Motivational Strategies and EFL Teachers' Perceptions: A Saudi Survey

Saleh Mohammad Ali Alqahtani

Department of English Language and Translation, Faculty of Sciences and Arts, University of Jeddah, KSA

Abstract—The present study is only the second one of this kind in the Saudi context. As a first stage of the study, 117 EFL teachers with varying demographic characteristics (age, qualifications, teaching experience and the like) rated 55 motivational micro strategies on 5-point scales, which were then grouped into 10 macro strategies in accordance with previous research. Since the present study is a modified replication of previous studies, the expectation that the ranking of strategies in the Saudi context will match to a degree the rankings found by researchers elsewhere in the world was borne out - four of the macro strategies that came out in the top five scales in this study were ranked in the top five scales in three other studies conducted by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in Hungary, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan, and Alrabai (2010) in Saudi Arabia. The order in which the macro strategies were ranked in the present research differed from the ranking order found previously, including Alrabai's (2010) in the Saudi context. Unlike in any previous research, however, when inferential statistical analyses were applied on the collected data, statistically significant differences in the ranking order of the macro strategies emerged as a function of the respondents' qualifications and length of teaching experience. The results may have implications for teacher training and the research design of future investigations into the effects of the motivational strategies deployed by teachers on student motivation and FL achievement.

Index Terms—motivation, motivational strategies, macro strategies, micro strategies, EFL teachers

I. INTRODUCTION

In Second-language acquisition (SLA) research, motivation has been found to be a key factor in learning a foreign/second language (L2), and motivation theories have been fine-tuned and tested for the last 60 years. L2 motivation is needed to help learners apply themselves and persist in their efforts during the learning process, which may extend over a long period of time. In the past 20 years, numerous studies have proposed different strategies to generate, sustain, and promote learner motivation in language classes (e.g. Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Dörnyei, 2001; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Alrabai, 2010). It is believed that without sufficient motivation even the cleverest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language proficiency, while most learners with strong motivation can achieve a working knowledge of the L2, regardless of their language aptitude or any undesirable learning conditions (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). This study mainly concerned with the Saudi EFL teachers' perceptions of how important using the motivational strategies in the classroom.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the last 50 years or so, a quite considerable research effort has gone into investigating the role of motivation in L2 learning by exploring the nature of this complex construct and how it affects the L2 learning process. SLA researchers attempt to conceptualize the term motivation. Ellis (1994, p. 509) claims that 'L2 motivation refers to the effort that learners put into learning the L2 as a result of their need or desire to learn it.' The linguists who first considered the role of motivation in language learning were Gardner and his associates. Their inspiration to the field of L2 motivation resulted in one of the leading theories in the field: the Social-Psychological Theory. Dörnyei (2005) explains that according to Gardner and Lambert (1972), second languages played a role as 'mediating factors between different ethno-linguistic communities and thus regarded the motivation to learn the language of the other community as a primary force responsible for enhancing or hindering intercultural communication and affiliation' (p. 67). The Social-Psychological Theory is based on the principle that learners' attitudes have a great influence on students in whether they will be successful or not in learning the target language. Among Gardner's theory influentially contributed to the field of L2 motivation is through many features such as the nature of motivation, what integrative motivation consists of, and the integrative-instrumental motivation dichotomy, however there are a number of aspects of motivation which the socio-educational model does not have the capacity to explain, such as the nature of the task, the connections of motivation to language-learning processes, and language pedagogy.

In the 1990s, the study of L2 motivation shifted to a cognitive-situated view and started taking a lot more interest in the role of situation-specific factors, for instance, factors specific to classroom learning (e.g. Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1990, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Williams & Burden, 1997). The new approach successfully extended the L2 motivation model by examining cognitive aspects of motivation, especially those

related to the learner's "self" (e.g. self-confidence/efficacy, self-determination), extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, the need for achievement, and expectancy of success, etc.

Motivational Strategies

Many previous studies focused on constructing a theoretical framework for motivation and concentrated on establishing the effectiveness of motivation on the EFL/ESL learning/teaching second and foreign language contexts, rather than try to show how to motivate learners in the classroom. Motivational strategies did not receive enough attention until the early 1990s, and there has not been a significant amount of empirical work on them. Dörnyei (2001b, p. 28) defined motivational strategies as 'the motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect.' Many L2 scholars (e.g. Alison & Halliwell, 2002; Brown, 2001; Dörnyei, 2001b; Chambers, 1999; Williams & Burden, 1997) designed and summarised motivational techniques for classroom application. However, as Gardner and Tremblay (1994) argued, the obvious intuitive appeal of motivational strategies is not enough to justify strong claims in favour of their use in the classroom without empirical evidence. The validity of Gardner and Tremblay's point notwithstanding, the actual number of empirical studies which have tried to examine the effectiveness of motivational strategies is still quite small, which may be a reflection of the rather labour-intensive nature of experimental research (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Only three studies to date have been empirically conducted on the effectiveness of motivational strategies. These studies were Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in Hungary, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan, and Alrabai (2010) in Saudi Arabia.

Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) asked 200 Hungarian teachers of English how important they considered a list of 51 motivational strategies and how frequently they used them in their teaching practice. The researchers came up with a set of the major motivational strategies and called them *The Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners.* 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 (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007).

The second empirical study was conducted by Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in a different EFL context – Taiwan. The study was a modified replication of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) exploring the range of strategies that 387 teachers of English used to motivate their learners in Taiwan. The findings of the two studies revealed that some of the motivational strategies were perceived to be similar and effective in both contexts, indicating that some motivational strategies are transferable across diverse cultural and ethnolinguistic contexts (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007).

