

# The Effectiveness of Teacher Motivational Strategies in EFL Contexts: A Critical Review of the Literature<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Many scholars in the field of language learning have reached the consensus that motivation plays a pivotal role in the success of students' language acquisition. This desk-based study examines the use of motivational interventions, namely teacher motivational strategies (TMSs), by drawing on theoretical concepts and existing quantitative and qualitative research. Insightful questions are posed to reveal how effective these strategies are in improving learner behaviour and achievement. Furthermore, the link between divergent cultural contexts and the efficacy of motivational strategies is explored. The comprehensive review supports the theoretical position that, essentially, intrinsic motivation is an imperative condition for EFL learner behaviour. Motivation can be successfully fostered by instructors if they consciously utilise and specifically tailor TMSs. In contrast, this review also presents significant secondary evidence for the limits cultural context may exert on TMS effectiveness. Moreover, the conclusion suggests that more research is needed to inform theory, especially with regard to the interconnectedness of TMSs and substantive learner achievement.

## Resumen

Estudiosos del campo del aprendizaje de idiomas han llegado al consenso de que la motivación juega un papel fundamental en la adquisición exitosa del idioma por parte de los estudiantes. Este estudio documental examina el uso de intervenciones motivacionales, a saber, estrategias de motivación docente (TMS), basándose en conceptos teóricos e investigaciones cuantitativas y cualitativas existentes. Se plantean preguntas perspicaces para revelar qué tan efectivas son estas estrategias para mejorar el comportamiento y el rendimiento del alumno. Además, se explora el vínculo entre contextos culturales divergentes y la eficacia de las estrategias motivacionales. La revisión integral respalda la posición teórica de que, esencialmente, la motivación intrínseca es una condición imperativa para el comportamiento de aprendizaje de EFL. Los instructores pueden fomentar la motivación si utilizan conscientemente y adaptan específicamente los TMS. En contraste, esta revisión también presenta evidencia secundaria significativa de los límites que el contexto cultural puede ejercer sobre la efectividad de la TMS. Además, la conclusión sugiere que se necesita más investigación para informar la teoría, especialmente con respecto a la interconexión de los TMS y el logro sustantivo del alumno.

## The Importance of Motivation

Since the 1960s, second-language acquisition (SLA) has rapidly evolved as a prominent field in the social sciences (Moskovsky et al., 2013). As a sub-discipline of applied linguistics, it provides us with a profound appreciation of the complex nature of language learning (Skehan, 1989). While historically much SLA theory has centred on universal propensities, including age effects and universal grammar, a distinct focus on researching variations amongst learners has accompanied this tradition (Skehan, 1989). These chief socio-psychological factors, or individual differences, include aptitude, learner styles, learner strategies, and motivation (VanPatten & Benati, 2010).

While there appears to be a lack of consensus on many issues within the SLA field, one area of inquiry where academics reach agreement is regarding the value of *motivation* (e.g., Csizer & Dörnyei, 2005; Gass et al., 2013). Scholars widely accept motivation as an important predictor of successful and proficient SLA (Gass et al., 2013), not only as a primary driver for learning but also salient in the impact it has throughout the lengthy second language (L2) learning continuum:

*Motivation serves as the initial engine to generate learning and later functions as an ongoing driving force that helps sustain the long journey of acquiring a foreign language without sufficient motivation, even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language proficiency whereas most learners with strong motivation can achieve a working knowledge of the L2 (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007, p. 153).*

Motivation is a crucial socio-psychological component that evidently exerts a formidable influence on learners - particularly those in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (Kim, 2010; Ng & Ng (2015). EFL contexts are those where English is not a mother tongue, nor it is not widely used in day-to-day life. South Korea is an example of an EFL context (Iwai, 2011). This can be contrasted with English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, where English is widely spoken: Korean people learning English in England (Si,

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2019). In an EFL context, high motivation ostensibly serves to counteract potential obstacles including the absence of opportunities for learners to experience the target language culture or interact in English outside of the classroom (Chen et al., 2005). As motivation is thought to be axiomatic with high-level learning success (Chen et al., 2005; Csizér & Dörnyei 2005), fostering EFL learner motivation is an issue of substantial interest to researchers and practitioners alike.

However, motivation may also be viewed as an abstract, internalised, and contextualised notion, making it challenging to measure objectively (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2011). This has led the research domain of EFL motivation to go through different theoretical stages during the last fifty years, with these substantive shifts in thought highlighting the complexity of researching and understanding motivation (Guerrero, 2015). Criticisms have been raised regarding research which has been viewed as predominantly theoretical rather than evidence-based (Guerrero, 2015). More recently, empirical studies have investigated the potential utility of deliberate *teacher interventions* to initiate, sustain and improve learner motivation in EFL contexts (Koran, 2015). This review centres on the use of such motivational interventions, namely teacher motivational strategies (TMSs), examining theoretical concepts and existing quantitative and qualitative research to reveal how effective these strategies are in improving learner behaviour and achievement.

