

## **Motivational Practice in High-Schools in Vietnam: EFL Teachers' Strategies from Student Perspective**

Loi Van Nguyen\*, Ph.D, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, Vietnam  
*loinguyen@ctu.edu.vn*

Nuong Nguyen Thi My, MA in Tesol, Long My High School, Hau Giang Province, Vietnam  
*mynuong13121987@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

Despite abundant research on teachers' motivational strategies worldwide, scant attention has been paid to this in Vietnam. Thus, the current study aimed to investigate the high school EFL teachers' use of motivational strategies reported by students and their attitudes towards these motivational strategies. The participants consisted of 416 students taught by 30 EFL teachers from ten high schools of eight provinces in the Mekong Delta. A semi-opened questionnaire was employed to elicit students' report on the motivational strategies employed by their English teachers, and their judgments about the value of these strategies. Findings of the study indicated that the teachers frequently used top motivational strategies as reported in previous research. Such strategies were also judged to be motivating by the students. However, noticeably, the students highly valued teacher recognition of their efforts and a harmonious behaviour and ascribed these practice to their increased motivation. Other strategies were also suggested by students that teachers should use. The implication is that cultural differences mediate students' perceptions, and that the EFL teachers in the context should attend to fundamental strategies, and the ones preferred by students.

**Keywords:** motivational strategies, student perspective, EFL, high-school

### **Introduction**

Exerting a significant influence on foreign language learning achievement (Gardner, 1985; Dörnyei & Otto, 1998; Reid, 2007), learner motivation is often regarded as “the most complex and challenging issue facing teachers” (Dörnyei, 2001a, p.116). Ellis (1996, p.215) emphasized that learner motivation depends largely upon the “teacher's initiative”. Teacher actions in the classroom are thus recognized to play a crucial role in pushing students' language learning (Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei, 1998; Dörnyei, 2001b; Guilloteaux; 2007; Karimi & Hosseini, 2019).

In Vietnamese schools where English is a subject taught weekly for a couple of hours, and “the teacher is expected to be the sole provider of experience in the target language” (Le, 1999, p.74), there exist few opportunities for the target language use. Therefore, the pressure to pass the national graduation English exam seems to be the major force motivating a majority of students (Ton & Pham, 2010; Tran, 2007). Given this situation, teaching practice plays an indispensable role in impacting students' intrinsic motivation. Motivation-promoting strategies constitute the essential knowledge, which teachers can be made aware of and deploy to improve their teaching practice. In this respect, a number of studies on teachers' motivational strategy use and its impact on motivation have been conducted outside Vietnam (e.g., Cho & Teo, 2013; Dorney & Csizer, 1998; Guilloteaux; 2007; Karimi & Hosseini, 2019). Furthermore, research (e.g., Cheng & Dorney, 2007) concluded that motivational strategies vary in their impacts, depending on cultural contexts. Scant research has been undertaken about what motivational strategies are often

employed in the Vietnamese EFL classroom, and how such strategies are perceived by students. Therefore, a study that focuses on exploring these issues is still worthwhile since its results could provide further corroborating evidence and offer useful implications for improving English teaching in the local context. The following questions were investigated:

1. What motivational strategies are often used by Vietnamese EFL high-school teachers as reported by their students?
2. What strategies are perceived to be important by students? Are their attitudes different in terms of gender, learning experience and grade-levels?
3. Is there a match between reported motivational strategies and students' rating of their importance?

## **Literature Review**

### **Teacher motivational strategies and their impact on learner motivation**

Motivational strategies (MS) are widely described by many researchers. Dörnyei (2001a) view MS as motivational influences deliberately used to obtain the long-term positive outcomes. Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008, p.57) conceptualize MS as “instructional interventions applied by the teacher to elicit and stimulate students' motivation”.

