

Students' Motivation and Engagement in English Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

Motivation and engagement are essential to successful English language learning, as they drive students' desire to learn and their active participation in the process. This qualitative exploratory case study examined how motivation and engagement manifest among Grade 9 students at Marintoc National High School, using semi-structured interviews with purposively selected participants. Findings show that students' motivation stems from a mix of classroom experiences, social interactions, and personal aspirations, though emotional and cognitive barriers often hinder their engagements. Classroom motivation improves when teachers offer praise, constructive feedback, and consistent encouragement, building students' confidence and sense of achievement. Learning is

further reinforced by socio-cultural and environmental influences both inside and outside the classroom. Students also recommend incorporating play-based strategies – such as games, competitions, and storytelling – to make lessons more enjoyable and reduce anxiety. Based on these findings, the study recommends that teachers sustain consistent praise, feedback, and encouragement; that schools promote structured peer collaboration through group work, paired reading, and peer-led exercises; and that teachers adapt lesson pacing and complexity to learners' readiness levels.

Keywords: *English language learning, student motivation, student engagement, rural learners, qualitative case study, Grade 9 students*

INTRODUCTION

English is a primary medium of instruction in the Philippines, and is also the language of business, science, technology, government, and international communication. According to the *Business World* (2023), Filipino students generally demonstrate a high level of English proficiency, with the Philippines ranking 20th globally in the 2023 English Proficiency Index (EPI) and 2nd highest in English proficiency in East and Southeast Asia, behind Singapore. While Filipinos generally have a high level of English proficiency, recent data show a concerning decline, with the country's ranking on the Education First's English Proficiency Index (EPI) falling from 13th in 2015 to 27th in 2020 before edging back up to 20th out of 116 countries in 2024. While the Philippines remains in the "high proficiency" category, this downward trajectory has raised questions about the country's long-term competitiveness in the global market.

Aside from limited resources and teacher training, studies made in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia show that student motivation is also potentially impacting academic and professional opportunities in the rural context. Both Anggela, S., et.al. (2024) and Hossain, M.M. found that students in rural areas may lack motivation to learn English, potentially due to a perceived lack of immediate need or

opportunities to use the language. A separate study in Vietnam (Cuong, P.H., 2021) reveals inequities in language education facilities, funding, teaching staff shortages, and English curricula deployment, impacting students' motivation and associations with language learning, despite efforts to address these issues. Motivation and engagement are crucial for successful English language learning, with motivation driving the desire to learn and engagement ensuring active participation and deeper learning experiences. There are several definitions of motivation and engagement and all highlighting the significant roles of both in the learning process. The Cambridge Dictionary defined motivation as "willingness to do something, or something that causes such willingness" and "the need or reason for doing something" while engagement simply being "the fact of being involved with something."

In the context of the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines, motivation and engagement in language learning are influenced by socio-political factors, personal aspirations, and cultural values. This means motivation and engagement in language learning comprise not only of some psychological frameworks but a lot more socio-cultural, political and even personal factors especially for rural learners. Gardner and Lambert's study (as cited in Bernal, A.S. & Palma, R., 2025) reveals that integrative motivation enhances language proficiency by fostering deeper cultural connections beyond linguistic skills acquisition, allowing students to interact with the target language community. This study, among others, highlights the significant role of motivation within a cultural context in language learning

Given the current context and existing research on this issue, the researcher sought to explore how students' motivation and engagement manifest in their English language learning experiences. It aimed to understand the underlying factors that shape their motivation and the ways they engage in learning activities. By investigating the challenges students face and identifying the instructional strategies that foster greater motivation and engagement, this research intended to uncover the necessary elements that can improve language instruction.

Based on these considerations, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What motivates students to learn English?
2. What challenges do students encounter in maintaining motivation and engagement in learning English?
3. What instructional strategies or classroom practices contribute to students' motivation and engagement?
4. How do socio-cultural and environmental factors influence students' motivation and engagement in learning English?
5. What suggestions do students have to improve the teaching and learning of English in their schools?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative exploratory case study design to examine how motivation and engagement manifest among students in the context of English language learning. A qualitative approach was adopted because it allows for a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences and perceptions, which are best elicited through direct narratives and open-ended responses. As Creswell and Poth (2018) note, qualitative research is particularly suited to exploring how individuals make sense of their experiences within specific social and educational settings, making it well-aligned with the aims of this study. The case study method, in particular, was selected for its capacity to provide an in-depth, contextualized understanding of phenomenon as it naturally occurs. According to Yin (2018), the case study method is appropriate when the research seeks to explore contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident.

This is consistent with Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) assertion that case studies are especially valuable for capturing the complexity of a bounded system by drawing on multiple sources of information to construct a holistic picture. In this case, the interaction between students' personal experiences and the socio-cultural context of their learning environment necessitated an approach that emphasizes depth over breadth. The exploratory nature of the design enabled the researcher to probe the underlying factors that shape students' motivation and engagement, identify challenges they encounter, and draw out suggestions grounded in their own reflections and perspectives.

Research Locale

The respondents for this study were fourteen (14) Grade 9 students from Marintoc National High School. These students were chosen based on the following criteria: a) must be a grade 9 student of the school, and b) must have at least a 90% grade in English. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the personal information of the participants, they were coded as follows: *Participant 1*, *Participant 2* and so on.

