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Research article

Demotivation and oral participation following negative experiences: an intrinsic case study of an english language student at ESPOCH

Desmotivación y participación oral tras experiencias negativas: estudio de caso intrínseco de un estudiante de inglés en ESPOCH

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Abstract

Introduction: This article examines how negative experiences in English language learning shape student motivation and influence subsequent oral participation. **Objective:** To examine how prior negative experiences shape a student's demotivation at ESPOCH. **Methodology:** A qualitative intrinsic case study was conducted with one adult participant selected through a screening questionnaire. Data collection included a semi-structured interview and a written reflection. **Results:** The findings show that the participant associates limited prior exposure, public comparison of pronunciation, and perceived ridicule with shame, reduced self-confidence, loss of curiosity, and withdrawal from oral participation. However, the participant differentiates humiliating correction from patient feedback and describes a partial reactivation of motivation in a safer learning environment. **Conclusion:** Demotivation is shaped by the social meaning attributed to corrective feedback rather than by linguistic difficulty alone; respectful correction, protection from ridicule, and peer support foster motivational reactivation.

Resumen

Introducción: El presente artículo analiza cómo las experiencias negativas en el aprendizaje del inglés marcan la motivación estudiantil y condicionan la participación oral futura. **Objetivo**:

Examinar cómo las experiencias negativas previas configuran la desmotivación de un estudiante en la ESPOCH. **Metodología:** Se realizó un estudio de caso intrínseco cualitativo con un participante adulto seleccionado mediante un cuestionario de preselección, que incluye una entrevista semiestructurada y una reflexión escrita. **Resultados:** Los hallazgos muestran que el participante vincula la exposición previa limitada, la comparación pública de su pronunciación y la burla percibida con vergüenza, menor confianza, pérdida de curiosidad y retiro de la participación oral, aunque distingue la corrección humillante de la retroalimentación paciente y describe una reactivación parcial en un entorno más seguro. **Conclusión:** La desmotivación se configura por el significado social atribuido a la corrección, no por la dificultad lingüística aislada, y que la corrección respetuosa, la protección frente al ridículo y el apoyo entre pares favorecen la reactivación motivacional.

Introduction

In foreign language learning, motivation is not a fixed trait; rather, it changes as personal goals, emotions, classroom relationships, and previous experiences interact over time (Boo et al., 2015; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Demotivation refers to processes that diminish an already existing intention to learn and typically manifests as reduced effort, silence, avoidance, or task abandonment (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Kikuchi, 2015). It should be distinguished from the complete absence of motivation, as a student may remain interested in English while simultaneously avoiding situations associated with others' judgment or loss of face before the group. Therefore, this distinction is crucial when analyzing silence.

Various studies on English as a foreign language have repeatedly identified teacher behavior, instructional practices, materials, the compulsory nature of the subject, repeated failure, and peer dynamics as potential sources of demotivation (Falout et al., 2009; Kikuchi, 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). Factor inventories are useful for identifying patterns, although they offer limited explanation of why a particular episode becomes significant for a given student. Nor do they clarify how that episode is interpreted or why its effects change over time. A case narrative makes it possible to reconstruct the sequence through which an experience becomes connected to emotion, self-evaluation, and subsequent action, without assuming that this sequence is replicated across all students.

In Ecuador, prior educational opportunities are particularly relevant. The national English curriculum is defined as student-centered, communicative, and aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference, and it presents the development of motivated and autonomous students as a curricular objective (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2016). Its implementation in public schools, however, is conditioned by available pedagogy, infrastructure, the use of Spanish, and certain perceptions of English (Sevy-Biloon et al., 2020). A national survey reports that 30.9% of the surveyed teaching staff work in rural areas, whereas 37.2% of the Ecuadorian population resides in rural communities, a distribution that the authors interpret as potential neglect (Newman et al., 2023).

According to evidence from Ecuadorian higher education, previous English-learning trajectories, school background, interruptions, and exposure outside the classroom are associated with differences in linguistic production (Espinoza-Hidrobo et al., 2024). These findings do not, by themselves, determine the experience of a particular student or justify characterizing public or rural schooling as deficient. Rather, they demonstrate why students entering university may display unequal learning histories and differing levels of familiarity with the language. Within this framework, demotivation is not explained by an individual deficiency but by the relationship between institutional demands and accumulated resources. School biography thus becomes a central analytical element rather than merely a contextual datum.

