

The Use of Motivational Strategies in Language Instruction: The Case of EFL Teaching in Taiwan

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With motivation being one of the key factors determining success in foreign/second language (L2) learning, strategies in motivating learners should be seen as an important aspect of the study of L2 motivation. However, empirical investigations focusing on motivational strategies are scarce in L2 research, with one exception being Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) study carried out in Hungary. The large-scale empirical survey reported in this paper is a modified replication of the Dörnyei and Csizér study: 387 Taiwanese teachers of English were asked to rate a list of comprehensive motivational strategies in terms of (1) how much importance they attached to these and (2) how often they implemented them in their teaching practice. The results indicate that the list of motivational macrostrategies that emerged in this study bears a certain amount of resemblance to the list generated by Dörnyei and Csizér's survey amongst Hungarian English teachers, which provides reassurance that at least some motivational strategies are transferable across diverse cultural and ethnolinguistic contexts. However, there are also dissimilarities between the Taiwanese and the Hungarian findings, indicating that some strategies are culture-sensitive or even culture-dependent.

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Introduction

In the field of foreign/second language (L2) learning, motivation has long been recognised as one of the key factors that determine L2 achievement and attainment. Motivation serves as the initial engine to generate learning and later functions as an ongoing driving force that helps to sustain the long and usually laborious journey of acquiring a foreign language. Indeed, it is fair to say that without sufficient motivation even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language proficiency, whereas most learners with strong motivation can achieve a working knowledge of the L2, regardless of their language aptitude or any undesirable learning conditions.

Due to its great importance, L2 motivation has been the subject of a considerable amount of research in recent decades, exploring the nature of this

complex construct and how it affects the L2 learning process. Until the early 1990s, this line of research had been strongly influenced by the seminal work of two Canadian scholars, Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1959, 1972), who conceptualised motivation from a social psychological perspective. They perceived the L2 as a mediator between different ethnolinguistic communities and therefore the motivation to acquire the language of the other L2 community was seen to play a powerful role in promoting or hindering intercultural communication. It needs to be noted here that it is a common misunderstanding that Gardner's (1985) motivation theory is limited to the *integrative-instrumental* dichotomy because his *integrative motive* construct does entail elements that have a direct relevance to actual classroom learning (e.g. the component 'attitudes toward the learning situation'). However, Gardner's social psychological approach has never explicitly addressed the classroom implications of motivation theory and did not aim at providing language teachers with direct help in promoting their teaching practice.

Around the 1990s, there appeared a marked shift in the way many L2 researchers started to conceptualise motivation, and this was reflected in the number of papers calling for a more education-oriented approach that was more in congruence with mainstream educational psychological research (e.g. Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1990, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Williams & Burden, 1997). The new approach successfully expanded the L2 motivation paradigm by (1) promoting cognitive aspects of motivation, especially those related to the learner's 'self' (e.g. need for achievement, self-confidence/efficacy, self-determination); (2) integrating various influential theories that were already prevalent in mainstream psychology (e.g. goal theories and attribution theory); and (3) focusing on situational factors relevant to classroom application (e.g. characteristics of the language course and language teacher).

Motivational Strategies

With motivation being one of the key factors that determine success in L2 learning, strategies in motivating language learners should be seen as an important aspect of the theoretical analysis of L2 motivation. However, looking at the literature we find that far more research has been conducted on identifying and analysing various motives and validating motivational theories than on developing techniques to increase motivation. Interestingly, the past decade has witnessed an increasing number of L2 scholars designing and summarising motivational techniques for classroom application (e.g. Alison & Halliwell, 2002; Brown, 2001; Chambers, 1999; Williams & Burden, 1997), with one book being particularly relevant to this topic: *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* by Dörnyei (2001b), in which a list of more than 100 concrete motivational techniques was presented within a comprehensive theoretical framework. In educational psychology we can also observe an increasing amount of valuable sources being published, offering practical techniques based on solid theoretical considerations (e.g. Alderman, 1999; Brophy, 2004; Covington, 1998; McCombs & Pope, 1994; Pintrich & Schunk,

1996; Raffini, 1993; Scheidecker & Freeman, 1999; Stipek, 2002; Wlodkowski, 1999).

In reflecting on the potential usefulness of motivational strategies, Gardner and Tremblay (1994) argued that although many of the practical recommendations and implications might be of value, from a scientific point of view intuitive appeal without empirical evidence is not enough to justify strong claims in favour of the use of such strategies. Responding to this call, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) conducted an empirical investigation of Hungarian teachers of English who evaluated a list of 51 motivational strategies, indicating how important they considered the techniques to be and how frequently they actually implemented them. Based on the results, the researchers produced the 'Ten commandments for motivating learners', which was a list of the 10 most important motivational macrostrategies emerging from the Hungarian study. The value of this investigation lies in the fact that it reflected practising teachers' beliefs and perceptions in genuine classroom-relevant settings, and Dörnyei and Csizér also identified the underutilisation of certain strategies. In addition, the smaller set of strategies distilled made the concept of motivating learners more manageable and teacher-friendly.

