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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**THE STRUGGLE OF AN ESL LEARNER: DELVING INTO LEARNING ORIENTATION,  
 MOTIVATION, AND STRATEGIES.**

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**Abstract**

This paper provides a detailed account of how a non-Tagalog ESL graduating Education student struggled to learn English in Tagalog region. It can be of great significance especially to teachers who complain about their low-achieving students who on the other edge are actually not helped to learn and process information. It tried to determine the subject's intrinsic and extrinsic language learning motivation, her language learning orientation based on language learning theories with Nunan's (2009) orientation model, and the learning strategies that she utilized while learning English courses. The data were gathered through attitudinal questionnaires and series of interviews conducted by the researcher. Analysis revealed that the participant was intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to learn English; nevertheless, she manifested very limited learning strategies for disposal and possessed surface approach to learning, so she would perform badly inside and outside the language classroom. Teachers might have overlooked the student-centeredness of the modern classrooms, hence, forget to look into the reasons of the students' failure. Thus, all content area teachers are reminded to delve into their students' motivation and approaches to learning so as to adjust their motivational strategies as well as their teaching methodologies and strategies for students' improved academic performance.

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**Introduction:**

Mezei (2009) asserts that classroom based qualitative studies on Second Language Learning (SLL) are apparently lacking. Quoting Santha, (2006) and Dornyei (2007), she states that an atypical case in qualitative research is advantageous as the given phenomenon can be investigated more thoroughly, and it can contribute to a more comprehensive picture where the case can be studied from several angles. The present researcher, hence, tried to examine a struggling learner's learning motivation, orientation, and strategies. These variables relate to any students' success or failure in learning a second language, and ESL teachers, in general, ought to understand these interrelated concepts for them to be able to deal with classroom issues that involve such factors. Indeed, Chapman (2006) found a significant positive relationship between students' learning orientation and motivation as well as between their learning orientation and learning strategies.

There are three things to remember about education. The first one is motivation; the second one is motivation; the third one is motivation Bell (cited in Ames, 1992, p.409). Motivation has been identified as an important factor in learning a second or foreign language learning (Dornyei, 2000; Gardner, 1985; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Needless to say, learning becomes more effective when the learner wants to and is ready to learn. One definition, among others, which Webster (2016) gives for the word motivation, is a force or influence that causes one to do something. Aggarao and Sedilla (2014) define the construct as an internal state or condition (i.e., need, desire, or want) that serves to activate or energize behavior and give it direction. Ryan and Deci (2000) add that motivation concerns energy, direction, persistence and equifinality.

Brown (2000) identifies three views of motivation: behavioristic, cognitive, and constructivism. He suggests that upon performing a task, a behavioristic motivated learner anticipates external reward or at least positive reinforcement; cognitively motivated learner performs expends efforts driven by basic human needs; while, a constructivist acts as influenced by his social environment.

One known behavioral theory is the *self-determination theory* (SDT) developed by Deci and his associates that highlights self-regulation. It deals with the students' interest and confidence in their own capacities to learn. To be self-determined means to experience a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one's own actions (Deci, Connell, and Ryan, 1989). The choice in performing an action can be intrinsically or extrinsically driven.

Extrinsic motivation makes learners engage in an activity to obtain an outcome distinct from the activity itself. SDT proposes that there are varied types of extrinsic motivation, and some of which represent active and agentic states. While it is true that students can perform extrinsically motivated actions with resentment, resistance, and disinterest, it is also true that most perform such motivated actions with an attitude of willingness that reflects an inner acceptance of the utility of a task.

Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is the type of motivation that causes one to willingly and voluntarily engage in an activity because it is enjoyable. In other words, the learner is stimulated by his own goals and ambitions. Ryan and Deci (1985) explain that from birth onward, children are active, inquisitive, and playful, displaying a ubiquitous readiness to learn and explore. They do not require extraneous incentives to do so. They claim further that this intrinsic motivation is a critical element in cognitive, social, and physical development because it is through acting on one's inherent interests that one grows in knowledge and skills (p.56).

