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English Language Learning Anxiety and Motivation Among Bangladeshi Secondary and Higher Secondary Students: A PRISMA-Guided Systematic Review

Tanvir Mostafa *

Abstract

This PRISMA-guided systematic review synthesizes accessible scholarly evidence on English language learning anxiety and motivation among Bangladeshi secondary and higher secondary students. The review addresses three questions: how anxiety and motivation have been conceptualized in this learner group; which classroom, assessment and socio-cultural factors are repeatedly reported; and where the strongest gaps remain for future empirical and intervention research. Searches were updated to May 2026 and covered ERIC, Google Scholar-visible records, publisher pages, Bangladeshi journal portals, and backward and forward citation tracing. After deduplication, eligibility screening and quality appraisal, 18 eligible empirical, review or highly relevant contextual sources were synthesized thematically, with supplementary theoretical, methodological and reporting sources used to support interpretation. The synthesis indicates that Bangladeshi learners commonly show strong instrumental motivation because English is associated with examinations, university access, employment, mobility and digital information. However, motivation is often constrained by fear of negative evaluation, speaking anxiety, test anxiety, limited communicative practice, teacher-centred pedagogy, peer ridicule, large classes and rural-urban resource unevenness. A central contribution of the review is that motivation and anxiety should not be treated as mutually exclusive: students may be highly motivated to learn English while remaining silent, risk-averse and anxious in class. The review recommends affect-sensitive teacher education, low-stakes communicative routines, selective feedback, assessment reform that balances written accuracy with communication, and longitudinal classroom-based intervention studies in resource-limited school and college settings.

Keywords: *English learning anxiety; motivation; systematic review; Bangladesh; secondary students; higher secondary students; EFL*

1. Introduction

In Bangladesh, English is a compulsory school subject and a gate-keeping language for higher education, scholarships, digital knowledge, social mobility and employment. This high value gives English a powerful instrumental role, but it also makes the subject emotionally demanding. Many students recognize English as important for their future while simultaneously feeling afraid to speak, make mistakes or be evaluated by teachers and peers. Therefore, any serious account of English learning in Bangladesh needs to examine both motivation and anxiety rather than considering achievement only in terms of curriculum, textbooks or examination results.

* Lecturer, Department of English, Bangladesh Air Force Shaheen College Kurmitola-Bangladesh, (Corresponding author) romen18142@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1425-425X>



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Foreign language anxiety is usually understood as a situation-specific form of tension, worry and apprehension experienced during the learning or use of another language. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) remains influential because it links anxiety with communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Later work has shown that anxiety can affect attention, processing, willingness to communicate and performance, especially when students are required to speak in front of others or respond under examination pressure (Liu & Jackson, 2008; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Teimouri et al., 2019; Zhang, 2019).

Motivation, by contrast, concerns the reasons, goals, effort and persistence that lead learners to engage with a language. Gardner's (1985) socio-educational model distinguishes integrative and instrumental orientations; Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory explains how autonomy, competence and relatedness influence learning; and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System connects motivation with learners' future self-images and learning experiences (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2020). These models are useful in Bangladesh because students may be strongly instrumentally motivated while receiving limited opportunities to use English communicatively.

The Bangladeshi context is particularly important because English is valued, but access to supportive learning conditions is uneven. Previous Bangladesh-focused studies and contextual analyses have reported examination pressure, grammar-oriented instruction, limited speaking practice, shyness, fear of mistakes and rural-urban differences as recurring issues in English language learning (Ahmad, 2005; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Hera & Saha, 2023; Masum, 2016; Rahman et al., 2019; Rahman & Pandian, 2018). However, evidence on anxiety and motivation is dispersed across empirical studies, local journals, theses, review articles and international theoretical literature. A focused synthesis is therefore needed for the secondary and higher secondary stage, where students are preparing for public examinations and future academic transitions.

