

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

This section presents the findings obtained from both quantitative and qualitative data. The findings are organized based on the two research focuses of the study. Each section consists of questionnaire findings and interview findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of learner's experiences and responses toward the feeling of falling behind in language learning. The questionnaire comprised 28 items organized according to the two research questions. Items 1 to 12 focused on learners' experiences of feeling left behind in language learning to address the first research question. Meanwhile, Items 13 to 28 examined how these experiences influenced learners' motivation and the learning strategies they adopted, thereby addressing the second research question. This organization ensured that each section of the questionnaire collected data relevant to the specific objectives of the study and facilitated a systematic analysis of the research findings.

Prior to analyzing the questionnaire responses, a reliability test was conducted to examine the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's Alpha through SPSS as below.

Figure 4.1 Reliability Statistics**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.794	28

The result showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.794, indicating that the questionnaire had acceptable internal consistency and could be considered a reliable instrument for data collection. This result suggests that the questionnaire items were sufficiently consistent in measuring the constructs investigated in this study. Therefore, the questionnaire was deemed appropriate for further analysis.

1. Language Learner's Experiences of Falling Behind in Understanding Certain Aspects of Language Compared to Their Peers

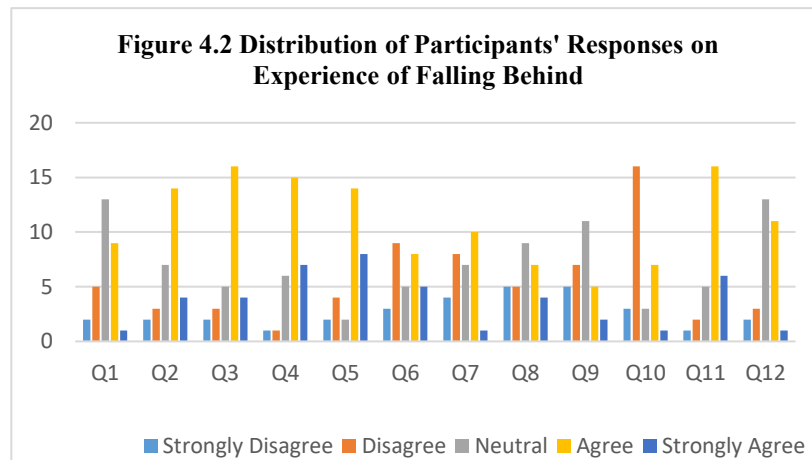
a. Questionnaire Findings

The questionnaire findings indicate that experiences of falling behind in language learning were relatively common among the participants. Several items related to social comparison, emotional responses, and perceived language difficulties obtained moderate to high mean scores. The questionnaire items below were developed to collect data related to research question 1, employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Higher

mean scores indicate stronger agreement with each statement. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistic of Learner's Experiences of Falling Behind

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	30	1	5	3.07	.944
Q2	30	1	5	3.50	1.075
Q3	30	1	5	3.57	1.073
Q4	30	1	5	3.87	.937
Q5	30	1	5	3.73	1.202
Q6	30	1	5	3.10	1.296
Q7	30	1	5	2.87	1.137
Q8	30	1	5	3.00	1.287
Q9	30	1	5	2.73	1.143
Q10	30	1	5	2.57	1.073
Q11	30	1	5	3.80	.961
Q12	30	1	5	3.20	.925



Participants reported a moderate tendency to feel left behind compared to their friends in language learning (Q1, $M = 3.07$). They also tended to compare their language abilities with their peers (Q2, $M = 3.50$) and experienced anxiety when classmates understood the material faster than they did (Q3, $M = 3.57$). In addition, participants reported feelings of insecurity when they did not understand certain aspects of the language (Q4, $M = 3.87$), which was one of the highest scores within this category. Similarly, participants indicated that they often felt nervous when speaking English because they were afraid of making mistakes (Q5, $M = 3.73$) and experienced frustration when others were more fluent than they were (Q6, $M = 3.10$).

Regarding classroom participation, participants reported a moderate level of pressure when they were asked to answer questions in English during class (Q8, $M = 3.00$). However, items related to classroom disengagement received comparatively lower scores. For example, staying silent during class discussions because of feeling less capable obtained a mean score of 2.87 (Q7), while difficulties in understanding teacher instructions compared to peers scored 2.73 (Q9). Participants also reported feeling somewhat slower in learning new vocabulary than their classmates (Q10, $M = 2.57$).

