that use the emerging subthemes as indicators.

Keywords: fear and anxiety, motivation, English language learning, integration of emotional regulation, social cognitive theory

1. Introduction

Low motivation in English language learning has been a continuing concern in teacher education programs worldwide. I learned that, despite English's central role in academic and professional communication, some pre-service language teachers show low motivation to improve their English proficiency during their training. I found that recent studies have highlighted this issue as an important concern that deserves closer attention in language education research (Halimi *et al.*, 2024; Izhar *et al.*, 2024).

I also noticed that the problem of low motivation among pre-service language teachers is not limited to one context. In countries such as China, Indonesia, and Nepal, some pre-service English teachers have been reported to experience low motivation in learning the language during their teacher preparation programs (Huang *et al.*, 2023; Naja,

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2023; Bidari *et al.*, 2024). Similarly, in the Philippine context, I found that low motivation for English language learning persists among some pre-service language teachers in higher education institutions (Santos & Reyes, 2023; Villanueva & Bernardo, 2024).

Through my review and reflection, I was convinced that low motivation can hinder pre-service teachers' engagement, limit their effort in practicing language skills, and slow the development of their overall proficiency, which may affect their future effectiveness as teachers (Li & Wang, 2022; Rahman *et al.*, 2023). It is because of these observations and reflections that I recognized the urgency of further exploring this issue. Hence, I conducted this study.

2. Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it supports Sustainable Development Goal 4 by promoting inclusive and equitable quality education by understanding the factors that influence student motivation in English learning. It aligns with Philippine education goals by enhancing learner engagement, fostering lifelong learning skills, and improving instructional practices. Furthermore, it contributes to the implementation of the vision and mission of Holy Cross Davao College by advancing holistic education, guiding teachers in providing responsive and motivating instruction, and equipping pre-service teachers with insights to become competent and committed English educators.

3. Statement of the Problem

In this study, I explored pre-service language teachers' perceptions of their motivation for English language learning. In pursuing this goal, I sought answers to the following research questions:

- 1) What are the beliefs of pre-service teachers about their capability in English language learning?
- 2) What are the goal orientations of pre-service teachers in English language learning?
- 3) What are the social supports received by pre-service teachers in English language learning?
- 4) What are the perceptions of pre-service teachers on their motivation in English language learning?
- 5) What are the realizations of pre-service teachers on the effects of their beliefs, goals, and social support received on their motivation in English language learning?

4. Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that aside from the commonly identified interconnected factors in the theory, namely, personal factor, behavioral factor, and environmental factor, which are said to influence motivation, there can be new themes that may arise from the participants' perceptions. A new theme might not be directly connected to the existing

factors, but it does have a clear direct link to motivation. This methodological assumption may modify the existing theory upon which this study is anchored, which can be systematically explored through appropriate research procedures, allowing empirical data from participants' responses to reveal meaningful patterns that explain motivation for learning English.

5. Theoretical Lens

The original and fundamental concept of Social Cognitive Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura (1986), holds that human behavior results from a dynamic, reciprocal interaction among personal factors, behavioral patterns, and environmental influences. Bandura explained this through the principle of reciprocal determinism, which emphasizes that individuals are not merely shaped by their environment; rather, they actively influence and are influenced by their behavior, cognitive processes, and social surroundings.

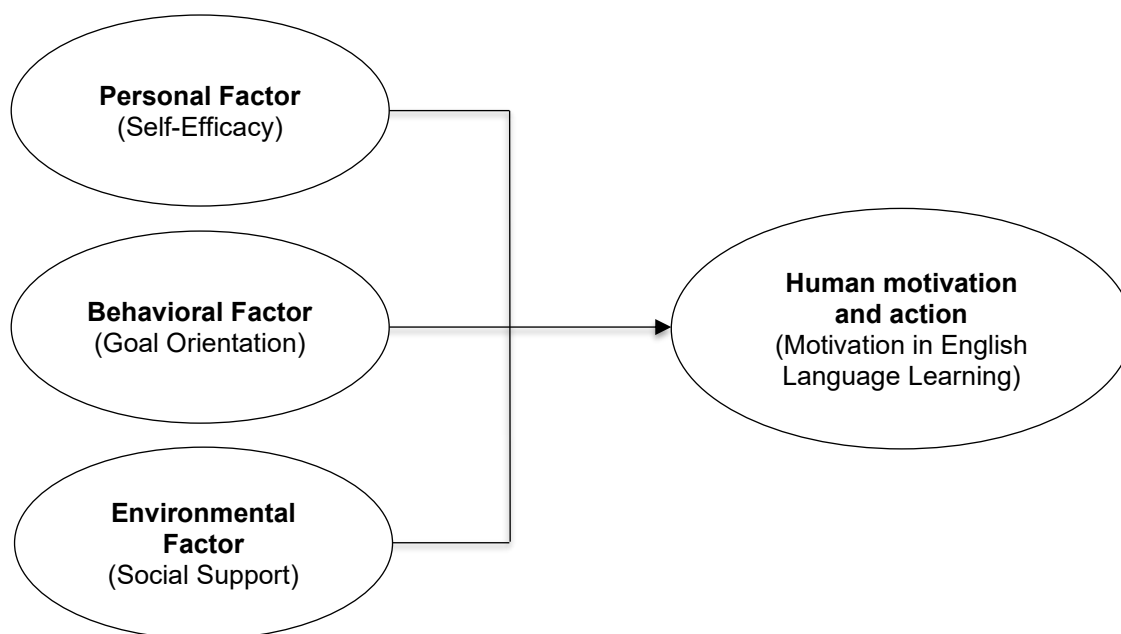


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

The research paradigm illustrates the interplay among the three major components of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, personal, behavioral, and environmental factors, in understanding pre-service language teachers' motivation in English language learning. The personal factor, represented by self-efficacy, refers to learners' beliefs in their capability to accomplish language tasks. The behavioral factor, expressed as goal orientation, involves the learners' purpose and persistence in achieving desired outcomes in English learning. Meanwhile, the environmental factor, conceptualized as social support, encompasses the assistance, encouragement, and feedback learners receive from teachers, peers, and family. These three components continuously interact to shape and sustain learners' motivation to acquire English,

reflecting Bandura's principle of reciprocal determinism, in which personal beliefs, behaviors, and environmental influences dynamically affect one another.