This review asks three research questions. First, what major themes emerge from the literature on English learning anxiety and motivation among Bangladeshi secondary and higher secondary students? Second, which classroom, assessment and socio-cultural conditions shape these affective experiences? Third, what methodological and pedagogical gaps should guide future research and classroom intervention?

2. Methodology

This study used a PRISMA-informed systematic review design. PRISMA 2020 provides reporting guidance for transparent identification, screening, eligibility assessment and synthesis of evidence (Page et al., 2021a, 2021b), while PRISMA-S supports clearer reporting of literature searches in systematic reviews (Rethlefsen et al., 2021). Because the present topic is located in education and second language learning rather than clinical intervention research, the synthesis was thematic and narrative rather than statistical. No meta-analysis was attempted because the available studies differed substantially in population, level, instruments, design and outcome focus.

The search was updated to May 2026 and covered records from database, publisher and open-access sources. Sources included ERIC, Google Scholar-visible records, publisher



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websites, Bangladeshi journal portals, ResearchGate full texts where bibliographic information could be confirmed, and backward and forward citation tracing from relevant publications. The search covered records from inception to May 2026. During final checking, unverified 2025-2026 citations were not retained as evidence unless bibliographic details and relevance could be established.

The initial search log contained 54 candidate records. After removing duplicates, inaccessible non-scholarly pages and records with insufficient bibliographic information, 40 records remained for title and abstract screening. Thirteen records were excluded because they addressed other levels of education, languages other than English, or affective issues outside the scope of this review. Twenty-seven full texts or detailed abstracts were assessed for eligibility; 18 eligible empirical, review or highly relevant contextual sources were used in the thematic synthesis. Supplementary theoretical, methodological and reporting sources were used to define constructs, justify review procedures and interpret findings.

Inclusion criteria were: English-language scholarly source; relevance to English language learning anxiety, motivation, demotivation or closely related affective variables; identifiable context, method or review scope; and conceptual or empirical relevance to Bangladesh, school-level EFL learning, or transferable second language anxiety and motivation theory. Exclusion criteria were: opinion-only materials, non-scholarly web pages, sources without usable bibliographic details, and records unrelated to English language teaching or the secondary/higher secondary learner group.

Quality appraisal was conducted using a light mixed-evidence approach informed by the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool and CASP principles (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018; Hong et al., 2018). The appraisal considered clarity of aim, appropriateness of design, transparency of sample and instruments, adequacy of analysis, and relevance to the review questions. Because the included literature comprised quantitative, qualitative, mixed-method, review and contextual sources, no single numerical score was imposed. Instead, studies were treated as strong, moderate or limited evidence during synthesis.

Data were extracted into a matrix covering author and year, educational level or context, construct focus, sample or source type, method, key findings and relevance to Bangladeshi secondary or higher secondary English learning. Thematic synthesis proceeded through open coding of repeated factors, clustering into broader categories, and interpretive comparison against anxiety and motivation theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The synthesis prioritized recurring patterns while also noting gaps and areas where evidence remains thin. The review was not registered in PROSPERO because it is an education-focused language learning review, but the search logic, selection process and synthesis approach are reported to support reproducibility.

Table 1. Search Strategy and Reproducibility Details

Element	Final decision used in the review
Review framework	PRISMA 2020-informed review reporting; PRISMA-S-informed search reporting.
Cut-off date	Search and final reference checking updated to May 2026.
Sources searched	ERIC; Google Scholar-visible records; publisher pages; Bangladeshi journal portals; ResearchGate full texts where bibliographic information could be confirmed; backward and forward citation tracing.
Bangladesh-focused string	("English language learning anxiety" OR "foreign language anxiety" OR "communication apprehension" OR



