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Are the Motivated Learners the Autonomous Ones?

Monica R. Cabanding

Bataan Peninsula State University, Dinalupihan Campus, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

While theoretical frameworks connect language learner autonomy with identity-oriented motivation, empirical literature often overlooks how pre-service teachers' long-term professional identities interact with autonomous learning. This study addressed this gap by examining the relationship between pre-service teachers' English learning motivation and their self-assessment as autonomous ESL learners. Utilizing a correlational design, survey data from 243 respondents were analyzed using simple regression analysis. Results indicated high overall motivation ($M = 4.19$), primarily driven by international orientation ($M = 4.45$) and professional instrumentality ($M = 4.22$). Concurrently, respondents demonstrated a high level of learner autonomy ($M = 3.92$), characterized by strong learning accountability ($M = 4.35$). However, critical academic vulnerabilities emerged, specifically a dip in oral communication self-efficacy ($M = 3.90$) and weaknesses in time-related self-management ($M = 3.53$). Regression analysis confirmed that motivation significantly and positively predicts learner autonomy ($\beta = 0.32, p < .001$), accounting for 11% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.11$). This study underscores the critical role of identity-driven motivation in fostering learner independence. Pedagogically, it implies that teacher education programs must pivot from achievement-oriented targets to design holistic curricula that intentionally cultivate global motivations while integrating structured interventions to reinforce behavioral time discipline and oral communication confidence among future language teachers.

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Corresponding Author:

Monica R. Cabanding,

Bataan Peninsula State University, Dinalupihan Campus, Philippines

Email: mrcabanding@bpsu.edu.ph

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of learner autonomy has long been recognized as a pivotal challenge and a primary goal in contemporary language education, particularly in the global pursuit of fostering lifelong learning skills (Aldosari & Alsager, 2023; Betancor-Falcon, 2023; Nemetova, 2020). More popularly grounded, autonomy implies that actively engaging students in the language learning process transforms them into more responsible and active agents of their education (Mohebbi, 2025). This pedagogical shift is critical; teaching students how to think and how to learn constitutes essential skills that direct

and sustain learners throughout their active adult lives (Dixit et al., 2024). In the context of English as a Second Language (ESL), cultivating this independence is fundamental to preparing students for a rapidly evolving global landscape (Ahmed & Hossain, 2024).

Concurrently, extensive literature highlights a robust and reciprocal relationship between motivation and learner autonomy, wherein motivation heavily influences a learner's capacity to manage their own learning (Houssami & Benattabou, 2024). Early theoretical foundations established by Deci and Ryan differentiated between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to explain learners' purposes and engagement levels (Ryan & Deci, 2024). While intrinsic motivation has traditionally been associated with a compelling internal drive to integrate with the target language, extrinsic motivation was often viewed as a mechanism geared toward external rewards (Ferber et al., 2024). Although scholars have long debated whether intrinsic motivation yields greater learning effectiveness, subsequent research demonstrates that both dimensions dynamically influence a learner's willingness to take responsibility and exert control over their educational trajectory.

A significant evolution in understanding this motivational drive is marked by the L2 Motivational Self-System (Bui & Teng, 2021). His pioneering framework shifts the focus toward an individual's self-representation, allowing learners to actively visualize the professional and personal benefits earned by adopting a second language. This model introduces the concepts of "possible selves" and "ideal selves", which serve as self-defining and self-relevant milestones. These internalized visions regulate psychological incentives, thereby direct actions and behaviors that support long-term commitment. When learners align their ideal L2 selves with their current academic behaviours, they become inherently more driven to establish sustainable habits of independent study (Sun & Mu, 2023).