It is important to emphasise that although most of the strategies recommended by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) had a sound theoretical basis and had been found to be effective in certain classroom applications, nearly all the techniques were derived from Western educational contexts, and as the authors put it, 'we cannot say with certainty that the ten commandments are valid in every cultural, ethnolinguistic and institutional setting. There is clearly much room for further research in this respect.' (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998: 224). Indeed, culture-specific variables such as the learners' approach to learning, the teachers' teaching methods and ideologies as well as the contextual reality of different learning environments may render some techniques highly effective, while others less useful.

The current study is a modified replication of Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) original survey to explore the range of motivational strategies that teachers can use to motivate their learners in an Asian context, Taiwan. Due to its different cultural background, the Taiwanese teaching context differs in many aspects from language learning situations in Western countries, and one aim of our study was to examine how these differences are reflected in Taiwanese teachers' motivational beliefs and practices. The Dörnyei and Csizér study used an instrument that was based on Dörnyei's (1994) first summary of motivational strategies. Since then, Dörnyei (2001b) has produced a more comprehensive and systematic framework of motivational strategies and therefore the questionnaire used in the current study has been revised on the basis of this.

Method

Participants

Participants in the questionnaire survey were 387 teachers of English in Taiwan (49 males, 330 females and 8 with missing gender data), teaching in a

Table 1 The participants' ($N = 387$) teaching contexts*

<i>Type of context</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
University	54	12.1
Senior high school	156	35.2
Junior high school	141	31.8
Elementary school	50	11.2
Cram school	14	3.1
Private practice	20	4.5
Vocational school	8	1.8

*Some teachers taught in more than one context

wide range of institutional contexts from elementary schools to universities, with many participants teaching in several different educational sectors at the same time (see Table 1). We adopted a 'snowball' sampling strategy whereby several key informants were identified and then were asked to further introduce other potential participants who shared similar backgrounds and interest in partaking in the research. The data were collected from different parts of Taiwan (including the capital city Taipei, as well as northern, central and southern Taiwan) in an attempt to achieve diversity. The participating teachers represented a range of teaching experiences and educational background: 4% had less than one year's experience and 48% had been teaching for over 20 years; about one quarter ($N = 86$) of the total sample had had the experience of studying abroad.

Instruments

The study aimed at exploring the motivational strategies employed by Taiwanese English teachers with the focus on (1) how important the participating teachers perceived certain motivational strategies and (2) how frequently they actually made use of these strategies in their teaching practice. In order to cover these two aspects, two questionnaires were developed containing the same set of motivational strategies. The only difference between these two questionnaires concerned the rating scales: the first comprised six response options describing degrees of importance ('not important' → 'very important') and the second describing degrees of frequency ('hardly ever' → 'very often'). Because all the participants were Taiwanese teachers, Chinese versions of the questionnaires were administered to eliminate any potential language-based interference.

We were aware of an inherent shortcoming of self-reported questionnaires, namely that the respondents are likely to be tempted to describe their behaviours in a better than real light, according to what they believe to be the positive or the expected answers (i.e. 'social desirability bias'). Two measures have been taken in order to address this limitation. First, both the cover letter and the questionnaire instructions highlighted the fact that the

information provided was confidential and anonymous. Second, realising the risk that the participants who rated certain motivational strategies as important in the 'importance' questionnaire might be hesitant to admit that they rarely adopted these strategies in the 'frequency' questionnaire, we divided the participants into two groups and they were asked to fill in either the importance questionnaire ($N = 176$) or the frequency questionnaire ($N = 211$).

As mentioned earlier, the selection of the strategies to be included in the two questionnaires was based on Dörnyei's (2001b) systematic overview of motivational techniques. The initial item pool contained more than 100 strategies, which was reduced by piloting the instrument amongst 19 English teachers, who were doing postgraduate studies within the English Language Teaching Programme at the University of Nottingham when the research was conducted. The final version of the questionnaires was made up of 48 motivational strategies (for the list of all the items, see Table 2). This questionnaire differed in some aspects from the instrument used in Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) Hungarian investigation, but because both surveys attempted to be comprehensive and focused on similar broad motivational dimensions, the results of the two studies are comparable.

Table 2 Final rank order and descriptive statistics of the strategy scales and the individual constituent strategies

<i>Scales and constituent strategies</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Proper teacher behaviour (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.79$)	5.32	0.66
(2) Show students you care about them	5.57	0.86
(23) Establish good rapport with students	5.38	0.81
(17) Show your enthusiasm for teaching	5.31	0.83
(40) Share with students that you value English as a meaningful experience	5.01	0.89
(47) Be yourself in front of students	4.95	0.97
2. Recognise students' effort (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.76$)	5.22	0.69
(46) Recognise students' effort and achievement	5.36	0.80
(8) Monitor students' progress and celebrate their victory	5.27	0.84
(15) Make sure grades reflect students' effort and hard work	5.06	0.87
(42) Promote effort attributions	4.77	1.06
3. Promote learners' self-confidence (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.78$)	5.11	0.71
(34) Provide students with positive feedback	5.35	0.83
(36) Teach students learning techniques	5.10	0.89