Sampling Technique

Participants for this study were identified through purposive sampling, a technique widely employed in qualitative research to ensure that the individuals selected are information-rich cases capable of offering meaningful insight into the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015). As Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) explain, purposive sampling enables researchers to focus specifically on individuals who are best positioned to provide rich, relevant information, thereby enhancing the depth and credibility of the data collected. Purposive sampling was particularly effective for this study because it allowed the inclusion of students who were most likely to provide detailed, relevant, and reflective insights into the motivational and engagement dynamics in their English language education. This targeted selection process ensured that the data gathered would be substantive enough to support a nuanced exploration of the factors influencing students' motivation and engagement. The sample size of fourteen is consistent with qualitative research standards, which emphasize the value of depth in data collection and analysis rather than generalizability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is further supported by Boddy (2016), who argues that sample size in qualitative research should be determined not by predetermined statistical formulas but by the point at which the data collected sufficiently illuminates the research problem – a principle closely tied to the concept of data saturation.

Research Instrument

The researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide that was carefully constructed around the study's research questions. The interview guide was organized into several sections which includes background information, sources of motivation, classroom engagement, challenges in learning English, the influence of teachers and classmates, and socio-cultural as well as environmental influences. It also included questions that prompted students to provide suggestions for improving English instruction in their school. The semi-structured format offered the flexibility to explore emerging themes during interviews while ensuring consistency in addressing the core topics of inquiry. To ensure the content validity, the instrument was reviewed by two academic experts in English language education and qualitative research, who assessed the guide for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. It was then pilot-tested with three students who shared similar characteristics with the target population but were excluded from the actual sample. Piloting is a critical step in a qualitative instrument development, as it allows the researcher to assess whether questions are interpreted as intended, identify awkward phrasing or ambiguous items, and refine the sequencing of questions to improve the overall flow of interview (Majid et al., 2017; Kallio et al., 2016). Based on the pilot results, the researcher made necessary revisions to the wording, structure, and order of items to enhance the instrument's clarity, cultural appropriateness, and suitability for the target respondents.

Treatment of Data

Since the study adopted a qualitative design, the data were analyzed and interpreted using thematic analysis rather than statistical computation. Thematic analysis is a widely accepted method in qualitative research for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher first familiarized themselves with the transcripts through repeated reading before generating initial codes related to the study's central questions. These codes were then organized into broader themes such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, classroom engagement behaviors, barriers to sustained motivation, and the role of socio-cultural contexts. The coding process was both deductive—guided by the research questions—and inductive—allowing for new patterns and themes to emerge organically from the data. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis, the researcher conducted member checking with selected participants to validate interpretations and engaged in peer debriefing with fellow qualitative researchers. These steps helped reduce interpretive bias and ensured that the themes reflected the authentic voices of the participants.

Ethical Considerations

The public schools district supervisor of the Mobo South District gave permission for the study to be conducted before the actual gathering of data. Informed consent regarding the purpose, procedures involved, and ethical considerations was secured in writing from participants. They were given a guarantee that all the data they would provide would be dealt with the utmost confidentiality in adherence to the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173).

The researcher made sure that the ethical standards in conducting the research were strictly followed. Participation is voluntary, and participants were informed of the purpose of the research, its risks, and its benefits before they took part in the study. As per the guidelines stated in the CHED Memorandum Number 15, series of 2019, which emphasizes the protection of human participants in research based on the concepts of informed consent, autonomy, beneficence, and justice, the participants were made aware that they had the right to decline to participate or to withdraw from the research at any time without any obligation. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were strictly protected, and no unauthorized person had any access to the information gathered. Moreover, as stated in Republic Act Number 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, all personal data gathered from the participants were processed, stored, and disposed of in a lawful, secure, and specific manner for the prescribed purpose to protect against unauthorized access, disclosure, or misuse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Motivation and Engagement in English Language Learning

The first research question explored students' motivation and engagement in English language learning. The analysis revealed two major themes: Learners' Motivation and Learners' Engagement. Under Learners' Motivation, four subthemes emerged: Practical Communication, Academic Orientation, External Exposure, and Intrinsic Motivation. Under Learners' Engagement, the major subtheme was Active Participation.

Theme 1: Learners' Motivation

Learners' Motivation refers to the reasons, goals, and personal meanings that encourage students to learn English. The participants' responses revealed that their motivation was shaped by practical communication needs, academic purposes, exposure to media and technology, and personal aspirations.

Subtheme 1: Practical Communication

Practical Communication emerged as one of the major sources of students' motivation. The participants viewed English as a useful language for communicating with people beyond their immediate environment. Participant 1 stated, "I want to communicate globally," while Participant 2 shared, "To

communicate better.” Participant 14 also described English as “enjoyable and widely used,” showing that students valued English for both its usefulness and personal appeal.

These responses indicate that students were motivated by the functional value of English. Their answers reflect Gardner’s (2001) view of instrumental motivation, where language learning is driven by practical goals such as communication and future opportunities. Crystal (2003) also emphasized the global role of English, while Dörnyei (2009) explained that learners may be motivated by both practical usefulness and personal interest. In the Philippine context, Bautista (2001) further noted that English is deeply embedded in education, media, governance, and technology, making it a language associated with social and academic mobility.