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Element	Final decision used in the review
	"test anxiety" OR "fear of negative evaluation") AND (Bangladesh OR Bangladeshi) AND (secondary OR "higher secondary" OR college OR EFL OR ESL).
Motivation string	("English language motivation" OR "EFL motivation" OR demotivation OR self-efficacy OR "willingness to communicate") AND (Bangladesh OR Bangladeshi) AND (secondary OR "higher secondary" OR college).
International support string	("foreign language anxiety" OR "second language anxiety" OR "language learning motivation") AND ("systematic review" OR meta-analysis OR intervention OR classroom OR assessment) AND (EFL OR ESL).
Inclusion criteria	English-language scholarly source; relevance to English anxiety, motivation, demotivation or close affective variables; identifiable context, method or review scope; Bangladesh relevance or transferable EFL/ESL theory.
Exclusion criteria	Opinion-only materials; non-scholarly pages; weak bibliographic records; unrelated language or learner level; records outside English language teaching.
Synthesis type	Thematic narrative synthesis; no meta-analysis because samples, measures and designs were heterogeneous.

Figure 1. PRISMA-Informed Source Selection Flow

PRISMA-informed identification, screening and inclusion flow

Stage	Records / decision	Number	Reason or note
Identification	Candidate records identified from ERIC, Google Scholar-visible records, publisher pages, Bangladeshi journal portals and citation tracing.	54	Search and reference checking updated to May 2026.
Initial removal	Records removed before screening.	14	Duplicates, inaccessible non-scholarly pages and weak bibliographic records.
Screening	Titles and abstracts screened after initial removal.	40	Records screened for English anxiety, motivation, demotivation and closely related affective variables.
Screening exclusion	Records excluded after title/abstract screening.	13	Wrong learner level, non-English focus, unrelated language issue or affective construct outside the scope.
Eligibility	Full texts or detailed abstracts assessed for eligibility.	27	Assessed for relevance to Bangladesh, secondary/higher secondary learning or transferable EFL/ESL evidence.
Eligibility exclusion	Records excluded after eligibility assessment.	9	Low relevance, insufficient method detail, weak transferability or insufficient bibliographic information.
Included	Core empirical, review or contextual sources included in thematic synthesis.	18	Used as the main evidence base for the six themes.
Supplementary support	Theoretical, methodological and reporting sources used to support interpretation.	12	Used for construct definition, review reporting and contextual interpretation; not counted as primary Bangladesh-focused empirical evidence.

Note. The flow reports the transparent selection logic used for this education-focused systematic review. Unverified recent records identified during checking were not cited as evidence.

3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework treats anxiety and motivation as interacting, context-sensitive constructs. A learner may be strongly motivated to learn English for examinations, employment or higher education, yet still avoid speaking in class because of fear of error, ridicule or public



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correction. This is especially important in exam-driven EFL settings where written accuracy may be practised more frequently than spontaneous communication.

The anxiety component is grounded in Horwitz et al. (1986), MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), and subsequent meta-analytic work showing that foreign language anxiety is not merely general nervousness but a language-learning-specific affective condition. It can appear as communication apprehension, test anxiety, reading anxiety, writing anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. It may reduce attention, limit risk-taking, lower willingness to communicate and encourage avoidance of the target language (Botes et al., 2020; Cheng, 2004; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Saito et al., 1999; Teimouri et al., 2019; Zhang, 2019).

The motivation component is informed by three complementary traditions. Gardner's (1985) model highlights integrative and instrumental orientations. Deci and Ryan (2000) explain how autonomy, competence and relatedness influence sustained engagement, while Ryan and Deci (2020) update the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in educational practice. Dörnyei (2005, 2009) reframes motivation through the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self and L2 learning experience. Together, these theories help explain why many Bangladeshi learners may value English intensely for future success while lacking communicative confidence in everyday classroom interactions.

The framework also recognizes contextual mediators: examination pressure, teacher feedback style, peer reaction, class size, rural-urban resource differences, family expectations, access to English exposure, and the perceived usefulness of English. The central assumption is that anxiety and motivation are not fixed learner traits. They are produced, intensified or reduced through classroom and institutional conditions. Therefore, pedagogical responses should target the learning environment as much as individual learners.

