

Teachers' Role in Motivating EFL Students at Palestinian Schools by Using Motivational Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the extent to which teachers motivate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at Palestinian schools and the strategies that they use to motivate students. It also discusses the meaning of motivation, the importance of motivation, and the different types of motivation. An attempt was made to answer the following questions: (1) To what extent do EFL teachers at Palestinian schools motivate their students? (2) What are the strategies that teachers use in order to motivate their students? The data were elicited through specially designed questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The problem of the study stems from the poor level of EFL students in language learning. Moreover, lack of studies conducted on English teachers in Palestine in the field of motivation leads the researcher to conduct this study. By examining the extent to which EFL teachers motivate their students at Palestinian schools, it was evident that 6.3 % of female teachers and 3% of male teachers do not motivate their students while 97% of male teachers and 93.7% of female teachers motivate their students by using verbal and non verbal motivation in order to attract them and to involve them in new topics. It was apparent that teachers can encourage students to become more active participants in the classroom by using different motivational strategies such as creating supportive learning atmosphere, using enjoyable games and activities, having good relationships with their students, and using interesting texts. However, the results reveal that some teachers encounter many difficulties in motivating their students. For example, 25% of female teachers and 14.3% of male teachers do not use technological or visual aids when introducing a difficult language task. The study recommends teachers to focus more on learners' motivation and to use appropriate motivational strategies which help students to achieve better language learning.

Keywords: *Motivational strategies, Intrinsic motivation, Extrinsic motivation, Instrumental motivation.*

INTRODUCTION

Researchers' findings about the learning differences among EFL/ESL learners have inspired researchers to investigate the causes of these differences with the goal of providing teaching strategies that promote language learning (Khalil, 2005). There are many factors that might cause students' low proficiency in English. One of these factors may refer to students' motivation towards English. In general, motivation affects humans' behaviors and explains why they behave in a good or bad way toward some activities. Studying learners' motivation helps teachers to know the strategies that they should use in order to motivate these students who are weak in language performance and activities. Students need motivation in order to succeed in learning the foreign language (FL) or the second

language (L2). Therefore, this paper introduces the role of teachers in maintaining and generating students' motivations towards learning English by using different motivational strategies.

It is important to know why students succeed or fail in learning English. Students' motivation toward learning English influences their learning results as students react differently to various learning activities and materials. In other words, some students may simply refuse to learn anything or they may start new topics with displeasure and with annoyance. In contrast, other students learn new topics with excitement and with enthusiasm (Berliner & Gage 1988). This paper investigates the extent to which teachers motivate EFL students at Palestinian schools and the strategies that they use to motivate students. Moreover, this study examines teachers' role in motivating EFL students at Palestinian schools. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- (1) To what extent do EFL teachers at Palestinian schools motivate their students?
- (2) What are the strategies that teachers use in order to motivate their students?

Lack of studies conducted on English teachers in Palestine in the field of motivation leads the researcher to conduct this study. Alshehri and Etherington (2017) conducted a study in order to investigate Saudi Arabian EFL students and teachers perceptions of motivational strategies. An important implication of this study is that EFL teachers should be supported to have a clearer view about L2 motivation and motivational strategies. Some EFL teachers do not have a clear view about the strategies that they can use in motivating students. The problem of the study stems from the poor level of EFL students in language learning. Some EFL learners at Palestinian schools encounter various difficulties when learning English. One of these problem is that most of them are unmotivated to learn English. In other words, these students usually do not like English, do not have the desire to learn it, or do not put sufficient effort to learn it. Teachers at Palestinian schools should motivate these students. Abidin, Mei, Rany, and Souriyavongsa (2013) investigated the reasons behind students' weakness towards English language learning as a foreign language at the National University of Laos in Lao. They listed seven factors that cause students' poor English performance. First, students illustrated that the English teachers are not well-trained. For example they use their native language when teaching instead of using English, and they cannot focus on the interest of the students. Secondly, students do not have sufficient background about English language. Third, students lack self-confidence in speaking tasks causing their poor level in English. Fourth, the curriculum does not help students to improve their English proficiency. Fifth, students are not well-motivated, so they think that English language is difficult. Sixth, students do not practice English with English native speakers. Finally, classroom environment is crowded, so it does not facilitate learning. Hess (2001) also said that students in large multilevel classes are afraid to practice English speaking because they think they will say something wrong in front of their peers.