This finding suggests that students become more motivated when they see English as a tool for real-life communication. Therefore, English instruction should include authentic communicative tasks such as conversations, role plays, interviews, oral sharing, and real-world speaking situations.

Subtheme 2: Academic Orientation

Academic Orientation also emerged as an important subtheme. Students were motivated to learn English because they associated it with school performance, vocabulary development, grammar learning, and access to technology-based learning materials. Participant 3 stated, “To learn new words and meanings,” while Participant 10 explained, “English helps with school and technology.”

These responses show that students viewed English as important for academic success and learning competence. This finding is supported by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), who explained that learners may be motivated by the desire to master language content, understand patterns, and solve linguistic problems. Noels et al. (2003) also emphasized that self-determined learners are more likely to sustain engagement when their goal is competence and personal growth. Bautista (2018) further highlighted the role of English in Philippine education as a language connected to academic achievement and socio-economic advancement.

This finding implies that English teachers should connect lessons to students’ academic needs. Vocabulary work, grammar lessons, reading tasks, writing activities, and technology-based learning should be presented as tools that help students succeed not only in English class but also in other learning areas.

Subtheme 3: External Exposure

External Exposure refers to students’ motivation from media, technology, entertainment, and online communication. Several participants reported that they encounter English outside school through songs, shows, games, movies, social media, and chats. Participant 5 stated, “I learn English through shows and songs,” while Participant 7 shared, “I want to understand movies and games.” Participant 6 also noted, “English is used in shows and chats.”

These responses suggest that students’ motivation is strengthened by informal exposure to English. Sundqvist and Sylvén (2012) described this as extramural English, or English learning that happens outside formal classroom settings. Reinders and White (2011) also explained that technology allows students to engage with English autonomously and at their own pace. Similarly, Gee (2004) emphasized that games and interactive media provide meaningful contexts where learners encounter language naturally.

This finding indicates that students’ out-of-school experiences can be used to strengthen classroom learning. Teachers may integrate songs, video clips, films, games, or digital materials to make English lessons more relatable and connected to students’ everyday interests.

Subtheme 4: Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic Motivation emerged from students’ personal interest, values, and future aspirations. Some students learned English because they personally valued the language and saw it as connected to their dreams. Participant 13 stated, “I am self-motivated because I value English,” while Participant 9 shared, “English is useful for my dream job.”

These responses reflect Ryan and Deci's (2000) explanation of intrinsic motivation as engagement in an activity because it is personally meaningful or interesting. Ushioda (2011) also emphasized that motivation is shaped by personal goals and real-life relevance, while Lamb (2012) highlighted the role of future self-guides, or learners' visions of what they hope to become.

This finding suggests that students' motivation becomes stronger when English learning is connected to their identity, future career, and personal growth. Teachers may strengthen intrinsic motivation by using goal-setting activities, career-related tasks, reflective writing, and lessons that allow students to connect English with their dreams.

Theme 2: Learners' Engagement

Learners' Engagement refers to students' active involvement, effort, attention, and participation in English learning activities. The findings showed that engagement was reflected through students' participation in interactive, collaborative, and creative classroom tasks.

Subtheme 1: Active Participation

Active Participation emerged as the main expression of students' engagement. Participants identified activities such as group work, games, role plays, spelling competitions, reporting, recitation, reading, writing, and film viewing as activities that helped them become more engaged. Participant 1 mentioned "group activities and games," while Participant 4 identified "games and role plays." Participant 3 referred to "spelling games and competitions," and Participant 13 mentioned "group games with points." Participant 6 also shared "interactive activities and reporting," while Participant 11 mentioned "recites and watches movies in class."

These responses show that students are more engaged when classroom activities are varied, interactive, and student-centered. Ellis (2003) supports this through task-based language learning, which emphasizes purposeful language use. Deterding and Khaled (2017) also explained that game-based learning promotes focus and participation, while Mayer (2009) emphasized the value of multimedia learning. Fredricks et al. (2004) described behavioral engagement as participation, persistence, and effort in learning tasks, and Skinner and Belmont (1993) added that supportive learning environments strengthen student engagement.

This finding implies that English classes should provide students with frequent opportunities to participate through games, role plays, group tasks, reporting, recitation, reading, writing, and multimedia-based activities. These strategies can make English learning more active, enjoyable, and meaningful.

Overall, the findings show that students' motivation and engagement in English language learning are shaped by both internal and external factors. Under Learners' Motivation, students were motivated by practical communication, academic purposes, external exposure, and intrinsic goals. Under Learners' Engagement, students became more involved through active participation in interactive and creative classroom tasks. Supported by the works of Gardner, Dörnyei, Ryan and Deci, Sundqvist and Sylén, Ellis, Mayer, and Fredricks et al., these findings suggest that English instruction becomes more effective when it connects learners' goals, classroom participation, media exposure, and real-life communication.

Challenges in English Language Learning

The second research question examined the challenges students encounter in sustaining their motivation and engagement in English language learning. The analysis generated one major theme: Motivation Challenges, which reflects the emotional, cognitive, oral, and linguistic difficulties that interfere with students' willingness to participate and persist in English learning. Four subthemes emerged under this theme: Affective Barriers to Motivation, Cognitive Barriers to Motivation, Oral Language and Listening Difficulties, and Grammatical and Lexical Challenges. These findings show that students' struggles were not limited to lack of interest; rather, their motivation was affected by boredom, low confidence, difficult grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation problems, and challenges in understanding spoken English.