6. Methodology

In this chapter, I presented the research design, the study locale, the sample and sampling technique, the data-gathering technique, the data-analysis technique, and the study's trustworthiness.

6.1 Research Design

In this study, I employed a qualitative descriptive research design. This design was a flexible approach that provides a clear and comprehensive summary of participants' perceptions of a particular phenomenon (Sandelowski, 2000; Kim *et al.*, 2017). It emphasized rich description and straightforward presentation of findings rather than deep theoretical interpretation. This design was most suitable for my study because I focused on perceptions rather than experiences and practices.

6.2 Locale of the Study

I conducted the study in Padada, Davao del Sur, Philippines, specifically at a college institution offering Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) courses. The locality is home to educational institutions that offer teacher education programs. The chosen institution implements the national teacher education curriculum and supports various academic and professional development activities for pre-service teachers. The schools and colleges in Padada serve as key educational centers that foster the academic and professional growth of pre-service teachers while promoting the goals and standards of Philippine higher education.

6.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

In this study, the participants consisted of eight pre-service language teachers enrolled in the Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English program. The participants met the following inclusion criteria: they were officially enrolled in the BSED English program, had completed at least one major English course, were willing to participate in an in-depth interview, and were able to reflect on their experiences of low motivation in learning English.

I employed purposive sampling in selecting the participants. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which participants are intentionally chosen based on their knowledge, experience, or characteristics relevant to the purpose of the study (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015; Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

6.4 Data Gathering Technique

I used in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection in this study. In-depth interviews were a qualitative research technique that allowed researchers to gather

detailed information about participants' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences through open-ended, flexible conversations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

6.5 Data Analysis Technique

I used thematic analysis to analyze data from in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis was a qualitative method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I familiarized myself with the transcripts, generated initial codes through manual coding, identified recurring patterns, reviewed and refined the themes, and then defined and named the final themes before producing the report. It provides a flexible and systematic approach to organizing and interpreting qualitative information. This method was appropriate for the study because it allowed me to systematically organize and interpret the shared perceptions of pre-service language teachers regarding their motivation in learning English.

6.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

In this study, I ensured trustworthiness by following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework, which included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I established credibility by accurately representing participants' responses during the interviews. I provided clear descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures. I carefully documented the data collection, transcription, coding, and thematic analysis processes. Lastly, I did reflexive journaling and used verbatim excerpts, keeping the findings grounded in participants' actual accounts rather than my personal assumptions. As a result of ensuring these trustworthiness measures, my study obtained ethical clearance from the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE).

7. Results

In this section, I presented the results of my study. Likewise, I narrated the summary of my findings, along with the modified paradigm. After listening to all the perceptions of the study participants, I ascertained the following results: Beliefs in English Language Learning, Goal Orientation in English Language Learning, Social Support Received in English Language Learning, Perceptions on Motivation in English Language Learning, and Emotional Regulation in English Language Learning.

7.1 Building Resilience: Beliefs of Pre-service Teachers in English Language Learning

This theme about the beliefs of pre-service teachers in English language learning, identified from the viewpoints of the study participants, consists of five sub-themes: Believing that English proficiency develops through continuous practice, viewing confidence as dependent on preparation and familiarity, holding stronger self-efficacy in writing than in speaking, transforming fear and pressure into motivation for improvement, and linking self-efficacy with emotional regulation and psychological states.

The pre-service teachers believed that English proficiency is developed through continuous practice. As I listened to their stories, I realized they did not see fluency as something reserved for the naturally gifted, but as something built slowly through effort, repetition, and patience. Their words carried a quiet determination. One participant expressed, *"I believe that as long as I keep practicing, I can become fluent"* (PST 4-L29-P17), while another shared, *"I believe that I can learn and use English effectively but... uhm, I also recognize that it requires continuous effort"* (PST 3-L42-P12). Another added, *"I think I could improve my skills more through constant practice..."* (PST 2-L33-P7). As they spoke, I noticed the firmness in their voices, even as their hands trembled slightly, and their pauses revealed lingering doubt. In those moments, I felt a deep sense of admiration, as if their words were not just statements, but quiet promises they were making to themselves.

Despite their acknowledgment of weaknesses, what struck me most was their refusal to surrender to those limitations. I could almost feel the weight of their struggles in the room, yet an equally strong sense of perseverance matched it. Their belief in practice became a steady anchor, grounding them whenever doubt tried to take hold. As I watched them reflect, some lowering their gaze, others letting out soft, hesitant breaths, I felt my heart tighten, as if I were witnessing a fragile yet unbreakable thread being pulled through hardship. Practice, for them, was not merely an academic task; it was a lifeline—a bridge stretching from uncertainty to growth. In their stories, I saw not perfection, but persistence unfolding quietly, like a flame that flickers yet refuses to be extinguished.

