

Postgraduate Students' English Learning Motivation in Practicing CEFR Preparation Level B1 Reading

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Abstract

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is globally adopted as a standard framework for measuring language proficiency across various contexts, including English language education. Despite its increasing application, little is known about how CEFR-based test preparation impacts learner motivation, particularly among postgraduate students. This study aims to explore the motivation of postgraduate students to practice the CEFR preparation level B1 reading test. Using a qualitative narrative inquiry design, data were collected through questionnaires, observation sheets, and self-reflection reports and analyzed thematically to identify key motivational patterns. The results show that 90% of participants reported feeling motivated by the CEFR B1 reading practice, while 10% expressed a neutral stance. Seven prominent motivational terms emerged from the analysis, they are finished, positive, supported, whole, carefully, focused, and practiced. These findings suggest that structured CEFR preparation activities can enhance learners' self-perception, focus, and persistence in English learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Motivation is a psychological term that describes how individuals and groups choose and stick to specific behaviors (McInerney, 2019). These states support the claim from Schunk & DiBenedetto (2020). Motivation refers to the mechanisms that initiate and sustain goal-directed behavior, resulting in outcomes such as choice, effort, persistence, achievement, and environmental regulation. Therefore, learning motivation in CEFR, motivation is defined as the stimulation of interest that guides the learner toward a goal, which includes arousing and maintaining interest in an activity to reach that objective.

The Curriculum of European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages tests an international standard for describing language proficiency. It contains six levels, ranging from A1 to C2, allowing you to track your progress as you learn. The B1 level, or "Threshold," demonstrates that you can understand the significant principles of unambiguous standards (Council of Europe. Council

for Cultural Co-operation. Education Committee. Modern Languages Division, 2001). This statement is supported by the findings of the research conducted by Syakirah & Santosa (2024), saying that the most frequent level of CEFR is B1 level, appearing in 86 videos on TikTok. CEFR is a descriptive language usage and competency model based on actual events that participants have deeply adopted worldwide (Nagai, et al., 2020). The CEFR is generally associated with standardized English testing but does not impact educational curriculum, pedagogy, or learning in Indonesia (Novawan, et.al., 2023). The CEFR Preparation Test is a performance assessment approach that uses the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) to measure and report incremental changes in competency (Berger, 2019).

Natova (2019) said most students tested demonstrated reading comprehension of at least 90% of the vocabulary in the text appropriate to their level, confirming the ability to measure text difficulty using the CEFR level. This confirms the CEFR of the suggested instrument for measuring text difficulty based on CEFR levels, at least for intermediate levels B1 and B2. However, this problem developed when the researcher collected, noticed, and read several self-reflections from postgraduate students who had taken the B1 reading test. The findings revealed that over half of the students were unmotivated to enhance their English, primarily at the B1 reading level. Through various topics such as job applications, education, free time, health, and many others, the average score reached 48,9% which reflected a lack of motivation among participants.

The first previous study can be supported by Mo's research (2022) entitled *A Case Study on a Self-Directed Task in a College English Class: Focusing on Student Reflection*. The research aims to contribute to research on enhancing college students' self-direction by sharing a case of a self-directed task activity conducted in a college English class in South Korea. The participants are 102 undergraduate students. The method utilized case studies. The findings revealed that the participants experienced different levels of self-regulation through the task process. The differences were rooted in personalized motivation, a clear goal, self-understanding, and self-reflection. The group with weak motivation and a vague goal had an unspecified plan and lacked self-understanding and self-reflection. Meanwhile, the group with strong motivation and a solid personalized goal deeply understood themselves and was active in self-reflection. Their successful experience of self-regulation strengthened their positive self-image and helped them to have a continuance will.