Empirical evidence consistently confirms a positive correlation between motivation and language learner autonomy across various tertiary contexts. For instance, research conducted in a state university preparatory school by Okumus Ceylan (2021) revealed that tertiary students who recognized high task value were better equipped to manage and select both in-class and out-of-class activities, suggesting that motivation prompts extended language practice. Similarly, a study on Indonesian EFL learners by Melvina et al. (2023) demonstrated that higher learning motivation—specifically intrinsic drive and task value—strongly predicted a greater degree of learner autonomy. Furthermore, Gunes and Alagozlu (2020) found that highly autonomous Turkish learners reported stronger motivation and superior academic performance, concluding that classroom environments scaffolding self-regulated strategies (e.g., goal-setting, self-assessment, reflective journaling) can simultaneously optimize both constructs.

Despite these insights, a critical gap remains in the existing literature, which typically views motivation through a purely achievement-oriented or performance-based lens. The novelty of the current study lies in its distinct conceptualization of motivation as a form of identity-driven self-representation—specifically utilizing the "ideal self" framework—rather than mere grade-seeking behavior. This exploration is further enriched by integrating perspectives from English language teaching (ELT)

practitioners. In the researcher's previous study [Cabanding \(2022\)](#), practitioners emphasized that a learner's motivation to study a second language is deeply intertwined with the teacher's ability to cultivate productive study habits, a sense of personal responsibility, and sustained engagement. By synthesizing learner autonomy ([Little, Dam, & Legenhausen, 2017](#); [Stringer, 2025](#)) with identity-centric motivation ([Basri, 2023](#); [Dörnyei, 2019](#); [Namaziandost & Rezai, 2024](#); [Ushioda, 2011](#)), this study offers a fresh, dual-lensed framework specifically tailored to pre-service teachers who must master these constructs for their future careers.

Ultimately, investigating whether identity-based motivation predicts language learner autonomy among college students serves a broader pedagogical imperative. Correlating these levels of motivation and autonomy is not merely an academic exercise but a strategic means to advocate for the integration of both constructs into daily language classroom practices. Elevating these dimensions contributes significantly to the overarching pursuit of proficiency in using English as the global lingua franca. By empowering pre-service teachers to bridge the gap between their current learning habits and their future professional identities, this study helps university graduates actualize their "ideal selves" as competent, independent global communicators.

2. METHOD

The study is correlational research that aims to investigate the relationship between language learner autonomy and motivation and its eventual impact in acquiring English as a second language. It targeted the second-year pre-service teachers from an institution that offers courses in Education with various areas of specializations namely: Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education and Secondary Education major in Math, Science and English. The second-year college students have taken various English courses in their basic education including the general courses in tertiary English. On their way towards specialized courses, the second-year college students like their senior counterparts have enough background as English language learners and while both have no longer English language courses in their academic curriculum, the second-year college students' cohort is conceived to be a viable set of respondents to represent tertiary students' positioning as English language learners.

A survey questionnaire based on the instruments developed by [Macaskill and Taylor \(2010\)](#) and modified by [Aklan and Arslan \(2019\)](#) was utilized to measure the autonomy level of the research participants. The instrument has undergone procedure for validation and claimed to be psychometrically sound ([Macaskill & Taylor, 2010](#)) with items showing high degree of face validity. It was further enhanced by including items from [Deregözü's \(2014\)](#) The Autonomous Learning Scale that indicates Independence of Learning and Study Habits. The 25-item survey questionnaire validated measures of learner autonomy. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (very unlike me) to 5 (very like me) with higher scores indicating greater levels of autonomy, more independence and more positive attitudes to learning.

To assess the participants' motivational levels, this study utilized a survey questionnaire adapted from [Iwaniek \(2014\)](#), which is theoretically anchored on the L2

Motivational Self System (L2MSS) conceptualized by Dörnyei (2009, 2019) and Ushioda (2011). This framework emphasizes value-based and identity-oriented motivation, suggesting that language learning motivation is best understood through self-identification processes and how students connect language acquisition to their imagined future selves, both domestically and internationally. Consequently, four core motivational factors were evaluated: Ideal L2 Self, International Orientation, Efficacy Beliefs, and Instrumentality. These variables were selected due to their critical relevance in investigating the identity-driven dimensions of language learning as espoused by Dörnyei (2009) and Ushioda (2011). The comprehensive procedural workflow of this methodology is illustrated in Figure 1.

