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TEACHERS' MOTIVATION IN TEACHING EFL FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) AT SPECIAL SCHOOLS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY IN INDONESIA

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A B S T R A C T

Motivation has been arguably a crucial factor in the language teaching-learning dynamics, including in the language classroom consisting of students with special needs. While there have been several studies reporting teachers' teaching practices for students with special needs, the inquiry on teachers' motivation in the realms of Indonesian special education and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching on the basis of their vision on themselves, consisting of their ideal, ought-to, and feared language teacher selves is still lacking in literature. This study aims to dissect two Indonesian special school teachers' motivation in teaching EFL to students with special educational needs (SEN) as it potentially drives them to develop professionally. This study, then, is executed as a narrative inquiry by amassing data from two Indonesian female special school teachers through interviews. The discoveries exhibit several elements which might motivate Indonesian special school teachers to teach EFL to students with SEN, encompassing (1) inspirations beyond educational environments, (2) adjustments to the curriculum, and (3) misalignments between the nationally administered curriculum and their teaching implementation. The aforementioned elements also accentuate how the diverse needs of students with SEN influence teacher motivation. In light to the inquiry, several recommendations are proposed for further studies.

A R T I C L E   I N F O

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1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation has been arguably a crucial factor in language teaching-learning dynamics (Boo et al., 2015; Lamb, 2017; Li et al., 2024; Papi & Hiver, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2020; Ushioda, 2011). Both teachers' and students' motivation are intertwined; motivated teachers would result in driven students (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) who strive to achieve goals in the target language (Tambunan et al., 2018) as well as engaging educational environments (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). Despite the aforementioned intertwinement and the surge of studies on teacher motivation in recent time (Han & Yin, 2016), the latter's trend on EFL teaching is considered unsatisfactory (Alibakhshi & Nezakatgoo, 2019; Kubanyiova, 2009) compared to those of students (e.g., Fukui & Yashima, 2021). This calls for further studies in light to EFL teacher motivation within contexts that have yet to be entirely explored (Stężycka & Etherington, 2020), which in the context of this study is special education.

In defining motivation, there is likely no consensus due to its complexity (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Generally, motivation has been shaped as an "energy or drive that moves people to do something by nature" (Han & Yin, 2016, p. 3). Sinclair (2008) particularizes motivation as the underpinnings of an individual in (1) deciding action, (2) being willing to maintain the action, and (3) persevering through the action pursuit. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) propose that the majority of scholars handling motivation agree on motivation referring to the navigation and weight of human behavior.

As for teacher motivation, its essence does not stray further from the motivation itself i.e., the drive to teach (Dörnyei, 2001; Stężycka & Etherington, 2020). Watt and Richardson (2007) in their FIT-Choice framework offer a notion that teachers are motivated in three realms, namely intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic. However, the implementation of the aforesaid three realms of motivation showcases paucity of definitional accuracy, which is consistent to the complexity in defining motivation suggested by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011). In the EFL teaching context, they (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) accentuate two scopes of teacher motivation, which comprise the motivation to teach and to continue in the profession. Pourtousi and Ghanizadeh (2020) deem teacher motivation necessary to be studied because of English teachers' numerous hurdles in maintaining their motivation. Teacher motivation is bound to the dimensional human behavior (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014) which causes teachers to envision themselves on what kind of person they want to become. Vision as a force—within EFL teachers in this case—leads Kubanyiova (2009) to develop Possible Selves Theory; the theory is chosen from one of many motivational theories as it supports the aim of this study.

Language teachers are encouraged in Kubanyiova's (2009) Possible Selves Theory to reflect on their identity, desire to become something, and vision on their students' language learning environment (also see Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014), Kubanyiova (2012, 2014), and Rahmati et al. (2018)). The sources of teachers' vision derive from a variety of snapshots on good teaching on the basis of theories, their own intuitions, or role models. Its essentiality lies on create engaging learning environment for language students to attain their goals. In spite of vision being associated with future, dissecting language teachers' vision does not come with their ideals which could be unrealistic, but personally worthwhile vision that is possible to achieve.

In her Possible Selves Theory, Kubanyiova (2009) offers three visions of language teachers, namely (1) ideal language teacher self, (2) ought-to language teacher self, and (3) feared language teacher self. The first vision, ideal language teacher self, encompasses a teacher's visualization of themselves as capable and inspiring, reflecting their aspirations, objectives, and professional identity. Professionalism is when the second vision—ought-to language teacher self—comes. It depicts what they are bound to represent as well as their responsibilities. In another work, Kubanyiova (2012) demonstrates a specific occurrence when a teacher stumbles upon a conflict between their ideal vision and recently discovered knowledge. A teacher either explores the aforementioned conflict or finds comfort by avoiding the knowledge. The last vision, feared language teacher self, portrays negative consequences instilled onto the teacher if the representations and responsibilities earlier mentioned were not to be accomplished.