Alrabai (2010) conducted an empirical investigation in Saudi Arabia, examining the importance of using some selected motivational strategies by EFL Saudi teachers and came up with the 10 strategies that the teachers rated as the most important to be used in the Saudi EFL classes to promote learners' motivation. The researcher asked 119 Saudi teachers to consider a list of 55 motivational strategies in terms of how important they considered these strategies to be used in motivating learners in the language classroom.

The current study is a modified replication of the previous three studies to explore the range of motivational strategies that teachers can use to motivate their learners in the Saudi context. These three studies used an instrument that was based on Dörnyei's (1994) first summary of motivational strategies.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

117 male and female EFL teachers were recruited through email and on the recommendation of those in charge of these institutions, representing a variety of age groups, EFL teaching/learning experience, and schooling level, social and regional backgrounds. The main goal at this stage was to recruit as many participants as possible. For this reason, the researcher decided to use snowball sampling. According to Dörnyei (2012), snowball sampling involves a 'chain reaction', whereby the researcher identifies a few people who meet the criteria of a particular study and then asks these participants to identify appropriate further members of the population. The male participants ($n = 91$, 77.8%) outnumbered the female participants ($n = 22$, 22.2%). The teachers' age ranged between 23 and 54 ($M = 35.21$, $SD = 7.74$). The participating teachers held different qualifications; 66 participants (56.4%) had a BA degree, 37 participants (31.6%) had a Master degree, and 14 participants (12%) had a PhD degree. The teaching experience of the participants ranged between 1 and 40 years ($M = 10.21$, $SD = 7.0$).

B. Instruments

The study aimed at exploring the motivational strategies employed by Saudi English teachers with the focus on how important the participating teachers perceived certain motivational strategies. Initially, the questionnaire consisted of 58 items. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic and piloted on 13 participants. The participants in the pilot study provided valuable recommendations and suggestions. Most of the items in the survey were adopted from the studies of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in Hungary, Dörnyei (2001a), Dörnyei (2001b), Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan, and Alrabai (2010) in Saudi Arabia. Most of the amendments proposed by the 13 teachers that piloted the questionnaire included the rewording of some items and the omission of certain specific strategies. The final version of the questionnaires was made up of 53 motivational strategies (for the list of all the items, see Table 1). The questionnaire items/strategies were scaled on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Very important' to 'Not important' in relation to

how important they consider the use of each strategy for the purpose of enhancing their students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language. Because all the participants were Saudi teachers, Arabic version of the questionnaire was administered to eliminate any potential language-based interference.

TABLE 1
FINAL RANK ORDER AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE MACRO STRATEGIES AND THEIR CONSTITUENT MICRO STRATEGIES

1. Proper teacher behaviour	$\alpha = 0.582$	Mean 3.68	SD .323
(3) Show students that you care about their progress.		3.91	.337
(5) Show students that you accept them and care about them.		3.83	.400
(6) Pay attention to your students and listen to each of them.		3.82	.485
(2) Show students that you value English language as a meaningful experience.		3.67	.602
(48) Try to have natural, informal conversation with the students in class.		3.50	.715
(1) Share with your students your own personal interest in the English language.		3.41	.745

2. Familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2 related values	$\alpha = 0.740$	Mean 3.65	SD .375
(21) Remind students of the benefits of mastering English language.		3.86	.345
(22) Increase the amount of English language you use in the class.		3.80	.459
(23) Encourage students to use English language outside the classroom.		3.74	.532
(19) Promote students to contact with English language speakers and cultural products.		3.57	.735
(46) Familiarise students with the cultural background of the target language.		3.56	.608
(18) Encourage students to explore the English language community through the internet.		3.49	.677

3. Promote learners' self-confidence	$\alpha = 0.684$	Mean 3.61	SD .395
(36) Give students positive feedback and appraisal.		3.84	.454
(50) Encourage students to attribute their failure experience when learning English to the lack of sufficient effort or bad luck rather than to their low ability.		3.80	.459
(4) Show students that you have high expectations for what they can achieve.		3.65	.620
(38) Teach various learning strategies and help students to design their learning strategies.		3.62	.679
(47) Design tasks that are within the limits of students' ability.		3.56	.608
(20) Encourage students to apply their English language proficiency in real-life situations.		3.39	.840
(49) Promote cooperation between students instead of competition.		3.35	.913

4. Increase learners' satisfaction	$\alpha = 0.648$	Mean 3.60	SD .485
(40) Recognise students' effort and achievement.		3.82	.448
(41) Monitor students' progress and celebrate their success.		3.70	.633
(43) Make sure that grades reflect students' effort and hard work.		3.65	.647
(42) Give students other rewards besides grades.		3.23	.959

5. Increase learners' expectancy of success	$\alpha = 0.765$	Mean 3.55	SD .456
(32) Provide the students with clear instruction about how to do the task.		3.74	.458
(25) Make sure students know exactly what success in the task involves.		3.62	.614
(27) Provide appropriate strategies to carry out the task.		3.60	.657
(24) Make sure students receive sufficient preparation before the lesson and assistance during the lesson.		3.56	.636
(26) Explain the goal of each learning task.		3.50	.805
(54) Raise the students' expectations of the task outcomes.		3.32	.806