For these pre-service teachers, confidence is not constant but deeply tied to preparation and familiarity. As I listened to their accounts, I noticed their voices soften and slightly tremble when recalling moments of uncertainty. One shared, *"I feel confident if I am well prepared"* (PST 6-L41-P26), while another admitted, *"Compared to speaking English... kanang mas confident ko Miss in writing. It's because I could erase some mistakes through a draft before even finalizing my outputs."* (PST 2-L5-P8). Their words carried caution, and as I watched their hands fidget and their pauses linger, my heart tightened, like a double-edged sword pressing gently against my chest. Confidence, for them, is not instant—it is something carefully built through study, rehearsal, and readiness.

What moved me most was the fragile strength behind their admissions. As one reflected, *"Uhm... that motivation pushed me to practice and boosted my confidence"* (PST 3-L12-P13), I saw eyes lower and heard voices crack, as if reliving both doubt and growth at once. I felt deeply saddened, yet quietly hopeful, as though I was walking alongside them in their struggle. Their confidence appeared like a flickering flame—unsteady at times, yet slowly growing brighter with each act of preparation—reminding me that behind every hesitation lies a quiet, determined effort to believe in oneself.

As I listened to their responses, I noticed a clear theme—self-efficacy in writing is stronger than in speaking. Their voices softened, some stuttered, as if the words themselves were hesitant to come out. One shared, *"Uhm... honestly, Ma'am, I am more confident in writing"* (PST 2-L12-P8), while another admitted, *"I feel very confident in writing because naa pa koy time para e-search ang mga words and check my grammar before I had to*

submit my work." (PST 4-L7-P18). As one participant spoke, *"Uhm... writing using the English language is somehow my... my specialty... because I know that I could write well, but I could not speak well."* (PST 5-L45-P22), her voice cracked slightly, repeating *"my... my specialty,"* and in that moment, I felt my chest tighten, as if their uncertainty echoed within me. Writing, for them, feels safe; speaking feels like standing unguarded.

What I saw was not just preference, but quiet vulnerability. Their eyes lowered, their hands trembled, and I felt deeply moved, like witnessing a fragile shield slowly forming. Writing gives them control, but speaking exposes their fears of mistakes and judgment. Still, beneath that fear, I sensed a quiet courage—a flicker of determination—reminding me that, even in hesitation, their confidence is slowly rising.

One of the most moving themes in their narratives is how fear and pressure can become a source of motivation for improvement. As I listened to their stories, I witnessed how fear slowly transformed into motivation. Their voices trembled, some paused to steady themselves, and I saw tears well up as they recalled moments of doubt. One shared, *"I cried that time Miss and na realize nako nga I need to improve"* (PST 1-L7-P4), while another admitted, *"Uhm... I was so nervous and scared... but then, I realized nga need nako e-conquer kana nga fear to be able to get used to it and master the English language"* (PST 2-L6-P9). As I watched their hands shake and heard their voices crack, my heart clenched, as if their fear reached out and wrapped around me.

What moved me most was their refusal to be defeated. Despite the tears and hesitation, I felt a quiet strength rising within them, like a storm turning into steady rain that nurtures growth. One even shared, *"Imbes nga ma low akong motivation because I have fear, but I am turning that fear into motivation"* (PST 7-L45-P32), and in that moment, I felt both heaviness and hope. Fear did not silence them—it pushed them forward, becoming not an end, but a beginning.

As I listened more closely, I realized that their self-efficacy is linked with emotional regulation and psychological states. Their voices wavered as they spoke of pressure and discouragement, and I saw their eyes dim, as if reliving those heavy moments. One shared, *"Uhm... If I'm discouraged, Miss, it feels like my brain gets foggy and I forget the words that I already know"* (PST 4-L44-P19), while another admitted, *"I can feel the pressure which can make me doubt my learning."* (PST 6-L24-P28). As their voices cracked and their hands trembled, I felt a heaviness settle in my chest, like carrying a weight that was never mine yet felt deeply.

What struck me most was how emotion shaped their performance. I saw sadness in their lowered gaze as one said, *"Of course, I feel down, Ma'am uy... it breaks my heart because I did everything tapos maka receive kog negative feedback"* (PST 7-L9-P34), and in that moment, my heart clenched with theirs. Anxiety blurred their thinking; pressure silenced their voice—yet they did not remain there. I sensed quiet resilience as they wiped their tears, gathered themselves, and tried again, as if stitching their confidence back together, one fragile moment at a time.

7.2 Striving for Competence and Growth: Goal Orientations of Pre-service Teachers in English Language Learning

This theme regarding the goal orientations of pre-service teachers in English language learning, as reflected in the participants' responses, includes four sub-themes: Improving communication skills in speaking and writing, striving to become competent and effective future English teachers, persisting despite difficulties to attain personal and academic growth, and prioritizing continuous self-improvement over short-term outcomes.

As I reflected on their responses, I realized that improving communication skills in speaking and writing lies at the heart of their English learning journey. Their voices wavered slightly as they spoke, some pausing, others softly nodding, as if reassuring themselves of their goals. I felt a quiet warmth as I listened, sensing that their aspirations reached beyond the classroom. One shared, *"Uhm... I set myself in learning English to, you know, improve my proficiency in speaking... and also, uhm, my ability in writing..."* (PST 1-L32-P14), while another added, *"Ahm... my goals are improving my communication skills and my academic performance..."* (PST 3-L27-P11).

