

A Study on Motivational Teaching Strategies Among English Teachers at Different Types of Universities in Hanoi – Vietnam



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ABSTRACT: The quantitative research was conducted among seventy two (72) English teachers from six universities and academies in Hanoi to find out the most frequently used motivational teaching strategies that these teachers employ during their teaching practices. Forty five (45) teachers came from private-funded universities, namely Thang Long University, Dai Nam University and Nguyen Trai University. Twenty seven (27) teachers were from state-funded universities; Hanoi National Economic University, Banking Academy and Financial Academy. The questionnaire for was adapted from Dörnyei (2001: 137-144) which consists of 20 items to measure the frequency uses of motivational strategies. The findings showed that the most frequently used strategies were “*I use a short and interesting opening activity to start each class*” (M=4.1). “*I give clear instructions by showing examples*” (M= 4.04). “*I encourage students to use English language outside the classroom*” (M=3.86). “*I establish good relationship with students*” (M=3.86). Meanwhile, the least used strategies included “*I give students choices in deciding how and when they will be graded*” (M=1.93). “*I let students suggest class rules*” (M=2.26). The study also examines the discrepancies in the uses of motivational strategies among teachers of English state-funded and private funded universities. The group statistics showed that teachers in private funded universities employ strategies more often than those from state funded universities M= 3.64; M=3.05 respectively.

KEYWORDS: motivational teaching strategies, state-funded universities, private funded universities.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the problem

Motivation was for many years shaped by social-psychological perspectives on learner attitudes to target language cultures and people. Gardner and Lambert (1972, p.135) argued that language learning motivation was qualitatively different from other forms of learning motivation, since language learning entails much more than acquiring a body of knowledge and developing a set of skills. During the lengthy and often tedious process of mastering a foreign language, the learner’s enthusiasm, commitment and persistence are key determinants of success or failure. Indeed, in the vast majority of cases learners with sufficient motivation can achieve a working knowledge of a foreign language, regardless of their language aptitude, whereas without sufficient motivation even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language.

Language learning is inevitably a long-term process; it is also notoriously difficult to see progress, particularly when studying a language as a career (i.e. to be a teacher of that language upon graduation). In classrooms there are always multiple potential distractions to which the language learners could not succumb. Therefore it is important for the teacher to have an armoury of strategies to keep their learners ‘on task’. These include first and foremost making the language class enjoyable and stimulating, making clear the purpose of tasks, skilfully scaffolding learners while they are engaged on tasks, setting proximal goals, reducing feelings of anxiety, and helping learners to be autonomous and self-motivating. Teachers are key actors who shape the learning environment (Eccles and Roeser 2011) and one of their most important tasks is to create a learning environment that enhances and sustains students’ motivation and engages students in learning. If motivation is such a crucial feature of successful learning, teacher skills in motivating learners should be seen as central to teaching effectiveness. Researchers refer to the role of teachers and their motivations and behaviors as a determinant factor for achievement a second language (Kikuchi, 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Tanak, 2005). Some other studies point to the role of teachers in the learners’ motivation. These studies express the influential roles of teachers for helping the students in the process of second language acquisition. In fact, teachers can play as facilitator, initiator, motivator, consultant, and supporter in a language classroom (Kaboody, 2013). These roles can be considered as influential factors in achievement of a second language. Ramage (1990) shared the same idea that teachers should be motivated themselves and they should try to increase the learners’ motivation in order to actively engage in the learning of a target language.

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Problem statement

As discussed, English teachers whose duty are dealing with language learners everyday suffer from great pressure such as the monotony of learning, boredom and consciousness of students. All these make the teaching endeavour painful and endless. It then comes to teachers' responsibility to overcome those hinders to make the learning effective, in other words teachers have to motivate learners. Oxford and Shearin (1994) refer to five implications for the role of the teacher in understanding motivation. They propose that the teachers should (i) figure out learners' real reasons for learning the L2; (ii) help students build challenging but achievable goals; (iii) show students the benefits of learning the L2; (iv) create a safe, welcoming, and non-intimidating teaching environment; and (v) motivate students to develop high but realistic intrinsic motivation (p.49). In order to be more influential and assisting the learners to attain a high level of achievement in second/foreign language learning, a teacher should be flexible in employing motivational strategies to make the learning enjoyable and stimulating.