### Research Questions

In this desk-based study, I examine the use of teacher motivational strategies (TMSs) and their reported influence on learners' intrinsic motivation to answer the following:

1. *How effective are TMSs on learners' intrinsically motivated behaviour?*
2. *How does the use of TMSs influence learner achievement?*
3. *How effective are TMSs in different cultural contexts?*

This paper first proceeds by reflecting on the definition of motivation, introduces the importance of the EFL teacher in motivating language learners, describes TMS frameworks and then reviews notable empirical studies researching TMSs to respond to these research questions.

### Defining Motivation

Before examining motivational interventions in detail, it is necessary to attend to the meaning of the concept 'motivation.' Motivation, as a fundamental condition in the process of EFL learning, is subject to extensive commentary. While many scholars have offered definitions of this term, they often cite the complexity of such an endeavour. For instance, Drucker (1973) alluded to how scholars would write about motivation, without perhaps fully understanding its scope and meaning. Perhaps the concept has eluded concrete definition perhaps because "like the concept of gravity is easier to describe ... than it is to define" (Dörnyei, 2001, p.7). However, for the purpose of this review, I will offer some guiding principles to establish a conceptual understanding of the term motivation.

Motivation is inherently abstract, and it encompasses a wide-ranging set of personal motives for engaging in particular acts (Dörnyei, 2001). Motivation may also be conceived of as a phenomenon set deeply in the individual mind and related to three key elements; "conative, cognitive and affective" (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 2), which are understood respectively as what is wanted, thought, and felt by the learner. In terms of SLA, motivation encompasses "the desire to initiate L2 learning, and the effort employed to sustain it" (Ortega, 2009, p. 168). Thus, the nature of learner motivation can be discerned by the extent to which students are engaged and attentive during classroom activities (Brophy, 2010). Similarly, Ryan and Deci (2000) present the correlation between being motivated and being impelled to act; there is a clear distinction between the individual who exhibits the drive and determination to do something, in contrast with the unmotivated individual who lacks the requisite skills and enterprise to pursue a goal.

Considering the concepts set forth, the position taken here is that EFL learner motivation is characterised by why students choose to study a foreign language, how much enjoyment they derive from the process, how engaged they are in lessons, how long they are prepared to continue with their course of action and how much effort they are willing to exert in pursuit of their goals. Furthermore, the manifestation of motivation appears dependent on both internal and external factors, resulting in *intrinsic* or *extrinsic* motivation. However, prior to the emphasis on motivation, researchers commonly addressed *orientations* to language learning.

### Integrative and Instrumental Orientations

Early research related to the effect of motivation on language learning was carried out by Gardner and Lambert (1972) in Canada (Dörnyei, 2001). The researchers proposed two types of orientation, or attitudes,

towards the second language community which directly affect the acquisition of a second language. They categorised language learners according to the dichotomy of integrative and instrumental orientation (Dörnyei, 2001). Integrative orientation is concerned with identifying positively with the target community and refers to exhibiting “a positive disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community” (Dörnyei 1997, p. 262) whilst instrumental orientation is based on acquiring more practical benefits and is related to language learning being “primarily associated with the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency, such as a getting a better job or a higher salary” (p. 262). However, Gardner and Lambert (1972) believed that instrumental motivation would not be as effective as integrative orientation since it was not deeply embedded in the individual learner’s psyche (Skehan, 1989). This model was very successful and well recognised, based on empirical findings using the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner, 1985), but later drew criticism from experts in the field as it was judged “too restrictive and unresponsive to wider developments in psychology” (Ortega 2009, p. 168) and failed to take account of motivated learners in EFL contexts who had no opportunities for integrating with native speakers (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). Some of the limitations of Gardner and Lambert’s work (1972) include the lack of application of their theory to classroom settings, the concentration of their studies in one geographical location, and the absence of practical guidance for teachers in how to really motivate their learners (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). Moreover, Dörnyei (2001) suggested that there had been too much emphasis on the social component of motivation that other facets were possibly being neglected in the research which led to a palpable shift in the 1990s (Dörnyei, 2001) whereby “researchers tried to extend on the existing paradigms” (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003, p. 614). These implications fostered new research and new ways of thinking about motivation. Accordingly, since the 1990s, scholars have questioned the binary, restrictive and static nature of integrative and instrumental orientations, called for greater attention to the dynamism of motivation by borrowing terms from the field of psychology (Matsuzaki Carreira, 2005). Whilst scholars recognise the formidable contribution the orientation concepts had made to the field, the cognitive constructs of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are now more commonly utilised (Matsuzaki Carreira, 2005).