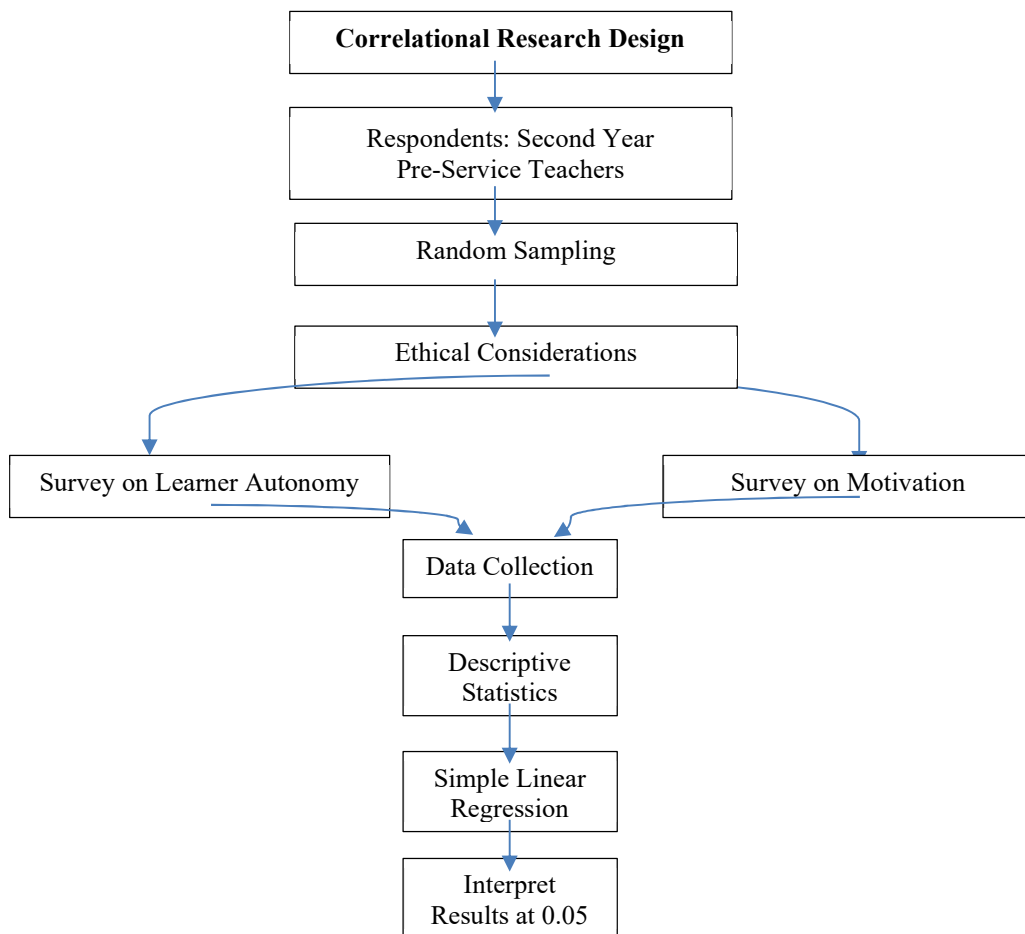


Figure 1. Methodology Presented in Flowchart

Data collection was executed through a random sampling technique, wherein the researcher personally administered the questionnaires by coordinating specific time slots with subject teachers, in alignment with the study's established work plan. To maximize the response rate and accommodate the target population, a hybrid distribution scheme was implemented: students with internet connectivity completed the survey via Google Forms, whereas those lacking access completed physical hard copies. This face-to-face facilitation allowed the researcher to address respondent queries in real-time, thereby ensuring the integrity of the data collection process. Subsequently, statistical analyses were performed using Jamovi (Version 2.4.8). Descriptive

statistics—including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation—were employed to determine the levels of learner autonomy and motivation among second-year tertiary students. Furthermore, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate whether motivation serves as a significant predictor of language learning autonomy, with all results interpreted at a 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$) level of significance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Description of Pre-service Teachers' Motivation to Learn English