Table 2 (Continued)		
<i>Scales and constituent strategies</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
(28) Encourage students to try harder	5.02	0.92
(11) Design tasks that are within the students' ability	4.97	1.00
(33) Make clear to students that communicating meaning effectively is more important than being grammatically correct	4.41	1.08
4. Creating a pleasant classroom climate (Cronbach $\alpha=0.59$)	4.99	0.69
(30) Create a supportive classroom climate that promotes risk-taking	5.28	0.89
(1) Bring in and encourage humour	5.03	1.01
(41) Avoid social comparison	4.68	1.05
(21) Use a short and interesting opening activity to start each class	4.52	1.05
5. Present tasks properly (Cronbach $\alpha=0.55$)	4.87	0.80
(6) Give clear instructions by modelling	5.23	0.92
(25) Give good reasons to students as to why a particular task is meaningful	4.52	1.01
6. Increase learners' goal-orientedness (Cronbach $\alpha=0.69$)	4.86	0.74
(20) Help students develop realistic beliefs about English learning	4.90	0.96
(26) Find out students' needs and build them into curriculum	4.88	0.86
(10) Encourage students to set learning goals	4.80	1.03
(31) Display the class goal in a wall chart and review it regularly	4.06	1.21
7. Make the learning tasks stimulating (Cronbach $\alpha=0.81$)	4.85	0.69
(18) Break the routine by varying the presentation format	4.98	1.00
(12) Introduce various interesting topics	4.96	0.91
(45) Present various auditory and visual teaching aids	4.91	0.97
(43) Make tasks attractive by including novel and fantasy element	4.84	0.93
(27) Encourage students to create products	4.59	0.93
(13) Make tasks challenging	4.51	0.96

Table 2 (Continued)		
<i>Scales and constituent strategies</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
8. Familiarise learners with L2-related values (Cronbach $\alpha=0.76$)	4.78	0.63
(39) Increase the amount of English you use in the class	5.00	0.89
(38) Encourage students to use English outside the classroom	4.94	0.96
(4) Familiarise students with the cultural background of the target language	4.91	0.91
(32) Introduce authentic cultural materials	4.84	0.94
(9) Remind students of the benefits of mastering English	4.80	1.01
(7) Invite senior students to share their English learning experiences	4.20	1.01
(19) Invite English-speaking foreigners to class	3.78	1.07
9. Promote group cohesiveness and group norms (Cronbach $\alpha=0.73$)	4.76	0.73
(5) Explain the importance of the class rules	5.11	0.95
(44) Encourage students to share personal experiences and thoughts	4.76	0.97
(3) Allow students to get to know each other	4.59	1.09
(35) Ask students to work toward the same goal	4.57	1.03
(16) Let students suggest class rules	4.55	1.03
10. Promote learner autonomy (Cronbach $\alpha=0.82$)	4.62	0.71
(37) Adopt the role of a 'facilitator'	4.98	0.91
(24) Encourage peer teaching and group presentation	4.81	0.99
(14) Teach self-motivating strategies	4.79	0.94
(48) Allow students to assess themselves	4.53	0.96
(29) Give students choices in deciding how and when they will be assessed	3.97	1.07
(22) Involve students in designing and running the English course	3.81	1.15

Procedures

As said earlier, we used a 'snowball' sampling strategy to reach as many Taiwanese teachers of English as possible, and most of the actual questionnaires were administered by mail. Because we never approached a potential participant 'cold', the response rate was high: 86%.

Data analysis

The data were submitted to a number of initial statistical analyses to make the dataset more manageable. The 48 strategy items were grouped into 10 clusters based on their content similarities. The internal consistency of these scales was tested by means of a reliability analysis to determine whether the theoretical clustering was borne out in practice. A strategy was added to a cluster only if this increased the scale's Cronbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient. Following this, descriptive statistics were computed to summarise the results and prepare a rank order of the 10 clusters. Finally, the importance and frequency items were compared by computing standardised scores (described in detail in the next section) to identify motivational strategies that were particularly underutilised relative to the importance attached to them by the responding teachers.

Results and Discussion

The dataset produced several interesting findings. We start by discussing the reliability of the motivational clusters (or 'macrostrategies') and then first analyse the results of the 'importance' questionnaires, followed by the 'frequency' questionnaires. In all these analyses the Taiwanese results will be evaluated against the Hungarian ones, and at the end we summarise these comparisons in a separate section to examine the culture-specificity of motivational strategies.

The reliability of the strategy clusters

The reliability analysis of the 10 strategy clusters showed that the mean Cronbach Alpha across all the clusters and both scale types was above 0.70; as indicated in Table 2, the clusters that had rather low Cronbach Alphas were 'Classroom climate' ($\alpha_{\text{importance}} = 0.59$; $\alpha_{\text{frequency}} = 0.55$), 'Task presentation' ($\alpha_{\text{importance}} = 0.55$; $\alpha_{\text{frequency}} = 0.50$) and 'Goal' ($\alpha_{\text{importance}} = 0.69$; $\alpha_{\text{frequency}} = 0.58$). It must be pointed out here that unlike attitude surveys, our questionnaires were designed to explore the teaching practice of the participating teachers, and therefore the items were *behavioural items* (i.e. items focusing on what the teachers *did* rather than on what they thought or felt) and such items tend to be more heterogeneous even within one domain than attitude scales. This would partly explain the lower Cronbach Alpha coefficients.

