



Teachers' Beliefs and Strategies in Motivating Students in Learning English

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-02-22 Revised: 2026-07-30 Accepted: 2026-09-02 Keywords: English language learning, learning motivation, motivational strategies, teacher beliefs DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.9758 Corresponding Author: Annisa Deliza Annisadeliza.2023@student.uny.ac.id Master of English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Languages, Arts and Cultures, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta	<i>This study explores junior high school English teachers' beliefs about motivating students to learn English and examines how these beliefs shape their motivational strategies, the challenges they encounter, and the influence of their personal learning experiences and professional development on their teaching practices. Although previous studies have examined teachers' beliefs or motivational strategies in EFL contexts, limited research has explored how teachers' beliefs are reflected in their motivational strategies through multiple qualitative data sources, particularly in Indonesian junior high school settings. Furthermore, the integration of Teacher Cognition Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Dörnyei's motivational framework remains limited in previous studies. Guided by these three theoretical perspectives, this qualitative descriptive study involved two English teachers from a junior high school in Jakarta. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans and teaching materials. Methodological triangulation was used to enhance the credibility of the data. Thematic analysis was used to detect trends and themes across the data sources. Findings show that teachers' beliefs were a key factor in the selection and implementation of motivational strategies, particularly in creating emotionally supportive classrooms, fostering student engagement, and tailoring teaching to students' needs through reflective teaching practices. Low self-confidence and negative perceptions of English were major challenges faced by teachers and they tackled these through adaptive and student-centred strategies. The findings offer practical insights into how teachers' beliefs shape motivational practices in Indonesian EFL classrooms and contribute to deeper comprehension of the relationship between teacher cognition and motivational strategies.</i>

1. Introduction

Motivation is one of the most important factors in successful foreign language learning as it affects learners' participation, perseverance and attitude towards communication." In English as a foreign language (EFL) settings where chances to use English outside the classroom are often limited, motivation becomes even more important to maintain students' learning efforts. Gardner (1985) defines motivation as the combination of effort, desire and positive attitudes to language learning of the learners. In a broader perspective, Dörnyei (2001) defines motivation as a dynamic process affecting learners' goal-directed behaviour, and being affected by both internal and external factors. Current perspectives also emphasise learners' self-regulation, goals, and social learning environment, rather than simply learners' innate abilities, and identify motivation as a key element of successful language learning.

Despite its acknowledged importance, maintaining students' motivation is a big challenge in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Many studies have found that despite the educational and professional value of learning English, many Indonesian students are not engaged in English learning. For instance, Usman et al. (2021) found that students had both integrative and instrumental orientations to learning English but they were not fully engaged in learning. Likewise, Astuti et al. (2022) pointed out that students' motivation was often reduced by boredom, anxiety and learning difficulties, and Farid et al. (2023) showed that students' persistence in language learning was negatively affected by their poor L2 self-concepts.

These findings imply that students' positive attitudes towards English do not necessarily translate into continued motivation, and emphasise the necessity of classroom practices that actively foster and sustain students' engagement for the duration of the learning process. Given these persistent motivational challenges, understanding how teachers respond to students' motivational needs becomes essential, as teachers are among the most influential factors in shaping supportive classroom environments and sustaining students' engagement in EFL learning.

Teachers are key to creating learning environments that keep students motivated to learn, especially in EFL classrooms where there are few opportunities outside of school to use English. In addition to determining instructional strategies, teachers are always making pedagogical decisions based on what they know, believe and experience in their professional practice. Teacher Cognition reflects this view, as it refers to teachers' beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and experiences as related mental constructs that influence classroom decision-making and instructional practices (Borg, 2006). Teachers' beliefs are not frozen but develop over time, through prior learning experiences, interactions in the classroom and professional development.

Thus, teachers' beliefs affect how they perceive students' needs, plan their instructional goals and use motivational strategies to promote learning. Recent reviews further highlight that research on language teacher cognition has increasingly focused on understanding the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices, emphasizing that teachers' instructional decisions are strongly influenced by their cognitive processes rather than merely by curriculum requirements or teaching techniques.

Previous studies have consistently agreed that teachers' beliefs and motivational strategies are both important for promoting student engagement and achievement in language learning. Research on motivational strategy has shown that the design of meaningful learning activities, the provision of constructive criticism, and the creation of supportive classroom environments can enhance students' motivation and participation in the classroom (Dörnyei, 2001). Similarly, teacher cognition-based studies have highlighted that teachers' beliefs, prior experiences and professional knowledge significantly impact

their instructional decisions, which in turn affect their classroom practices (Pajares, 1992; Borg, 2006).

More recently, Zaim et al. (2024) found that teachers' pedagogical beliefs and instructional strategies had a significant impact on students' motivation and English learning achievement. Likewise, Ye and Hu (2024) found that teachers' stated beliefs about motivational strategies were not always reflected in their classroom practices, and both contextual and personal factors contributed to this belief–practice misalignment. These studies together show that teachers' beliefs and motivational strategies are intricately linked. However, previous research has mainly focused on either teachers' beliefs or teachers' motivational strategies, and not on the enactment of teachers' motivational beliefs in authentic classroom practices.

While literature on teacher beliefs and motivational strategies has been growing, there are still several important gaps in the current literature. Teachers' beliefs have been consistently recognised as influential on instructional choices and motivational strategies have been emphasised as important for improving students' engagement (Pajares, 1992; Borg, 2006; Dörnyei, 2001; Zaim et al., 2024) but the investigation of these two variables have been mostly treated as two separate domains. Thus, little research attention has been given to how teachers' beliefs are translated into motivational practices in classroom instruction. Furthermore, the study of teacher cognition has been increasingly interested in the constantly changing relationship between teachers' beliefs, experiences and instructional decision making; however, empirical evidence of the relationship between these cognitive dimensions and motivational practices in Indonesian junior high school EFL classrooms remains scarce.