In terms of specific language difficulties, participants indicated that they often found it difficult to remember grammar rules (Q11, $M =$

3.80), which was among the higher scores in this section. They also reported feeling behind in certain language skills such as listening, speaking, or grammar (Q12, $M = 3.20$), suggesting that perceived deficiencies were not limited to a single aspect of language learning.

Overall, these findings suggest that although learners experience various emotional and cognitive challenges associated with falling behind, these feelings do not necessarily lead to withdrawal from classroom participation. Instead, learners appear to experience moderate levels of emotional discomfort while remaining engaged in the learning process and continuing to participate in language learning activities.

b. Interview Findings

The interview findings further revealed that all participants had experienced feelings of falling behind at different stages of their English learning journey. These experiences were primarily associated with social comparison, differences in prior educational backgrounds, and classroom performance demands.

The findings revealed that all participants had experienced feelings of falling behind in learning English at different stages of their educational journey. These experiences were primarily associated with social comparison, differences in prior educational backgrounds,

classroom performance demands, and varying levels of language exposure before entering university.

Several participants reported comparing themselves to peers who were perceived as more proficient. One participant explained that they often felt left behind because their peers were able to manage multiple activities while still performing well academically. As the participant stated, *“My other friends are still actively participating in the organization, some even become the head of the organization. But they can complete project tasks faster than me, whereas my activities are less but I am slower than them”* (P1). Similarly, another participant highlighted differences in educational backgrounds, explaining that *“Most of my friends already have an English background from elementary to high school and some even take courses”* (P4). These findings suggest that previous exposure to English contributed to learners’ perceptions of being left behind.

Participants also identified specific language skills in which they felt most left behind. Speaking and writing were the most frequently mentioned areas of difficulty because these skills required immediate language production and a solid understanding of grammar. One participant explained that they often compared their speaking ability to that of their peers after observing how fluent they were during speaking-based projects, stating that *“I saw the results of my friend’s project*

where they were the speakers, they were very fluent in English. From there, I often compared with my speaking skills at that time” (P2).

Likewise, another participant reported that grammar-related activities often highlighted their limitations because they could not immediately recall appropriate vocabulary or verb forms during classroom activities.

Various emotional responses also emerged from these experiences. Feelings of sadness, insecurity, anxiety, nervousness, and self-doubt were commonly reported by the participants. One participant admitted feeling emotionally challenged, explaining that *“Obviously I am challenged to equate my abilities with them, but sometimes I feel sad about myself, ashamed of myself for feeling lacking in learning” (P1).* Similarly, another participant expressed feelings of insecurity, stating that *“I was immediately insecure. I’m feeling embarrassed, embarrassed, anxious” (P2).* In contrast, another participant tended to interpret these experiences as a form of self-evaluation rather than failure, explaining that *“It’s sad, but it’s more for an evaluation.” (P3).*

Overall, the interview findings suggest that feelings of falling behind are influenced not only by actual language competence but also by learners’ subjective perceptions, social comparison processes, prior educational experiences, and classroom expectations. These findings indicate that the experience of falling behind is multidimensional and extends beyond purely linguistic factors.

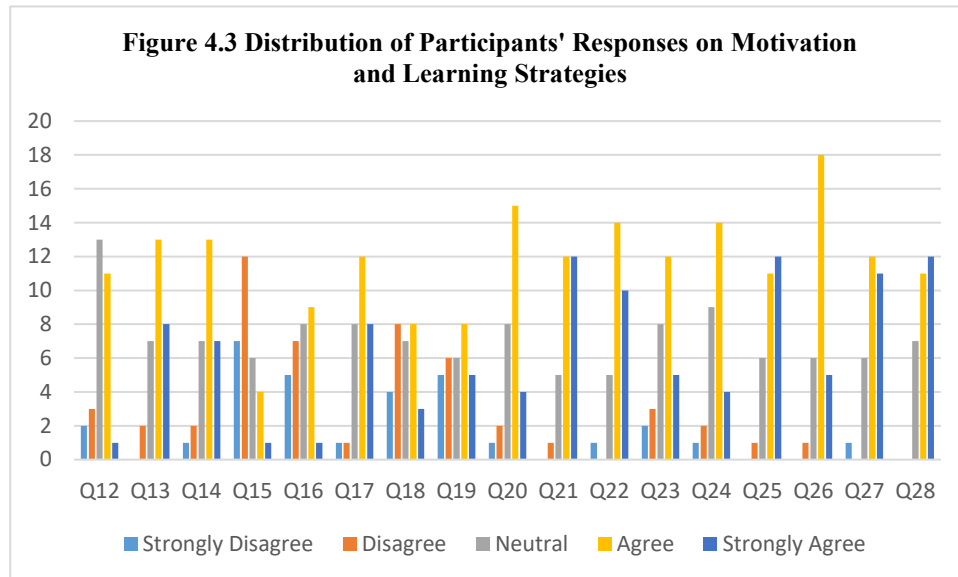
2. The Feeling of Falling Behind Affects Learner's Motivation and the Strategies They Use in Language Learning

