


Research Article

Motivational Teaching Strategies: Perceptions of Vocational School EFL Teachers and Students

¹  **Nguyen Tien Phung**, ²**Tran Thi Thanh Truyen**

¹Testing and Quality Assurance Office, Quy Nhon University, Quy Nhon City, Vietnam

² Khanh Hoa Economics College, Nha Trang City, Vietnam

Abstract

This study investigates EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of motivational teaching strategies at a vocational school in Khanh Hoa Province. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from five teachers and 300 students through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews during the 2024-2025 academic year. The findings reveal that both groups highly value strategies such as supportive teacher behavior, encouragement, recognition of effort, and a comfortable learning environment. Teachers also emphasized goal-setting and meaningful tasks, while students appreciated emotional support and structured, confidence-building activities. Although both groups shared similar views, teachers were slightly more supportive of promoting learner autonomy. Strategies involving fantasy or high difficulty were less favored. The study highlights the need for a balanced approach that blends structure, encouragement, and clear goals to enhance motivation in vocational EFL classrooms.

Keywords: motivational teaching strategies, EFL teacher perceptions, EFL student perceptions, vocational education

1. Introduction

In learning a foreign language, motivation is one of the most important factors affecting success, even more so than factors like learning style, natural ability, or age. Motivation is considered as a crucial aspect of the human mind, playing an essential role in determining whether a student will succeed or struggle, especially in language learning (Dornyei, 2001). Highly motivated students are more likely to succeed, even without strong cognitive skills, while unmotivated learners may struggle despite high potential (Sucuoglu, 2017). Therefore, maintaining student motivation especially in English learning is essential. Teachers play a central role in this process by acting as motivators and creating supportive learning environments. Fen and Kiat (2015) highlight that EFL teachers serve as facilitators, consultants, and role models, while Lawrence and Hanitha (2017) emphasize the teacher's role in inspiring students through effective classroom strategies. In response to the growing need for English language skills in today's world, Khanh Hoa, as a traveling city, is trying to improve English education. However, at vocational schools in Khanh Hoa province, many students still face challenges when learning English. One major reason might be rooted from students' low motivation. Many believe that learning English is difficult, which makes them less willing to practice and improve their skills; therefore, they often lack motivation when it comes to learning English. The emphasis on practical skills and limited perceived relevance of general English to their vocational field can lead to feelings of discouragement and low confidence (Benson, 2001). These motivational challenges may affect their language learning progress and overall academic success. Studies show that

*Corresponding author: Nguyen Tien Phung

Email addresses:

nguyentienphung@qnu.edu.vn (Author Name1), thanhtruyentran57@gmail.com (Author Name2)

Received: 01-03-2025; **Accepted:** 09-04-2025; **Published:** 15-05-2025



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2025. Published by JKLST. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

vocational students generally display lower academic progress and motivation than their peers in general education (Chu et al., 2018; Oymak, 2018). In response to these concerns, this study explores how EFL teachers and students at a vocational school in Khanh Hoa Province perceive motivational teaching strategies, aiming to identify effective practices for enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes.

The aim of this study is to examine the perceptions of both EFL teachers and vocational students regarding the use of motivational teaching strategies in English language classrooms at a vocational school in Khanh Hoa Province. To achieve this goal, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. *What are teachers' perceptions of motivational strategies in the EFL classroom?*
2. *What are students' perceptions of motivational strategies in the EFL classroom?*

2. Literature Review

2.1. Motivation and Motivational Teaching Strategies in EFL Learning

2.1.1. Motivation

Motivation is widely recognized as one of the most important factors influencing success in foreign language learning, often more so than age, aptitude, or learning style (Dörnyei, 2001). Gardner (1985) defines motivation as the extent to which an individual works to learn a language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction gained from it. While definitions may vary, most researchers agree that motivation significantly affects learners' engagement, persistence, and achievement (Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998).

Motivation can be categorized into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from internal factors such as personal enjoyment or curiosity whereas extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards like grades, praise, or job prospects (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2008). Although extrinsic motivation can help students begin learning, intrinsic motivation is often more effective for long-term success (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). In real classrooms, both forms often interact. Teachers can use external rewards to spark interest, while also encouraging internal engagement through meaningful activities.