#### A Motivational Dichotomy

The phenomena of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are well established in the SLA field (Ng & Ng, 2015). Put simply, this dichotomy holds that intrinsic motivation is said to lead an individual to perform out of personal interest or enjoyment, whereas extrinsic motivation arises due to the pursuit of an external result (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Accordingly, one is intrinsically motivated when studying English for gratification, or when learning English is a goal in itself’ (Ng & Ng, 2015, p. 98). For instance, if an individual chooses to study a language for intrinsic reasons, such as in the pursuit of a natural ‘high’ or self-satisfaction, then the motivational level will be at its most desirable, due to the presence of enjoyment in the process (Ortega, 2009). Accordingly, studies have adduced that intrinsically motivated learners sustain their motivation for longer (Ng & Ng, 2015).

Conversely, extrinsic motivation is evinced by factors including the requirement to acquire English for employment opportunities or high-stakes exams. These motives are not as effective or expedient as the intent underpinning them is to acquire English as a means to an end, with a focus on product over process. Conversely, intrinsically motivated learners are thought to gain pleasure from the act of ‘doing’ (Ortega, 2009). Thus, with extrinsic motivation, the perception of external pressure can be negative, and perhaps, devoid of joy. Accordingly, research into the implications of TMSs is largely concerned with how practitioners, EFL teachers, can leverage these techniques to influence intrinsic learner motivation (Koran, 2015). The distinction between extrinsic motivation and instrumental orientations is that extrinsic factors pertain to the external reasons a person wishes to acquire the language, whilst instrumental orientations are narrower and relate to the reason for learning (Anjomshoa & Sadighi, 2015). With intrinsic motivation and integrative orientations, intrinsic motivation arises from a feeling of satisfaction, whilst integrative orientation is reflected in the desire to belong to a language community (Anjomshoa & Sadighi, 2015). It is important to note that intrinsic and extrinsic motivational constructs have always been somewhat controversial in psychology – for one, like Gardner’s orientations, they suggest a dichotomy when of course it is possible for learners to be concurrently motivated intrinsically and extrinsically time (Ng & Ng, 2015). Furthermore, motivation is certainly a “dynamic process with room for several intervening variables” (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994, p, 366), and undeniably, the role of the EFL teacher in motivating one’s students is a vital consideration.

### The EFL Teacher

Highly relevant to the issue of motivation in EFL contexts is recognizing who is responsible for its stimulation (Dörnyei, 2001). While it is logical to require students to demonstrate autonomy and be accountable for their learning, it is also plausible to suggest that the language teacher plays a vital role in fostering and developing motivation (Howard, 2019; Koran, 2015). Even in the contemporary communicative, student-centered classroom, the teacher is still integral to cultivating a positive classroom ethos (Dörnyei, 2007a). While an educator's principal responsibilities may be to facilitate learning in consonance with the curriculum and course learning objectives, this cannot legitimately occur if the students are adequately motivated (Dörnyei, 2001). Therefore, if teachers nurture their learners, encourage ongoing achievement, and incorporate a motivational capacity into their pedagogy, they may relish the effect their own passion has on their students' language learning success (Dörnyei, 2001).

Moreover, the EFL instructor is commonly the predominant (and sometimes only) source of native-level language, instruction, and feedback, subsuming many roles, including those of 'initiator, facilitator, motivator, the ideal model of the target language speaker, mentor, consultant and mental supporter' (Ng & Ng, 2015, p. 99). In the performance of these various roles, the EFL teacher is well-positioned to influence the subjective realities and social experiences of learners (Howard, 2020). Accordingly, TMSs and how the practitioner espouses them are key areas of relevance both from an SLA, instructor, and teacher education perspective. SLA researchers seek to link theoretical assumptions with classroom practice, teachers aim to cultivate optimal learning conditions, and the content of teacher training courses, such as the CELTA, emphasises short- and long-term motivational interventions (Thornbury & Watkins, 2007). In order to investigate how teachers may augment intrinsic learner motivation, it is pertinent to now define TMSs and consider them with more specificity.

### Defining TMSs

TMSs first came to prominence in the 1990s (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008), and have been defined as "influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect" (Dörnyei, 2001, p.28). In other words, TMSs are specific techniques, actions, and behaviours, which teachers may utilise to enhance their students' motivation for and in language learning, "to improve students' motivation as demonstrated by effort and engagement in learning activities, to enhance students' sense of self-efficacy and to improve students' academic achievements" (Hardré et al., 2008, p. 21). Thus, teachers exploit TMSs to encourage learner goal-seeking behaviour and it appears that these strategies may offer substantive practical and educational benefits once applied in context. The promise of rich payoffs has led scholars to conduct considerable research to highlight the types of techniques teachers can use to arouse and cement students' intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 2001; Ellis, 2005). Some of these specific techniques are discussed below.