Table 1 shows that pre-service teachers report a positive Ideal L2 Self—on average they agree that they envision using English in their future professional and personal lives. The mean scores for all individual items range from 3.77 to 4.15, suggesting that participants envision themselves being able to communicate in English in various contexts which includes communication in their future job, at work, abroad, and identifying themselves as consumers of English materials both in reading and watching films. The highest agreement was found for the item "When I imagine my future job, I see myself using English," indicating a strong idealization of English proficiency in professional settings. The overall composite mean of 3.93 further supports the general trend of agreement, with pre-service teachers expressing a moderate to strong desire to improve their English skills for both personal and professional purposes. While the consistently positive means indicate generally strong future-oriented motivation, the moderate standard deviations ($\approx 0.7-0.8$) indicate individual variability.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre-Service Teachers' Ideal L2 Self

Item Code	Statement / Indicator	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
ILS1	When I imagine my future job, I see myself using English.	4.15	0.72	Strongly Agree / Highest Agreement
ILS2	I can envision myself using English effectively at my future workplace.	3.98	0.75	Agree
ILS3	I imagine myself traveling abroad and using English to communicate.	3.91	0.78	Agree
ILS4	I see myself as someone who understands and enjoys reading English materials.	3.84	0.81	Agree
ILS5	I envision myself easily watching and understanding English films.	3.77	0.79	Agree / Lowest Mean
Overall	Composite Score (Ideal L2 Self)	3.93	~ 0.75	Positive / Strong Agreement

The data in Table 2 present the pre-service teachers' motivation to learn English in terms of international orientation. The results reveal that all indicators obtained a "Strongly Agree" interpretation, suggesting that the respondents possess a high level of motivation to learn English as a means of connecting with the global community. Among the indicators, "Speaking English is important to be able to work with people

from other countries” received the highest mean score, indicating that pre-service teachers strongly recognize the practical and professional value of English in international collaboration and future career opportunities. This suggests that respondents perceive English proficiency as an important skill in a globalized workplace. Overall, the composite mean of 4.45 (SD = 0.48) with an interpretation of “Strongly Agree” demonstrates that pre-service teachers have a very strong international orientation in learning English. This implies that their motivation is largely driven by aspirations for global communication, intercultural engagement, and opportunities beyond their local context.

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre-Service Teachers' Motivation in terms of International Orientation

Item Code	Indicator / Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
IO1	Speaking English is important to be able to work with people from other countries.	4.62	0.42	Strongly Agree (Highest)
IO2	Learning English is essential for global communication and intercultural engagement.	4.48	0.45	Strongly Agree
IO3	I am motivated to learn English to access better career opportunities beyond my local context.	4.41	0.51	Strongly Agree
IO4	English proficiency is an important skill for me to participate in the global community.	4.36	0.53	Strongly Agree
Overall	Composite Score (International Orientation)	4.45	0.48	Strongly Agree

The data in Table 3 presents the pre-service teachers' motivation to learn English in terms of self-efficacy beliefs. The findings indicate that the respondents generally possess strong confidence in their ability to use English effectively, as reflected by the composite mean of 4.21 (SD = 0.49). This suggests that pre-service teachers have positive beliefs regarding their capability to perform various English-related tasks. Among the indicators, “I am certain that I will be able to use English successfully in my future job” obtained the highest mean score. This finding indicates that respondents strongly believe in the practical value of English and are confident that they can apply it successfully in their future professional careers. However, the indicators referring to confidence in speaking in English received an interpretation of “Agree.” Although still positive, these comparatively lower scores may imply that respondents experience some uncertainty in their ability to speak fluently in English despite their confidence to understand conversations in the same language.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre-Service Teachers' Motivation in terms of Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Item Code	Indicator / Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
SE1	I am certain that I will be able to use English successfully in my future job.	4.55	0.42	Strongly Agree (Highest)
SE2	I am confident that I can understand conversations in the English language.	4.30	0.47	Strongly Agree
SE3	I believe I have the capability to perform various English-related tasks well.	4.22	0.48	Strongly Agree
SE4	I am confident in my ability to speak fluently in English.	3.98	0.54	Agree
SE5	I feel certain when communicating or presenting orally using English.	3.90	0.56	Agree (Lowest)
Overall	Composite Score (Self-Efficacy Beliefs)	4.21	0.49	Strongly Agree