Another limitation is methodological, as this is the case with most previous research, which has mainly used single sources of qualitative or quantitative data, such as interviews, questionnaires or classroom observations, while relatively few studies have used methodological triangulation using interviews, classroom observations and document analysis to give a more holistic picture of teachers' motivational practices. To fill these gaps, this study synthesises Teacher Cognition Theory (Borg, 2006), Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and Dörnyei's motivational strategies (Dörnyei, 2001) in a single qualitative study. Moreover, the triangulation of multiple qualitative data sources in this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' beliefs in shaping motivational strategies, the enactment of these strategies in classroom practice, and the influence of teachers' personal learning experiences and professional development on their motivational decision-making in Indonesian junior high school EFL contexts.

Based on the identified research gaps, this study aims to explore junior high school English teachers' beliefs about motivating students to learn English and to examine how these beliefs shape the motivational strategies implemented in classroom practice. Specifically, the study investigates (1) teachers' beliefs regarding students' motivation in learning English, (2) the motivational strategies they employ and how these strategies are implemented in classroom instruction, (3) the challenges teachers encounter when motivating students, and (4) how teachers' personal learning experiences and professional development influence their beliefs and instructional practices. By addressing these objectives, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between teacher cognition and motivational practices in Indonesian EFL classrooms while offering practical implications for English language teachers, teacher educators, and future research on student motivation.

2. Method

In order to conduct the research on beliefs and motivation strategies of junior high school English teachers, a descriptive qualitative approach was chosen. It is due to the fact that the approach helps to understand the experiences and perceptions of teachers as well as their instructional practices in their real education context (Sandelowski, 2000; Creswell, 2013). The two participants who participated in the study were selected using the technique of purposive sampling. The selection criteria for participants included three characteristics: more than four years of teaching experience, active involvement in teaching English at the junior high school level, and readiness to be interviewed, observed in the classroom and analyzed documents. Two participants are considered to be an appropriate number of people as the researcher wanted to get the rich contextualized data and not to use the statistical methods of data analysis. Therefore, the generalization of the results is not possible. The findings can be transferred by the readers themselves.

This study was done at a private junior high school in West Jakarta since the researcher considered it as an appropriate place to do the research on teachers' motivational beliefs and practices in Indonesia EFL context. The main sources of data for this study were two English teachers, who became the key informants in the course of this study. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of teachers' lesson plans, thus achieving methodological triangulation and full picture of teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. Before conducting this study, the researcher got permission to carry out the study, which was confirmed in the form of research authorization letter from Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta and the school principal. All participants agreed voluntarily to participate in the study and signed the informed consent form where all details about the aims and procedures of the study as well as the rights of the participants were clearly mentioned. To guarantee anonymity, all participants were called by pseudonyms.

Three qualitative methods of collecting data were used in this research; namely, semi-structured interviews, classroom observation and document analysis. The two participating teachers undertook three semi-structured interviews each, involving 16 questions derived from the Teacher Cognition model of Borg (2006) and motivational strategies of Dörnyei (2001). Each of the interviews took about 20 minutes and focused on the beliefs held by the teachers concerning student motivation, teaching strategies, challenges encountered in teaching, and impact of their experience on their practice. Further, one classroom observation was done for each of the teachers during an ordinary English lesson that took about 80 minutes. These observations focused on how the teachers applied motivational strategies, teacher-student interaction, classroom climate and the reaction of the learners. In document analysis, the lesson plans of the teachers were reviewed, using the deductive coding based on the motivational factors of Self-Determination Theory by Deci and Ryan (2000) and those of Dörnyei (2001). The coded lesson plans were then compared with the interviews and classroom observations for consistency.

In order to ensure the credibility of the results, the methodology of triangulation was utilized through cross-validation of the data obtained from interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis (Patton, 1999). Thematic analysis techniques proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used for the analysis of data, which includes familiarization of data, initial coding, developing themes, reviewing the themes, and interpreting the results. Peer debriefing was another way of ensuring the credibility of the study that entailed the consultation of the research supervisor on the matters concerning coding, emerging themes, and the results of data analysis. Moreover, member checking was carried out throughout the interview procedure through the validation of the responses of the participants during the subsequent interviews.

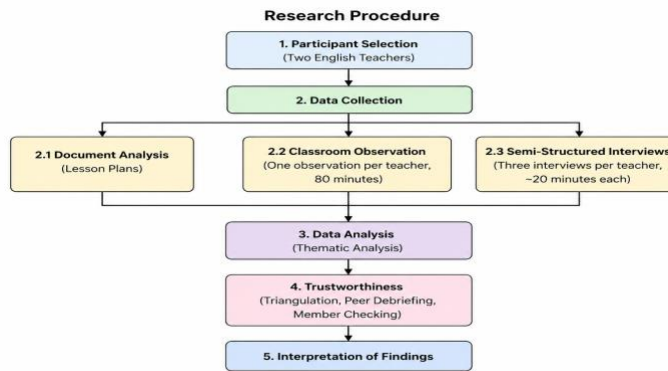


Figure 1. Research Procedure of the Study

3. Result

The findings were generated through thematic analysis of data collected from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and lesson plan analysis. The analysis identified four major themes related to teachers' beliefs about student motivation, motivational strategies, challenges encountered in motivating students, and the influence of teachers' personal learning experiences and professional development. A summary of the major themes, subthemes, supporting evidence, and data sources is presented in Table 1, followed by a detailed presentation of each theme.

