



L2 Learners' Perceptions of Two Motivation-Based Online Programs: ARCS-Based and L2MSS Vision-Inspired Frameworks in Focus

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Abstract

Recent years have witnessed extensive research on motivation in second/foreign language (L2) contexts. Attempts have been made to develop motivation-based techniques and methods to boost learners' learning outcomes in L2 programs. Yet, studies that have targeted L2 learners' perceptions about the effectiveness of such programs in online classes remain scarce. This study addressed this gap and delved into L2 learners' perceptions of two motivation-oriented instructions, namely the ARCS-based (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction) and L2MSS vision-inspired (Second Language Motivational Self System) instructions, in an online English course. To this end, 41 learners of English were assigned to two groups. One group was instructed based on the ARCS motivation framework, and the other was instructed based on the L2MSS framework. Then, 10 volunteer participants from each group participated in focus group interviews. Thematic analysis of the data revealed 19 subthemes and 7 main themes, including 4 themes of attention-related pedagogy, relevance-oriented content, confidence-building elements, and sense of contentment/discontentment regarding the ARCS group, and 3 themes of ideal self-orientations, ought-to self-orientations, and situated learning/teaching experiences regarding the L2MSS group. The engaging content and appealing learning environment in the ARCS group and the future perspective enhancement and goal setting in the L2MSS group were motivating factors, creating positive perceptions of the two programs. The findings suggest utilizing attention-catching and vision-building strategies to motivate learners and enhance their L2 learning outcomes in online classes.

Keywords: L2 Learners, Motivation-based instruction, Online learning, Perception, Vision

Second/foreign language (L2) education has witnessed a gradual change from traditional in-person to online learning as an educational format in the new century. Online learning deals with the "interactions that are mediated through using digital, typically internet-based, technology" (Greenhow et al., 2022, p. 131). Moreover, the rapid integration of technology into

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education may create various L2 learning experiences, both positive and negative for L2 learners (Stanley, 2013). Technology-based instruction may result in an increase in learners' interest levels and a boost in self-confidence (Lamb, 2017), boredom, and confusion (D'Mello, 2013). Therefore, systematic probes into activities used in online contexts are essential to unravel the latent impacts of technology-based instruction and learn about the L2 learners' perceptions of online instruction.

Since the incorporation of web-based communication into L2 online instruction, the issue of how to motivate L2 learners and adapt them to the new environment has been a challenge for many L2 teachers. Although online learning can improve learner agency and autonomy (Suzuki, 2013), predict learners' engagement (Bolliger & Halupa, 2018), and lead to better educational outcomes (Kahu, 2013), its constraints can seriously impact the quality of the L2 learning experience. Some students have even announced their loss of motivation in online learning, mainly because of social isolation (Teodorescu et al., 2022). Substantiating learning outcomes and keeping learners motivated require well-designed activities and practices (Zhou & Zhang, 2023). Thus, explicit motivation-based instructions, based on structured frameworks of motivation, need to be engineered and tailored to the domain of L2 learning and skills, particularly in an L2 online setting.

Among various frameworks, ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction) and L2MSS (Second Language Motivational Self System) have gained prominence as two motivational models or frameworks in education. In the ARCS framework, proposed by Keller (1987, 1999, 2010), motivation is viewed as "what people desire, what they chose to do, and what they commit to do" (2010, p. 3). The ARCS framework focuses on those components that seize learners' attention, establish relevance, build confidence, and guarantee satisfaction in the learning process. On the other hand, the L2MSS emphasizes the dynamic interplay between L2 learners' ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experiences (Dörnyei, 2005). In this framework, individuals are motivated by being assisted in envisioning their desired future self and then being triggered to move away from their current self to the desired one (Dörnyei, 2009).

As Fang et al. (2023) and Yousefi and Mahmoodi (2022) have maintained, both frameworks can contribute to the field of education by offering insights. According to them, utilizing these frameworks can enhance learners' motivation, attitudes, emotional engagement, and performance. This issue is also supported by research, too. For instance, Huett et al. (2008) demonstrated the efficacy of ARCS-based mass messages for undergraduate students in a computer course in the US, which resulted in the students' increased interest, persistence, engagement, and content retention rate in the course. Also, Wu (2018) demonstrated the efficacy of ARCS-based instruction for fostering lexical retention of English vocabulary and academic performance among Taiwanese students. Regarding the L2MSS, Gertenbach (2019)

demonstrated the efficacy of this framework in strengthening L2 learners' *self*-guides. The results showed that such interventions improve L2 learners' visions of themselves as proficient future English speakers. However, little research has been conducted to put the ARCS and L2MSS frameworks under the spotlight from learners' perspectives in L2 education and examine L2 learners' attitudes and views towards the effectiveness of such instructions in online learning in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context of Iran. Accordingly, the present inquiry sought to address this gap by delving into the experiences and perceptions of the L2 (English) learners who were instructed through the ARCS-based and L2MSS vision-inspired programs in online learning mode by adopting a qualitative approach to get deeper insights about the learners' views regarding these two instructions/programs. This study proves significant in that it recognizes L2 learners' opinions of what strategies and activities motivate them in online settings and advances our understanding of the motivational measures and dynamics of online L2 classes.

Literature Review

Motivation is regarded as a predictor of deeper engagement in learning (Loderer et al., 2020) and one of the robust predictors of L2 behaviors (Ushioda, 2020) and L2 proficiency (Alrabai, 2022). Early scientific attempts to conceptualize motivation date back to the 19th century. Theories that believed in the existence of internal forces shaping human behaviors rose to prominence, marking the turning point for motivation research (Heckhausen, 1991).