Rank order of the 'importance' scales

The 10 motivational clusters (or macrostrategies) were rank-ordered according to the participating teachers' responses. Because each strategy cluster was made up of a set of interrelated items, it might have seemed logical to take the mean values of all these related items when determining the importance attached to a particular scale. However, a closer examination revealed that the mean of certain macrostrategies would have been considerably reduced by a marginal item that had a rather low score. For instance, the

Table 3 Comparison of the rank order of the macrostrategies obtained in Taiwan and in Dörnyei and Csizér’s (1998) study

<i>Taiwanese survey</i>	<i>Hungarian survey</i>
1. Set a personal example with your own behaviour.	1, 4
2. Recognise students’ effort and celebrate their success.	–
3. Promote learners’ self-confidence.	5
4. Create a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.	2
5. Present tasks properly.	3
6. Increase the learners’ goal-orientedness.	9
7. Make the learning tasks stimulating.	6
8. Familiarise learners with L2-related values.	10
9. Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms.	–
10. Promote learner autonomy.	7

macrostrategy regarding setting goals for learners involved several items with relatively high importance scores, but one item – ‘display the class goals on the wall and review them regularly’ – was not considered particularly important by most participating teachers. Consequently, this item would have disproportionately reduced the scale mean and thus would have led to a false picture concerning the issue of promoting goal-orientedness amongst language teachers. In order to solve this problem, several clustering approaches were tried out to delete the outliers (e.g. removing the lowest and highest scoring strategy; eliminating each strategy whose rating was 2.5 standard deviations below or above the scale mean). In the end, we decided to leave out the items with the lowest score when calculating the mean score of each strategy scale because the resulting cluster scores were felt to provide a realistic representation of the teachers’ strategic dispositions (and the results were not dissimilar to the ones obtained by the other methods). Table 2 presents the overall rank order of all the strategy clusters according to the importance that was attached to them by the teachers.

Let us examine the Taiwanese English teachers’ perception of the importance of the assessed motivational strategies in the light of Dörnyei and Csizér’s (1998) Hungarian findings (see Table 3).

Set a personal example with your own behaviour

Appropriate teacher behaviours were seen as the most important motivational macrostrategy in Taiwan, which coincides with the outcome of the Hungarian survey. The fact that the same finding emerged from two very different contexts points to the conclusion that, from the teachers’ viewpoint, presenting a personal role model is perhaps the most powerful and influential tool in motivating their students. Our results show that Taiwanese English teachers were aware of their roles as leaders in the learner groups, and the

findings also confirm the importance of the teachers' projection of *enthusiasm*: the display of a strong interest in the subject matter and the amount of effort teachers exert in teaching are likely to have a strong impact on the students' motivational dispositions (Stipek, 2002).

Recognise student's effort and celebrate any success

The second position of this macrostrategy is certainly a dramatic contrast to the results of Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) survey, where strategies concerning how to respond to or reward students' effort failed to make the top 10 list.¹ It is somewhat surprising to find that the participating teachers placed such a high value on promoting effort attributions in Taiwan, where an ability-driven and achievement-based educational tradition is pervasive. The result indicates that most English teachers did recognise the importance of the students' effortful engagement in the learning process (which may be influenced by Confucian ideology – see also later for a more detailed analysis).

Promote learners' self-confidence

This macrostrategy requires little justification because it is generally accepted in educational psychology that the way students perceive or judge their own ability has a significant effect on the effort they are willing to devote to completing a task. In Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) study this motivational dimension also qualified in the top half of their list and the high endorsement of this strategy in the current study indicates that Taiwanese teachers recognise the significant role they can play in generating a 'can-do-spirit' in the students.

Create a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom

It is certainly no exaggeration to claim that learning a new language is one of the most face-threatening experiences students encounter as part of their studies (Dörnyei, 2005). In fact, it has been well documented that language learning anxiety created by a tense classroom climate is a powerful negative factor that hinders students' learning motivation and achievement (Young, 1999). No wonder therefore that in the Hungarian teacher survey, the importance of the classroom climate as a motivational strategy was placed highly, in second place. Our results show that Taiwanese teachers have also become more sensitive to this issue and have accepted that it is their responsibility to promote a secure learning environment where risk-taking is advocated and social comparison discouraged.

Present tasks properly

There is no doubt that the way the teacher presents the learning tasks bears a strong effect on how the students perceive the assigned activity. The responses of the participating teachers confirm Williams and Burden's (1997: 4) observation that teachers 'should be clear in their minds why specific tasks have been selected and careful to convey exactly what is required of the learners'. Indeed, no matter how capable a teacher is, it is unreasonable to anticipate that student motivation will be aroused if the teaching lacks instructional clarity. The results of our study suggest that communicating an appropriate rationale and strategic advice concerning how to approach a particular activity is endorsed by

Taiwanese English teachers as an essential ingredient of a motivating teaching practice, and its significance was also highlighted in the Hungarian teacher survey, where 'presenting tasks appropriately' was ranked third amongst all the motivational dimensions.

Increase the learners' goal-orientedness

In traditional L2 motivation research, goals have been labelled 'orientations', with the most frequently mentioned types being 'instrumental' and 'integrative orientations' (Gardner, 1985). Influenced by the significance of goal theories in educational psychology, in the 1990s L2 researchers adopted a broader and more education-specific conception of goals, highlighting their potentially powerful influence on student motivation in classroom settings (e.g. Dörnyei, 1994, Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Schmidt *et al.*, 1996; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). In our survey this macrostrategy was positioned only in the second half of the rank order (and came only ninth in the Hungarian survey), reflecting that English teachers are either not entirely sure about the value of setting learner goals or have difficulty in putting this strategy into practice in their teaching contexts. A lack of recognition of the utility of goal setting may also be due to the fact that language teachers often believe that the official curricula outline a set of institutional objectives that are readily servable.