Theme 1: Motivation Challenges

Motivation Challenges refer to the conditions that weaken students' interest, confidence, and active participation in English learning. Although the students recognized the importance of English, their responses showed that motivation becomes difficult to sustain when lessons are emotionally discouraging, cognitively demanding, or linguistically complex. This theme suggests that students' engagement in English class depends not only on their willingness to learn but also on how manageable, supportive, and meaningful the learning experience is.

Theme 2: Learners' Motivation

Learners' Motivation refers to the reasons, goals, and personal meanings that encourage students to learn English. The findings showed that students were motivated not only by classroom learning but also by their desire to communicate, succeed academically, understand media and technology, and prepare for their future aspirations.

Subtheme 1: Affective Barriers to Motivation

Affective barriers emerged when students described moments of boredom, discouragement, and loss of interest in English class. Participant 1 admitted, "Yes, sometimes I lose interest," while Participant 6 explained, "Yes, when the lesson is long and boring." These responses show that students' motivation weakens when classroom activities feel repetitive, lengthy, or emotionally unengaging.

Some students also connected demotivation with academic difficulty and low performance. Participant 13 stated, "Yes, when I don't get high scores," suggesting that poor results can reduce a learner's sense of competence. Participant 3 added, "Yes, when grammar is difficult," while Participant 4 shared, "Yes, when I don't understand the lesson." These responses reveal that emotional discouragement often occurs when students feel unsuccessful or unable to cope with lesson demands.

This finding is supported by Gardner's (1985) view that attitudes toward the learning situation influence language motivation. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis also explains that anxiety, low confidence, and demotivation may block effective language learning. Similarly, Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory emphasizes that learners are more motivated when they experience competence and emotional support. Therefore, affective barriers suggest the need for English classrooms that are not only academically structured but also encouraging, varied, and psychologically safe.

Subtheme 2: Cognitive Barriers to Motivation

Cognitive barriers were evident when students described difficulty understanding English words, grammar, pronunciation, and lesson content. Participant 9 stated, "Yes, when I don't understand new words," while Participant 10 shared, "Yes, when pronunciation is hard." These answers show that students' motivation declines when the lesson requires them to process unfamiliar vocabulary or difficult language forms beyond their current readiness.

Other participants identified grammar and vocabulary as specific sources of cognitive difficulty. Participant 7 answered, "Yes, especially in grammar," while Participant 14 said, "Yes, because of hard vocabulary." These responses indicate that students may disengage when English becomes mentally overwhelming or when they lack the support needed to understand complex language structures.

Dörnyei's (2001) concept of demotivation supports this finding, as learners may reduce effort when language tasks become too difficult or frustrating. Swain's (2005) Output Hypothesis also suggests that learners need opportunities to produce language within a manageable level of difficulty, while Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development emphasizes guided support for tasks that are challenging but achievable. This implies that English instruction should provide scaffolding, contextual examples, vocabulary support, and gradual progression so that learners can remain confident and engaged.

Subtheme 3: Oral Language and Listening Difficulties

Oral language and listening difficulties also affected students' confidence and willingness to participate. Several participants pointed to pronunciation as a major challenge. Participant 1 stated, "Pronunciation is hard," Participant 8 remarked, "Pronouncing big words is hard," and Participant 13 shared, "Pronouncing unfamiliar words is hard." These responses suggest that students may hesitate to speak when they are unsure of how to pronounce English words correctly.

Listening comprehension also emerged as a concern. Participant 9 said, "It's hard to listen to native English," while Participant 6 stated, "Hard to catch accent and grammar." These answers show that students experience difficulty understanding spoken English, especially when exposed to unfamiliar accents, fast speech, or complex grammatical patterns.

This finding is supported by Derwing and Munro (2005), who emphasized that pronunciation affects both intelligibility and learners' willingness to communicate. Vandergrift (2007) and Rost (2011) also noted that listening requires active processing of sounds, vocabulary, grammar, and meaning. In this study, oral and listening difficulties show that students need more guided speaking and listening practice, including pronunciation modeling, repeated oral drills, listening activities, and low-pressure speaking opportunities.

Subtheme 4: Grammatical and Lexical Challenges

Grammatical and lexical challenges were also identified as barriers to motivation and engagement. Participant 3 stated, "I struggle with grammar," while Participant 7 shared, "Grammar and sentence formation are hard." These responses show that students find it difficult not only to understand grammar rules but also to apply them in constructing sentences.

Vocabulary difficulty further contributed to students' struggle. Participant 4 answered, "Difficult vocabulary," while Participant 14 explained, "Stress and unclear delivery are problems." These responses indicate that limited vocabulary, unclear expression, and difficulty with stress patterns affect students' ability to understand and use English confidently.

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) support this finding by emphasizing that grammar should be taught within meaningful communication rather than as isolated rules. Nation (2001) also highlights vocabulary as a major foundation of language proficiency, while Bautista (2004) notes that learners in rural or resource-limited contexts may experience weaker English reinforcement outside the classroom. This implies that grammar and vocabulary instruction should be contextualized through meaningful examples, sentence-building tasks, oral practice, vocabulary mapping, and repeated use in real communication.