Major Theme	Subthemes	Supporting Evidence	Data Sources
Teachers' Beliefs	Understanding motivation; Teacher's role; Factors influencing motivation	Teachers viewed motivation as an internal drive and perceived themselves as facilitators of learning.	Interview, Observation
Motivational Strategies	Enjoyable classroom; Positive feedback; Contextual materials; Group work; Reflective adjustment	Teachers implemented various student-centred strategies and adjusted them according to classroom conditions.	Interview, Observation, Lesson Plan
Challenges	Low confidence; Negative perceptions; Diverse learners	Teachers identified students' confidence and attitudes as major barriers to motivation.	Interview

Professional Experiences	Personal learning; Professional development; Reflection	Teachers' experiences shaped their beliefs and instructional decisions.	Interview
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Teachers' Beliefs about Student Motivation in Learning English

The findings indicate that both teachers regarded student motivation as a fundamental element of English language learning. Based on interview and classroom observation data, both teachers perceived motivation as an internal psychological drive that encourages students to participate actively in learning rather than merely responding to external rewards such as grades or examinations. They believed that students' willingness, interest, emotional readiness, and self-awareness were essential for sustaining engagement throughout the learning process. Teacher 1 defined motivation as:

"dorongan dalam diri siswa untuk mau belajar, dan semangat dalam belajar."

"the motivation within students to want to learn, and enthusiasm for learning."
(Teacher 1, 21 October 2025)

Similarly, Teacher 2 explained:

"motivasi itu, sesuatu hal yang harus diciptakan sebelum belajar. Motivasi itu kayak semangat yang tumbuh atas kesadaran diri sendiri."

"motivation is something that needs to be created before learning begins. It is like enthusiasm that grows from one's own self-awareness."
(Teacher 2, 27 October 2025)

Although expressed differently, both teachers consistently viewed motivation as originating from students' internal readiness rather than external pressure. While Teacher 1 emphasized students' willingness and enthusiasm to learn, Teacher 2 highlighted the importance of fostering motivation before learning begins and associated it with students' self-awareness. These responses indicate that both teachers regarded motivation as an internal condition that supports students' active engagement in learning English.

Both teachers also identified students' emotional conditions, particularly self-confidence and feelings of comfort, as important factors influencing motivation. During the interviews, they explained that many students were reluctant to participate because they were afraid of making mistakes or lacked confidence in using English. This finding was consistent with the classroom observations. During a group presentation, several students hesitated to speak English and spoke in very low voices when presenting their work. Rather than criticizing their performance, Teacher 2 encouraged them by saying, *"Speak louder, please,"* while allowing them sufficient time to complete their presentations. Similarly, Teacher 1 was observed providing positive verbal encouragement and patiently waiting for students' responses during classroom activities. These classroom interactions reflected teachers' efforts to encourage students' participation while maintaining a supportive learning environment.

Furthermore, both teachers maintained that they were not just supposed to impart instructions. Both of them viewed themselves as accountable for keeping up the motivation of the students by continuously encouraging them, giving them emotional support, and providing them with positive interactions. Throughout all the classroom observations, both teachers were seen greeting the students positively, engaging them in class activities, responding to them positively, and creating situations for cooperative learning.

Overall, evidence from the interviews and classroom observations consistently demonstrates that both teachers viewed student motivation as an internal and dynamic process influenced by students' emotional readiness, self-confidence, and willingness to participate in learning. They also believed that teachers play an important role in sustaining students' motivation by creating supportive classroom environments and encouraging active engagement throughout the learning process.

Teachers' Strategies to Motivate Students in Learning English

The findings indicate that both teachers employed multiple motivational strategies to encourage students' engagement in learning English. Rather than relying on a single instructional technique, they intentionally combined several strategies that addressed students' emotional, social, and cognitive needs. Evidence from interviews, classroom observations, and lesson plans consistently showed that creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere, providing positive feedback, using relevant learning materials, and encouraging collaboration through group work were interconnected practices designed to foster students' confidence, emotional comfort, and active participation.

Both teachers considered an enjoyable learning atmosphere as the foundation for motivating students. They believed that students were more willing to participate in English lessons when they felt emotionally comfortable and enjoyed the learning process. Teacher 1 explained that enjoyable learning was created through ice-breaking activities, games, and group work:

"biasanya sih biar mereka senang dalam pembelajaran, selain memberikan ice breaking, kita juga memberikan metode pembelajaran yang menarik, melalui games atau mungkin kerja kelompok ya, seperti itu."

"Usually, to make them enjoy learning, besides providing ice-breaking activities, we also use interesting learning methods such as games or group work."

(Teacher 1, 21 October 2025)

Similarly, Teacher 2 emphasized that students became more enthusiastic when classroom activities were connected to topics that reflected their daily lives and current interests.

"...Biasanya kalau sudah diberikan pertanyaan pemantik dengan hal yang trending... mereka jadi lebih antusias..."

"...Usually, when they're given an icebreaker question about something that's trending... they get more enthusiastic..."

(Teacher 2, 21 October 2025)

These beliefs were reflected in the lesson plans, which incorporated warm-up and ice-breaking activities before the main lesson, and were consistently observed during classroom instruction, where teachers began lessons with ice-breaking activities to establish a relaxed and supportive classroom atmosphere.

5. Guru memberikan ice breaking kepada peserta didik sebelum pembelajaran

"The teacher gives ice breaking activities for students before the lesson."

(Lesson Plan Teacher 1)

The classroom observation further confirmed this practice, showing that the teacher began the lesson with an ice-breaking activity before introducing the learning materials.

"Guru juga memberikan ice breaking sebelum pembelajaran."