Henceforth, motivation research underwent three distinct epochs or stages (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). The first stage, the social-psychological stage, predominantly attributed motivation levels to affective factors (Ushioda, 2009). However, sparked in the 1990s, the second stage, namely the cognitive-situated stage, heavily drew on educational psychology to incorporate cognitive theories into classroom contexts (Mahmoodi & Yousefi, 2021). Currently, the third stage, the socio-dynamic stage, dominates the field of motivation research, placing a pivotal emphasis on the dynamicity of motivation and its temporal fluctuations influenced by the interplay of contexts and individuals (Mahmoodi & Yousefi, 2021). Of the most rigorously substantiated models of motivation, the ARCS and the L2MSS frameworks have garnered considerable attention from practitioners owing to their applicability, contribution, and potential for the provision of procedural instructions (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Keller, 2010).

The ARCS framework combines components that synergistically construct a comprehensive motivational framework. According to Keller (1987, 2016), within this framework, four distinct components have been recognized: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. The attention component pertains to the process of captivating learners' focus on stimuli and maintaining them. It encompasses subcomponents such as perceptual arousal, inquiry arousal, and variability, with the primary aim of eliciting curiosity and sustaining a state

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of heightened awareness. For instance, The second component, namely the relevance component, refers to the congruence between learning prerequisites and prospective needs. Constituent elements of relevance encompass goal orientation, motive alignment, and familiarity. Confidence, the third element, stems from the perceived probability of success in the learning process and the practical encounters within educational settings. Subcomponents of confidence include learning requirements, opportunities for success, and personal control. The final component, satisfaction, posits that learning is reinforced when internal and external rewards are clearly defined and timely. Subcomponents of satisfaction consist of intrinsic reinforcement, extrinsic rewards, and equity. According to Keller (1987, 2016), the ARCS framework is practical, and instructional designers can establish and foster these components through a variety of activities, methods, strategies, and materials in various contexts to improve motivation. For instance, attention can be aroused in L2 learners by utilizing diverse media in the course (Tomlinson, 2013), providing a fascinating language learning context, and using humor in the class (Loderer et al., 2019). Relevance can be established by including culture-relevant and real-life activities (Chang & Zhao, 2012). Confidence can be instilled by giving learners some degree of control and lowering their anxiety (Keller, 2016). Satisfaction can be achieved by giving praise to learners (Satoto & Subekti, 2023).

Most studies (e.g., Chang & Lehman, 2002; Nafissi et al., 2019) centered on the ARCS model have adopted experimental orientation to investigate its effectiveness in educational settings. For instance, Chang and Lehman (2002) aimed to probe the effects of intrinsic motivation and relevance enhancement (a component of the ARCS model) on English L2 learners' ability to give and take criticism. The results showed that the use of relevance enhancement strategies promoted the L2 learners' comprehension of English criticism. Wu (2018) investigated the lexical retention of English vocabulary by adapting the treatment to the ARCS model. He came up with excellent learning effectiveness and positive feedback of learning motivation due to the higher interest and attention engendered by the game-based vocabulary practice system. As Keller (2016) claims, the application of the ARCS model in technology-based environments may help practitioners handle learning challenges. Ucar and Kumtepe (2020) applied the model in an English course for undergraduate students who were taking an English course online over an 11-week semester with 122 Turkish undergraduate learners. The results revealed that the group that was subject to the motivational strategies showed significantly higher gains in motivation, academic performance, and course interest scores. Li and Keller's (2018) meta-analysis research indicates that learners can exhibit a positive attitude toward such courses that implement the ARCS model.

As noted earlier, the socio-dynamic stage of motivation research placed substantial emphasis on the importance of the concept of the *self* in developing a robust motivation theory. The L2MSS, recognized as one of the dominant motivation models from 2005 on (Liu, 2024),

was introduced by Dörnyei (2005), which took into account the possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986). This theory posits that an individual's envisioned future selves play a crucial role in shaping their L2 learning motivation. The L2MSS model also drew on the self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), which holds that individuals compare their actual selves to their ideal and ought-to selves, leading to emotional and motivational consequences. The proposed model is a tripartite theory that entails three dimensions. The ideal L2 self component involves envisioning a favorable self-image an individual aspires to reach. It is associated with hopes, growth, and accomplishment, indicating a promotion-focused approach. Ought-to L2 self, on the other hand, encompasses the qualities deemed necessary for an individual to meet expectations and prevent potentially negative outcomes. As Dörnyei (2009) and Kim (2009) point out, the ought-to self acts as a source to supply the ideal self with triggers and incentives. The L2 learning experience, as the third constituent, refers to context-specific motivations that deal with the actual learning environment, including teachers, materials, and facilities.

The most notable element of the L2MSS model is the ideal L2 self, which is a reliable predictor of many L2-related variables (Al-Shehri, 2009; Sato & Lara, 2019). Since the ideal L2 self exhibits an impact on L2 motivation, several researchers (e.g., Magid & Chan, 2012) have attempted to devise vision-enhancement strategies to boost the ideal L2 self-construct. Imagery, “the ability to represent perceptual states in the absence of the appropriate sensory input” (Kosslyn et al., 2002, p. 342), has been employed to obtain the mental self-image, which is regarded as the central element of selves theory (Dörnyei, 2009). Relying on the L2MSS model, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) elaborated on a six-step vision enhancement program, outlined and displayed in Figure 1.