6. Promote learners' autonomy	$\alpha = 0.728$	Mean 3.54	SD .492
(44) Encourage students to adopt, develop, and apply self-motivating strategies.		3.62	.628
(39) Adopt the role of a facilitator whose responsibility is to provide students with input and opportunities to communicate in the foreign language rather than a controller whose job is to decide what students can and cannot do in the classroom.		3.57	.674
(55) Encourage students' contribution and peer teaching.		3.51	.727
(45) Allow students to assess themselves.		3.47	.624

7. Make the learning tasks stimulating	$\alpha = 0.795$	Mean 3.43	SD .600
(17) Highlight and demonstrate aspects of English language learning that your students are likely to enjoy.		3.60	.631
(31) Break the routine of the classroom by varying the presentation format and learning tasks.		3.53	.783
(34) Select tasks which require involvement from each student.		3.47	.794
(35) Make tasks challenging to involve the students.		3.40	.821
(33) Make the learning tasks more attractive by including novel, humorous, and fantasy elements.		3.20	.985

8. Create a pleasant classroom atmosphere	$\alpha = 0.640$	Mean 3.42	SD .437
(37) Explain to students that mistakes are a natural part of learning.		3.84	.473
(29) Personalise learning tasks.		3.74	.458
(7) Create a supportive classroom climate that promotes risk-taking and mistakes accepted as a natural part of learning.		3.70	.620
(10) Avoid social comparison between students such as comparing the performance of two students or the public announcement of grades.		3.64	.814
(11) Use an interesting activity to start the class.		3.51	.727
(8) Bring in and encourage humour.		3.38	.653
(9) Encourage learners to personalise the classroom environment according to their taste.		2.79	1.103
9. Increase learners' learners' positive goals, realistic beliefs, and needs.	$\alpha = 0.798$	Mean 3.38	SD .617
(28) Relate the subject matter to the everyday experiences and background of the students.		3.68	.554
(30) Help students develop realistic beliefs about English learning.		3.50	.690
(52) Encourage students to set clear, short-term, and realistic learning goals for themselves.		3.46	.826
(51) Find out students' needs and build them into lessons.		3.45	.876
(53) Display the class goal on a wall chart and review it regularly.		2.83	1.101
10. Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms.	$\alpha = 0.700$	Mean 3.36	SD .528
(12) Encourage students to interact, cooperate and share their personal information and thoughts.		3.63	.624
(15) Explain to the students the importance of the class rules and the consequences for violating them.		3.56	.688
(14) Include activities that lead to the successful completion of whole group tasks.		3.46	.749
(13) Divide students into small groups and ask them to work toward a shared goal.		3.41	.779
(16) Let students suggest other class rules.		2.76	1.023

Note: M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, α = Cronbach alpha coefficient.

C. Procedures

As said earlier, the researcher used a 'snowball' sampling strategy to reach as many Saudi teachers of English as possible, and most of the actual questionnaire was administered by e-mail.

D. Data Analysis

The collected data were subjected to preliminary statistical analyses, such as the internal consistency Cronbach's alpha in order to group into 10 macro strategies based on their content similarities. The internal consistency of these scales was tested by means of a reliability analysis to determine whether the theoretical grouping was substantiated in practice. A strategy was added to a macro strategy 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 macro strategies.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The dataset produced several interesting findings. The researcher started by analysing the results of the rank order of the macro strategies according to its importance. In all these analyses the Saudi results will be evaluated against the previous three studies. Second, analyse the results of the differences in macro strategy rankings as a function of demographics.

A. Rank Order of the Macro Strategies

The previous studies that examined this issue were conducted in Hungary, Taiwan, and Saudi Arabia. The ranking of the strategies was based on the means and standard deviations so that the strategy with the highest mean and lowest standard deviation topped the list. The same approach was adopted here. For answering the above question, the mean and the standard deviation analyses were conducted on the data from the teachers' questionnaire so as to obtain the final rank order of the 10 macro strategies. Table 1 above shows the final rank order and the descriptive statistics of the 10 macro strategies and the constituent micro strategies of each.

The low Cronbach alpha coefficients of Scale 1 can be attributed to the nature of the items used in the survey. Dörnyei and Cheng (2007) have pointed out that unlike attitude surveys, this type of survey was designed to explore the teaching practices of the participating teachers and, therefore, the items were behavioural items that tend to be more heterogeneous, even within one domain than attitude scales.

The mean values of the individual macro strategies scales ranged between 3.36 out of 4 as a minimum value, and 3.69 as a maximum value, on a scale from 0 to 4. The overall mean value of the whole scale was 3.52. These results revealed that the participating teachers assigned a substantial importance to most of the items of each strategy. Macro strategies ranking were identified based on the degree of importance that was assigned by the participants.

Proper teacher behaviour

Proper teacher behaviours were classified as the most important motivational macro strategy by the participants. This ranking is in agreement with the findings of most previous studies like that of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in Hungary, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan, and Alrabai (2010) in Saudi Arabia. It is clear that, from the teachers' viewpoint,

presenting a personal role model is perhaps the most powerful and effective tool in motivating their students. Dörnyei (2001b, p. 120) claimed that '[a]lmost everything a teacher does in the classroom has a motivational influence on students, which makes teacher behaviour the most powerful motivational tool.' The findings show that EFL Saudi teachers were aware of their commitment towards their students' progress, their development of a positive relationship with students, and also confirm the importance of the teachers' display of enthusiasm.

Participating teachers discerned the commitment towards their students' progress (Strategy 3) as the most important motivational distinctive behaviour of the teacher. Developing a positive relationship with students (Strategies 5, 6, and 48) was considered the second important dimension of the teacher behaviour. The importance of the teachers' prediction of enthusiasm held the third position of the teachers' behaviour dimensions. Showing students that they value the English language as a meaningful experience (Strategy 2), and sharing with their students their own personal interest in the English language (Strategy 1) were considered as the best strategies for representing such enthusiasm in the classroom by the teachers.

Familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2-related values

The second position of this macro strategy is certainly in stark contrast with the results of previous studies like that of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in Hungary, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan, and Alrabai (2010) in Saudi Arabia. In their studies, this strategy was ranked 10, 8, and 6, respectively. In the present study, teachers' responses ranked this macro strategy as the second most important macro strategy. The high ranking that this strategy received in the current study should be expected since it is in line with previous theorising (Gardner, 1985; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). From a learner-centred perspective, Gardner (1985) maintains that language learners' attitudes towards the target culture and its people have a significant influence on their learning motivation and, indirectly, through motivation on foreign/second language (L2) achievement. The teachers may have felt that they needed to promote some degree of integrative motivation in their students. From a teacher-centred perspective, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) suggest that there is a need to make the L2 "real" by introducing learners to its cultural background, using authentic materials, and promoting contact with native speakers of L2.

In terms of values associated with L2 learning, the respondents recognised the importance of three values. Participants perceived the utilitarian value of foreign language competence as the most important aspect with which learners should be familiarised in order to enhance their L2 motivation. They considered that reminding students of the benefits of mastering the English language, such as passing exams, getting a career, pursuing future studies, and improving one's social position (Strategy 21) is the most promising technique that can be employed to enable their students to recognise such values. Respondents also believed that encouraging students to use English outside the classroom in order to apply what they have learned in class in their daily life is another strategy to familiarise them with the instrumental benefits of the foreign language learning (Strategy 17). The importance that Saudi teachers attached to these two strategies suggests that the English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers are aware of the fact that Saudi students are mostly instrumentally motivated, as acknowledged by many previous studies (e.g. Al-Shammary, 1984; Al-Amr, 1998; Al-Otaibi, 2004; Alrabai, 2007).

Micro Strategy 22 represented the importance of intrinsic values in enhancing learners' L2 motivation. The respondents considered that increasing the amount of English the teacher uses in the language classroom is the most important strategy that can be employed to enable their students to recognise such values. They believed that the increased exposure to the target language enhances students' motivation to learn and use the language, which in turn indicates that the extensive use of the learners' Arabic mother tongue during English classes in Saudi Arabia (see Alrabai, 2010) should be eliminated or at least substantially reduced as it is the fastest way to weaken the value of the foreign language in their students' view.

Participants considered L2 integrative values as the least important in enhancing learners' L2 motivation. They considered that promoting students to contact with English language speakers and cultural products (Strategy 19), familiarising students with the cultural background of the target language (Strategy 46), and encouraging students to explore the English language community through the internet (Strategy 18) as of less importance for familiarising learners with the L2 values. Alrabai (2010) suggested that *absence of contact* can be reasonably considered a rationale for why participants in this study perceived the individual strategies relating to integrative values as the least important ones for familiarising students with the foreign language values and subsequently promoting their L2 motivation. More generally, this finding lends strong support to the view that integrative motives play a much less significant role in foreign language contexts in which, like Saudi Arabia, learners do not have direct contact with the target language community.

Promote learners' self-confidence

It was not surprising to see this macro strategy coming in the third position. Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) stressed that self-confidence is not directly related to one's actual ability or competence, but rather to subjective ability/competence; it is not necessarily what someone knows or can do which will determine their L2 use, but rather what they think they know or can do. In addition, some learners might be afraid of making mistakes and also feel anxious about their performance in front of the class. The seven micro strategies represented in this scale highlight the importance of three aspects of learners' self-confidence that are very essential motives (Alrabai, 2010). These aspects were reducing learners' anxiety, promoting motivational attributions, and providing positive motivational feedback.

Participants endorsed the view that the best way to reduce students' anxiety is by designing tasks that are within the limits of students' ability (Strategy 47) and by promoting cooperation between students instead of competition (Strategy 49).

Participants seemed to be well conscious of the importance of promoting students' motivational attributions to help in reducing their L2 anxiety and fostering their self-confidence at the same time. This can be achieved by encouraging students to attribute their failure experience when learning English to the lack of sufficient effort or bad luck, rather than to their low ability (Strategy 50).

Participants also believed that it is important that teachers provide students with the amount of support they need for successful learning in order to promote their self-confidence. They considered that teaching various learning strategies and helping students to design their learning strategies is an important technique to build their self-confidence (Strategy 38). In addition, participants recognised the importance of the teacher's positive feedback as an important factor in fostering his/her students' self-confidence (Strategy 36).

Increase learners' satisfaction

Increasing learners' satisfaction was ranked as the fourth most important macro strategy by the participants. This is a reflection of the understanding that the feeling of satisfaction is a major component of learners' motivation (see e.g. Burden, 2000; Dörnyei, 2001a). Participants in our study perceived the importance of intrinsically satisfaction-promoting outcomes. They placed high importance on recognising students' effort and achievement (Strategy 40) as well as on monitoring students' progress and celebrating their success (Strategy 41).

For extrinsically-motivating outcomes, respondents acknowledged making sure that grades reflect students' effort and hard work (Strategy 43) and giving students other rewards besides grades (Strategy 42) as important values that support students' satisfaction with learning.

Increase learners' expectancy of success

This macro strategy was ranked as fifth by the participants. It contained some micro strategies that emphasise the expectancy of success of learners through the learning process. Participating teachers seemed to be fully conscious of the importance of providing the students with clear instruction about how to do the task, in a sense that enables them to understand and easily follow the teacher to perform learning tasks successfully (Strategy 32).