What moved me most was their shared sense of purpose. As one expressed, *"My main goal is... uhm... to improve my communication skills, Miss especially dili jud kaayo ko hawd when it comes to my communication skills, and so I can become an effective English teacher..."* (PST 8-L40-P18), I noticed slight tremors in their voices. I felt my heart gently tighten, as if witnessing dreams being carefully spoken into reality. Their goals were not just words—they were quiet commitments, slowly shaping the kind of teachers they hope to become.

As I listened to their responses, I began to see that their goal is not merely academic success, but becoming competent and effective future English teachers. Their voices carried a sense of seriousness, though some paused and swallowed nervously, as if feeling the weight of that responsibility. I felt a quiet heaviness in my chest, sensing that their aspirations reached far beyond themselves. One shared, *"These goals keep me motivated every day kay kanang kuan Miss... gusto ko mag work abroad someday as an English teacher Miss... like mao jud na akong dream"* (PST 1-L28-P12), while another reflected, *"Ahm... there were times when my motivation came from my goal of becoming a competent teacher... especially knowing English proficiency is really essential..."* (PST 3-L35-P15).

What resonates in their words is a deep sense of accountability. As one expressed, *"They keep me focused when I remember that I'm doing this to be a better teacher and a better professional someday..."* (PST 4-L41-P18), I noticed their voices trembled slightly, and their gaze lowered. In that moment, my heart tightened, as if witnessing a quiet promise being carried with care. Their goals were not just ambitions—they were responsibilities, shaping them into the teachers they are slowly becoming.

As I looked more closely at their accounts, I also began to see a powerful theme of persistence despite difficulties to attain personal and academic growth. Their voices trembled at times, and I saw tears well up as they recalled moments of doubt and exhaustion. One shared, *"Uhm... I doubted myself that I can't do it... and nihilak jud ko ato*

nga time Miss kay dili ko kabalo... so I realized that I need to improve my skills in using the English language" (PST 1-L30-P14), while another admitted, *"It was really challenging... that I didn't want to perform anymore. But, uhm, my goals pushed me and motivated me to try everything I could"* (PST 2-L27-P12). Listening to them, my heart clenched, feeling the weight of their struggle as if it touched me too.

What moved me most was their quiet resilience. One participant said, *"There were times when I received low scores, but instead of giving up, I used them as motivation to improve"* (PST 3-L33-P15), and I saw their hands fidget slightly as their voices cracked. Despite disappointment, fatigue, and fear, they continued, transforming setbacks into fuel for growth. Their struggles became stepping stones, shaping not only their academic progress but also the strength and perseverance they will carry into their future as educators.

As I examined their responses more closely, another clear theme emerged—they prioritize continuous self-improvement over short-term outcomes. Their voices carried thoughtfulness, some pausing as if weighing their words, and I felt a quiet respect for their perspective. One participant shared, *"Uhm... my goals are more focused on long-term skill development rather than, you know, just getting high grades"* (PST 3-L29-P13), while another admitted, *"A high grade is nice but, ahm... being able actually to communicate in a real classroom is more important"* (PST 4-L31-P14). I noticed slight hesitations and soft sighs, and my heart warmed as I sensed their genuine commitment to meaningful learning.

For these pre-service teachers, learning English is not merely about grades, applause, or temporary recognition. As one reflected, *"I care more about the process of learning, actually... not the end goal...uhm, motivation is what kept me going, it is the driving force"* (PST 5-L33-P15), I saw their hands shift nervously, and their voices falter slightly, yet I felt the strength behind their words. For them, competence outlasts grades, and steady progress outweighs quick rewards. Their focus on growth reveals not just discipline, but a forward-looking vision of themselves as capable, effective future educators.

7.3 Cultivating Confidence and Independence: Social Support Received by Pre-service Teachers in English Language Learning

This theme, based on participants' experiences, concerns the social support pre-service teachers receive in English language learning and encompasses three sub-themes: receiving encouragement that boosts confidence in using English, drawing emotional strength from family belief and affirmation, and developing independence when external support is limited.

As I examined their experiences, I found that encouragement that boosts confidence in using English acts like a gentle wind, quietly lifting their confidence and helping them soar. Their growth is not shaped solely by effort. It is nurtured by the presence of people who believe in them. Their voices brightened as they spoke, some smiling softly, others pausing to gather emotion. One participant shared, *"Uhm... the support from my teachers, classmates, and family greatly influences my motivation"* (PST 3-L28-

P12), while another admitted, *"My family... especially akong mama po supports me by being proud of my progress, which makes me want to keep going"* (PST 4-L31-P14). I felt a warmth in my chest, as if their words were rays of sunlight cutting through lingering doubt.

What struck me most was the quiet power of this support. One participant said, *"So, my teachers, classmates, and even my family members' support made me feel and think that I can also be better at learning the English language"* (PST 6-L34-P15), and I noticed a soft tremor in their voice, their eyes reflecting hope. Encouragement, even in small gestures or words, became an anchor in their learning journey—a steadying force that reassured them they were not alone, helping their confidence grow like roots deepening in fertile soil.

A closer look at their experiences reveals how emotional strength from family belief and affirmation acts like a quiet lighthouse, guiding them through moments of doubt and uncertainty. Their voices softened, some smiling as they recalled small gestures of trust and encouragement. One participant shared, *"I have my parents with me saying I can do it, kaya nimo na, just do what you can"* (PST 1-L27-P13), while another reflected, *"Ahm... actually, they don't have any direct support in my learning process, but their presence and belief in me is enough, and it boosts my motivation"* (PST 5-L31-P14). I felt my heart warm as I sensed how these subtle affirmations quietly anchor their confidence.