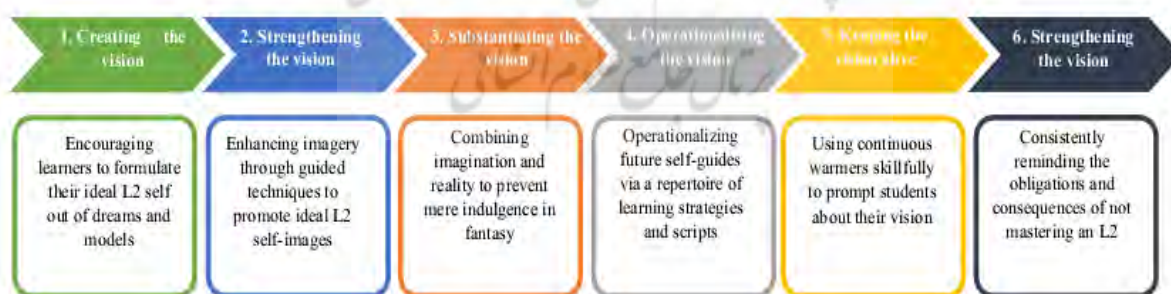


Figure 1. *Procedural Framework for Implementing Vision-Enhancement Intervention*

Note: Adapted from *The Psychology of the Language Learner revisited* (p. 98), by Zoltán Dörnyei and Stephen Ryan, 2015, Routledge.

Vision enhancement has been the focus of some empirical studies (e.g., Skottnik & Linden, 2019). For instance, Magid’s (2014) longitudinal study on the effects of using imagery-related techniques on L2 Chinese learners’ ideal L2 self resulted in a significant increase in the strength

of their L2 ideal self with a large effect size. However, he did not delve into the individual learners' perceptions of the intervention. Mackay (2019) conducted a study in which the instruction included activities designed in line with the vision enhancement program, aiming to improve Spanish EFL learners' L2-related vision through visualization techniques. The findings showed that the intervention had successfully assisted the Spanish EFL learners in developing their ideal future vision. More recently, Safdari (2021) investigated the efficacy of a vision-building intervention to enhance the motivational attributes of 51 Iranian EFL learners. The results showed that the vision-based intervention significantly improved both the vision and motivation of L2 learners. The above studies contribute to the literature by accentuating the role of vision enhancement in L2 motivational programs. However, they did not pay attention to L2 learners' perceptions of such motivation-based vision enhancement programs. Besides, they have not adopted a qualitative approach towards L2 learners' attitudes and views towards motivation-based instructions.

Purpose of the Study

Prior research corroborates the positive impact of technology-based online instructions in L2 learning (e.g., Hamouda, 2020; Kurucova et al., 2018). Also, the potential effect of the motivation-based instructions, including ARCS-based (Goksu & Islam Bolat, 2021; Karabatak & Polat, 2022) and L2MSS-based instructions (Mahmoodi & Yousefi, 2021) has been acknowledged. Nevertheless, little research has investigated the perceptions of L2 learners about motivation-based programs or instructions such as ARCS-based and L2MSS vision enhancement instructions in online environments. Online learning may create challenges for learners in the L2 learning process; therefore, it seems crucial to probe learners' views to learn about the effectiveness of such instructions and then design effective instructional strategies to meet learners' L2 learning needs. We conducted this qualitative research to find out EFL learners' perceptions of the ARCS-based and L2MSS vision-inspired classes in an online environment. The following research questions were then formulated:

1. What is the perception of EFL learners about ARCS-based instruction in the online classroom?
2. What is the perception of EFL learners about L2MSS vision-inspired instruction in the online classroom?

Method

Participants

The study took place in a language institute in two intact online classes consisting of 41 upper-intermediate EFL learners. The classes were selected based on the convenience sampling method. One class included 21 learners (11 males and 10 females), and the other included 20

learners (10 males and 10 females) with Persian as their mother tongue. The participants were young adult EFL learners (mean age of 18.4 and 18.6, respectively) and a mean of 5 years of English learning experience in the institute. They registered in the English course to improve their English proficiency. The two classes were labeled as the ARCS-based group (henceforth the ARCS group) and the L2MSS vision-inspired group (henceforth the L2MSS group). For this study, 10 individuals from each group (including 5 males and 5 females) voluntarily participated in focus group interviews to explore the participants' perceptions of the programs in the online classes.

Instrument

Focus group interviews were employed to gather data about the EFL learners' perceptions of the two motivation-based instructions in the online classes. The focus group is a specialized research tool to collect in-depth data in a group fashion (Dörnyei, 2007), requiring interviewer-interviewee interaction. The number of participants, the usability of the online platform, and the researcher-participant interactions are key issues in the focus group interview (Willemsen et al., 2023). This type of interview needs a small number of participants. Krueger and Casey (2015) suggest that 6-12 participants can maximize optimal discussion in the focus interview. Accordingly, 10 volunteer individuals from each group were recruited for the interviews, which were conducted online through the Adobe Connect platform.

Procedure

After the EFL participants in the two online intact classes (the ARCS and the L2MSS groups) gave their permission to participate in the study, they took part in the program, which lasted 14 sessions, with two 90-minute sessions per week. Both classes were taught by the same teacher (one of the researchers) using the same textbook (*ILI English Series: Advanced 2*, 2008).

Instruction in the ARCS group was based on the techniques and activities corresponding to the components of the ARCS framework. Although the textbook provided the structure and a syllabus for the course, the element of attention was realized through utilizing multimedia (such as podcasts, vodcasts, and PowerPoint slides), employing various engaging activities (such as brainstorming activities), supplementing the textbook content with humor, fun, and personal experiences, and adding variety by presenting puzzles and enigmas, when possible. The learners of the ARCS group were invited to recount their personal real-life stories related to the textbook topics (such as ceremonies and weddings) and discuss them throughout class time. They were allowed to talk about their personalities, interests, beliefs, and cross-cultural experiences. Also, the learners were asked to have collaborative conversations and discussions on the Adobe Connect platform on some class topics related to their everyday lives to highlight the element of relevance in the L2 learners' eyes. Pair-group and collaborative (non-competitive) activities

were frequently used to share personal experiences. Moreover, cultural awareness as one of the activities in this group allowed them to work things out for themselves beyond their L1 norms. These learners were asked to self-assess their L2 (English) performance, especially their oral performance, using a predetermined set of criteria introduced at the end of every online session. Finally, positive reinforcement in the form of verbal compliments, praise messages, and emoji stickers were among the activities.