Nonetheless, Bohlin et al. (2009) suggest that activities can be both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. For instance, a language student may enjoy reading an assigned material because she enjoys reading short stories and because she wants to get good grades. Hence, they suggest (p.267) that it is more important to determine the conditions that affect the degree of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. They further explain that the learner's upbringing and cultural background significantly influence their motivation. For instance, student teachers may be working hard, because they enjoy and appreciate the on-the-job-training/practice teaching at the same time want to get good grades.

The cognitive theories of motivation posit that students' motivation to learn requires changing their cognition. These are their expectations for success, valuing of learning tasks, goals, beliefs about ability, and explanations of success and failure (Bohlin et al., 2009, p.279). The *expectancy-value theory* postulates that students are motivated to study, participate in class, and do homework assignments because of their expectation for success and their reasons for undertaking the task. A student may be motivated to complete a task because of intrinsic value: interest, curiosity, or enjoyment. One may choose to specialize in English because she sees the explicit usefulness of having the command of English in joining co-curricular activities and in landing into a job.

The *goal theory* posits that individuals set goals for different academic and nonacademic pursuits. An academic goal includes both the reason for choosing to do a task and the standard that learners construct to evaluate their performance (Ames, 1992, Pintrich, 2000). Achievement goal oriented individuals aim for competence, so they organize their behavior. This goal oriented behavior is explained well by mastery goals and performance goals.

Ames (1990) explains that a student who is interested in learning new things and developing his skills and ability is mastery-oriented. This student expends the necessary effort to learn something new and confront challenging tasks. A student who wants to demonstrate that s/he has ability or to protect his/her ability when threatened is

performance-oriented. S/he thinks more about his/her ability than about the way of doing the task. His/her strategies, such as memorizing facts or reading or studying only what s/he thinks will be on a test, tend to serve his/her performance only over the short term.

Finally, a learner explains his/her performance thru casual attributions and interpretations of performance based on the past performance and social norms Weiner (1995 in Harvey & Martinko, 2009). This is explained by attribution theory which posits that the specific attribution being made (e.g., luck, effort) is less important than the characteristics of attribution, which are classified along three casual dimensions: locus, stability and controllability. The locus dimension refers to whether the cause of event is perceived as internal or external to the individual. If the learner believes that she fails an examination because she lacks ability, she attributes the failure to an internal cause because ability is internal to her. In contrast, if she believes that she fails an examination because the teacher is incompetent, she attributes the failure to an external cause because teacher incompetence is external to her.

Learning orientation is another variable very much connected with strategies and motivation. Nunan (2009) claims that it as a learner's general approach to learning when s/he is into various situations manipulating activities. It is the general learning process s/he undergoes as s/he deals with tasks developing his/her macro and micro language skills. One's learning orientation describes the type of learner she is. Likewise, the Intentional Learning Orientation Construct (LOC), a multidimensional representation which is assisted by neurosciences to be precise in defining individual's intentional learning domain and learning competencies qualifies learning orientation construct as the learners' distinct disposition, approach, management, and achievement of learning in different environments and through various instructional presentations.

The LOC explains that: 1) *learning independence domain* or *autonomy* refers to locus of control or the individual's desire and ability to take responsibility, make choices, control, manage and improve her own learning, self-assessment and self-motivation; 2) *committed strategic planning and learning effort domain* or the degree that a learner persist and commit deliberately to his/her strategic purpose and effort to accomplish learning and achieve her goals; and 3) *affective learning focus domain* or the learner's effort to learn which is directly effectuated by her will, commitment, intent, and passion for improving, mastering, transforming, and setting and achieving goals, taking risks and meeting challenges impact intentional learning success and influence individual learning differences.