A variety of MS have been proposed for application in language classrooms (Ruesch, Brown, & Dewey, 2011). By synthesizing theories of motivation, Oxford and Shearin (1994) suggested practical implications for teachers. William and Burden (1997) further suggested 12 strategies that teachers could use to motivate their students. However, Dörnyei's (1994) work lays a foundation for developing a conceptual framework of MS. The researcher described a three-level model of second language motivation: language, learner, and learning environment. The elements respectively specify the values and attitudes that a society, including its people, attaches to the target language; “the need for achievement and self-confidence”, and the factors relevant to a classroom setting such as course materials, teacher, and group dynamics (Cited in Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998, pp. 206-207). On this ground, Dörnyei and Csizer (1998) developed a questionnaire and collected data from 200 Hungarian teachers of English about their perspectives on the importance of MS in the classroom and the frequency with which they employed these strategies. This empirical study offers strong evidence for a motivational framework known as the ‘Ten Commandments of Motivation’. These ten macro-strategies include clusters of specific techniques for motivating language learners, as cited below in descending order of importance according to the researchers.

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. Familiarize learners with the target language culture.

(Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998, p.215)

Over the decades, research worldwide has indicated a substantial effect of teacher motivational behaviours on student motivation and language learning, and several studies draw

on the ten macro-strategies presented above in different contexts to explore the effect (Alrabai, 2016; Dörnyei, 2001a; Dörnyei, 2001b; Guilloteaux 2007; Karimi & Hosseini, 2019; Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, & Ratcheva, 2013). For example, Guilloteaux (2007) reported a study that involved 27 EFL teachers from 20 different middle schools in South Korea and 1300 students. The teachers' motivational strategies were assessed by the Motivation Orientation of Language Teaching scheme based on Spada and Frohlich (1995). The students' motivation was measured by a self-report questionnaire. This study concluded that the students' motivated learning behaviours and their motivational state increased due to the teachers' use of motivational strategies. Cho and Teo (2013) similarly found that Thai English-as-an-international-language teachers in all governmental secondary schools practised 28 MS, and their Grade-9 students' motivation was enhanced. This in turn has led to their achievement in the target language. Moskovsky et al. (2013) further confirmed the effect of teacher motivational practice on students' motivation with an experimental study. Fourteen EFL teachers and 296 EFL learners with different levels of study (from secondary to tertiary) and different levels of English proficiency (beginner, intermediate, and advanced) in Saudi Arabia participated in the study. Ten preselected motivational strategies were employed in the experimental group over an 8-week period. The results of the pre- and post-versions of a questionnaire indicated that the experimental group increased motivation in learning English due to teachers' motivational behaviours.

### **Teacher and student perceptions of motivational strategies**

Given the relationship between teacher motivational practice and student motivation, it is essential to understand how teachers and students react to motivational strategies. Research in this strand has also revealed varied teacher and student perceptions about the importance relative to the frequency of teachers' motivational practice.

Regarding teacher perceptions and practice, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) explored the MS used by 387 Taiwanese EFL teachers of various institutional backgrounds. Using a survey of 48 motivational strategies drawn from Dörnyei's (2001b) list, clustered into ten macro-strategies, the researchers found that the ten macro-strategies were employed in the following descending order of frequency: (1) Setting a good personal example, (2) Recognizing learners' effort and success, (3) Encouraging self-confidence, (4) Generating a relaxing class atmosphere, (5) Presenting appropriate tasks, (6) Promoting goal-oriented learning, (7) Providing stimulating learning tasks, (8) Familiarizing learners with L2 cultural background and values, (9) Encouraging group cohesiveness and group norms, and (10) Promoting learner autonomy. The study confirmed top five rated motivational strategies as reported in Dörnyei and Csizer's (1998) study such as (1), (3), (4), and (5). It further revealed that the teachers perceived importance of strategies (7) and (8), relative to their underutilization. Likewise, Alqahtani (2016) made a survey of 117 EFL teachers in the Arabian context, confirming that (1) and (3) were among the top ones. In contrast, strategies rated low such as (8) and (10) in Dörnyei and Cheng's (2007) study were rated as top important ones, very much like that reported in Dörnyei and Csizer's (1998) study.