In the L2MSS group, the textbook provided content for the learners. However, the course instruction followed the principal steps of the vision enhancement framework. In the first step, the L2 learners' dreams and wishes were put into discussions wherever possible. Through vision boards and image streaming, they were invited to create a personalized vision regarding language learning. They were asked to take note of their vision and put it down on the vision board. In the second step, every week, a few learners were asked to nurture the previously formed vision through imagery techniques and collective vision activities using future image elaboration and motivational lectures. These learners were invited to prepare a short motivational speech and present it online. Additionally, in the next step, the learners were encouraged to deliberate on the internal and external motives and issues (e.g., their preferences or their parents' expectations) relevant to their language learning goals and then turn their visions into action. The learners were asked to develop their learning plans through individual reflection or pair-group work and prepare a roadmap for the learning goals. In the fifth step, as they made progress through the course, reminders were made to recall the ideal vision. They were allowed to modify the initial vision boards. Finally, they were invited to reflect on the repercussions of failing to reach their goals.

After 14 weeks of instructions, 10 participants from each group voluntarily attended online focus group interviews to discuss their attitudes and perceptions. They were informed that the interviews would be video/audio-recorded. To initiate the discussion, each group was provided with some prompts (e.g., "What do you think of the class?" and "What aspects/characteristics of the class were motivating for you?") to initiate the discussion. The interviews were conducted on the same day and with the same interviewer. They were transcribed and inspected for potential themes.

Data Analysis

The hybrid thematic analysis, the integration of data- and theory-driven codes (Xu & Zammit, 2020), was utilized. First, the data was analyzed per se, regardless of existing frameworks or models of motivation. The codes were extracted for each group. Afterward, the extracted codes for the first and second groups were checked in relation to the components of the ARCS and L2MSS frameworks, respectively. This issue allowed the researchers to consider the participants' views and leverage the strengths of the existing literature on motivation. The

thematic analysis was run based on the six-phase procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) Familiarizing with the data by reading and reading the interview data; (2) Generating initial codes; (3) Searching for themes (progressing from coding to the organization of codes into thematic clusters); (4) Reviewing themes (verifying the alignment of the initial themes with the research inquiries and exploring the possibility of reformulating them into new thematic elements); (5) Refining and naming themes; and (6) Producing the report.

To ensure trustworthiness and verify the accuracy of the interpretations, member checking (soliciting feedback from the participants on the coded transcripts and emerging themes) and peer debriefing (scrutinizing the data analysis and interpretation by two experts, a PhD student majoring in Teaching English and an assistant professor of applied linguistics) were carried out. We received confirmation from the EFL participants and two experts about the accuracy of the data analysis. In addition, an external audit was conducted by a colleague, an associate professor who was a researcher in the field of applied linguistics and an expert in qualitative research. He reviewed the whole data analysis and confirmed that our data supported the outcomes.

Although intercoder reliability is a controversial issue in qualitative data analysis, intercoder consistency can function as a mark of trustworthiness (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Thus, it was used in the study. The first round of coding was done by one of the current researchers of the study with the help of MAXQDA18 software. Following the suggestion by O'Connor and Joffe (2020), recoding was done on 25% of the data from the two groups by another independent coder. Intercoder reliability, measured through Cohen's kappa, was high (0.97). Also, intracoder reliability or consistency index, measured through Cohen's kappa, was high (0.98). However, the data were reviewed again and the initial round of coding was followed by a group meeting where a few cases of differences and disagreements were discussed and agreement was reached before the final round of coding was done.

Results

First Research Question: Perceptions of EFL Learners in the ARCS group

The data were analyzed thematically. The initial codes were extracted and then reformulated into main themes that governed the L2 learners' perceptions of their programs in the online class. Figure 2 displays the map of themes resulting from the thematic analysis for the ARCS-based intervention. As Figure 2 illustrates, four main themes were extracted regarding the ARCS group.

Another learner (female, 21 years old) highlighted the importance of PowerPoint slides as a way to draw her attention to vocabulary (idiom) learning (the multimodality subtheme). She stated:

I am glad the teacher used visual materials like PowerPoint slides and pictures to discuss the new terms and idioms. It is good to use PowerPoint files in the online class. As a matter of fact, the audio and beautiful pictures in the PowerPoint slides grabbed my and other students' attention.

Relevance-Oriented Content: The second theme is *relevance-oriented content*, which is related to the relevance of the content presented in the class. The learners found the instructional materials highly relevant to their L2 learning and the situations where they need English in the future. The contingency between the type of topics and activities and the L2 learners' goals affected the perception of the participants about the motivating power of the intervention.

This theme is composed of two subthemes: *practical learning* and *cultural sensitivity*. Practical learning entails experiencing real-life challenges and coping with them. It deals with content relevance and real-world skills, namely the skills that have relevance to the real world and are needed for real-world challenges. Cultural sensitivity deals with cultural awareness, namely the cultural content knowledge and awareness of other cultural aspects through activities which are relevant to students' needs. Both these subthemes could reflect motivation because they had relevance to the learners' real-world experiences and needs. For instance, regarding the cultural sensitivity subtheme, one learner (female, 19 years old) explained how a discussion of cultural customs and traditions in cultural awareness activities in the online class was relevant to their needs and motivating in the L2 learning process:

In the group work, when a discussion about cultural customs, such as wedding ceremonies, was brought about in the class, each student shared cultural knowledge of our country's traditions and several other countries' customs. I learned about wedding ceremonies in the UK ... informal ways of saying *congratulations*. It [cultural awareness] was useful and relevant It was motivating.