Respondents also considered making sure students know exactly what success in the task involves (Strategy 25) as an important strategy for increasing their expectancy of success. Furthermore, they regarded providing appropriate strategies to carry out the task as an important strategy (Strategy 27) which could increase their expectancy of success in that task and then their motivation. Making sure students receive sufficient preparation before the lesson and assistance during the lesson (Strategy 24) was ranked as an important strategy in order to generate their expectancy of successful performance of the learning tasks.

Based on the responses from the questionnaire, EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia do not seem to believe that explaining the goal of each learning task (Strategy 26, ranked second-last) has a great capacity to promote students' expectancy of success. Even more so, in obvious disagreement with what others have claimed (see Brophy, 2004; Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006), raising students' expectations in the outcomes of any learning task is not regarded as an important strategy. According to Alrabai (2010), EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia considered this strategy as too vague and general, comprising too many details that could not be easily accomplished in the Saudi EFL context. It is worth mentioning that this strategy also came last in Alrabai's (2010) ranking.

Promote learners' autonomy

This macro strategy was ranked sixth by our participants, in terms of its capacity to enhance students' motivation. The micro strategies that this macro strategy includes are those in relation to encouraging students to adopt, develop, and apply self-motivating strategies (Strategy 44), such as: adopting the role of a facilitator whose responsibility is to provide students with input and opportunities to communicate in the foreign language, rather than a controller whose job is to decide what students can and cannot do in the classroom (Strategy 39); encouraging students' contribution and peer teaching (Strategy 55); and, allowing students to assess themselves (Strategy 45).

The importance of promoting learners' autonomy to increase their motivation has become of considerable interest since 2000 (see Deci & Ryan, 2000; Brophy, 2004). Dörnyei (2001b) summarised that the freedom to choose or to have choices, rather than being forced or coerced to behave according to someone else's desire, is a requirement to motivation. Although this macro strategy is ranked just outside the top five, its mean ($M = 3.54$, $SD = .492$) is almost equal to the mean of the strategy that was ranked fifth ($M = 3.55$, $SD = .456$). The close ranking shows that EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia favour the use of this macro strategy and think that it is an important motivational technique in the classroom for enhancing learners' motivation. The findings in relation to promoting learners' autonomy differ only marginally from those in Alrabai (2010), where promoting learners' autonomy was ranked seventh.

Make the learning tasks stimulating

This macro strategy was ranked by the respondents as the seventh. The importance of this macro strategy is well-emphasised in many different fields, like psychology and education (see Raffini, 1993; 1996; Dörnyei, 2001b). Furthermore, the concept of "interest" has been considered as one of the noticeable motivational components across a number of L2 motivation-related models (e.g. Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

The micro strategies that this macro strategy comprises are those related to highlighting and demonstrating aspects of English language learning that students are likely to enjoy (Strategy 17), breaking the routine of the classroom by varying the presentation format and learning tasks (Strategy 31), selecting tasks which require involvement from each student (Strategy 34), making tasks challenging to involve the students (Strategy 35), and making the learning tasks more attractive by including novel, humorous, and fantasy elements (Strategy 33).

The main reason for the positioning of this strategy in the lower half of the rankings is that most EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia are required to cover the prescribed learning contents in the official curriculum because of restricted teaching hours. Additionally, Al-Subahi (1991) has maintained that EFL curriculum designers in Saudi Arabia usually design the curriculum based on their personal subjective expectations, rather than on students' actual needs and goals. Teachers also have to assist their students to get better grades in exams, which in turns makes it hard for the teachers, in a grade-driven education system, to make the learning task stimulating. It is worth mentioning that this low ranking is in disagreement with Alrabai's (2010) empirical study, in which this strategy was ranked in the top half.

Create a pleasant classroom atmosphere

This macro strategy was ranked as eighth by the EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. Creating a secure learning environment is important for the teachers. As Young (1999) has pointed out, it has been well documented that language learning anxiety created by a tense classroom climate is a powerful negative factor that obstructs students' learning motivation and achievement. A comfortable classroom atmosphere has positive effects on students' motivation, such as fostering their self-confidence, developing a good rapport between students and their teachers and between students themselves, as well as making learning stimulating and enjoyable to students (see Good & Brophy, 1994; Dörnyei, 2001a).

The micro strategies that this macro strategy encompasses are those relating to explaining to students that mistakes are a natural part of learning (Strategy 37), such as: personalising learning tasks (Strategy 29); creating a supportive classroom climate that promotes risk-taking and mistakes accepted as a natural part of learning (Strategy 7); avoiding social comparison between students, such as comparing the performance of two students or the public announcement of grades (Strategy 10); using an interesting activity to start the class (Strategy 11); bringing in and encouraging humour (Strategy 8); and, encouraging learners to personalise the classroom environment according to their taste.

The findings of our study shows that the mean score ($m = 3.42$) of this macro strategy is higher than the one in Alrabai's (2010) empirical study ($m = 3.00$), which was ranked at the bottom. As stated in Cheng and Dörnyei's (2007) study in Taiwan, teachers are becoming more sensitive to this issue and more accepting that it is their responsibility to promote a secure learning environment, where risk-taking is advocated and social comparison discouraged.