EFL teachers have an important role in motivating their students. They should use motivational strategies in order to motivate students. This study guides teachers to decide if they apply or do not apply good motivational strategies. It also helps teachers to modify or change their ways in motivating students. Teachers may use new motivational strategies that they have used if they are persuaded by this study. Astuti (2015) clarifies in her study that Indonesian teachers of English can affect their students' motivation by recognising the effect of motivational strategies on students' language learning. She concluded that teachers have significant part in motivating their students. It is believed that motivated students can improve students' level in English language, so it can now be readily concluded that conducting this study is important as it provides teachers with different strategies that they should use in order to motivate their students. In addition, the importance of motivation in enhancing foreign language learning is evident when it is related to students' success in language learning activities. Gardner (2006) states that highly motivated students do better than slightly motivated students. He also adds that motivated students participate in learning activities, make good effort, perform and enjoy tasks, and have the desire to learn more and more (cited in Al-Tamimi & Shuib,2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are different definitions of motivation, especially in language learning. Dornyei (1998) states that motivation is one of the major aspects that affect language learning progress. In addition, he believes that motivation provides the push to start learning the L2 and it later becomes the driving force that enhances and promotes learning process. Berliner and Gage (1988) also claim that the different energy levels that students have toward learning L2 are related with the concept of motivation. In addition, Berliner and Gage (1988) state that motivation is a major expression that indicate other terms such as needs, interests, values, attitudes, aspirations, and incentives which illustrate the direction of students' behavior. They consider motivation as the engine and steering wheel of a vehicle because they believe that motivation stimulates students' energy and influences their behaviors. They also believe that motivation moves learners from boredom to interest, encourages them, and directs their behaviors and attitudes toward language learning.

Motivation is classified into two main categories namely intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is known as self-motivation. Some students have self-motivation when they learn the target language. Wimolmas (2013) defines intrinsic motivation by saying that learners who are intrinsically motivated learn with pleasure what they think is worth or necessary for them. Intrinsic motivation is driven by an excitement or enthusiasm in the task itself. Students who are intrinsically motivated do not rely on their teachers' rewards or on external motivation. However, extrinsic motivation is defined as the "desire to get a reward and avoid punishment" and it may be tangible, intangible, positive, or negative" (Wimolmas, 2013, p. 907). When teachers give rewards to their students, they motivate and promote these students to attend language classes. However, when these rewards are extracted, the student will not be attentive and interested in language learning (Wimolmas, 2013). Therefore, students who are extrinsically motivated learn the language because they want to have rewards or avoid punishment.

In addition, Dornyei (2001) classified language learners' goals into two categories: instrumental orientation and integrative orientation. Learners who are instrumentally motivated learn the language in order to use it as a tool in order to achieve specific goals. For example, they learn L2 in order to pass an exam, or to have a good job. On the other hand, learners, who have integrative motivation, want to learn L2 in order to become involved in the culture of the target language. In this respect, Wimolmas (2013) conducted a study which examined the type of students' motivation toward English at an international institute of engineering and technology in Thailand. The findings illustrated that the students are instrumentally motivated.

There are several studies that reveal students' motivation. For example, Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) conducted a study to identify Yemeni Petroleum Engineering students' motivation and attitudes towards learning the English language. The paper illustrates students' instrumental motivation, integrative motivation and personal motivation by using a questionnaire and interviews. The findings explain that instrumental motivation is found to have great impact on students. However, integrative motivation is found to have low impact on students. In addition, the results indicate that many students are interested in the culture of the target language.

Teachers' Role and Strategies in Motivating Students

"Sparkling student motivation is an important part of any teacher's function. Effective teachers will make sure that students know why they need to learn the language" (Culle & Diamond 2013, p. 23). Teachers have an important role in motivating their students. Motivation to learn English can be enhanced and reinforced among L2 students. Teachers should help students in order to achieve their needs by asking them to talk about their learning goals (Berliner & Gage, 1988). Hess (2001) also illustrates that teachers have significant roles in increasing students' self confidence. Moreover, Harmer (2007) believes that teachers should care about their students and support them.

Teachers need to use motivational strategies in order to motivate their students. Al Kaboody (2013) illustrates that students sometimes are not interested in L2 learning because they have many problems in language learning. For example, they may think that L2 learning is difficult and that language learning process takes a long time. However, he assumes that certain motivational strategies can increase students' positive attitudes towards language learning. He also believes that motivation leads to the success in second and foreign language learning. Dornyei (2001) defines motivational strategies as the methods that generate the learners' goal-directed behaviors and achieve positive effect on students' language learning.

In addition, Al Kaboody (2013) illustrates that teachers should implement different motivational strategies which promote students' motivation toward learning L2. First, teachers should increase the attitudes and values of L2 learners. Second, teachers should increase the learners' probability of success in the L2 because if students feel that they will succeed in specific activity, they will have great capability to do that activity. Third, teachers should direct the students toward specific goals for the whole group, assist these students to achieve these goals, and explain to the students the purpose of each activity. Fourth, teachers should make the teaching materials appropriate to the learners and use activities which is related to the students' lives and own experiences. Finally, teachers should assist students to make reasonable and practical view about language learning.