Overall, the findings show that students' challenges in maintaining motivation and engagement are both emotional and linguistic. Under Motivation Challenges, students experienced affective barriers, cognitive barriers, oral and listening difficulties, and grammatical and lexical struggles. Their responses reveal that boredom, low scores, difficult grammar, unfamiliar vocabulary, pronunciation problems, native English accents, and unclear delivery affect their confidence and participation. These findings imply that English instruction should be supportive, scaffolded, communicative, and responsive to students' actual proficiency levels.

Instructional Strategies or Classroom Practices in English Language Learning

The third research question examined the instructional strategies and classroom practices that contribute to students' motivation and engagement in English language learning. The analysis generated three major themes: Classroom Motivation, Peer Assistance, and Teacher Support. These themes show that students were more motivated and engaged when the English classroom provided encouragement, opportunities for participation, collaborative support, and patient instructional guidance.

Theme 1: Classroom Motivation

Classroom Motivation refers to the teacher-led practices that encouraged students to participate and remain interested in English learning. The participants emphasized the value of praise, speaking practice, correction, patience, and encouragement. Participant 1 stated, “Teacher praises my work,” while Participant 10 shared, “Teacher lets us practice speaking.” These responses suggest that students feel more confident when teachers recognize their efforts and provide opportunities to use English actively.

Corrective feedback also contributed to motivation. Participant 11 noted, “Teacher helps correct mispronunciations,” showing that students appreciated feedback when it helped them improve without embarrassment. In addition, Participant 13 stated, “Teacher is patient and encouraging,” while Participant 14 said, “Teacher motivates me when I struggle.” These responses reveal that motivation is strengthened when students feel supported during mistakes and difficulties.

This finding is supported by Skinner and Belmont (1993), who emphasized that teacher involvement enhances students’ motivational and behavioral engagement. Swain’s (2005) Output Hypothesis also supports the importance of speaking practice, while Lyster and Ranta (1997) highlight the role of corrective feedback in language development. Dörnyei (2001) and Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) further stress that encouragement and a supportive classroom climate help reduce anxiety and sustain learner participation.

This implies that English teachers should build classrooms where praise, feedback, oral practice, and encouragement are consistently used to help students feel capable and willing to participate.

Theme 2: Peer Assistance

Peer Assistance emerged as another important classroom practice that supported students’ motivation and engagement. Participants described their classmates as sources of explanation, correction, pronunciation support, and encouragement. Participant 2 stated, “Classmates help explain lessons,” Participant 3 shared, “Classmates help with grammar,” and Participant 7 noted, “Classmates correct my mistakes.” These answers show that peer interaction helped students understand lessons in a less intimidating way.

Peer support was also evident in speaking and performance tasks. Participant 12 stated, “Peers model pronunciation for me,” while Participant 6 shared, “Peers motivate me when we present.” Participant 9 also remarked, “Classmates read together to help me.” These responses indicate that classmates helped reduce anxiety, improve confidence, and encourage participation in English activities.

This finding aligns with Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, which explains that learners can perform better with support from more capable peers. Johnson and Johnson (1999) also emphasized that cooperative learning improves achievement and self-esteem, while Topping (2005) noted that peer teaching benefits both the learner receiving help and the learner giving support. Bernardo (2004) further supports the importance of socially mediated learning in Philippine classrooms.

This suggests that peer-based strategies such as pair work, group tasks, peer tutoring, shared reading, and collaborative speaking activities should be intentionally included in English instruction.

Theme 3: Teacher Support

Teacher Support refers to the guidance, encouragement, and feedback provided by teachers during English learning tasks. Participants emphasized that teachers helped them understand tasks and remain motivated during difficult moments. Participant 5 stated, “Teacher is supportive during tasks,” while Participant 8 shared, “My teacher helps me understand tasks.” These responses show that teacher guidance helped students feel more secure and engaged in class.

The participants also valued emotional and instructional support. Participant 14 said, “Teacher motivates me when I struggle,” while Participant 13 described the teacher as “patient and encouraging.”

Participant 11's response, "Teacher helps correct mispronunciations," further shows that students viewed teacher feedback as helpful when it was delivered constructively.

This finding is supported by Mercer and Gregersen (2020), who emphasized the role of teacher-created emotional climate in student engagement. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) also highlight the value of scaffolding, where teachers adjust support based on learners' needs. Hattie and Timperley (2007) stress that feedback guides improvement, while Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory explains that students become more motivated when they feel competent, supported, and connected.

This implies that teacher support is not only about explaining lessons. It also involves patience, encouragement, correction, and emotional reassurance that help students continue participating even when English tasks become difficult.

Overall, the findings show that students' motivation and engagement are strengthened by supportive classroom practices. Classroom Motivation is developed through praise, oral practice, correction, patience, and encouragement. Peer Assistance helps students understand lessons, improve pronunciation, correct mistakes, and gain confidence through collaboration. Teacher Support sustains engagement by providing guidance, feedback, and emotional reassurance. These findings suggest that English instruction becomes more effective when the classroom is interactive, supportive, and relationship-centered rather than purely lecture-based.

Socio-Cultural and Environmental Influences

The fourth research question examined how socio-cultural and environmental factors influence students' motivation and engagement in English language learning. The analysis revealed two major themes: Socio-Cultural Influences and Environmental Influences. Under Socio-Cultural Influences, three subthemes emerged: Home-Based Learning, Parental Support, and Community Support. Under Environmental Influences, three subthemes were identified: Media Exposure, Entertainment Influence, and External Support Systems. These findings show that students' English learning was shaped not only by classroom instruction but also by the support, exposure, and learning opportunities available in their homes, communities, and everyday environments.