Increase learners' positive goals, realistic beliefs, and needs

As we can see from the Table 1 above (p. 5), this was among the lowest-ranked macro strategies. Respondents classified the micro strategies of relating the subject matter to the everyday experiences and background of the students (Strategy 28), and helping students develop realistic beliefs about English learning, as slightly more important than the micro strategies related to helping students set clear, realistic goals.

It is worth mentioning that this strategy also received a similar ranking in the previous studies of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in Hungary, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan, and Alrabai (2010) in Saudi Arabia. Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) suggested 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. They also indicated that language teachers often believe that the official curricula outline a set of institutional objectives that are readily servable, and this may explain the lack of recognition of the utility of goal setting.

Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms

Saudi EFL teachers seem to treat this macro strategy as the least important one. Participants regarded dividing students into small groups and asking them to work toward a shared goal (Strategy 13) as of little importance in enhancing learners' group cohesiveness. The low importance attached to this strategy might also be attributed to the nature of EFL classes in Saudi Arabia, where large class sizes make the utilisation of this strategy difficult (Alrabai, 2010).

Dörnyei and Murphey (2003), as cited in Alrabai's (2010) study, argue that group cohesiveness by itself will not work in the best way to motivate students unless associated with a 'rules of conduct' protocol that governs the group members' behaviours in the classroom, and makes it possible for its cohesiveness to grow. Respondents recognised two micro strategies in relation to group norms. They considered that explaining to the students the importance of the class rules and the consequences for violating them (Strategy 15), and letting students suggest other class rules (Strategy 16) are the best way to increase students' awareness of these rules.

B. Motivational Strategy Rankings – A Comparison across Studies

One significant conclusion that comes out from the ranking of macro strategies in our study was that these strategies were distributed almost equally on the four dimensions of the systematic theoretical framework of motivational strategies presented by Dörnyei (2001b) as follows:
1. Macro strategies 1, 8, and 10 represented the dimension of creating the basic motivational conditions.
2. Macro strategies 2, 5, and 9 represented generating initial motivation dimension.
3. Macro strategies 3, 6, and 7 represented maintaining and protecting motivation dimension.

4. Macro strategy 4 represented encouraging positive self-evaluation dimension.

A second important and interesting conclusion about the final rank order achieved for the motivational macro strategies in our study, is that it was mostly similar to that of the three previous experimental studies conducted on motivational strategies in Hungary (1998), in Taiwan (2007), and in Saudi Arabia (2010) - four of the top five strategies were the same as the ones in the other studies.

It is important to note that there were some differences with the analytical design between these four studies. First, in Hungary, the initial 51 macro strategies were logically grouped under 18 scales, and the top 10 of these clusters were categorised as 'The Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners.' In the second study, in Taiwan, all the 48 single motivational strategies were also logically grouped into 10 macro strategies. In the third study, in Saudi Arabia, the 53 single strategy items were initially grouped under 12 clusters. The final 48 reliable strategies loaded on 10 scales based on factor analysis findings and were finally grouped under 10 macro strategies. In our study, the 58 single strategy items that were initially grouped under 11 macro strategies. The final 55 reliable strategies loaded on 10 scales based on factor analysis findings.

Table 24 contains a comparison of the rank order of the macro strategies obtained in this study and in the study of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in Hungary, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan, and Alrabai (2010) in Saudi Arabia. The purpose of the comparison is to identify the possible existence of similar patterns regarding motivational strategies used in different cultural contexts.

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF THE FINAL RANK ORDER OF THE MACRO STRATEGIES/SCALES OBTAINED IN THIS STUDY
AND IN HUNGARY (1998), TAIWAN (2007), AND IN SAUDI ARABIA (2010)

No.	Macro strategy	Hungary study (1998)	Taiwan study (2007)	Alrabai Saudi Arabia (2010)	This study
1	*Proper teacher behaviour*	1	1	1	1
2	*Familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2 related values.*	10	8	6	2
3	*Promote learners' self-confidence*	5	3	5	3
4	*Increase learners' satisfaction.*	----	2	2	4
5	*Increase learners' expectancy of success.*	3	5	4	5
6	*Promote learners' autonomy.*	7	10	7	6
7	*Create a pleasant classroom atmosphere*	2	4	10	8
8	*Make the learning tasks stimulating*	6	7	3	7
9	*Increase learners' positive goals, realistic beliefs, and needs.*	9	6	9	9
10	*Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms.*	---	9	8	10

The comparison reveals a considerable degree of similarity in the ranking of the different motivational macro strategies among the four studies that were conducted in three different EFL contexts (one each in Hungary and Taiwan, and two in Saudi Arabia). Other conclusions drawn from this comparison are as follows:

A. Macro strategy 1: 'Proper teacher behaviour' was ranked at the top of the 10 strategies in all four studies as the most important motivational macro strategy.

B. Our study and the study of Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan were identical in ranking 'promote learners' self-confidence' third and 'increase learners' expectancy of success' fifth among the 10 macro strategies.

C. The macro strategy 'increase learners' positive goals, realistic beliefs, and needs' got the same ranking - ninth - as in Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in Hungary, and Alrabai (2010) in Saudi Arabia.

D. Except for the identical positions of macro strategies 1 and 9, the ranking order in the present study differed from the ranking order found in Alrabai's (2010) in the Saudi context, by one or two places. The greatest difference emerged in the ranking of macro strategy 'familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2-related values', which was ranked sixth in Alrabai's study, while in our study it was ranked as the second most important macro strategy.