English language teacher motivation is appealing as there has been a myriad of previous literature revolving around the subject (Basikin, 2020; Kizildag, 2021; Lomi & Mbato, 2021; Roohani & Dayeri, 2019; Tran & Moskovsky, 2022; Trinh & Le, 2021; Upa & Mbato, 2020; Çelen, 2022). Motivation seemingly plays a major role in driving individuals to enter teaching profession (Lomi & Mbato, 2021; Çelen, 2022). There is also evidence that motivation pushes EFL teachers to develop themselves professionally by entering a program (Basikin, 2020) or pursuing graduate studies entrenched on their fear of failure (Trinh & Le, 2021). Beyond a classroom, motivation alongside expectation appears to be affected by institutional culture (Kizildag, 2021). On the other side of motivation, there is demotivation (Tran & Moskovsky, 2022) which could lead to burnout (Roohani & Dayeri, 2019). In a Vietnamese context, Tran and Moskovsky (2022) even revealed the potential of students themselves as teachers' source of demotivation.

Intriguingly, the previous literature emphasizes the under-researched area of special education in EFL teacher motivation. Upa and Mbato (2020) investigated Indonesian EFL teachers' motivation at special schools due to the arduous nature of teaching students with special needs, hereafter abbreviated as SEN (see Demetriou (2020) and Kurniawati et al. (2016) for usage of the term). This demands for more studies in related areas as English language subject is mandatory in Indonesian education (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). The scope of Indonesian special education alone is broad since the types of special school (Sekolah Luar Biasa – SLB) are divided based on students' disabilities, at least consisting of visual impairment (SLB-A), deafness or hearing impairment (SLB-B),

intellectual disabilities (SLB-C), physical disabilities (SLB-D), and social as well as emotional disorders (SLB-E) (Mendiknas, 2008). Despite Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology administering the curriculum for English language in special schools to be bound by students' preparedness instead of age, its implementation is considered laborious nonetheless.

Teaching EFL for students with SEN should come with motivational forces as per its eventual results in students being driven to achieve goals as well as teachers creating engaging language learning environments. In order to facilitate students with SEN by providing an effective learning environment, special school teachers should perceive the urgency to seek further knowledge, comprehension, and skills (UCLES, 2017). Klingner et al. (2014) stress that students with SEN could gain advantages from linguistically and culturally sensitive English teachers in which the latter provide relevant instruction, positively-nuanced classroom, and assistance in learning the language to mention a few. Speaking from Indonesian special education perspectives, Apriliyanti (2023) and Utami et al. (2021) have also highlighted that teaching English to students with SEN is plausibly challenging, thus leading the teachers to overcome the challenges by applying various strategies. Alongside the notion, EFL teachers' potential success in teaching students with SEN renders the necessity to foster EFL teacher motivation in special schools (Upa & Mbato, 2020).

The circumstances around EFL teacher motivation and Indonesian special education explored earlier causes us to see that there is a limited number of studies on Indonesian EFL teachers' motivation in the scope of special education. Upa and Mbato (2020) have attempted on doing so by conducting a descriptive study, though there is still a call for further in-depth studies to explore teacher motivation in under-researched contexts (Stężycka & Etherington, 2020) i.e., Indonesian special education. Therefore, we posit a research question: "How do Indonesian special school teachers become motivated in teaching EFL?" This study dissects EFL teacher motivation in the sphere of Indonesian special education, with its significances being to (1) contribute to relevant literature, (2) expose teachers' reality in the field, and (3) contribute to the improvement of EFL teachers' personal and professional well-beings, particularly for those in Indonesian special schools.

2. METHOD

Given that this study intended on dissecting Indonesian special school teachers' motivation in teaching EFL through the lens of vision, narrative inquiry was utilized to reach the aforementioned aim. Narrative inquiry is deemed suitable for this study due to its capacity to capture participants' teaching careers as lived experiences, which might expand beyond educational scopes (Barkhuizen et al., 2025) such as social and cultural circumstances (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). It aligns to Kubanyiova's (2019) claim that multifaceted insights could provide transdisciplinary pictures on the formations, realms, and navigation of teacher motivation studies. In addition, narratives could become a device to spark teachers' vision (Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014) by looking at their identity and action (White & Ding, 2009).

