

## **English teachers' uses of motivational strategies beyond an established framework**

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### Structured Abstract

**Background** Although the usefulness of Dörnyei's framework of motivational strategies to language teachers has been widely tested, motivational techniques which are not within the framework have less commonly been accounted for.

**Purpose** This study explores the uses of motivational strategies beyond Dörnyei's taxonomy, and the factors which cause English teachers to use them.

**Methods** 22 teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Hong Kong participated in this study. Reflective journal data and interview data, supported by classroom observations, were collected and analysed qualitatively.

**Findings** The results reveal that, while most of the reported strategies corresponded closely to Dörnyei's recommendations, two additional macrostrategies - routine teaching activities and uses of authentic materials - were employed. The most predominant factor leading to the use of these two macrostrategies was a concern about feasibility

**Conclusions** This study hence suggests the need for a new line of research on strategies which are primarily instructional and secondarily motivational, as well as further studies which take the feasibility of motivational strategies into greater consideration.

**Keywords:** Motivation, motivational strategies, feasibility, Hong Kong, EFL, teaching and learning approaches

## Introduction

Regardless of how researchers conceptualise motivation, language teachers often face the profound challenge of motivating learners in practical ways. Therefore, the motivational effects of language teaching in various ethnolinguistic and educational contexts deserve as much attention from researchers as the countless facets of language learning motivation itself. A prerequisite for valid research on such desirable effects is a general agreement on what constitutes motivational interventions in language classrooms. In the last two decades, Dörnyei's

(2001) four-stage framework of second language (L2) motivational strategies has been the most representative and influential one. His taxonomy has been the anchor of studies investigating the prevalence and effectiveness of English teachers' motivational techniques worldwide, such as in Japan (Sugita & Takeuchi, 2010), South Korea (Guilloteaux, 2013; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008), Taiwan (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007), Spain (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008), Hungary (Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998), the US (Ruesch, Bown, & Dewey, 2012), Saudi Arabia (Alrabai, 2011, 2014, 2016), and Iran (Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2011).

Although previous studies have confirmed the usefulness of Dörnyei's collection of motivational strategies to English teachers, other recommendable practices outside Dörnyei's framework are likely to be apparent. It is, hence, worth uncovering these underresearched strategies, explaining why they are employed, and discussing how they may impact future research and constructs. The present study aims to address these questions by the analysis of journal and interview data gathered from teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Hong Kong. A noteworthy feature of this study is the collection of data from not only tertiary but also secondary English teachers - a response to the underrepresentation of secondary schools in studies on language learning motivation as pointed out by Boo, Dörnyei, and Ryan (2015).

It should be noted that, while this study looks into Hong Kong EFL teachers' regular and conscious efforts to enhance students' motivation, it does not aim to attest to their effectiveness. Whether a motivational strategy can raise students' motivation is dependent on a diversity of contextual and cultural factors (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998). No single motivational strategy should be assumed to bring identical or similar benefits to all learners in all situations (Guilloteaux, 2013; Lamb, 2017). The collection of student data is essential to determine the effectiveness of individual strategies (e.g. Ruesch et al., 2012, Sugita & Takeuchi,

2010; Wong, 2014) or a constellation of strategies (e.g. Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, & Ratcheva, 2013; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2011) in specific settings. Neither does this study aim to question the construct of motivational strategies, as its common definition, which is covered in the following literature review, is believed to encompass all possible facets of language learners' motivation.

## **Background**

Motivation has long been regarded a crucial factor that fuels language learning, and an important predictor of eventual success. A lack of motivation may cause capable language learners to underperform, even in the presence of appropriate curricula and sound teaching practices (Dörnyei, 2005). It is also commonly believed that language teachers shoulder substantial responsibility for the elicitation and maintenance of learners' motivation in classroom settings. A substantial amount of research has been undertaken to look into the influence of language teachers' instructional and interpersonal styles on learners' motivation (e.g. Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Brophy, 2006; Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010; Reeve, Jang, Hardre, & Omura, 2002). Also, a number of cognitive-situated and process-oriented models of L2 motivation (e.g. Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Williams & Burden, 1997) attach great importance to language teachers, thus comprising a range of teacher-specific components. Some examples are teachers' personalities, behaviours, and teaching styles, as well as feedback, praise, admonishment, and other teacher interventions.