Other Previous is by Díez-Bedmar (2018). The research title is *Fine-tuning Descriptors for CEFR B1 level: Insights from Learner Corpora*. This research highlights the main challenges CEFR and ELP users posed by the linguistic competence descriptors—focusing on the grammatical accuracy descriptors and strategy descriptors for monitoring and repair at the B1 level—when they try to self-assess their written production activities. The method utilized in the research is to use respondents who are L1 Spanish learners of English. The results indicate that the reformulation of the descriptors for written production activities at the CEFR B1 level aimed at L1 Spanish learners of English was enabled by complementing the current descriptors with more linguistic information on the most frequent errors at that level (Palaming, 2016).

The last previous studies were by Matsuzaki (2020). The title investigates the difficulties for university learners of English in Japan with CEFR B1-level phrases. The research examines the variations in difficulty encountered by university learners of English in Japan concerning English phrases classified as CEFR B1 level by the English Vocabulary Profile (EVP). The participants are 360 university students in Japan. The research results are that the determination of difficulty based on a single processing mode is unlikely to provide a sufficient indicator of phrase difficulty; hence,

measurement tools that assess recognition and production abilities should be used. The implications for learning and teaching and future directions for this line of research are examined.

After previous studies, the researchers can learn the differences from the first previous studies. In all these studies, it can be concluded that there are many differences in the prior research. The first researcher is from Mo (2022), whose research uses different methods, namely case studies, while researchers use qualitative descriptive, as well as differences from participants, namely researchers using qualitative. However, it has in common that it takes data from sharing self-reflection from classmates. Next, the second researcher, Díez-Bedmar (2018) used research with a special focus on grammar descriptors; the researcher used data from reading level b1, as well as data taken from Spanish people, while the researcher used data from graduate students, so there is no significant similarity only the same CEFR level B1. A third study also has a lot in common because it analyzes student difficulties while this study analyzes student motivation. Their participation is Japanese students with a lot of data, while the researcher is only one graduate student. There are also differences again; CEFR tests analyzed by previous researchers are vocabulary tests, while researchers analyze reading. The only similarity is the test level, which is B1 CEFR.

While previous studies have explored CEFR-related issues such as grammatical accuracy (Díez-Bedmar, 2018), vocabulary difficulty (Matsuzaki, 2020), and self-directed learning (Mo, 2022) among undergraduate and secondary learners, few have examined the motivational aspects of postgraduate students engaging with B1-level reading assessments, especially in Indonesia. This is a critical gap, as postgraduate learners face distinct academic pressures that shape their motivation differently from younger students. Understanding what drives or hinders their motivation is essential for designing tailored preparatory materials and instructional strategies. According to Selvarajasingam et al. (2023), using the Bubble Map and Tree-Map approaches can enhance CEFR students' understanding of literature and foster motivation within a conducive learning environment, suggesting that the right tools and methods play a key role in learner engagement. Investigating motivational factors not only informs better educational practices but also contributes to the global discussion on how international frameworks like CEFR operate in local contexts. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to explore what motivates postgraduate students to practice for the CEFR B1 reading test and how this preparation process affects their engagement. The findings aim to provide practical insights and recommendations to strengthen postgraduate learners' motivation and improve CEFR-based learning outcomes.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used qualitative methods with narrative data because it helps comprehend individuals' perceptions, attributions of meaning, and viewpoints from their vantage point (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This process involves the analysis of comprehensive data depicting their experiences in a thorough and detailed manner. Nine randomly selected postgraduate students of English language education in Jakarta participated in this study. Questionnaires, observation sheets, and self-reflection reports compiled in Google Drive were used to explore perceptions, meaning attributions, and viewpoints regarding the CEFR Level B1 reading test. The ten-item close-end questionnaires in Google Forms were distributed via WhatsApp group in May 2024. Likert scale was used to assess individuals' attitudes, views, or perceptions (Jamieson, 2017) requiring participants to respond to questions or statements with a variety of options, such as "strongly agree," "agree,"

"neutral," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." The question items were checked on validity and reliability using SPSS. When response categories are coded numerically, values must be defined for each study, such as 1 for highly agreeing, 2 for agreeing, etc. Then, the researcher confirmed and decided to limit it by modifying it to 3 items to categorize data. The Likert scale can be seen as Agree (19 – 27), Impartial (10 – 18), and Disagree (1 – 9). It demonstrates that there are three description scores. Agree has a score of 3, impartial has a score of 2, and disagree has a score of 1. This information is totaled using the observation sheet. Disagree with a range of 1 to 10, then 11 to 20 is impartial, and agree with a score of 21-30.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

Questionnaires Results

Question 1. Does the CEFR help you in practicing English?