Certain demotivating experiences from the past may remain salient after the original episode. Falout et al. (2009) linked demotivation to affective states, self-regulation, and learning outcomes among English-language university students across different proficiency levels and institutional contexts. Albalawi and Al-Hoorie (2021) observed that beliefs and coping responses guide the transition from demotivation to renewed engagement, whereas Wang and Littlewood (2021) documented declines and recoveries across successive stages. Analysis of these studies cautions against the notion of a uniform demotivator with an inevitable outcome in all cases. The trajectory matters as much as the specific event and its immediate context, since the same incident may lead either to sustained withdrawal or to subsequent reappraisal depending on the support available.

Emotion and oral participation add a further layer of analytical complexity. Anxiety, boredom, and demotivation have been associated with willingness to communicate, although the intensity and nature of this relationship vary according to context (Solhi, 2024). Trajectory studies situate criticism, discouraging comments, and humiliation within broader ecological patterns of demotivation and remotivation, according to Ye et al. (2026). According to Mynhardt (2026), critical incidents also emerge from reciprocal interpretations between teacher and student rather than from an isolated student deficit. The relevant question is not limited to what happened, but rather concerns what

that episode meant to the person who experienced it and how that meaning is reflected in the student's current, concrete participation.

Two theories offer bounded interpretive lenses for this question. The L2 Motivational Self System comprises the ideal self, the ought-to self, and the learning experience; the latter component highlights how the classroom climate and immediate relationships sustain or undermine motivated behavior (Dörnyei, 2009; Yousefi & Mahmoodi, 2022). Self-Determination Theory proposes that the quality of motivation depends on the satisfaction or frustration of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (Alamer et al., 2025; Ryan & Deci, 2020). In this case, these constructs were not formally measured; however, they serve to interpret why public comparison may have threatened perceived competence and why supportive correction may have enabled re-engagement.

Although factor inventories identify recurring influences across large groups, they do not independently reconstruct the way in which prior access, public evaluation, emotional meaning, and subsequent behavior became interconnected for an individual student. An intrinsic case study preserves these connections within their temporal and relational context and makes it possible to examine why the same pedagogical act, even a minor one, may be subject to opposing interpretations (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Its contribution is analytical rather than statistical, as it clarifies one possible pathway through which pronunciation correction may be interpreted as useful guidance or as a threat to competence and belonging. This distinction is relevant in university English programs that enroll students from diverse educational backgrounds.

In light of the foregoing, the study is justified by the need to understand, from a student's perspective, how an adverse school experience develops into sustained demotivation and what conditions may partially reverse it in higher education. The guiding research question examines how previous negative English-learning experiences have shaped the demotivation of an EFL student at ESPOCH. Three secondary questions address the experiences the participant perceives as negative, the emotional and motivational consequences attributed to them, and their manifestation in current participation. The general objective of the study is to develop a rigorous and bounded, evidence-based interpretation of a delimited trajectory and to contrast it with the literature on motivation in English as a foreign language.

Methodology

A qualitative intrinsic single-case design was adopted to develop an in-depth understanding of a bounded English-learning trajectory rather than to estimate a population-level effect, in accordance with Stake (1995) and Yin (2018). The case involved an adult student enrolled in the PAO 0_2 preparatory cohort of the Marketing program at the Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo during the academic period

from September 2025 to February 2026. The analytical boundary encompassed the participant's account of English instruction prior to enrollment and the perceived relationship between those experiences and current engagement. The unit of analysis was the participant's individual trajectory rather than the class group or institution, as the interest lay in the situated experience.

Within the preparatory program, students have diverse educational histories, and English instruction is concentrated within a brief period and a small group. This institutional condition lends particular importance to the foundational differences with which each student arrives and to the speed of adjustment. The case involved an adult student whose interview was conducted in Spanish, who had studied English intermittently during secondary education, and who entered the program without a consolidated basic level of proficiency. His account included experiences of public exposure, teacher correction, and peer ridicule during secondary school. Selection did not seek statistical representativeness but rather information power, as the participant was able to describe in detail the connection between school episodes and current behavior.

Following written institutional authorization, the instructor of the PAO 0_2 cohort distributed two online forms. The prescreening questionnaire collected information on adult status and enrollment, prior formal English study, negative experiences before enrollment, perceived motivational change, current manifestations of reduced engagement, availability for an interview, and the absence of a teaching or supervisory relationship with the researcher. A separate form collected contact information only from those who volunteered. Eighteen students completed both instruments within the established timeframe using a self-generated six-character code that enabled the information to be linked without using names. Only one interviewed participant met all criteria without disqualifying or conditional responses and was selected under the code AM2007.