Table 2. Conceptual Link Between Anxiety, Motivation and Context

Construct	Main dimensions	Classroom relevance
Foreign language anxiety	Communication apprehension; test anxiety; fear of negative evaluation; skill-specific anxiety.	Explains silence, avoidance, low confidence and hesitation during speaking or public performance.
Learning motivation	Instrumental orientation; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; ideal L2 self; learning experience.	Explains why learners continue studying English even when they feel anxious or lack confidence.
Contextual mediators	Assessment pressure; teacher correction; peer norms; class size; rural-urban resources; family expectations.	Explains why motivation and anxiety vary across classrooms and why affective support must be institutional, not only individual.

4. Results: Main Themes from the Reviewed Literature

The thematic synthesis identified six interrelated themes. These themes should be interpreted together because anxiety, motivation, assessment and pedagogy are mutually reinforcing in the Bangladeshi school-to-college English learning context.

4.1 Instrumental Motivation is Strong but Narrowly Channelled

The reviewed literature indicates that English learning motivation in Bangladesh is predominantly instrumental. Students commonly associate English with public examinations, university admission, scholarships, employment, international communication and social mobility (Ahmad, 2005; Masum, 2016). This motivation is a strength because learners understand the practical value of English and often invest effort in the subject. However,

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instrumental motivation can become narrow when it is channelled almost exclusively through marks, guidebooks and written examination preparation. In such cases, students may study English regularly but not develop confidence in real-time communicative use.

This pattern does not mean that Bangladeshi learners hold negative attitudes toward English. Rather, English is frequently understood as a means of future opportunity. The pedagogical challenge is to connect this future-oriented motivation with present classroom communication so that students experience English as a usable language, not only an examination subject.

4.2 Speaking Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation are Central

A second recurring theme is the close association between anxiety, oral performance and fear of negative evaluation. Learners may worry about pronunciation, grammar mistakes, teacher correction, peer laughter or comparison with more proficient classmates. Bangladesh-focused classroom anxiety evidence points to similar concerns in rural secondary contexts (Hera & Saha, 2023), and international anxiety research shows that speaking and public performance are among the most anxiety-provoking aspects of second or foreign language learning (Liu & Jackson, 2008; Teimouri et al., 2019; Zhang, 2019).

In Bangladesh, this fear is intensified when students have few low-stakes opportunities to practise speaking before being asked to perform publicly. When oral English is rare in daily classroom routines, a simple speaking task can feel like a high-risk event. Anxiety is therefore not only a learner characteristic; it is also a result of insufficient practice opportunities and unsupportive classroom norms.

4.3 Classroom Ecology Shapes Affective Experience

The classroom environment is a major mediator of both anxiety and motivation. Large classes, teacher-centred instruction, grammar-translation practices, limited group work and accuracy-heavy correction can increase affective pressure. Bangladesh ELT analyses repeatedly identify tensions between communicative goals and exam-oriented classroom practice (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Rahman et al., 2019; Rahman & Pandian, 2018). Learners may know grammar rules but hesitate when asked to use English spontaneously.

Teacher behaviour is especially important. Immediate public correction may improve accuracy in the short term but can also produce embarrassment and silence if repeated without support. Delayed feedback, pair rehearsal, short preparation time, predictable routines and encouragement can reduce the emotional risk of using English (Gregersen, 2003; Young, 1991). The evidence therefore supports a classroom ecology in which mistakes are treated as part of learning rather than as public failure.

4.4 Assessment Washback Reinforces Performance-Oriented Motivation

Assessment strongly shapes English learning culture. Washback theory explains how tests influence teaching and learning priorities (Alderson & Wall, 1993). In Bangladesh, public examinations, coaching, model answers and guidebooks can motivate students to study, but they can also encourage performance-oriented learning. When success is defined mainly by written answers, students may focus on memorized structures and avoid spontaneous language use. This



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can create a situation in which students are motivated to score well but anxious about communicating.

The implication is not that examinations should be ignored. In Bangladesh, high-stakes examinations remain central to educational progression. The problem is imbalance. If classroom English is reduced to exam rehearsal, affective barriers to speaking, listening and interaction remain unaddressed. Assessment practice should therefore include low-stakes communicative tasks that build confidence without undermining preparation for written examinations.