The type of narrative inquiry executed for this study was biographical case study, in which the narratives for this study were amassed from individuals and re-constructed for further analysis (Barkhuizen et al., 2025). Including more than one participant was our attempt for wider comprehension as well as potential comparison (Barkhuizen, 2022). Two Indonesian female special school teachers, Ayudia and Maryam (pseudonyms), agreed to become the participants of this study. They had been teaching at separate private special schools in West Java Province, with differing backgrounds as well. Despite serving as homeroom teachers, both were chosen to be inquired due to their extensive knowledge on English language as per Richard and Schmidt's (2010) standpoint on teachers' knowledge on teaching practice and subject—English language in this case—as practitioner knowledge. More information on them as per the data collection in 2023 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Demographic information of the participants

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Length of experience in teaching English (Approx.)	Educational background	Type of special school
Ayudia	36	Female	14 years	Graduate/Master	D (physical disabilities)
Maryam	29	Female	8 years	Undergraduate/Bachelor	C (intellectual and developmental disabilities)

Garnering Ayudia and Maryam's narratives was conducted orally i.e., through semi-structured interview with the questions aligning to Kubanyiova's Possible Selves Theory (2009). Semi-structured interview was selected because of the posited questions' open-ended nature, which enables further questions to be suited according to the interviewee(s) and their responses (Cohen et al., 2018) while remaining anchored (Barkhuizen et al., 2025). Open-ended questions also emerge new meanings in the study (Galletta, 2013) and numerous aspects of interest including motivation (Fukui & Yashima, 2021), which is one of the foci in this inquiry. Informed consent had been orally given and audio-recorded (Rolland et al., 2020) as both Ayudia and Maryam were provided explanation of the research conduct as well as its tendency of sensitivity (Cohen et al., 2018) and their right to withdraw anytime (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). The interview session took place once on each participant, twice in total, both in June

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2023. The session was conducted in-person as well as in Indonesian with the participants' utmost comfort, preference, and rapport building in mind. The interview sessions were recorded in their entirety while simultaneously taking notes; the recorded interviews were then listened attentively (Widodo, 2014) and transcribed verbatim as database (Flick, 2014). The data were built as narratives and excerpts with the contents cross-checked by the participants in addition to member-checking.

Subsequently, we administered a theory-driven thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in which Kubanyiova's Possible Selves Theory (2009) served as the themes, namely ideal, ought-to, and feared language selves. Thematic analysis was employed in this regard to comprehend experiences, notions, or demeanors across datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Kiger & Varpio, 2020) as well as discover recapitulated importances (Braun & Clarke, 2020). The analyzing steps comprising (1) data familiarization through careful, repeated reading; (2) code application to distinguish data representing patterns; (3) organization of codes into wider themes; (4) review and refinement of the themes; (5) acquisition of insights into the investigated issues; and (6) exploration of the data.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings
This subsection serves as our delivery of the reconstructed narratives as well as the excerpts entrenched on the data amassed from Ayudia and Maryam. The narratives and excerpts are elaborated in chronological sequences of their teaching journey, beginning from their period of future study program selection and ending in their present teaching praxes at the time of data collection.

Ayudia

> *"I noticed a senior. That time when I was in senior high school, I was in the middle of choosing [where to continue higher education]. I looked up to them because I wanted to be a teacher firstly, but was still confused in determining the subject. My parents advised me to take English [education]. But, because of its uniqueness—I saw the experiences of my upperclasswoman as unique. Many of them were interesting. So, I asked for permission to my parents to pursue a teaching [career at] special schools. Actually, at that time, the motivation wasn't really there, just a choice among others, typical of senior high school students."*

Ayudia, Excerpt 1

Ayudia came from a family that encouraged her to attend an English course since her early childhood. Her parents had been unable to attain a fair level of English proficiency, which caused them to insist for Ayudia to master the language. In addition, her uncle was a teacher at a renowned English language learning institution in the region. She had been enrolled in the institution until her undergraduate years as she had to move due to the distance from her university.

However, her journey on teaching just started when she was in high school, a student in the midst of choosing future career. Her parents initially advised Ayudia to choose English as a means to her future career. She had been quite clueless in determining the study program she would be entering—a phenomenon quite commonly found among senior high school students—until she stumbled upon an upperclasswoman who had been enrolled in Special Education study program at the moment. Their experience, which she perceived as intriguing, sparked her interest in pursuing the same major. She gained fascination towards the major. Based on their encounter, Ayudia found the field to be challenging and not quite widely known. Nonetheless, the unknown prompted her curiosity. Eventually, she asked for permission from her parents. They hesitated due to the minimum amount of information regarding future careers of Special Education major. Moreover, Ayudia had actually been accepted in two universities majoring in English at the time. Despite the initial hesitancy, she was granted the permission to enter Special Education study program.