The motivational interventions from language teachers are often cited by researchers as motivational strategies, which are instructional techniques consciously employed to 'generate and enhance student motivation', 'maintain ongoing behaviour', and protect the motivation

‘from distracting and/or competing action tendencies’ (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 103). An upsurge in research on motivational strategies in language classrooms has been witnessed in the last two decades, probably as a result of researchers’ hopes to test empirically the properties and effectiveness of numerous strategies, and to recommend a manageable set of effective strategies to language teachers. This can also be regarded as researchers’ response to Gardner and Tremblay’s (1994) call for empirical evidence which could verify the usefulness of motivational techniques in language classrooms. Dörnyei and Csizér’s (1998) quantitative study on Hungarian English teachers’ uses and perceptions of 51 motivational strategies has been widely regarded as the forerunner of this line of enquiry. Incorporating the 51 strategies and other educational theories, Dörnyei (2001) proposes a comprehensive framework of 102 motivational strategies in relation to the following four motivational goals: creating the basic motivational conditions; generating initial motivation; maintaining and protecting motivation; and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation.

This framework, apart from being clear and comprehensive, is also theoretically underpinned: it corresponds to Dörnyei and Ottó’s (1998) process model of language learning motivation, which matches different required motivational influences with a sequence of events and desired actions in language classrooms. The process model has high relevance to language classrooms because it proposes three phases in which the teacher can influence learners’ motivated behavioural process; i.e.: preactional phase: learners select a goal or task to be accomplished; actional phase: learners take an irrevocable step and become committed to the selected goal or task; post-actional phase: learners reflect on the completed action and form causal attributions about the outcomes.

The appeal of Dörnyei's (2001) framework has led researchers worldwide to adopt it as the basis of their quantitative and qualitative enquiries into language (mostly English) teachers' uses of motivational strategies (e.g. Al-Mahrooqi, Abrar-ul-Hassan, & Asante, 2012; Alrabai, 2011, 2014, 2016; Astuti, 2013; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Cowie & Sakui, 2011; Guilloteaux, 2013; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Mezei, 2014; Moskovsky et al., 2013; Nosratinia & Moradi, 2017; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2011; Ruesch et al., 2012; Sugita & Takeuchi, 2010; Tavakoli, Yaghoubinejad, & Zarrinabadi, 2018; Wong, 2014). In general, their findings indicate that the uses of motivational strategies can raise different aspects of language learning motivation, engender motivated behaviours, and even augment performance. Therefore, Dörnyei's taxonomy has expedited deeper understanding of motivational strategies, and perhaps promoted more frequent and thoughtful use of them. It must be remembered that Dörnyei's framework has constituted the foundation of the majority of recent research; few studies provide justifications for adopting Dörnyei's framework or slightly modified versions of it, or for excluding strategies beyond the framework. The importance and value of this prominent and valuable framework notwithstanding, it is also crucial not to overlook the possibility that there may be other applicable motivational strategies at English teachers' disposal.

A rather small number of studies have tested English teachers' motivational behaviours beyond Dörnyei's (2001) taxonomy. Notably, Bernaus and Gardner (2008) investigated the uses of teacher-centred and learner-centred motivating teaching strategies in secondary English classes. Sugita McEown and Takeuchi (2014) explored the relationship between learners' English proficiency levels and the effectiveness of 17 strategies beyond Dörnyei's framework. Maeng and Lee (2015) analysed English teachers' motivational behaviours based on Keller's (1994, 2010) ARCS model (attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction), and also in

relation to teachers' English proficiency and experience. These works represent encouraging endeavours to stretch the boundaries of research on English teachers' motivational practices. However, there has been limited research which allows English teachers to report and reflect freely on their motivational practices, including those not yet accommodated by any existing frameworks.

Examining English teachers' perspectives on motivational practices beyond Dörnyei's (2001) or any frameworks is further acknowledgement of the teachers' professionalism and autonomy. After all, teachers have an indispensable role in shaping classrooms through complex decision-making (Borg, 2006). Rather than simply adopting motivational strategies recommended by research, English teachers are expected to consider a range of factors in their strategy selection and implementation. Some major considerations are their English learning and teaching experience, personalities, and styles, together with learners' proficiency levels and needs, class sizes, course content, assessments, and institutional requirements. Perhaps surprisingly, there have been few attempts to ascertain what causes English teachers to prefer or avoid certain motivational techniques. Cowie and Sakui (2011) associated the uses of motivational strategies with English teachers' perspectives on L2 motivation. Wong (2014) found that certain motivational strategies were responses to English learners' desires for tangible rewards, smaller tasks, surprises, and humour. Glas (2016) identified a body of contextual and internal constraints which inhibited English teachers' motivational efforts, such as lack of support, difficult access to resources, and erroneous beliefs. Although these studies have successfully delineated the influences of certain factors on the uses of motivational strategies, further research is warranted to establish a comprehensive and, perhaps, hierarchical framework, encompassing both facilitative and inhibitive factors, and ranging from the personal to the

societal level. It is also worthwhile to try to uncover the factors which compel English teachers to deploy motivational strategies which are not within familiar classifications.

