Enhancing EFL Students' Motivation Using the ARCS Model

The Case of Tunisian University Students

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Abstract. An abundance of research suggests that motivation is important for foreign language learning. However, fewer studies have focused on the effective use of motivational strategies by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers. Keller's (2010) ARCS (attention, relevance, confidence, satisfaction) model addresses the gap between L2 motivation theories and classroom practice with a focus on four categories: attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction. The present research seeks to investigate Tunisian university EFL teachers' use of motivational strategies (MotS) (Dörnyei 2001) and the extent to which their students find them effective. It also explores the difference between teachers' reported use of MotS and their actual motivational practice. To answer the research questions, the Instructional Materials Motivational Survey (IMMS) questionnaire (Min and Chon 2021) was administered with students and teachers, and the Motivational Orientation of Language Teaching (MOLT) scheme was used for classroom observation (Guilloteaux and Dörnyei 2008). Quantitative and qualitative methods were employed for the data analysis. The present study is expected to make methodological and pedagogical contributions to the Tunisian educational context.

Keywords: motivational strategies, English as a foreign language, ARCS model, EFL teachers, Tunisian higher education.

1. Introduction

Motivation is arguably the most studied variable in learners' individual differences (IDs) studies. Dörnyei (2005) advances that all ID variables are related to the study of motivation as "it provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process" (65). This is primarily relevant to adult foreign language learners who choose to learn the language and often endeavor to reach a good proficiency level for a personal or a professional aim. Research on L2 learning motivation is quite prolific; however, studies on teachers' use of MotS remain scarce (Lamb 2019). In this context, the present study aims to explore the use of MotS by EFL teachers in Tunisian universities as well as students' perspective towards employing these strategies.

1.1. Background to the study

L2 motivation research has gone through three main phases: the socio-psychological phase, the cognitive phase and the socio-dynamic phase (Dörnyei and Ryan 2015; Dörnyei and Ushioda 2021). The social psychologists were primarily interested in learners' attitudes towards the second language and its speakers, as well as their motives for learning it. In the 1990s, there was an educational shift and theories began to focus on the learning context and not just

on the learners themselves (Al-Hoorie 2017). Later on, the conceptualization of L2 motivation has changed from being viewed as a fixed personal trait to being theorized as a dynamic construct that is bound to temporal and contextual changes. Based on Keller's (1983) theory of motivation in terms of interest, relevance, expectancy and satisfaction, Crookes and Schmidt (1991) proposed a model with four components: (1) the micro level, which includes the "motivational effects on the cognitive processing of SL stimuli" (483); (2) the classroom level, which deals with motivational techniques; (3) the syllabus level; and (4) a broader view that takes into account "considerations relevant to informal, out-of- class, and long-term factors" (483). In this vein, Dörnyei (1994) put forward a tripartite model of L2 motivation that concerns three levels: the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level. Ushioda (2013) urges L2 motivation researchers to focus more on "teacher- and classroom-focused empirical studies to investigate how teachers' instructional and interactional practices contribute to shaping processes of motivation in their classrooms" (237). This view was supported by Dörnyei's (2001) process view of motivational teaching that informs teachers on the motivational strategies (MotS) that they could employ to enhance learners' motivation. Prominent longitudinal research in Hungary led to the theorization of this process-oriented view (Dörnyei 1994; Dörnyei and Ottó 1998; Dörnyei 2001). Dörnyei's (2001) process model with 103 micro-strategies was designed based on the results of the study by Dörnyei and Ottó (1998). This model of L2 motivation conceptualized motivational teaching in four main phases: (1) creating the basic motivational conditions; (2) generating initial motivation; (3) maintaining and protecting motivation; and (4) encouraging positive retrospective-evaluation (Dörnyei 2001). This taxonomy initiated a surge of studies on the impact of motivational teaching practices on promoting student motivation (Dörnyei 2020). In this context, combining both researchers' and teachers' perspective of motivation, Csizér (2020) puts forward the following definition of L2 motivation as "an interactional process which subsumes effort and persistence to learn a foreign language and which is co-constructed by teachers and students alike" (2020, 11).

According to Cohen and Henry (2019), student motivation can be enhanced in a conscious manner "by employing principled methods, it is possible to generate motivation and to channel it in positive directions" (175). One practical way teachers could promote their students' motivation is the use of MotS. Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) define MotS as the "instructional interventions applied by the teacher to elicit and stimulate student motivation" (57). Lamb (2017) points out that enhancing student motivation fosters extra effort in studying throughout the course, yields even higher results, and possibly even carries over to subsequent study periods. Besides examining how teachers employ MotS, students' perception of MotS is equally important (Lee and Lo 2017). Numerous studies zoomed in on the use of MotS by English teachers, most of which were conducted in high school contexts in countries such as Hungary (Kouraïchi and Lesznyák 2022), Taiwan (Cheng and Dörnyei 2007; Guilloteaux 2013; Guilloteaux and Dörnyei 2008), South Korea (Maeng and Lee 2015), Japan (Sugita McEown and Takeuchi 2014), Saudi Arabia (Alrabai 2016), Iran (Tavakkoli, Yaghoubinejad and Zarrinabadi 2018) and China (Wong 2014; Yang and Sanchez 2021).