*"Before starting the lesson, the teacher also conducted an ice-breaking activity."
(Field Notes Teacher 1, 27 October 2025)*

Another strategy frequently employed by both teachers was providing positive feedback and emotional support. Rather than focusing on students' mistakes, the teachers believed that constructive encouragement helped maintain students' confidence and willingness to participate. Teacher 1 explained that students with low achievement should be encouraged to improve instead of being discouraged by their scores,

"ini nilainya masih sekian, kamu ditingkatkan lagi ya belajarnya."

"Your score is still this much, so you need to study harder."

(Teacher 1, 21 October 2025)

While Teacher 2 reassured students that making mistakes was a natural part of learning English. This strategy was also incorporated into the lesson plan by encouraging students to appreciate their peers' participation during classroom activities.

12. Guru mengajak peserta didik untuk memberikan tepuk apresiasi kepada kelompok yang telah mempresentasikan hasil diskusi.

"The teacher asked the students to applaud the group that had presented the results of their discussion."

(Lesson Plan Teacher 1)

Similarly, classroom observations showed that the teacher consistently provided verbal praise and encouraged peer appreciation after each presentation.

"Setelah setiap perwakilan kelompok maju, guru meminta siswa lain untuk memberikan applause, guru juga memberikan kalimat pujian seperti 'oke good'."

“After each group representative came forward, the teacher asked the other students to applaud, and the teacher also gave words of praise such as ‘okay, good.’”

(Field notes Teacher 2, 27 October)

These beliefs were also reflected in classroom practice through verbal praise, applause, and supportive comments following students' presentations, as well as in lesson plans that explicitly encouraged peer appreciation after group presentations.

The teachers also emphasized the importance of using relevant and contextual learning materials to increase students' motivation. Learning topics were intentionally connected to students' everyday experiences, current issues, and familiar situations so that English learning became more meaningful. Teacher 2 explained that beginning lessons with questions related to trending topics often increased students' enthusiasm, while Teacher 1 highlighted the importance of linking learning materials to students' daily lives.

“dikaitkan dengan kehidupan sehari-hari dan hal-hal yang sedang relevan bagi siswa.”

“related to everyday life and things that are relevant to students.”

(Teacher 1, 21 October 2025)

This strategy was evident in the lesson plans through prompting questions designed to activate students' prior experiences and was consistently observed during classroom instruction before introducing the target language.

7. Guru menyampaikan pertanyaan pemantik

- *Have you ever had a memorable experience?*
- *Is that a good or bad experience?*
- *What happened?*

“The teacher asked a prompting question: Have you ever had a memorable experience? Was it a good or bad experience? What happened?”

(Lesson Plan Teacher 1)

This was consistently observed during classroom instruction, where the teacher began the lesson by asking prompting questions related to students' experiences.

“Guru memberikan pertanyaan pemantik untuk membuka pembelajaran.”

“The teacher asks a sparking question to start the lesson.”

(Field Notes Teacher 1, 27 October 2025)

Collaboration through group work was another strategy employed by both teachers to motivate students in learning English. Both teachers believed that collaborative learning reduced students' anxiety and encouraged them to support one another during learning

activities. While Teacher 1 described group work as an effective way to create an enjoyable and engaging learning environment, Teacher 2 emphasized that collaboration enabled students to motivate and encourage one another throughout the learning process,

"biasanya melalui games atau kerja kelompok... supaya bisa saling menularkan semangat dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris."

"usually through games or group work... so that we can inspire each other to learn English."

(Teacher 2, 28 October 2025)

This strategy was also reflected in the lesson plan, which incorporated collaborative learning activities by assigning students to work in small groups to complete classroom tasks.

1. Guru membagi peserta didik sesuai gaya belajar mereka (4 atau 5 orang) dan mengarahkan membuat worksheet 1

"The teacher divides the students according to their learning styles (4 or 5 people) and instructs them to complete worksheet 1."

(Lesson Plan Teacher 2)

The classroom observation further confirmed the implementation of this strategy, showing that students worked collaboratively in teacher-assigned groups before completing the learning tasks.

"Guru meminta siswa untuk duduk sesuai dengan kelompok yang sudah dibuatkan oleh guru yang berisikan 4-5 orang lalu membuat lingkaran."

"The teacher asked the students to sit in groups of 3–4 that had been arranged by the teacher and then form a circle."

(Field Notes Teacher 2, 27 October 2025)

Taken together, evidence from interviews, lesson plans, and classroom observations demonstrates that these motivational strategies were not implemented as isolated classroom techniques but as interconnected practices that reflected teachers' beliefs about student motivation. Creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere, providing constructive feedback, selecting relevant learning materials, and encouraging collaboration collectively fostered students' emotional comfort, confidence, and active participation in English learning.

Challenges and Teachers' Adaptive Strategies in Motivating Students

The findings revealed that both teachers encountered several challenges in motivating students to learn English. The most frequently reported challenges were students' negative perceptions of English as a difficult subject, limited English proficiency, and low confidence when participating in classroom activities. These conditions often reduced students' willingness to engage in learning tasks and required teachers to continuously adjust their instructional practices to maintain students' motivation.

Teacher 1 explained that many students entered the classroom believing that English was a difficult subject, making it challenging to build their motivation from the beginning of the lesson:

"kalau siswanya sudah berpikir 'Bahasa Inggris pelajaran yang sulit', jadi ada yang tertanam dalam diri dia seperti itu. Itu yang membuat kita menjadi susah untuk membangun motivasi lebih kepada peserta didik."

"If students already think 'English is a difficult subject', then that idea becomes ingrained in them. That makes it difficult for us to motivate them further."

(Teacher 1, 21 October 2025)

Similarly, Teacher 2 reported that students with limited English proficiency often lacked confidence and were reluctant to participate in classroom activities.