Make the learning tasks stimulating

Humans are willing to invest a considerable amount of time and energy in activities that interest them. Accordingly, in educational psychology, arousing the learners' curiosity and sustaining their interest as the course goes on has been one of the focal issues when addressing the topic of motivating learners (e.g. Brophy, 2004; Keller, 1983; Stipek, 2002). Not surprisingly, the idea of 'interest' has also been regarded as a prominent motivational component in a number of L2 motivation-related models (e.g. Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995), yet as the low ranking of this strategy in Taiwan indicates, most practising teachers for some reasons do not deem adopting interesting learning tasks a significant component of motivating learners.

Familiarise learners with the L2 culture and L2-related values

This macrostrategy is in line with the notion promoted by Gardner (1985) that language learners' dispositions towards the target culture and its people have a considerable influence on their learning achievement. Over the past decades raising L2 learners' cross-cultural awareness has become a key objective in several language programmes across the world, including Taiwan. However, as shown in Tables 2 and 3, the endorsement of this strategic area by the participating teachers is limited relative to the other strategies both in Taiwan and Hungary.

Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms

In social psychology, there is an active research domain, *group dynamics*, that focuses on how the group's collective behaviour influences its members' development of beliefs and action. However, Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) argue that group-related matters have not been given their due importance in

L2 studies. This has been borne out by the results of both our current survey and the Hungarian investigation (in which group-building issues did not even qualify for the 'Ten Commandments').

Promote learner autonomy

Deci and Ryan's (1985) work on self-determination theory has highlighted the fact that an autonomy-supporting environment leads to increased intrinsic motivation. The link between autonomy and motivation has also been recognised in the L2 field (e.g. Ushioda, 2003), and an interesting line of relevant research involves exploring the motivational impact of the language teachers' communicative style (autonomy-supporting versus controlling) on learner motivation (e.g. Dam, 1995; Noels, 2001; Wu, 2003). In our study, promoting autonomy was rated the least important macrostrategy, which is a telling result. It implies that English teachers in Taiwan are not ready to take off the 'authoritarian' mask and let learners govern their own learning process. Warden and Lin (2000: 536) argue that 'in countries with a history of obedience to authority, a teacher is not seen as a facilitator but as a presenter of knowledge', which would certainly apply to Taiwan, but Benson (2000: 114) points out that the problem is more general: 'while autonomy is widely accepted as an educational goal, advocates of autonomy in learning are aware that education often does little to provide learners with the opportunity to exercise autonomy in the practice of learning.' In Hungary facilitating learner autonomy was ranked seventh. (For a more detailed discussion, see the following section).

Frequency items versus importance items

The main purpose of conducting the frequency questionnaires was to determine how often the participating teachers actually employed the assessed motivational strategies. In addition, by comparing the frequency scores to those derived from the importance questionnaires we can identify those strategies that are considered important by teachers, yet which for various reasons are underutilised in their teaching practice. Following Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) example, three different statistical measures were computed to describe the use of the strategies:

- (1) The mean frequency of each individual item, which is the most straightforward manner of deciding the extent to which a strategy was employed.
- (2) The difference between the mean frequency of a strategy and the mean frequency of all the strategies. This measure shows the extent to which the use of a specific strategy is above or below the average frequency of strategy use.
- (3) The difference of the standardised importance and frequency scores for each strategy (*z-diff*). We subtracted the importance *z*-scores from the frequency *z*-scores so that the results indicate whether the relative frequency of a strategy matches the relative importance attached to it: a negative figure demonstrates that a strategy is underutilised relative to its perceived importance whereas a positive figure means the opposite.

Table 4 displays the three measures mentioned above. Similarly to the processing of the importance questionnaire, the scale mean of each macro-strategy was calculated by deleting the item with the lowest score, which we believe to be a better representation of the actual use of a set of related items. However, with regard to the relative frequency (*z-diff*) scores, every item mean was taken into account when calculating the scale scores, because with standardised score differences the absolute values of the items are irrelevant and therefore there are no ‘outliers’ as such that need to be deleted.

Table 4 Frequency statistics of the use of the 10 macrostrategies: mean frequency; difference between the item’s mean frequency and the mean frequency of all the items; relative frequency (i.e. the frequency of an item relative to the importance attached to it) and its rank order

	M	Mean-diff	z-diff ^a (rank order)
1. Proper teacher behaviour (Cronbach $\alpha=0.82$)	5.20	0.94	0.03 (7)
(23) Establish good rapport with students	5.32	1.07	-0.05
(2) Show students you care about them	5.20	0.95	-0.69
(47) Be yourself in front of students	5.18	0.92	0.85
(17) Show your enthusiasm for teaching	5.08	0.82	-0.19
(40) Share with students that you value English as a meaningful experience	4.79	0.53	0.21
2. Recognise students’ effort (Cronbach $\alpha=0.72$)	4.93	0.67	0.01 (8)
(46) Recognise students’ effort and achievement	5.13	0.87	-0.26
(42) Promote effort attributions	4.90	0.64	0.95
(15) Make sure grades reflect students’ effort and hard work	4.77	0.51	0.06
(8) Monitor students’ progress and celebrate their victory	4.58	0.33	-0.72
3. Promote learners’ self-confidence (Cronbach $\alpha=0.71$)	4.79	0.53	0.11 (5)
(34) Provide students with positive feedback	5.12	0.86	-0.23
(36) Teach students learning techniques	4.81	0.55	0.00
(28) Encourage students to try harder	4.80	0.54	0.19
(11) Design tasks that are within the students’ ability	4.41	0.15	-0.19
(33) Make clear to students that communicating meaning effectively is more important than being grammatically correct	4.06	-0.20	0.79