The results of the questionnaire show that out of nine postgraduate student respondents, eight responded affirmatively, indicating that the CEFR assisted them in learning English while one person responded neutrally. The overall data clearly suggest that the majority of postgraduate student respondents (88.89%) found the CEFR beneficial for their English learning, reflecting a strong positive perception among respondents which can be the potential for CEFR to improve motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes when properly integrated into instructional strategies. Thus, these findings suggest that incorporating CEFR-based activities and assessments can be an effective approach to enhancing postgraduate students' language development.

Question 2. Does the CEFR motivate you in your practice learning?

The findings reveal that the CEFR serves as a strong motivational factor for the majority of postgraduate students in their English learning practice. Specifically, eight out of nine respondents affirmed that the CEFR framework encourages and supports their sustained engagement with language learning tasks. One respondent provided a neutral response, indicating some uncertainty about the motivational impact of the CEFR and suggesting that the framework might benefit from further adaptation to better suit learners' needs. Despite this, the overall positive consensus highlights the CEFR's effectiveness in fostering learners' commitment and enthusiasm. This motivation throughout their preparation is crucial, as it can enhance learners' persistence, focus, and ultimately, their language proficiency development.

Question 3. Does the CEFR reading level B1 help you understand the text?

This question aimed to assess whether postgraduate students felt that the CEFR B1 reading level improved their comprehension of texts. The results showed that five respondents agreed that the B1-level materials helped them better understand the content. Meanwhile, three persons responded neutrally, indicating uncertainty or ambivalence about the CEFR B1's impact on their reading comprehension. One respondent disagreed, suggesting that the CEFR B1 level did not significantly aid their understanding. The mixed responses may reflect differences in individual motivation or familiarity with the CEFR framework. Overall, however, the majority of respondents perceived the CEFR B1 reading materials as beneficial for improving their comprehension, suggesting that it can be an effective tool in supporting postgraduate learners' reading skills, though further support might be needed for some students to fully benefit from it.

Question 4. Do you get new things and insights through CEFR reading?

This question sought to explore whether postgraduate students felt that engaging in the CEFR Level B1 reading materials provided them with new knowledge and insights. The majority of respondents (eight persons) agreed that the CEFR reading test introduced them to fresh information and broadened their understanding. One person responded neutrally, indicating uncertainty about the usefulness of the CEFR materials in offering new insights. This neutral response may reflect individual differences in learning preferences or prior familiarity with the content. Overall, the data suggests that most respondents perceive the CEFR Level B1 reading materials as a valuable source of new ideas and perspectives, which not only support language proficiency but also stimulate deeper cognitive engagement and insight development among postgraduate students. Then, when benefits are gained, motivation and engagement can be enhanced.

Question 5. Is CEFR reading level B1 difficult to understand?

This question investigated whether postgraduate students found the CEFR Level B1 reading materials challenging to comprehend. Seven respondents expressed a neutral stance, indicating that they neither found the texts particularly difficult nor especially easy. In contrast, two students explicitly disagreed with the notion that the B1 reading level was difficult, suggesting they found it fairly straightforward to understand. Overall, the responses suggest that postgraduate students perceive the CEFR B1 reading materials as moderately accessible, without significant difficulty. This impartial or balanced view implies that the materials are appropriately challenging, striking a balance between being too easy and overly complex. Such a level of difficulty may help sustain learners' motivation by providing enough challenge to engage their skills without causing frustration. Therefore, the data indicate that the CEFR Level B1 reading texts generally meet postgraduate students' comprehension capabilities, fostering a conducive learning environment.