> *"Perhaps I have to try remembering [the moment that caused to think that teaching in a special school was a fate], but in the early years of [my] teaching career, the experiences were… shocking. [laughing] Actually, they were leaning towards making me distraught."*

Ayudia, Excerpt 2

Ayudia firstly gained experience on teaching students with SEN during her final semester of the undergraduate program. At the time, she had been undergoing teaching practicum (*Praktik Pengalaman Lapangan – PPL*) as one of the requirements to graduate. Ayudia had elected physical disabilities as her specialization. Her choice turned out to be arduous because of her initial discomfort and boredom. Instead, her interest towards students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) elevated because of their unpredictability, which led her to become prepared anytime. Nevertheless, she was able to dissipate her own negative perception over time. Combined with her considerably intensive English learning, Ayudia was gradually renowned in teaching English at the special school she had been working due to a particular event. One time, she had been selected by the school headmaster to accompany foreign students coming from an international non-profit organization for approximately a month. In turn, she was oftentimes asked by other homeroom teachers if she could teach English in their classes.

"I, to be honest, in teaching [English] at a special school, only teach greetings. It could take months, even a semester, going back and forth. It's boring, honestly, but eventually in the classroom I only try to make enjoyable activities. It's not like I don't prioritize English, but the urgency in students with SEN isn't much compared to students in regular schools, except that they are capable of pursuing higher education, and that's rare. … In English lessons, I try to make them relaxed. … Yes, so that the students can follow the trends. If their use of language is uncool, with them having special needs, who's going to be their friend?"

Ayudia, Excerpt 3

Throughout her teaching career, Ayudia possessed this urge in her to create learning activities which could become enjoyable and relaxing while being simultaneously meaningful. She applied repetitive learning materials— even feeling its necessity—because she understood that there were multiple levels of thinking applied in teaching languages to students with SEN, namely teaching learning materials and teaching the materials in the target language. Though, the repetition caused her boredom, which further reinforced the essentiality of learning activities being joyful especially for the students. Also, Ayudia taught her students in relation to greeting. She encouraged her students to greet each other using English outside the classroom. She was concerned with the future of her students, personal and academic, had they been unable to master English even at a novice level.

"Every basic competency [in the curriculum], every class, contains songs [as learning materials], so I certainly am able to include them in the class. If greetings were to be found [in the lesson], inside or outside the classroom, they [her students] who learned [English] with me, greeted [me] in English. I had instructed them beforehand outside [to greet]. … I follow the basic competencies, but simplified. First [the material] is surely about introduction, followed by descriptions on items, people, animals. This means I have to teach [the student] on colors and numbers. [We] revolve around there so they [the students] become able to make a sentence which has colors and numbers. The examples are, like, things in their school. Colors. They could be made into a sentence, not mere words."

Ayudia, Excerpt 4

Ayudia had been following the curriculum, precisely the basic competencies, but simplified to accommodate her students. Its implementation was gradual from vocabulary to sentence building. In line with the step-by-step learning materials, she had been teaching utilizing songs. At the school, there was a singing competition held annually, which included English songs. Afterwards, songs became a means to showcase the students' learning outcomes. She perceived songs—as one form of arts—as pivotal due to arts being a potential for students with SEN to channel their talents.

"Yes, due to demands of the curriculum, we are at loss, like, "This hasn't been taught yet, that hasn't been taught yet." Whereas observing the students, it's okay to not teach [the materials]. They don't need it, but sometimes there's like, "These [materials] have to be taught." In the end it was forced even though they couldn't—but, how? If they [the lessons and outcomes] were to be manipulated, "They can do it!" Sometimes, in special schools, [we are] trapped with the curriculum, maybe, because there's a lot to cover in the curriculum, but the students are slower in achieving [the learning outcomes]."

Ayudia, Excerpt 5

For administrative purposes and meeting the demands of the curriculum, Ayudia used to cover all learning materials in teaching English to her students for administrative purposes. In reality, as they came with multiple types of needs according to their conditions, the students were slower in meeting the expectations in the curriculum. Speech delays and ASD were the source of concerns in the mismatch between the curriculum and the learning implementation. She saw that learning numerous languages at once was an obstacle for the students instead of an aid in enabling their speaking ability. Given that living skills and the ability to read, write, and count were prioritized for her students to master, Ayudia turned out to become less dependent on the curriculum in teaching English. Alternatively, she built an atmosphere in which students could implement English delightfully in the classroom, including listening to songs, watching videos, and playing games.

Maryam

"I came from a family full of educators. I graduated from a major in a university in which its graduates mostly end up working as special school teachers. Originally, I wasn't interested because my family works in educational sectors, thus I thought, "Duh, I want to be anti-mainstream. Different." … When I was confused in applying [for university entrance examinations], there were so many [choices]. I suddenly remembered a childhood friend who is hearing impaired. Maybe because we grew up together, we could read each other's gesture. However, as time passed, her needs increased more and more to speak, to express desire—those required more gestures, or languages in our case. As she had a disability, she became easily worked up. … I didn't know why, I constantly thought of her at the moment. Eh, at the time I was entering university— she had just graduated senior high school—I still asked for things to my parents as I was still a student, but my friend had become an independent person, an athlete. National [level]. … I eventually thought, "How did those children become like that [independent] and how were they taught?""