## Purpose

In light of the abovementioned context, the present study aims to address the following research questions:

- (1) What motivational strategies do English teachers adopt?
- (2) Do English teachers adopt strategies other than those from Dörnyei's (2001) framework?
- (3) If so, what causes English teachers to adopt these additional strategies?

## Methodology

### *Ethical considerations*

Prior to participant recruitment and data collection, the investigators obtained ethical approval from the respective research ethics committees of their academic institution. They then provided the participating school principal and directors a summary of the study and were granted permission. All participants consented to participation by reading and signing an informed consent form which stated the investigators' contact information, purposes of the research and its procedure, arrangements to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, potential benefits and risks, compensation, storage of data, and participants' rights. Once the data collection was complete, personal identifiers were removed from the dataset. Pseudonyms are used in this article to refer to the participants in the reported data. To achieve confidentiality, digital copies of the data were



stored in a USB flash drive with password protection, and hard copies were kept in a locked cabinet accessible only to the investigators.

### ***Ethnolinguistic and educational background of Hong Kong***

In Hong Kong English, Cantonese, and Putonghua are widely regarded as the three official spoken languages, and the undisputed local lingua franca is Cantonese. It was the usual spoken language of 88.9% of the population aged five and above in 2016 (Census and Statistics Department, 2018). After the return to the People's Republic of China (PRC) sovereignty in 1997, the symbolic and economic role of English in Hong Kong has remained strong (Bolton, 2000; Joseph, 2004). Proficiency in English as the unmarked language of written business communication is a key determinant of socio-economic status (Evans & Morrison, 2018). English also continues to be valued as part of a Hong Kong identity. English-Cantonese bilingualism or English-Cantonese-Putonghua trilingualism is considered a prerequisite for being a Hong Konger (Lai, 2010, 2012), and to some extent 'a separation between a Hong Kong and a PRC identity' (Hansen Edwards, 2015, p. 184). Despite its prestige, though, English is rarely needed in intra-ethnic communication (Evans & Green, 2001). Although English is the medium of instruction in government-funded universities and community colleges run under their auspices, most secondary schools are Chinese-medium. It is thought that the majority of Hong Kong Chinese students have difficulty meeting the English standard expected within Hong Kong because of limited home support for English and exposure to English other than classroom input; concerns about standards have been raised, for example, by educators, academics, journalists, businesspeople, and politicians (Li, 2017).

### ***Participants***

The participants in this study were 22 Cantonese-Chinese-speaking teachers in Hong Kong who taught English as a foreign language. To enhance representativeness, the teacher participants were recruited from diverse educational settings - a Chinese-medium secondary school (7), a self-financed English-medium community college (9), and a government-funded English-medium university (6). They possessed different amounts of EFL teaching experience, ranging from 2 to 15 years. During data collection, they were teaching a range of English courses, such as: the Hong Kong secondary English language curriculum; practical, academic, and workplace English; analysis of English grammar; and postgraduate thesis writing. All participants possessed academic qualifications in English language studies or in relevant fields. As Dörnyei (2001) does not introduce any of his motivational strategies as context-specific, it can be reasonably assumed that all the strategies in his framework are comprehensible to teachers and potentially beneficial to students in the three chosen research contexts.

The recruitment process began with purposive sampling. The investigators first approached five former colleagues in the three different institutions, who agreed to participate. This was followed by 'snowball' sampling: that is, the five participants recommended colleagues who might be interested. As a result, 17 more teachers with different qualifications and teaching duties became participants.

### ***Data collection***

The present study first examined the 22 teacher participants' motivational practices over a semester. Each teacher participant wrote one journal in the middle of the semester and another one near the end of the semester. The participants reported several regularly used motivational

strategies in each journal. Allowing the teachers to write journals at two points of time ensured that their reflections were based on their recent experiences rather than their recollections across the whole semester. A journal writing guide was provided for the participants in order to stimulate their reflections and direct their attention to relevant themes (see Appendix A). Due to the different semester lengths of the three institutions involved, the three groups of participants completed the first journal in Week 8 (secondary school) and Week 6 (community college and university) respectively. All the participants then completed the second journal one or two weeks before the semester ended. A total number of 44 journals were collected, and the average length of one journal was 400 to 500 words. Although this study aims to compare the strategies adopted by the participants with those endorsed by Dörnyei's (2001) framework, the framework was neither introduced to the participants nor appended to the journal writing guide. This minimised unintended influences on the participants, so that they would be less likely to deliberately match their data with any speculations.