4.5 Motivation and Anxiety Coexist Rather than Cancel Each Other

A central finding of the review is that motivation and anxiety can coexist. A common assumption is that motivated students are confident and anxious students are unmotivated. The reviewed evidence does not support this simple division. Positive emotion research also shows that affective experiences in language learning are not always simple opposites: anxiety may coexist with enjoyment, effort or future-oriented desire (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Many Bangladeshi learners therefore appear motivated but constrained: they understand why English matters, yet they remain silent or risk-averse in class.

This coexistence has important diagnostic value. Teachers should not interpret silence as laziness or lack of interest. Silence may indicate anxiety, lack of rehearsal, fear of peer judgment or uncertainty about acceptable errors. Similarly, high examination effort should not be taken as proof that communicative confidence has developed. Affective support is needed even for students who appear diligent and achievement-oriented.

4.6 Intervention Evidence Remains Limited

The final theme is the shortage of classroom-based intervention evidence in Bangladeshi secondary and higher secondary settings. International research increasingly examines anxiety-reduction strategies, self-efficacy, enjoyment, teacher support and willingness to communicate (Botes et al., 2020; Toyama & Yamazaki, 2021). However, Bangladesh-focused school and college studies remain more often descriptive than intervention-based. Descriptive studies can identify the presence and sources of anxiety, but they cannot show with confidence which classroom practices reduce anxiety over time.

Future work should therefore test feasible interventions in ordinary classrooms: delayed correction, peer-support norms, short pair-speaking routines, formative speaking tasks, teacher feedback training, confidence routines, and low-cost communicative activities that do not depend on expensive language laboratories. This is particularly important for rural and under-resourced schools where students may have fewer opportunities for English exposure outside class.

Table 3. Thematic Synthesis of Anxiety-Motivation Evidence

Theme	Evidence pattern	Implication for Bangladeshi classrooms
Instrumental motivation	Students value English for examinations, higher education, jobs, mobility and access to information.	Use career and academic goals, but connect them with authentic communicative tasks.
Fear of negative evaluation	Learners worry about mistakes, pronunciation, peer judgment and public correction.	Use pair rehearsal, delayed feedback, private correction and no-mocking classroom norms.
Teacher-centred classroom ecology	Large classes, grammar-heavy instruction and limited oral practice restrict confidence.	Build predictable, low-stakes speaking and listening routines into regular lessons.
Assessment washback	High-stakes written examinations shape motivation	Balance exam preparation with formative



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Theme	Evidence pattern	Implication for Bangladeshi classrooms
	and classroom priorities.	communication tasks.
Motivation-anxiety coexistence	Learners may be motivated but silent, diligent but risk-averse.	Do not treat silence as lack of interest; reduce risk and increase practice opportunities.
Limited intervention evidence	Bangladesh-focused research is more descriptive than longitudinal or intervention-based.	Test feasible anxiety-reduction and confidence-building practices in ordinary classrooms.

4.7 Included Evidence Matrix

Table 4 summarizes the main evidence base used in the thematic synthesis. The table separates direct Bangladesh school or college evidence from transferable international evidence so that the scope of inference is clear.