What moved me most was the deeply personal nature of this support. One participant said, *"All my family members usually ask me what the English of some words is, kay ako man gud ang murag human dictionary sa among balay Ma'am, and I love that because it makes me more confident..."* (PST 7-L34-P15). I saw their eyes brighten as they spoke. Being trusted, being asked, being encouraged—these small acts became powerful reinforcements, like gentle hands helping them stand taller. Through their families' faith, their own confidence slowly grows, firming with each quiet affirmation.

While social support plays a meaningful role in their journey, their experiences also reveal moments of independence when external support is limited. I noticed how moments of limited support became a forge for their independence. Their voices wavered slightly as they reflected, some pausing as if gathering inner strength, and I felt a quiet admiration for their self-reliance. One participant shared, *"Uhm... I just tell myself that I have goals that I need to achieve and need nako maging independent and think that it is part of my journey in learning English"* (PST 1-L29-P13), while another explained, *"So, when external motivation is not available, uhm... I tend to rely on my internal motivation... even if external motivation is to no avail, internal motivation still forces me to do things"* (PST 5-L32-P14). I felt my heart lift, as if I were witnessing sparks of determination catch fire in the absence of others' guidance.

What became evident was their quiet ownership of growth. One participant admitted, *"At the end of the day, you only have yourself... so if they don't support me, it's okay because I have myself, I need to support myself para dili pud ko kawawa"* (PST 7-L34-P15). I noticed a firmness in their voice, a tangible resilience. Encouragement may light the path, but it is their own steady effort that carries them forward, like a lone traveler navigating a forest guided by the stars of self-discipline and determination.

7.4 Motivation as a Driving Force: Perceptions of Pre-service Teachers on their Motivation in English Language Learning

This theme regarding the perceptions of pre-service teachers on their motivation in English language learning, as revealed in the participants' responses, consists of four sub-themes: Viewing motivation as the driving force in learning English, experiencing increased engagement and participation when motivated, becoming proactive in studying and seeking additional resources, and experiencing procrastination and minimal effort during low motivation.

As I reflected on their perspectives, I realized that my study participants consistently view motivation as the driving force behind learning English. I realized that motivation serves as the heartbeat of their English learning journey. Their voices carried energy, some pausing thoughtfully, and I felt a quiet admiration for how central it is in their efforts. One participant shared, *"Uhm... I would describe the role of motivation in my English language journey as a driving force to explore more on learning things about the English language"* (PST 1-L30-P13), while another reflected, *"Looking back, motivation has been like my personal GPS in learning English"* (PST 2-L28-P12). I noticed subtle gestures and brightened expressions as they spoke, as if mapping the invisible force guiding their steps.

What struck me most was how dynamic and sustaining motivation is in their experiences. One participant said, *"So, I would describe the role of motivation in my English language learning journey as a fuel where it helps me to be persistent and eager."* (PST 6-L33-P14), and I felt their words ripple through the room, like sparks setting determination alight. Motivation does more than inspire—it drives action, strengthens confidence, and steadies persistence. It becomes the pulse behind every effort, every practice, and every step forward, quietly powering their journey toward growth.

As I reflected on their classroom experiences, these pre-service teachers are experiencing increased engagement and participation when motivated. I could feel the energy shift in the room as motivation sparked their participation. Their voices brightened, hands gestured more freely, and I felt a flutter of excitement alongside them, sensing the thrill of being fully engaged. One participant shared, *"Uhm... when I'm motivated, I'm the first to raise my hand, when I'm not, I try to stay invisible, I try to stay quiet, kanang dili kayo ko mu participate po."* (PST 4-L29-P12), while another admitted, *"When I am motivated, I am willing to participate in class and even practice together sa akong mga classmates or even give extra effort in completing my tasks"* (PST 3-L27-P11). I noticed their smiles and subtle shifts in posture, and my heart lifted, as if I were moving with them from hesitation to initiative.

What moved me most was the stark contrast between retreat and engagement. One participant said, *"Motivation affects my engagement and participation... when I am highly motivated... uhm, I'm actively participating in the discussion"* (PST 1-L31-P13), and I felt their determination radiate like a sudden beam of sunlight breaking through clouds. Motivation did not just inspire thought—it ignited action. It transformed silence into voice, doubt into effort, and hesitation into courage. Witnessing it, I felt a surge of admiration, as if a dormant flame had awakened and burned steadily with purpose.

As I examined their learning habits more closely, their experiences illustrate how proactive they are in studying and seeking additional resources when motivated. I could feel a strong current of motivation, carrying them beyond the classroom's boundaries. Their voices brightened with excitement, eyes sparkling as they described their self-directed efforts. One participant shared, *"I keep researching different resources online if maglisod ko sa isa ka topic or lesson, and I keep on reading hard Miss"* (PST 1-L28-P12). At the same time, another admitted, *"So, when I'm motivated, I'm proactive, I ask questions and look for resources"* (PST 4-L30-P13). I felt a surge of admiration, as if watching seeds of curiosity sprout into determined action before my eyes.

Motivation does not merely make them attentive; it compels them to act. One participant said, *"Uhm... I always remind myself, Ma'am, of my goals and use online resources to practice independently"* (PST 8-L33-P14), and I saw a subtle firmness in their posture, their hands moving as if mapping their own path. Motivation became more than inspiration—it became a compass and a sail, guiding and propelling them forward. Their initiative reflected ownership, turning every challenge into an opportunity to grow, and I felt the quiet power of their determination ripple through the room.