During the semester, observations were conducted to see whether the motivational strategies recorded in the journals were implemented. Eight of the participants, who indicated their consent, were observed in class once or twice. In all of the classroom observations, the investigators took the role of a non-participant observer. After each observation, the investigators discussed the observation results with the teacher. All discussion sessions ended with both parties' agreement that the reported motivational strategies had been adopted. The observations hence confirmed the general reliability of the participants' self-reports.

One week after the end of the semester, each of the nine teacher participants who had reported strategies beyond Dörnyei's (2001) framework was invited to an individual, semi-structured interview. The primary aim of the nine interviews was to try to determine the factors

which influenced the teachers to employ the additional strategies. The interview guide can be found in Appendix B. To facilitate participation, the interviews were conducted in Cantonese Chinese, in the teachers' offices. The interviews were audio-recorded. During the interviews, the investigators constantly encouraged open-ended discussion and additional comments from the participants. As a result, varied and extended responses were collected from the nine participants. Most interviews were completed in around 30 minutes.

### ***Data analysis***

All the motivational strategies recorded in the collected journals were compared with those in Dörnyei's (2001) framework. The reported strategies were then classified into the following four groups:

- (1) Strategies identical or highly similar to Dörnyei's recommendations
- (2) Strategies subsuming a multitude of Dörnyei's recommendations
- (3) Strategies as applications of Dörnyei's recommendations for specific skills or course components
- (4) Strategies noticeably different from Dörnyei's recommendations.

Strategies assigned to the first category bear close resemblance to the 102 motivational strategies recommended by Dörnyei; strategies in the second category also draw upon Dörnyei's work, but each of them represents two or more recommendations from the framework; strategies in the third category can be regarded as applications of Dörnyei's recommended strategies for the teaching of discrete skills (such as reading, writing, pronunciation, and vocabulary) or course components (such as assignments, assessments, and consultations); and strategies in the final category were regarded as beyond Dörnyei's framework, owing to their significantly different forms and purposes. Since a primary objective of this study was to examine motivational strategies not embodied by Dörnyei's framework, strategies put in the last category were further

categorised.

The interview data, which were pertinent to the factors causing the nine participants to use the additional strategies, were transcribed verbatim and then translated into English. The translated interview transcripts were sent to the corresponding participants for member checking. After some minor revision, all the participants confirmed the accuracy of the transcription and translation. The two investigators coded the data independently in every stage of the coding process. Owing to the lack of existing frameworks which capture diverse influences on English teachers' motivational behaviours, the interview data and the nine interviewees' reflective journals were initially coded with reference to two previous classifications in order to capture particular factors. The first was Glas' (2016) distinction between contextual and internal constraints on English teachers' autonomy to employ motivational strategies. The second was Kyriacou and Coulthard's (2000) summary of the three dimensions of teachers' motivation to teach: altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic reasons. This summary was believed to be relevant because English teachers' motivational efforts could be regarded as an integral part of their teaching activities. After the first round of coding, however, both investigators noticed that the nine teachers were more inclined to comment on the resultant ease of use of the additional strategies than on the constraints on their general motivational interventions. Therefore, the two investigators discussed the tentative notion of feasibility, agreed on a definition, and reread and recoded independently the interview transcripts and the nine interviewees' journals for this notion. Most of the excerpts related to feasibility appeared in the interview transcripts. Lastly, the two investigators compared the coding results and the inter-rater reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was 96%, indicating a reliable coding process.

# Findings

Overall, a total of 46 motivational strategies were found in the 44 journals collected from the 22 participants. A large portion of the strategies were used by multiple participants, resulting in considerable overlap in the reported data and a somewhat compact collection of strategies. Table 1 presents the 46 strategies, following the classification outlined in the data analysis section.

**Table 1.** L2 motivational strategies reported by participants.

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## **1. Strategies identical or highly similar to Dörnyei's recommendations**

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- Help students understand their strengths and weaknesses
- Promote cooperation instead of competition
- Provide feedback on students' performance
- Allow students to change the classroom settings according to their preferences
- Tell students the usefulness and importance of the knowledge taught in daily life, further studies, employment, etc.
- Use pair and group work
- Use group games and competitions
- Use encouraging words in class instead of criticisms
- Regularly use small-group discussions where students can mix
- Explain the purpose and utility of a task or an assignment
- Help students understand that obstacles, correction, and revision are a normal and natural part of English learning
- Share own English learning experience with students

- Show care about students' progress
- Have high expectations for what students can achieve
- Tell students how the course can help them achieve their goals
- Use jokes and humour
- Provide opportunities for students to make discoveries
- Use examples from daily life to illustrate English features