"kadang susahnyanya justru muncul saat membangun semangat mereka, terutama siswa yang kemampuan Bahasa Inggrisnya masih terbatas supaya tetap mau berpartisipasi."

"Sometimes the difficulty arises when trying to motivate them, especially students whose English skills are still limited, to continue participating."

(Teacher 2, 21 October 2025)

These challenges were also evident during classroom observations. Several students spoke very softly when presenting their work, prompting the teacher to encourage them to speak louder.

"Ketika ada siswa yang maju ke depan dan berbicara pelan, guru memberi respon seperti 'speak louder please'."

"When a student comes to the front and speaks softly, the teacher responds with, 'Please speak louder.'"

(Field Notes Teacher 2, 27 October 2025)

Rather than allowing these challenges to hinder the learning process, both teachers continuously adapted their instructional practices according to students' classroom responses and emotional readiness. Teacher 1 explained that instructional activities were modified whenever students appeared less enthusiastic. For example, an individual task was changed into a group discussion to encourage greater participation.

"Nah awalnya saya merencanakan menganalisisnya secara individu tapi karena melihat kondisi yang ada ternyata siswa kurang bersemangat kita bisa ubah menjadi diskusi kelompok."

"Initially, I planned the activity as individual work, but after seeing that the students were less enthusiastic, I changed it into a group discussion."

(Teacher 1, 21 October 2025)

Likewise, Teacher 2 emphasized that teachers should continuously adjust their teaching according to students' needs rather than focusing solely on completing the planned learning objectives.

"guru itu wajib berubah, karena ini kurikulum merdeka kita tidak ngejar capaian pembelajaran, tapi melihat kondisi anak."

"Teachers must change because, under the Merdeka Curriculum, we are not merely pursuing learning outcomes but responding to students' needs and conditions."

(Teacher 2, 21 October 2025)

Both teachers also described reflection as an ongoing process that enabled them to refine their motivational practices. Teacher 1 explained that students' confidence developed gradually through continuous encouragement and positive support, while Teacher 2 highlighted the importance of adapting instructional approaches and utilizing peer tutoring because some students felt more confident learning with classmates.

"kita damping siswa dan terus memberi motivasi positif agar siswa lebih percaya diri, meskipun perubahannya tidak langsung terlihat tetapi muncul secara bertahap."

"We continuously support students and provide positive encouragement so they become more confident, even though the improvement is gradual rather than immediate."

(Teacher 1, 21 October 2025)

"guru harus terus menyesuaikan diri dengan perkembangan dan memanfaatkan tutor teman sebaya karena sebagian siswa lebih percaya diri belajar dengan teman."

"Teachers need to continue adapting and utilize peer tutoring because some students feel more confident learning with their classmates."

(Teacher 2, 28 October 2025)

Overall, the findings indicate that students' negative perceptions of English and low confidence were the primary challenges faced by both teachers. To address these challenges, the teachers continuously adapted their instructional practices and reflected on students' classroom responses to provide appropriate motivational support. These adaptive and reflective practices enabled them to respond flexibly to students' learning needs and sustain students' participation in English learning.

Teachers' Experiences Shaping Motivational Beliefs and Strategies

The findings indicate that teachers' beliefs regarding motivation and the strategies utilized in their practice are built on various professional experiences, including their personal experience as students, professional development, and expectations of the school and parents. Such experiences impact the teachers' beliefs about motivation and motivate them to apply motivational strategies in English classes continuously.

The personal experience of both teachers as English language learners was considered important for their current teaching practice. The experience of Teacher 1 who had been taught by an English teacher who was very patient and understanding at her senior high school made her believe that encouragement and understanding helped the students learn English.

"kalau dulu, guru Bahasa Inggris saya di SMA orangnya sabar... gurunya ngasih motivasi, jadi kita tumbuh kepercayaan diri," dan "dari guru yang sabar saya belajar bahwa dengan pendekatan yang tenang dan penuh pengertian siswa akan lebih mudah terbuka dan mau belajar."

"Back then, my high school English teacher was very patient... the teacher motivated us, so we became more confident. From that patient teacher, I learned that a calm and understanding approach makes students more willing to open up and learn."

(Teacher 1, 21 October 2025)

Similarly, Teacher 2 explained that previous learning experiences taught the importance of showing attention and respect through responsive classroom interaction.

"dengan keep contact ngelihat matanya aja sudah merasa dihargai... itu yang saya lakukan sekarang dalam proses belajar mengajar."

"By maintaining eye contact and simply looking at students attentively, they already feel appreciated... that is what I do now in the teaching and learning process."

(Teacher 2, 21 October 2025)

These beliefs were reflected in classroom practice, where the teacher patiently waited for students' responses without giving negative reactions and provided praise such as "good job" and applause to maintain students' confidence during classroom participation.

"Guru menunggu siswa menjawab pertanyaan yang guru berikan tanpa memberikan respon negatif agar siswa tetap percaya diri untuk berbicara. Guru juga memberikan pujian seperti 'good job' dan juga memberikan applause."

"The teacher waited for students to answer questions without giving negative responses so that they remained confident in speaking. The teacher also gave praise such as 'good job' and applause."

(Field Note Teacher 1, 27 October 2025)

The findings further revealed that teachers' motivational practices continued to develop through both formal and informal professional learning. Teacher 1 explained that direct classroom experience, discussions with colleagues, and independently exploring teaching resources through social media contributed to improving her motivational strategies.

"dari pengalaman langsung di kelas, dari rekan guru, dan juga mencari referensi dari media sosial."

"From direct experience in the classroom, from fellow teachers, and also by searching for references on social media."