Theme 1: Socio-Cultural Influences

Socio-Cultural Influences refer to the support systems and social environments that affect how students value, practice, and engage with English. The findings revealed that students' motivation was strengthened when English learning was supported at home, reinforced by parents, and extended through community-based activities. This theme suggests that students' engagement with English is not formed only inside the classroom; it is also shaped by the people and environments that surround them.

Subtheme 1: Home-Based Learning

Home-Based Learning emerged as an important socio-cultural influence on students' motivation and engagement. Several participants shared that their families supported their English learning by encouraging practice and study habits at home. Participant 1 stated, "Family supports practice at home," while Participant 2 shared, "Parents remind me to study." Participant 3 also noted, "Home helps by speaking English with me," and Participant 12 added, "Family speaks English during meals." These responses show that the home can serve as an extension of the classroom where students continue to encounter and practice English.

Other responses also showed how literacy practices at home contributed to students' learning. Participant 9 mentioned, "Family reads bedtime English stories," while Participant 14 stated, "Family supports me with learning tasks." These answers suggest that home-based support helps students become more comfortable with English through repeated exposure, encouragement, and meaningful use in daily routines.

This finding is supported by Epstein's (2001) framework, which emphasizes the connection among home, school, and community in shaping learners' academic development. Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) also highlight the value of parental involvement, while Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) emphasize the role of literacy-rich home environments. Vygotsky's (1978) view of learning as socially supported also explains how family members can help scaffold students' English development.

Subtheme 2: Parental Support

Parental Support was also identified as a strong influence on students' motivation. Participants described their parents as active sources of reminders, monitoring, encouragement, and reinforcement. Participant 4 shared, "Parents remind me to review vocabulary," while Participant 10 stated, "Parents monitor my English progress." These responses indicate that parents contribute to students' motivation by showing concern for their English learning and by helping them maintain study habits.

Students also mentioned that parents encouraged them to use media as part of English learning. Participant 7 stated, "Parents encourage me to watch English TV," while Participant 13 noted, "Family encourages daily practice." These responses show that parental support was not limited to formal studying; it also included encouragement to engage with English through accessible and enjoyable activities.

This finding is supported by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model of parental involvement, which explains how parents' beliefs and actions influence students' academic engagement. Li and Tan (2016) also support the use of media-integrated parental involvement, while Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory explains that encouragement from significant others strengthens students' sense of relatedness and motivation.

Subtheme 3: Community Support

Community Support emerged as another socio-cultural factor influencing English learning. Some students shared that the community provided additional opportunities for language engagement. Participant 6 stated, "Community supports school projects," while Participant 8 shared, "Barangay holds English reading contests." Participant 11 also mentioned, "Community gives us English programs." These responses show that community activities can extend English learning beyond the school and home.

This finding suggests that community-based programs help students see English as useful and valued in their local environment. When barangay activities, school projects, and reading programs support English learning, students are given additional spaces to practice and appreciate the language. This is especially important in rural or resource-constrained settings where formal English exposure may be limited.

Cummins (2001) supports this finding by emphasizing that language learning is connected to sociocultural practices, while Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory explains that learners are influenced by wider social structures, including community institutions. The finding implies that schools may strengthen English learning by building partnerships with barangays and local organizations for reading contests, literacy programs, and English-related activities.

Theme 2: Environmental Influences

Environmental Influences refer to the non-classroom resources, tools, and surroundings that shape students' exposure to English. The findings showed that students encountered English through media, entertainment, digital platforms, applications, online tutorials, and library materials. These resources provided informal and self-directed opportunities for students to practice and improve their English beyond regular classroom instruction.

Subtheme 1: Media Exposure

Media Exposure was one of the strongest environmental influences identified by the participants. Students reported that movies, games, vlogs, videos, and online content helped them learn English.

Participant 1 stated, “I learn from movies and games,” while Participant 2 shared, “I watch English vlogs.” Participant 5 also said, “Online videos help me speak English,” and Participant 11 noted, “YouTube helps with pronunciation.” These responses show that media provided students with authentic and engaging exposure to English.

This finding is supported by Sundqvist and Sylén’s (2012) concept of extramural English, which refers to English learning outside formal instruction. Reinders and White (2011) also emphasize that technology allows learners to engage with English independently, while Derwing and Munro (2005) highlight the importance of exposure in improving pronunciation. Krashen’s (1982) input hypothesis also supports the value of meaningful English exposure through media.

This suggests that students’ media experiences can be used as a bridge between formal and informal learning. English teachers may strengthen engagement by incorporating short videos, vlogs, film clips, and online pronunciation materials into classroom activities.

Subtheme 2: Entertainment Influence

Entertainment Influence also shaped students’ motivation and engagement. Participants mentioned that music, cartoons, and animated materials helped them learn English in enjoyable ways. Participant 3 stated, “I listen to English music,” while Participant 12 shared, “Cartoons teach me new words.” These responses indicate that entertainment-based exposure supports vocabulary learning, pronunciation, and listening comprehension without the pressure of formal instruction.