There have been calls for language motivation studies that target the learning context per se and explore students' language learning experience (Csizér and Kálmán 2019; Csizér 2020). The ARCS (attention, relevance, confidence, satisfaction) model draws on motivation theories and instructional design models (Keller 1983, 1987, 2010) to connect the theory and practice divide. Maeng and Lee (2015) suggest that the ARCS model "offers a comprehensive picture of motivation, including both teachers and students, theory and practice, and broad components and detailed constructs of motivation" (26). Along these lines, Csizér (2020) adds that the ARCS model offers teachers clear recommendations on how to motivate their students. Keller's (2010) ARCS model has four main categories, with three sub-strategies for each (see Table 1). Attention-getting strategies seek to stimulate and maintain learners' attention and interest. They include perceptual arousal, inquiry arousal and variability. Relevance-producing strategies accentuate the relatedness of the instruction to learners' goals. They are divided into goal orientation, motive matching and familiarity. Confidence-building strategies boost students' confidence for success in learning the content and completing the assignments. They comprise learning requirements, success opportunities and personal control. Satisfaction-generating strategies allow students to "have feelings of satisfaction with the process or results of the learning experience" (Keller 2010, 46). They include intrinsic reinforcement, extrinsic rewards and equity. This model has been applied in various contexts as well as different fields, among which is foreign language teaching (Li and Keller 2018).

Categories	**Sub-categories**	**Guiding questions for teachers**
Attention-getting strategies	Perceptual arousal	What can I do to capture their interest?
	Inquiry arousal	How can I stimulate an attitude of inquiry?
	Variability	How can I maintain their attention?
Relevance-producing strategies	Goal orientation	How can I best meet my learners' needs?
	Motive matching	How and when can I provide my learners with appropriate choices, responsibilities and influences?
	Familiarity	How can I tie the instruction to the learners' experiences?
Confidence-building strategies	Learning requirements	How can I assist in building a positive expectation for success?
	Success opportunities	How will the learning experience support or enhance the students' beliefs in their competence?
	Personal control	How will the learners clearly know that their success is based upon their efforts and abilities?
Satisfaction-generating strategies	Intrinsic reinforcement	How can I provide meaningful opportunities for learners to use their newly acquired knowledge/skill?
	Extrinsic rewards	What will provide reinforcement to the learners' success?

Categories	Sub-categories	Guiding questions for teachers
	Equity	How can I assist students in anchoring a positive feeling about their accomplishments?

Table 1. ARCS categories in detail from Keller (2010).

2. Methodology

A thorough review of the literature has shown that there is little research on EFL motivation in Tunisia. In this context, the present study involves both teachers and students through a model that was not applied in the Tunisian context before and it aims to take both students' and teachers' perspectives on the use of MotS. This study aims to answer the following research questions through a mixed-method approach:

1. What are the MotS that EFL teachers in Tunisia employ?
2. Is there a significant difference between students' perception of MotS and their teachers' reported use of MotS?
3. What is the relationship between teachers' self-reported use of MotS and their classroom practice?

2.1. Research context

Multilingualism is part of Tunisian history and identity (Daoud 2001, 2011; Aouina 2013; Boukadi and Troudi 2017; Smari and Navracsics 2019; Smari and Hortobágyi 2020). The first language in Tunisia is Arabic. The Tunisian dialect contains a lot of code-switching with French, which is the second language that is taught in state schools starting from grade 3. English language classes are introduced in grade 6 and continue until university as a compulsory subject. French is also the language of instruction of scientific subjects at high schools and later at university level. Subjects in humanities and social sciences are still taught in Arabic. Only two universities use English as the language of instruction and are accredited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Tunisia.

Sociolinguists have argued that there is a 'rivalry' between French and English in Tunisia which calls for considering English as an L2 (Battenburg 1997; Daoud 2011). Despite the global spread of English nowadays, French continues to be the first foreign language widely used in Tunisia. Veltcheff (2006) proposes that French is part and parcel of Tunisians' daily life as it is used in humor and media, besides education. She further suggests that depending on people's social class, code-switching could be considered a continuum from Arabic dotted with French to French dotted with Arabic.