a. Questionnaire Findings

The questionnaire findings indicate that feelings of falling behind influence both learners' motivation and the learning strategies they adopt in language learning. Overall, participants demonstrated positive motivational tendencies and active learning behaviors rather than disengagement from the learning process. Several items related to help-seeking behavior, confidence development, the use of additional learning resources, and collaborative learning obtained relatively high mean scores. The questionnaire items below were designed to collect data for the second research question, employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Higher mean scores indicate stronger agreement with each statement. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics Data of Learner's Motivation and Learning Strategies

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q13	30	2	5	3.90	.885
Q14	30	1	5	3.77	1.006
Q15	30	1	5	2.33	1.093
Q16	30	1	5	2.80	1.157
Q17	30	1	5	3.83	.986
Q18	30	1	5	2.93	1.230
Q19	30	1	5	3.07	1.363
Q20	30	1	5	3.63	.928
Q21	30	2	5	4.17	.834
Q22	30	1	5	4.07	.907
Q23	30	1	5	3.50	1.106
Q24	30	1	5	3.60	.932
Q25	30	2	5	4.13	.860
Q26	30	2	5	3.90	.712
Q27	30	1	5	4.07	.944
Q28	30	3	5	4.17	.791
Valid N (listwise)	30				



1) Learners' Motivation

The questionnaire findings indicate that feelings of falling behind generally encouraged learners to maintain positive motivation rather than withdraw from the learning process. Participants reported that they became more motivated to study harder when they realized they were falling behind (Q13, $M = 3.90$) and tended to study more seriously to improve their abilities (Q14, $M = 3.77$). They also indicated that seeing their classmates make progress served as a source of motivation (Q17, $M = 3.83$). In contrast, negative motivational responses received comparatively lower mean scores.

Participants reported relatively low levels of losing interest in learning when they felt slower than others (Q15, $M = 2.33$), giving up when they could not keep up with lessons (Q16, $M = 2.80$), feeling

discouraged when they did not see improvement in their language skills (Q18, $M = 2.93$), and delaying study because they believed they could not complete assignments (Q19, $M = 3.07$). These findings suggest that although learners experienced moments of discouragement, they generally maintained their motivation and continued their learning efforts.

2) Learning Strategies

The questionnaire findings also indicate that participants employed various learning strategies to cope with feelings of falling behind and improve their language abilities.

Regarding learning strategies, participants demonstrated a strong tendency to adopt various approaches to improve their language abilities. They agreed that they used different learning strategies to catch up with their classmates (Q20, $M = 3.63$). The highest scores were found in help-seeking behavior (Q21, $M = 4.17$), confidence development after catching up with lessons (Q28, $M = 4.17$), preference for interactive learning methods (Q25, $M = 4.13$), the use of additional learning resources (Q22, $M = 4.07$), and comfort in learning within small groups (Q27, $M = 4.07$). Participants also reported practicing more when they felt weak in certain language skills (Q23, $M = 3.50$), trying new learning techniques such as note-taking, self-talk, or flashcards to improve their understanding (Q24, $M =$

3.60), and studying independently to enhance their language abilities (Q26, M = 3.90).

These findings indicate that learners tended to respond to feelings of falling behind in constructive ways rather than disengaging from language learning. Instead of giving up, they maintained their motivation, sought assistance from peers and teachers, utilized additional learning resources, practiced independently, experimented with various learning techniques, and developed greater confidence as they gradually caught up with the learning process.

b. Interview Findings

The interview findings revealed that feelings of falling behind influenced learners' motivation, the learning environment they perceived, and the learning strategies they employed. These themes are presented in the following sections.