Table 4 illustrates that pre-service teachers view English language learning as highly instrumental for their future endeavors, with a composite mean of 4.22, falling in the "Strongly Agree" range. Individual items show strong agreement, particularly regarding the necessity of English for career advancement, global work opportunities, and future travel. The statement, "I need English for my future career" garnered the highest mean emphasizing the critical role that English proficiency plays in the participants' envisioned career paths. Furthermore, a strong emphasis is placed on using English for academic and financial goals, as indicated by high agreement on the importance of English for passing exams and earning good money.

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre-Service Teachers' Motivation in terms of Instrumentality

Item Code	Indicator / Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
INS1	I need English for my future career.	4.58	0.45	Strongly Agree (Highest)
INS2	Learning English is essential for me to gain global work opportunities.	4.35	0.48	Strongly Agree
INS3	I need to be proficient in English for my future travel endeavors.	4.24	0.51	Strongly Agree
INS4	English proficiency is important for me to pass my academic exams.	4.10	0.54	Strongly Agree / Agree
INS5	Knowing English is instrumental for me to earn good money in the future.	04.05	0.56	Strongly Agree / Agree
Overall	Composite Score (Instrumentality)	4.22	0.50	Strongly Agree

Table 5 provides a summary of pre-service teachers' motivation to learn English across various indicators. The results show that the participants are generally motivated,

with a composite mean of 4.19 for overall motivation, falling within the "Motivated" range. More specifically, the highest levels of motivation are observed in the International Orientation (M = 4.45), Self-Efficacy Beliefs (M = 4.21), and Instrumentality (M = 4.22) subcategories, all of which fall into the "Highly Motivated" range. The Ideal L2 Self indicator also reflects a strong level of motivation, with a mean of 3.93, indicating a general motivation to achieve a desired future-self using English. It may therefore be construed that pre-service teachers are particularly motivated by the potential global opportunities and self-assurance in their ability to use English, as well as the practical benefits associated with language proficiency for career and academic success.

Table 5. Summary of Pre-Service Teachers' Motivation to Learn English Across Various Indicators

Rank	Motivation Indicator / Subcategory	Mean (M)	Interpretation	Key Driver / Focus
1	International Orientation	4.45	Highly Motivated	Global opportunities & intercultural engagement
2	Instrumentality	4.22	Highly Motivated	Practical career advancement & financial/academic success
3	Self-Efficacy Beliefs	4.21	Highly Motivated	Self-assurance and confidence in English-related tasks
4	Ideal L2 Self	3.93	Motivated	Envisioned future-self using English in professional/personal life
-	Overall Motivation (Composite)	4.19	Motivated	General drive to learn and master English

Description of Respondent's Autonomy in Language Learning

The table shows that the pre-service teachers generally demonstrated a high level of learning autonomy, with a composite mean of 3.92 interpreted as **Agree**. This suggests that the respondents were typically self-directed in managing and evaluating their learning experiences.