Multiple factors shape learners' motivation, including their personal goals, interests, beliefs about their abilities, and the influence of teachers and learning environments. Research has shown that teacher enthusiasm, timely feedback, and emotional support significantly contribute to students' motivation to learn a language. For instance, Dörnyei (2001) emphasizes that motivating language learners requires creating a positive classroom climate and recognizing learners' individual needs. Similarly, Ushioda (2003) argues that the teacher's personal commitment and the quality of interpersonal relationships with students are central to fostering motivation. In contexts like Vietnam, where English is not widely spoken in daily life, the teacher's role in sustaining motivation becomes even more critical. According to Tran and Baldauf (2007), Vietnamese students are more engaged when teachers actively encourage participation and make learning activities relevant to real-life situations.

Motivational challenges are even more pronounced in vocational education. Students in this context may feel that English is not directly relevant to their future careers, leading to low motivation (Chu et al., 2018; Oymak, 2018). Social perceptions and limited exposure to English also contribute to these challenges. As a result, vocational students benefit from classroom strategies that connect English learning with practical, job-related applications and provide a positive, supportive learning environment.

2.1.2. Motivational Teaching Strategies in EFL Learning

Motivational Teaching Strategies (MTS) are specific methods that teachers use to enhance students' interest and engagement in language learning. Dörnyei (2001) emphasizes the importance of these strategies in creating a classroom where students feel confident and supported. Common strategies include setting clear goals, using interactive tasks, providing constructive feedback, and encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). In Vietnam, research has shown that students respond well to communicative activities, real-life content, and emotional support (Tran & Baldauf, 2007).

Cheng and Dörnyei's (2007) framework offers a comprehensive model for applying MTS in the classroom. It outlines ten macro-strategies, such as showing care and enthusiasm, recognizing students' efforts, building their confidence, creating a pleasant classroom climate, and promoting learner autonomy. Each macro-strategy is supported by practical techniques, including using humor, giving clear instructions, and connecting tasks to learners' lives and goals. This framework is particularly helpful in vocational settings, where motivation can be more fragile. For example, designing tasks that relate to future job roles like handling hotel reservations or giving directions can make learning feel more relevant. Promoting group cohesion through teamwork, and allowing students to participate in decision-making, helps foster motivation and responsibility (Ushioda, 2003; Lamb,

2008). Motivation is a complex but essential part of language learning. Teachers in vocational schools can support students more effectively by applying motivational teaching strategies that are relevant, engaging, and learner-centered. The framework developed by Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) offers practical guidance for building a classroom environment that motivates students and improves learning outcomes.

2.2. Perceptions of Teachers and Students Toward Motivational Teaching Strategies

Perception refers to how individuals interpret and understand their experiences. In education, perception shapes how both teachers and students approach the teaching and learning process. It is influenced by personal background, values, emotions, and past experiences (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2016). In the classroom, perception affects students' self-confidence and motivation, as well as how teachers design and implement their instructional strategies (McShane & Von Glinow, 2021).

Teachers' perceptions of motivational teaching strategies (MTS) are central to how they structure their lessons and interact with students. These perceptions are shaped by factors such as years of teaching experience, students' needs, and the educational setting (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, teachers often use strategies they believe will increase engagement and participation such as creating a positive classroom climate, offering praise, promoting goal-setting, and connecting language tasks to real-life situations. In vocational schools, where students often seek job-specific skills, teachers may prioritize strategies that demonstrate the relevance of English for future careers (Tran & Baldauf, 2007).

Similarly, students' perceptions of motivational strategies influence their attitudes toward learning. Their motivation is often shaped by how they view teacher behavior, classroom interaction, and task relevance. Students tend to feel more engaged when teachers show support, give clear instructions, and provide constructive feedback (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). In vocational education settings, students are especially responsive to lessons that are interactive, practical, and emotionally supportive.