Evidence was generated through a semistructured interview guide and a written reflection prompt. The interview progressed from learning history and a significant negative episode to emotional meaning, motivational consequences, current participation, alternative explanations, and supportive experiences. The reflection enabled the participant to expand, correct, or qualify the interview account. Before implementation, an English teacher with master's-level training and experience in qualitative research independently reviewed the relevance of both instruments. The reviewer considered alignment with the research questions, clarity, neutrality, cultural appropriateness, sequencing, and feasibility, and recommended retaining the questions. This procedure did not constitute psychometric validation or a quantitative estimate of validity.

Before data collection, the participant signed written informed consent on October 28, 2025, and separately authorized audio recording. The interview, conducted in Spanish, lasted 33 minutes and 4 seconds. It was recorded, transcribed verbatim, and cross-checked against the original recording. Ambiguous wording was flagged during verification and was not used as a direct quotation when substantive content could not be resolved. Subsequently, the participant completed a brief handwritten reflection, which was transcribed while preserving meaning and documenting minor orthographic standardization. The principal researcher maintained a decision log that distinguished participant attributions from independently established facts and documented transcription decisions.

The analysis followed the reflexive thematic analysis process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021). The first author reconstructed the chronology, coded the interview and reflection separately, developed candidate themes, and maintained traceability for each analytical decision. Coding remained close to the participant's language. Codes addressed prior access, negative classroom experiences, emotional meanings, behavioral consequences, current insecurity, and conditions associated with renewed engagement. Themes were systematically examined against contradictory evidence and alternative explanations. The second author provided ongoing methodological supervision and reviewed the coherence among extracts, themes, claims, and limitations. Convergence between the two sources was treated as elaboration by the same individual rather than as independent corroboration.

The study had previously received institutional approval from the Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo, and the coordination of the Marketing program authorized recruitment and the interview. The participant received written information regarding voluntariness, the right to withdraw or omit questions, potential discomfort, confidentiality, recording, and anonymized quotation. The first author is an English teacher at the institution and a master's student, although he did not teach, assess, or supervise the PAO 0_2 cohort. To manage this positionality, recruitment was conducted through the cohort instructor, the contact form was kept separate, and analytical notes distinguished the participant's words from the researcher's interpretation. Names and contact information were stored separately.

Results

The participant's account organizes the experience into four interconnected themes that explain how he relates his prior learning to subsequent motivation and participation. The sequence describes meanings and responses as perceived by the participant himself and does not demonstrate that the recalled episodes caused each subsequent behavior, nor does it rule out other school-related or personal influences. The quotations are retained in Spanish, the original language of the interview and

reflection. The interpretation is grounded in verbatim excerpts from the interview and the written text, preserving the contradictions within the account rather than reconciling them. At the end of this section, Table 1 summarizes the four themes, the evidence supporting them, and the analytical qualifications that delimit their scope.

According to his account, the beginning of formal English instruction was late, discontinuous, and limited. An initial statement placed this beginning in tenth grade, whereas two subsequent responses located it in eighth grade and emphasized that the language had not been taught in preschool or primary school. The exact year remains uncertain. This discrepancy was retained as part of the analytical material and was not resolved through inference. The stable point in the account was not the date, but rather the perceived absence of a solid foundation before secondary school. The participant characterized his prior knowledge as basic and insufficient in relation to what subsequent teachers assumed he already knew, and this characterization shaped the way he interpreted classroom demands.

This school history acquired meaning when the student encountered the assumption that foundational knowledge should already have been acquired. He recalled a teacher's question, formulated as: ¿cómo no va a saber si le enseñaron en la escuela?, and his own response, cuando nunca me habían enseñado. In his interpretation, unequal access became a personal deficiency. Peers who pronounced or wrote more easily served as an implicit standard against which he felt inadequate. The comparison did not require explicit comments to function as a measure of his own academic performance. The account did not portray all prior instruction negatively, as some previous teachers were remembered as helpful and as responsible for the limited knowledge he possessed.