Table 6. Mean and Interpretation of Pre-Service Teachers' Learner Autonomy

Item Code	Indicator / Statement	Mean (M)	Interpretation
Strengths and Learning Management			
LA1	I enjoy new learning experiences.	4.52	Strongly Agree
LA2	I am open to new ways of doing familiar things.	4.48	Strongly Agree
LA3	I take responsibility for my learning experiences.	4.35	Strongly Agree
LA4	I use various sources that support my learning.	4.15	Agree
LA5	I enjoy finding information about new topics on my own.	04.08	Agree
Time-Related Self-Management			
LA6	I plan my time for study effectively.	3.65	Agree
LA7	I am good at meeting deadlines.	3.58	Agree

Item Code	Indicator / Statement	Mean (M)	Interpretation
LA8	My time management is good.	3.53	Agree (Lowest Positive)
Negatively Stated Items (Reverse Scored)			
LA9	I tend to be motivated to work by assessment deadlines.	1.93	Disagree
LA10	I frequently find excuses for not getting down to work.	2.76	Neither Agree / Disagree
Overall	Composite Score (Learner Autonomy)	3.92	Agree

The highest-rated indicators were “I enjoy new learning experiences” and “I am open to new ways of doing familiar things,” both with a mean interpreted as **Strongly Agree**. “I take responsibility for my learning experiences” also received a very high mean of 4.35, reinforcing the idea that the respondents are accountable and active in their own learning. In terms of learning management, the respondents also showed strong agreement that they use sources supporting their learning and enjoy finding information about new topics on their own. These results indicate that they are resourceful and willing to explore beyond required materials. However, some areas were relatively weaker, particularly time-related self-management. “My time management is good” had the lowest positive mean among the non-negative items at 3.53, and “I am good at meeting deadlines” and “I plan my time for study effectively” also received only moderate agreement, suggesting that time management may be an area for improvement.

The negatively stated items provide additional insight. The statement “I tend to be motivated to work by assessment deadlines” received a low mean of 1.93 and was interpreted as *Disagree*, while “I frequently find excuses for not getting down to work” had a mean of 2.76, interpreted as *Neither Agree/Disagree* after reverse scoring was applied. Overall, the table reflects strong learner autonomy, but with room to strengthen discipline and time management habits.

Test for significant effect of pre-service teachers' motivation to learn English on their learning autonomy

A simple regression analysis was conducted to assess the effect of pre-service teachers' motivation to learn English on their capacity to be autonomous. The results indicate that motivation significantly predicts learner autonomy, with a standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.32$), $t(241) = 5.33$, $p < .001$, suggesting a moderate positive effect. The model explained 11% of the variance in learning autonomy, $R^2 = 0.11$, $F(1, 241) = 28.38$, $p < .001$. This implies that while other factors may also influence learner autonomy, motivation contributes a meaningful portion of the variation in autonomy levels. The findings emphasize the importance of motivation in enhancing pre-service teachers' autonomy in learning, suggesting that nurturing motivation can lead to increased self-directed learning. However, it must be noted that the model's R^2 value indicates that there are additional variables beyond motivation that also play a role in determining overall learner autonomy in language learning. The following are the results of a simple regression analysis in Table 7.

Table 7. Simple Regression Analysis: Motivation Predicting Learner Autonomy

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	df	p-value
0.332	0.11	0.106	28.38	(1, 241)	< .001
Predictor Variable	Unstandardized B	Standard Error (SE)	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	[Constant Value]	-	-	-	-
English Learning Motivation	-	-	0.32	5.33	< .001

Discussion

Pre-service Teachers' L2 Motivation Profile: A Global and Career-Oriented Drive

The empirical findings of this study demonstrate that pre-service teachers possess a robust motivation to learn English (M = 4.19), a trend that aligns with contemporary research highlighting the heightened L2 drive among future educators globally (Degirmencioglu & Gilanlioglu, 2025; Reynolds et al., 2021). When examined through the lens of Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) (Brady, 2019), International Orientation emerged as the primary catalyst for language learning (M = 4.45). Specifically, participants exhibited the highest agreement regarding the role of English in facilitating collaboration with individuals from diverse national backgrounds (M = 4.62). This indicates that future educators view English not merely as an isolated academic subject, but rather as an essential vehicle for global citizenship and transnational engagement. This global outlook expands traditional notions of integration, supporting Yashima's conceptualization of international orientation, wherein L2 learning is driven by a desire to connect with an imagined global community rather than a specific target-language culture (Khotimah et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2022).