Understanding both teachers' and students' perceptions is essential for creating effective motivational practices. When teachers align their strategies with students' preferences and needs, it can lead to improved motivation and better learning outcomes. As Van Lier (1996) emphasized, listening to students' voices helps educators support their development more effectively, while teachers' own beliefs shape how learning experiences are designed and delivered.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of motivational teaching strategies at a vocational school in Khanh Hoa Province. The design combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a more complete understanding of how motivational strategies are perceived and applied in the EFL classroom. The research was conducted over a four-month period, from January to April 2025, during the second semester of the academic year. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire aimed to gather quantitative data from a broad group of participants, while the interviews provided deeper, qualitative insights from a smaller group. A total of five EFL teachers and 300 vocational students participated in the study. All participants completed the questionnaire. In addition, 12 students and all five teachers took part in follow-up interviews. The combination of these two methods helped capture both general trends and more detailed, individual experiences regarding motivational teaching strategies. The study was designed to identify the strategies teachers consider most effective in promoting student engagement, and how students perceive the impact of these strategies on their motivation to learn English. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods allowed cross-validating the findings and provide practical recommendations for enhancing motivation in vocational EFL classrooms.

3.2. Data collection

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of motivational teaching strategies, this study employed two primary data collection methods: a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. These instruments were used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, ensuring a more detailed analysis of participants' attitudes and experiences.

The questionnaire was distributed to five English teachers and 300 students at a vocational school in Khanh Hoa Province. It was designed to explore participants' perceptions of various motivational teaching strategies used in EFL classrooms. The student

version was written in Vietnamese to ensure full comprehension, while the teacher version was provided in English. Before completing the survey, participants were informed that their responses would remain confidential and that participation was voluntary. Students completed the questionnaire during their regular English class under the supervision of the researcher. Teachers filled in their responses individually at a scheduled time that was convenient for them. The estimated time to complete the questionnaire was 15 minutes. All completed questionnaires were reviewed, and only fully answered responses were used in the final data analysis to maintain the reliability and validity of the results. Both teachers and students were asked to evaluate a series of motivational teaching strategies based on their perceived importance in enhancing student engagement and learning motivation. Each strategy was rated using a 4-point Likert scale: VI = Very Important, I = Important, SI = Slightly Important, NI = Not Important. This scaling method allowed the researcher to measure and compare the perceived value of each strategy across both participant groups, providing a clear picture of which techniques were considered most effective in the EFL classroom.

To gain deeper insight into the perceptions of motivational strategies, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of participants. Five EFL teachers and twelve students were selected for interviews. The students were randomly chosen from among the 300 who completed the questionnaire, ensuring a range of perspectives across different English proficiency levels and learning backgrounds. Each interview followed a semi-structured format, guided by a list of open-ended questions that allowed participants to freely share their thoughts while keeping the discussion focused on key themes, such as the effectiveness of motivational strategies, their impact on student engagement, and any challenges faced in applying or responding to these strategies. Teacher interviews were held individually in a setting of their choice to ensure comfort and privacy. Student interviews were conducted in a quiet environment to encourage open and honest responses. The average length of each interview was approximately 10-15 minutes.

Together, the questionnaire and interviews provided a comprehensive set of data for examining the perceptions of both EFL teachers and students toward motivational teaching strategies in the vocational school context.

3.3. Data analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were calculated to summarize the responses from both teachers and students regarding their perceptions of motivational teaching strategies. The results were organized into tables and visualized through graphs to present a clearer overview of the patterns and trends in the participants' answers. For the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews, responses were first recorded and transcribed verbatim. Then, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to participants' experiences and views on motivational strategies in EFL classrooms. This process involved categorizing the data into meaningful themes aligned with the research questions, providing deeper understanding and interpretation of the quantitative findings. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis aimed to provide a comprehensive and balanced picture of how motivational teaching strategies are perceived and applied in the vocational education context.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. EFL teachers' perceptions of motivational strategies

The perceptions of EFL teachers to motivational strategies can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. EFL teachers' perceptions of motivational strategies

Macro-Strategies	Micro-Strategies	VI		I		SI		NI	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I - Proper teacher behavior	1. Show students that you care about them.	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%	0	0%
	2. Show your enthusiasm for teaching.	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%	0	0%
	3. Share with students you value English as a meaningful experience	2	40%	2	40%	1	20%	0	0%
	4. Establish good rapport with students.	1	20%	4	80%	0	0%	0	0%
	5. Be yourself in front of students	0	0%	3	60%	1	20%	0	0%

