

More Proficient vs. Less Proficient EFL Learners’ Perceptions of Teachers ‘Motivation Raising Strategies

Nasrin Yousefi ¹, Marjan Vosoughi ^{2*}, Mino Alemi ³

1, 3. English Department, Tehran West branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

2. English Department, Sabzevar Branch, Islamic Azad University, Sabzevar, Iran

**Corresponding author: vosoughee@iaus.ac.ir*

.....
Received: 2017.3.11

Accepted: 2017.8.23
.....

Online publication: 2017.12.10

Abstract

Motivation raising strategies are frequently used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes; nevertheless, learners’ perceptions of such strategies used by language teachers have not sufficiently been explored. Also, there are not enough studies on differences and similarities between more and less proficient EFL learners regarding this issue. To scrutinize this topic, a groups of more (No=50) and less proficient EFL learners (No=50) participated in this study by completing to a validated, researcher-made questionnaire with a five-point Likert type format. Non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was run in the SPSS ver. 23 to check the differences between the two groups. The results of the study verified that, regardless of each individual scale in the utilized questionnaire, overall, the more proficient ones manifested significantly less perceptions on teachers’ motivation raising strategies based on the total estimated mean ranks compared with the less proficient learners. However, within the surveyed scales, only in the classroom atmosphere scale, the results showed that the less proficient learners were more mindful of teacher strategies for motivation raising. The findings from this study have implications for motivation raising strategy instructions for a language classroom.

Keywords: extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, more and less proficient EFL learners, perception, motivation raising strategy

Introduction

Motivation has been a vital research topic in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research for more than five decades and has been realized as an important cause of language learning and teaching success (Dörnyei, 2001; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). There is evidence that L2 learners, teachers, material developers, and researchers all believe that motivation is a vital part in SLA (Dörnyei & Schmidt, 2001; Hashimoto, 2001; Vandergrift, 2005, etc). In fact, motivation is “energy, direction, persistence, and equifinality of all aspects of activation and intention” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, P. 2). Dörnyei (2000, 2001) asserted that the difficulty of the theory of motivation resides in its attempts to explain a person’s actions on behavior that cannot be accounted for by one panacea or cure-all notion. The dilemma, as Dörnyei (1996) provided, is not the abundance of concepts to explain motivation but rather the lack of theories and models.

Recently, L2 researchers agree that motivation in a second language (here, English) develops independently although some behavioral, cultural, social, and psychological complexities are involved (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). To instantiate how such complexities might be involved, it has long been argued by the pioneers of motivation research that motivation is not only the union of endeavor in addition to desire to obtain the target of learning the language but it also involves favorable attitudes regarding learning the language (Gardner 1985). In fact, motivation is involved with this question: why does a creature act as it does?

Regarding motivation and its association with learning, some scholars draw a line between dependent and independent influence that motivation might have on learning. Brown (1994) points out that motivation is an inner guide, impulse, feeling, or wish that drives one to a special action. Here, Brown considers motivation as a key factor, which is independent of the learning situation itself. In another occasion, he even considers motivation as the most important factor in human learning (Brown, 1987). On the other hand, in recent works, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) designated motivation as a driving force or propulsion to produce learning initially and later as a maintaining force to the boring process of obtaining a target language. Here, in Cheng and Dörnyei’s view, motivation is believed to be enhanced by some external activators such as learning

situation, language instructors etc. in order to maintain its effect on learning while Brown had a different viewpoint in that motivation acts in situ. In other words, it acts independently of a learning situation. Meanwhile, some scholars have long taken a mediating stance regarding the relationship between motivation and learning. Keller (1983) suggests that motivation notifies the choices persons make as to what experiences or targets they will arrive to avoid, and the level of endeavor they will apply in that respect.

Shearin (1994) argues motivation determines the scope of active, private involvement in a second language learning situation. Narayanan (2006) considers motivation as a factor among other things behind individuals' actions or behaviors. Oxford and Shearin (1994) remark that motivation is a wish to attain a target, united with the energy to take an action towards that goal.

Ames and Ames (1989) recognize motivation as the force to make and maintain intentions and targets setting acts. On the other hand, Ngeow, Karen, and Yeok-Hwa (1998) consider motivation as a driving force for involving students in learning to maintain positive attitudes regarding the learning situation.