There are various motivational strategies that teachers can use in order to motivate their students. This research introduces the eight motivational strategies that are introduced by Dornyei (2001), and it presents the ten motivational strategies that are clarified by Dörnyei and Csizer (1998). In addition, it examines whether Palestinian EFL teachers are using both of these strategies.

Dornyei (2001) illustrated eight various strategies which promote L2 learning. First, teachers should show and confirm their own enthusiasm for the course material and talk about their personal interest in the L2. They also should tell their students that L2 learning is a significant experience that would benefit them in their life. Second, teachers should take the students' learning firmly and actively. To be specific, teachers should demonstrate that they watch their students' development and advancement. Third, teachers should build a personal relationship with the students. They should care about them and listen to them. Fourth, teachers should build a cooperative relationship with the students' parents, tell them regularly about the progress and development of their children, and ask for their help in enhancing language learning at home. Mata, Pedro, and Peixoto (2018) confirm that parental support and assistance at home influence students' motivation toward language learning and on their progress in language. Fifth, teachers should create an enjoyable and a very encouraging atmosphere in the classroom. They should promote risk-taking, tell students that mistakes are acceptable in language learning, use humor in the classroom, and found a norm of forgiveness. Sixth, teachers should enhance group work. In other words, they should encourage interaction, and collaboration among the students. Seventh, teachers must form group norms obviously, discuss them with the students, and ask them for other additional rules. These rules may be about the material, its activities and ways of testing, or about the students themselves and their behavior. Finally, teachers must monitor the established norms frequently.

In addition, Dörnyei and Csizer (1998) have studied the use of different teaching strategies that 200 Hungarian teachers of English used in order to motivate learners. The researchers assigned 51 motivational strategies and studied the significance attributed to each strategy by the teachers. The study leads to ten strategies that teachers should use to motivate learners. They said that teachers should display a situation that reflect their own behaviors, make sure that the class atmosphere is comfortable and enjoyable, introduce the tasks perfectly to the learners, have a good teacher-student relationship, work on developing learners' self-confidence in their proficiency in language, ensure that the language class is interesting and attractive, increase as much as possible the learners' self-reliance, make language relevant to the learners and give them the opportunity to use language in the context of their own lives, encourage learners to set their learning goals, and make sure that learners are familiar with the culture of the target language.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A mixed methods approach is used to collect quantitative and qualitative data in Palestinian schools. The data were elicited through one specially designed questionnaire that consists of ten multiple choice questions (see appendix 1) and one semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview is used in this study because it presents a structure for the interview protocol and gives participants the freedom to comment on each question. It also makes the discussion between the researcher and the participants deeper (Gugiu & Rodríguez-Campos, 2007).

Data Collection

The subjects of this study are thirty English teachers at Palestinian schools. These teachers teach English as a foreign language. They also teach different grades. Fifteen female teachers and fifteen male teachers were randomly selected for the purpose of the study. In addition, the researcher conducts interviews with ten EFL teachers. They were five female teachers and five male teachers. There are many researchers who use questionnaires and interviews in order to examine teachers' motivational strategies. For example, Alhodiry (2016) conducted a study that sheds light on the strategies that are used by the Libyan EFL teachers in motivating their students. This study uses various data collection techniques such as classroom observation, students' questionnaires, and teachers' interview. The questionnaire was designed to measure the teachers' role in motivating EFL students, and it consisted of ten multiple choice questions. Different ways that teachers may use to motivate students were presented including external motivation, teacher-student relationship, learning activities, and materials. The subjects were asked to circle the appropriate answer. Each point in the questionnaire refers to specific motivational strategy. The first point in the questionnaire presents extrinsic motivation as described by Wimolmas (2013) who says that extrinsic motivation may be tangible or intangible in other words verbal or nonverbal. The second point presents teachers' inductive and deductive ways of teaching. Sik (2015) illustrated that students learn better deductively, and that the deductive teaching group in her study appears to be more trained and more competent in learning language. Moreover, the third, fourth, fifth, seventh, ninth, and tenth points present some of the motivational strategies that are described by Dörnyei and Csizer (1998). The eighth point describes a strategy that is introduced by Dörnyei (2001). The sixth point introduces a strategy that is illustrated by Al Kaboody (2013).