Nunan, (2009) identifies three orientations: 1) *achieving orientation* or *competitive approach* which describe students marked by competitiveness, well organized study methods, and hope for success, and who thus oriented toward doing well in whatever is involved; 2) *reproducing orientation* or *surface approach* to learning which classify students who are not interested in studying for its own sake but only out of concern to pass or gain qualifications, hence generally do badly despite their concern; and 3) *meaning orientation* or *deep approach* to learning which point to students who are interested in the subject itself, intend to make sense and fully learn it. They follow up their own interests even if these are outside the parts of the course assessed.

Another variable which is very closely related to students' learning motivation and orientation is their language learning background and strategies. Chomsky (1965) explains the existence of a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in the human brain; a sort of a blueprint containing the linguistic rules common to all languages in the world forming what the Minimalists call Universal Grammar. The child's learning development through the LAD is in accordance with his capacity to process information and other maturational factors. This LAD atrophies and declines with his age, so he then relies on his other mental organs when he matures into adulthood.

Krashen's (1982) Monitor Theory asserts that language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules and tedious drills. It only requires natural communication and meaningful interactions in the target language, in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the message they convey and understand. His comprehensible input hypothesis is L<sub>2</sub> input beyond the learners' current L<sub>2</sub> competence in terms of its syntactic complexity. This meaningful input reaches the Chomsky's (1965) LAD, if the learner has lower filter, i.e., in an environment conducive to language learning, free from jitters, humiliation, stress and related variables. Those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only get less input, but they will also have a high affective filter. That means, even if they understand the message, the input will not reach the part of the brain which is responsible for language learning.

Mitchel and Myles (2006) acknowledge Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis for normal language learning to take place; however they see it as insufficient for, indeed language production or speaking the second language is very much helpful in learning it and developing L<sub>2</sub> skills. Long (1980) advances his extension of Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis; his interaction hypotheses postulates that when learners engaged with their interlocutors in negotiation of meaning, the input qualitatively change. When learners paraphrase input or query about it, the more it becomes comprehensible and useful. The learners learn to utilize conversational tactics like repetitions, confirmation checks, comprehension checks and/or clarification requests. On the other hand, Swain (1985, 1999) advances output hypothesis and argues that only second language production (i.e., output) really forces the learners to process grammatical learning and drive forward to development of L<sub>2</sub> syntax and morphology.

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory posits the centrality of language as a means of mediation in mental activity. Language learning is viewed as a mediated process, socially mediated by expert learners around the novice one. The novice or beginner learns and performs tasks under the guidance of skilled ones, the teachers in the classrooms. The teachers engage the learners into group activities to do collaborative talk until they are able to use new skills and knowledge. The expert/teacher scaffolds or assists the learner while performing language tasks and prompts him to go thru successive steps of the activity. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) when applied to language learning refers to the collaboration, interaction and communication between students and teachers or advanced and low achieving language learners.

Studies on language learning strategies began in the '70s after the good language learner studies primarily of Rubin (1975) who hypothesized that these strategies are teachable to poor language learners. Seifert (1993) states that strategy is a mental event carried-out by the learners to achieve some desired goals. He observes that in most cases, learning strategies have been demonstrated to enhance performance of students requiring remedial assistance and have been used with students across a wide age range, from as young as eight years to university undergraduates. Nunan (2009) gives related definition, the mental and communicative processes that learners deploy to learn a second language.

Malley and Chamot (1990) categorize language learning strategies into: metacognitive, cognitive and social or affective. Cognitive strategies help learners make and strengthen associations between new and old information (O'Malley and Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990, 1996) and facilitate the mental restructuring of information. Guessing from context, analyzing, reasoning inductively and deductively, taking systematic notes, synthesizing and reorganizing information are cognitive strategies.