Table 4 (Continued)			
	M	Mean-diff	z-diff^a (rank order)
4. Create a pleasant classroom climate (Cronbach $\alpha=0.55$)	4.66	0.40	0.10 (6)
(30) Create a supportive classroom climate that promotes risk-taking	5.22	0.96	0.06
(41) Avoid social comparison	4.44	0.18	0.58
(1) Bring in and encourage humour	4.30	0.04	-0.47
(21) Use a short and interesting opening activity to start each class	3.84	-0.42	0.23
5. Present tasks properly (Cronbach $\alpha=0.50$)	4.50	0.24	0.18 (1)
(6) Give clear instructions by modelling	4.72	0.46	-0.43
(25) Give good reasons to students as to why a particular task is meaningful	4.27	0.01	0.78
6. Increase the learners' goal-orientedness (Cronbach $\alpha=0.58$)	4.51	0.26	0.13 (3)
(20) Help students develop realistic beliefs about English learning	4.74	0.49	0.43
(10) Encourage students to set learning goals	4.42	0.16	0.27
(26) Find out students' needs and build them into curriculum	4.37	0.12	0.00
(31) Display the class goal in a wall chart and review it regularly	2.60	-1.66	-0.20
7. Make the learning tasks stimulating (Cronbach $\alpha=0.79$)	4.17	-0.08	-0.34 (10)
(18) Break the routine by varying the presentation format	4.49	0.23	-0.12
(45) Present various auditory and visual teaching aids	4.37	0.12	-0.07
(12) Introduce various interesting topics	4.30	0.05	-0.29
(43) Make tasks attractive by including novel and fantasy element	4.18	-0.08	-0.14
(13) Make tasks challenging	3.51	-0.74	-0.17
(27) Encourage students to create products	3.39	-0.86	-1.23
8. Familiarise learners with L2-related values (Cronbach $\alpha=0.64$)	4.11	-0.15	-0.20 (9)

Table 4 (Continued)			
	M	Mean-diff	z-diff^a (rank order)
(9) Remind students of the benefits of mastering English	4.90	0.65	0.88
(39) Increase the amount of English you use in the class	4.51	0.25	-0.12
(4) Familiarise students with the cultural background of L2	4.43	0.17	-0.01
(32) Introduce authentic cultural materials	4.35	0.10	0.09
(38) Encourage students to use English outside the classroom	4.22	-0.03	-0.34
(7) Invite senior students to share their English learning experiences	2.22	-2.03	-1.04
(19) Invite English-speaking foreigners to class	1.54	-2.72	-0.85
9. Promote group cohesiveness and group norms (Cronbach $\alpha=0.63$)	4.23	-0.03	0.12 (4)
(5) Explain the importance of the class rules	4.79	0.53	-0.06
(44) Encourage students to share personal experiences	4.21	-0.04	0.08
(3) Allow students to get to know each other	4.00	-0.26	0.34
(35) Ask students to work toward the same goal	3.90	-0.36	0.12
(16) Let students suggest class rules	3.84	-0.41	0.11
10. Promote learner autonomy (Cronbach $\alpha=0.72$)	3.84	-0.41	0.16 (2)
(37) Adopt the role of a 'facilitator'	4.38	0.12	-0.24
(24) Encourage peer teaching and group presentation	4.12	-0.13	-0.16
(14) Teach self-motivating strategies	3.99	-0.26	-0.26
(48) Allow students to assess themselves	3.46	-0.80	-0.28
(29) Give students choices in deciding how and when they will be assessed	3.25	-1.01	0.87
(22) Involve students in designing and running the English course	2.98	-1.28	0.91

^aNegative figures indicate underutilisation, positive ones overuse relative to the item's importance.

As can be seen in Table 4, the macrostrategy that appears to be most underutilised (i.e. has the lowest *z-diff* score) is 'making the learning tasks stimulating'. All the items subsumed by this scale were underused relative to their perceived importance, and three out of the six strategies show a

below-average frequency. A closer investigation reveals that particularly two microstrategies, 'encourage students to create products' and 'make tasks challenging', were responsible for the low scale mean. As we saw earlier when we analysed the importance rank order of the strategies, this strategy was ranked rather low in Taiwan; therefore, the fact that it was underutilised even relative to this already low level of endorsement underscores the challenging nature of providing learners with an enjoyable and interesting learning experience for Taiwanese practitioners.

We find a very similar situation with the macrostrategy 'familiarizing learners with L2-related culture', with five out of the seven items within the scale having a negative frequency relative to the already low level of importance attached to them. Moreover, the scale mean is also below the average mean of all the strategies, which further confirms that this strategic domain is not widely practised.