Among researchers involved in L2 arenas, perceptions related to what motivation is and how it works is diverse. Perception means the way one thinks about something or someone, and the act of understanding by *means* of the mind (Williams & Burden, 1997). Allegedly, learners are influenced by their own feelings about their teachers. In so doing, their perceptions of teachers and interactions between and among them will undoubtedly affect their motivation to learn. Presumably, motivation does not have a specific definition. Various people consider motivation from different viewpoints due to the existence of different contexts for language learning and teaching. Williams and Burden (1997) claim that motivation emerges from a union of various influences including internal and external factors. The term has been developed by well-known figures who have done outstanding researches on motivation, among whom one may refer to some major ones like Brophy, 1998; Brown, 2000; Brown, 2001; Cook, 1991; Crookes, 2003; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Dörnyei, 2001a; Dörnyei, 2001b; Dörnyei, 2002a; Dörnyei, 2002b; Dörnyei, 2003; Dörnyei & Cziser, 1998; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Lowman, 1990; Noels, Clement, & Pelletier, 1999; Noels, 2003; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Raffini, 1996; Reeve, Bolt & Cai, 1991; Ushioda, 1996; VanLier,

1996; Wentzel, 1999; Williams & Burden, 1997; Wlodkowski, 1999; Wu, 2003, etc (see Taspinar, 2004).

More and less proficient EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners' perceptions as a novel line of research is related to researches through which various aspects of teachers' motivation raising strategies are analyzed in line with students' perceptions. Unfortunately, despite its great impact on SLA, exploration of learners' perceptions and criteria has not been investigated much. In the process of applying teachers' motivation raising strategies, problems are very critical, as they can easily undermine the perception of the learners (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Klein, Noe & Wang, 2006; Weinstein, 1989).

Regarding the diverse views on the nature of motivation, it seems that teachers and learners might have different perceptions over what motivation might involve and this brings about chaos in language classrooms. Accordingly, it is highly important to know that "*the effect of teaching strategies in motivating students depends on students' perceptions of the strategies*" as Dörnyei (2001b, p.179) suggests. Learners' perceptions of teachers' motivation raising strategies, as a vital issue in identifying its real nature is an important factor but the number of studies on motivations SLA is scarce in this respect (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2001a; Dörnyei & Clément, 2001; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Noels, 2003).

It has recently been emphasized by the researchers in language education fields that motivation raising strategies can be used by talented teachers for good reasons if students also have the same perceptions of the utilized strategies (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012). This indicates that if the intentions by teachers are not matched with students' perceptions of those strategies, complexities may be brought about regarding targeted goals, which have originally been set by teachers.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) assert that motivation is a significant reason for variability in SLA, and that its effect has no relation to ability or aptitude but just to the learners' perceptions. They contemplate that SLA has vital, social and psychological dimensions. To their view, teachers can establish conditions in which case certain "motivated" learners can do significantly better than their classmates, if they get aware of those strategies. Learners frequently

have success in what appear to be unfavorable situations (Harmer, 1991). In this case, it sounds reasonable to offer that the motivation that learners bring to class may be one of the biggest factors affecting their success (Harmer, 1991).

Language Teachers and the concept of motivation raising as a process

Regarding the core issues related to language teachers as one main providers of motivation for learning Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) as well as Dörnyei (2000, 2001a, 2001b) provided the process model that clarified the most elaborate endeavor to date to specify the temporal structure of L2 motivation. It had three domains including 1)pre-action (selection of motivation) 2) action (executive of motivation) and 3)post-action (evaluation stages) that each involved various internal and contextual motivational effects and organizing mechanisms. These effects and mechanisms could be facilitating (feeling of self-efficacy, positive teacher motivation feedbacks) or inhibiting(competitive pressures, distracting effects)if they participate to successful implementation of the target or discourage the actor's endeavor.

The process model of L2 motivation has two vital deficiencies: a) it is assumed that we can define clearly when a learning process begins and ends; and (b) it is supposed that the action process happens in relative isolation, with no interference from other action processes in which the learner is engaged. In addition, there is a difference in precise actions that teachers can take to increase motivation on classroom tasks. Among intrinsic motivation raising promoters utilized by language teachers could be 1) making and keeping curiosity, 2) setting targets for learning, and 3) preparing games, and simulations which increase intrinsic motivation. However, providing precious rewards, giving corrective feedbacks, and making rewards accessible can be classified as some tasks which increase extrinsic motivation as Huitt (2001)pointed out. To address this unexplored topic, Ziahosseini and Salehi (2008) asserted that extrinsic motivation is not related to the options and/or candidates for language learning strategies. They believed that Iranian EFL learners are intrinsically motivated and there is not a significant relationship between the level of motivationand the strategy of language learning. It is worth noting that Gardner (1985) had provided two aspects of motivation: instrumental and integrative. He stated that an integratively-motivated EFL learner is interested in learning about the culture and the people of the L2 whereas an instrumentally motivated EFL learner has more pragmatic

considerations in his/her mind regarding L2 such as acquiring a job or earning more money.

Associated with teacher strategies, L2 motivational self -system is a recent theory that proposes a comprehensive perspective and emphasizes motivational, cognitive, and emotional conglomerates. Not only has it extended the motivational repertoire at the disposal of (EFL) teachers but it has also extended the framework of the mentioned theory and tailored it useful for classroom application because it emphasizes learners' language learning vision (Dörnyei, 2009a). This theory consists of three vital constituents involving ideal L2 self, ought-to self and, L2 learning experience.