### TMS Frameworks

Perhaps the most seminal framework of TMSs, which was established to inform teachers how to motivate learners is the 'Ten Commandments' (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). In 2001, Dörnyei expanded the taxonomy, categorising TMSs into four components of positive practice in the Motivational Teaching Practice (MTP) framework. The four stages in the cyclical model comprise fostering a motivational classroom culture, inspiring motivation at the outset, preserving learner motivation, and supporting self-reflection. The framework includes a total of 102 TMSs, which form the substantive content of Dörnyei's (2001) book. The sub-components traverse a host of aspects that include suggestions to encourage teachers to behave appropriately, instill positivity in students, maintain an ethos of cooperation, and provide effective feedback. Whilst other scholars have proposed alternative models (Wong 2014), it appears that Dörnyei's (2001) MTP, with its dynamic view of motivation and its pragmatic application, has survived as a popular taxonomy, perhaps because other proposals were not adequately situated in theory and adopted a fundamental 'reward and punishment' approach (Wong, 2014). Moreover, Dörnyei's (2001) MTP has often been adopted as a theoretical framework, grounded in research and extolled as a 'comprehensive and systematic' scheme (Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012, p. 573). The MTP has framed more recent empirical studies of TMSs in EFL contexts (e.g., Alrabai, 2016; Moskovsky et al., 2013; Wong, 2014), some of which I discuss in this review, which is guided by the three key research questions mentioned above.

### Empirical Studies

Prior to the 1990s, SLA motivational literature was predominantly theoretically grounded (Wong, 2015) and rooted in three distinct periods of in scholarship. These periods were the Social Psychological Period, with a

focus on goal orientation, the Cognitive-Situated Period emphasising cognitive processes and the Process Oriented Period which drew on processual aspects of learning and motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Guerrero, 2015).

Gardner and Tremblay's (1994) notable call to action suggested that researchers turn more *empirical* attention to TMSs as hypotheses, worthy of testing in authentic classroom environments (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Consequently, several notable empirical studies have investigated the application of TMSs, during the contemporary Socio-Dynamic Period which focuses more on contextual factors and interactions (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2011). In the following section, I introduce a well-known set of TMSs and discuss some of the notable studies which have investigated these strategies through a variety of research designs.

#### The Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners

Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) seminal Hungarian study was hailed by Sugita and Takeuchi (2010) as one of the most authoritative studies in the TMS field. The research validated the proposition that teachers' classroom behaviour was the most significant determinant of learner motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) conducted quantitative research to further define and shape the earlier intuitive commandments for motivating language learners (Dörnyei, 1994), while also responding to Gardner and Tremblay's (1994) critique.

The researchers, seeking to substantiate a set of TMSs through empirical procedures, elicited responses from in-service English teachers (n=200) working in a variety of educational contexts in Hungary. The researchers mobilised questionnaires to ascertain the importance teachers placed on certain strategies and how often they employed them. The questionnaires included 51 strategies, which subsequent to statistical analysis, were grouped into clusters, forming the new set of 'Ten Commandments' or macro-strategies. The commandments ranking according to the order of importance is shown in Table 1 below:

Order of importance	The commandment to EFL teacher
1	Set a personal example with your own behaviour
2	Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom
3	Present the tasks properly
4	Develop a good relationship with the learners
5	Increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence
6	Make the language classes interesting
7	Promote learner autonomy
8	Personalize the learning process
9	Increase the learners' goal-orientedness
10	Familiarise learners with the target language culture

Note. Adapted from Dörnyei & Csizér (1998, p. 215)

Table 1: The ten commandments for motivating language learners

The inventory consists of key techniques including role-modeling, focusing on individual needs, and delivering engaging classes, clearly lending credence to the notion that the teacher plays a pivotal role in classroom motivation (Ng & Ng, 2015).

Interestingly, the findings from Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) study were quite representative of the earlier conceptions (Dörnyei, 1994), and Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) suggested that the corollary between the instinctually conceived techniques and the resulting list serves to validate the findings. There were also some notable, unanticipated outcomes. Specific TMSs that were under-represented suggest that the researchers located areas, which required more teacher development, including techniques related to enforcing group dynamics, encouraging cohesion amongst groups of learners, and focusing more on goal setting and achievement (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998).

This influential study has been extensively cited and adapted in further research on TMSs (e.g., Alrabai, 2016; Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Moskovsky et al., 2013). However, there are some limitations to this account which perhaps prompted the later studies. Firstly, the ranking is somewhat subjective, is solely based on the respondents' interpretations of TMSs. Moreover, the research only collected *teacher* opinions. A further potential constraint, as Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) concede, was the research did not test the actual *effectiveness* of the TMSs. Furthermore, the study was performed in a single context, Hungary, and therefore the potential transferability of TMSs was deemed ambiguous. Accordingly, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) followed up this study with a "modified replication" (Ruesch et al., 2011, p. 17), seeking to test the 10 macro-strategies in an alternative context, Taiwan. Their findings confirmed that whilst some TMSs are culturally dependent, certain TMSs may be considered universally applicable, (Papi & Abdollahzadeh 2012)

including strategies related to the teacher's own behaviour, instilling confidence in learners, clear tasks, and establishing a positive environment (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007).