This finding is supported by Krashen’s (1985) Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes that learners acquire language more effectively when they are exposed to understandable input in low-anxiety contexts. Weyers (1999) also noted that authentic television materials can improve listening comprehension, while Paivio’s (1991) dual-coding theory explains how language paired with visuals supports retention. Schmidt’s (1990) concept of incidental learning further explains how students acquire language while engaging in enjoyable activities.

This finding implies that entertainment materials should not be dismissed as distractions. When used appropriately, songs, cartoons, and animated clips can support language exposure and make English learning more engaging, especially for students who respond well to visual and auditory materials.

Subtheme 3: External Support Systems

External Support Systems refer to the tools and resources students use outside the classroom to support their English learning. Participants mentioned educational websites, learning apps, YouTube tutorials, library books, and English learning games. Participant 6 stated, “I use apps and websites to study English,” while Participant 14 shared, “I use English apps and websites.” Participant 7 added, “I watch YouTube tutorials,” and Participant 8 referred to using English books from the library. Participant 10 also stated, “I play English learning games.”

These responses show that students use both digital and print-based resources to supplement classroom learning. Apps, websites, tutorials, games, and books provide students with additional practice in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and comprehension. These tools are especially useful in settings where classroom resources may be limited.

This finding is supported by Benson’s (2011) theory of learner autonomy, which emphasizes the importance of independent access to learning resources. Godwin-Jones (2011) also notes that technology can support out-of-class language practice, while Warschauer and Kern (2000) highlight the value of combining digital and print resources. Reinders and White (2011) further explain that digital tools provide low-pressure spaces for language experimentation, and Deci and Ryan’s (2000) Self-Determination Theory supports the idea that personalized tools can strengthen students’ sense of control and competence.

This finding implies that schools should recognize students’ use of digital and print resources as part of their English learning experience. Teachers may guide students in using reliable apps, tutorial videos, online dictionaries, library materials, and learning games to support independent practice.

Overall, the findings show that students' motivation and engagement in English learning are influenced by both socio-cultural and environmental factors. Socio-Cultural Influences were reflected in home-based learning, parental support, and community support, showing that students benefit when families and communities encourage English use. Environmental Influences were reflected in media exposure, entertainment influence, and external support systems, showing that students also learn English through digital platforms, music, cartoons, apps, websites, tutorials, and books.

These findings suggest that English learning extends beyond the classroom. Students become more motivated and engaged when their homes, parents, communities, media environments, and learning resources provide meaningful exposure and support. Therefore, English instruction should acknowledge students' lived experiences and connect classroom learning with the social and environmental resources already present in their daily lives.

Suggestions for Improvement

The fifth research question explored students' suggestions for improving English teaching and learning. The analysis revealed three major themes: Play-Based Strategies, Effective Delivery, and Multimedia Integration. These themes show that students preferred English instruction that is enjoyable, clear, interactive, and supported by visual and technological materials. Their suggestions indicate that improving English learning requires not only more activities but also better lesson delivery and stronger connection between classroom instruction and students' interests.

Theme 1: Play-Based Strategies

Play-Based Strategies emerged from students' desire for English lessons that are more enjoyable and participatory. Participant 1 suggested, "Add fun games to class," while Participant 5 recommended, "Include more games and group work." These responses show that students associate games and group activities with a more engaging English learning experience.

This finding suggests that students are more likely to participate when learning activities reduce pressure and allow them to interact with classmates. Games, group work, and collaborative tasks can make English less intimidating, especially for learners who may feel anxious about speaking or making mistakes. Nixon and Topping (2001) support the value of play-based learning by emphasizing its contribution to motivation, fluency, and vocabulary development. Hadfield (1990) also noted that language games encourage real communication, allowing learners to use vocabulary and grammar in meaningful contexts.

This implies that English teachers may improve motivation and engagement by incorporating games, group challenges, vocabulary contests, role plays, and other interactive activities. In resource-limited classrooms, play-based strategies are useful because they do not always require expensive materials but can still promote active participation and meaningful language use.

Theme 2: Effective Delivery

Effective Delivery was reflected in students' call for clearer, simpler, and more understandable instruction. Participant 3 suggested, "Use simpler English and translate hard parts," while Participant 4 recommended, "Make lessons more visual and simpler." Participant 13 also stated, "Explain topics better and use visuals." These responses show that students want lessons to be adjusted to their level of understanding.

The participants also suggested more active and communication-based delivery. Participant 9 recommended storytelling and character acting, Participant 8 suggested competitions and speaking tasks, and Participant 14 preferred communication-focused lessons. These answers indicate that students do not only want easier explanations; they also want lessons that allow them to use English in expressive and meaningful ways.

This finding aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, which emphasizes the importance of scaffolding learners based on what they can understand with support. Paivio's (1990) dual-

coding theory also supports the use of visuals because learners understand and remember information better when verbal explanations are paired with visual representations. Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis further suggests that learners benefit from understandable input delivered in a low-anxiety environment.

This implies that English instruction should be clearer, more contextualized, and more student-responsive. Teachers may use visuals, examples, translation when necessary, guided practice, storytelling, speaking tasks, and real-life communication activities to make lessons easier to understand and more meaningful to learners.