As I reflected on their accounts, it became evident that these pre-service teachers are experiencing procrastination and minimal effort when motivation is low. I could feel the weight of low motivation like a heavy fog settling over their efforts. Their voices softened, some pausing with a sigh, and I sensed the frustration and lethargy that accompany procrastination. One participant admitted, *"On the other hand, when motivation is low, uhm... I often procrastinate"* (PST 2-L28-P12), while another shared, *"However, when my motivation is low, Miss, I notice that I tend to procrastinate and even tend to be distracted more and rely on my minimum requirements"* (PST 3-L30-P13). I felt a pang of empathy, as if their struggle was a shadow stretching across the room.

Their admissions are honest. They openly recognize how low motivation leads to postponement, reduced effort, and minimal engagement. One participant said, *"Uhm... Whereas if I am less motivated, I tend to become lazy to learn and use the English language"* (PST 6-L33-P14), and I noticed a slight tremble in their voice, a quiet honesty in acknowledging their lapses. Low motivation did not just slow them down—it reshaped their entire engagement, turning effort into mere obligation. Yet even in this admission, I felt a flicker of hope, like clouds parting, for their recognition hinted at the possibility of regaining momentum and reclaiming their drive.

7.5 Facing Fear and Anxiety: Emotional Regulation of Pre-service Teachers in English Language Learning

This theme, the emotional regulation of pre-service teachers in English language learning as reflected in the participants' experiences, includes four sub-themes: experiencing speaking anxiety and performance pressure, feeling fear of negative evaluation, experiencing emotional disappointment after unmet expectations, and developing emotional resilience through struggle.

As I listen to their narratives, it vividly captures that these pre-service teachers are experiencing speaking anxiety and performance pressure. I could almost feel the tension in the room, like a storm building in their chests. Their voices wavered, hands trembled, and I felt my own heart tighten alongside theirs. One participant shared, *"I was so nervous and scared at the same time that I might say grammatically incorrect phrases or thoughts kay patay jud ko ni Ma'am, mangasaba jud baya to..."* (PST 2-L29-P13), while another admitted, *"Uhm... my heart starts racing before a formal presentation or a graded recitation"* (PST 4-L31-P14). I saw their eyes dart briefly, as if imagining every possible mistake, and my chest ached at the weight of their anxiety.

For them, using English in front of others is not a neutral task. It triggers racing hearts, trembling thoughts, and the fear of committing mistakes. One participant said, *"When I am being asked in impromptu, like katong subject namo sa purposive communication, I can feel the pressure which can make me doubt my learning"* (PST 6-L33-P14). I noticed their fingers fidget lightly, their voice cracking with honesty. Speaking in English becomes a double-edged sword, exposing both skill and insecurity, yet recognizing this fear is the first step toward confronting it. In those moments, I felt a mixture of empathy and admiration as I witnessed vulnerability give way to the beginning of courage.

Beyond general nervousness, their experiences reveal a strong sense of fear of negative evaluation. I could feel the weight of fear pressing down like a heavy fog over their voices. Their hands fidgeted, eyes lowered, and I felt my chest tighten as they described the dread of judgment. One participant shared, *"Now, negative feedback can... uhm, make me want to stop speaking in class for a while because I'm afraid of being judged"* (PST 4-L30-P13), while another admitted, *"It leads me to doubt myself, po Miss, and I became afraid to make mistakes"* (PST 1-L28-P12). I sensed the vulnerability behind each word, like a fragile thread trembling under pressure.

There is a fragile tension in these statements. Feedback, which is meant to guide improvement, can sometimes wound confidence when delivered without encouragement. One participant said, *"Uhm... lack of encouragement or negative feedback affects my motivation in a way that I lose hope and interest in continuing to learn the language"* (PST 6-L33-P14), and I noticed their voice falter slightly, their gaze dropping. The anticipation of criticism can silence them, yet even in this hesitation lies awareness. Their responses reveal a deep care for growth—fear may hold them back temporarily. Still, it also illuminates the value they place on improvement, like a shadow outlining the shape of their determination.

As I revisited their reflections, I was struck by how deeply they are experiencing emotional disappointment after unmet expectations. I could feel the weight of disappointment pressing quietly yet heavily upon them. Their voices softened, some lowering their gaze, and I felt my heart ache alongside their frustration. One participant shared, *"Uhm... when I fail to meet my goals, I feel disappointed at first but... uhm, I eventually reflect on what I can do better next time"* (PST 3-L29-P13), while another admitted, *"I feel disappointed and also, I isolate myself at that time but at the end of the day I reflect on everything"*

and get back on track..." (PST 1-L31-P12). I noticed the subtle tremor in their voices, as if carrying the sting of effort unrecognized.

They do not deny the sting of unmet expectations. Some withdraw briefly; others question their efforts. One participant said, *"Actually, of course, there is a disappointment, Ma'am, when I did everything, but that everything is not enough, Ma'am"* (PST 7-L33-P14), and I felt the tension of their struggle, like a rope pulled tight. Yet in that pause, I sensed resilience. Disappointment did not become a wall but a mirror, allowing them to examine, adjust, and move forward. Their experiences reveal that setbacks are not endings, but gentle nudges guiding them toward growth and renewed effort.

As I reflected more deeply on their journeys, I began to see how they are gradually developing emotional resilience through struggle. I could feel the tension and release in their words, like watching steel being forged in fire. Their voices trembled at moments, eyes flickering with vulnerability, and I felt my chest tighten with empathy. One participant shared, *"Uhm... I was so nervous and scared... but then, I realized that I have to conquer that fear to be able to get used to it and master English language"* (PST 2-L30-P13), while another reflected, *"I usually feel frustrated for a day but then akong ginahimo po is I try to adjust my study plan and just see it as a sign that I need to practice more"* (PST 4-L32-P14). I could almost see them bracing themselves, gathering courage with each step.