#### Later Quantitative Studies

Further cogent studies have examined the efficacy of specific TMSs in other EFL contexts. Sugita McEown and Takeuchi (2014) conducted research in Japan to determine how TMSs correlated with students' motivational feelings. At the time, the research was quite unique as previous studies tended to observe motivation from a unitary standpoint, yet in this case, teacher and learner perceptions of TMSs were examined, potentially overcoming a limitation of previous studies (Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014). Moreover, the study utilised a longitudinal approach, permitting correlations over time to be investigated and to account for the dynamic nature of intrinsic motivation (Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014). Interestingly, the researchers studied two separate proficiency clusters, which enabled them to look at different levels of attainment, *vis-à-vis* the frequency of motivational strategies employed. The researchers did not mobilise the earlier commandments, but selected strategies resulting from student views expressed in self-report questionnaires. Following content analysis, the researchers identified 17 TMSs, some of which paralleled those of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998), while others were new micro-strategies, including 'circulate around the classroom, write clearly on the whiteboard, display enthusiasm for teaching English' (Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014, p.28).

Through the statistical analysis, the researchers determined that punctuality was one of the strongest motivational factors, regardless of proficiency level. Interestingly, TMSs related to the positive communicative style of the teacher had no correlation with student motivation in either cluster. The researchers also ascertained that certain TMSs were more effective depending on the circumstance/and or context. For instance, in the sessions immediately before exams students valued clear explanations highly. Thus, the authors suggest that 'washback effects' can cause certain TMSs to be construed as 'situation specific' (Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014, p. 32). Concerning strategies that were not positively correlated in either cluster, the researchers concluded that the level of learners' English competence and degree of motivation impacted their views of TMS effectiveness (Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014).

However, a methodological limitation of this study arises from correlational analytical approaches' inability to measure beyond relationships to establish cause and effect (Bryman, 2008). Therefore, as Sugita McEown and Takeuchi (2014) acknowledge, it is impossible to establish whether the TMSs utilised were directly motivational or if the learners responded well purely because they held the teacher in high regard. More importantly, this study displayed several negative correlations, where certain TMSs failed to have a positive impact. The researchers explain that perhaps these practices were not TMSs in themselves, but simply signs of appropriate teacher practice. Furthermore, the TMSs in question were obtained from self-reported student perceptions rather than theoretical concepts (Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014). Overall, whilst the findings provide some evidence of the benefits of TMSs, they do not present a link between *specific* TMSs and motivational *behaviour*. To draw further conclusions, it would be necessary to investigate the specific techniques *vis-à-vis* their success in the educational domain, perhaps using a variety of instruments to permit triangulation (Alrabai, 2016). Moskovsky et al. (2013) suggest quite unreservedly that studies which rely solely on self-reporting and neglect to undertake an observational element are 'unrevealing with regard to the actual inspirational effect that teachers' classroom behaviours can have on learners' intrinsic motivation. This is especially pertinent given that, Sugita McEown and Takeuchi's (2014) research centered on the *perceptions* of, rather than the direct usage of, TMSs (Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012).

Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) went beyond the scope of self-reporting in their large-scale Korean study. They mobilised questionnaires and a detailed observation scheme, the Motivation Orientation of Language Teaching (MOLT), to investigate the relationship between TMSs (drawn from the MTP) and students' attention, participation, and volunteering. The context is particularly noteworthy since public-school pedagogy in Korea tends to be didactic and teacher-centered, not lending itself well to TMSs (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). However, the findings revealed that there was a discernible, empirical association between TMSs and student motivation in Korean classrooms (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2011), once again, substantiating the significance of the EFL teacher's influence. However, the study adopted a holistic view and did not probe relationships between specific TMSs and enhanced motivation. Additionally, a potential limitation arises from the methodology employed; observational techniques can produce what has been termed the 'Hawthorne Effect', a type of reactivity in which participants act differently as a result of being studied (Neuman, 2003). Moreover, a further constraint to the study is one similar to that of McEown and Takeuchi's (2014). This is the inability for the findings to establish a causal link since the study adopted "a cross-sectional design ...

did not involve a control group ... does not allow for stringent causality inferences" (Moskovsky et al., 2013, p. 37). However, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) explain that the decision to conduct a cross-sectional study was one based on 'examining the quality of the teachers' overall motivational practice...by generating rich observational data' (p. 60), which would have been infeasible had they visited the study sites repeatedly.

