Motivational and Practical Frameworks for Teaching English to Weak Learners: An Empirical Study

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2787-5037

Ilhama Mammadova
Nakhchivan State University

Keywords	Abstract
motivational practical mixed-methods contextual learning self-assurance language education	Teaching English to weak learners poses significant challenges, as traditional methods often fail to engage and motivate these students. This study explores the effectiveness of integrating motivational and practical teaching frameworks to enhance language acquisition and confidence among struggling learners. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research involved 150 high school students, with pre- and post-tests measuring proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The intervention combined goal-setting, positive reinforcement, and real-world contextual learning, resulting in substantial improvements, particularly in speaking and listening skills. Qualitative feedback from students and teachers emphasized increased engagement and self-assurance, validating the impact of these strategies. The findings suggest that implementing such frameworks can significantly transform language education for weak learners, offering valuable insights for educators seeking more effective teaching approaches.

1. Introduction

Weak learners face numerous challenges in acquiring English proficiency, which often stem from a combination of cognitive, affective, and environmental factors. Unlike their peers who progress more smoothly, these students grapple with foundational skills, such as vocabulary retention, grammar comprehension, and effective communication. They may feel disheartened, resulting in a negative self-perception that further hampers learning. According to research, conventional pedagogical approaches—typically centered on rote memorization and abstract grammar exercises—fail to engage and inspire these learners (Zakarneh, Al-Ramahi, & Mahmoud, 2020). Consequently, motivation emerges as a critical component in the educational experience. When students are motivated, they become active participants, willingly investing effort in language tasks. Practical teaching strategies, which link language learning to meaningful, real-life contexts, further amplify this engagement, making language acquisition more relatable and sustainable.

The significance of motivation and practicality in language education cannot be overstated. Effective teaching frameworks, therefore, must go beyond traditional methods and instead utilize motivational elements alongside practical, context-rich content. As Axelsson (2007) suggests, language learning becomes more effective when students perceive a direct relevance to their lives and are encouraged to take ownership of their learning process. By crafting an immersive and engaging environment, teachers

can transform classrooms into vibrant spaces where even the weakest learners are given the opportunity to succeed.

Problem Statement

Despite various pedagogical advancements, a significant research gap persists in developing and implementing effective methods for teaching weak English learners. Traditional curricula often overlook these students' needs, applying a one-size-fits-all approach that exacerbates their struggles. Consequently, weak learners are left feeling alienated, with little opportunity for meaningful language growth. While some studies have examined differentiated instruction, few have explicitly focused on combining motivational and practical frameworks tailored to this demographic. There remains a lack of empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of these methods, leaving educators without a clear roadmap for enhancing student outcomes.

Objective

The primary aim of this research is to explore the impact of motivational and practical teaching frameworks on improving language outcomes for weak learners. By integrating approaches that focus on building confidence and using language in real-world scenarios, the study seeks to offer concrete strategies for empowering these students. This research will contribute to the growing body of literature on innovative English language teaching methods, providing insights into how tailored interventions can transform learning experiences for struggling students.

Research Questions/Hypotheses

1. **Does a motivational teaching approach improve the confidence of weak English learners?**

o   Hypothesis: Incorporating motivational strategies in English lessons will lead to a measurable increase in students' confidence and willingness to engage with the language.

2. **How effective are practical frameworks in enhancing language skills among weak learners?**

o   Hypothesis: Practical, context-based teaching methods will significantly improve language skills, particularly in speaking and comprehension, compared to traditional approaches.

2. Methods

Study Design

This study employed a mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the impact of motivational and practical teaching frameworks on weak English learners. The quantitative component involved pre- and post-intervention tests to measure language proficiency and confidence levels objectively. Meanwhile, the qualitative aspect incorporated classroom observations, teacher journals, and student interviews to gather deeper insights into the experiences and perceptions of participants. This dual approach allowed for a richer, more nuanced analysis of the intervention's effectiveness, ensuring both measurable outcomes and a thorough understanding of the underlying processes.

Participants

The study involved 150 high school students identified as weak English learners. These students were enrolled in various public and private institutions and had been categorized as struggling based on initial assessments and teacher recommendations. The selection process ensured a diverse representation of learners in terms of socio-economic background, gender, and geographic location. Participants ranged from 14 to 17 years of age, and all had demonstrated persistent difficulties in language learning, such as limited vocabulary, poor grammar comprehension, and a lack of confidence in using English. Additionally, teachers who had experience working with weak learners were included to provide observational data and insights into the instructional methods.