In terms of teachers' versus students' perceptions, a major study was conducted by Ruech, Bown and Dewey (2011) which engaged 126 students from North America enrolling in various foreign language courses, and 30 instructors of corresponding languages at Brigham Young University in responding to a questionnaire of 51 micro-strategies based on Dörnyei and Csizer (1998). The study results showed that some similarities existed in the perceived importance of some strategies, while perceptions of some other strategies were culturally different. The teachers generally agreed that teacher personal behaviour, rapport with students, a relaxing climate, building self-confidence, and proper presentation of tasks were the top

motivational strategies. This finding confirms the importance of these strategies in the list of Dörnyei and Csizer (1998). In comparing the teachers' and students' perceptions, Ruech et al. (2011) found that the teachers and students exhibited significant perceptual differences in strategies related to presenting tasks, encouraging efforts and avoiding student/social comparison. The teachers tended to rate efforts more importantly than the students did, while they rated tasks as having a lower motivational force than the students did. The students also found open comparisons demotivating whereas the teachers rated this strategy as an important one. Additionally, the students appreciated teachers' setting a positive behaviour, presenting tasks properly, and dedication and willingness to develop a good relationship with students more than recognizing their efforts which was conversely considered motivating by Taiwanese teachers. The authors concluded that there is a need to include students' perspectives on MS. Furthermore, Al-Shehri and Etherington (2017) found a discrepancy between teachers' and students' beliefs about classroom motivation in the Saudi Arabian context. The teachers held on to the belief that strategies that support students' academic achievement are motivating, while their students reported strategies related to actual social learning process such as participation and interaction actually motivated them. Besides, Bernaus and Gardner (2008) noted that EFL secondary school teachers preferred traditional strategies to innovative ones, which made students more aware of traditional than innovative strategies, whereas Cho and Teo (2013) found that students preferred innovative MS to traditional ones.

To sum up, research has up-to-date revealed the impact of teacher motivational practice on students' motivation; the similarities and differences in teacher and student perspectives on MS. There is evidence that cultural contexts play a role in teachers' and students' perspectives on what motivates learning. Besides, different academic environments may exert different influences on teachers' classroom decisions relative to their students' characteristics and preferences. In the EFL context of Vietnam, research on teachers' MS remains a gap to be filled. For this reason, the current study seeks to expand knowledge by examining EFL teachers' MS from the perspective of Vietnamese high-school students only. This could be considered as a learner-centred approach, emphasizing students' voice in informing classroom teaching.

## **Research Method**

### **Design**

The current study is descriptive in nature, using a semi-structured questionnaire to collect data. The participants were invited to participate in responding the questionnaire through convenience sampling. This method was used due to the availability of the school population we had access to. The questionnaire was administered to students with the help of colleagues working at different high schools in the Mekong Delta.

### **Sample**

A total of ten high schools of eight provinces in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam were approached through our network with high-school teachers. 416 students were selected from the classes of 30 teachers of English from these schools. These students included 171 males and 245 females. Of the total, 214 students were in Grade 10, 127 in Grade 11 and 75 in Grade 12. 42.3% students started to learn English from Grade 3, and 57.7% from Grade 6. The average class time per week was two hours, and classroom activities were largely based on the English textbooks designed by the Ministry of Education and Training.

## Instruments

Questionnaire was used as the instrument for collecting data, an appropriate and useful one for eliciting information on attitude, motivation or opinion (McMillan, 2001). The questionnaire comprised 32 strategy items adapted from Dörnyei and Cheng's (2007) 48-item original questionnaire based on item relevance to the context of Vietnam. Most of them were rephrased and then translated into Vietnamese. Two new items were added, namely "Teacher encourages students to learn from classmates in small groups." (item 26) and "Teacher arranges groups appropriately for particular tasks." (item 29). A five-point scale applied to the practice frequency and importance level. The overall alpha reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was .89.