Confidence-Building Elements: The third theme is *confidence-building elements*, underscoring the confidence-developing aspects of the online class. The ARCS group learners were instilled with confidence, making them motivated. *Ample opportunities* and *low-stress classrooms*, as the subthemes, helped the learners foster a sense of positive self-appraisal in the L2 learning process. They believed that the online class provided them with plenty of chances to practice (the ample opportunities subtheme), resulting in more self-confidence. One learner (male, 20 years old) elaborated:

In my opinion, this class improved our English since we had more opportunities to talk

about our personal experiences. It is good to have opportunities to speak. When we talked more in groups ..., we became more confident, and we felt that developing English was easy. We did not have much time to chat in the previous courses, but in this online class, there were more opportunities to discuss and learn about our strengths and weaknesses.

Sense of Contentment/Discontentment: The last theme is a *sense of contentment/discontentment*. It deals with the sources of contentment, such as providing support and equal opportunities in the class, as well as the causes of discontentment in the L2 learners, such as content overload and internet network connectivity. The learners found that the class satisfying their educational and psychological needs; therefore, they displayed more interest in pursuing the learning process. On the other hand, some technology-related issues had some negative effects on the L2 learners' contentment, but they were marginal compared to the positive effect of the ARCS-based intervention on their satisfaction.

This theme has three subthemes, namely *rewards and encouragement, fairness, and tech/online communication problems*. The first two subthemes reflected the L2 learners' satisfaction with their online classes. The learners were satisfied with the presence of rewards including the praise stickers sent in the chat box or the verbal praises of the teacher. The learners were satisfied with the fairness, equal opportunities, and lack of discrimination between students in the class. For instance, regarding the subtheme of fairness, one of the learners (male, 18 years old) explained:

In this course, there were equal opportunities for each of us. Unlike previous courses where only a few students talked in class, all the students participated in class discussions. Regardless of our gender and circumstances, I think we all received the same level of respect.

Nevertheless, some learners were not very familiar with the Adobe Connect application and most learners had a challenge with the breakdown of the internet while they were listening to the teacher. They were discontented with low internet speed and network connection problems (the subtheme of tech/online communication problems). One of the participants, for instance (female, 21 years old), reported:

The online class was good, but the challenge for me and some of my classmates was network disconnection. Two weeks ago, the internet speed was low and I got disconnected several times and lost the thread of conversation in our online class.

As shown in Figure 3, the most frequent theme or themes regarding the ARCS group were attention-related pedagogy and the sense of contentment/discontentment (both contentment and discontentment were considered as one theme). The frequency of the attention-related pedagogy

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per se was higher than others. The participants believed that the techniques that attracted their attention to the content and activities were more motivating.

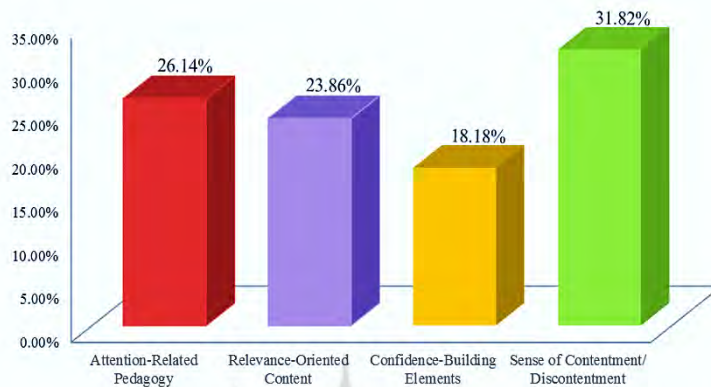


Figure 3. The Percentage of Each Theme in the ARCS Group

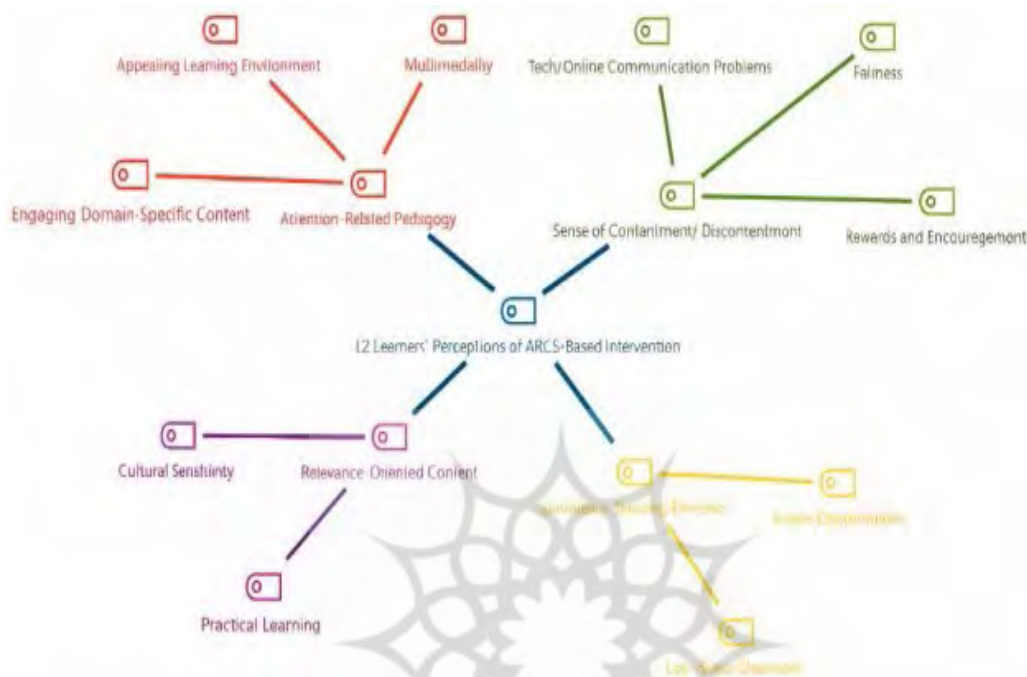
Second Research Question: Perceptions of EFL Learners in the L2MSS group

To explore the L2MSS groups' perceptions, the interview data were analyzed thematically, and three overarching themes were extracted (see Figure 4).