Pronunciation in front of the group constituted the central negative experience in the account. The participant described repeated comparisons with his peers and stated that siempre había burla de su profesor. He also indicated that some classmates joined in the laughter. The episode occurred before a stable group with prior and subsequent interpersonal ties. It was experienced as more than the correction of an inaccurate sound, as the difficulty became a public display of supposedly basic knowledge that he did not possess. The audience gave the incident its force, since the classmates present were part of his everyday interactions. Pronunciation, more than writing, became associated with exposure, a nuance that research on demotivation in English classrooms frequently highlights, according to Kikuchi (2009).

A contrasting episode made it possible to identify the demotivating element more precisely. Another teacher also corrected his pronunciation, although the correction was accompanied by support and by the message that improvement was possible. The participant did not describe this episode as equally hostile. Correction, therefore, was not experienced uniformly as harmful. The same teaching action could have different consequences depending on the support surrounding it. Public comparison, ridicule, and

lack of support altered its meaning and made speaking socially unsafe. This internal contrast indicates that the decisive factor was not the existence of corrective feedback, but rather the way it was combined with exposure, the group's response, and the classroom climate.

As the primary emotional response, the participant identified shame and stated that he felt deeply ashamed of himself. This was accompanied by sadness, aversion toward English, reduced confidence, and a sense of feeling foolish. The affective repertoire was broad and was not limited to a momentary reaction of displeasure. These expressions show that the episode was not experienced merely as feedback on a specific task. Over time, it became a stable judgment about personal ability and about the value of continuing to make an effort. Shame operated as a mediator between external evaluation and the participant's self-evaluation. A pronunciation error came to be interpreted as evidence of a broader incapacity, and this interpretation foreshadowed subsequent disengagement.

Based on this interpretation, the participant described reduced curiosity. Before the episode, not knowing something could lead to a question or an independent search for information. Afterwards, the remembered response was: why should I make an effort if they say I am bad? This statement connects an external judgment with a modified expectation regarding the value of effort. The clearest behavioral change affected voluntary participation. There was also a reduced willingness to ask questions in class and to seek clarification. He stated that he no longer participated and added that he only did what was necessary to pass, and sometimes not even that. Engagement declined from curiosity and spontaneous contribution to minimal compliance, although the account also included a prior belief that English was difficult.

Traces of the previous experience remain visible in current participation. The participant described checking pronunciation with another person before speaking and sometimes withholding an answer, even when he believes it is correct. He expressed it as follows: I know how it is pronounced, but I do not want to pronounce it for fear of making a mistake. The search for reassurance and hesitation suggest that the expectation of being judged did not disappear when the original teacher and classmates were no longer present. At the same time, the current environment proved to be different. Patient correction, boundaries against teasing, peer support, and group work were associated with a return to participation, consistent with the relationship between negative emotion and willingness to communicate reported by Solhi (2024).

In the handwritten reflection, the participant expanded on this interpretation. He maintained that discussing students' experiences helps explain why learning English can be difficult and why no one should be treated negatively without knowing the memories that affect their learning. He also suggested that recognizing these experiences could make it possible to overcome them, improve the classroom experience, and regain

interest. The written text functioned as a space for reflection distinct from the oral exchange. The reflection did not introduce a different episode but rather condensed the elaboration that followed the interview. Overall, demotivation emerged through the connection between oral participation, anticipated public judgment, and self-devaluation, a relationship that persisted in current hesitation without becoming definitive.

Table 1 presents the four themes, their interpretative synthesis, the source supporting each one, and the evidence qualifying their scope. A joint reading of the table reveals a connected, internal, and non-deterministic sequence. Unequal prior access created vulnerability when basic knowledge was assumed, public comparison endowed pronunciation with social meaning, shame narrowed curiosity and participation, and a safer environment enabled partial re-engagement. Each link depended on the participant's specific interpretation. The available evidence from this case does not support the claim that correction always leads to withdrawal, since supportive correction was described differently. Rather, it shows how correction becomes demotivating when it is experienced as public judgment without relational support.

Table 1. *Themes, evidence, and analytical considerations of the case.*

Theme	Interpretive synthesis	Source	Qualifying evidence
Unequal prior access	Limited exposure was met with expectations of previously acquired basic knowledge.	Interview	The start date was recalled inconsistently, and some previous teachers were described positively.
Pronunciation as a social threat	Public comparison and perceived ridicule transformed oral errors into anticipated social judgment.	Interview and reflection	Supportive correction was not experienced in the same way; therefore, correction alone does not explain withdrawal.
Withdrawal following shame	Shame and self-devaluation preceded fewer questions, reduced participation, and lower effort.	Interview and reflection	Retrospective attribution does not establish exclusive causality, and prior beliefs about difficulty also played a role.
Partial re-engagement	A safer current environment sustained renewed effort while oral insecurity persisted.	Interview and reflection	Both sources originate from the same person, and current participation is self-reported.