1) Learners' Motivation

The interview findings revealed that the feeling of falling behind influenced both learner's motivation and the strategies they used in language learning. Although participants experienced negative emotions such as sadness, insecurity, self-doubt, and reduced confidence, these feelings generally did not lead them to disengage

from learning. Instead, most participants transformed these experiences into motivation to improve their language abilities. For example, one participant explained that despite feeling sad, the experience encouraged them to continue learning, stating, “*There is still motivation. Instead, I want to catch up so as not to be left behind. Sometimes I feel sad but I still want to learn.*” (P1). Similarly, another participant stated, “*If you fall behind, it means you have to put more effort into learning. So don’t stop, instead, learn again*” (P2). Another participant also mentioned that observing peers’ progress could become a source of encouragement, saying, “*Sometimes it makes me more motivated. Because seeing friends can also be an encouragement*” (P3). Meanwhile, one participant reported experiencing a temporary decline in motivation but eventually used the experience as a source of self-improvement, stating, “*Initially, the motivation dropped. But it has been used as a motivation to grow*” (P4).

Although participants occasionally questioned their abilities and felt emotionally exhausted, none of them reported completely giving up on learning English. One participant explained, “*I once doubted my own abilities. But not to the point of giving up*” (P1). Similarly, another participant stated, “*speaking of giving up, I might think about it almost every day. But it must continue.*” (P2). Other participants also

emphasized that they only experienced temporary fatigue rather than complete disengagement from learning.

2) Learning Environment

Participants also highlighted the importance of a supportive learning environment in maintaining their motivation. They emphasized that peers and teachers significantly influenced their confidence and learning engagement. One participant explained, *“If friends are supportive, usually become more confident. If the lecturer gives you the opportunity to try, it becomes more comfortable”* (P2). Another participant stated, *“If the environment is supportive, I am more courageous to try. If you are not afraid of being judged, it will be easier to learn”* (P3). Overall, participants emphasized the importance of a supportive learning environment that is non-judgmental, provides opportunities for practice, encourages learners to ask questions, and minimizes excessive competition among students.

The interview findings indicate that feelings of falling behind do not necessarily decrease learners’ motivation permanently. Instead, these feelings often encourage learners to adopt various independent and collaborative learning strategies, seek support from their social environment, and maintain their engagement in the language learning process.

3) Learning Strategies

The findings further revealed that participants employed various learning strategies to cope with feelings of falling behind. These strategies can be categorized into four main types: self-regulated learning strategies, resource-based learning strategies, collaborative learning strategies, and affective learning strategies.

a) Self-regulated Learning Strategies

Several participants demonstrated self-regulated learning by independently identifying their weaknesses and taking initiative to improve them. One participant explained, *“Usually, I go back to the beginning. If I feel that my effort is lacking, for example in terms of grammar lessons, yes, I have to learn grammar again. Sometimes practice from an online learning website or find a way to practice on your own”* (P1). Similarly, another participant stated, *“I usually study on my own. Watch English videos, I try to listen to how the pronunciation is. Sometimes you also read English texts to get used to the structure of the English language”* (P2). Another participant also reported, *“If I am behind compared to others, I usually still try to follow their pace. Even if I don’t understand it right away, I find out for myself after the class ends”* (P3). Likewise, one participant explained, *“Usually, I relearn on my own. If I still don't understand, I discuss it with my friends”* (P4). These

findings indicate that participants actively monitored their own learning needs and made efforts to improve their language abilities independently.

These responses indicate that participants actively monitored their own learning needs and independently sought ways to improve areas in which they perceived weakness.

b) Resourced Based Learning Strategies

Participants also reported utilizing various learning resources beyond classroom instruction to support their English learning. These resources included online learning websites, English videos, English texts, YouTube, Duolingo, Instagram, and pronunciation materials. For example, one participant explained that they practiced through “*an online learning website*” (P1). Another participant stated, “*I watch English videos, try to listen to how the pronunciation is, and sometimes read English texts to get used to the structure of the English language*” (P2). In the additional interview, one participant further explained that entertainment media such as YouTube helped improve vocabulary, while another participant reported using Duolingo and consuming English-language content on Instagram to improve pronunciation and speaking skills as stated by P1 and P2. These findings show that participants actively

sought various learning resources to complement classroom learning.