The questionnaire also included 4 open-ended questions to explore students' thinking further. One question was to ask students to report on other strategies than the ones listed that their teachers used. Another asked them to write down which strategies (the corresponding numbers) listed in the questionnaire made them feel motivated to study English. Another focused on what they think teachers should do to motivate them in studying English. The last item asked them to judge whether they generally felt motivated in their English classes. The ten macro-strategies are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** *Questionnaire items clustered into ten teacher motivational macro-strategies*

Number	Macro strategy	Items
1	Showing harmonious behaviour	1, 3, 9, 24
2	Recognizing students' efforts	5, 19
3	Promoting learners' self-confidence	7, 27, 32, 33
4	Generating a pleasant classroom climate	2, 8, 13, 29
5	Presenting tasks properly	12, 16, 22
6	Increasing learners' awareness of goal setting	15, 21
7	Making learning tasks simulating	4, 6, 10, 25
8	Familiarizing learners with English-related values	11, 14, 20, 30
9	Promoting group cohesiveness and group norms	18, 23, 26, 34
10	Promoting learner autonomy	17, 28, 31

## Data collection procedure

Before being administered on site, the Vietnamese questionnaire was checked by two experts and piloted for wording clarity. To collect data, first, the participants were briefly informed of the study purpose. Then, the questionnaire was delivered, and the participants were allowed to complete it at home so that they had enough time for reading, thinking, and recalling. They were asked to return the questionnaire the following day.

## Data analysis

Data were entered into SPSS for analysis of descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics such as independent sample t-test and ANOVA test were employed to compare the differences in students' perceptions before the assumption about normal distribution was checked.

## Results

### Vietnamese EFL high school teachers' use of motivational strategies

From students' report, as presented in Figure 1, the overall mean score of teacher use of motivational strategies in the high school EFL classroom was  $M = 3.43$  ( $SD = .55$ ). This score

indicates that strategies above the mean were more regularly used and the ones below were less often used.

**Table 2.** *Macro-strategies used by Vietnamese EFL high school teachers*

<b>Macro-strategies</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD.</b>
Recognizing student efforts	416	1.00	5.00	3.90	.78
Showing proper teacher behaviour	416	1.75	5.00	3.77	.63
Promoting learners' self confidence	416	1.25	5.00	3.75	.67
Presenting tasks properly	416	1.00	5.00	3.59	.71
Creating a pleasant classroom climate	416	1.50	5.00	3.47	.70
Promoting group cohesiveness and norms	416	1.00	5.00	3.35	.77
Promoting learner autonomy	416	1.00	5.00	3.33	.75
Increasing learner awareness of setting goals	416	1.00	5.00	3.25	.90
Making learning tasks stimulating	416	1.25	5.00	3.24	.76
Familiarizing learners with English-related values	416	1.00	5.00	2.86	.74

Accordingly, five most regularly used macro-strategies were recognizing students' efforts ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = .78$ ), showing harmonizing teacher behaviour ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = .63$ ), promoting learners' self-confidence ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = .67$ ), creating a pleasant classroom climate ( $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = .70$ ), and presenting tasks properly ( $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = .71$ ). Strategies such as promoting group cohesiveness and group norms ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = .78$ ), promoting learner autonomy ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = .75$ ), increasing learners' awareness of setting goals ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = .90$ ), making the learning tasks stimulating ( $M = 3.24$ ,  $SD = .76$ ) were less often practiced. Familiarizing learners with English-related values ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = .74$ ) were the least employed by the teachers.

Data from open-ended questions further showed that games, music, videos, pictures and bonus marks were other strategies that their teachers used in their classes to motivate them in studying English.

### **Students' attitudes towards motivational strategies**

The overall mean score of students' attitudes towards the importance of teacher motivational strategies was relatively high ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = .46$ ). This may suggest that the students tended to think that teacher motivational practice was relatively important in their English learning. The importance rank of each macro-strategy was further presented in the table below in descending order.