A crucial issue to be considered here is when and in what ways we may ensure motivation can be enhanced to help a teacher reach intended outcomes. This may be a prerequisite for the strategies to be taken by a language teacher. In case these are clarified by language teachers, many dilemmas could be resolved as to what the real nature of motivation raising strategies are. One line of inquiry in the investigated literature was motivational plan, which has been extended in the next section.

Motivational plans by language teachers

In our profession, we, as teachers, might ask ourselves questions like *'What actions can we take to help our students get started?'*, or *'What actions can we take to help them endeavor to learn more?'*. For confronting such questions, a motivational plan is absolutely needed. One would like to see enhancing motivation along with increasing learning. Without a motivational plan, it is hard to make or strengthen motivation among learners. Actually, there is no structure for constant application in this regard. Possibly one of the most helpful features of any plan is that it may remind teachers on what to do and when to do it (Taufan, 2017). Without a plan, motivation mostly becomes a trial-and-error without any cohesion and continuity throughout instruction (Wlodkowski, 1986).

Motivational strategies

Before elaborating on the specific motivational strategies, some key motivational principles should be explored in the literature. First, there is more to motivational strategies than proposing presents and punishments. Psychologists contemplate that presents and punishments are very simplistic

and unpleasant. Besides, learning processes shall be pleasing and raising language-related-vision is even more crucial. Second, generating learner motivation has to be maintained and protected. So, motivation shall be trained and practiced continuously. Third, the quality of applied motivational strategies shall be counted on not their quantity (Murcia, Brinton, & Snow, 1991).

Dörnyei (2001) stated motivational strategies cover three main scopes in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) involving (1) Generating initial motivation not only with establishing basic motivational conditions by creating teachers' suitable behavior, establishing rapport with the students, making pleasant and safe classroom atmosphere, and building a cohesive learner group but also with enhancing learners' language-related attitudes by integrative motivation, intrinsic motivation, instrumental motivation that cover students' related curriculum, and students' successful expectancy; 2) Protecting and maintaining motivation not only with helping learners to plan suitable sub targets, increasing learning experience quality, and enhancing self-confidence of learners by preparing regular experiences of triumph, decreasing classroom anxiety, and increasing favorable self-conceptions competence of foreign language learning but also with forming learner autonomy, accepting a dynamic social role in motivation plan, and promoting the awareness of learners' motivation continuance strategies by emotional control, motivational control, and environmental control; and 3) Rounding off learning experience and reinforcing positive self-evaluation both with raising attributions to endeavor rather than ability and enhancing learner satisfaction.

Teachers' multi-dimensional roles for motivational strategies in EFL classes

Researchers investigated positive actions to be applied by teachers and ways through which learners' motivation could be affected (Dörnyei, 1994, 2001a; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Jacques 2001; Tanaka 2005). These studies claim that EFL teachers have one of the most significant and influential roles for EFL learners' engagement in the long process of L2 acquisition. In fact, teachers require to have multi-dimensional roles in EFL classes which are assumed to influence each EFL learner's motivation continuously. There are many aspects pertained to this issue involving 1) Initiator, facilitator, motivator, speaker and mentor, and 2) Ideal model, consultant and mental supporter. The crucial point that should be born in mind here is that in various situations,

teachers cannot actually utilize their full potential for increasing the motivation among learners. Their roles can change which make the decisions over how they can be judged as promoters of any kind of motivational strategies so hard. As an example, Grolnick and Ryan (1987) elaborated on autonomous vs. controlled motivation regarding higher levels and attainments in schools. They defined that one of the vital reasons why teachers behave in a controlling manner towards students is that they feel the pressure on behalf of school administration. Recently, it was thought that teachers' perceptions of pressure guide to reduction of their motivation for teaching which results in increasing the controlled behavior of teachers in the classroom, reduced motivation of students for work which caused low educational achievements (Pelletier & Sharp, 2009). This urged the current researchers to consider the concepts of perception so crucial.

With regard to perception, as already defined above by Williams and Burden (1997), allegedly, learners are influenced by their own feelings about their teachers. In so doing, their perceptions of teachers and interactions between and among them will undoubtedly affect their motivation to learn. In fact, as Lundy and Cowling (1996) put it, strategy is arisen of investigations associated with a conflict felt by a person. Regarding strategy, they reveal five categories including guiding, arranging resources, positioning, protecting competitive benefits, and attaining success in the prevailing surrounding.