Ideal Self-Orientations: The first theme is *ideal self-orientations*. It deals with the learners' ideal self-related orientations and the development of a pleasant image of the future, helping them overcome L2 learning challenges. The ideal L2 self essentially focuses on developing a pleasant image of the future so that L2 learners can have the backbone to overcome disappointments and learning troubles. This theme consisted of *future perspective enhancement, sustained active class participation, and goal-setting and planning development*. They deal with the issues of depicting a delightful picture of one's future intertwined with success in L2 learning, participating actively in class to get closer to the ideal future, setting feasible and personal goals, and devising some strategies to achieve those goals. For instance, one of the participants (female, 21 years old) explained how the L2MSS vision-inspired instruction helped her in setting her personal goal and planning to achieve it:

We learned to define our goals. It was very novel for us. In previous courses, we just focused on the present and immediate language-related things. I set my goal during the course and discussed it in the class. I like kids and I want to teach them English. I want

to be a professional tutor for kids. That is my future vision. Now I think that I should learn



songs. I download many nursery rhymes and listen to them.

Figure 4. *The Themes and Subthemes in the L2MSS Group*

Ought-to Self-Orientations: The second theme is related to the *ought-to self-orientations*, pertinent to the learners' obligations and other people's expectations of them. They believed that external sources, such as the pressure they received from their teachers, families, and peers, could also play a role in motivating them to learn more. This theme is composed of *projected-future expectations* and *psychological burdens and challenges* subthemes, focusing on the anticipation of L2-related success with an eye on the expectations of the people around the L2 learners. For instance, one learner (male, 20 years old) maintained:

During the course, I found out that learning English is necessary these days, and failing to learn it makes me embarrassed. Some of my friends were better than me in the class. They had nice motivational lectures. I should be like them. I am under pressure, but I am determined to make my English better.

Situated Learning/Teaching Experiences: The last theme is *situated learning/teaching experiences*, highlighting the actual and situated experiences, including positive and negative experiences that learners have throughout the course. The contextual factors and teacher-learner interactions acted as a source of motivation even though some learners faced some challenges in the course and expressed negative attitudes. This theme includes the following subthemes:

effective teaching/learning style, emotional engagement in class, collaborative-interactive learning environment, and adaptation challenges. They refer to the teaching styles employed for teaching the content, the learners' emotional engagement in the class, the collaborative learning environment, and adaptation challenges faced by learners. For instance, regarding the subthemes of emotional engagement, one learner (female, 21 years old) believed that she experienced an agreeable atmosphere in the course and was emotionally engaged when she talked about her school experience:

I enjoyed the online class. I was involved in the activities. I talked about my interesting experiences and personal stories. When I talked about my personal experiences about the school day when my love for language learning started, I felt a kind of intimacy. I was emotionally engaged in the online class.

Despite the positive aspects of the course, some learners pointed out the negative aspects of the class, which are mainly related to the adaptation challenges faced by the learners, such as difficulty in getting accustomed to the physical absence of their classmates (the subtheme of adaptation challenges). For instance, one of the participants (male, 19 years old) maintained:

I did not have online classes before. I met my classmates face to face. It was hard at first to get familiar with the online class. I felt that I missed my classmates. I felt that I was distant.

As shown in Figure 5, the most frequent themes regarding the L2MSS group were situated learning/teaching experiences and ideal self-orientations.

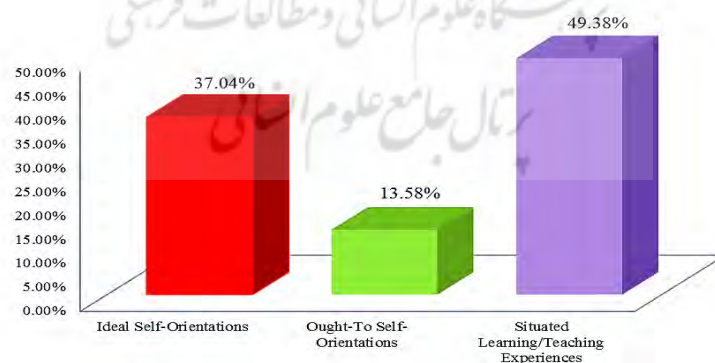


Figure 5. The Percentage of Each Theme in the L2MSS Group

Discussion

This qualitative research shed light on the perceptions of L2 learners about their online L2 classes where the ARCS-based and L2MSS vision-inspired instructions were implemented. The analysis of the data collected from the participants in the ARCS group revealed four themes:

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attention-related pedagogy, relevance-oriented content, confidence-building elements, and sense of contentment/discontentment. The first theme was attention-related pedagogy. This theme reflects the pedagogy that promotes meaningful interactions and sustainable attention in L2 learning. The data analysis accentuated the elements of multimodality, engaging domain-specific content, and an appealing learning environment as features that could promote sustainable attention in the program. The learners found the learning environment appealing enough to pay attention to the instructional content and have meaningful communication in the course. As Loderer et al. (2020) have argued, the appeal of the learning environment adds to the intrinsic value of the instructional content and promotes enjoyment and motivation in the class. Also, utilizing non-text-based resources, such as audiovisual media, fostered verbal and non-verbal communication (e.g., the use of emojis) and meaningful interaction. Some scholars (e.g., Tomlinson, 2013) also emphasize the element of non-text-based materials to foster attention in L2 pedagogy. Integrating authentic, multimodal, and personalized content motivated the learners in the online course on the way to developing their English, which resulted in a positive attitude. Research (e.g., Barón & Celaya, 2022; Fan & Fox, 2012) has emphasized the importance of using audiovisual materials in L2 courses to foster constant attention. This argument is supported by Puimège et al.'s (2023) findings, indicating that enhanced audiovisual input can lead to more visual attention, more engagement, and better pedagogy, creating a positive attitude towards the course.