**Table 2.** *Students' rating of importance of motivational macro-strategies in descending order*

Macro-strategy	Mean	SD.	Rank
Recognize students' efforts	4.19	.70	#1
Promote learners' self-confidence	4.01	.56	#2
Show proper behaviour	3.96	.60	#3
Present tasks properly	3.78	.65	#4
Make learning tasks stimulating	3.75	.66	#5
Promote group cohesiveness and group norms	3.70	.65	#6
Increase learners' awareness of setting goals	3.68	.79	#7
Create a pleasant classroom climate	3.67	.68	#8
Promote learner autonomy	3.61	.68	#9
Familiarize learners with English - related values	3.55	.78	#10

(1=not important, 5=very important)

It is obvious that the three most crucial macro-strategies were related to learner affective concerns, i.e. the needs for being recognized (#1), feeling encouraged and safe (#2), and the harmonious behaviour of teachers (#3), who are traditionally regarded as an authority in the Vietnamese culture. A look at the results of specific strategies further showed that 'Teacher shows enthusiasm for teaching English' was rated top ( $M = 4.47$ ,  $SD = .72$ ), followed by 'Teacher makes sure grades reflect students' efforts and hard work' ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = .90$ ). Methodology-related strategies regarding task design and presentation (#4 and #5) and grouping (#6) were considered less important. The students rated the need for autonomy and getting to know about English cultural values (#7 and #9) the lowest importance.

### **Difference in students' attitudes by gender, students' learning experience, school area and grade levels**

Regarding the mediation of gender, grade, school area and students' experience with English study, the Independent sample t-test and ANOVA results showed that there was no statistically significant difference in students' attitudes in terms of gender ( $t = -.34$ ;  $p = .73$ ), students' classroom experience in terms of starting year of exposure to English (primary or secondary school) ( $t = .74$ ;  $p = .46$ ), and grade (10, 11, & 12) ( $F = 1.39$ ;  $p = .25$ ). On the other hand, Table 3 indicated a significant difference existed between the attitudes of students in the urban area and those in the rural area ( $t = 3.47$ ;  $p = .001$ ). City students attached a higher value to motivational strategies than countryside students in regards to three macro-strategies, namely promoting learner autonomy, creating a pleasant classroom climate, and making learning tasks stimulating.

**Table 3.** *The p-value and mean difference of importance by living area*

Dimension	Macro-strategies	p-value	Mean (Urban)	Mean (Rural)
Living area	Promote learner autonomy	.000	3.75 (SD=.64)	3.46 (SD=.69)
	Create a pleasant classroom climate	.002	3.77 (SD=.66)	3.57 (SD=.69)
	Make learning tasks stimulating	.003	3.84 (SD=.61)	3.65 (SD=.70)

Most of the students felt motivated by their teachers' motivational practices. Specifically, 199 out of 214 (93%) students in Grade 10 felt motivated; 84.3% students in Grade 11 (107 out of 127 students), and 53.3% twelfth graders (40 of 75) responded that they were motivated in English lessons. Additionally, based on open-ended questions, more than half of the students (53.6%) reported feeling more motivated in learning English if their teachers are nice, friendly, and humorous because this creates an enjoyable atmosphere in the class.

Together with the data presented above, it is concluded that a positive attitude existed towards the motivational strategies used by the high school teachers. The students in general felt the importance of motivational strategies.

### Match between teacher motivational strategies and students' rating of importance

Table 4 presents teacher motivational practice frequency rank order and the students' importance ranking. Apparently, most of the macro-strategies frequently applied by the teachers were also considered vital to be motivating by their students. The pattern of perception is that all of the strategies were rated to be more important relative to the teachers' utilisation of the strategies. When subtracting the importance means from the practice means (see Dörnyei and Cheng, 2007), the results showed that all the mean differences were positive.