Research Purpose statement

The amount of research on how to motivate students through the use of specific strategies or the application of theoretical knowledge centred in the real classroom has been relatively limited in Vietnamese context. A few studies have specified certain strategies employed in certain teaching contexts. Teachers, however, must be aware of the context of any research of motivation since the findings and the proposed motivational teaching strategies may not be suitable for all EFL teaching and learning situations. A strategy that is highly effective in one context of teaching and learning may not work at all in another context and vice versa. As Nakata (2006) implies, motivating students is not as easy in practice as in theory. Since human behaviours are complex, these strategies are not applicable to every individual and in every context of learning. Bearing this in mind, the first purpose of the present study is to investigate types of motivational strategies that teachers employ during their teaching practice. Secondly, the study would like investigate any differences between the uses of these strategies among teachers at state-funded universities and private-funded universities.

Research questions

With the above mentioned purposes, the study addresses the following research questions:

- What motivational teaching strategies are mostly used by teachers of English at universities?
- Is there any significant difference in the uses of motivational strategies between state-funded and private-funded universities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

General understanding of motivation

Motivation is a factor determining the extent of people's desire to do an activity. The term motivation is used quite broadly in the field of education. Because motivation is considered to be one of the most influential factors in learning and academic achievement, a number of researchers from diverse field of education studies have tried to define, analyse and conceptualise this term (Brophy, 2010; Dörnyei, 2001). Brown defines it as "an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one toward a particular action" (1987, p.117). Maehr and Meyer as cited in Brophy state that motivation is an abstract and theoretical construct specifically to refer to "the initiation, direction, intensity, persistence and quality of behaviour, especially goal-directed behaviour" (2010, p.3). Keller as cited in Ziahosseini and Salehi (2008) concludes that motivation consists of the choices that people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid and the degree of effort they exert in that respect. Motivation is a complex construct that appears to be simple on the surface, it has been impossible for theorists to reach consensus on a single definition. According to Dörnyei (2001) there are a number of challenges which prevent a consensus regarding a clear definition of L2 motivation. The first challenge for researchers is to identify if people's behaviours are directed by their conscious or unconscious thoughts. The second challenge is based on whether L2 motivation relates to 'cognition' (thoughts) or 'affect' (feeling). The third challenge relates to the question of whether L2 motivation is influenced by context. The last challenge relates to time and concerns the question of whether L2 motivation is a product (a stable state) or a process (a changing phenomenon).

Types of Motivations

Motivation is a determinant indicator for foreign language learning success, but not all learners can be motivated in the same way, for the same reason and have the same kind of orientation that expresses their goals (Rayan & Edward, 2000). Motivations are categorized into four types.

- **Integrative and instrumental motivation**

Integrative motivation refers to positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language in order to join and be part of another group or community who speaks that language. Instrumental motivation describes the beneficial systemic attainments that learners will accomplish from learning the foreign language. Integrative or instrumental motivations deal with the learner's direct (interaction) or indirect (getting a job) reasons for learning the target language. For instance, when a learner wants to travel and interact with people of another culture and language, he is 'integratively' motivated. On the other hand, when the learner's goal is to get a better

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job, he is 'instrumentally' motivated. Ribas (2009) argued that learners could have a combination of both types of motivation, as one may travel abroad to a society that speaks another language for a double goal, working and communicating with people from different cultures.

• Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Deci and Ryan (1985) define intrinsic motivation as the motivation to pursue an "activity in the absence of a reward contingency or control" (p. 38). Intrinsic motivation is proposed to be the most self-determined type of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2012). When intrinsically motivated, an individual engages in a task because he/she finds the task enjoyable and pleasant. These positive feelings originate from the fact that participating in the task is voluntary (i.e., this individual does not feel coerced to do it) and that the task is optimally challenging. Self-determination theory emphasises that when intrinsically motivated, individuals engage in the task for its own rewards. Such individuals tend to expend much effort on the task, and persist in the task for long time. In school contexts, students who are intrinsically motivated tend to remember things easily, and exhibit high levels of persistence in a learning task (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Barker (2004) shared the same idea when claim that intrinsic motivation as the person's internal stimuli for doing something. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand refers to motivation to engage in an activity as a means to an end. Extrinsically motivated individuals are regulated by external forces such as tangible rewards (i.e., money and medals), praise and punishment (Deci, 1980). Traditionally, extrinsically-motivated individuals were characterised as being non-autonomous, which is antithetical to self-determined (de Charms, 1968). Individuals may be required to carry out many tasks which are imposed upon them or controlled by others. For example, in schools, students are asked to learn many academic subjects, complete exams and follow school rules yet they may not find any of these activities interesting or motivating. In order to persist with these tasks and accomplish them, individuals need to exercise extrinsic motivation to perform the required behaviours (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Harmer (2008) defined extrinsic motivation as the kind of motivation which is affected by outside conditions. Extrinsically motivated learners are not self-determined. They pursue the task for instrumental reasons such as passing exams or getting a certificate (Eragamreddy, 2015; Lai, 2011). Harmer (2008) added that while intrinsic motivation is essential for L2 learning, extrinsic motivation can act as the outside support that stimulates the language learning process.

Motivational teaching strategies in a foreign language classroom

Motivation is considered significantly in its role in language learning success. Gardner and Lambert (1972) argued that motivation to learn a second language distinguishes itself from motivation to learn other subjects. They reasoned that a second language learner not only learns new knowledge such as grammar and vocabulary, this learner needs also show willingness to be integrated with the community speaking this second/foreign language. As a result, at its early age, L2 motivation research, viewed by the socio-psychological perspective, was an independent research area that did not have any connection with the mainstream motivational philosophy. Along this line of thoughts, students' motivation toward English language learning can influence their learning. Language teachers frequently use the term 'motivation' when they describe successful or unsuccessful learners. This reflects our intuitive belief that during the lengthy and often tedious process of mastering a foreign/second language, the learner's enthusiasm, commitment and persistence are key determinants of success or failure. Without sufficient motivation, even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language (Dörnyei (2001, p.4).

How to motivate students through motivational teaching strategies has engaged second/foreign language researchers due to its significant contribution to academic performance and achievement in learning a second/foreign language. Dörnyei states that "motivational strategies refer to those motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effects" (2001, p. 28). The majority of teachers recognise that motivating their learners is a part of their job, though it is probably more important for some than for others. In certain pedagogic contexts learners may be expected to bring with them such high initial levels of motivation that the teacher's focus is exclusively on maximizing the efficiency of the learning processes. At the other extreme, there are pedagogic contexts where learners are compelled to attend, and where the teacher's main task seems to be to persuade them to engage in learning tasks. Motivational teaching strategies are thus steps or techniques employed by teachers in their teaching practices to facilitate students' motivation in learning a second/foreign language.

Motivational teaching strategies have been the focus of studies over the past decades. Teacher's success is usually measured by the effective use of such strategies to enhance students' performance. Bernaus, Willson and Gardner (2009) indicated that what takes place in the classroom can influence students' attitudes and motivation. Fernandez-Orio (2013) argued that teachers should utilize motivational strategies that are comparable with students' personal lives in order to help them in establishing positive attitude towards the TL and take part in classroom activities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

The study was conducted among 72 teachers from six universities and academies in Hanoi to find out motivational teaching strategies that these teachers employ during their teaching practices. Forty five teachers came from private-funded universities,

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namely Thang Long University, Dai Nam University and Nguyen Trai University. Twenty seven teachers were from state-funded universities; Hanoi National Economic University, Banking Academy and Financial Academy (table 1).

Table 1. Frequency of teachers from different types of universities

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid State funded universities	27	37.5	37.5	37.5
Private funded universities	45	62.5	62.5	100.0
Total	72	100.0	100.0	

Research design

The research design refers to the overall strategy that a researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring you will effectively address the research problem; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables you to effectively address the research problem logically and as unambiguously as possible. In the present study, a quantitative descriptive research design was selected to obtain information about motivational strategies employed by teachers and the students' perception toward teachers' performance in classes to foster motivation among students.