What moved me most was the quiet resilience woven through their experiences. One participant said, *"So, the criticism, although it breaks my heart, Ma'am, but it gives me the motivation"* (PST 7-L33-P15), and I felt the subtle strength behind their words, like a vine bending under the wind yet refusing to break. Fear, doubt, and frustration do not halt them—they pause, reflect, and rise again. Through repeated encounters with struggle, they build emotional endurance, becoming not just stronger learners but future educators who know that growth often blooms where vulnerability meets courage.

7.6 Summary of Findings

- 1) Building Resilience: Beliefs of Pre-service Teachers in English Language Learning
- 2) Striving for Competence and Growth: Goal Orientations of Pre-service Teachers in English Language Learning
- 3) Cultivating Confidence and Independence: Social Support Received by Pre-service Teachers in English Language Learning
- 4) Motivation as a Driving Force: Perceptions of Pre-service Teachers on their Motivation in English Language Learning
- 5) Facing Fear and Anxiety: Emotional Regulation of Pre-service Teachers in English Language Learning

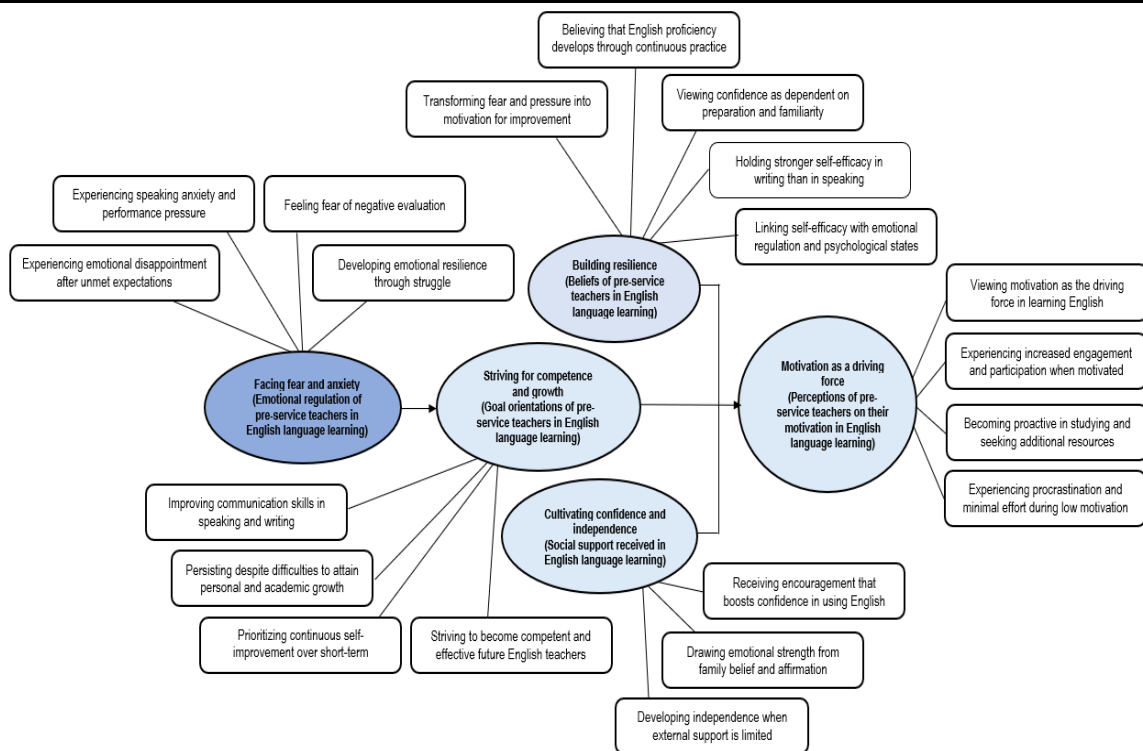


Figure 2: Modified Paradigm

8. Discussions

In this section, I presented the discussion of the study's results on pre-service language teachers' perceptions, including implications for practice, and identified the study's future direction.

8.1 Building Resilience: Beliefs of Pre-service Teachers in English Language Learning

In this study, I found that the eight pre-service teachers' resilience is shaped by their belief that English proficiency develops through continuous practice. Their confidence is not fixed—it shifts with preparation and familiarity, and is stronger in writing than in speaking. Despite fear, pressure, and self-doubt, they persist. I observed that these emotional struggles do not weaken them; instead, they become motivation for improvement, showing resilience grounded in persistence and emotional regulation.

My findings support the study of Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021), who emphasized that sustained motivation in language learning is closely tied to learners' ability to manage challenges and remain persistent over time. Similarly, my findings align with those of Wang and Sun (2021), who found that continuous practice strengthens both competence and learner confidence. In addition, my findings align with those of Bai *et al.* (2022), who found that learners develop stronger self-beliefs when they engage in reflective, effortful learning processes. I also found consistency with Lugnasin and Espinosa (2024), who emphasized that self-efficacy and emotional regulation contribute to sustained engagement in English learning. These studies reinforce my finding that

resilience is not simply endurance, but an active process shaped by practice, reflection, and emotional control.

However, I contradict Gao and Liu (2022), who suggested that persistent difficulties and negative emotional experiences may lead to demotivation rather than resilience. In contrast, among my eight participants, I found that these challenges did not lead to withdrawal but instead became sources of motivation and growth. While Gao and Liu claimed that negative experiences can hinder learning in some contexts, I saw them as opportunities for improvement, highlighting a more adaptive and resilient response to difficulty.