Amongst all the motivational macrostrategies, 'promoting learner autonomy' has the lowest scale mean difference, which indicates that this strategy is virtually not used in Taiwanese EFL contexts. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the *z-score* difference of this scale is rank-ordered the second highest of all macrostrategies. The reason for this seeming contradiction is that, as shown in Table 2, autonomy was the least endorsed strategic area in terms of its importance and, therefore, even a very low level of utilisation matched the low importance score.

Apart from assessing the scale means of the macrostrategies, we have also looked at the individual motivational strategies to investigate their relative frequency. There are five items whose relative frequency coefficients (*z-diff*) are below -0.50, demonstrating a serious mismatch between the actual use of these strategies and their attached importance: 'show your students that you care about them' (-0.69), 'monitor students' progress and celebrate their victory' (-0.72), 'invite English-speaking foreigners to class' (-0.85), 'invite senior students to share their English experience' (-1.04) and 'encourage students to create products' (-1.23).

The underutilisation of some of these strategies is related to certain constraints of the Taiwanese EFL context. The first strategy concerning personal care may be difficult to employ with large class sizes, which are a typical feature in Taiwanese EFL setting. This may also explain the lack of any monitoring of the students' progress (let alone celebrating their successes). Furthermore, Taiwanese EFL teachers tend to be hard pressed to cover the official curriculum established by the government, which leaves them little time to encourage students to create tangible products (as such project-like tasks tend to be time-consuming). The underutilisation of the strategy 'invite English-speaking foreigners to class' does not come as a surprise either because there may simply not be enough available foreigners whom teachers could invite. On the other hand, successful senior students could possibly be invited to share their experiences if teachers were aware of this strategy.

Culturally and contextually dependent motivational strategies

The most interesting finding of this study has been that there is a consistent pattern in both the current Taiwanese and the previous Hungarian studies

regarding some of the most important motivational strategies, which implies that certain motivational educational practices can transcend specific cultures. A closer look reveals that motivational principles such as 'displaying motivating teacher behaviour', 'promoting learners' self-confidence', 'creating a pleasant classroom climate' and 'presenting tasks properly' were in the top five positions in both studies. This leads to the conclusion that these macrostrategies embody fundamentally important beliefs in teaching pedagogy and thus can be universally treated as central tenets for any sound teaching practice.

Besides the similarities existing between the two studies, we also find some strategies that received a less uniform endorsement by Taiwanese and Hungarian teachers. For example, 'promoting learner autonomy' was considered unimportant whereas 'recognizing students' effort and hard work' was strongly endorsed by Taiwanese teachers as compared to their Western counterparts. Such discrepancies seem to confirm that certain strategies are rather culture-specific in their educational relevance and impact. Therefore, in this final section, we examine three key aspects of the findings in more detail in the light of the relevant literature and our past teaching experience.

Promoting learner autonomy

Although this study did not examine the reasons for Taiwanese English teachers' reticence in allowing their learners to organise their learning process, in congruence with other researchers' observation (Ho & Crookall, 1995; Littlewood, 1999), we hold the position that cultural differences have a decisive part to play in this issue. Different cultures appear to have their own perception of what autonomy entails and what the optimal degree of learner freedom is. An important result of this survey was that unlike several other strategies that teachers believed to be important in principle but for various reasons did not implement sufficiently in their classes, 'promoting learner autonomy' was regarded as *unimportant* in terms of motivating language learners. This suggests that Taiwanese English teachers tend not to approve of the concept of autonomy as framed by Western educators and may even have a fundamentally different interpretation of this construct from the mainstream view reported in the Western literature.

These results led us to re-examine the definition of autonomy we had in mind when devising the questionnaires. We found that the autonomy-related strategies we focused on were in line with the conception of 'proactive autonomy' put forward by Littlewood (1999), in that learners were expected to actively engage in all aspects of the learning process, including choosing or designing instructional materials, establishing learning goals, selecting and adopting learning strategies, self-evaluating learning progress as well as exercising self-motivating strategies to take control of their own emotion. It is quite possible that the participating teachers were rather suspicious of this broad conceptualisation of autonomy because it demands a radical change of the role of both learners and teachers.

Traditionally, Chinese teachers have had total control over the teaching/learning process and some motivational strategies listed by us could easily be perceived as incompatible with their core teaching beliefs and values. The

common belief amongst Chinese educators is that the teacher is the ultimate source of knowledge, which he/she has then to transmit to the learners. This being the case, Chinese teachers are likely to be sceptical of activities such as peer teaching or peer evaluation, which require them to hand some teaching functions over to the students themselves. Interestingly, Chinese learners are often similarly unwilling to adopt new roles. It has been observed by many that they display a strong tendency to be dependent on the teachers' instructions, show little initiative in participating in group discussion and often lack critical or reflective thinking (e.g. Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). In their investigation of students' readiness for autonomy in Hong Kong, Spratt *et al.* (2002: 251) reported that most responding students expected their teachers to make all the pedagogical decisions, believing that 'it was the teachers' job to teach and that any teacher handing over responsibility for methodological areas would be lazy or even crazy'.