Maryam, Excerpt 6

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Maryam came from a family mostly consisting of educators. This flickered her desire during senior high school to initially pursue different types of careers. She had been interested in applying for psychology, engineering, and criminology majors, in spite of her passion in learning foreign languages, remarkably English and German. Though, she had not been accepted in the aforementioned study programs. She eventually recognized that educational study programs were her calling, which resulted in her further consideration on the related areas. Her other choice for the school subject turned out unchosen. As her journey in choosing a study program for higher education became increasingly complicated, memories with her hearing-impaired childhood friend came to the forefront of her mind. They had been inclined to communicate in their own gestures, which had started to dissatisfy her friend as the necessity to convey emotions and wants developed gradually into a pressing issue. Despite both of them being in senior high school at the moment, her friend became an independent athlete. This sparked Maryam's curiosity in special education, thus applying for the study program in the finality.

> *"I want—wish so much for this. I once was granted the opportunity for the teacher exchange program, because our school is associated to some universities. At that time, the exchange [program] was to Japan. There, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities—just some of them, not all—they could— the culture is the same in Japan, that they aren't confident in speaking English. That's what I perceived. They talked in English as fluently as they could. For example, they introduced themselves and asked simply, "Where are you come from, Miss?" They became able to talk to people. In my opinion, when children have the ability to speak in foreign languages, let alone them, I gain my confidence when I'm on an adequate level of foreign language proficiency. I don't know. I saw that in those intellectually and developmentally Japanese disabled students. I then had a dream, "Why can't we?" Therefore, I became enthusiastic in teaching [English] to them. … Still, I want to give—persuade students to learn with fun activities. Of course, with a wish to gain their motivation, and for them to feel happy."*

Maryam, Excerpt 7

She obtained her first experience in teaching students with SEN in the final year of her undergraduate program, having the requirement to undergo a teaching practicum program (*PPL – Praktik Pengalaman Lapangan*) at a private special school in order to graduate. This experience expanded her knowledge on assignments and challenges in teaching, from lesson preparation to assessment. Later on, the special school became her workplace. Once, there was an exchange program due to a collaboration between the school with several universities, with her having been granted the opportunity to visit Japan for the program. During her time abroad, she discovered that numerous intellectually and/or developmentally disabled Japanese students were able to converse in English in spite of the complication in learning English, particularly emphasizing the different systems of letters between Japanese and English. With her own confidence based on learning foreign languages and the Japanese students with SEN in mind, Maryam's enthusiasm in teaching English flourished. In result, she wished to provide her students with delightful learning activities to increase their motivation and invoke their contentment. The manifestation of her wish came in the form of her utilization of multiple learning methods she had read beforehand, including role-playing and sociodrama. She thought that a teacher should be able to focus students' attention and not become bored in the process.

> *"Learning [process] in students with intellectual disabilities—they tend to be repetitive, the learning process. Teachers shouldn't be bored [of the learning process]. Therefore, I am grateful that special schools specialized in intellectual and developmental disabilities are provided the right [to choose]. Core competencies and basic competencies in English [subject]—let's say there's ten basic competencies for the seventh grade of junior high school, but if the student were only to achieve three basic competencies in a year, it's okay. What's important is how these three basic competencies become consistent and implemented. However, in reality, teachers are required—so,* Néng *[Amalia], subtly [speaking], "You have to do all ten of them." How? It's contradictory, between regulations and reality, despite several policies. … In [general] elementary schools, [students] are able to do a simple conversation. Sentence [too]. I'm [focused] on vocabulary. I have always hoped the lessons to become a meaningful thing for the children. When [the experiences] become meaningful,* Insya Allah *they may become advantageous and able to be implemented, to help their [the children; students] lives."*

Maryam, Excerpt 8

Alongside other teachers, Maryam had been required to assist the students in attaining all core and basic competencies in the administered curriculum at the time despite the policy to apply basic competencies possibly achieved by the students. She thought of the requirement as questionable because of her students' various needs in reality. In selecting learning materials, Maryam chose to focus on vocabulary on the basis of the distinctive level of difficulty in general schools and special schools. She wished for her English lessons being meaningful and beneficial so the outcomes could aid the students with their lives.

> *"There's nothing I avoid [in teaching English for students with SEN] so far,* Néng *[Amalia]. [I am] still exploring. … Back to the topic, in teaching English, I haven't had many opportunities to deepen [my] knowledge on English education. I have just had the opportunity for special education. It requires a long time and lengthy process to learn a branch of science. … What I'm really curious about is how to strategize a fun lesson for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in elementary, junior high, and*

senior high schools. … Is there any fun strategy, method, model, or medium? For our students, is there any?"