One of the main student variables that teachers can ignore if they follow general motivational plans without tailoring their behavior to what their learners perceive is language learners' proficiency level. At first sight, one may think learners with lower proficiency apply language learning strategies less than those with higher proficiency. The purpose behind current research is to consider English language teachers' motivation raising strategies in Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) and their adjustment with more and less proficient EFL learners' perceptions of those strategies. In the present research, differences between less and more proficient EFL learners' perceptions of teachers' raising motivation strategies in the context of Iran were intended to be focused on. Despite its great impact on SLA, exploration of differences between more and less EFL learners and criteria has not been investigated much. Assessing less and more proficient EFL learners' perceptions have not

been considered enough. It seems that bringing language teachers' motivation raising strategies mapped on diverse language proficiency levels could give out a wide-ranging set of criteria needed for evaluating teachers' ability to motivate diverse learners. These sets of criteria regarding motivation could help teachers be more successful in holding classrooms in different levels. Moreover, comparing less and more proficient EFL learners' perceptions could reveal the differences and help teachers apply suitable motivations raising strategies regarding less and more proficient EFL learners and make them apt in order to prevent demotivation among different level of EFL learners. Accordingly, the question that was proposed for this research included:

1. Is there a significant difference between more and less proficient EFL learners' perceptions of teachers' motivation raising strategies?

Method

participants

In this study, the researchers made use of mixed-method research approaches for exploring the research question. Two groups of less vs. more proficient EFL learners participated in this research. They included 50 less and 50 more proficient EFL learners both male (no = 25) and female (no = 25). They all attended low-intermediate to advanced EFL classes of Pishgaman institutes (North West branches of Tehran), Toloue Sabz, and Shokouh institutes in Tehran, Iran. Their age range was 20 to 35.

Instrumentation

In line with the purposes of this study, after collecting motivation raising strategies from the existing literature and seeking diverse groups of learners with similar characteristics to the sampled participants of this study, viewpoints were mapped on various readings from distinguished figures on motivation studies like Dornyei. Finally, a researcher-made questionnaire with 30 items having a five-point Likert scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" was utilized and distributed among the participants. To ensure the validity and reliability of this questionnaire, in the first stage, based on a guiding open question over what a motivating strategy involves on the part of an English teacher along with successive sub related questions based on the interviewees' responses mainly with regard to Dornyei's different relevant questionnaires, and considering expert views, possible ideas were extracted from among the

existing literature regarding learners' perceptions. The extracted themes signifying learner perceptions were classified under five distinguished scales each having different questions including 1) teacher appearance (clothes, neat appearance), 2) teacher personality like cheerfulness, politeness, etc., 3) teacher expertise in English language, 4) teacher feedback giving and 5) teachers' pedagogical skills such as good use of materials, good explanations, interesting tasks etc. as it was explicitly mentioned in the two groups of language learners' perceptions. Eight behavior-type items were devised drawing on these five scales. The rest of the questionnaire items (twenty-two questions) were devised in line with some seven scales about the teachers' motivation raising strategies from Alshehri's (2013) PhD dissertation on this topic. The nominated scales from Alshehri's study included 1) Teacher behavior, 2) Class atmosphere, 3) Learner groups, 4) Teaching materials, 5) Learner strategies, 6) Feedback giving and 7) 12 values. For each scale, maximum two to five items were written and/or translated from Alshehri's study. After de/briefing the items of the questionnaire with multiple content reviews, the finalized questionnaire in Persian was devised. In order to see whether the same propositions were in line with the extracted perceptions in the Persian version, the techniques of back translation into English were utilized, which ensured the present researchers in further follow-up validation stages. After devising the questionnaire items, some ELT professors with PhD degrees having diverse teaching experiences were also reached to ensure the validity of the questionnaire. Accordingly, some items were modified and added again to the questionnaire.

The reliability measures were also checked over the incorporated scales separately and the averaged reliability score showed an acceptable alpha of 0.76 among one hundred more and less proficient English learners (Table 1).

Table 1
Reliability Statistics for the Researcher-made Questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.764	.848	30

Procedure

The main intention of the present study was to extract motivation raising strategies of Iranian language teachers based on what language learners felt or perceived and examined the differentiated outlook as maintained by more vs. less proficient EFL learners. In the first phase of the study, during a larger scale examination of the motivation raising strategies, voices were gained in full. In the next stage, after de/briefing the viewpoints by the more and less students, a researcher-made questionnaire was constructed for two purposes. The first aim was to cross-validate the data obtained in the first stage of the research and secondly to differentiate more and less students' perceptions regarding what they felt as more motivating in their proficiency level. Thirty questions related to the scales mentioned in the previous section on instrumentation, based on more frequently cited items denoted language teachers' motivation raising strategies. Then fifty more and fifty less proficient learners of both sexes were equally accessed through convenient sampling within two randomly selected language institutes in Tehran. Their responses were then concisely analyzed to examine any possible differences that the two groups held over the motivation raising strategies of a language teacher in their view. Any priority in their rated ranks could possibly denote their preferences based on many still hidden reasons and motives, but in this study, the present researchers just controlled proficiency level to see its probable effects in this regard.