Metacognitive strategies help learners manage themselves as learners, their general learning process and the specific learning tasks. These strategies help individuals know themselves better as language learners. Classifying, predicting, taking down notes, concept mapping, inferencing are examples of metacognitive strategies. These types of strategies help learners identify available resources, decide which resources are valuable for a given task, set a study schedule, find a good place to study and establish general goals for language learning, among others. Oxford (1996) enumerates metacognitive strategies that let learners manage language tasks that include, among other techniques: deciding on task-related goals for language learning, paying attention to the task at hand, planning for steps within the language task, reviewing relevant vocabulary or grammar, finding task-relevant materials and resources, deciding which other strategies might be useful and applying them, choosing alternative strategies if those do not work and monitoring language mistakes during task.

Affective strategies include identifying one's feeling and becoming aware of the learning circumstances or task that evoke them. Sharing opinions, feelings and ideas about a topic, self-evaluating of one's learning thinking about the ways he learns, and working with groups are affective strategies. Likewise, social strategies facilitate learning with others and help learners understand the culture of the language they are learning. Examples of social strategies are asking questions for clarification or confirmation, asking for help, learning about social or cultural norms and values and studying together outside the classroom.

**Method:-****The participant:-**

Data from interviews and observations

The participant is a twenty-two-year-old, Bachelor of Secondary in Education, major in English graduating student who was born in Bicol but educated in Laguna, Tagalog region. For the sake of confidentiality, she is given the

pseudonym, Filish, a blend from Filipino and English. She was chosen because the researcher found her atypical compared to her classmates; hers is more interesting linguistic journey than her classmates'.

She was born to Bicolano and Tagalog parents. She obviously struggled in learning English as her second language; Krashen' (1982) Affective Filter explains her constant silence during class discussions and her very soft voice even when reporting. Her classmates claimed, there were times that she was at the bottom, the poorest performer in the ESL class especially in the oral tasks. Outside the ESL classroom, she appears and sounds livelier. Nevertheless, Rubin's (1975) qualification of good language learners subsumes her positive attitude towards the English language and her satisfactory performance in written exams.

Filish is a twenty-two year old young lady who was born in Bunot, Legazpi City, Bicol, and lived there for 9 years. Her parents' languages are Bicol and Tagalog. She could speak both languages when she was young and still in Bicol. She shyly admitted that Bicol is her L<sub>1</sub>; Tagalog is her L<sub>2</sub> and English, her L<sub>3</sub>. In her earlier grades school, her grade school teachers would use the three languages in teaching content areas. Chomsky's (1965) Innateness theory proved her successful learning of English from grade 1 to grade 3.

She was in grade 4 when her family moved to Sta. Cruz Laguna. She admitted, she would always be shy and dumb. She was afraid to talk and participate in the discussion and was very conscious of her Bicolano accent. She told the researcher that she lost her interest in the English language and would not understand all the lessons from grade 4 to grade 6 English. This suggests the possible decline of her LAD Chomsky (1965) and change of her motivation (Dornyei, 2001).

The Affective Filter Hypothesis and socio-cultural theories justify the jitters that overpowered her when required to stand before her classmates and speak the language. So when she had to express herself in English, it was her paralinguage that worked more. She emphasized she did not learn English in her high school years because her secondary ESL teachers would always be out and made them copy lessons on the board. When they were present, they would just tell stories; she attributed it to the fact that she belonged to the second to the bottom class.

She specialized in English in gratitude to her guardian, a born again Christian Pastor who sent her to University for Education course. He would usually accommodate native English speaker visitors from America and Australia and non-native English speaking. This man is also the administrator of an Acceleration school who assured of her employment after her graduation. She struggled from 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> college years. She did not enjoy the lessons and would not understand specially the literature courses.

On the other hand, she disclosed that she was happy that their classes were given opportunities for interactive conversations to share and exchange knowledge Long (1980). She began to have positive attitude towards English in her 4<sup>th</sup> year college.

#### **Instruments:-**

##### **Interviews:-**

In a case study like the present article, there is a need for richer descriptions of the variables related to the areas of investigation. This can be achieved by using qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, think-aloud protocols, learning logs, diaries, or dialogue journals (e.g., Oxford, 1990). Interview was the main instrument used; formal and casual interviews with the participant and her classmates were conducted. The set of questions used in the first and second interviews (Appendix A) was anchored on language acquisition and learning theories; whereas the questions asked in the third interview (Appendix B) were designed after language learning strategies literature and studies of Oxford (1990, 1996; Nunan 1991, 2009); and Dornyei (2006).