Maryam, Excerpt 9

Maryam felt she lacked opportunities in expanding her knowledge on teaching English to students with SEN. The duration of process in learning the science was her obstacle in achieving so. Therefore, when she met Amalia, she was incredibly curious. She would like to delve further into teaching strategies, methods, models, and media in order to create English delightful lessons for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities from elementary to senior high school level.

Discussion

In this subsection, we focus on unveiling the findings in the previous sub-section and address them alongside previous literature on EFL teacher motivation in the sphere of Indonesian special education. The exploration is to answer the research question we posit in this study comprising, "How do Indonesian EFL special school teachers become motivated in teaching EFL?" with the framework aligning to Kubanyiova's (2009) Possible Selves Theory. Table 2 emphasizes subthemes we obtained from Ayudia and Maryam's narratives. The table is then followed by explorations on the findings. Afterwards, we enclose this sub-section with recommendations to promote the cultivation of motivation in teaching EFL, specifically in an Indonesian special education scope.

Table 1 – The subthemes of motivation discovered in the narratives

Aspects of Possible Selves Theory	Pasrticipants	
	Ayudia	Maryam
Ideal Language Teacher Self	• Familial influence • Interest in special education • Extensive duration of English language learning • Provision of enjoyment through delightful learning activities	• Influences of friends and a family • Fallback career • Passion in English language • Provision of enjoyment through delightful learning activities
Ought-to Language Teacher Self	Adjustments to currently administered curriculum	Adjustments to currently administered curriculum
Feared Language Teacher Self	Mismatch between expectations in the curriculum and reality	• Lack of opportunities to deepen knowledge related to EFL teaching in special education • Mismatch between expectations in the curriculum and reality

Ideal Language Teacher Self

In regard to the first vision, Ideal Language Teacher Self, both Ayudia and Maryam possessed several similarities as well as discrepancies between them. As their motivation to teach EFL at special school was antecedent to their motivation to enter special education, the two female special school teachers were influenced by their surroundings, Ayudia by her family as well as an upperclasswoman in her senior high school and Maryam by her family in addition to a hearing-impaired childhood friend of hers. Both of them coming from families with educational background is consistent to other Indonesian EFL teachers working at special schools whose motivation was influenced by family as depicted by Upa and Mbato (2020) as well as EFL teachers in another context (Lomi & Mbato, 2021). Although there was a familial influence to an extent, special education fascinated Ayudia nonetheless, indicating personal interest in teaching as English language teacher motivation as per the discovery by Rahmati *et al.* (2018). Their respective encounters—Ayudia with an upperclasswoman and Maryam with a friend—signifies past encounters as what brought them to the teaching profession. Remembering these encounters deems essential for teachers to recall who they are and even reignite their drive as suggested by Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014).

Moreover, both teachers exhibited relationships with English language learning prior to entering the world of teaching. Ayudia had learned English extensively in her non-formal education, even extending to her undergraduate school years, and Maryam had showcased passion with English through school extracurricular activities and even past experience on being abroad. This further aligns to Dörnyei and Kubanyiova's (2014) proposition that love of language and strongly imminent L2 self could serve evidence as an initial force for teaching language. Of particular interest, Maryam entered the area of special education not as her first choice, which corroborates Lomi and Mbato's (2021) revelation on several EFL teachers entering a teaching career due to rejection from their first choice. Despite

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the potential of teaching career being the first choice, Kubanyiova (2012) explores that in most cases, the choice is either driven by subjects or issues related to self-esteem.

Gradually, Ayudia and Maryam entered the teaching profession. Both taught English with a notion in mind to provide delightful yet still worthwhile learning activities on the basis of their students whose needs were diverse and the students' preparation to become independent. Their notion was also brought to the spotlight by prior studies, that English language teachers are likely motivated by altruistic motives such as to prepare students with SEN in entering society (Upa & Mbato, 2020), shape students' future (Çelen, 2022), contribute to society (Lomi & Mbato, 2021) as well as become responsible and passionate for community (Kizildag, 2021). Albeit referring to this particular motivation as intrinsic, Kubanyiova (2012) points out imprinting positive impacts on young people as one of the most referenced crucial underpinnings when someone embarks on their teaching profession. Safe to say, Ayudia and Maryam were in tune to their vision of ideal language teacher selves as underscored by their engagement (Kubanyiova, 2009; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014) with what drove them to the profession, their background, and what they desired to bring into their EFL teaching.

Ought-to Language Teacher Self

Language teachers' engagement to their ought-to language teacher self potentially could shed light not only to the compellation for teachers in acting on what is right, but also to demonstrate insights on their language teaching process, in which there appears to be discrepancies among the portrayals of who teachers would ideally want to become, who they are supposed to become, and who they fear might become (Kubanyiova, 2012). These discrepancies potentially derive from contextual demands and expectations. In this case, both Ayudia and Maryam were implied to share an incredibly similar vision on their ought-to language teacher selves i.e., a teacher who adjusts curriculum implementation on their teaching praxis. We regard its implication due to their exploration on their own experiences. This adheres to the findings by Rahmati *et al.* (2018) on Iranian L2 teaching experience as an element of their vision.