8.2 Striving for Competence and Growth: Goal Orientations of Pre-service Teachers in English Language Learning

In this study, I found that pre-service teachers are strongly driven by goals centered on competence and long-term growth. Their orientations go beyond grades, focusing on improving communication skills and becoming effective future English teachers. Despite challenges, they persist, using difficulties as motivation to continue. I observed that their goals provide direction and sustain effort, reflecting a commitment to continuous self-improvement rather than short-term success.

This finding resonates with Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021), who emphasized that goal-directed behavior sustains motivation in language learning. It also echoes Li and Wang (2022), who found that clear learning goals enhance persistence and engagement. In addition, my findings align with those of Rahman *et al.* (2023), which highlight that long-term professional goals strengthen learners' commitment and effort.

However, my findings differ from those of Kikuchi (2019), who reported that unclear or externally imposed goals can lead to demotivation. In contrast, my participants showed that personally meaningful, internally driven goals sustain motivation and persistence, providing a more realistic view of how pre-service teachers navigate challenges and remain committed to learning English.

8.3 Cultivating Confidence and Independence: Social Support Received by Pre-service Teachers in English Language Learning

Looking back to the perceptions I heard, I found that pre-service teachers draw confidence from social support while also developing independence when such support is limited. Encouragement from teachers, peers, and family strengthens their belief in using English and sustains their motivation. At the same time, when support is minimal, they rely on internal motivation, showing growing self-reliance. I observed that both support and its absence contribute to their development, shaping a balance between confidence and independence.

This realization aligns with Torres and Alieto (2019), who highlighted that social support enhances learners' confidence and motivation in English learning. It also reflects Soriano *et al.* (2021), who emphasized that encouragement from significant others fosters engagement and persistence. Additionally, my findings align with those of Chotimmah

et al. (2023), showing that supportive environments positively influence learners' attitudes and effort.

However, my claim negates Naeem *et al.* (2023), who found that lack of support often leads to demotivation and disengagement. While their study highlights the negative impact of limited support, my findings offer a more nuanced perspective by showing that its absence can also foster independence. Drawing on insights from eight participants, my study captures how learners actively compensate for limited support through internal motivation, thereby better reflecting how pre-service teachers adapt and sustain their learning in real contexts.

8.4 Motivation as a Driving Force: Perceptions of Pre-service Teachers on their Motivation in English Language Learning

In this study, I found that pre-service teachers view motivation as the central driver of their English learning. When motivated, they become more engaged, participative, and proactive in seeking resources and practicing skills. Conversely, low motivation leads to procrastination and minimal effort. I observed that motivation directly shapes not only their performance but also their level of involvement and initiative in learning.

My assertion is consistent with Torres and Alieto (2019), who emphasized that motivation significantly influences learners' engagement and performance in English learning. It also reflects Soriano *et al.* (2021), who highlighted that motivated learners demonstrate greater participation and sustained effort in language tasks. Similarly, my findings echo the study of Li and Wang (2022), showing that motivation encourages proactive learning behaviors and persistence in overcoming challenges.

However, this differs from Gao and Liu (2022), who emphasized demotivation as a dominant outcome of learning challenges. While their study focuses on the decline in engagement, my findings offer a more nuanced and current perspective by showing both the positive and negative dimensions of motivation. With eight participants providing in-depth insights, my study is more contextually grounded, demonstrating how learners actively navigate between motivation and demotivation and thereby better reflects real learning dynamics.

8.5 Facing Fear and Anxiety: Emotional Regulation of Pre-service Teachers in English Language Learning

In this study, I found that pre-service teachers experience fear and anxiety, particularly in speaking and performance situations, often triggered by pressure and fear of negative evaluation. These emotions sometimes lead to self-doubt and temporary withdrawal. However, I observe that they do not remain in this state; instead, they reflect, adjust, and continue. Their ability to manage disappointment and gradually confront fear shows that emotional regulation plays a crucial role in sustaining their motivation and growth.

My findings correspond with Horwitz *et al.* (1986), who identified language anxiety as a significant factor affecting learners' performance and confidence. It also corroborates the study of MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), who explained that anxiety can

interfere with cognitive processing but can be managed over time through exposure and adaptation. Additionally, my findings parallel those of Gregersen and MacIntyre (2014), who emphasized that emotional regulation strategies help learners cope with anxiety and maintain engagement in language learning.

However, my idea opposes the study of Young (1991), who suggested that anxiety often leads to avoidance and long-term disengagement in language learning. In contrast, my participants demonstrated the ability to regulate their emotions and persist despite fear, suggesting that rather than being purely debilitating, anxiety can also become manageable and even facilitative when learners develop adaptive coping strategies.

9. Implications for Practice

The study highlights the need for school leaders to implement programs that strengthen pre-service teachers' self-efficacy, goal orientation, and social support in English language learning to enhance their motivation. Crucially, these programs may address and reduce fear and anxiety, allowing pre-service teachers to engage more confidently with challenging tasks. By combining skill-building, emotional support, and goal-focused strategies, resilience may be fostered, and learners may develop confidence and persistence, ultimately shaping both professional identity and lifelong engagement with the English language.

10. Future Direction

Future research may explore the predictive relationships among key factors in pre-service teachers' English language learning. Specifically, multiple regression can be conducted using beliefs, goal orientations, and social support received by pre-service teachers in English language learning as predictors, with motivation serving as the criterion variable. Researchers are also encouraged to investigate mediation models in which emotional regulation predicts goal orientations, which in turn predict motivation. Additionally, future studies may conduct an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to develop a questionnaire using the subthemes as indicators, providing a structured, theory-driven instrument for further quantitative investigation.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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