Table 4. Included Evidence Matrix for Thematic Synthesis

Source	Context or evidence type	Main construct	Use in synthesis
Ahmad (2005)	Bangladesh, higher secondary EFL learners; ERIC record.	Motivation	Direct evidence for instrumental motivation and learner goals.
Masum (2016)	Bangladesh, higher secondary students.	Motivation	Direct support for instrumental reasons for learning English.
Hera & Saha (2023)	Bangladesh, rural secondary students in Bauphal, Patuakhali.	English learning anxiety	Direct local support for classroom anxiety, fear of mistakes and evaluation pressure.
Hamid & Baldauf (2008)	Bangladesh ELT policy and classroom context.	CLT and exam-oriented practice	Contextual explanation of the communication-examination tension.
Rahman & Pandian (2018)	Bangladesh ELT reform and CLT implementation.	Classroom practice	Contextual support for unfulfilled communicative expectations.
Rahman et al. (2019)	Bangladesh ELT issues and outcomes.	ELT system	Contextual support for institutional and assessment-related constraints.
Botes et al. (2020)	International meta-analysis of FLCAS and achievement.	Foreign language anxiety	Transferable evidence on anxiety-performance relationships.
Teimouri et al. (2019)	International meta-analysis.	Second language anxiety and achievement	Transferable evidence on the negative association between anxiety and achievement.
Zhang (2019)	International meta-analysis.	Foreign language anxiety and performance	Transferable evidence on performance-related anxiety effects.
Liu & Jackson (2008)	Chinese EFL classroom context.	Unwillingness to communicate and anxiety	Transferable evidence for silence, risk avoidance and willingness to communicate.
Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014)	International positive psychology evidence.	Anxiety and enjoyment	Supports the coexistence of motivation, anxiety and positive affect.
Toyama & Yamazaki (2021)	Systematic review of classroom interventions.	Foreign language anxiety interventions	Supports recommendations for intervention-focused future research.
Young (1991)	Classic pedagogical review.	Low-anxiety classroom	Supports low-risk classroom routines and supportive teacher behaviour.
Gregersen (2003)	Teacher guidance for language-anxious students.	Error, perfectionism and anxiety	Supports selective feedback and non-threatening correction.
Saito et al. (1999)	Skill-specific instrument development.	Reading anxiety	Supports treating anxiety as skill-specific, not only speaking-related.
Cheng (2004)	Writing anxiety scale development.	Writing anxiety	Supports skill-specific anxiety and written-performance pressure.
Alderson & Wall (1993)	Washback theory.	Assessment washback	Explains how examinations shape teaching and learning behaviour.
Ryan & Deci (2020)	Self-determination theory update.	Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation	Supports interpretation of instrumental and autonomous motivation.



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4.8 Quality Appraisal Summary

Because the review combines local empirical studies, international reviews, scale-development work and contextual analyses, the appraisal was not converted into a single score. Instead, sources were judged for relevance, transparency and strength of contribution to the review questions.

Table 5. Quality Appraisal and Evidence Weighting

Evidence group	Representative sources	Judgement	Reason for weighting
Direct Bangladesh higher secondary motivation evidence	Ahmad (2005); Masum (2016)	Moderate	Directly relevant to the target learner level, but mainly descriptive and not longitudinal or intervention-based.
Direct Bangladesh secondary anxiety evidence	Hera & Saha (2023)	Limited to moderate	Directly relevant local anxiety evidence, but geographically narrow and requires cautious generalization.
Bangladesh ELT contextual evidence	Hamid & Baldauf (2008); Rahman & Pandian (2018); Rahman et al. (2019)	Strong contextual	Useful for explaining classroom ecology, policy and assessment-related constraints, although not all are anxiety-specific.
International anxiety meta-analyses and reviews	Botes et al. (2020); Teimouri et al. (2019); Zhang (2019); Toyama & Yamazaki (2021)	Strong transferable	High relevance for anxiety-performance relationships and intervention directions, but not Bangladesh-specific.
Skill-specific and classroom pedagogy sources	Cheng (2004); Gregersen (2003); Saito et al. (1999); Young (1991)	Moderate to strong transferable	Useful for explaining reading, writing, error correction and low-anxiety classroom conditions.
Motivation and affective theory	Gardner (1985); Deci & Ryan (2000); Dörnyei (2005, 2009); Ryan & Deci (2020); Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014)	Strong theoretical	Provides conceptual foundation for interpreting motivation, autonomy and the coexistence of anxiety with positive affect.
Methodological and reporting sources	Braun & Clarke (2006); CASP (2018); Hong et al. (2018); Page et al. (2021a, 2021b); Rethlefsen et al. (2021)	Strong methodological	Supports transparent search reporting, appraisal and thematic synthesis procedures.