Theme 3: Multimedia Integration

Multimedia Integration emerged from students' suggestion to use more media and technology in English lessons. Participant 10 proposed, "Use technology more in class," while Participant 11 suggested, "Include more film viewing and speaking practice." These responses show that students see technology and media as helpful tools for making English lessons more interesting and accessible.

The use of multimedia can support listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, and speaking practice. Videos, films, educational apps, and online materials expose students to varied accents, natural speech, visual context, and authentic language use. Mayer (2009) supports this through multimedia learning theory, which emphasizes that students learn more effectively when information is presented through both visual and auditory channels. Buckingham (2003) also highlights the importance of media literacy, suggesting that learning in the modern classroom extends beyond textbooks and includes digital engagement.

This finding implies that multimedia should not be used only for entertainment but as a purposeful instructional support. English teachers may integrate short films, video clips, pronunciation videos, educational apps, online games, and digital speaking tasks to strengthen students' exposure to English and connect classroom learning with the media tools students already use outside school.

Overall, the findings show that students want English instruction to be more engaging, understandable, and connected to modern learning tools. Play-Based Strategies highlight the need for games, group work, and enjoyable classroom activities. Effective Delivery emphasizes clearer explanations, simpler language, visuals, translation of difficult parts, storytelling, and communication-based tasks. Multimedia Integration points to the value of technology, films, videos, and digital tools in supporting language learning.

These findings suggest that students prefer English classes that are interactive, supportive, and responsive to their learning needs. Improving English instruction, therefore, requires teachers to balance enjoyment, clarity, communication practice, and multimedia-supported learning.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, one can identify that the motivation and engagement of Grade 9 students in English learning is affected by a number of factors such as personal factors, instructional factors, sociocultural and environmental factors. The learners were motivated by the relevance of English for communication, education success, the use of technology, media, and future goals. Their engagement was increased by the interactive and cooperative class activities as well as class activities involving games, role-playing, group work, speaking, reading, writing and multimedia activities. From these findings, we can understand that English learning gains importance because of its relevance to individual aspirations, class engagement and experiences of students in daily life.

Nevertheless, there are certain barriers faced by the learners which affect their motivation and engagement. Such barriers include boredom, low self-esteem, problems with understanding grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation problems and understanding spoken English. From these barriers we can conclude that the challenges of learners are related to both emotional and language aspects. In such a way, English teaching should pay attention not only to teaching the subject matter, but also providing learners with emotional support, explanations, examples and proper learning activities.

Moreover, the findings demonstrate that fostering classroom relations have a significant impact on keeping students' involvement in English lessons. Teacher motivation, constructive criticism, constructive guidance, and opportunities to speak make the students feel more confident in participating in class, whereas peer support eliminates intimidation and creates a collaborative learning atmosphere. Besides the classroom learning, family support, speaking English at home, community programs, interaction with media, education apps, and many other factors increase students' motivation and provide additional opportunities for the development of the language skills.

The research draws attention to the crucial role of English education which is learner-oriented, motivational, involving, and oriented at the circumstances of rural students. The suggestions of the students about the implementation of games, stories, visual materials, clear explanation, using of technology and communicative activities mean that the effective English education should be consistent with fun, clarity, and application of language in practice. Thus, improving students' motivation and participation requires classroom approaches taking into account their emotions and difficulties in learning the language.

Recommendations

Various recommendations have been made to enhance students' motivation and participation in English learning, taking into account the results and conclusions of the research.

First and foremost, it is crucial for English teachers to continue creating a positive atmosphere within their classes through constant encouragement, constructive criticism, and emotional support. It is necessary to motivate and positively reinforce the students through patience and kindness in order to make them comfortable with active participation, questioning, and errors during English lessons, since some of the students have problems with low self-esteem, boredom, and demotivation.

Secondly, there should be more exercises aimed at peer collaboration, such as group projects, paired reading, pronunciation, grammar and conversational practices. Such exercises can reduce the stress level among students and make learning English more interesting and less stressful for them.

Third, the level of preparedness of the students must be considered in lesson plans for English lessons. Where necessary, the teacher is advised to make use of mother tongue, scaffolding, simplified language, contextual examples, and visuals. These strategies might help to reduce cognitive load, especially where there are problems associated with listening, pronunciation, unknown words, and complex grammar.

Fourth, the incorporation of more interactive and communicative activities such as games, stories, competitions, role plays, speaking practice, and practice with real-life conversation can also be done in English lessons. These kinds of activities could contribute to making the students enjoy the process of learning English and build their confidence and fluency.

Fifth, teachers must utilize the potential of technology and multimedia. These materials can reinforce vocabulary, listening, pronunciation, and speaking skills while connecting classroom learning to students' informal exposure to English outside school.

Lastly, schools need to establish stronger ties with the parents and the communities in terms of English learning activities. The parents can be motivated to assist in their child's English learning through reading, English conversation, encouragement, and study routine in the comforts of the home while the schools can link up with the barangay officials and other organizations to undertake various reading competitions, English programs, literacy activities, and other similar language learning activities in the community.

Moreover, the administrators must conduct trainings and professional development activities for English teachers especially on motivation, differentiated instruction, scaffolding, communicative activities, and use of technology.

Therefore, the school administrators, teachers, and English instructors need to listen to the views of the learners as part of the preparations in undertaking English lessons in class. The learners have provided

several views about what activities are useful in teaching English, thus, these must be considered during the lesson preparation..

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