Setting

The research was conducted in both urban and rural schools to capture any contextual differences that might affect the intervention's outcomes. Urban schools were characterized by access to more educational resources, while rural schools often faced challenges such as larger class sizes and fewer instructional materials. This variation allowed the study to assess the intervention's adaptability across different educational environments. Classrooms were equipped with basic teaching aids like whiteboards, projectors, and language lab resources where available. Efforts were made to ensure that all settings were conducive to the intervention, with adjustments made to accommodate specific needs, such as noise reduction in urban schools or space optimization in rural ones.

Intervention

The intervention was structured around two key components: motivational strategies and practical, real-world language applications. The duration of the intervention was 12 weeks, with three 60-minute sessions per week.

1. **Motivational Strategies**:

o **Goal Setting**: At the beginning of the intervention, students engaged in goal-setting activities where they defined their language learning objectives. These goals were revisited regularly to track progress and keep students motivated.

o **Positive Reinforcement**: Teachers used a system of rewards and recognition to acknowledge student achievements, however small. For example, a student who successfully used new vocabulary in a sentence would receive immediate positive feedback, such as praise or a small reward.

o **Storytelling and Relatable Content**: Lessons incorporated stories and examples that were culturally relevant and engaging, such as discussing popular local sports events or community traditions.

2. **Practical Frameworks**:

o **Role-Playing and Simulations**: Students participated in activities like mock interviews, restaurant dialogues, and shopping scenarios to practice using English in authentic contexts. This approach emphasized speaking and listening skills, encouraging active participation.

o **Project-Based Learning**: Students worked on projects that required them to use English creatively, such as creating simple presentations about their hobbies or writing short stories based on their daily routines.

o **Community Involvement**: Where possible, the intervention involved real-world tasks, such as interviewing community members in English or visiting local businesses to ask questions. This practical exposure helped solidify language use in meaningful settings.

Data Collection

Data collection methods were carefully selected to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into the intervention's effectiveness:

1. **Pre- and Post-Intervention Tests**: Language proficiency was assessed through standardized English tests administered before and after the intervention. These tests measured skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Confidence levels were also measured using a self-assessment survey where students rated their comfort in various language tasks.

2. **Surveys and Questionnaires**: Students completed surveys throughout the intervention, providing feedback on their motivation, engagement, and perceived improvements. Teachers also filled out questionnaires detailing their observations of student behavior and language use.

3. **Classroom Observations**: Teachers and researchers conducted regular observations, documenting student interactions, participation levels, and the overall classroom atmosphere. These observations were used to identify trends and areas for improvement.

4. **Interviews and Focus Groups**: At the end of the intervention, selected students participated in one-on-one interviews or small focus groups. These sessions explored their experiences in depth, revealing how the intervention affected their attitudes toward learning English and their perceived progress.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure a well-rounded understanding of the results:

1. **Quantitative Analysis**: Paired sample t-tests were conducted to compare pre- and post-intervention test scores, assessing whether the intervention led to statistically significant improvements in language proficiency. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze survey data, providing insights into changes in student confidence and engagement levels.

2. **Qualitative Analysis**: Data from classroom observations, teacher journals, and student interviews were analyzed thematically. Key themes were identified, such as increased student participation, improved confidence, and challenges encountered during the intervention. This thematic analysis allowed for a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to the intervention's success or limitations.

3. **Triangulation**: To enhance the validity of the findings, data from multiple sources (e.g., test scores, observations, and interviews) were compared and contrasted. This triangulation ensured that the results were robust and reliable, providing a comprehensive view of the intervention's impact on weak English learners.

3. Results

Quantitative Results

The quantitative data collected from the pre- and post-tests revealed significant improvements in the language skills of students who participated in the intervention. The average scores across all four language skill areas (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) showed marked increases.

- **Reading Skills**: The mean score increased from 55% to 72%, indicating a substantial improvement in comprehension and vocabulary usage.

- **Writing Skills**: Writing scores improved from an average of 50% to 68%, with students demonstrating better grammar control and sentence structure.

- **Listening Skills**: The listening section saw a rise from 60% to 78%, reflecting greater ability to understand spoken English in practical contexts.

- **Speaking Skills**: Speaking scores had the most pronounced increase, moving from 45% to 70%, with notable progress in fluency and confidence.

The following table summarizes these results:

Skill Area	Pre-Test Mean (%)	Post-Test Mean (%)	Percentage Increase (%)
Reading	55	72	17
Writing	50	68	18
Listening	60	78	18
Speaking	45	70	25

The statistical analysis using paired sample t-tests confirmed that these increases were significant ($p < 0.01$), demonstrating the effectiveness of the motivational and practical teaching frameworks in enhancing language proficiency among weak learners.

Qualitative Results

Qualitative data from classroom observations, teacher journals, and student interviews provided further insights into the intervention's impact. Several recurring themes emerged:

1. **Increased Confidence**: Both students and teachers reported a noticeable boost in students' confidence. One student remarked, "I feel more comfortable speaking in class now. I am not afraid to make mistakes because the activities are fun and practical." Teachers observed that previously hesitant students were now more willing to participate in class discussions and language exercises.