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## **2. Strategies subsuming many of Dörnyei's recommendations**

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- Provide mainly positive feedback on oral presentations and other assignments, and show confidence in students' abilities
- Recognise students' attempts to speak English, show understanding, and provide encouragement
- Act as a facilitator and show appreciation to students for their hard work in class
- Ensure that students receive sufficient assistance, and be available to students physically and mentally

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## **3. Strategies as applications of Dörnyei's recommendations for specific skills or course components**

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- Let students learn writing skills through interaction
- Ensure that a group writing task will yield a product which is worth keeping
- Pick different students to present every time to ensure that every student has the opportunity to experience success
- Change the seating patterns when carrying out speaking tasks
- Offer students opportunities to discuss in groups before or after various reading and

listening tasks

- Let students know that there are numerous ways to enhance their vocabulary
- Use games which allow students to move around in the classroom to teach and revise vocabulary
- Show students a sample test paper and stress that all the topics on the paper have been taught in class
- Tell students how they can perform well in assessments
- Adjust assessment guidelines to ensure success
- Provide appropriate strategies to complete the assignments

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#### **4. Strategies noticeably different from Dörnyei's recommendations**

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Routine teaching activities – i.e.

- Compare Chinese and English features like nominalisation, finite/nonfinite verbs, and tenses
- Use the overhead projector to show students' in-class work and invite comments on it
- Use the step-by-step guide for research essay writing
- Raise students' awareness of pronunciation issues and encourage students to practise
- Discuss previous students' assignments as exemplars
- Teach presentation skills with videos of previous students' performance
- Begin a lesson by reviewing the newly-taught words with students

Uses of authentic materials – i.e.

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- Use lyrics to introduce English structures like prepositional phrases
  - Incorporate authentic materials into the course, such as news reports, blogposts, advertisements, etc.
  - Use both effective and ineffective advertisements to raise students' awareness of language mistakes and differences
  - Use TV dramas to highlight common problems with pronunciation
  - Show students videos of sample presentations and let students discuss the strengths and weaknesses
  - Share with students useful L2 learning online resources, especially exercises, for self-study
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The sections which follow present and describe the findings of the analysis in greater detail. Where relevant, anonymised, translated quotations from the transcribed data are included in order to support the descriptions of findings.

### ***Strategies resembling Dörnyei's recommendations***

Among the four categories, the first comprises the largest number of motivational strategies. These 18 strategies are so similar to those endorsed by Dörnyei (2001) that they can be deemed to align with the comprehensive framework. The four strategies in the second category encapsulate a body of recommendations from Dörnyei. These two categories, therefore, provide evidence of the prevalence of Dörnyei's recommendations in the Hong Kong EFL teaching contexts investigated in this study.

Further evidence of the universality of Dörnyei's (2001) taxonomy can be found in the third category, which encompasses 11 skill- or component-specific strategies. Seven of them were reported in relation to the teaching of writing, speaking, and vocabulary. This highlights some participants' propensity to use Dörnyei's recommended strategies in connection with discrete English skills, despite the fact that Dörnyei's framework makes no attempt to categorise or restrict the strategies that way. The remaining four strategies in the third category are manifestations of Dörnyei's recommendations in assignments, assessments, and suggested resources for self-study.

### ***Strategies dissimilar to Dörnyei's recommendations***

The fourth category contains 13 motivational strategies which, upon meticulous analysis, were considered markedly different from Dörnyei's (2001) recommendations. These strategies were further divided into two subcategories: routine teaching activities and uses of authentic materials.

#### *Routine teaching activities*

A conspicuous feature of the strategies as routine teaching activities is that they comprise details of the skills being taught (nominalisation, verb tenses, presentation skills, etc.), the equipment or materials to be used (a visualiser, students' assignments, videos, etc.), or when a certain strategy ought to be employed (the beginning of a lesson). They are much more concrete than Dörnyei's general guidelines, and hence more prone to be regarded as instructions for carrying out regular teaching. The second feature is that some of these strategies involve materials which are integral to the courses being taught. The adoption of these strategies was, to some extent, fulfilment of course requirements. Instances include using a step-by-step research essay writing guide and displaying previous students' works. The former strategy's applicability is confined to academic

English courses and thus not as versatile as Dörnyei's recommendations. The latter may be at odds with Dörnyei's recommendation of avoiding face-threatening acts.