II - Recognise students' effort	6. Promote effort attributions.	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%	0	0%
	7. Make sure grades reflect students' effort and hard work.	1	20%	3	60%	1	20%	0	0%
	8. Recognise students' effort and achievement.	4	80%	1	20%	0	0%	0	0%
	9. Monitor students' progress and celebrate their victory.	2	40%	3	60%	0	0%	0	0%
III - Promote learners' self-confidence	10. Provide students with positive feedback.	5	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	11. Teach students learning techniques.	1	20%	4	80%	0	0%	0	0%
	12. Encourage students to try harder.	2	40%	2	40%	1	20%	0	0%
	13. Design tasks that are within the students' ability.	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%	0	0%
IV - Creating a pleasant classroom atmosphere	14. Make clear to students that communicating meaning effectively is more important than being grammatically correct.	1	20%	3	60%	1	20%	0	0%
	15. Bring and encourage humour.	1	20%	2	40%	2	40%	0	0%
	16. Use a short and interesting opening activity to start each class.	4	80%	1	20%	0	0%	0	0%
	17. Create a supportive classroom climate to promote risk-taking.	1	20%	4	80%	0	0%	0	0%
V - Proper presentation of tasks	18. Avoid social comparison.	2	40%	3	60%	0	0%	0	0%
	19. Give clear instructions by modeling.	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%	0	0%
VI - Increase learners' goal-orientedness	20. Give reasons to students why a particular task is meaningful.	1	20%	3	60%	1	20%	0	0%
	21. Encourage students to set learning goals.	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%	0	0%
	22. Find out students' needs and build them into a curriculum.	2	40%	2	40%	1	20%	0	0%
	23. Help students develop realistic beliefs about English learning.	1	20%	3	80%	1	20%	0	0%
VII - Make the learning tasks stimulating	24. Display the class goal in a wall chart and review it regularly.	1	20%	3	60%	1	20%	0	0%
	25. Introduce various interesting topics.	1	20%	3	60%	1	20%	0	0%
	26. Break the routine by varying the presentation format.	4	80%	1	20%	0	0%	0	0%
	27. Encourage students to create various products.	2	40%	3	60%	0	0%	0	0%
	28. Present various auditory and visual teaching aids	0	0%	4	80%	1	20%	0	0%
	29. Make tasks attractive by including novel and fantasy element	0	0%	1	20%	3	60%	1	20%
VIII - Familiarise learners with L2-related values	30. Make tasks challenging	0	0%	2	40%	2	40%	1	20%
	31. Encourage students to use English outside of classrooms.	0	0%	5	100%	0	0%	0	0%
	32. Remind students of the benefits of mastering English.	2	40%	3	60%	0	0%	0	0%
	33. Increase the amount of English you use in the class.	2	40%	3	60%	0	0%	0	0%
	34. Familiarise students with the background of the target language.	1	20%	4	80%	0	0%	0	0%
	35. Introduce authentic cultural materials	1	20%	2	40%	2	40%	0	0%
	36. Invite senior students to share their English learning experiences	0	0%	2	40%	2	40%	1	20%
IX - Promote group cohesiveness and group norms	37. Invite English-speaking foreigners to class	0	0%	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%
	38. Encourage students to share personal experiences and thoughts.	0	0%	4	80%	1	20%	0	0%
	39. Explain the importance of class rules.	1	20%	4	80%	0	0%	0	0%
	40. Allow students to get to know each other.	1	20%	4	80%	0	0%	0	0%
	41. Ask students to work toward the same goal.	0	0%	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%
X - Promote	42. Let students suggest class rules.	0	0%	2	40%	3	60%	0	0%
	43. Adopt the role of a 'facilitator'.	2	40%	3	60%	0	0%	0	0%
	44. Encourage peer teaching and group presentation.	1	20%	4	80%	0	0%	0	0%

learner auton- omy	45. Teach self-motivating strategies.	1	20%	4	80%	0	0%	0	0%
	46. Allow students to assess themselves.	1	20%	4	80%	0	0%	0	0%
	47. Give students choices in deciding how and when they will be assessed.	1	20%	3	60%	1	20%	0	0%
	48. Involve students in designing and running the English course.	1	20%	2	40%	2	40%	0	0%

The results of the study reveal that EFL teachers at the vocational school in Khanh Hoa Province generally perceived motivational teaching strategies as highly important for maintaining student engagement. These perceptions were supported by both quantitative data from the teacher questionnaire and qualitative insights from interviews.