As their students were diverse in relation to needs deriving from disabilities, they simplified their English teaching and learning activities to cater their students until they were able to accomplish demands issued by the curriculum. Their attempt in doing so was by focusing on teaching English vocabulary. Additionally, they utilized various assignments to showcase their students' learning results while simultaneously sustaining enjoyable teaching-learning implementation, such as greetings and songs in Ayudia's case and role-playing as well as sociodrama in Maryam's. Such efforts seemingly contradict Tran and Moskovsky's (2022) finding that teaching students with limited level of English proficiency could be "often demoralizing" (p. 1536), though their context leaned more towards general education. Ayudia and Maryam's certain degree of freedom to adjust teaching-learning activities also appears to echo Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2011) proposition that imposed teaching methods could become detrimental to L2 teachers' motivation. In tandem with that, Kubanyiova (2009) revealed that teachers' fear on adopting new approaches to their teaching could result in failure to satisfy students, which causes development to be challenging. In a similar vein, Roohani and Dayeri (2019) reported that the lack of teachers' autonomy derived from the restriction to create decisions on teaching could even lead to teachers' burnout.

In the realm of special education, Ayudia and Maryam's narratives highlighted the difference of learning English between general and special education contexts as per Maryam's remark in Excerpt 8, "In [general] elementary schools, students are able to do a simple conversation," as well as Ayudia's in Excerpt 3, which said, "It's not like I don't prioritize English, but the urgency in students with SEN isn't much compared to students in general schools, except when they are capable of pursuing higher education, and that's rare." Those remarks indicated the distinguished nature of teaching EFL to students with SEN as underscored by previous studies (Apriliyanti, 2023; Upa & Mbato, 2020). Apriliyanti (2023) brought the issue into the limelight that EFL teachers should possess extended amount of spirit, patience, and stability in emotion. Patience as one aspect necessary in EFL teaching to students with SEN was also referred to by Upa and Mbato (2020).

Furthermore, two captivating points emerged from Ayudia's and Maryam's narratives in how they implemented the curriculum as well as adjusted their teaching according to their students' needs. Firstly, they emphasized vocabulary in their teaching praxis. This adheres to other Indonesian special school teachers' focus on English vocabulary (Apriliyanti, 2023; Upa & Mbato, 2020; Utami et al., 2021). Ayudia's mention of names of animals was consistent to the basic English learning materials proposed by Upa and Mbato (2020). They further claimed that teachers' choice of teaching strategies in EFL teaching to students with SEN potentially influence the latter's success in learning. Secondly, they accentuated repetition and/or drilling in teaching English, especially in teaching vocabulary. Other relevant studies also pinpoint Indonesian special school teachers' inclination towards such a method (Apriliyanti, 2023; Upa & Mbato, 2020; Utami et al., 2021). Given that both teachers had been teaching students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, they corroborate the uncovering by Utami *et al.* (2021) that repetition and drilling method were typically utilized in teaching English to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Briefly put, Ayudia and Maryam were in touch to an extent with the vision of their ought-to language teacher self, which is ingrained by contextual demands as well as expectations (Kubanyiova, 2009) i.e, the nationally administered curriculum, their students' various needs, and an aim for the students to obtain several competencies issued by the curriculum.

Feared Language Teacher Self

With reference to their exploration on feared language teacher self, Ayudia and Maryam seemed to lack clarity in envisioning what is constituted as a feared language teacher self, encapsulating a depiction of what they would become if their perceived responsibilities were to be unfulfilled (Kubanyiova, 2012). This stems from Ayudia's feeling of being "trapped with the curriculum" sometimes in Excerpt 5. Maryam's answer, on the other hand, was considerably intriguing, as she acknowledged her lack of feared language self in Excerpt 9, "There's nothing I avoid [in teaching English to students with SEN]. [I am] still exploring." Despite their lack of vision in this regard, it does not necessarily imply a lack of motivation. Kubanyiova (2012) suggested that not all of the possible selves are necessarily present to every teacher. To boot, Rahmati *et al.* (2018) disclosed in their study that several L2 teachers might leave their position despite being visionary. The contradictory situation could also occur in which considerably non-visionary L2 teachers might foster their interest in the profession.