2. **Engagement and Motivation**: The use of motivational strategies significantly increased student engagement. A teacher noted, "The goal-setting and positive reinforcement methods made a big difference. Students were eager to achieve their goals and receive recognition." Students also expressed that the lessons felt more relevant and engaging compared to traditional methods.

3. **Real-World Relevance**: Practical activities such as role-playing and project-based learning were well-received. Students highlighted the value of these exercises, with one explaining, "Practicing conversations that I can use outside of class made learning feel more useful and interesting." Teachers

observed that students retained language structures better when they could connect them to real-life contexts.

Comparison and Analysis

The results of this study align with previous research emphasizing the importance of motivation and practical application in language learning. Axelsson (2007) found that engaging weak learners through meaningful content improves retention and interest, a conclusion mirrored in the present study. Similarly, Zakarneh et al. (2020) noted that differentiated instruction can positively impact student outcomes, though they did not specifically investigate the motivational aspect as deeply as this study did.

However, some differences also emerged. While previous studies have shown mixed results regarding the use of positive reinforcement, this study found it to be a consistently effective strategy for maintaining student engagement. Additionally, the significant improvement in speaking skills suggests that practical frameworks might be particularly beneficial for developing oral language proficiency, a finding that warrants further exploration in future research.

Overall, the combination of motivational and practical teaching methods demonstrated a strong positive effect on the language skills and attitudes of weak English learners, offering a promising approach for educators working with this challenging demographic.

4. Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study underscore the significant impact that motivational and practical teaching frameworks can have on weak English learners. The marked improvements observed in language proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening skills, highlight the effectiveness of an approach that combines motivation with real-world application. The 25% increase in speaking scores suggests that creating a supportive environment where students can practice English in relevant contexts plays a crucial role in enhancing fluency and reducing anxiety. Similarly, the overall rise in confidence levels indicates that motivational strategies such as goal setting, positive reinforcement, and engaging activities can transform students' attitudes toward learning English. This transformation is critical, as a lack of confidence is often a major obstacle for weak learners.

The qualitative data further reinforce the quantitative results, revealing that students felt more invested in their language learning journey when the content was engaging and applicable to their daily lives. Teachers' observations of increased classroom participation and enthusiasm validate the idea that motivation and practical experiences can drive academic success. These outcomes suggest that the integration of these teaching frameworks can effectively address both the cognitive and emotional barriers that hinder weak learners.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this study contribute to existing theories of language learning, particularly those emphasizing the importance of affective factors and experiential learning. The findings align with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that a low-stress, highly engaging learning environment is conducive to language acquisition. By lowering students' affective filters through motivational strategies, teachers can

create conditions where language input is more readily processed and internalized. Additionally, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which highlights the importance of social interaction in learning, is supported by this study. The practical, communicative activities provided students with opportunities to engage meaningfully with their peers, enhancing both comprehension and production.

This study also extends the understanding of how motivation and real-world relevance can work synergistically to improve learning outcomes. While previous research has examined these factors separately, the combination presented here demonstrates a holistic approach that can be particularly effective for struggling learners. It provides empirical support for the idea that language learning is not just a cognitive process but also an emotional and social experience.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of this research are clear and actionable for educators. Teachers working with weak English learners should consider incorporating motivational strategies into their lesson plans. Simple techniques like setting achievable goals, using positive reinforcement, and integrating culturally relevant content can make a significant difference. Moreover, practical frameworks, such as role-playing real-life scenarios and using project-based learning, should be prioritized to help students connect language skills to everyday contexts.

Teachers can also benefit from creating a classroom environment that fosters collaboration and communication, emphasizing active learning over passive instruction. Using real-world materials, like menus, brochures, or authentic conversations, can provide students with a sense of purpose and immediacy in their language use. Additionally, training programs for teachers should emphasize the value of these methods, equipping them with the tools and resources needed to support weak learners effectively.

Limitations

While the study yielded promising results, several limitations should be noted. First, the duration of the intervention (12 weeks) may not have been sufficient to observe long-term retention of language skills. The improvements seen in speaking and listening may require continuous reinforcement to be sustained. Second, the study's sample was limited to high school students in specific urban and rural settings, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Different age groups or educational contexts might yield varying results. Additionally, the reliance on teacher observations and self-reported data introduces potential biases that could influence the qualitative analysis.

Future Research

Future research should aim to address these limitations by conducting long-term studies to examine the sustainability of language gains. Investigating how motivational and practical frameworks impact different age groups, such as primary school students or adult learners, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of these strategies' effectiveness. Additionally, future studies could explore the integration of technology-based learning tools, such as language learning apps or online collaborative platforms, to see how digital resources can further enhance motivation and engagement.