##### **Attitudinal questionnaires:-**

As the second step of the survey, a motivational questionnaire or self-report survey was developed. Murcia (2006) states that self-report surveys, observations, interviews, learner journals, dialog journals, think aloud techniques have been used as assessment tools for learners' use of strategies. The questionnaire prepared by the researcher's previous Psycholinguistics class with its leader, Erfe, Jonathan was used in this study. The questionnaire was composed of two sections: 1) items focusing on language use and 2) Likert-type statements concerning intentions, beliefs, values, interests, and attitudes. It reflects the participant's level of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The

attitudinal questionnaire used to describe her learning orientation was the standardized instrument by Nunan (2009 adapted from Gibbs et al., 1989).

#### Procedures:-

After the participant, a struggling ESL learner had been identified the researcher thought about possible determinants of her struggle and came up with the variables: learning motivation, learning orientation and learning strategies. Instruments were then prepared based and anchored on the reviewed readings.

The participant was informed about the interviews to be done. She was requested to be open without reservations and assured of her anonymity, more so of the confidentiality of the data to be gathered from her. She understood the purpose of the interviews and confirmed her cooperation. The interviews were done in three consecutive months: August-October when she would feel relaxed i.e., student council election, intramurals week, and intercampus athletic meet. Each interview was begun with exchanges of greetings and chitchats. The natural flow of conversation was maintained that the participant was cooperative and candid. After the interviews, the subject was requested to answer the attitudinal questionnaire on language learning motivation.

#### Data analysis:-

To get the level of Filish's motivation, her answers to the five items describing the specific type of her motivation were added and divided by five. The verbal interpretation of the answers was based on the Likert scale below:

5 Strongly agree	4.21-5.0	Very high degree
4 Agree	3.41-4.20	High degree
3 Cannot tell	2.61-3.40	Moderate degree
2 Disagree	1.81-2.	Low degree
1 Strongly disagree	1.00-1.80	Very low degree

A week after the accomplishment of the motivational questionnaire, she was requested to answer Nunan's (2009) questionnaire on learning orientation. The figures obtained for learning orientation were tabulated and computed as directed by the framework's proponent.

### Results and Discussion:-

#### Filish's Learning Motivation:-

**Table 1:** Filish's level of Motivation

Items	Score	Description	Interpretation
1. I enjoy the activities involved in learning the English language.	4	Agree	High level of motivation
2. I want to receive good grades, awards and/or other forms of recognition when I excel in English.	4	Agree	High level of motivation
3. I want to deepen my understanding of English: the language itself and the culture i.e., society, literature, media, etc.) in which it is used.	4	Agree	High level of motivation
4. I wish to earn people's approval and/or high regard when I become proficient in English	3	Agree	Moderate Level of motivation
5. I like accomplishing challenging tasks in English that can lead to my mastery of the language.	4	Agree degree	High level of motivation
6. I intend to get better job opportunities that seek at least an adequate level of English proficiency.	4	Agree degree	High level of motivation
7. I wish to gain fulfilment and/or satisfaction from expressing my ability, talent, and/or creativity in the use of English.	4	Agree	High level of motivation
8. I plan to study, work, or live abroad where English is the main medium of communication.	3	Agree	Moderate level of motivation
9. I love the freedom to choose and decide on what I intend to learn about English.	4	Agree	High Level of motivation
10. I desire to strengthen my relationship with my family, peers, teachers, bosses, etc. who expect or encourage me to use English.	5	Agree	Very high Level of motivation

As can be seen from Table 1, Filish consistently marked items numbered 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 which all reflect intrinsic motivation with four (4), verbally interpreted as high level of motivation. Items numbers 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 which reflect extrinsic motivation were marked with (4) high level, (3) moderate level and (5) very high level of motivation. It is interesting to note that she was intrinsically motivated to learn English despite the learning privation she claimed during the interviews.