Data collection instruments

In order to obtain the data for the study, questionnaires were administered among teachers and students. The questionnaire for teachers was adapted from Dörnyei (2001: 137-144). The original questionnaire included 35 items. However, the researcher shortened it into 20 items because some of them were not suitable for the current study (see the appendix). The 5-point Likert rating scales were used to measure the use of motivational strategies (from 5 means *always* to 1 means *never*).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research question 1: What motivational teaching strategies are mostly used by teachers of English at universities?

The descriptive statistics (table 2) show the descending order of strategies used. The most frequent used strategies were “*I use a short and interesting opening activity to start each class*” and “*I give clear instructions by showing examples*” (M=4.1 and 4.04 respectively). The two strategies “*I encourage students to use English language outside the classroom*” and “*I establish good relationship with students*” ranked the second with means as M=3.86. The least use strategies were “*I let students suggest class rules*” and “*I give students choices in deciding how and when they will be graded*” with M= 2.26 and M=1.93 respectively.

Table 2. Means overall strategy used by teachers from both types of universities

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
I use a short and interesting opening activity to start each class	72	2	5	4.10	.858
I give clear instructions by showing examples	72	2	5	4.04	.740
I encourage students to use English language outside the classroom	72	1	5	3.86	1.066
I establish good relationship with students	72	2	5	3.86	.893
I introduce various interesting topics	72	2	5	3.75	.900
I familiarize students with the cultural background of the target language	72	2	5	3.72	.859
I make sure grades reflect students' efforts and hard work	72	2	5	3.68	.932
I encourage students to set personal learning goals	72	1	5	3.60	.914
I provide students with positive feedback	72	2	5	3.57	1.149
I encourage students find out mistakes by themselves	72	1	5	3.49	1.061
I help students develop realistic goals about learning English	72	2	5	3.46	1.034
I encourage students to share personal experiences and thoughts	72	1	5	3.44	.991
I give good reasons to students as to why a particular task is meaningful	72	2	5	3.44	.767
I encourage learning from classmates in small groups	72	2	5	3.43	.917
I show my great enthusiasm for teaching	72	1	5	3.39	1.001
I create a supportive classroom so students will take risks	72	1	5	3.35	.995
I make it clear to students that communicating meaning effectively is more important than being grammatically correct	72	1	5	3.26	.964

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I increase the amount of English language for students to use in the class	72	2	4	3.26	.822
I let students suggest class rules	72	1	3	2.26	.475
I give students choices in deciding how and when they will be graded	72	1	3	1.93	.718
Valid N (listwise)	72				

Research question 2: Is there any significant difference in the uses of motivational strategies between state-funded and private-funded universities?

To examine the research question, an independent sample t-test was conducted to assess if differences exist on the uses of motivational strategies by teachers of different types of universities, in this case, the state-funded universities and private universities. An independent samples t-test is the appropriate statistical test when the purpose of research is to assess if differences exist on a continuous (interval/ratio) dependent variable by a dichotomous (2 groups) independent variable. Table 3 shows that there was a significant statistic difference between the use of motivational strategies between two groups of teachers, $M=3.05$ and $M=3.64$ respectively.

Table 3. Means of motivational strategies used by teachers at different types of universities

Report			
MEAN			
Type of university	Mean	N	Std. Dev.
State funded universities	3.0537	27	.36451
Private funded universities	3.6433	45	.34536
Total	3.4222	72	.45299

The group statistics (table 4) shows the discrepancies in detailed of each strategy uses among teachers from state-funded universities and private-funded universities. The most noticeable difference can be seen in the strategy #1 “*I establish good relationship with students*”. Teachers from private universities were more likely created relationship with students $M=4.04$ compared with $M=2.96$ of the teachers who come from state-funded universities. The strategies “*I encourage students find out mistakes by themselves*” showed a great difference use $M=4.0$ for private funded universities and $M= 2.63$ for state-funded universities. The strategies that teachers from state-funded universities used more often than those from private funded universities were “*I familiarize students with the cultural background of the target language*” $M= 4.33$ and $M=3.36$ respectively. “*I give clear instructions by showing examples*” $M= 4.30$ and $M=3.89$.