Question 6. Does CEFR reading level B1 motivate you to understand reading texts?

This question aimed to determine whether postgraduate students feel motivated to engage with and comprehend texts at the CEFR Level B1. Six respondents responded positively, affirming that the CEFR B1 reading materials indeed motivate them to better understand the texts. Meanwhile, three students expressed a neutral or impartial view, indicating that their motivation fluctuates, sometimes they feel inspired by the materials, while other times less so. Overall, the majority response suggests that the CEFR B1 level has a positive motivational impact on postgraduate learners, encouraging active reading and comprehension. This motivational effect is important because it can enhance students' engagement and persistence when encountering reading tasks at this level. The balanced mix of agreement and impartiality also highlights that while many students find the material stimulating, motivation can vary depending on other factors such as text complexity or individual learner differences. In summary, the findings indicate that CEFR B1 reading materials generally serve as a motivating factor for postgraduate students in their efforts to understand English texts.

Question 7 Does CEFR Level B1 reading allow you to understand other reading texts more easily?

This question explores whether postgraduate students believe that engaging with CEFR Level B1 reading materials facilitates easier comprehension of other reading texts. Five students agreed that practicing with B1-level texts improved their ability to understand a wider range of reading materials.

However, four students responded neutrally, indicating that while the CEFR B1 reading texts sometimes help, they do not always make other texts easier to comprehend. The mixed responses suggest that, for most postgraduate students, exposure to B1-level reading can enhance overall reading skills and confidence, but this effect may vary depending on individual differences or the complexity of other texts. Overall, since a moderate number of respondents perceive that CEFR Level B1 reading contributes positively to their broader reading comprehension abilities, these materials can be a useful stepping stone in developing reading proficiency across diverse texts.

Question 8 Does CEFR Level B1 make you more critical in learning?

This question investigates postgraduate students' perceptions of whether engaging with CEFR Level B1 reading materials encourages a more critical approach to learning English. Six respondents agreed that the CEFR B1 materials helped them develop more critical thinking skills in their language learning process. Two students responded neutrally, suggesting that the materials may not significantly influence their critical learning abilities, while one student disagreed, feeling that the CEFR B1 reading did not enhance their critical thinking. Despite the varied responses, the trend indicates that most respondents perceive CEFR Level B1 reading texts as a valuable tool for fostering critical reflection and deeper engagement in learning English, which is essential for advanced academic success and language proficiency.

Question 9 Did you do the CEFR Level B1 2 times?

This question explores postgraduate students' perspectives on whether they took the CEFR Level B1 test more than once and their views on its usefulness. Five students agreed that they took the test twice, indicating acceptance of retaking it as part of their learning process. One student remained neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. However, three students disagreed, expressing the opinion that repeating the test more than once is unnecessary, as they felt it did not significantly improve their critical learning skills nor clearly identify errors for correction. Despite these varied responses, participants supported the idea of taking the CEFR B1 test twice suggesting that repeated exposure can be beneficial for reinforcing understanding and tracking progress.

Question 10 Do you have any struggles in reading the CEFR level B1 test?

This final question explores postgraduate students' perceptions of their difficulty with the CEFR Level B1 reading test. As many as six respondents agreed that they experienced difficulties when taking the test. Meanwhile, three students responded impartially, indicating mixed experiences: Some found the test challenging, while others did not face significant problems. The fact that more respondents encounter challenges with the CEFR B1 reading test than those who do not indicates that the test presents a moderate level of difficulty for most postgraduate learners, highlighting areas where additional support or practice might be beneficial to improve their reading comprehension at this level.

Scale of Description

Based on the scale description, observations are separated into three categories. The first descriptive scale is agreed 21 to 30, the second is impartial 11 to 20, and the third is disagreed 1 to 11. The following is a review by researchers using this description scale.