The figures show that after having been disinterested in her Basic Education English courses for less than eight years, this EFL learner is now intrinsically motivated to learn it. It looks like: 1) she started to enjoy learning the language and 2) develop her desire to enrich her knowledge of the language with the culture to which it is embedded. Despite her past failures to learn English, she became open to doing challenging tasks towards mastery as shown by Item no. 5. This implies that she has set academic achievement goal (mastery of the language) which she might have not done in her early school years.

Mastery goal is necessary in acquiring and developing skills as Bohlin et al. (2009) suggest. Students with mastery goals focus on improving intellectually, acquiring new knowledge even if they experience failures. When Filish was on her fourth year in the university and had gone a lot of challenges and classroom learning tasks, she may have finally reached Maslow's (1943 as cited in Kaur, 2013) *self-actualization*. At that point of her linguistic journey, it can be said from the figures that she was beginning to feel the satisfaction and fulfilment in what she perceived was successful use of the language.

It can be noticed that very near value was obtained from Items: 2,4,6,8,10 which reflect her extrinsic motivation: 4, 3, 4, 3 and 5 which are totalled to 3.8. Like other students, she wanted to get good grades and receive other forms of recognition such as people's high regard. In addition, because she was graduating when this study was conducted, she was thinking too, of landing into a good job.

The expectancy value theory explains her extrinsic motivation which was probably triggered only when she was in the 4<sup>th</sup> year college. It appeared that she had now realized the reasons why she should undertake English classes' tasks and saw the edge of being an English teacher. Her replies to Items 8 and 10 are more interesting. She was not lured by the dollar earnings of overseas teachers of English, but she desired to fortify her relationship with her family and future bosses who encouraged her to learn English.

The last item, "*to strengthen relation with family and people who encourage me to use English*" is an extrinsic motivation which appears to be driven by an intrinsic motivation. It is her guardian who encouraged her to learn English; now that she got mature, the feeling of gratitude towards her guardian who spent for her college education seemed to be the driving force. She wanted to fortify her relationship with him. This shows the crossing of boundaries—the intrinsic motivation became an extrinsic one. The same Item 10 suggests that Filish became positive towards the L<sub>2</sub> community she would be with after her graduation. She wanted to get closer to the people who expected her to learn English (i.e., her guardian and English speaking church members and visitors).

In sum, the overall mean scores, 4 and 3.8, show that she was more intrinsically motivated to learn English though it is very small value gap. A number of scholars and researchers have proven the positive relationship between learning success and motivation. Studies have shown that students who have high motivation are at academic advantage. Filish's desirable level of language motivation could have helped her show better performance.

#### **Filish's Learning Orientation:-**

**Table 2:-** Filish's Learning Orientation

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
2	4	3
3	3	1
2	2	3
2	3	2
4	3	2

2                      2                      2

Totals:

15                      17                      13

Table 2 reflects Filish's learning orientation based on Nunan's (2009) framework. As has been explained in the earlier part, this paper used the exact questionnaire of Nunan adapted from Gibbs et.al (1989). As can be gleaned from Table 2, Filish scored the highest in column B which refers to learners who have *reproducing orientation*, i.e., those who have *surface approach* to learning. Those who have this orientation tend to memorize subject matter only to pass or gain qualification. They are not interested in studying a subject for its own sake, so in spite of their concern to gain qualifications, they generally do badly.

This description of Filish's learning orientation matched with her responses in the interview questions regarding her most used strategies in learning English and her attitude towards the language. She did not like English; she was just asked to take the course Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education major in English by her parents and her guardian who financed her education. She would not understand most lessons, found them boring when not understood, and would just give up if she could not make sense anymore. She would resort to memorization of learning items, even without understanding them when preparing for oral or written examinations.