(Teacher 1, 21 October 2025)

Meanwhile, Teacher 2 emphasized that workshops encouraged continuous reflection on previous teaching practices and inspired improvements in classroom instruction.

"setiap workshop yang saya ikuti itu, saya terapkan untuk menambah atau merecycle kira-kira apa yang harus kita hindarkan dari metode pembelajaran sebelumnya, yang kita tambahkan setelah kita mengikuti workshop."

"In every workshop I attend, I apply what I learn by reflecting on previous teaching methods, identifying what should be improved, and incorporating new approaches gained from the workshops."

(Teacher 2, 21 October 2025)

Beyond personal and professional experiences, both teachers also recognized that motivational strategies needed to align with broader educational contexts. Teacher 1 explained that motivational practices should be adjusted to school policies and parents' expectations so that they remain appropriate within each school's culture.

"setiap sekolah punya aturan dan budaya sendiri, jadi waktu memotivasi siswa saya menyesuaikan supaya tidak keluar dari kebijakan sekolah dan tetap sesuai harapan orang tua."

"Every school has its own rules and culture, so when motivating students, I adjust my approach so that it does not conflict with school policies and remains in line with parents' expectations."

(Teacher 1, 21 October 2025)

Likewise, Teacher 2 emphasized that maintaining students' motivation required collaboration among teachers, parents, and schools.

"kerja sama itu sangat penting, orang tua, guru, sama sekolah... guru nanti yang menjembatani kalau anak kurang motivasi."

"Cooperation among parents, teachers, and schools is very important... teachers become the bridge when students lack motivation."

(Teacher 2, 21 October 2025)

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers' motivational beliefs and strategies were shaped by a combination of meaningful learning experiences, continuous professional development, and collaboration with the broader school community. These experiences influenced not only what teachers believed about student motivation but also how they implemented motivational practices to support students' engagement in learning English.

4. Discussion

This study provides evidence that teachers perceive student motivation as a dynamic and evolving process rather than a fixed condition that simply initiates students' engagement in learning. Across the four themes identified, teachers consistently viewed motivation as requiring continuous emotional support, psychological readiness, and sustained teacher–student interaction throughout the learning process. These findings can be interpreted through Borg's (2006) Teacher Cognition framework, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), and Dörnyei's Motivational Teaching Practice (2001, 2020), which collectively emphasize that teachers' beliefs, classroom practices, and contextual experiences interact in shaping students' motivation. Overall, the findings suggest that motivating students in junior high school EFL classrooms extends beyond the implementation of isolated instructional strategies, requiring teachers to continuously adapt their beliefs, practices, and interactions to students' evolving emotional and learning needs.

Teachers' Beliefs about Student Motivation in Learning English

The findings suggest that teachers viewed student motivation as an ongoing process that developed through consistent interaction in the classroom setting, not something that appeared just once instruction began. This perception was developed through teachers' collective experiences in the classroom where they recognized that students' inclination to engage was dependent upon their emotional preparedness, self-confidence, and psychological comfort level. As indicated by Borg's (2006) Teacher Cognition model, these experiences facilitated the development of interrelated beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions that eventually guided teachers' teaching decisions. Such views were similarly expressed by Mekheimer (2025), who highlighted the significant role played by teachers' beliefs in shaping students' motivation in EFL classrooms. Yet contrary to previous research, which mainly highlighted the effect of beliefs on teachers' actions in instructional settings, the current research illustrates the ongoing enactment of teachers' beliefs in daily classroom experiences and decision making processes.

In this study, teachers thought motivation was developed when students felt emotionally supported, valued, and confident to engage in learning activities. Rather than viewing motivation as a cognitive construct or an individual learner characteristic, they viewed it as a dynamic process that requires constant emotional reinforcement throughout classroom interaction. This finding corresponds to the findings of Alrabai and Algazzaz (2024) who found the teacher emotional support significantly improves learners' basic psychological needs satisfaction, emotional engagement, and motivation in EFL classrooms. However, Alrabai and Algazzaz (2024) focused primarily on the effects of teacher emotional support with an intervention-based design, but this study takes a step further in illustrating how teachers' emotionally supportive beliefs were shaped by their cumulative teaching experiences and, in turn, were consistently enacted in their daily classroom practices.

Another important finding was that teachers perceived student motivation to be context-dependent and not fixed. They recognized that students' motivation was affected by individual characteristics, emotional readiness, family background and classroom situations, which varied among students. This finding is consistent with Ushioda's (2021) person-in-context relational perspective that language learning motivation is socially constructed through the interactions between learners and their learning environments. However, this study also reveals that teachers did not passively absorb this contextual understanding but actively transformed it into their pedagogical decision-making, by continually adapting their instructional approaches to students' emotional and learning needs. This implies that teacher beliefs are not only cognitive orientations, but also practical frameworks for addressing the constantly changing nature of motivation in the classroom.

The findings, in general, demonstrate that teachers' experiences, beliefs, and classroom practices are closely related. Teachers' beliefs about student motivation were shaped by their prior experiences with teaching, which influenced their instructional choices and their interactions with students. Teachers' beliefs were not treated as independent cognitive entities but were enacted through emotionally supportive classroom practices designed to bolster students' confidence and engagement.

This finding also converges with recent evidence showing that teacher emotional support and learner engagement mutually influence each other over time, indicating that motivational processes are dynamic and continuously shaped through teacher-student interaction (Alrabai et al., 2025). Collectively, these findings provide a glimpse of the holistic, contextualized, and dynamic nature of teachers' motivational beliefs, which are constructed through classroom experiences, and highlight the significance of teacher cognition in sustaining students' motivation in EFL learning.