Agree

This description category ranges from subjects 19 to 27. An indicator of a positive response. Based on previous questionnaire classification. Agree is the participant's opinion that agrees with the researcher's question. Many postgraduate students who completed the Ten questionnaires agreed. Questionnaires 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 have answers that were agreed. Nine questionnaires were completed, with ten responding positively. Researchers have discovered that graduate students agree that CEFR reading B1 helps them practice their English, motivates them, helps them understand texts, enhances new things or sights, understand more, think critically, and overcome their reading difficulties.

Impartial

This description category has a score ranging from ten to 18. This category displays an impartial answer. Based on previous questionnaire classification. Researchers categorized, numbered, and totaled one questionnaire that said impartial or neutral. Only one of the ten questionnaires completed by postgraduate students was impartial, and it was question number 5. The questionnaire asked, "Is CEFR reading level B1 difficult to understand?" Seven of the nine participants who answered the questions believed the CEFR B1 reading text was neither challenging nor neutral. Researchers might conclude that postgraduate students realize that CEFR reading B1 can be challenging at times and easy at others, which allows them to respond impartially.

Disagree

This description category has a scoring scale of 1 to 9. This category includes answers that disagree. Based on previous questionnaire classification. Researchers categorized, counted, and combined the questionnaires to make sure neither of them asked whether they agreed or disagreed. Based on the ten questionnaires completed by postgraduate students, CEFR reading B1 stimulates them to pursue learning English even more.

Therefore, based on the ten questionnaires, researchers may conclude that nine agreed and one was impartial. No one disagrees with the question. The table shows the following questionnaire data results:

Table 1. The result of Based on Categories Description

Description Categorical	Questionnaire Number	The Percentage of Based Categories (%)
Agree	1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9, and 10	90
Impartial	5	10
Disagree	-	0

Motivational Words in Reading B1

Data from the postgraduate students' self-reflection writing was then read, analyzed, and determined thematically to find words, phrases, and sentences that indicate motivation to take the CEFR B1 reading test. Seven expressions of motivation were discovered written by participants.

One of the participants stated. "I also finished taking the test for reading level B1 and got the highest score.". That motivation refers to one of the postgraduate students' motivations to finish the reading test until the participant completes all 11 topics. When this motivation was realized, the participant received a high result on each B1 reading topic. This sentence's underlined motivational word is finished.

The second motivational sentence discovered by the researcher was "We should be positively related to the sentences that support the answer because it is not only true-false but also may be the statement is not in the passage.". The researcher discovered the second motivational statement while

working on the first section of reading subject B1, which had the title Job Application. The motivation given by the postgraduate student was that we must be enthusiastic about words that support replies because they are not simply right or wrong. This means that he must inspire himself to think positively when completing the CEFR test, as there are many challenging sentences on the test, and not all of them are correct or incorrect. Perhaps the rule is about, but it is also possible that this sentence does not appear in the reading. However, adds the next part of the sentence, meaning that the question sentence may not be in the text; the participant also encourages readers to only begin after thinking first. This motivating statement emphasizes positivity and support.

The next motivating sentence is *“We should read the whole text to get the information, and also the choices of the sentence. After that, we should carefully read the previous and following sentences to find the clue for the answer.”*. Researchers discovered this motivating sentence submitted by postgraduate students in section 3 of the reading test about Education 2. The term motivation denotes that we must read the whole sentence of the text to get the information we require. This has motivated readers to read the content thoroughly, rather than halfheartedly. Secondly, we have to carefully read the sentence. This sentence is related to the previous one. If we locate the answer, we must read the previous and carefully. Thus, this is a motivating sentence for readers, including postgraduate students doing B1 reading assignments. This word of motivation is found in general and thoughtful reading.

Researchers also identified the following expressions: *“We should make sure we find exactly the supported sentences in the text for each question.”*. This motivation was discovered by researchers in postgraduate students' work on topic 4, Hotel Reviews. The motivational phrase states that we should make sure we find suitably the supported sentences in the text for each question. This means that graduate students should focus on finding supporting sentences in each text. The underlined motivational words are attention and support sentences.