#### Quantitative Experimental Studies

Building on the above quantitative studies (e.g. Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014), and overcoming some of the limitations, there are attempts to examine TMSs by further diversifying methodology. In 1994, Gardner and Tremblay had also recommended that future studies adopt experimental designs, which could "involve simply observing two classes of students studying the same language at the same level, applying the strategy to one of the classes and not the other" (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994, p. 365). Such an approach ostensibly presents a pragmatic and valid means of testing the efficacy of TMSs in robust controlled conditions, notwithstanding the possible discrepancies which may exist at the outset of the potential ethical concerns which could be raised (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008). However, such studies were seemingly non-existent, until Moskovsky et al. (2013) attempted to respond to this challenge with a quasi-experimental, longitudinal design. Alrabai (2016) claims that this study effectively establishes the previously missing causal link between TMSs and motivated behaviour.

Accordingly, Moskovsky et al.'s (2013) Saudi Arabian investigation of EFL teachers and learners was novel in design; the researchers studied two large groups of Saudi EFL students of varying language proficiencies and ages (n=296). One set was a control group and the other, an experimental cohort. They also prudently matched teachers to each group according to demographic factors, to further control for variations. After piloting, the researchers partially replicated the earlier work of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) and Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) and pre-selected ten TMSs which were utilised in the experimental group, while the control group learners were only exposed to conventional pedagogical practices (Moskovsky et al., 2013).

To further strengthen the validity of the study, the experimental group teachers were provided with directions on how to utilise TMSs in their praxis. The researchers observed the teachers' implementation of TMSs in the experimental group and confirmed that the same techniques did not feature in the control cohort. Moskovsky et al. (2013) concluded that student motivation increased over time, significantly more in the experimental group, thus providing evidence for the legitimacy of the motivational practice. Moskovsky et al. (2013) contend that their findings transcend a simple interrelationship between variables to offer a concrete association between the use of TMSs and the actual motivated behaviour exhibited by the learners. Furthermore, they assert that the study was the first to adequately fulfill Gardner and Tremblay's (1994) earlier overture. However, while perhaps the findings do exemplify a causal link between TMSs and increased, subsequent motivated behaviour over time, the research did not seek to determine a relationship between TMSs and their effect on achievement or acquisition.

Thus, it is observable from the studies discussed above that a seemingly strong association exists between the role of the teacher, TMSs, and resultant positive behaviour. However, perhaps one of the most pressing issues in contemporary EFL/SLA motivational research is establishing a robust link between TMSs and learner success. Ultimately, if TMSs are to be extensively adopted, conclusive findings that show how they positively impact English acquisition would not only benefit learners but also reinforce the theoretical assumptions in literature (e.g., Bernaus & Gardner, 2008) and perhaps shape future EFL pedagogical approaches.

Alrabai's (2016) notable research appears to have successfully accomplished this aim. At the time of writing, it is thought that this is the only study of its kind, a Saudi Arabian quasi-experimental study, which builds on Moskovsky et al. (2013) and employs similar methodological procedures. However, the distinction lies in Alrabai (2016) seeking to establish the elusive empirical link between TMSs and student achievement.

Alrabai (2016) integrated questionnaires, observation, and an achievement measurement instrument to collect data from a cohort of students (n=437) and language teachers (n=17). The researcher describes how, following robust statistical analysis, "learner motivation explained 92.6 percent of the variance in learner achievement" (Alrabai, 2016, pp. 328–329) and "the association between the IV (teacher behaviour) and DV (learner achievement) is completely accounted for by MV (learner motivation)" (p. 329). Yet, while this study may have been the first of its kind, and perhaps the most in consonance with Gardner and Tremblay's (1994) call to action, it is not without limitations. Similar to Moskovsky et al. (2013), the study only included male respondents, due to issues of gender segregation and access, which could be viewed as a potential constraint. However, Alrabai (2016) attends this issue, claiming that if a similar study were to be carried out with female participants the findings would have been even more representative based on

the assumption that female EFL students are naturally more motivated. Yet, I suggest that such a claim cannot be based on supposition and would need to be supported by compelling empirical evidence in the Saudi Arabian context and beyond. Additionally, as Alrabai (2016) concedes, whenever studies include self-reporting there are always constraints. Skehan (1989) also describes how questionnaires inevitably trigger the hazard of social desirability since 'the respondent may answer an item not with his true beliefs, attitudes...but rather with the answer which...will reflect well on him (1989, p. 62). This is a form of impression management (Neuman, 2003) and perhaps challenging to control for. Moreover, and true of all the studies discussed here which mobilise questionnaires, the content is also necessitated to an extent by the researcher's own agenda (Skehan, 1991). However, with motivation being 'an abstract, multifaceted construct subject to various internal, contextual and temporal processes' (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012) - finding objective instruments is perhaps inherently onerous.

#### Qualitative Research

As seen thus far, TMS research has generally relied on the quantitative paradigm and mobilised self-report data and observational scales to assess these techniques (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012). However, mixed methods approaches have also emerged, 'to complement the dominant quantitative paradigm... to address the dynamic and situated complexity of L2 motivation ... also mirroring a general trend in SLA research' (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012, p. 402)<sup>3</sup>.