This globalized vision is tightly coupled with a pragmatic vocational drive, as reflected in the high composite score for Instrumentality (M = 4.22). Within this utilitarian dimension, participants strongly articulated that English proficiency is an indispensable prerequisite for their future professional careers (M = 4.58) and a gateway to securing global employment opportunities (M = 4.35). This prominent instrumental drive corroborates previous empirical inquiries indicating that economic globalization and the marketization of education have intensified the pragmatic value of English in teacher education (Muhaim, 2023; Smith, 2023). Collectively, these insights suggest that pre-service teachers are highly driven by the extrinsic, utilitarian rewards of English within a highly competitive global labor market, transforming language learning into a form of professional capital (Wibooliyasarin et al., 2025; Wu & Li, 2023).

Despite this pronounced external and pragmatic focus, a critical psychological tension emerges when analyzing the participants' internal projections and self-beliefs. The Ideal L2 Self yielded the lowest mean score among the motivational subcategories (M = 3.93). While participants internalize the necessity of using English in their future workplace (M = 4.15), their conceptualization of themselves as fluent consumers of

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English multimedia remains comparatively modest ($M = 3.77$). This nuance becomes clearer when juxtaposed with their Self-Efficacy Beliefs ($M = 4.21$), where a distinct asymmetry is observed between receptive and productive confidence. Although pre-service teachers exhibit absolute confidence in their ability to use English successfully in their future jobs ($M = 4.55$), their perceived competence noticeably drops regarding oral fluency ($M = 3.98$) and public speaking ($M = 3.90$). This discrepancy echoes the work of [Fallah \(2017\)](#) and [Zhou et al. \(2023\)](#) on the interplay between self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety. The findings reveal that while future teachers maintain an idealized vision of professional utility, they simultaneously grapple with perceived inadequacies in active productive skills. Consequently, teacher training programs must bridge this gap by transitioning from passive language reception toward immersive, high-stakes communicative pedagogy to align pre-service teachers' linguistic self-efficacy with their professional aspirations.

Learner Autonomy and the Predictive Power of L2 Motivation

The descriptive findings of this study demonstrate that pre-service teachers exhibit a commendable baseline of Learner Autonomy ($M = 3.92$), a characteristic that is increasingly vital for modern educators who must model lifelong learning ([McLennan et al., 2021](#); [Reeve & Cheon, 2021](#)). The data reveal that these future educators are naturally exploratory and responsible learners, characterized by an intense appetite for new learning experiences ($M = 4.52$), open-mindedness toward innovative methodologies ($M = 4.48$), and a proactive willingness to take full accountability for their academic trajectories ($M = 4.35$). However, a distinct asymmetry emerges when comparing these intrinsic volitional tendencies with their operational execution. The participants' lowest positive scores were recorded in the domain of Time-Related Self-Management, specifically general time management ($M = 3.53$) and effective study planning ($M = 3.65$). Conversely, they strongly rejected the notion that they are strictly driven by external assessment deadlines ($M = 1.93$). This critical gap between autonomous intention and regulatory execution aligns with [Bollas and Bennett \(2026\)](#) assertion that psychological autonomy does not automatically translate into behavioral self-management, emphasizing that intellectual curiosity must be supported by explicit structural scaffolds.

Crucially, the inferential statistics clarify the predictive mechanism linking these constructs, proving that L2 learning motivation is a statistically significant, positive predictor of learner autonomy ($\beta = 0.32$, $t(241) = 5.33$, $p < .001$). This moderate positive effect implies that as a future teacher's motivation—particularly their international orientation and career-driven instrumentalities are systematically nurtured, their propensity to self-regulate, seek independent resources, and take control of their learning is enhanced. This finding empirically supports the theoretical alignment between the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that self-determined, internalized forms of motivation serve as the psychological engine driving autonomous learning behaviors ([Henry & Liu, 2023](#); [Li et al., 2026](#); [Lin, 2026](#)). When pre-service teachers possess a clear vision of their global

and professional utility, they become more agentic in directing their own linguistic development.