Table 4. Means of compared strategy uses between teachers from different types of universities

Group Statistics				
	Type of Uni.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
I establish good relationship with students	SFU*	27	2.96	.649
	PFU**	45	4.40	.495
I increase the amount of English language for students to use in the class	SFU	27	3.00	.877
	PFU	45	3.42	.753
I make sure grades reflect students’ efforts and hard work	SFU	27	3.04	.706
	PFU	45	4.07	.837
I introduce various interesting topics	SFU	27	3.19	.681
	PFU	45	4.09	.848
I make it clear to students that communicating meaning effectively is more important than being grammatically correct	SFU	27	2.63	.742
	PFU	45	3.64	.883
I create a supportive classroom so students will take risks	SFU	27	2.67	.555
	PFU	45	3.76	.981
I show my great enthusiasm for teaching	SFU	27	3.78	1.013
	PFU	45	3.16	.928
I use a short and interesting opening activity to start each class	SFU	27	3.96	1.018
	PFU	45	4.18	.747
I give good reasons to students as to why a particular task is meaningful	SFU	27	2.96	.649
	PFU	45	3.73	.688
I help students develop realistic goals about learning English	SFU	27	3.00	.877
	PFU	45	3.73	1.031
I familiarize students with the cultural background of the target language	SFU	27	4.33	.679

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	PFU	45	3.36	.743
I encourage students to set personal learning goals	SFU	27	3.48	1.014
	PFU	45	3.67	.853
I encourage students find out mistakes by themselves	SFU	27	2.63	.742
	PFU	45	4.00	.879
I encourage students to use English language outside the classroom	SFU	27	2.67	.555
	PFU	45	4.58	.499
I give clear instructions by showing examples	SFU	27	4.30	.775
	PFU	45	3.89	.682
I encourage students to share personal experiences and thoughts	SFU	27	3.00	.877
	PFU	45	3.71	.968
I encourage learning from classmates in small groups	SFU	27	3.04	.706
	PFU	45	3.67	.953
I provide students with positive feedback	SFU	27	2.22	.424
	PFU	45	4.38	.490
I give students choices in deciding how and when they will be graded	SFU	27	2.11	.751
	PFU	45	1.82	.684
I let students suggest class rules	SFU	27	2.26	.526
	PFU	45	2.27	.447

*SFU: state funded university

**PFU: private funded university

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Studies in the uses of motivational strategies that teachers employ during their teaching practices are popular in the world (Elashhab, S. 2020; Seven, A. 2020; Kalmari, I. 2017; He, N. 2009). Research shows that teachers in different parts of the world use varieties of strategies to motivate their learners. In the current studies the mostly used strategies were “I use a short and interesting opening activity to start each class” (M=4.1). “I give clear instructions by showing examples” (M= 4.04). “I encourage students to use English language outside the classroom” (M=3.86). “I establish good relationship with students” (M=3.86). The least used strategies included “I give students choices in deciding how and when they will be graded” (M=1.93). “I let students suggest class rules” (M=2.26).

The study also examines the discrepancies in the uses of motivational strategies among teachers of English state-funded and private funded universities. The group statistics showed that teachers in private funded universities employ strategies more often than those from state funded universities M= 3.64; M=3.05 respectively.

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Appendix: Questionnaire for teachers' self-perception of motivational teaching strategy used.

The following statements represent motivational strategy teaching practice. Please read each item carefully and circle the appropriate number to show the how often you do these during your teaching practice.

5. = always
4. = usually
3. = sometimes
2. = rarely
1. = never

#	Statements	Ratings				
	I establish good relationship with students	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I increase the amount of English language for students to use in the class	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I make sure grades reflect students' efforts and hard work	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I introduce various interesting topics	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I make it clear to students that communicating meaning effectively is more important than being grammatically correct	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I create a supportive classroom so students will take risks	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I show my great enthusiasm for teaching	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I use a short and interesting opening activity to start each class	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I give good reasons to students as to why a particular task is meaningful	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I help students develop realistic goals about learning English	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I familiarize students with the cultural background of the target language	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I encourage students to set personal learning goals	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I encourage students find out mistakes by themselves	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I encourage students to use English language outside the classroom	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I give clear instructions by showing examples	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I encourage students to share personal experiences and thoughts	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I encourage learning from classmates in small groups	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I provide students with positive feedback	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I give students choices in deciding how and when they will be graded	①	②	③	④	⑤
	I let students suggest class rules	①	②	③	④	⑤



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