c) Collaborative Learning Strategies

Collaborative learning also emerged as one of the strategies used by participants to overcome feelings of falling behind. Some participants preferred studying with others because it provided opportunities for discussion, feedback, and mutual encouragement. One participant stated, *“If I prefer to study with others. Because if I have to do it myself, sometimes I can lose my spirit. If there are other people, the atmosphere is more felt for learning. Can remind each other too”* (P1). Similarly, another participant explained, *“I prefer to study with friends. Because they can immediately correct each other’s mistakes. If it is wrong, it can be corrected immediately. And also, I feel like I’m not too alone”* (P4). Another participant also reported discussing difficulties with friends after class because *“sometimes a friend’s explanation is easier to understand”* (P3). However, one participant preferred studying independently because it suited their own learning pace, although they still discussed with friends when necessary as stated by P2. These

findings indicate that participants combined both independent and collaborative learning according to their learning needs.

d) Affective Learning Strategies

Besides cognitive and behavioral strategies, participants also adopted strategies to regulate the negative emotions associated with feeling left behind. Rather than focusing on comparison with others, several participants attempted to shift their attention toward their own learning progress. One participant explained, *“Sometimes it’s important to look at your own progress so you don’t compare it too much to others. Because if you keep comparing it, it becomes more and more behind”* (P1). Another participant reported, *“I practice continuously, hear a lot of English material, and try to get used to not being afraid of making mistakes”* (P2). Similarly, one participant emphasized, *“I usually take a break first. I look again at where the shortcomings are... Don’t directly blame yourself”* (P1). These findings suggest that participants attempted to manage feelings of anxiety, self-doubt, and fear of making mistakes while maintaining their engagement in language learning.

The interview findings indicate that feelings of falling behind do not necessarily decrease learners' motivation permanently. Instead, these feelings often encourage learners to adopt various independent and collaborative learning strategies, seek support from their social environment, and maintain their engagement in the language learning process.

B. Discussion

This section presents the discussion of the findings in relation to the research objectives and theoretical framework of the study. The discussion focuses on interpreting the quantitative and qualitative results to provide a deeper understanding of learners' experiences, motivation, and learning strategies in relation to perceived linguistic deficiency.

1. Language Learner's Experiences of Falling Behind in Understanding Certain Aspects of Language Compared to Their Peers

This study found that learners experienced feelings of falling behind through social comparison, differences in prior educational backgrounds, classroom demands, and emotional responses that emerged during the language learning process. These findings suggest that the experience of falling behind

is not solely determined by actual language competence, but also by how learners perceive their own abilities in relation to others.

From the perspective of perceived linguistic deficiency, learner's perceptions of being left behind are largely subjective and socially constructed. Although some learners were able to keep up with classroom activities, they still perceived themselves as less capable when comparing their progress with peers who demonstrated higher proficiency or completed tasks more quickly. This finding indicates that learner's judgments about their own competence are strongly influenced by the learning environment and peer visibility rather than by objective measures of language ability.

Social comparison emerged as one of the most influential factors contributing to these perceptions. Many learners evaluated their own abilities by observing classmates who had stronger English backgrounds, greater fluency, or better academic performance. Such comparisons often intensified their awareness of personal limitations and reinforced feelings of inadequacy. This finding suggests that social comparison functions as a double-edged phenomenon in language learning. While it may create pressure and self-doubt, it also increases learner's awareness of their own areas for improvement.

In addition, emotional factors were found to be closely associated with the experience of falling behind. Participants reported feelings of insecurity, anxiety, nervousness, sadness, and self-doubt, particularly during speaking activities, grammar-related tasks, presentations, and situations requiring

immediate responses. These findings indicate that language learning is not merely a cognitive process but also an emotional experience in which learners continuously negotiate their confidence and self-perception.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies. Wallace and Leong (2020) argue that learner's motivation and engagement are strongly influenced by their perceived language competence. When learners perceive themselves as less capable, they may experience reduced confidence and increased emotional discomfort. Similarly, Wang, Derakhshan, and Zhang (2021) emphasize that emotional factors play an important role in language learning, as positive emotional experiences contribute to learner's persistence and overall engagement.

However, this study extends previous research by focusing specifically on the experience of feeling left behind compared to peers. Previous studies have generally examined self-perception, anxiety, and motivation separately, whereas the present study demonstrates that these factors are interconnected and emerge simultaneously within learner's daily classroom experiences. Furthermore, this study provides insight into the Indonesian EFL context, where differences in educational backgrounds and social comparison appear to strongly shape learners' perceptions of their own abilities.