2.2. Participants

The data collection procedure was carried out during the university year of 2021-2022 at different Tunisian universities. The whole data collection process spanned nearly two semesters, starting from September 2021 and ending in May 2022. A call for teacher participants was open in the fall semester when the pilot

study was conducted. Then in the spring semester, the main data for this study were collected. During the data collection period, classes were held in-person and masks were compulsory in classrooms. Heads of English departments were contacted via phone or email and written or oral consents were obtained before the data collection.

Convenience sampling followed by snowball effect was employed to recruit teachers. The study used Facebook and groups of teacher associations in Tunisia to recruit teachers willing to participate. Colleagues later spread the call to involve more participating teachers. A total of 46 teachers of English (see Table 2) from nine universities across Tunisia answered the questionnaire while nearly the half agreed to take part in classroom observations. Student participants and teacher participants were then contacted at the beginning of the spring semester.

Number of teachers	**Gender**		**Age**	**Years of teaching experience**
46	Female	Male	28-59	1-35
	42	4		

Table 2. Teacher participants.

Student participants were recruited from different universities (see Table 3 below). However, for logistic reasons, most of student respondents were eventually from one university. A total of 264 undergraduate students were recruited (English majors: N = 248 and non-English majors: N = 16). All participants were Tunisian from public universities. Questionnaire administration for students was both online and, in a pen and paper format.

Gender	Male	57
	Female	171
	Other	2
Age	Less than 20 years old	23
	20-24 years old	193
	25-30 years old	9
	More than 30 years old	3

Table 3. Student participants.

2.3. Instruments

2.3.1. Questionnaire

The instructional materials motivational survey (IMMS) was originally designed by Keller (2010), following the four main categories of the ARCS model. For the aims of this study, I used the adapted version by Min and Chon (2021) that was validated in a study in South Korean high schools. The main difference between the original questionnaire and the one developed by Min and Chon (2021) lies in

the degree of explicitness in the wording of items. They also designed a teacher version of the same questionnaire to report on the use of MotS. The adapted version includes 40 items that follow a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The first part collects participants' demographic information including their age, gender, university and years of teaching experience (for teachers). The teacher version requires participants to report their use of MotS while the student version asks respondents to evaluate their teacher's motivational practice.

For each ARCS category, 10 items are randomly listed. Below are some examples:

- Attention (e.g., teacher varies teaching materials or presentation style, when necessary).
- Relevance (e.g., teacher clearly explains the relevance of the lesson to what I already know).
- Confidence (e.g., teacher tells us about what I will be able to do after successfully completing the lesson).
- Satisfaction (e.g., teacher shows personal interest when I work hard or when I complete an assignment successfully).

2.3.2. Observation

Classroom observations were conducted following the motivational orientation of language teaching (MOLT) scheme, designed by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008). It is based on Dörnyei's (2001) motivational framework as well as Spada and Frohlich (1995) observation scheme. It records minute-by-minute teachers' motivational practice through 25 MotS that fall under four main categories: encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation, activity design, participation structure and teacher discourse. Students' motivated behavior is reported in terms of their alertness, volunteering and engagement.

All classroom observations were done during the spring semester of the academic year 2021-2022 (February 2022). A total of 21 face-to-face classes were observed. They were given by 21 (18 female and 3 male) teachers from different universities who taught different classes (language, culture, literature). Only 4 teachers were teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes while 17 taught English majors. Given the relatively large number of observations scheduled in a short period of time and the different universities involved, only one class observation could be scheduled per teacher. Although the class lasted one hour, the observation of the main lesson took only 45 minutes.

3. Preliminary results

3.1. Questionnaire results

Exploratory factor analysis was run on SPSS to check the validity of the questionnaire. A total of 27 items loaded on 4 factors with the KMO = .89. These 4 factors explained 53.88% of the total variance. Following Meyers, Gamst and Guarino (2017), factors were identified based on the questionnaire items and

informed by the ARCS model. The first factor was labelled as confidence-building strategies, which included 10 items (α = .88). It accounted for 20.08% of the variance in the data. The second factor accounted for 12.14% of the variance in the data and included 7 items labelled as relevance-producing strategies (α = .76). The third factor, accounting for 11.87% of the variance, had 7 items that were labelled as attention-getting strategies (α = .81). The fourth element accounted for 9.77% of the variance with 5 items that were labelled as satisfaction-generating strategies (α = .77). The reliability of each factor was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. The overall reliability alpha values as well as for each ARCS scale indicate satisfactory internal consistency of the questionnaire.

The first research question aimed to identify the MotS that Tunisian EFL teachers use most as they reported in the IMMS questionnaire. The mean scores for the ARCS strategies show that teachers deploy confidence-building strategies the most, followed by relevance-producing strategies, satisfaction-generating strategies and attention-getting strategies.