Among all strategies, proper teacher behavior was highly valued. 60% of teachers rated showing care and enthusiasm as "Very Important," with the remaining 40% rating them as "Important." Teachers emphasized the need to build rapport and show genuine interest in students' lives. For example, T4 stating, "*Building trust is the first step... it really makes them feel more comfortable and willing to participate.*" These findings align with Cheng and Dörnyei's (2007) framework, which emphasizes teacher behavior as a key motivator.

Recognizing students' effort was also seen as critical. 80% of teachers rated it highly, especially praising effort and participation regardless of correctness. T5 mentioned posting lists of students who showed improvement, which motivated others to try.

Promoting learners' self-confidence emerged as another priority. All teachers rated providing positive feedback as "Very Important" the highest-rated item in the study. Additionally, 60% believed that assigning tasks suitable to students' ability levels was crucial to preventing discouragement. Teachers shared that they regularly adjust task difficulty to match learners' abilities and reduce language anxiety. This finding is consistent with the Vietnamese context, where students often hesitate to speak out in English classes. By giving constructive feedback and setting achievable goals, teachers aim to help students feel more secure and motivated.

Creating a pleasant classroom atmosphere was strongly endorsed. 80% of teachers emphasized starting lessons with short, engaging activities. While promoting risk-taking and avoiding student comparisons were generally supported, the use of humor showed mixed responses only 20% viewed it as "Very Important." This suggests that while teachers value a friendly learning environment, they apply humor selectively based on class dynamics.

When it came to presenting tasks, most teachers (60%) favored modeling as a key method to clarify instructions. In contrast, fewer emphasized explaining the purpose behind tasks. Interviews revealed that while some teachers try to link activities to real-world uses, others admitted that time constraints sometimes prevent them from doing so. Nevertheless, modeling remains an effective and commonly used strategy for ensuring task clarity.

Strategies related to increasing goal-orientedness received moderately strong support. While 60% of teachers considered goal-setting very important, strategies such as integrating students' personal needs or beliefs about English learning received more mixed responses. One teacher (T3) noted: "*I usually ask students about their goals at the beginning of the course. Some want to work in tourism, others in hospitality, so I try to include related topics to keep them motivated.*" This reflects the importance of personal relevance in sustaining motivation, particularly in vocational education settings where learners seek practical application.

Stimulating learning tasks were widely supported. 80% favored varying presentation formats, and many encouraged students to create their own learning products. On the other hand, strategies involving fantasy or novelty elements were less favored. Teachers explained that while visuals and hands-on tasks increase interest, overly imaginative activities might be confusing or disengaging for vocational students.

Cultural strategies were acknowledged but not prioritized. All teachers supported encouraging English use outside the classroom, but fewer emphasized using authentic cultural materials or inviting native speakers. Teachers preferred practical resources like short videos or films that were accessible and relatable. This practical approach aligns with studies that show Vietnamese vocational students benefit more from functional rather than in-depth cultural instruction.

Group cohesion strategies were considered useful, though less central. Most teachers supported encouraging peer interaction and explaining class rules. However, teachers preferred maintaining control over rule-setting, citing that students were more comfortable with teacher-led classroom management.

Lastly, strategies promoting learner autonomy received modest support. Most teachers acknowledged the importance of acting as facilitators and encouraging peer learning, but fewer believed in giving students control over assessment or curriculum design. One teacher (T4) commented, "*I give students some choice about how they want to do their projects, but I still need to guide them closely.*" This suggests that while autonomy is encouraged, it is often limited and guided, reflecting cultural norms and student readiness.

In summary, the findings reveal that teachers value a broad range of motivational strategies, particularly those emphasizing

teacher support, effort recognition, and clarity in instruction. Autonomy and cultural elements were acknowledged but less frequently applied. These results suggest the importance of a balanced, context-sensitive approach to motivation, especially in vocational EFL classrooms where students benefit from structure, relevance, and emotional support.