5. Discussion

The synthesis suggests that English learning anxiety and motivation among Bangladeshi secondary and higher secondary students should be studied together. Anxiety is not merely an individual weakness, and motivation is not merely an individual desire. Both are produced within a system where English is necessary for advancement, examinations are highly consequential, and communicative practice is inconsistent. A student can therefore be motivated by future opportunity while being anxious about present classroom performance.

Instrumental motivation should be treated as both an asset and a limitation. It is an asset because students and families often recognize English as important for academic and occupational futures. It becomes a limitation when it narrows learning to test preparation and discourages communicative risk-taking. The challenge for teachers is to use instrumental goals as a bridge to meaningful language use. For example, a lesson can prepare students for examination writing while also including brief interview practice, information-gap tasks or oral summaries connected to real academic and workplace situations.

Teacher feedback is a second key issue. Corrective feedback is necessary in language learning, but its timing and manner determine whether it supports or inhibits participation. Public interruption of every mistake may strengthen the belief that English should be used only when



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perfect. Selective correction after an activity, modelling of improved language, peer rehearsal and praise for effort can protect fluency while still supporting accuracy. This balance is essential in classrooms where students already associate English with judgment and high-stakes outcomes.

The rural and under-resourced dimension should not be treated as secondary. Students in rural or less resourced settings may have less access to private tutoring, English media exposure, digital resources and communicative spaces. At the same time, the emotional pressure of public performance may be stronger when English is rarely used outside formal lessons. Policies that assume all schools can implement technology-intensive communicative reforms risk widening inequality. Low-cost, routine-based strategies are therefore important: pair work, read-and-share tasks, short oral practice, supportive peer norms and locally available texts can be implemented even without specialized equipment.

The review also has methodological implications. Much Bangladesh-focused work on anxiety and motivation relies on cross-sectional surveys or small-scale descriptive studies. These designs are useful for mapping problems but less able to explain change over time. Longitudinal and intervention studies are required to examine whether classroom practices actually reduce anxiety, increase willingness to communicate and sustain motivation. Mixed-method designs would be valuable because quantitative scales can show patterns while interviews and classroom observation can explain why students remain silent or confident in specific situations.

Finally, Bangladesh should not be discussed as a single homogeneous English-learning context. English learning experiences may differ by school type, district, gender, family education, teacher availability, class size, internet access and peer culture. Future reviews and empirical studies should therefore avoid overgeneralization and provide clearer contextual description of learner groups. Such specificity would make findings more useful for policy and classroom practice.

6. Implications for Assessment and Policy

The reviewed evidence has direct implications for assessment and policy. Assessment policy influences what teachers prioritize and what students perceive as valuable. If English success is measured mainly through written examinations, students may rationally concentrate on grammar, memorized answers and guided writing while avoiding speaking and listening. This can maintain high instrumental motivation but low communicative confidence. Assessment design should therefore include formative oral and listening components that are low-stakes, predictable and supportive.

Teacher education should also address affective barriers explicitly. Anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and low confidence are not soft or peripheral issues; they directly shape participation, practice and performance. Training programmes should include practical guidance on anxiety-sensitive correction, classroom routines for shy learners, peer-support norms, task sequencing, formative feedback and ways to make English use less socially risky. Teachers need strategies that fit large classes and limited resources rather than idealized communicative conditions that many schools cannot provide.

Policy discussion should avoid deficit language about Bangladeshi learners. The evidence indicates that many students are not disengaged from English. They often know exactly why English matters. The problem is that motivation does not automatically produce communicative



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confidence. Effective policy should therefore protect existing motivation while reducing the classroom conditions that convert English into a source of fear.

7. Pedagogical Recommendations

First, teachers should create frequent low-stakes opportunities to use English before high-stakes performance. One-minute pair discussions, read-and-share activities, guided dialogues, short oral summaries and rehearsed interview answers can give students practice without making every use of English a public test. Small routines are especially realistic in large Bangladeshi classrooms.