**Table 4.** *The importance and frequency orders of macro-strategies reported by students*

Macro-strategy	Importance Rank (Mean)	Practice Rank (Mean)	Mean difference
Recognize students' efforts	1 (4.19)	1 (3.90)	0.29
Promote learners' self-confidence	2 (4.01)	3 (3.75)	0.26
Show harmonious behaviour	3 (3.96)	2 (3.77)	0.19
Present tasks properly	4 (3.78)	4 (3.59)	0.19
Make learning tasks interesting	5 (3.75)	9 (3.24)	0.51
Promote group cohesiveness and group norms	6 (3.70)	6 (3.35)	0.35
Increase learners' awareness of setting goals	7 (3.68)	8 (3.25)	0.43
Create a pleasant classroom climate	8 (3.67)	5 (3.47)	0.20
Promote learner autonomy	9 (3.61)	7 (3.33)	0.28
Familiarize learners with English-related values	10 (3.55)	10 (2.86)	0.69

Noticeably, recognizing students' efforts was ranked top in accelerating students' learning motivation. Promoting self-confidence stood at the second position, and teacher behaviour ranked the third. However, the strategy that the teachers often created a pleasant classroom climate was ranked eighth, which suggests that it was considered not very important in motivating them. 'Making learning tasks interesting' was perceived to cause motivation, but were almost least practiced in the classroom. Familiarizing with English-related values was the least important and practiced. Spearman's correlation test was further run between the average means of importance rank and practice rank, and the result revealed that there was a medium correlation ( $r = .525$ ,  $p = .000$ ).

### Discussion

One of the findings which is in line with previous studies (Alqahtani, 2016; Cheng and Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998) is that the Vietnamese EFL teachers frequently utilized

macro-strategies such as teacher proper behaviour, self-confidence, an easy class atmosphere and proper task presentation. These strategies were also highly appreciated by the students. A significant difference was previously reported between teachers' use of motivational strategies and their students' preferences (Cho & Teo, 2013). However, overall in the current study, the teachers' motivational practice correlated with students' appreciation. This uncovers a similar pattern of perception to the one reported in previous studies in Hungary (Dörnyei & Cziser, 1998) and Taiwan (Cheng and Dörnyei, 2007). Together with these studies, the current one has confirmed that the most frequent motivational principles are proper teacher behaviour, recognition of students' efforts, encouragement of self-confidence, a pleasant classroom climate, and properly presented tasks. These strategies represent fundamental principles in language pedagogy and thus can be universally applied across teaching contexts to motivate language learners.

In particular, teacher proper behaviour proves to be the most crucial strategy across cultures. Further exploration of this macro-strategy revealed that 'Teacher shows enthusiasm for teaching English' was the most crucial strategy rated by the students. This result suggests that students appreciate and feel more motivated if teachers are enthusiastic and responsible, especially in regard to assisting less capable students in how to study English. Another noticeable finding is that recognition of student efforts was considered the most important, which is congruent with what was found in the Taiwanese context. Research in educational psychology suggests that Asian students place a high value on efforts when compared to their Western counterparts; that is, they believe they can work harder to accomplish better performance (e.g., Grant & Dweck, 2001), and thus their efforts need to be properly acknowledged. In stark contrast to this attitude, the North American students in Ruech et al.'s (2011) study perceived efforts as unimportant motivational practice because in American culture recognizing efforts is considered as the lack of ability. This difference reflects the cultural difference in learners' perceptions of motivational practice.

Familiarizing learners with English-related values and particularly inviting English speakers to class were not highly appreciated although these strategies, as suggested by Gardner (1985), could enhance learner integrative motivation, and was found to increase learners' motivation in the context of Ken State University (He, 2009). Like what was reported in Cheng and Dörnyei's study (2007), these strategies were underutilized. This is simply because few English native speakers were available in their areas. The teachers might lack cultural experiences abroad, and the assessment system in high schools nationwide focused on grammar and reading skills at the expense of communicative ability. Therefore, it is doubted that an emphasis on the significance of studying English for cultural understanding would drive Vietnamese students and others in similar EFL settings to learn the language. Promoting learner autonomy was both least used and perceived least important, which aligns with Cheng and Dörnyei (2007). But this finding greatly differs from that in previous studies in Arab Saudi and the Western part where teachers and students emphasize learner autonomy (Alqahtani, 2016; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998; Ruech et al., 2011). We agree with Cheng and Dörnyei's (2007) explanation that in the Asian culture, learner autonomy may be conceptualized in a different way. Research on this in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2016) confirms that teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy leaned towards the ability and skills to cope with learning tasks, rather than the Western self-directed and choice-based learning.