Overall, the findings suggest that the experience of falling behind is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Rather than being solely an indicator of low language proficiency,

feeling left behind reflects a complex interaction between learners' self-perceptions, emotional experiences, prior learning backgrounds, and social environments.

2. The Feeling of Falling Behind Affects Learners' Motivation and the Strategies They Use in Language Learning

The findings of this study indicate that feelings of falling behind do not necessarily reduce learners' motivation. Instead, many participants transformed these experiences into opportunities for self-improvement by increasing their learning efforts and adopting various learning strategies. The findings also suggest that motivation is influenced not only by learners' internal factors but also by their learning environment and the support they receive from others.

a. Learner's Motivation

This is suggested that experiencing feelings of falling behind does not inevitably diminish learners' motivation. Instead, perceived linguistic deficiency appears to function as a driving force that encourages learners to invest greater effort in improving their language abilities. Rather than interpreting their perceived shortcomings as evidence of failure, the participants generally viewed them as challenges that required continuous learning and self-improvement. This indicates that feelings of inadequacy can serve as a constructive

source of motivation when learners maintain positive beliefs about their capacity to improve.

This interpretation supports the argument proposed by Mahadi and Jafari (2012), who explain that motivated learners are more likely to engage actively in learning and adopt strategies that facilitate continuous language development. Similarly, Wallace and Leong (2020) argue that learners' perceptions of their own language competence strongly influence their willingness to invest effort in language learning. Although lower perceived competence may initially generate feelings of insecurity, it does not necessarily result in withdrawal from learning. Instead, learners who believe that their abilities can improve tend to respond by increasing their learning effort and persistence. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that perceived linguistic deficiency can function not only as a source of emotional discomfort but also as a motivational trigger that encourages learners to close the gap between themselves and their peers.

The findings can also be interpreted through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Ryan and Deci (2020), which explains that motivation is sustained when learners' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. In the context of this study, learners demonstrated autonomy by taking responsibility

for improving their own learning through independently selecting learning methods and regulating their study process. Although they perceived themselves as falling behind, they continued striving to strengthen their sense of competence through consistent practice, self-monitoring, and gradual improvement. At the same time, support from peers and teachers contributed to learners' sense of relatedness, creating an environment in which they felt encouraged to continue learning despite experiencing difficulties.

These findings suggest that perceived linguistic deficiency does not automatically undermine motivation. Instead, its influence depends on whether learners perceive themselves as capable of overcoming their difficulties and whether the learning environment supports their psychological needs. When autonomy, competence, and relatedness are simultaneously fostered, learners are more likely to transform feelings of inadequacy into persistence and continuous engagement. Therefore, motivation in language learning should not be viewed merely as an individual characteristic but as a dynamic process shaped by learners' psychological needs and their interaction with the surrounding learning environment.

b. Learning Environment

The findings also reveal that the learning environment plays a significant role in shaping learners' motivation. Participants repeatedly

emphasized the importance of supportive peers, approachable teachers, and non-judgmental classroom environments. They preferred learning environments that provided opportunities to ask questions, practice freely, and make mistakes without fear of being criticized. This finding is consistent with Ryan and Deci (2020), who argue that a sense of relatedness strengthens learners' intrinsic motivation and encourages long-term engagement in learning. Similarly, Wang, Derakhshan, and Zhang (2021) found that learners who feel emotionally supported are more likely to develop positive emotions such as enjoyment, hope, and resilience, which sustain their participation in language learning.

c. Learning Strategies

The findings also indicate that learners did not respond to feelings of falling behind passively. Instead, perceived linguistic deficiency encouraged them to actively adjust their learning behaviors by adopting various strategies aimed at improving their language competence. This suggests that feelings of inadequacy may stimulate learners to become more self-directed in managing their own learning rather than simply accepting their perceived limitations. Consistent with Mahadi and Jafari (2012), motivated learners tend to employ learning strategies that enable them to participate more actively in the learning process. Likewise, Bagheri Nevisi and Farhani (2022) explain that learners who develop adaptive coping strategies are more capable of

maintaining engagement despite experiencing anxiety or lower perceived competence. Based on the findings, the strategies employed by the participants can be classified into four categories: self-regulated learning strategies, resource-based learning strategies, collaborative learning strategies, and affective learning strategies.