Note. Prepared by the authors based on the semi-structured interview and the participant's written reflection (AM2007).

Table 2 contrasts the two correction experiences described by the participant and specifies which conditions changed the meaning attributed to being corrected. In both episodes, pronunciation was corrected; the difference lay in the presence of comparison and ridicule versus patience and a credible pathway for improvement. This contrast supports the argument that linguistic standards can be maintained without turning error into a judgment of identity. Private correction or correction involving limited exposure before the group, explicit protection against ridicule, prior rehearsal, and feedback oriented toward the next step emerge as conditions compatible with the reported re-

engagement. These implications are propositions grounded in a narrative rather than empirically demonstrated effects of an intervention.

Table 2. *Conditions that modified the meaning of correction in two episodes of the case.*

Condition	Demotivating episode	Supportive corrective episode
Object of correction	Pronunciation in front of the group	Pronunciation in front of the group
Audience	Regular peers and teacher	Interaction with teacher support
Public comparison	Present and recurrent	Absent
Response from the environment	Mockery by the teacher and some classmates	Assistance and a message that improvement is possible
Attributed meaning	Exposure of a basic deficiency and judgment of the person	Identification of an aspect that can be improved
Described consequence	Shame, reduced curiosity, and withdrawal from participation	Acceptance of feedback and continued effort

Note. Prepared by the authors based on the participant's account. The contrast holds the linguistic object constant while modifying the relational conditions.

Discussion

Rather than residing in pronunciation difficulty itself, the core of the case lies in the social meaning that this difficulty acquired. Demotivation emerged when an oral error became evidence of personal inadequacy before a familiar audience and when the anticipation of such judgment constrained subsequent participation. Falout et al. (2009), Kikuchi (2009), and Sakai & Kikuchi (2009) identified teacher behavior, peer dynamics, repeated failure, and loss of confidence as recurrent factors. The contribution of this case lies in showing how these factors were articulated within a specific biography. The list of causes is thus transformed into an interpretive sequence in which order and context modify the weight of each element.

Correction and humiliation are not equivalent, and this distinction warrants pedagogical attention. The participant contrasted a discouraging episode with another teacher who corrected him while simultaneously offering support, and only the former acquired a demotivating meaning. Ye et al. (2026) situate criticism and humiliation within broader ecological patterns, whereas Mynhardt (2026) emphasizes the interactional nature of critical incidents. The case supports this interpretation and adds specificity regarding the concrete conditions involved. The mode of correction, the audience, the relationship with the person providing the correction, and the precision of the feedback carried more weight than the corrective act itself. Correction is interpreted before it is received, and that interpretation depends on the prior relationship, the group climate, and the shared history.

Between shame and withdrawal, a sequence unfolds that helps explain the persistence of a brief episode. The participant linked shame and self-devaluation to fewer questions, less voluntary speaking, and effort reduced to a minimum. This sequence did not emerge

as an abrupt interruption but rather as a gradual adjustment of effort. Solhi (2024) reported relationships among demotivation, negative emotion, and willingness to communicate, finding that demotivation was the strongest predictor in face-to-face contexts. Thus, emotional disengagement is assumed to vary according to the communicative modality. The case adds a temporal dimension, as anticipatory evaluation connected a school memory with hesitation at university. The most defensible interpretation is that of a perceived pathway rather than demonstrated causality, since the evidence is retrospective.

Two theoretical lenses organize this pathway without replacing the participant's voice. In the L2 Motivational Self System, the learning experience refers to the immediate environment and can become a powerful source of motivated behavior (Dörnyei, 2009; Yousefi & Mahmoodi, 2022). Public ridicule rendered this experience incompatible with a future self-image as a confident English speaker. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, the episode can be understood as frustration of competence and relatedness, whereas patient correction and peer support may have restored some sense of capability and belonging (Alamer et al., 2025; Ryan & Deci, 2020). It is important to note that none of these constructs was measured; therefore, these connections are interpretative.