In summary, the earlier discussion showed that in 4<sup>th</sup> year college of studying English, Filish had high level of intrinsic motivation and moderate level of extrinsic motivation. She was motivated to learn the language and tried to learn it using her limited strategies. The subsequent section, interviews with Filish will show her confession that she would always fail the learning tasks. Filish learning strategies are presented in Subsection 4.1. Scholars argue that motivated individuals want to achieve particular goals, exert efforts to achieve those goals and experience satisfaction in the activities associated with the goals.

### Filish's Learning Strategies:

**Table 4:-** Filish's Repertoire of Learning Strategies

Meta cognitive	Cognitive	Affective/Social
Finding references/resources	1. Memorization of lessons (understood or not for written examinations and oral reports)  2. Structuring information - constructing sentences to improve syntactic knowledge.	1) asking questions 2) asking for help - from classmates when the lesson is difficult and when the teachers' instructions are unclear to her. 3. Using the language with experts - talking with her guardian's native speakers of English visitors

Table 4 summarizes the results of observations and interviews regarding Filish's very limited learning strategies. What the researcher observed matched with Filish's repeated and bold answers to questions on making sense of what she reads, on learning complicated lessons and on extra effort exerted to learn them, and on making sense of boring lessons. The repeated admissions are as follows:

*"If I don't understand the lesson, if the reading text is difficult, I give up."*

*"Sometimes I ignore word that is unfamiliar to me. If I'm curious about what I've been reading I use the dictionary."*

She frankly said *no* when asked about having tried to find ways to make sense of lessons she could not understand. The analysis of her responses to interview questions on learning strategies can be summed up by her own confession:

*"I want to enhance my English language, but I don't know what I'm going to do. My understanding is slow. Hindi ko po maintindihan ang mga long materials."*

Filish recounted that she used to employ the sole metacognitive strategy she was familiar with when she encountered new lexical items. She would look for word meanings only if she was curious about the lessons. When she was not interested in a text she was studying, she would not care to know the word meanings.

She confessed that she would just employ the first cognitive strategy she seemed to have at hand when preparing for short tests. When asked how she would prepare for examination, she answered, *“I memorize with or without understanding”* without hesitation. She would also use such strategy when preparing for oral reports. This probably explains her uncontrolled laughter while reporting before the class; the researcher would sometimes want to flare up when she kept on laughing while doing oral reports.

The second cognitive strategy she was familiar with was organizing or structuring information which she gave as answer to the query on the grammar lessons she enjoyed learning and what she would do to learn them.

*“Sentence construction . . . by constructing sentences. I enjoyed it because I want my English grammar to enhance, but it is really hard for me to construct a sentence . . .”*

*“By constructing sentences, I enjoyed it because I want my English grammar to enhance but it is really hard for me to construct a sentence. Especially doing an essay is difficult for me. I have no idea; I don’t know what I’m going to write.”*

*“It’s complicated for me to do an essay about what the lesson is. I don’t know if my sentence is correct, I’m confused using words to make a sentence. Sometimes, I’ve learned but sometimes I don’t. If I’m interested to the lesson I understand but if not I never understand.”*

When asked about lessons she found boring, how she tried to overcome the boredom and how she tried to understand the lesson, she replied:

*“If I don’t understand the lesson it is boring for me. Especially in Literature, I have many to read that will lose my interest. If the reading text is difficult to understand I give up.”*

Relatively, she admitted she had tried rating her performance on a learning task and felt disappointed about it, she shared:

*“Yes, I always tried to think how well I did on a task. I mean I always failed on a task. Sometimes, I want to give up, I always think I can’t do that, that is it. I’m sad because I always remember my guardian every time I got failed because they have expectations for me.”*

The attribution theory of motivation explains her interpretation of her college poor language performance. She seemed to believe that her failure was not caused by her innate possible low ability and self-esteem but by an external cause–teacher factor. She was frank to attribute her failure to her past English teachers, particularly to her secondary school ESL teachers from 1<sup>st</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> years. It was relieving to know, however that this struggling ESL learner began to have positive attitude toward the language and ELT itself in her college years.