1) Self-Regulated Learning Strategies

The first prominent strategy identified in this study is self-regulated learning, which reflects learners' ability to independently monitor, evaluate, and adjust their own learning process. Rather than depending solely on classroom instruction, learners demonstrated awareness of their own weaknesses and deliberately focused on improving those specific areas. This indicates that learners actively took responsibility for their learning by identifying deficiencies, setting priorities, and selecting appropriate ways to overcome them.

From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, these behaviors represent the fulfillment of learners' need for autonomy and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Autonomy is reflected in learners' willingness to make independent learning decisions, while competence is strengthened through continuous efforts to improve their performance. Such self-regulatory behaviors enable learners to perceive language learning as a gradual developmental

process rather than as a fixed measure of ability. Consequently, feelings of falling behind become opportunities for reflection and improvement instead of barriers to learning.

2) Resource-based Learning Strategies

Resource-based learning also emerged as an important strategy for coping with feelings of falling behind. Rather than relying exclusively on lecturers or textbooks, learners actively sought additional materials that could help them improve their language competence according to their individual needs. The use of online videos, mobile applications, dictionaries, English-language social media content, and authentic English materials illustrates learners' willingness to extend learning beyond institutional settings.

This finding supports Atmanegara et al. (2013), who argue that web-based resources provide authentic learning experiences that enhance learners' motivation while simultaneously developing their digital literacy. Likewise, Bygstad et al. (2022) emphasize that digital learning environments enable learners to access diverse learning resources flexibly, allowing them to take greater control of their learning process. The present study suggests that resource-based learning serves not merely as a supplementary activity but as an important mechanism through which learners compensate for

perceived deficiencies and continue developing their language competence independently.

3) Collaborative Learning Strategies

The findings also highlight the importance of collaborative learning in helping learners cope with feelings of falling behind. Rather than viewing peers as competitors, many learners perceived classmates as valuable learning partners who could provide explanations, constructive feedback, and emotional encouragement. Learning collaboratively reduced uncertainty, increased opportunities for discussion, and allowed learners to receive immediate clarification when encountering difficulties.

This finding aligns closely with Ryan and Deci's (2020) concept of relatedness, which emphasizes that learners are more likely to sustain motivation when they feel connected to others within their learning environment. Similarly, Bygstad et al. (2022) argue that collaborative learning environments facilitate deeper learning by promoting meaningful interaction among learners and teachers. Therefore, collaborative learning contributes not only to academic development but also to learners' emotional security, reducing the negative psychological impact associated with feeling left behind.

4) Affective Learning Strategies

Besides cognitive and social strategies, learners also demonstrated affective strategies aimed at regulating the negative emotions associated with perceived linguistic deficiency. Rather than allowing anxiety, insecurity, or fear of making mistakes to dominate their learning experiences, participants attempted to reinterpret these emotions in more constructive ways. They gradually shifted their attention from comparing themselves with peers toward monitoring their own progress and celebrating incremental improvement.

This interpretation supports Bagheri Nevisi and Farhani (2022), who explain that adaptive emotional coping enables learners to maintain engagement despite experiencing anxiety or low perceived competence. Similarly, Wang et al. (2021) argue that positive emotional regulation strengthens learners' resilience, enjoyment, and persistence throughout the language learning process. The present study therefore suggests that emotional regulation functions not only as a coping mechanism but also as an essential component of successful language learning, as it enables learners to transform negative emotions into motivation for continuous improvement.

Overall, the findings suggest that feelings of falling behind do not automatically lead to demotivation. Instead, these experiences can stimulate learners to become more self-regulated, seek support from their social environment, and adopt a variety of adaptive learning strategies to improve their language competence. Rather than withdrawing from the learning process, participants actively engaged in independent learning, utilized additional learning resources, collaborated with peers, and regulated their emotional responses to cope with perceived deficiencies. These findings reinforce previous studies suggesting that motivated learners are more likely to adopt effective learning strategies and maintain engagement despite challenges (Bagheri Nevisi & Farhani, 2022).

Furthermore, from the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), learners' sustained motivation can be understood through the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The participants demonstrated autonomy by directing their own learning, competence by continuously practicing and monitoring their progress, and relatedness by seeking support from peers and teachers. Consistent with Wang et al. (2021), the findings also highlight the importance of a supportive learning environment in fostering positive emotions, resilience, and persistence in language learning. Therefore, language educators should not only focus on developing learners' linguistic competence but also create learning environments that support learners' psychological needs and encourage adaptive learning strategies,

enabling them to transform feelings of falling behind into opportunities for continuous growth and sustained engagement in language learning.