Results

This study first had an exploratory nature to find out how two groups of learners with diverse proficiency levels distinguished diverse motivation raising strategies by an English language teacher. In order to compare the responses made by more vs. less proficient EFL learners, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was run in the SPSS ver. 23 since we had two independent samples with their responses recorded as ranks having ordinal scales. The addressed research question was aimed at investigating less and more proficient EFL learners' perceptions of teachers' motivation raising strategies through a group-administered questionnaire.

In line with the research question as to the significant difference between the two more vs. less proficient learners' perceptions of English language teachers' motivation raising strategies, the results for Mean Ranks (MR) of the

sampled learners in Table 2 were initially focused upon. Regarding the descriptive item/scale statistics for both EFL more and less proficient EFL learners in each case, first the summary data for the overall mean for the thirty item variation is given which shows the disparities across estimated MR for the participants and estimated sum of ranks for each group of less and more proficient language learners.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistic for the Summary Item Statistics and Mean Ranks among More vs. Less Proficient Groups in the Distributed Questionnaire

Total	
Item means	4.106
Minimum	2.560
Maximum	4.850
Mean ranks for less proficient learners	55.97
Mean ranks for more proficient learners	45.03
Mann-Whitney	976.500
Wilcoxon W	2251.500
Z	-1.886
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.059

a. Grouping Variable: proficiency

As seen in Table 2, descriptive statistics for the MRs regarding the two groups from Mann Whitney U test showed that the mean difference exist between less and low proficient learners (i.e., the mean score of less proficient learners are higher than more proficient learners); however, it is not significant.

For elucidating the preferences of the two groups in each assigned scales, summary Table 3 below sums up the MRs and sum ranks for each scale from the perceptions mentioned by the two groups contrastively in the second phase of the study among 100 more and less students. The higher ranked score indicated their proliferated preferences and thus their concern in each case in the individual utilized scales.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics for the Mean Ranks of the Individual Scales among More vs. Less Proficient Learners' Perceptions of Teachers' Motivation Raising Strategies

	Proficiency	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Teacher behavior	more proficient	50	47.07	2353.50
	less proficient	50	53.93	2696.50
	Total	100		
class atmosphere	more proficient	50	43.90	2195.00
	less proficient	50	57.10	2855.00
	Total	100		
learner groups	more proficient	50	46.33	2316.50
	less proficient	50	54.67	2733.50
	Total	100		
teaching materials	more proficient	50	46.65	2332.50
	less proficient	50	54.35	2717.50
	Total	100		
Feedback	more proficient	50	46.13	2306.50
	less proficient	50	54.87	2743.50
	Total	100		
I2values	more proficient	50	48.89	2444.50
	less proficient	50	52.11	2605.50
	Total	100		
Learner strategies	more proficient	50	47.79	2389.50
	less proficient	50	53.21	2660.50
	Total	100		

In order to test the difference of MRs for the two groups, the results of Mann Whitney U test in Table 5 were checked.

Table 1
U-Mann Whitney Significance Test Results for the Seven Scales

	Teacher behavior	class atmosphere	Learner groups	Teaching materials	feedback	l2values	Learner strategies
Mann- Whitney U	1078.500	920.000	1041.500	1057.500	1031.500	1169.500	1114.500
Wilcoxon W	2353.500	2195.000	2316.500	2332.500	2306.500	2444.500	2389.500
Z	-1.221	-2.486	-1.453	-1.340	-1.541	-.575	-.943
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.222	*.013	.146	.180	.123	.565	.345

a. Grouping Variable: proficiency

As indicated in Table 5, out of the seven scales in the questionnaire, the perceptions made by the more and less proficient students was significant in only one classroom atmosphere scale. The estimated MR for Classroom atmosphere (.013) significantly exhibited the existence of a difference between the two groups. In order to see which group overtook in its perceptions on this scale, MR scores in Table 4 were examined, which showed that the less proficient learners (MR= 57.10) significantly surpassed over the more proficient learners in terms of their degree of agreement with the items related to classroom atmosphere which could create motivation on the part of language learners.

Discussion

In this research, the main intention was to clarify to what extent proficiency level could interfere in the perception seeking procedures over the motivation raising strategies used by English language teachers in an Iranian context. The goal was to see through ways for extracting the viewpoints maintained as revealing of learners' intentions and desires to get benefitted from their English language classes. Overall, the mean distributions between the two groups (Table 2) showed that in their total ranked score sums, the less proficient EFL learners were more informed that a teacher is a very important element in class. Nevertheless, there were different sets of criteria for a teacher who could

motivate learners. Evidently, regarding the results gained in the quantitative stages of the survey with the devised questionnaire, the estimated MRs revealed that from among the scales surveyed in the devised questionnaire in this study, only classroom atmosphere could significantly differentiate between less and more proficient learners. This could mean a lot as far as less learners' intentions were concerned on emotional factors compared with other motives, though the whole collected data based on separate scales could also denote that both groups had roughly similar perceptions of the strategies.