Nevertheless, some slight differences existed between what the teachers expected and practiced, and students' preferences. One noteworthy observation from an open-ended question is that the students listed teachers' creation of a pleasant classroom climate as one of the strategies

that would motivate them in learning English, contrary to their low rating of its importance (the eighth rank). This implies that those strategies students consider to be crucial may necessarily entail a motivational force, and that those strategies teachers frequently use may not necessarily be highly motivating for students. The way a strategy is implemented could play a more significant role.

Games and songs as well as funny stories were additionally suggested by the students as the strategies that EFL teachers should use to motivate them in learning English. This was also recommended by Cho and Teo (2013) as a way to build an enjoyable classroom atmosphere. Moreover, giving bonus marks was a new motivational strategy suggested by the students, which was not found in any study before. This fact reflects the dominance of instrumental and extrinsic motivation and the learning-for-exam motivation that a majority of Vietnamese students hold.

The difference in students' attitudes towards the three strategies like promoting learner autonomy, creating a pleasant classroom climate, and providing stimulating tasks possibly indicates that the urban students take a more active approach, and are in favour of learner autonomy, focus on the classroom atmosphere as well as task presentation and implementation more than the rural students. This could also be due to the different exposures to opportunities for studying and using English, teachers' teaching methods that the students have experienced, and students' levels of proficiency (Gomathi, 2014).

The students in general were motivated by their teachers' use of strategies, but students' motivation reduced as they levelled up from Grade 10 to Grade 12. This result indicates that students' motivation could have diminished towards the end of high school education because the frequency of teachers' practices of motivational strategies reduced. The mean scores of teacher motivational practices decreased from Grade 10 ( $M = 3.40$ ) to Grade 12 ( $M = 3.27$ ). Both teachers' practices of motivational strategies and students' attitudes towards these strategies were changed probably because they adapted to the assessment to achieve the temporary goal, which is to pass the graduation exam, a widely recognized wash-back effect on teaching in Vietnam (Le & Barnard, 2009).

Despite the limitations of the study which involve a non-representative sample and qualitative data, which reduces the level of generalizability and depth, the major findings have some useful implications. First, the study confirmed that some strategies may transcend cultures, and therefore provide the fundamental principles for classroom practice, and that, however, differences in the cultural contexts may impact motivational practice and participants' perceptions. Second, findings of this study are significant, considering the positive relationship between teachers' use of motivational strategies and students' attitudes towards these strategies. English learning can be better achieved by boosting students' motivation and that motivation can be enhanced by teachers' use of motivational strategies. Vietnamese high school teachers should attend to the motivational strategies which are appreciated by students. Strategies affecting their identity such as recognizing their efforts together with keeping a harmonious attitude towards the students are highly appreciated. Monitoring students' progress and rewarding their success in time as well as teaching them how to study English effectively should be also the focus of attention. It is further suggested that teachers use more language games and songs, be creative in designing and delivering tasks, and actively provide students with opportunities to get bonus marks. Finally, teachers should actively reflect on their selection of motivational strategies so as to adapt to students' preferences. It is expected that a match between teacher motivational practice and students' appreciation will drive students' motivation for learning English.

### Conclusions

This study provides further evidence from the student perspective to conclude that motivational strategies are vital measures for increasing student motivation. Some strategies have the universal potential as they reflect the nature of learning, while others could be less effective due to cultural differences, and thus can be selectively applied. As students play the central role in their learning process, the teacher should select appropriate strategies to increase students' intrinsic motivation. This could be an effective approach to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning English in the current context and other similar ones. Future research in similar settings could delve into the way teachers use specific strategies in the classroom, and its impact on students' motivation. Examining how cultural values or practices impact students' perceptions regarding effective language learning strategies, including motivational strategies.

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