This research also uses a semi-structured interview. The researcher uses three questions: 1) Do you motivate your students? 2) Why do you motivate them? 3) How do you motivate them? Moreover, the researcher uses other questions in the interviews according to the situation such as identifying the reasons that may prevent teachers from motivating their students and clarifying the reasons that encourage them to motivate their students.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. A comparison between the subjects' responses is held. The teachers' answers for the questions in the questionnaire and in the interview are presented in the findings section. The data about the motivational strategies that teachers used were calculated and presented in percentage.

FINDINGS

The findings show the extent to which teachers use specific motivational strategy. As mentioned before, fifteen female teachers and fifteen male teachers are the subject of this study. Table 1 provides the ten strategies used in the questionnaire and shows how female and male teachers apply these strategies.

Table 1 Motivational Strategies

Motivational strategies	The questions in the questionnaire		Female Teachers	Male Teachers
The use of verbal and nonverbal motivation	1-When my students do a good work, I	a-use verbal motivation	a-87.5%	a-82.7%
		b-use non verbal motivation	b-6.2%	b-14.3%
		c-don't motivate them	c-6.3 %	c-3%
The use of inductive and deductive way of teaching	2- My method in teaching is	a-inductive	a-6.3%	a-14.3%
		b-deductive	b-12.5%	b-14.3%
		c-mixed	c-81.3%	c-71.4%
Creating organized classroom and supportive atmosphere	3-I create organized classroom and supportive atmosphere	a-usually	a-62.4%	a-85.7%
		b-sometimes	b-18.8%	b-0%
		c-never	c-18.8%	c-14.3%
Build a strong teacher – student relationship	4-My relationship with my students is	a-Excellent	a-62.5%	a-71.4%
		b-good	b-31.3%	b-28.6%
		c-bad	c-6.3%	c-0%
Introduce the tasks perfectly to the learners	5-I give my students the opportunity to choose the activity that they will do next	a-usually	a-0%	a-14.3%
		b-sometimes	b-75%	b-71.4%
		c-never	c-25%	c-14.3%
Increase the attitudes and values of L2 learners.	6-I notice that most of my students have	a-positive attitudes	a-31.2%	a-21.4%
		b-negative attitudes	b-25%	b-21.4%
		c-neutral attitudes	c-43.8%	c-57.2%
Introduce the tasks perfectly to the learners	7-When I introduce a difficult language task, I	a- use technology	a-12.5%	a-35.7%
		b-use visual arts	b-62.5%	b-50%
		c-don't use any aid	c-25%	c-14.3%
Enhance group work	8- During the lesson, I	a-allow group work and pair work	a-93.8%	a-85.7%
		b-allow individual work	b-6.2%	b-14.3%
		c-don't give students the opportunity to participate.	c-0%	c-0%
Work on developing learners' self-confidence	9-I try to increase students' self confidence by telling them that	a-mistakes are acceptable	a-62.5%	a-57.2%
		b-they have the ability to learn English	b- 31.3%	b-21.4%
		c-English is easy	c-6.2%	c-21.4 %

Introduce the tasks perfectly to the learners	10-When I introduce a new activity to my students, I	a-clarify its purpose before doing it b-choose an interesting activity c-don't (a+b)	a-91.2% b-6.3% c-2.5%	a-80.7% b-14.3% c- 5%
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Table 1 shows that most male teachers and female teachers try to facilitate the new activities by clarifying the purpose of the new activities before introducing them or by choosing interesting activities. It is clear here that in introducing difficult task, male teachers motivate their students by using technology more than female teachers. In addition, it is apparent that all male teachers and female teachers always give their students the opportunity to participate and allow their students to work individually or in group work. Although 6.3% of female teachers have bad relationship with their students, none of male teachers has bad relationship with their students. Moreover, most of male teachers and female teachers use both the inductive way and the deductive way of teaching, and most of them usually create organized classroom and supportive atmosphere. Furthermore, the results show that male teachers in this study accept students' mistakes more than female teachers. Both male teachers and female teachers try to increase students' confidence by saying that mistakes are acceptable, English is easy, or their students have the ability to learn English.

The findings show unexpected results. For example, 25% of female teachers and 14.3% of male teachers do not use any aid to motivate or attract students to the difficult tasks. Furthermore, 25% of female teachers and 21.4% of male teachers notice that their students have negative attitudes, and 43.8% of female teachers and 57.2% of male teachers observe that their students have neutral attitudes. Therefore, teachers' role here is to use different motivational strategies in order to motivate students who have negative or neutral attitudes toward language learning.