Another inspiring sentence was *“Therefore, it is necessary to read the passage as a whole first, followed by finding the details again in the passage.”*. Researchers identified the following statement in the sixth topic of reading B1 CEFR, titled Free Time. This means that postgraduate students' motivation must first raise their whole reading of the text, thereby allowing them to receive more thorough responses. It is critical to note that the motivational sentence is both in it as a whole and in more detail.

Next, researchers found the sentence *“So, we should prepare ourselves to be focused. We should read all the answers to find the suitable for each question. I have one wrong mistake in this part, for it is quite long, and I lost my focus a little bit.”*. Researchers detected the following sentence in the sixth topic of reading B1 CEFR, titled Holidays. This means that postgraduate students must be motivated to focus on finding all the correct responses for each sentence they work on to achieve a decent mark. However, the second incentive is not a motivating sentence. The graduate student stated that the participant made a minor error when filling in because he lost attention to this aspect of the material. The motivational sentence is the focus of this claim.

Last but not least, the following expression of motivation was noticed *“Practice strategies for each skill tested.”*. The researcher observed the following sentence in the conclusion of the postgraduate writer's work. The essence of the word motivation is that postgraduate students' motivation must be put into practice; individuals are instructed in methods to practice all skills, not only reading; can write, listen, and speak. This is emphasized by the motivational sentence, which demands practice. It follows among the motivational sentences in postgraduate students' self-

reflection, there are motivations to focus, motivation to do the whole test, motivation to practice, motivation to support, motivation to think positively, and motivation to complete the test successfully.

B. Discussion

This study found that most postgraduate student respondents agreed that the CEFR B1 reading test could motivate them to practice, study, and comprehend the test in English. This is consistent with Goundar's (2023) findings that undergraduate students' English language proficiency nurtured from A1 to B1 and B2, with 21 going to B1 and 41 to B2. This demonstrates that there is strong motivation following preparation for the CEFR test. The questionnaire results were further analyzed and evaluated, resulting in nine items referring to agree signifies that 90% of the graduate students agreed with the questionnaire questions. The remaining 10% were impartial in questionnaire question number 5, which asked if reading topic B1 was difficult. This result aligns with Fithriani et al. (2020) who found that postgraduate students have a positive perception of CEFR-based reading tests as reading materials, thereby motivating them to develop their comprehension skills. Self-reflection report further displayed the seven most used motivational words to complete the CEFR B1 reading test. This is highlighted by widely used motivational sentences demanding results, such as *"I also finished having the test for reading level B1 and got the highest score."* Following is *"We should be positively related to the sentences that support the answer because it is not only true-false but also may be the statement is not in the passage."* The significance of this motivational remark is that postgraduate students must complete the test from beginning to end and must think positively to encourage them to complete the test. In this scenario, seven motivational keywords are used: whole, finished, focused, supported, positive, practice, and careful. Therefore, this is consistent with the opinion of Howard, et al. (2021), who state that postgraduate students' intrinsic desire is related to success. And their persistence, which is tied to the importance of their attitudes. This means that their drive is intrinsic to themselves, which boosts their chances of passing the complete CEFR reading B1 test.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study explored postgraduate students' motivation in practicing the CEFR Level B1 reading test and found that the majority (about 90%) expressed positive motivation and engagement with CEFR-based reading materials, while a small portion remained impartial regarding the test's difficulty. These findings suggest that CEFR-aligned assessments not only support comprehension but also foster important motivational factors such as focus, self-reflection, and deliberate practice. The results underscore the value of integrating CEFR reading tests systematically within postgraduate English programs to enhance learners' motivation and improve language skills. As this study involved a limited number of respondents, it is recommended that future research investigate a wider group of respondents with the long-term effects of CEFR-based assessments on academic achievement and language proficiency, as well as explore motivational differences across various CEFR levels and academic disciplines. Overall, this study contributes to understanding the CEFR's potential beyond proficiency measurement, highlighting its role as a tool to encourage sustained learner engagement and success in English reading.

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