Further along the continuum, qualitative designs are also currently more prevalent in the SLA field (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012). Such approaches may overcome the epistemological and ontological critiques of quantitative research (Bryman, 2008) which view it as "overly simplistic, decontextualized, reductionist in terms of its generalizations, and failing to capture the meanings that actors attach to their lives and circumstances" (Brannen, 2005, p. 7). Thus, the qualitative paradigm may facilitate a better understanding of the students' own feelings about their EFL experiences (Friedman, 2011), and by adopting a constructivist approach, researchers are better situated to document multiple, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives (Friedman, 2011). This appears a logical approach to studying individual differences in SLA, since the dynamic motivational construct is ostensibly constantly in flux, intrinsically individual, and occurring in social contexts (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012).

One such insightful and relevant study discussed briefly here, is Astuti (2016). The researcher conducted a case study in Indonesian high schools to determine whether Dörnyei's (2001) MTP framework was contextually compatible. Astuti (2016) incorporated a qualitative methodology including classroom observations, stimulated recall, and focus groups to explore and describe motivational techniques as applied in context.

Ultimately, Astuti (2016) discovered that the majority of TMSs from Dörnyei's MTP (2001) was relevant in the context, and echoing earlier studies, the teacher was found to be the most significant determinant in motivating students. The language instructor fostered motivation by, for instance, creating a positive classroom ethos, reminding EFL students of the benefits of their endeavours, and ensuring that classroom activities were engaging, enjoyable, and varied (Astuti, 2016). Moreover, the researcher also noted that one effective strategy revealed in her study was not included in Dörnyei's (2001) framework: The discreet use of the first language (L1). This was shown to have motivational value in facilitating positive classroom interactions. This was a unique empirical observation (Astuti, 2016) and supported in the literature by Nation (2003) who explained that the extent to which the L1 is relied upon could depend on both proficiency level and context.

Overall, Astuti's (2016) study presents a thick description (Punch, 2005) by giving extended voice to both teachers and student respondents via the inclusion of lengthy quotes, whilst reflecting the social nature of language learning. However, this was a small-scale case study, and while the findings may not be generalizable, the design may reveal salient points for further investigation (Punch, 2005), including the influence of culture on TMSs.

#### Cultural Implications

Now, I focus in on a consideration of how effective motivational strategies maybe depending on the cultural contexts in which they are implemented. Previously, Guilloteaux, and Dörnyei (2008) identified the need to investigate the cultural nature of TMSs and whether transferability across distinctive EFL contexts as

<sup>3</sup> For an example of a more recent mixed-methods approach, see Alhodiry (2016).



feasible. Subsequent influential research has taken place in diverse contexts, including Hungary, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia.

In Indonesia, Astuti (2016) found that certain strategies may not be effective, namely, those that encourage self-reflection, evaluation, and foster individual learner autonomy; in other words, those in the fourth subset of Dörnyei's (2001) MTP framework. This partly echoes Cheng and Dörnyei's (2007) finding that some commandments were interchangeable across contexts including "displaying motivating teacher behaviour, promoting learners' self-confidence creating a pleasant classroom climate and presenting tasks properly, yet the notion of promoting learner autonomy" (p.171) was effective in Hungary yet demonstrated scant relevance in Taiwan. Furthermore, the Taiwanese teachers tended to celebrate their learners' efforts more than their Hungarian counterparts did, suggesting a clear cultural distinction between European and Asian contexts.

Furthermore, Wong's (2014) study investigated the relevance of TMSs in Hong Kong and included a comparative analysis of the most effective TMSs, drawing on studies conducted in Oman<sup>4</sup>, Taiwan, Hungary, Japan (Asante et al., 2012; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998; Sugita & Takeuchi, 2010<sup>5</sup>), respectively. Wong's analysis revealed some clear contextual differentials; for example, avoiding face-threatening acts was more important in the Japanese and Chinese studies, a positive learning environment was more germane in the Chinese, Taiwanese, and Hungarian contexts, and the Japanese and Omani respondents were the only two cohorts to favour positive feedback highly (Wong, 2014). Perhaps the most remarkable conclusion is that Wong could not identify any generalizable TMSs across contexts, let alone across a single continent: "one ... may be viewed as effective by one group ... and as ineffective by another, even if both groups are from Asia" (p.145). Therefore, this contradicts some earlier findings (e.g., Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007), suggesting that culture is a more salient and dominating influence on TMS effectiveness than previously conjectured.

## Discussion

In the following section, I discuss the reviewed studies to specifically address the research questions presented in the introduction.

### 1. How effective are TMSs on learners' intrinsically motivated behaviour?

The teacher certainly plays a crucial role in modelling behaviour for learners. The empirical research discussed here is replete with evidence that certain techniques can be employed to positively influence learner behaviours, such as participation and attention, to improve the overall quality of the learning experience. This appears especially apparent in Moskovsky et al. (2013), which perhaps supersedes earlier studies by presenting a robust empirical link between TMSs and behaviour.