E. Another important aspect of the comparative taxonomy above is that three of the macro strategies that came out in the top five macro strategies in our study were ranked in the top five macro strategies in the other three studies. These macro strategies were 1: 'proper teacher behaviour'; 3: 'promote learners' self-confidence'; and, 5: 'increase learners' expectancy of success'. Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) asserted that these macro strategies embody fundamentally important beliefs in teaching pedagogy and thus can be universally treated as central tenets of any sound teaching practice. This similarity, moreover, is a confirmation that these strategies can be seen as very powerful factors for generating, maintaining, and promoting students' L2 motivation in different EFL contexts.

C. Differences in Macro Strategy Rankings as a Function of Demographics

The present study extends the scope of previous investigations of the perceived importance of different motivational strategies by taking into consideration the participants' demographic characteristics. In order to determine whether the macro strategies were ranked differently as of a function of the teachers' demographic background, *one-way ANOVA* and *Independent samples t-test* were conducted on each of the 10 macro strategies by gender, age, qualifications, teaching experience, region of teaching, and level of teaching. Of these, only qualifications and length of teaching

experience were found to have a statistically significant effect on the perceived importance of some of the motivational macro strategies.

Table 3 summarises the results of a one-way ANOVA conducted on each macro strategy by groups of qualifications (BA, Master, and PhD).

TABLE 3
DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF THE MACRO STRATEGIES BETWEEN TEACHERS BY GROUPS BY
QUALIFICATIONS: BA, MASTER, PHD (ONE-WAY BETWEEN-SUBJECTS ANOVA)

Macro Strategies	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F(2, 115)	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
MAC1	.478	.239	2.342	.101	.039
MAC2	1.211	.605	4.545	**.013***	**.074**
MAC3	1.289	.645	4.357	**.015***	**.071**
MAC4	.948	.474	2.045	.134	.035
MAC5	1.936	.968	4.965	**.009***	**.080**
MAC6	3.310	1.655	7.592	**.001***	**.118**
MAC7	2.822	1.411	4.121	**.019***	**.067**
MAC8	.611	.306	1.613	.204	.028
MAC9	3.647	1.823	5.129	**.007***	**.083**
MAC10	2.221	1.110	4.188	**.018***	**.068**

MAC= macro strategy, (*) <. 05

As Table 3 shows, significant differences among the BA-, Master-, and PhD-qualified respondents existed on the perceived importance of seven of the ten macro strategies. These results were followed up with Scheffe post-hoc tests, which revealed that the group differences remained significant on five of the initially-identified seven macro strategies.

TABLE 4
IMPORTANCE OF MACRO STRATEGY RATED BY TEACHERS IN GROUPS BY QUALIFICATIONS

Macro strategy	Qualifications		
	BA	Master	PhD
2. Familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2-related values	3.56_a	3.75_b	3.80_{ab}
5. Increase learners' expectancy of success	3.44_a	3.64_a	3.89_{bc}
6. Promote learners' autonomy	3.40_a	3.64_b	3.89_{bc}
7. Create a pleasant classroom atmosphere	3.31_a	3.55_b	3.74_{bc}
9. Positive goals, realistic beliefs, and needs	3.24_a	3.49_b	3.85_{bc}

Note: Importance of a strategy was measured on 5-point scale (0 = uncertain, 4 = very important). Means in the same row that do not share subscripts differ at p < .05 in the Scheffe method of pair-wise multiple comparisons

As shown in Table 4, the BA-qualified teachers consistently rated four of the strategies significantly lower than their PhD-qualified counterparts, and lower than their Master-qualified colleagues on Strategies 2 and 6. None of the differences between the Master- and PhD-qualified teachers was statistically significant. This pattern of results suggests that the more qualified the teachers are, the greater their appreciation is of strategies that promote the aspects of learners' motivation.

Table 5 shows the final ranked of the macro strategies in terms of the qualifications of the Saudi EFL teachers.

TABLE 5
THE FINAL RANK OF THE MACRO STRATEGIES OBTAINED FROM THE SAUDI TEACHERS' QUALIFICATIONS BY MEAN

No.	Macro Strategy	Qualifications					
		BA		Master		PhD	
		Rank	mean	rank	mean	rank	mean
1	*Proper teacher behaviour*	1	3.68	2	3.73	4	3.80
2	*Familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2 related values.*	2	3.56	1	3.75	3	3.80
3	*Promote learners' self-confidence*	4	3.51	3	3.69	6	3.78
4	*Increase learners' satisfaction.*	3	3.55	6	3.59	2	3.83
5	*Increase learners' expectancy of success.*	5	3.44	4	3.64	5	3.80
6	*Promote learners' autonomy.*	6	3.40	5	3.64	1	3.89
7	*Create a pleasant classroom atmosphere*	8	3.31	7	3.55	8	3.74
8	*Make the learning tasks stimulating*	7	3.35	9	3.47	10	3.55
9	*Increase learners' positive goals, realistic beliefs, and needs.*	10	3.24	8	3.49	7	3.75
10	*Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms.*	9	3.24	10	2.49	9	3.58

Note: BA = Bachelor qualification, PhD = Doctor of Philosophy qualification

Besides qualifications, the other demographic variable that was found to have an effect on the motivational macro strategy ranking was length of teaching experience. Table 6 summarises the results of a one-way ANOVA conducted on each macro strategy by groups by Length of Teaching Experience (Below eight years, 9 to 20 years, and over 21 years).