The second theme was relevance-oriented content. The data analysis highlighted the elements of cultural sensitivity and practical learning. Cultural sensitivity is about the content knowledge and awareness of other cultural aspects and differences, which can be enhanced through instructional activities relevant to students' needs (van Boeijen et al., 2019). Since this theme deals with the congruence between the current practices in the class and the future needs of the learners, the culture-relevant activities in the program met the learners' needs in that they recognized and built on cultural aspects. The learners felt that the incorporation of culture into the course was highly relevant to their course, resulting in a positive perception of the course. Chang and Zhao (2012) also maintain that culture should be part of the content and should be embedded into instruction in L2 courses, and cultural awareness activities can result in learners' high interest levels. The relevance of cultural content can make the learners believe that the course is helpful, assisting them in real-life situations. In support of the above argument, Nafissi et al. (2019) assert that the relevance of content could foster interest and positive feelings. Likewise, the subtheme of practical learning is about acquiring relevant and real-life skills and is related to content relevance, which emerges from developing useful content that addresses the specific needs of learners. Because of its relevance to the learners' felt needs, this subtheme could reflect interest and motivation on the part of the learners. In support of this argument, Cho and Kim (2023) argue that there is a direct relationship between motivational intensity and

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practical learning internalization. The type of tasks and activities utilized in the ARCS group focused on real-life skills, connecting them to their outside-of-class experiences. The findings are in line with the expectancy-value theory underlying the ARCS model in that the more the activities bear a resemblance to the actual L2-related situations, the more satisfaction and engagement will be achieved.

The third theme was confidence-building elements. This theme indicates that the L2 learners gained self-confidence in the course, and two elements of ample opportunities and a low-stress classroom (represented as the two subthemes) contributed to confidence-building. Based on the data analysis, one possible reason was the low-stress classroom environment facilitating their English proficiency development and creating a positive perception. As Keller (2016) has asserted, low-stress classrooms increase risk-taking and lead to a higher expectancy of success, which is one of the sources of attaining self-confidence. In environments where L2 learners face lower levels of affective barriers, cognitive resources function optimally, learning takes place at a higher pace, and students become more confident (Güvendir & Uzun, 2023). Cheng (2004) identified a direct relationship between low self-confidence and anxiety. Excessive anxiety undermines students' beliefs in their capabilities in learning an L2. The secure situation can motivate them to pursue L2 learning and foster positive perceptions towards the course. Also, the implementation of some activities in the ARCS group, such as pair-group and collaborative activities, provided ample new opportunities for the learners to discuss their views and practice their assertiveness, namely to speak out their thoughts, feelings, needs, and thoughts. This led to a secure environment, which is a basic principle of psychological safety and can boost learners' confidence in class participation (Keller, 2010). As Oteir and Al-Otaibi (2019) have asserted, giving opportunities to learners to participate in class activities increases the self-confidence and motivation of learners.

The last theme was the sense of contentment/discontentment. Although the learners in the ARCS group occasionally expressed dissatisfaction due to technology-based challenges, they generally had a sense of contentment and assessed the ARCS-based instruction as motivating. Such elements as the provision of immediate feedback to individual learners in the online environment, the rewards and praises they received during the course, the opportunity given to the learners to self-assess their performance in the course, lack of discrimination between genders by the teacher, and teacher's fairness towards his learners resulted in a sense of satisfaction in the ARCS group. First, as Din and Saeed (2018) have argued, providing immediate feedback, which is a crucial feature of a teacher's expertise, can have a direct impact on learner satisfaction. Immediate feedback helped them rethink their ideas, which could lead to their satisfaction. Second, less punishment and more rewards were used throughout the course. According to research (e.g., Satoto & Subekti, 2023), providing rewards for L2 learners acts as a stimulus, which can result in positive perceptions. Third, the fact that the learners had

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the opportunity to self-assess their performance established a sense of trust and respect, generating a positive perception of the course. Finally, the lack of discrimination among students, teachers' fairness, and giving freedom for all to express their views improved a culture of inclusivity, which nurtured positive perceptions.

Despite the above-mentioned issues, several technology-rooted challenges, such as content overloading and insufficient time to adapt to the new learning environment, were the major dissatisfaction sources. This issue indicates that learners can face some problems in the online learning environment. Perhaps, some learners needed more time to adapt themselves to the digital platforms and learn how to deal with them. Also, sometimes, some learners faced content overlading. It occurs when the amount of information presented to the learners goes beyond their cognitive capacities, which confounds them to process the information properly (Virkus et al., 2018). It is a barrier between the learners and leads to disengagement and dissatisfaction (Lim, 2004). Several researchers (e.g., Skulmowski & Xu, 2022) have reported that cognitive overloading should be avoided in online learning.

The second research question delved into the L2 learners' perceptions regarding the L2MSS vision-inspired instruction. The first theme was ideal self-orientations. It can be argued that the instruction in the L2 group assisted the learners in depicting their promising future with clear details. They helped them think about their future careers and endeavor to invest in pursuing them. They gradually noticed the strengths of creating a promising future image in their mindset in the course. In support of this issue, other researchers like Chan (2014) have documented the greater ability of motivated L2 learners to imagine future success and a successful career as proficient L2 speakers.