Second, correction should be supportive and selective. Teachers do not need to ignore errors, but they should avoid interrupting every sentence. A more effective approach is to observe common errors during the activity, then provide delayed feedback to the whole class or to pairs. This protects fluency while still improving accuracy.

Third, motivation should be extended beyond examination success. Teachers can connect English with authentic tasks such as writing an email, reading a university notice, introducing oneself in an interview, understanding job information, reading online instructions or explaining a familiar local issue. These tasks show students that English is not only a subject to pass but a tool for academic and social participation.

Fourth, teachers should establish explicit peer norms. Many students fear peer laughter more than teacher correction. Rules such as 'mistakes are part of learning' and 'no mocking during English practice' may seem simple, but they can make a practical difference to affective safety. Peer support can be strengthened through pair work, rotating partners and group roles.

Fifth, future classroom interventions should be simple enough to test in ordinary schools and colleges. Researchers should evaluate not only whether students report lower anxiety, but also whether they speak more often, volunteer more, sustain motivation and perform better over time.

8. Limitations and Future Research

This review has limitations. It was based on English-language scholarly sources that were accessible through online searching, publisher pages, journal portals or identifiable bibliographic records. Some Bangla-language reports, unpublished theses, institutional documents and subscription-only studies may have been missed. The included studies also varied in level, method, instrument and learner group, so a meta-analysis was not appropriate.

Another limitation is that Bangladesh-focused evidence remains uneven. Some evidence used for interpretation comes from tertiary or international EFL contexts, while the present review is concerned primarily with secondary and higher secondary learners. Such evidence was used only when it helped interpret affective patterns that plausibly extend to school-to-college English learning. This means the review should be read as a structured synthesis of accessible evidence, not as a complete census of every unpublished or locally circulated study.

Future research should prioritize secondary and higher secondary learners directly. Longitudinal designs could follow anxiety and motivation across grades 9-12 and into the transition to higher education. Intervention studies should test feasible practices such as delayed correction, structured pair work, confidence journals, peer-support rules, formative speaking

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assessment and teacher feedback training. Mixed-method research combining validated scales, classroom observation and student interviews would provide a stronger account of how affective barriers operate in real classrooms. Researchers should also compare rural, urban, public, private, madrasa and college settings to avoid overgeneralized national claims.

9. Conclusion

English learning anxiety and learning motivation are closely connected among Bangladeshi secondary and higher secondary students. Learners often recognize the importance of English for examinations, higher education, employment and social mobility, yet many remain anxious about using English in class. This review shows that the problem is not a simple lack of motivation. Rather, students may be motivated but constrained by fear of negative evaluation, limited oral practice, test pressure, teacher-centred pedagogy and uneven access to resources.

The main contribution of the review is to frame anxiety and motivation as coexisting affective conditions shaped by classroom and institutional environments. For teachers and policy makers, this means that encouraging students to value English is not enough. Learners also need safe, repeated and meaningful opportunities to use English without ridicule or excessive public correction. Affective safety, communicative practice and examination preparation should therefore be treated as complementary parts of English language education in Bangladesh.

Future research should move beyond description toward intervention. The most useful next step is to test practical classroom routines that reduce anxiety, sustain motivation and increase willingness to communicate in ordinary Bangladeshi school and college classrooms.

Declarations

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Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethics approval: Not applicable, as this review used published literature and did not involve human participants or primary data collection.

Data availability: No new dataset was generated. All sources used in the review are listed in the References section.

AI Disclosure Statement:

ChatGPT and Grammarly were used only as language-support tools during the preparation of this manuscript. Their use was limited to language polishing, academic phrasing, grammar checking, consistency improvement, and editorial refinement. These tools were not used to generate empirical data, conduct literature screening independently, select sources, perform analysis, replace scholarly judgment, or determine the findings and conclusions of the study. The final manuscript was reviewed, revised, and approved by the author before submission.

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