Nothing in this case warrants a fixed interpretation of demotivation, as the participant continued to seek reassurance and at times withheld responses he believed to be correct, although he described renewed effort in a safer environment without the trace of the episode disappearing. This movement is consistent with the research of Albalawi and Al-Hoorie (2021) and Wang and Littlewood (2021), which demonstrates the influence of coping and contextual support on the persistence or reversal of withdrawal. The observed re-engagement was partial and coexisted with insecurity rather than replacing it. Improvement depended on conditions that the participant himself was able to identify. The student may resume participation while managing the perceived risk of oral error, and this coexistence better defines his current state than any single label.

The internal contrast is pedagogically informative because it keeps the linguistic object relatively constant while relational conditions change. In both episodes, there was pronunciation to be corrected. The difference lay in whether correction was accompanied by comparison and ridicule or by patience and a credible pathway toward improvement. It follows that teachers can maintain instructional standards without turning error into a public judgment of identity. Private or low-exposure correction, explicit protection against ridicule, rehearsal time, and feedback oriented toward an attainable next step are consistent with the conditions the participant associated with his re-engagement. For the purposes of this study, these implications are propositions rather than findings from an evaluated intervention.

To assess the transferability of the case, it is useful to compare its conditions with those of other educational settings. Unequal prior access, public correction, peer responses, and subsequent support describe a recognizable scenario in many university English programs serving students from heterogeneous educational backgrounds (Espinoza-Hidrobo et al., 2024; Sevy-Biloon et al., 2020). The rural distribution of teachers and the Ecuadorian population documented by Newman et al. (2023) helps contextualize these differences without turning them into a diagnosis of Ecuadorian public education. The methodological value of the study lies in the detailed reconstruction of a bounded and documented trajectory, the distinction between preselection and contact, transcript verification, and an audit trail that retained contradictory evidence.

The analysis of the findings is valuable for research; however, it is also important to highlight the limitations of the study. The initial analysis focused on eligibility, which required a self-reported negative experience followed by a perceived reduction in motivation. Thus, the selection made it possible to explain this relationship, but not to demonstrate its frequency or occurrence among other students. Furthermore, the evidence derives from a retrospective interview and reflection by the same individual, without classroom observation, third-party accounts, or review of the topics; therefore, depth does not amount to triangulation across independent sources.

Likewise, the initial chronology was inconsistent, the institutional role of the first author may have influenced disclosure and interpretation to some extent, and translation may have attenuated nuances. The case supports an analytical and situated understanding rather than causal generalization. Nevertheless, these limitations do not diminish the value of the study's contribution, precisely because of its situated and reflective nature, which provides an in-depth understanding of the relationship between emotion and disengagement and opens a promising avenue for future research to expand the evidence through triangulated designs.

Conclusions

In this case, previous negative experiences of learning English shape the student's demotivation by linking oral participation to public judgment and diminished self-appraisal. The account describes a sequence in which comparison and perceived ridicule produce shame, reduce confidence, decrease voluntary participation, and restrict effort to academic survival. This relationship remains evident in the current search for reassurance before speaking and in the withholding of responses whose pronunciation is known. The answer to the research question is supported by the meanings attributed by the participant and the internal coherence of the account, without establishing that the recalled episode caused all subsequent behaviors.

Nothing indicates that this trajectory is irreversible. The contrast between two forms of correction shows that feedback may be accepted when accompanied by patient guidance, peer support, and protection from ridicule. Under these conditions, the participant describes a partial and sustained reactivation of participation. The most defensible practical conclusion is not to avoid correction, but rather to address oral errors without public comparison and with supported opportunities to participate again. The classroom can uphold demanding standards while simultaneously protecting the student's self-image. Demotivation thus emerges as a modifiable and contextual process rather than a stable trait, although insecurity may persist and require sustained conditions of interpersonal safety rather than a one-time intervention.

All conclusions pertain to an intrinsic case and neither represent the entire ESPOCH student body nor allow for estimating the prevalence of demotivation within the leveling cohort. Future research could examine comparable trajectories through additional cases, repeated interviews, classroom observation, or longitudinal follow-up, and compare programs with different school-background compositions and varying levels of oral performance demands. Based on the available evidence, interpersonal safety appears to influence whether oral difficulty is experienced as a manageable learning challenge or as a threat to competence and belonging. Teacher education could incorporate this dimension as a distinct and cross-cutting component, alongside analysis of the conditions of oral exposure in leveling programs serving students from diverse school backgrounds.

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