Active class participation was a motivating factor. Conscious enhancement of L2 vision in the L2MSS class strengthened the L2 learners' bond to their dreams. The *self*-focused activities could energize the learners to be more willing to actively participate in class discussions and be assertive, resulting in a positive perception of the course. The learners experienced more engagement in individual and group activities, which in turn had a motivational impact on them. This discussion is supported by the results of Fukada et al.'s (2011) study, where learners' in-class and out-of-class investment improved significantly due to building positive future histories. Additionally, the course fostered the learners' image of the ideal self. They thought about their goals and attempted to set realistic and attainable goals for themselves. As Mackay (2015) points out, when learners clearly articulate their future goals and plan for the realization of those goals, they become motivated, and a positive attitude is consequently created. Established goals and outlined steps shape an optimistic outlook and inject a sense of agency into learners' decision-making process.

Another theme was ought-to self-orientations, suggesting that L2 learners can be motivated by external forces and possibly be under pressure. Ought-to self-orientations are primarily

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related to external requirements and necessities (Dörnyei, 2005). The L2MSS group learners mentioned some of their expectations shaped by parents and peers, making them try more to pursue their L2 learning goals. As Vlaeva and Dörnyei (2021) have argued, these forces are motivating since they mediate learners' performance to evade unpleasant outcomes. Although this external motivation is not favored as much as internal motivation, the attempts to avoid feared selves can force learners to maximize their efforts to achieve their goals and ally with external expectations and pressure.

Finally, the third theme for the L2MSS group was situated learning/teaching experiences. This theme emphasizes the crucial role of the situation and experience in L2 learning and knowledge construction. The participants in the L2MSS group were actively engaged in the activities in a learner-centered context and discussed their dreams and wishes in groups. The online environment provided a context to talk about their expectations. That is to say, it provided a context in which they were emotionally involved with their dreams and wishes. This issue reflects the subtheme of emotional engagement. Also, the teacher in such a context allowed the L2MSS group learners to get experience through performing vision enhancement activities (e.g., vision boards and image streaming) rather than transmitting abstract knowledge to them. The learners' views indicate that they preferred this kind of teaching style/method over an authority style or lecture-based teaching style. This issue supports the subtheme of effective teaching/learning style. In addition, when the motivational strategies implemented in the L2MSS group were integrated into L2 activities, the learners perceived this integration as an effective way of catering to their needs, preferences, and expectations. Moreover, the teacher acknowledged the strengths and experiences of his learners and viewed them as constructors of knowledge in a collaborative-interactive learning environment where they could discuss their visions with their peers. They could interact with their classmates and prepare a roadmap for their learning goals. These can represent the subtheme of the collaborative interactive learning environment. Situated language learning entails interactions, which gives identity to learners and brings about a sense of community membership. As Li and Jeong (2020) hold, this sense of identity and belonging helps them fully participate in learning tasks and sustains their motivation, which highlights the importance of situated learning in L2 education.

Despite the above-mentioned issues, data analysis revealed some adaptation challenges to the online program. The lack of physical contact could create some evaluation concerns among the learners. Some were worried whether they were able to fully demonstrate their abilities because online environments lack some in-person assessment features. Moreover, as Guangul et al. (2020) argue, there is little face-to-face interaction in online learning among learners. They may get stressed out since they cannot ask for more clarification of the assessment procedures. Perhaps inadequate familiarity with the online platform and the new learning modality, as asserted by Shrestha et al. (2022), was also a challenge to them in optimally taking advantage

of the instruction. Other researchers have also pointed out challenges in the online learning environment, including poor local infrastructure (Tao & Gao, 2022) and low task control (Yazdanmehr et al., 2021). In sum, the results indicate the overall positive perception of the L2 learners towards the L2MSS vision-inspired program in the online course despite some challenges they faced.

Conclusion and Implications

This study adopted a thematic analysis approach to delve into the perceptions of L2 learners taking part in ARCS-based and L2MSS vision-inspired instructions. The motivation-based instructions proved effective in attracting the EFL learners' attention and motivating them to pursue L2 (English) learning in such online programs. The ARCS group learners mainly referred to the aspects that dealt with attention features, followed by relevance, confidence, and satisfaction elements, as motivating features that generated positive perceptions. Still, some tech-related issues created a feeling of dissatisfaction in the learners. Moreover, the L2MSS group learners specified the ideal self-related and experience-related elements as motivating factors, mainly generating positive perceptions of the online program despite several negative views due to external forces, such as peer pressure.

The findings imply that motivation-oriented instructions in an online context can be helpful to L2 learners and teachers. L2 learners can enhance their investment in L2 learning and achieve better L2 outcomes in motivation-oriented programs, such as ARCS-based and L2MSS vision-inspired courses, because the sense of being valued and emotionally engaged in such programs can secure a supportive environment in which confidence, attention, and satisfaction increase. Also, L2 teachers can better opt for working strategies, tailor content and instruction to learners' preferences, and ensure higher engagement in online class activities.

Similar to other empirical studies, this study had some limitations. As the data collection was confined to a certain period of the intervention with a small sample, follow-up inquiries with other methods of data collection can gauge the long-term effects of the ARCS-based and L2MSS vision-inspired instructions and provide more comprehensive results about L2 learners' perceptions of such motivation-based interventions. Longitudinal studies and using diaries and observation can help researchers explore the sustainability of the attitudes towards such motivation-based instructions from learners' perspectives. This study did not study learner variables such as learning styles and personality traits. They may affect L2 learners' perception of such programs. Therefore, further studies are needed to investigate diverse learners.

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