TABLE 6
DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF THE MACRO STRATEGIES BETWEEN TEACHERS BY GROUPS BY LENGTH OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE:
BELOW EIGHT YEARS, 9 TO 20 YEARS, OVER 21 YEARS (ONE-WAY BETWEEN-SUBJECTS ANOVA)

Macro Strategies	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F(2, 115)	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
MAC1	.623	.311	3.091	**.049***	**.051**
MAC2	1.274	.637	4.801	**.010***	**.078**
MAC3	1.464	.732	4.999	**.008***	**.081**
MAC4	1.113	.557	2.415	.094	0.41
MAC5	1.551	.775	3.910	**.023***	**.064**
MAC6	1.629	.814	3.499	**.034***	**.058**
MAC7	2.212	1.106	3.180	**.045***	**.053**
MAC8	1.020	.510	2.744	.069	.046
MAC9	3.314	1.657	4.624	**.012***	**.075**
MAC10	2.030	1.015	3.805	**.025***	**.063**

MAC= macro strategy, (*) <. 05

As Table 6 shows, significant differences among the 'below eight years', '9 to 20 years', and 'over 21 years' length of teaching experience respondents existed on the perceived importance of eight of the 10 macro strategies. These results were followed up with Scheffe post-hoc tests, which revealed that the group differences remained significant on five of the initially-identified eight macro strategies.

TABLE 7
IMPORTANCE OF MACRO STRATEGY RATED BY TEACHERS IN GROUPS BY THE LENGTH OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Macro strategy	the length of teaching experience		
	Below 8 years	9 to 20 years	Over 20 years
2. Familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2 related values	3.61$_a$	3.76$_a$	3.56$_{ab}$
3. Promote learners' self-confidence	3.54$_a$	3.70$_a$	3.30$_{ab}$
6. Promote learners' autonomy	3.50$_a$	3.64$_a$	3.18$_{ab}$
9. Positive goals, realistic beliefs, and needs	3.32$_a$	3.55$_a$	3.19$_{ab}$
10. Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms.	3.33$_a$	3.45$_a$	2.92$_{ab}$

Note: Importance of a strategy was measured on 5-point scale (0 = uncertain, 4 = very important). Means in the same row that do not share subscripts differ at p < .05 in the Scheffe method of pair-wise multiple comparisons

As shown in Table 7, the 'over 21 years' experienced teachers consistently rated five of the strategies significantly lower than their '9 to 20 years' experienced counterparts. Furthermore, there were no statistically significant differences between the 'below eight years' experienced teachers and the other two groups ('9 to 20 years' and 'over 21 years'). This pattern of results suggests that the more experienced the teachers are (over 21 years), the less their appreciation is of the above five strategies.

Table 8 shows the final ranked of the macro strategies in terms of the length of experiences of the Saudi EFL teachers.

TABLE 8
THE FINAL RANK OF THE MACRO STRATEGIES OBTAINED FROM THE SAUDI TEACHERS' LENGTH OF EXPERIENCES BY MEAN

No.	Macro Strategy	The length of experience					
		Below 8 years		9 to 20 years		Above 21 years	
		rank	mean	rank	mean	rank	mean
1	*Proper teacher behaviour*	1	3.63	1	3.76	1	3.56
2	*Familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2 related values.*	2	3.61	2	3.73	3	3.33
3	*Promote learners' self-confidence*	3	3.54	3	3.70	4	3.30
4	*Increase learners' satisfaction.*	4	3.51	4	3.70	2	3.50
5	*Increase learners' expectancy of success.*	6	3.48	5	3.66	5	3.29
6	*Promote learners' autonomy.*	5	3.50	6	3.64	7	3.18
7	*Create a pleasant classroom atmosphere*	8	3.35	7	3.57	8	3.12
8	*Make the learning tasks stimulating*	7	3.36	9	3.51	6	3.19
9	*Increase learners' positive goals, realistic beliefs, and needs.*	10	3.32	8	3.52	10	2.87
10	*Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms.*	9	3.33	10	3.45	9	2.92

V. CONCLUSION

A range of interesting findings have emerged via the experimental investigation of this study. The first significant finding is that participating teachers consider most of the motivational strategies as being important for promoting Saudi EFL motivation in the classroom. The participants consider the strategies *demonstrating proper teacher behaviour, familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2-related values, promote learners' self-confidence, increase learners' satisfaction, increase learners' expectancy of success, and promote learners' autonomy* to be the most important macro strategies for this purpose. On the other hand, they consider the strategies *create a pleasant classroom atmosphere,*

make the learning tasks stimulating, increase learners' positive goals, realistic beliefs, and needs, and promote group cohesiveness and set group norms to be the least important for the promotion of students' motivation.

Another significant finding is that the ranking revealed in the current study is quite similar to the rankings reported in the studies of Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in Hungary, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in Taiwan, and Alrabai (2010) in Saudi Arabia on motivational strategies. Like the current study, all three rated the macro strategy *demonstrating proper teacher behaviour* as the most important motivational strategy for promoting students' motivation. In the current study, however, the strategy *familiarise learners with L2 culture and L2-related values* received a much higher ranking, compared with the other three studies.

A third major finding is that three of the top five macro strategies, as revealed in our study, are ranked in the top five macro strategies in the other three studies. These macro strategies are: 1. 'proper teacher behaviour'; 4. 'increase the learners' expectancy of success'; and, 5. 'promote learners' self-confidence'.

Our study also revealed some statistically significant differences in the ranking of macro strategies in terms of the respondents' qualifications and the lengths of teaching experiences in the Saudi context.

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Saleh Mohammad Ali Alqahtani is an assistant professor in the Department of English Language and Translation at the University of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He acquired his PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Newcastle, Australia. His research interests include L1 transfer, motivation, reading skills, writing skills, and second language equitation.