Thus, the low endorsement of autonomy-related strategies in our survey might be explained by the fact that the participating teachers supported another kind of autonomy, 'reactive autonomy', in which students display independence in working on the agenda that was set by their teacher. Further research is clearly warranted to find out how much and what forms of strategic support and guidance is likely to meet the needs of Chinese learner groups, and what sort of teaching functions are perceived by teachers as appropriate to be handed over to their students, who are not used to the notion of taking control of their own learning.

Creating interesting classes

In her overview of language learning and teaching in Taiwan, Wang (2002) argues that 'dullness' is a major characteristic of the typical language classroom due to the 'parrot learning' and grammar-translation instruction that is deeply embedded in the Chinese teaching tradition. Although the communicative teaching approach has been actively promoted in Taiwan over the past decades, most L2 teachers still tend to stick to the traditional way of teaching, particularly because communicative language teaching is rather demanding in terms of linguistic competence, pedagogical expertise and classroom management skills (Hu, 2002). After all, simply following the textbooks is far less intellect-taxing and labour-intensive than adopting various task-based activities, and many L2 teachers would be likely to find it overbearing to develop extracurricular materials and teaching aids in their already busy teaching schedule in order to make the language classes more interesting.

In addition, driven by the pressure of preparing learners to pass national or official exams, Chinese teachers might not see the direct association between the overall quality of learning experience and students' academic achievement. The first author's own experience as an English teacher in Taiwan suggests that teachers have the tendency to overemphasise learning outcomes at the expense of the learning process due to the fact that students' performance is assessed solely based on the results of paper-and-pencil exams. The belief that serious learning is supposed to be hard work is deeply embedded in the Confucian culture, and social mobility in China

was traditionally associated with the individual's success on the 'civil service examination'. No wonder, therefore, that both Chinese learners and teachers are inclined to equate game-like activities, competitions and product-oriented tasks with light-hearted entertainment that yields little pedagogical merits (Rao, 1996). In other words, it is quite possible that in Chinese educational contexts the word 'fun' has a rather negative connotation, and strategies related to injecting elements of 'fantasy' and 'humour' into learning activities are likely to be perceived by many as potentially detrimental to the serious business of learning.

Recognising students' effort and hard work

In sharp contrast to the results of the Hungarian survey, Taiwanese teachers reported to take the students' learning effort seriously and in general showed an effort-sensitive attitude. This is in accordance with several motivation studies in educational psychology that suggest that Asian students place high value on effort when compared to their Western counterparts, that is, they believe that they can always work harder to achieve better performance (e.g. Grant & Dweck, 2001). In addition, focusing on effort rather than ability also strikes a chord with a fundamental tenet of Confucian teaching, namely that the innate ability or intelligence does not necessarily lead to higher achievement and therefore should not be viewed as the sole determinant of success. Accordingly, various virtues and characteristics such as effort, perseverance and diligence also tend to be esteemed highly with regard to student learning performance (Hu, 2002).

Conclusion

The current study was aimed at evaluating the extent to which a comprehensive list of motivational strategies derived from Western educational contexts was perceived as educationally relevant by Taiwanese English teachers. The preference pattern of motivational macrostrategies that emerged in this study bears a resemblance to a similar inventory generated by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) amongst Hungarian teachers of English in that four of the top five macrostrategies in the two lists coincided (though not necessarily in the same order). This provides some evidence that at least some motivational strategies are transferable across diverse cultural and ethnolinguistic contexts. Our results show that such universally endorsed strategies include 'displaying motivating teacher behaviour', 'promoting learners' self-confidence', 'creating a pleasant classroom climate' and 'presenting tasks properly'.

On the other hand, we also found some discrepancies between the results of the two studies, which show that certain motivational strategies are culturally dependent. The most striking difference concerned *promoting learner autonomy*, which was recognised as a potentially effective motivational strategy in the Hungarian study, yet was perceived as possessing little motivational relevance by Taiwanese English teachers. This indicates that autonomy is not as highly valued by Chinese teachers as in Western contexts, although we argued that the contrast may only apply to 'proactive' rather than 'reactive' autonomy.

Another interesting finding was that although communicative and game-like activities have been promoted in Taiwanese EFL settings during the past decade, their spread may be hindered by (a) the test-driven teaching culture and (b) the perception that learning should be serious, hard work. On the other hand, a strategic area which Taiwanese teachers endorsed more than their Hungarian counterparts in motivating learners was the appreciation of effort in the learning process.

Besides mapping Taiwanese teachers' motivational preferences, we also examined the reported frequency of the use of the specific strategies. The two most underutilised macrostrategies relative to their importance were 'making the learning tasks stimulating' and 'familiarising learners with L2-related culture', which is all the more remarkable because the importance attached to these two strategic domains was originally low, yet the frequency scores could not even match these moderate levels. These appear to be real motivational 'trouble spots' in language teaching in Taiwan.

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Note

1. It is important to note here the difference in the analytical design between the Hungarian and the Taiwanese studies: Our study clustered all the motivational strategies into 10 macrostrategies, whereas in the Hungarian study 18 strategies were distilled and the 'Ten Commandments' presented the top 10 of these. Therefore, simply comparing the ranking of a strategy in the two studies may result in a distorted reflection of the significance of the strategies in the two environments (e.g. the 10th place in Hungary was still quite good and qualified for the 'Ten Commandments', whereas in Taiwan this was the bottom position).

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