Teachers' Strategies to Motivate Students in Learning English

The results revealed that teachers applied various motivational strategies to motivate students to engage in learning English. They didn't use isolated teaching methods but integrated fun classroom activities, positive feedback, contextual learning materials, and collaborative learning to keep students motivated during the entire learning process. This finding supports Dörnyei's (2001, 2020) framework of motivational teaching practice that motivation should be created and sustained through classroom interaction. The teachers involved in the study thought of motivation as a dynamic process, not a fixed attribute of the learner. Constant emotional support and instructional adaptation are required. Siacor et al. (2024) reported similar results, finding that emotionally supportive classroom environments and engaging instructional practices significantly increase students' motivation and willingness to communicate in EFL classrooms.

Creating a pleasant and emotionally supportive classroom atmosphere was one of the most conspicuous motivational strategies. The teachers deliberately used games, ice-breaking activities, contextual topics, and collaborative tasks to lower students' anxiety and motivate them to participate actively. These practices are indicative of the psychological need of relatedness proposed in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), where students are more motivated when they feel supportive interpersonal relationships. Likewise, Li, Xu and Wang (2024) have shown that collaborative and interactive classroom activities significantly improve students' willingness to communicate by decreasing language anxiety and increasing peer interaction. These findings imply that emotional safety and social connectedness are important bases in maintaining motivation in EFL classrooms.

Another important strategy was to use learning materials that were closely tied to students' everyday experiences, and to provide positive feedback. Teachers emphasized effort, progress, and encouragement over correctness, and contextual learning materials helped students understand English as meaningful and relevant to their own lives. These practices helped students feel competent, one of the basic psychological needs in Self-Determination Theory. Recent research by Yin and Wang (2023) also finds that process-oriented feedback enhances learners' confidence, resilience, and intrinsic motivation, especially in the setting of foreign language learning. These findings together suggest that both emotional encouragement and contextual relevance contribute to maintaining students' engagement in English learning.

Although the motivational strategies effectively supported students' needs for relatedness and competence, opportunities for autonomy support appeared relatively limited. Most classroom decisions, including learning activities, materials, and task organization, remained largely teacher-directed despite students being encouraged to participate actively in discussions and group work. This finding partially differs from recent studies emphasizing that learner autonomy plays an equally important role in sustaining long-term motivation. For example, Devas and Rahayu (2023) found that Indonesian EFL students demonstrated higher motivation and engagement when teachers simultaneously supported learners' autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The present findings therefore suggest that while emotionally supportive and collaborative instruction effectively motivates junior high school students, providing greater opportunities for student choice and decision-making may further strengthen intrinsic motivation and self-regulated learning.

Overall, the findings indicate that teachers' motivational strategies reflected a balanced integration of emotional support, meaningful learning experiences, and collaborative interaction. Consistent with Borg's (2006) Teacher Cognition framework, these instructional practices were closely connected to teachers' beliefs about how

motivation develops in language learning. At the same time, the findings extend previous research by demonstrating that motivation in Indonesian junior high school EFL classrooms is sustained through the integration of affective, social, and contextual dimensions rather than through a single motivational technique. These results highlight the importance of preparing teachers not only to implement engaging classroom activities but also to develop autonomy-supportive instructional practices that foster students' long-term motivation and independent language learning.

Challenges and Teachers' Adaptive Strategies in Motivating Students

The findings indicate that motivating students to learn English remained challenging despite teachers' consistent use of motivational strategies. Rather than resulting solely from instructional practices, students' motivation was strongly influenced by psychological factors, including negative beliefs about English, low confidence, and perceived language competence. This finding supports Dörnyei's (2001, 2020) view that motivation is dynamic and highly dependent on learners' beliefs and emotional readiness. Similar evidence has been reported by Al-Hoorie and Szabó (2023), who argued that learners' emotional perceptions and self-beliefs often determine engagement more strongly than instructional techniques alone. Likewise, Lamb et al. (2024) emphasized that motivation develops through the interaction between individual psychological characteristics and contextual learning conditions rather than through isolated classroom interventions.

Negative perceptions of English were commonly linked with anxiety, fear of making mistakes and unwillingness to participate, especially for learners with low levels of English. The results indicate that low motivation had a strong relationship with the unfulfilled need for competence as mentioned in the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). But it is also clear that the need for autonomy was not fulfilled among the students as the teachers mostly controlled the decision-making in the classroom. The teachers focused more on the emotional comfort of students along with providing them guidance. In similar trends, recent researches in EFL have shown that teacher-led classrooms emphasize the need for competence and relatedness than the support of autonomy (Reeve & Cheon, 2021; Wang & Ryan, 2024). It means that while the participating teachers succeeded in making the learners emotionally secure, some more opportunities for their decision-making would motivate them.

In order to counteract these issues, the participating teachers changed their instructional practices by altering the learning activities according to the emotional readiness of students. Individual activities were altered to group ones, the pace of learning was altered, and more encouragement was provided to the students whenever they looked reluctant. These findings support Dörnyei's (2020) concept of motivational maintenance as teachers made the changes based on observations and decisions rather than being reactive to the situation. Flexibility in instructional practice has decreased the language anxiety of students and increased classroom participation of students, which leads to their engagement as reported by Han and Wang (2023).

The results indicated that the teachers' motivational practices were closely related to the context in which they taught. Although the emotional conditions of students were an important consideration, teachers also had to respond to other realities in the classroom such as the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, differences in students' English proficiency and the limited chances for students to use English beyond school. These factors frequently affected the decisions teachers made during the learning process. Therefore they could not always trust their initial thoughts about motivation. Instead, they adapted their approaches to the context they faced in the classroom. This means that successful

motivational teaching is the result of the interaction between teachers' beliefs and the context in which such beliefs are put into practice. This finding is consistent with the Teacher Cognition framework (Borg, 2006) in that teachers' beliefs are constantly being formed and re-formed by their teaching experiences. Tao and Gao (2022) also found similar results that EFL teachers' decision making on motivating their students was influenced by contextual factors.