Regarding classroom atmosphere, the significant difference of perceptions by the more vs. less proficient EFL learners in this study showed that regarding a great atmosphere for learners, as another important motivation raising aspects as corroborated by both groups of participants (the more and less proficient EFL students) in an Iranian context, the more proficient learners had discerned less agreement ($M=8.64$, $SD: .21$) on this scale compared with the less proficient learners ($M=9.40$, $SD: .12$). This meant that not only was there an agreement between these two groups in this regard, but also this aspect of classroom atmosphere was discerned to be more important to the less proficient learners. This, in itself, showed an immediate concern for Iranian English language teachers to take heed of classroom atmosphere elements as noted by the less proficient English language learners in this context. One may then contend that verbal encouragement might be seen as an appropriate behavior on the side of a teacher that could act as another source of initial motivation for learners. A caring environment may be established by teachers' approachable verbal and non-verbal behavior such as eye contact, smiling and calling learners by their first names (Benson, 2005). According to findings of this study, good rapport with learners, as it can be established within classroom confines especially for the lower level learners could then be developed by numerous other supports such as being available, offering help and responding when help is requested. This finding, advocated by Sander, Stevenson, King and Coates (2000), put teachers' availability for learners as the second desired criteria of teachers' motivation raising strategies.

Regarding other surveyed scales for motivation raising strategies that were not significant, however, one may argue that mismatches and similarities among more and less proficient EFL learners could show their different values over the nature of English language teacher's motivation raising strategies.

Although, both groups shared similar perceptions mostly in the majority of the scales and items, there were some noteworthy disparities between them regarding the class atmosphere only. Inspiring among the findings in this research was that the less proficient EFL learners manifested that a teacher plays a vital role in class. In so doing, the learners preferred an environment that is engaging, satisfying, pleasant, and not face-threatening that eradicates discomfort in the EFL classes. Furthermore, teachers should encourage learners, to behave in an approachable manner, appreciate them, value their efforts, and meet their learning needs.

In all, in line with the different arguments in favor of some motivation raising strategies against others, other researchers have also recognized what items are used by teachers and in what ways learners' motivation can be impressed positively in different levels (e.g. Dörnyei, 1994, 2001a; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Jacques, 2001; Tanaka 2005). These studies remark that EFL teachers have one of the most significant roles for EFL learners' engagement in the long stages of L2 acquisition. In fact, teachers need to have multi-dimensional roles in EFL classes, which are believed to influence each EFL learner's motivation continuously in his/her special level.

In view of the findings, it should be concluded that the teachers' motivation raising strategies could be beneficial to both more and less proficient EFL learners. However, the less proficient learners were more enthusiastic towards teachers' motivation raising strategies for whom their perceptions were indicative of deeper and more extended nature compared with more proficient learners. Also, the researchers revealed that there were some similarities and differences between more and less proficient EFL learners' perceptions regarding the surveyed scales. As revealed by the results of the present study, various specific motivations could thus be deemed to be at work, for which teachers might take some actions to increase motivation on classroom tasks according to the presented reported sets of criteria in this research for diverse learners with higher vs. lower proficiency levels regarding motivation raising strategies. These actions might then make positive or negative reinforcements in both groups.

In a nutshell, in line with the results gained in this research, there could be implications for motivation raising strategy instructions for some teachers who

are anxious to know if different learners' perceptions should be cared for or not and what they should apply in the procedures of teaching in the classroom. In so doing, many dilemmas could be resolved as to what the real nature of motivation raising strategies are to students' views and what strategies are less important based on the main stake holders in language classrooms: the learners. To this end, one can contend that such researches may include noticeable promises for the extension of motivation studies for the learners' benefit. Besides, applying in placed method or combination of methods based on what language learners deem as effective can create condition for attending and sustaining within the confines of EFL classrooms. Finally, it is noteworthy that in this research, the participants' age ranges, their gender, and textbook quality were not of concern, although they may also be effective in this relation. Having these limitations in mind, by means of leading this research, the researchers understood what will be needed to produce a successful investigation in their own language classes.

References

- Alshehri, E. A., (2013). Motivational Strategies: The Perceptions of EFL Teachers and Students in the Saudi Higher Education Context. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). College of Arts and Social Sciences University of Salford, Salford, UK.
- Ames, C., & Ames, R. (1989). *Research in motivation in education*: San Diego, US: Academic Press.
- Brophy, J. (1998). *Powerful classroom management strategies: Motivating students to learn*. New York, NY, US: McGraw-Hill.
- Brown, (1994). Initiation of motivation in language learning acquisition. *Higher education of social science*, 2(2),8-11.
- Brown, (1987). Role of motivation in language learning. *International research journal of applied and basic sciences*, 6(6), 766-773.
- Brown, H.D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching: Language and languages-study and teaching. Language acquisition*. Englewood, FL: Cliffs.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principle*. San Fransisco: San Fransisco State university.
- Cheng, H. F., &Dornyei, Z. (2007). The use of motivational strategies in language instruction: *The case of EFL teaching in Taiwan. innovation in language learning and teaching*, 1(1), 153-174.

- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997). Intrinsic motivation and effective teaching: A flow analysis. In J. L. Bess (Ed.), *Teaching well and liking it: Motivating faculty to teach effectively* (pp. 72-89). London, UK: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Csizér, K., & Dörnyei, Z. (2005). The internal structure of language learning motivation and its relationship with language choice and learning effort. *Modern language journal*, 89 (1), 19-36.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985b). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior: Perspectives in social psychology*. New York, NY, US: Plenum Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (1990). Conceptualizing motivation in foreign-language learning. *Language learning*, 40(1), 45-78.
- Dörnyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. *Modern Language journal*, 78(3), 273-284.
- Dörnyei, Z. (1996). Moving language learning motivation to a longer platform for theory and practice. In R. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning motivation: The new century* (pp.766-773). IRAN, IR: Science Explorer Publications
- Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language teaching*, 31(3),117-135.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2000). Motivation in action: Towards a process-oriented conceptualization of student motivation. *British journal of educational psychology*, 70(4), 519-538.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001a). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom: Cambridge language teaching library*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001b). *Teaching and researching motivation: Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2002a). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2002b). The motivational basis of language learning tasks. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Individual differences and instructed language learning* (pp.137-157). Amsterdam, NL: John Benjamins Publishing Co.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2003). Attitudes, orientations, and motivations in language learning: Advances in theory, research, and applications. *Language Learning*, 53(1), 3-32.

- Dörnyei, Z. (2009a). The L2 motivational self system. In Z. Dörnyei, & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identified the L2 self* (pp. 9-42). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Clément, R. (2001). Motivational characteristics of learning different target languages: Results of a nationwide survey. In Z. Dörnyei, & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 399-432). Honolulu, UK: Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Centre, University of Hawaii.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. (1998). Ten commandments for motivating language learners: Results of an empirical study. *Language teaching research*, 2(3), 203-229.
- Dörnyei, Z. & Ottó, I. (1998). Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation. *Working papers in applied linguistics*, 4(1), 43-69.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Schmidt, R. (Eds.). (2001). *Motivation and second language acquisition* (Vol. 23). Natl Foreign Lg Resource Ctr.
- Dörnyei, Z. & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London, UK: Edward Arnold Ltd.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language Learning: Motivation language attitude and globalization*. Massachusetts, MA: Newbury House Publishers Inc.
- Grolnick, W. S., & Ryan, R. M. (1987). Parent styles associated with children's self-regulation And competence in School. *Journal of educational psychology*, 81(2), 143-154.
- Guilloteaux, M. J., & Dörnyei, Z. (2008). Motivating language learners: A classroom-oriented Investigation of the effects of motivational strategies on student motivation. *TESOL quarterly*, 42(1), 55-77.
- Harmer, J. (1991). *The practice of English language teaching*, New York: Longman Publishing.
- Hashimoto, Y. (2002). Motivation and willingness to communicate as predictors of reported L2 use: The Japanese ESL context. *University of Hawai'i Second Language Studies Paper 20* (2).
- Huitt, W. (2001). Motivation to Learn: An Overview. Retrieved December 1, 2008 from <http://chironvaldosta.edu/whuitt/col/motivation/motivate.htm/>.
- Huitt, W. (2001). Motivation to learn: An overview. *Educational psychology interactive*, 12. Jacques, S. R. (2001). Preferences for instructional activities and motivation: A comparison of

- student and teacher perspectives. In Z. Dörnyei, & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 185-221). Honolulu, UK: Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Centre, University of Hawaii.
- Keller, J. (1983). Motivational design of instruction. In M. Reigeluth (Ed.), *Instructional design theories and models* (pp. 386-433). Florida, US: Routledge.
- Klein, H. J., Noe, R. A., & Wang, C. (2006). Motivation to learn and course outcomes: The impact of delivery mode, learning goal orientation, and perceived barriers and enablers. *Personnel psychology*, 59(3), 665-702.
- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (1999). *How languages are learned :Oxford Handbooks for Language Teachers*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Lowman, J. (1990). Promoting motivation and learning. *College teaching*, 38(4),136-140.
- Lundy, O., & Cowling, A. (1996). *Strategic human resource management: Definition and importance*. Routledge: New York.
- Murcia, [M. C.](#), Brinton, D. M., & Snow, [M. A. \(1991\)](#). Motivation in second language learning. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (518-531). Boston, USA: National Geographic Learning.
- Ngeow, K., & Yeok-Hwa (1998). Role of motivation in language learning. *International research journal of applied and basic sciences*, 6(6), 766-773.
- Noels, K. A. (2003). Learning Spanish as a second language: Learner's orientations and perceptions of their teachers' communication style. *Language learning*, 53(1), 97-136.
- Noels, K. A., Clement, R., & Pelletier, L. G. (1999). Perceptions of teachers' communicative style and students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. *The modern language journal*, 83(91), 23-34.
- Narayanan, R. (2006). *Motivation variables and second language learning: Kanchipuram, India: Vinayaka Mission Research Foundation University*.
- Oxford, R.L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Oxford, R., & Shearin, J. (1994). Language learning motivation: Expanding the theoretical framework. *The modern language journal*, 1 (78), 12-28.