One prominent determinant in addressing Ayudia's and Maryam's feared language teacher self is that both of them revolved around the mismatch between the educational demands—specifically from the curriculum—and the reality. Initially, Ayudia had been quite dependent on the curriculum, which led to the occasional reinforcement of learning materials despite her students' capability not being on par. In Maryam's case, the fulfillment of the curriculum was deemed not entirely mandatory. Both teachers expressed, "How?" This signifies their operationalization of feared language teacher selves. Kubanyiova (2009) suggested that L2 teachers operationalized their vision of feared language teacher selves based on perceivably heavy contextual pressures or compliance to local expectation, which could be the demands of curriculum in this inquiry. Ayudia and Maryam's *how?* could also serve evidence for English language teachers' lack of autonomy being a potential source of their burnout as presented by Roohani and Dayeri (2019). Additionally, they reported that L2 policymakers' unsupportive decisions could lead to teachers' detachment from the society.

Both teachers' address on the mismatch between the demands of curriculum and their reality hints implementations of curriculum as a possible dispute in EFL teaching within the Indonesian special education scene. Utami *et al.* (2021) reviewed that insufficiently administered curriculum and materials could contribute to EFL teachers' hurdles in teaching students with SEN. The address on meeting the curriculum demands resonates Upa and Mbato's (2020) study on the motivation of Indonesian EFL teachers at special schools. They reported that, in achieving learning objectives, teachers should bear students' needs in mind when they prepare learning materials. As Ayudia and Maryam's respective schools had been in the midst of curriculum transition to Kurikulum Merdeka (Kemendikbudristek, 2022) during the research conduct, we call for further investigation on Indonesian curriculum for English language subject at special schools and its challenging implementation.

Another discovery in this study we consider worth mentioning is Maryam's drive to seek for knowledge on EFL teaching in special education contexts. Given that she had not obtain many opportunities to learn more on the matter, she disclosed her curiosity to Amalia the moment she was able to interact with a student majoring in English Language Education. This might indicate that her vision did not completely center around feared language teacher self, which appeared to contradict Kubanyiova's (2009) report that language teachers whose vision was dominated by their feared language teacher selves likely to lack engagement with new approaches to teaching. Trinh and Le (2021) uncovered shortage of knowledge as a fear for EFL teachers particularly in graduate study pursuit. On the other hand, Maryam's curiosity supported the unveiling by Rahmati *et al.* (2018) that the lack of vividity in a particular vision did not necessarily cause a language teacher to become less motivated. Several teachers could nurture their interest in EFL teaching despite their scarcity of vision. Maryam's curiosity appears to contradict student-related aspects as demotivation in Tran and Moskovsky's (2022) findings. While they discussed that the majority of their participants were negatively affected by their students—which caused a decrease in their pursuit, creativity, and engagement—our finding implies a different trend in which student-related aspects such as their special needs could drive teachers to cultivate their thirst for knowledge in EFL teaching.

Implications

Contingent on the discussion above as well as Maryam's questions, "Is there any fun strategy, method, model, or medium? For our students, is there any?" we recommend several implications to promote more motivating journeys in teaching EFL, specifically in an Indonesian special education scope. With respect to the visions of EFL teachers at special schools, they can reflect on what bring them to the profession and what they desire to achieve as a teacher. The context can broaden to their institutional and educational responsibilities, their students' various needs, and the negative consequences possibly brought if the aforementioned aspects were not to be borne in mind. This potentially results in improved teaching praxes and an increase on the effectivity as well as the accomplishment of students' learning.

For lecturers and policymakers, they can provide more trainings, courses, and activities revolving around English teaching to students with SEN. This is to gain insight on suitable teaching methods, materials, and strategies in EFL teaching. Thus, those wishing to teach students with SEN can prepare themselves in a better manner. In a broader sense, they can evaluate and/or design EFL curricula catering to students with SEN whose needs and disabilities are divergent. Although Kubanyiova (2009) discovered that several EFL teachers' vision did not quite increase despite having undergone a motivational program, we recommend implementations of teacher professional development nonetheless as per Basikin's (2020) study on a teacher professional development

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program. Those may function as endeavors in maintaining EFL teachers' motivation and preventing burnout as evidenced by Roohani and Dayeri (2019) on EFL teachers' lacks of autonomy and support from policymakers.

4. CONCLUSION

Motivations demonstrated in two Indonesian EFL teachers of two private special schools contribute to their images of a language teacher self they would like to become regardless of circumstances, corroborating their occupation, and relevant to the issues that would possibly happen if they were not to achieve their desired depictions. Numerous motivations discovered in shaping these images are interest in teaching, familial influence, experience in learning English, engagement with their teaching values, concern on their students' condition, and practical issues in the field. Several other distinctive aspects are disclosed as well, being inspiration outside the educational environment, curiosity towards special education, and mismatch between the curriculum and teaching implementations. This study has contributed to concerned studies, exposed teachers' reality in the field, and contributed to the improvement of teachers' personal and professional well-beings. A recommendation therefore is proposed for future researchers to conduct relevant studies more thorough and with a longer duration of data collection.

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