Rank	ARCS Strategies	Mean	SD
1	Confidence-building strategies	4.12	1.33
2	Relevance-producing strategies	4.09	1.22
3	Satisfaction-generating strategies	4.01	1.49
4	Attention-getting strategies	3.80	1.34

Table 4. Teachers' MotS.

For the second research question, teachers and students' answers were compared through an independent samples t-test. There were significant differences between students' perception of MotS and those of the teachers ($p < 0.05$) for all ARCS categories. Teachers' scores were still higher than students' scores for all ARCS categories and did not follow the same frequency order (see Table 5).

	Mean scores		T-test*
	Students (N=264)	Teachers (N= 46)	
Attention-getting	2.72	3.80	.00
Relevance-producing	3.39	4.09	.00
Confidence-building	3.30	4.12	.00
Satisfaction-generating	2.95	4.01	.00

*p <0.05

Table 5. Teachers and students IMMS results.

3.2. Observation results

To answer the third research question, teachers' questionnaire results were compared with their classroom observation. For each class observation, the average frequency for each teacher's motivational behavior was calculated. These scores were converted to standardized z-scores on SPSS and were later compared with standardized z-scores from questionnaire results (for more details, see Kouraïchi and Lesznyák 2022). Following Kouraïchi and Lesznyák (2022), the MOLT categories were categorized following the ARCS strategies. The MotS observed were then compared according to the teachers' questionnaire answers.

The MOLT observation results indicated the dominance of relevance-producing strategies, namely establishing-relevance, scaffolding, process-feedback, self or peer-correction. Some motivational strategies were totally absent such as promoting integrative and instrumental values, team competition, personalization, tangible task product and promoting autonomy. The comparison of z-scores for each teacher highlights discrepancies between questionnaire and observation results. Some teachers scored below the mean during the observation while having a score above the mean for the questionnaire. This result indicates that teachers' use of MotS during the observation were not the same as reported in the questionnaire. Other teachers scored negatively for both the classroom observation and the questionnaire. Their negative z-scores could show how they negatively estimated their motivational teaching practice. Scores of teachers with higher observation results indicate that they used more MotS during the observed classes than they usually do.

4. Conclusion

This research is a continuation of a research line presented at the Doctoral Symposium of the ESSE conference in Mainz 2022 and offers preliminary results of my dissertation (Kouraïchi 2023). The preliminary findings suggest that teachers reported using confidence-building strategies the most through their questionnaire answers. On the contrary, observation results showed that teachers relied on relevance-producing strategies the most. The findings report a significant difference for all ARCS categories. The strategies highlight the importance of the learned content to students and activation of their background knowledge (Maeng and Lee 2015). Compared to the Estonian context, confidence-building strategies were similarly the most used (Kouraïchi 2025) Moreover, results from Hungarian high schools suggest that satisfaction-generating strategies were the most important (Kouraïchi and Lesznyák 2022). For higher education, the importance of these MotS lies in forging students' confidence to use English after graduation. Adult students might be less influenced by rewards or care less about the ultimate result. The finding that students do not recognize the MotS used by their teachers resonates with previous results (Min and Chon 2020). In line with these findings, Lamb (2019) suggests that although both teachers and students value the importance of MotS, "teachers do not use them as frequently as one would expect from their stated importance, and when they do, students do not always recognize them" (295). In fact, students' perception of the MotS proves not just their importance but also their effectiveness.

L2 Motivation is inextricably linked with emotion since students' anxiety or enjoyment are a vital part of the classroom experience. This could be highlighted during the classroom observation. In addition, students' willingness to communicate was explored through another questionnaire to identify their L2 motivational self-vision that was not included in this paper. It would have been interesting to examine the difference between English majors and non-English majors in terms of the way that they evaluated the use of MotS. However, this was not possible because of the small number of ESP participants. Difference between female and male student participants' perception of MotS could also yield insightful results since few studies have focused on gender and L2 motivation (Henry and Cliffordson 2013). It should be mentioned that recruiting teachers for classroom observation was the most challenging part in the data collection. Although my presence might have influenced teachers' and students' behavior, there was no possibility for a second observer given the sanitary measures put in place and the time constraints during the collection of data.

In brief, this research aims to throw light on Tunisian EFL teachers' use of MotS and university students' evaluation of their teacher's motivational practice. The emerging findings echo with previous studies (Cheng and Dörnyei 2007; Ruesch, Bown and Dewey 2012; Tavakoli, Yaghoubinejad and Zarrinabadi 2018; Karimi and Zade 2019; Hsu 2020; Min and Chon 2021; Kouraïchi and Lesznyák 2022). The current study attempts to contribute to the scarce research on language learning motivation in the Tunisian context and provide practitioners with practical techniques to enhance students' motivation in the EFL classroom.

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