Moreover, this study was conducted to investigate the motivational strategies of teachers at Palestinian schools, and the reasons that require these teachers to motivate their students. The results of the interviews show that teachers motivate their students by using different strategies. First, they use warm up activity. For example, they ask students some questions at the beginning of the class in order to create a relaxed environment. Nordin, Zabidin, and Kamaludin (2019) believe that teachers introduce the tasks perfectly to the learners when they use different teaching strategies that reduce students' anxiety. They conducted a study in order to examine the effect of utilizing free writing as a pre-writing activity in minimizing learners' writing anxiety. The finding reveals that this strategy commonly have a positive effect in decreasing writing anxiety among learners. Second, teachers use different teaching techniques such as group work, pair work, and songs and encourage students to participate by asking them questions with different levels of difficulties in order to motivate weak students. Teachers sometimes ask students to choose the topic of the lesson. A ninth-grade teacher said: "I ask my students to act the plays that they have learnt during the semester". Third, they avoid extensive competition in order to make students relaxed during the activity. Fourth, they use visual aids such as pictures and flashcards. Fifth, they make the class funny by saying jokes and encouraging students to participate by asking questions with different levels of difficulties in order to motivate weak students.

Sixth, they use non verbal motivation: such as rewards, and extra marks. One of the teachers said: "I create medals and write encouraging sentences on them and I give students rewards such as chocolate". Another teacher said: "I draw on the students' faces beautiful shapes such as animals, and I give them stickers if they get full mark in the exam". Seventh, they use verbal motivation: such as good and excellent. Eighth, they build students' self confidence by telling them that mistakes are acceptable. Ninth, they use games, for example, one of the teachers in this study sometimes divides the students into two groups and asks them questions. The group who answers more questions has a gift. She also gives weak students special attention and rewards. A Palestinian study shows that most of the Palestinian teachers believe that using games through the teaching process largely influence students language learning (Mahmoud, &Tanni, 2014). Tenth, they try to have a good relationship

with their students, interact with them, and try to know what they like or dislike in a lesson. One of the teachers said that she usually discuss with her students the problems that they face in learning, and suggests solutions for these problems. Eleventh, they use songs and asking students to sing these songs. These songs make the lesson interesting and enjoyable. Nadera (2015) illustrates teachers' role in increasing students' motivation by using music. Finally, they use ice-break activity. For example, the teacher may ask students to "Stand up and sit down" several times.

Furthermore, according to the collected data from the interviewees, there are several reasons that encourage teachers at Palestinian schools to motivate their students. First, most of the students do not have internal motivation and they do not know the importance of English language in their lives. However, English is very important for them in order to pursue education at the university level, or to get a good job. Second, some of these teachers notice that students hate English and find it difficult. Third, students rarely participate in the classroom. Therefore, teachers want to attract students and involve them in the topics. They also try to help students in order to speak the language, and to be active learners.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study sheds light on some useful strategies used by Palestinian English teachers to motivate their students. Teachers would find it so helpful to use some motivational strategies in their classrooms in order to help their students in learning L2. The findings show that most teachers use verbal motivation when their students do good work. Whereas just 6.3 % of female teachers and 3% of male teachers do not motivate their students. It was apparent that teachers can encourage students to become more active participants in the classroom by using different motivational strategies. For example, they can create supportive learning atmosphere, use interesting texts, and use enjoyable games and activities in order to attract students' attention. Teachers also should make a good relationship with their students by talking about personal issues such as talking about their lives, feelings, problems, interests, and needs. Although this study does not represent all Palestinian teachers, the researcher is still confident that the results will give a relative representation and be of a great value to teachers or researchers who are concerned. The implication of motivational strategies can be beneficial for other EFL teachers.

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APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire

School:

Gender:

This questionnaire is a tool to collect information about students' motivation toward learning English. Please answer the following questions by circling the most appropriate answer. Your responses will only be used for survey purposes.

1-When my students do a good work, I

a- use verbal motivation b-use non-verbal motivationc c-don't motivate them

2- My method in teaching is

a-inductive b- deductive c- mixed

3-I create organized classroom and supportive atmosphere

a- usually b-sometimes c-never

4-My relationship with my students is

a- excellent b-good c-bad

5-I give my students the opportunity to choose the activity that they will do next

a- usually b-sometimes c-never

6-I notice that most of my students have

a- positive attitudes b-negative attitudes c-neutral attitudes

7-When I introduce a difficult language task, I

a- use technology b-use visual arts c-don't use any aid

8- During the lesson, I

a- allow group work and pair work b- allow individual work c- don't give students
the opportunity to participate

9-I try to increase students' self-confidence by telling them that

a- mistakes are acceptable b- they have the ability to learn English c- English is easy

10-When I introduce a new activity to my students, I

a- clarify its purpose before doing it b- choose an interesting activity c- don't (a+b)