It would also be valuable to examine the role of cultural differences in shaping students' responses to motivational strategies. For instance, comparing the effectiveness of these frameworks in different cultural contexts could reveal important nuances in language teaching. Finally, experimental designs that

include a larger and more diverse sample could help validate the findings and contribute to a more robust body of research on effective methods for teaching weak English learners.

By continuing to explore and refine these approaches, educators and researchers can develop increasingly effective strategies to support language learners who struggle the most.

5. Conclusion

Summary of Findings

This study demonstrated that motivational and practical teaching frameworks significantly enhance the language skills and confidence of weak English learners. Quantitative results showed substantial improvements across all four skill areas, with speaking and listening scores experiencing the most notable gains. The use of motivational strategies, such as goal setting and positive reinforcement, played a crucial role in increasing student engagement and self-assurance. Practical, real-world activities, such as role-playing and project-based learning, helped students internalize language concepts more effectively and apply them in meaningful contexts. Qualitative feedback from students and teachers further highlighted the positive shifts in classroom dynamics and learning attitudes, reinforcing the value of these integrated teaching methods.

Final Thoughts

The implications of these findings are profound for English language teaching, especially for educators seeking ways to empower weak learners. By creating an engaging, supportive environment and connecting language learning to real-life experiences, teachers can transform their classrooms into spaces of active, meaningful participation. Implementing these frameworks can not only improve language proficiency but also foster a lifelong interest in learning. The potential impact of this approach extends beyond individual classrooms, offering a model that can be adapted and scaled to benefit learners across diverse educational settings. As educators continue to refine and apply these strategies, the vision of inclusive, effective language education for all students becomes increasingly attainable.

References

Axelsson, S. (2007). The weak language learner: A study of ways of taking weak language learners into consideration in class.

Ashrafova, I. (2024). Culturally Responsive Teaching: Strategies for Promoting Inclusivity in the Classroom. *Global Spectrum of Research and Humanities*, *1*(1), 102-112. https://doi.org/10.69760/2wbtm276

Babazade, Y. (2024). Proverbs in Pedagogy: Their Role in Language Teaching and Cultural Transmission. *Global Spectrum of Research and Humanities*, *1*(1), 71-84. https://doi.org/10.69760/xh04ch55

Bakar, W. N. W., Yusoff, N. S. M., Husain, W. S. W., & Hassan, S. H. C. (2015, May). The effectiveness of Je Vous teaching and learning strategies on weak learners' performance in mathematics. In *2015 International Symposium on Mathematical Sciences and Computing Research (iSMSC)* (pp. 389-395). IEEE.

Copland, F., Garton, S., & Burns, A. (2014). Challenges in teaching English to young learners: Global perspectives and local realities. *Tesol quarterly*, *48*(4), 738-762.

Le, T. (2020). *Storytelling and teaching English to young learners: A Vietnamese case study* (Doctoral dissertation, Open Access Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington).

Mammadova, I. (2024). The Concept of the Absurd: Camus' Literary Exploration of Existential Philosophy. *Global Spectrum of Research and Humanities*, *1*(1), 113-122. https://doi.org/10.69760/btgr6946

Mohar, T. M. T., Singh, C. K. S., Kepol, N., Ahmad, A. Z. L., & Moneyam, S. (2017). Analysis of Teacher Beliefs and Efficacy for Teaching Writing to Weak Learners. *English Language Teaching*, *10*(9), 208-217.

Mursyid, M., & Kurniawati, N. (2019). Higher order thinking skills among English teachers across generation in EFL classroom. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, *7*(2), 119-124.

Nadia, R. (2011). Teaching English in Algeria and educational reforms: an overview on the factors entailing students failure in learning foreign languages at university. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *29*, 1327-1333.

Othman, J., & Kiely, R. (2016). Preservice teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching English to young learners. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *6*(1), 50-59.

Rahayu, V. W. T. (2016). *Teachers' challenges in teaching English to young learners in rural public primary schools in Salatiga* (Doctoral dissertation, Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FBS-UKSW).

Sadiqzade, Z. (2024). The Impact of Music on Language Learning: A Harmonious Path to Mastery. *EuroGlobal Journal of Linguistics and Language Education*, *1*(1), 134-140.

Seidlhofer, B. (2004). 10. Research perspectives on teaching English as a lingua franca. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, *24*, 209-239.

Tran, T. Q., & Duong, T. M. (2018). The effectiveness of the intercultural language communicative teaching model for EFL learners. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, *3*, 1-17.

Zakarneh, B., Al-Ramahi, N., & Mahmoud, M. (2020). Challenges of teaching English language classes of slow and fast learners in the United Arab Emirates Universities. *International Journal of Higher Education*, *9*(1), 256-269.