It was good to know that she had developed three affective/social strategies which can all be applied simultaneously or before cognitive strategies to improve her cognitive skills. As Table 3 shows, she was used to asking questions and to seeking help from her peers and classmates whether inside or outside the ESL classrooms.

*“Usually, I don’t understand the lesson, so I always ask my classmates about the lesson, especially when the teacher gives an instruction for what we are going to do is hard for me to understand”*

Another affective/social strategy Filish had been utilizing, especially when she was doing her practice teaching was rehearsal or practicing.

*“When I have the opportunity to have a conversation in our visitors from different countries I’m practicing my English language even if it is not correct.”*

This production of language in a natural setting, her interaction with English speakers outside the classroom would still help her brush up her English language and at the same time develop confidence. Krashen (1982) argues that second language acquisition does not require extensive use of grammatical rules but meaningful interactions and natural communication situations.

It may be concluded that Filish has unconsciously acquired and relied on this limited repertoire of ways of learning from her past ESL teachers who might have deliberately or unconsciously taught her and her classmates such strategies thru classroom language tasks. Teachers are commonly observed to give vocabulary task, usually in the

form of assignments, and to form groups for collaborative learning which allows them to practice the language for the development of communicative competence.

Nevertheless if Filish would be gauged via her learning strategies, she is still an ineffective learner. An effective learner based on Macaro's (2006) framework is one who uses clusters of strategies while wrestling with classroom task i.e., one who combines one strategy with other strategies either simultaneously or in sequence to improve performance

### Conclusion:-

This paper focused on the analysis of a struggling ESL learner's 1) cognitive aspect in terms of her learning orientation and strategies, and 2) affective aspect in terms of her motivation. Results show that she was motivated to learn English at least her college years, after having been demotivated for at least seven years in the past. Nonetheless, results also reflect that she possessed very limited repertoire of language learning strategies at her disposal especially when lessons seemed complicated.

The realization that Filish's past ESL teachers including the researcher herself have overlooked the deliberate teaching of Language Learning Strategies gave the researcher a humbling effect, and so it is suggested that ESL teachers from elementary to college, plan, and monitor their teaching of learning strategies for improved language performance among learners. Indeed, learning strategies expand the teachers' roles, support learning, and can be taught directly or indirectly as implied by Macaro (2006).

A lot of studies have been done to address learners' language problems in reading, speaking, writing and listening. Learning facility related factors, instructional materials and even teaching strategies have been looked into repeatedly. Areas connected with the learner factors such as profile have been investigated too using different subjects in different locales. However, specifically in the researcher's province and in the universities within its vicinity, none or may be very few studies have been conducted regarding learners' strategies as well as teachers' motivational strategies. ESL learners may have particular motivation to learn English; however, some teachers might have been unconsciously demotivating them to learn.

Having been teaching ESL for 25 years, the researcher can say that apart from this study's participant, most Filipino ESL students are indeed motivated to learn the language; teachers, on the other end should monitor their motivational strategies. Dörnyei (1998) advanced more than 100 motivational techniques. The *ten commandments* for motivating language learners Dörnyei (2001b) is a more practical list presented with a comprehensive theoretical framework which teachers may use in reviewing and monitoring their own motivational strategies to spark students' interest in language learning. It is recommended that ESL teachers, neophyte and expert, review their motivational skills and strategies, among others, using Dörnyei's recent frameworks to increase the students' level of learning motivation and success.

Affective factors like: learners' attitudes towards the target language, motivation for learning the language as well as anxiety and willingness to communicate have been found to be co related with success in language learning. This study did not look into anxiety and other negative affect that hinder language learning; hence, it is suggested that those variables as well as socio-cultural factors be considered in the follow-up or related studies on the struggle of ESL learners in all levels: elementary, secondary, and college.

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