The most prominent feature that sets this subcategory apart from Dörnyei's (2001) framework of motivational strategies is more emphasis on instructional effectiveness than on motivating potential. The purposes of these strategies seem to be primarily instructional and secondarily motivational. This assumption was confirmed by numerous participants, who, in the interviews, admitted to adopting this subcategory of strategies with a dual purpose; enhancement of students' motivation might have been incidental. Excerpts 1 to 4 imply the relative ease of adopting routine teaching activities which doubled as motivational strategies:

Excerpt 1

My class has to do oral presentations, a mandatory requirement. It is totally sensible and acceptable for me to show videos of sample presentations to let students explore their strengths and weaknesses...I won't be accused of idling away class time with irrelevant activities.

Excerpt 2

It is not like I have to devise a motivational strategy from scratch. I have taught those skills before, so I know how to do so. All I need to do beforehand is to search for fun and recent lyrics and advertisements, which usually does not take long.

Excerpt 3

The guide for research essay writing has to be used by all classes anyway. If I tweak it a bit and add some more insights and cautions to make it more interesting, I can perhaps teach my students and motivate them at the same time.

Excerpt 4

The previous students' assignments are readily available. It would be a waste not to use them to help my students perform better...some students are particularly eager to excel in class, and I suppose this strategy will be very motivating to them. But even if this strategy turns out to elicit little motivation there is still no harm in using it.

The data suggest that the main concern of these participants was not the magnitude of language

learning motivation aroused by the adopted strategies, or anything which corresponds to the widely researched parameters of importance or effectiveness. It was more practical considerations such as the minimal risk, preparation, and implementation time of these dual-purpose strategies which appealed to the participants. Therefore, motivational strategies which require relatively little effort and cause no resistance were likely to be considered highly feasible and employed frequently by them.

In comparison, few participants attributed the uses of ordinary teaching skills to high motivational effectiveness. In the few comments on strategy effectiveness, the participants either referred to impressionistic observations or previous students who might have exhibited motivated behaviours (see Excerpts 5 & 6). Throughout the whole study, none of the English teachers reported collecting students' views on the effectiveness of the adopted motivational strategies. A crucial strategy in Dörnyei's framework - using needs analysis to find out about students' needs, goals, and interests - was not present in the teachers' journals either. The analysis did not identify evidence of participants tailoring their motivational interventions to their students, or rigorously monitoring the effectiveness of their interventions. This, coupled with the participants' recurring concerns about feasibility, suggests that notions of feasibility might have been a more influential factor than importance or effectiveness in determining the participants' motivational practices.

Excerpt 5

Students seem to be quite attentive whenever I refer to the research writing guide...I assume this is a sign that they find the guide motivating, so I believe this strategy is worth using.

Excerpt 6

I had taught subdegree students for a few years. At that time I also occasionally began a class by reviewing difficult words, which seemed to be quite effective in engaging students...I suppose this strategy works equally well with undergraduates.

Apart from feasibility and effectiveness, more positive appraisal from the school management, peer influence, and previous English learning experience each had a few mentions as reasons for adopting ordinary teaching activities as motivational interventions.

### *Uses of authentic materials*

A range of authentic materials was used as motivational input by the participants, including online exercises, lyrics, advertisements, TV dramas, etc. While Dörnyei's (2001) framework does not explicitly advocate using authentic materials, several strategies in it are associated with authenticity. Examples include promoting contact with cultural products, encouraging students to apply their language proficiency in real-life situations, relating the subject matter to students' backgrounds and everyday experiences, and adapting task content to students' interests. The participants, however, rarely explained or justified their adoption of authentic materials with these aims, which suggests that the usage here is not the same as strategies within Dörnyei's recommendations. Rather, in the data analysed in this study, feasibility was again found to be a major factor; the participants remarked on the vastness of authentic English materials from various sources, and also the convenience and low costs of using them:

#### Excerpt 7

There are countless English TV dramas...I never have to worry about running out of materials. All I need to do is to check their difficulty levels and ensure that there is no inappropriate content, which is a breeze.

#### Excerpt 8

I often turn recent local and global news reports into discussion tasks and let my students discuss and report. Such news reports can be found easily, for free, and I can keep students motivated and occupied with very little preparation work.

#### Excerpt 9

An endless list of presentation videos can be found online, especially on YouTube...It is so easy to search for more recent videos by sorting the results by date, in order to avoid showing students videos they have watched before.

Excerpt 10

There are so many advertisements and most of them can be viewed online. There must be some that are related to whatever content or skill I am teaching...I can search for usable ones and prepare as late as a day before the class.