- Papi, M., & Abdollahzadeh, E. (2012). Teacher motivational practice, student motivation, and possible L2 selves: An examination in the Iranian EFL context. *Language learning*, 62(2), 571-594.
- Pelletier, L. G., & Sharp, E. C. (2009). Administrative pressures and teachers' interpersonal behavior in the classroom. *Theory and research in education*, 7(2), 174-183.
- Pintrich, P. R., & Schunk, D. H. (1996). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Raffini, J. P. (1996). *150 Ways to increase intrinsic motivation in the classroom*: Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Reeve, J., Bolt, E., & Cai, Y. (1999). Autonomy-supportive teachers: How they teach and motivate students. *Journal of educational psychology*, 9(1), 537-548.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social Development, and well-being. *American psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78.
- Shearin, (1994). Role of motivation in language learning. *International research journal of applied and basic sciences*, 6(6), 766-773.
- Tanaka, T. (2005). Second language motivation: The role of teachers in learners' motivation. *Journal of academic and applied studies*, 3(4), 45-54.
- Taspinar, H. K. (2004). Teachers' and students' perceptions of teachers' task related motivational strategy use and students' motivation levels (Master's thesis). Available from Thesis database.(edu.tr/0002559)
- Taufan, G. T. (2017). Understanding motivation to develop motivational plan in language classroom: A hint for language teachers. *LUNARI*(1), 23-34.
- Trevisan, M.S. (2002). The states' role in ensuring assessment competence: *Education resources information center*, 83(10), 766-771.
- Ushioda, E. (1996). *Learner autonomy: The role of motivation*. Dublin, UK: Authentik Language Learning Resources Ltd.
- Vandergrift, L. (2005). Relationships among motivation orientations, metacognitive awareness and proficiency in L2 listening. *Applied linguistics*, 26(1), 70-89.
- VanLier, L. (1996). *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy and authenticity*. London, UK: Longman.
- Weinstein, R. S. (1989). Perceptions of classroom processes and student motivation: Children's views of self-fulfilling prophecies. *Research on motivation in education*, 3, 187-221.
- Wentzel, K. R. (1999). Social-motivational processes and interpersonal relationships:

- Implications for understanding motivation at school. *Journal of educational psychology*, 91(1), 76-97.
- Williams, M. & Burden, R. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wlodkowski, R. J. (1986). *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn*: London: Jossey-bass Limited.
- Wlodkowski, R. J. (1999). *Enhancing adult motivation to learn: A comprehensive guide for teaching all adults*. San Francisco, CA, US: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Wu, X. (2003). Intrinsic motivation and young language learners: The impact of the classroom environment. *System*, 31(4), 501-517.
- Ziahosseini, M., & Salehi M. (2008). An investigation of the relationship between motivation And language learning strategies. *Pazhuhesh-e zabanha-ye khareji*, 41(special issue), 85-107.

Biodata

Nasrin Yousefi is an MA student in TEFL at Islamic Azad University, West Tehran Branch. She is currently projecting the final stages of data analysis for her MA thesis. She has been active in English language teaching courses in various English institutes in Tehran for a decade or so.

Marjan Vosoughi is currently a full-time faculty member of Islamic Azad University of Sabzevar, Iran. She holds a PhD in TEFL from Al-Zahra University of Tehran, Iran. She has various international publications in Applied Linguistics. Her areas of interest are language assessment, psycholinguistics, discourse analysis and materials designing for literacy aspects.

Mino Alemi is Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics at Islamic Azad University, West Tehran Branch, and a post-doctoral associate at Sharif University of Technology (SUT), Iran. She is the founder of Robot-Assisted Language Learning (RALL) and the co-founder of Social Robotics in Iran. Prior to her employment in tertiary education, she had taught EFL courses at English language institutes. She is on the editorial/review boards of many journals, including *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *BRAIN*, *LIBRI*, and *Scientia Iranica*. Her areas of interest include discourse analysis, interlanguage pragmatics, materials development, and robot-assisted language education. She has presented papers in many international conferences and published papers in journals such as *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, *TESL Canada Journal*, and *International Journal of Social Robotics*.