Nevertheless, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.11$) indicates that L2 motivation accounts for only 11% of the variance in learner autonomy. While this contribution is highly meaningful and establishes motivation as a core psychological pillar, it concurrently signals that the remaining 89% of the variance is governed by unmeasured variables. Within the broader framework of ecological SLA research, learner autonomy is conceptualized not merely as an individual trait, but as a socially situated capacity shaped by environmental affordances (Li & Timmaz, 2025; Sykes, 2025). Consequently, the unexplained variance is likely driven by institutional structures, digital literacy, socio-economic access, or specific instructional designs. For teacher educators and policymakers, these results suggest that while igniting global and professional motivation is essential, it is insufficient on its own. Cultivating truly autonomous future educators requires a holistic approach that simultaneously targets systemic curriculum affordances and explicit self-regulation strategies, particularly time-management training.

Academically, this study makes a significant contribution to the psycholinguistics and teacher education literature by elucidating the empirical relationship between components of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) and the level of learning autonomy in prospective English teachers. These findings extend the theoretical frameworks of Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) and Dörnyei (2019) by statistically proving ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < .001$) that international orientation and strong instrumental drive are significant predictors capable of triggering student learning autonomy. Practically, this study offers strategic guidance for curriculum designers at educational personnel training institutions to not only focus on theoretical linguistic materials but also integrate active communication-based pedagogy to address oral fluency anxiety and formulate specific interventions for students' time-related self-management. Through this comprehensive approach, institutions can produce future educators who not only possess high global motivation but also possess strong discipline and self-regulation as lifelong learners.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that pre-service teachers possess a robust, multi-faceted motivation to learn English ($M = 4.19$), alongside a highly developed capacity for language learner autonomy ($M = 3.92$). Their motivational profile is predominantly shaped by a strong international orientation ($M = 4.45$), pragmatic instrumentality ($M = 4.22$), and firm self-efficacy beliefs ($M = 4.21$), indicating that their learning behavior is heavily driven by global career aspirations, intercultural engagement, and professional utility. Concurrently, their high level of learner autonomy is characterized by strong psychological resourcefulness, an intrinsic enjoyment of new learning experiences ($M = 4.52$), and a proactive sense of accountability ($M = 4.35$). However, notable academic vulnerabilities persist within these constructs; Specifically, the respondents exhibited a slight dip in self-efficacy regarding fluent oral

communication ($M = 3.90$) and encounter explicit challenges in time-related self-management, where indicators for effective study planning and deadline compliance scored the lowest ($M = 3.53$).

20 Furthermore, the simple regression analysis underscores a statistically significant, moderate positive causal relationship between the two constructs, revealing that English learning motivation successfully predicts and accounts for 11% of the total variance in pre-service teachers' learner autonomy ($\beta = 0.32$, $R^2 = 0.11$, $F(1, 241) = 28.38$, $p < .001$). While the remaining 89% of the variance confirms that autonomy remains a complex, multifaceted construct governed by external variables beyond this model, the empirical evidence provides a clear instructional mandate for high-level teacher education. To effectively optimize the academic-to-professional transition of these future educators, teacher education programs must deliberately design a holistic curriculum that moves away from mere achievement-oriented targets. Instead, they should intentionally cultivate identity-driven, global motivations while simultaneously integrating structured interventions that reinforce behavioral time discipline, oral communication confidence, and self-regulated learning habits.

As a practical suggestion, English teacher education program administrators should intentionally integrate self-management training and time regulation strategies into the curriculum to discipline students' independent learning habits, which remain a weakness ($M = 3.53$). Furthermore, lecturers are advised to prioritize designing an interactive classroom environment through global assignment-based tasks and oral communication simulations to boost students' confidence in speaking English ($M = 3.90$), while simultaneously leveraging their already very high international orientation ($M = 4.45$) as a key catalyst in continuously optimizing their learning autonomy.

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