More specifically, Dörnyei and Csizer's (1998) Ten Commandments provide pragmatic examples that can ostensibly be adopted with ease. Further research has supported the list (e.g., Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007), displaying how the language instructor can effectively create a positive atmosphere to galvanise learners. Similarly, other studies have selected meaningful interventions from the broader MTP (e.g., Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008) while some researchers have raised situation-specific sets of TMSs using student surveys (e.g., Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014), all of which offer edifying insights for pedagogical practice.

EFL practitioners can consciously utilise these wide-ranging techniques, which may be selected and tailored as required. Specific interventions include encouraging learners to set goals, explaining activities clearly, and fostering student confidence (Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998). However, there is the question of where the distinction lies between 'good practice' and substantive TMSs. For instance, Sugita McEown and Takeuchi (2014) determined that timely lesson starts were of paramount importance, but can this be realistically categorised as a TMS? One may assume that avoiding tardiness is a pre-requisite of any teaching position, so I find it difficult to isolate this as a *strategy*. Moreover, the presence of negative correlations in the findings (Sugita McEown & Takeuchi, 2014) suggests that students themselves distinguish between their expectations of general teaching skills and TMSs. Additionally, Dörnyei (2001) concedes that TMSs may not be uniformly successful due to their dependence on many variables; therefore, the optimal and foremost means of aiding learners is to improve instructional quality. However, overall, research affirms that TMSs, whether examples of good practice or established techniques, may offer valuable inspiration to dedicated

<sup>4</sup> Asante et al. (2012) investigated the relationship between individual teacher differences, including qualifications, on TMS preference, outside the scope of this review.

<sup>5</sup> An earlier study by the same researchers.

EFL teachers wishing to foster positivity in their learners. Therefore, I believe that teacher training should certainly harness the value of TMSs.

### 2. How does the use of TMSs influence learner achievement?

Undoubtedly, establishing a robust association between TMS application and learner achievement is challenging. However, Alrabai (2016) presents evidence of a direct causal link between the two, notwithstanding the inevitable limitations. More research is needed in a variety of contexts, perhaps replicating this study, to further ground the findings. Again, the use of self-reporting is an enduring methodological constraint. Yet future mixed-methods and qualitative studies could produce descriptive accounts of student experiences and attitudes towards various interventions and the effects these TMSs have on both intrinsic motivation and actual progress.

### 3. How effective are TMSs in different cultural contexts?

This review offered significant evidence for the limits culture places on TMS effectiveness. In a broad sense, the Asian countries studied, such as Japan, Taiwan, China, and Korea, may be thought of as more 'traditional' didactic contexts, which are predominantly teacher-centered. Therefore, it comes as little surprise that avoiding face-threatening acts was important yet promoting learner autonomy was of less salience. Conversely, in Hungary, a European context, learner self-confidence, and autonomy were more relevant. Whereas Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) and Astuti (2016) suggested that certain TMSs were transferable across contexts, Wong (2014)'s study challenges the validity of this conclusion; suggesting that even in individual continents, which share some cultural values, there are still discrepancies regarding specific TMSs' effectiveness. Thus, culture is a critical determinant of how learners perceive and react to TMSs, and this should be a prominent consideration in EFL teacher praxis.

### Conclusion

This article has revealed that studying motivational strategies is a complex endeavour regardless of the researcher's paradigmatic orientation. Furthermore, establishing an evidential link between motivational strategies and student achievement remains quite tenuous. Moreover, it appears that cultural context may further elide a clear understanding of how, when and where motivational strategies can be optimally mobilised.

Intrinsic motivation does appear to be an imperative condition for EFL learners (Ng & Ng, 2015), which can seemingly be fostered by practitioners through the application of TMSs. This review has suggested that TMSs are instrumental tools, to be selected by teachers who may shape the techniques to suit their cultural context, thereby exerting favourable impacts on their students, situating them in a positive learning environment. It also presents important insights for scholars of SLA, EFL teachers, and training course designers (e.g., CELTA, Delta), yet more research is needed to inform theory, especially with regard to the interconnectedness of TMSs and achievement.

Perhaps future research could be performed comparatively – for example with researchers using the same TMSs in two or more disparate contexts (e.g., in nations in both Europe and Asia) to see how well particular strategies are received. This approach would permit a true comparison, notwithstanding the methodological and logistical challenges that may be faced. Additionally, if researchers conduct longitudinal qualitative studies with extensive interviewing, paying close attention to cultural factors, this could perhaps yield more insight into both teachers' and students' perceptions of effective motivational techniques in varied EFL contexts.

This may be even more relevant with the move to online teaching in so many contexts which has, to some degree, disrupted the interpersonal relationships between educator and learner (Howard, 2020). Perhaps new delivery modes call for new conceptualizations of motivational strategies to mediate the challenges brought about by the loss of face-to-face contact.

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