Authentic materials in English teaching can provide students with cultural information, encourage students to communicate and develop appropriate learning strategies, and prepare students to use English in real life, hence increasing their motivation. Nevertheless, the data analysis suggested a focus on pragmatic factors such as the ease of preparation. Similarly, other participants associated their use of authentic materials with external requirements. Excerpts 11 to 13 demonstrate how their motivational behaviours were a response to their perceptions of the predominant trends in English teaching, as well as more concrete institutional requirements:

Excerpt 11

A common view recently is that every aspect of English teaching has to be task-based...to incorporate authentic materials which are essentially real-life materials without much adaption...This is how I conform to this trend.

Excerpt 12

One of the appraisal criteria of my institution is to develop extra teaching materials...It takes minimal effort to find relevant lyrics online as long as you know what language features you are going to explore...I can meet this criterion quite easily, and hopefully this can raise students' motivation too.

Excerpt 13

The leader of this subject stresses all the time the importance of enriching classes with real-life examples and materials...I do this to ensure that there is such evidence in the students' feedback questionnaires, and when the leader visits my class.

Two other factors which were reported much less frequently were personal aspirations and

previous teacher education. One participant reported using this strategy in order to improve motivational capability as a reflective English teacher. Another participant, while pursuing a teaching qualification in the past, was convinced by instructors and classmates of the motivational effectiveness of this macrostrategy.

## Discussion

### *Direct teaching and incorporation of authentic materials as motivational techniques in English teaching*

Since 33 out of the 46 reported motivational techniques were highly similar or even identical to those recommended by Dörnyei's (2001) framework, the comprehensiveness and universality of this framework are once again supported by the evidence in the current study. However, two additional types of motivational behaviours - direct teaching skills and incorporation of authentic materials - were found to be used by some teacher participants. Three participants even reported no motivational efforts other than these two types. English teachers who use good instructional techniques can indeed be effective motivators of learning (Lamb, 2017). In Hong Kong, for example, tertiary students' self-efficacy and motivation may be raised with direct teaching of English writing skills (Lam, 2015). Even so, English teaching strategies which double as motivational strategies possess two inherent limitations. First, these dual-purpose strategies are perhaps no different from daily teaching routines, so the motivational purposes of these strategies, unless explicitly stated by teachers, may not be noticeable to learners. The motivational impact of these ordinary instructional practices may thus be weakened. Second, a key expected outcome of implementing effective teaching strategies is improved performance from learners. Although skilful teaching is often found to further motivate English learners with

high motivation as it increases their likelihood of achieving concrete and realistic goals (Lamb, 2017), it may not adequately meet the greater and more diverse motivational needs of English learners with mediocre or low motivation. Its motivational potential is even more doubtful if certain English learners do not regard improved performance as an important motive (Lee, 2017).

It may be easier for English learners to see the motivational purposes of incorporating extra authentic materials than those of ordinary instructional practices. The introduced materials also tend to bring a wider range of benefits than enhanced performance alone, such as interest and affinity to English communities and cultures. English teachers, nevertheless, need to be reasonably familiar with learners' academic backgrounds, personalities, proficiency levels, learning and motivational needs, and other learner traits to ensure that the supplementary authentic materials are appropriate. Otherwise, they may run a high risk of presenting unfamiliar, uninspiring, or overly difficult materials which are unmotivating (Lee, 2017). Since the participants of this study never reported any systematic or well-planned measures to gather information about learner needs, it is not possible to determine the appropriateness and effectiveness of their adopted authentic materials.

Despite these notes of caution, it is argued that English teachers ought not to be dissuaded from harnessing the motivational potential of routine teaching practices and additional authentic materials. Rather, it is suggested that they are advised not to overlook motivational strategies which do not entail any English skills, knowledge, or materials. A few instances are: showing care, indicating mental and physical availability, establishing a norm of tolerance, formulating group rules, and offering rewards. Plentiful strategies of this sort can be found in Dörnyei's (2001) framework, and their perceived importance and effectiveness have been borne out in



various educational and ethnolinguistic contexts. This implies that motivational interventions other than direct instruction and additional authenticity are required in most, if not all, English classrooms.

### ***The need for further research on dual-purpose strategies***

As mentioned previously, other studies have investigated the uses of ordinary English instruction as motivational interventions. Bernaus and Gardner (2008), for one, listed grammar exercises, vocabulary memorisation, dictation, and translation as motivating tasks. Similarly, Sugita McEown and Takeuchi (2014) included speaking English with proper pronunciation and explaining textbook content as motivational strategies. The present one chimes with these by suggesting that such dual-purpose techniques are likely to be prevalent, and the growth in English learners' motivation fostered by effective teaching is not to be disregarded. It must be restated, however, that the participants of this study attributed their adoption of the two additional macrostrategies largely to high feasibility, suggesting that the enhancement in learners' motivation might be only a secondary or even incidental outcome. There may exist a much wider range of similar strategies in English classrooms which are primarily instructional and secondarily motivational, and conceivably they may be some English teachers' preferred way of maintaining their students' motivation. Studies examining the diversity, features, and effectiveness of such strategies are called for; probably, a construct different from Dörnyei's (2001) framework will be required for this new line of research.