Together these findings indicate that teachers change motivational strategies not only when problems occur. "Ongoing" is part of their teaching practice. During the learning process, the teachers reflected on students' responses, made adjustments when necessary and tried different ways to keep students engaged. This means that motivation of students is more than a matter of using a set of strategies. Teachers also need to know their students, be flexible in a variety of classroom situations, and be willing to assess their own practices over time. Therefore, teacher education and professional development programs should equip teachers to learn motivational strategies and also to develop reflective and adaptive skills to deal with the various challenges they face in real classrooms.

Teachers' Experiences Shaping Motivational Beliefs and Strategies

Findings reveal that teachers' motivational beliefs and instructional practices were the result of interactions of personal learning experiences, professional development, and contextual factors. This supports Borg's (2006) Teacher Cognition framework which suggests that the construction of teachers' classroom practices is based on the interaction of prior experiences, professional knowledge and teaching contexts rather than prescribed instructional methods alone. The results indicate that teachers' beliefs about motivation were influenced by continuous reflection on their own experiences as learners and teachers, thereby supporting the argument that teacher cognition is dynamic and dependent on context. Mann and Walsh (2024) reported similar conclusions, arguing that teachers' beliefs are developed via continuous reflection and experience in the classroom rather than being static across their career.

Personal learning experiences were a strong influence on teachers' motivational beliefs. Participants' commitment to creating emotionally safe classrooms where students felt respected and confident to participate was influenced by positive memories of supportive, patient, and encouraging English teachers. This finding is in line with the concept of the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) in which teachers' prior experiences as learners remain an influence on their professional beliefs and practices. More recent studies have also demonstrated that teachers often rely on their own learning experiences when developing motivational strategies, especially those that emphasize empathy, emotional support, and positive teacher-student relationships (Nguyen & Newton, 2023; Yuan & Burns, 2022). The practices mainly served the students' need for relatedness by establishing confidence and emotional security in the classroom, as suggested by the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Teachers' motivational strategies were also strongly shaped by professional development. Teachers improved their instructional decision-making through formal learning experiences such as workshops and informal learning through classroom practice, collaboration with colleagues, and self-directed learning. Instead of just offering new teaching ways, professional learning pushed teachers to be more reflective and sensitive to the emotional and motivational needs of students. This finding is consistent with recent research highlighting how ongoing professional learning develops teachers' adaptive expertise and reflective ability to adapt motivational practices to different classroom contexts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2024; Tao & Gao, 2022). These findings also suggest that

effective professional development needs to incorporate reflective practice and motivational pedagogy as well as instructional knowledge.

Apart from individual experiences, teachers' motivational beliefs were also affected by contextual factors like school culture, curriculum implementation and parental expectations. For teachers, motivation was a shared responsibility, going beyond teaching in the classroom, requiring the alignment of school policy, family support and classroom practice. This finding extends Borg's (2006) Teacher Cognition framework by showing that teachers' beliefs are constantly negotiated in larger institutional and sociocultural contexts. It is in line with Ushioda's (2021) ecological view of language learning motivation which sees that motivation is created through interaction between learners, teachers, and their learning contexts. There is also international research which shows that supportive school cultures and collaborative relationships with parents improve student engagement and the capacity of teachers to maintain student motivation (Lai et al., 2023; Mercer, 2024).

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers' motivational beliefs and strategies are not fixed personal characteristics, but rather fluid constructions shaped by personal experiences, professional learning and contextual realities. These findings have important implications for teacher education and professional development, pointing to the need for programs to offer more opportunities for reflective practice, classroom-based inquiry, and the development of adaptive motivational competencies. Strengthening these aspects may better prepare teachers to respond to students' diverse motivational needs while being responsive to changing educational contexts.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings obtained through interviews, classroom observations and document analyses, the study concludes that teachers strongly believe that motivation plays a key role in English language learning and is a dynamic, ongoing and emotionally driven process that must be nurtured through supportive classroom environments and empathetic teaching practices. The two teachers also stressed that students' confidence, mental health, and feeling of comfort are the key foundations for effective learning. These were reflected in their interactive activities, positive reinforcement, and emotionally engaging instructional strategies. Their beliefs were found to have a strong influence on their motivational strategies.

One teacher took on the role of a facilitator by using praise, ice-breaking activities and interactive learning. The other teacher took on the role of a role model by showing empathy, enthusiasm and patience. This made it clear that motivation needs to be constantly attended to, and that adaptive teaching is needed. Both teachers used reflective and flexible approaches to tackle motivational issues such as low self-confidence, varying levels of proficiency and negative attitudes towards English, for example, emotional support, constructive criticism, and reactive class control, which indicates a student-centred and reflective pedagogical orientation.

The teachers' own learning experiences and professional development were found to have a significant impact on their motivational beliefs and strategies, and it was found to encourage compassionate, patient and creative teaching practices. Therefore, it is recommended that English teachers establish emotionally supportive and inclusive classroom environments, set realistic learning goals and reflective sessions to facilitate learner autonomy, promote experience sharing and peer-support activities to develop classroom community, and utilize peer motivation strategies such as compliment circles or motivation buddies to develop positive interpersonal relationships. Together, these practices can boost intrinsic motivation, foster emotional engagement, and establish a

supportive learning environment where students view learning as a collaborative, meaningful, and empowering experience rather than an academic obligation.

6. References

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