### ***Feasibility: An important yet neglected parameter?***

Feasibility – i.e. pragmatic and practical considerations – is a recurring theme in the findings, indicating that the teacher participants were incentivised to adopt highly feasible motivational

strategies. No other factors were found to be as influential as feasibility, and several teacher participants accounted for their motivational behaviours solely with feasibility concerns. All these point to the suggestion that feasibility is too important to be overlooked in future studies on motivational strategies in language classrooms. The notion of feasibility as an important parameter also would have implications for teacher education and school management. If the aim is to promote more frequent uses of motivational strategies by language teachers, eliminating feasibility-related obstacles may be more helpful than restating the importance of adopting the strategies.

There have in fact been indications in previous research that the feasibility of motivational strategies is a pivotal factor. Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) cite large class sizes, a small population of first language speakers, and pressure from the official curriculum as suspected impediments to strategy use. Guilloteaux (2013) underlines a prevalence of multiple-choice questions, exhausting institutional demands, and learners' overwhelming apprehension about assessments as possible inhibitions. These phenomena may lower the feasibility, and probably the frequency of use, of certain motivational strategies, yet claims of this type have rarely been verified with empirical data. Studies on general motivational strategies such as those by Hardré and Sullivan (2008) and Hardré and Hennessey (2013) have elucidated how feasibility and other factors predict teachers' motivational behaviours. There is a pressing need to address the same question in the context of language teaching.

Prior to the incorporation of the feasibility parameter into further studies, there is a need to determine exactly what this parameter comprises. The present study shows that abundance of easily accessible materials and preparation workload are common concerns about feasibility among English teachers. Other concerns, such as language teachers' familiarity with the

strategies, learners' proficiency levels, and institutional policies, are likely to exist, and their influences on language teachers' motivational efforts remain to be examined. It is hoped that, after substantial research and discussion, a specific definition of feasibility may be arrived at. Such a definition is a prerequisite for consistent data analysis methods and valid comparison of results from a variety of studies on strategy feasibility.

## **Conclusion**

This study examines, with reference to Dörnyei's (2001) framework, 22 Hong Kong EFL teachers' uses of motivational strategies, and the factors which encouraged the teachers to employ motivational techniques beyond the framework. The teacher participants' efforts to motivate learners generally accorded with the framework, hence supporting the applicability of Dörnyei's framework to Hong Kong EFL classrooms. A number of motivational strategies beyond Dörnyei's taxonomy were also reported, which could be classified as either direct English instruction or provision of authentic materials. Although the motivational values of these two types of interventions appear clear, an overreliance on them has to be cautioned against, due to their limitations. It is suggested that these two additional motivational macrostrategies, together with other strategies which serve the dual purpose of teaching and motivating students, are likely to be prevalent in English classrooms: therefore, they deserve more attention in future research.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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## **Appendix A**

### ***Guide for teacher reflective journals***

Please write several motivational strategies you have used recently. Please cover the three areas specified below. Some prompts are provided for each topic to guide your writing. You are free to include other content that is relevant.

#### *1. Knowledge of motivational strategies*

- What motivational strategies have you used recently?
- Where did you learn about these strategies (from colleagues, books, courses, etc.)?
- Are these strategies specific to language teaching?

#### *2. Details of motivational strategies*

- Were these strategies specific to any course content?
- How did these strategies correspond to students' needs or any unsatisfactory learning behaviour/performance?
- How did the strategies correspond to any external requirement?
- How did you benefit from the uses of these strategies?
- At what stage of the lesson did you use these strategies?

#### *3. Outcomes*

- Were the strategies effective?
- Why did you think they were effective/ineffective?
- What motivated/demotivated behaviours were exhibited by students?
- How can they be modified so that they are more effective?
- Will you use them again in the future?

## **Appendix B**

### ***Interview guide: Sample questions***

- In your opinion, are your students motivated to learn English?
- Do you believe that you can enhance your students' language learning motivation?
- Where did you learn about the regularly adopted motivational strategies?
- Does your understanding of language learning motivation affect the way you choose and use these motivational strategies?
- Can you categorise these motivational strategies?
- Are some of them particularly effective in Hong Kong?
- Are some of them particularly effective in your institutional setting?
- Have you benefited from using these motivational strategies?
- Does your institution encourage the uses of these motivational strategies?
- In general, what are the major and minor factors that cause your uses of these motivational strategies?