4.2. EFL students' perceptions of motivational strategies

The perceptions of EFL students to motivational strategies are demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2. EFL students' perceptions of motivational strategies

Macro-Strategies	Micro-Strategies	VI		I		SI		NI	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I - Proper teacher Behavior	1. My teacher shows that they care about students.	210	70%	90	30%	0	0%	0	0%
	2. My teacher is enthusiastic about teaching.	179	59,7%	110	36,7%	11	3,6%	0	0%
	3. My teacher conveys the importance of learning English as a valuable skill.	62	20,7%	171	57%	67	22,3%	0	0%
	4. My teacher establishes a good rapport with students.	53	17,7%	187	62,3%	56	18,7%	0	0%
	5. My teacher shows that they care about students.	210	70%	90	30%	0	0%	0	0%
II - Recognise students' effort	6. My teacher recognizes students' hard work and effort.	195	65%	105	35%	0	0%	0	0%
	7. My teacher makes sure that grades reflect effort and progress.	176	58,7%	124	41,3%	0	0%	0	0%
	8. My teacher acknowledges students' progress and achievements.	190	63,3%	110	36,7%	0	0%	0	0%
	9. My teacher monitors students' progress and celebrates their success.	172	57,3%	128	42,7%	0	0%	0	0%
III - Promote learners' self-confidence	10. My teacher provides positive feedback to boost confidence.	167	55,7%	133	44,3%	0	0%	0	0%
	11. My teacher teaches learning techniques to help students improve.	140	46,7%	160	53,3%	0	0%	0	0%
	12. My teacher encourages students to try harder.	183	61%	100	33,3%	17	5,7%	0	0%
	13. My teacher designs tasks appropriate to students' abilities.	179	59,7%	121	40,3%	0	0%	0	0%
	14. My teacher emphasizes that effective communication is more important than grammatical accuracy.	51	17%	162	54%	87	29%	0	0%
IV - Creating a pleasant classroom atmosphere	15. My teacher incorporates humor to make lessons enjoyable.	51	17%	194	64,7%	55	18,3%	0	0%
	16. My teacher starts lessons with engaging and interesting activities.	182	60,7%	118	39,3%	0	0%	0	0%
	17. My teacher creates a supportive classroom atmosphere that encourages risk-taking.	94	31,3%	206	68,7%	0	0%	0	0%
	18. My teacher fosters an inclusive learning environment by avoiding social comparison among students.	178	59,3%	122	40,7%	0	0%	0	0%
V - Proper presentation of tasks	19. My teacher gives clear instructions and examples.	144	44%	168	56%	0	0%	0	0%
	20. My teacher explains why learning tasks are meaningful.	36	12%	189	63%	75	25%	0	0%
VI - Increase learners' goal-orientedness	21. My teacher encourages students to set learning goals.	212	70,7%	88	29,3%	0	0%	0	0%
	22. My teacher identifies students' needs and incorporates them into the curriculum.	36	12%	215	71,7%	49	16,3%	0	0%
	23. My teacher helps students develop realistic beliefs about learning English.	37	12,3%	206	68,7%	57	19%	0	0%
	24. My teacher displays the class goal and regularly reviews it.	37	12,3%	203	67,7%	60	20%	0	0%
VII - Make the learning tasks stimulating	25. My teacher introduces interesting topics.	112	37,3%	172	57,3%	16	5,4%	0	0%
	26. My teacher changes presentation styles to avoid routine.	170	56,7%	130	43,3%	0	0%	0	0%
	27. My teacher encourages students to create various products.	91	30,3%	168	56%	41	13,7%	0	0%
	28. My teacher uses various audio and visual aids.	62	20,7%	199	66,3%	39	13%	0	0%

	29. My teacher makes tasks more attractive by including novel and fantasy elements.	0	0%	48	16%	165	55%	87	29%
	30. My teacher provides challenging tasks.	0	0%	67	22,7%	133	44,3%	100	33,3%
VIII -Familiarise learners with L2-related values	31. My teacher encourages using English outside class.	35	11,7%	265	88,3%	0	0%	0	0%
	32. My teacher reminds us of the benefits of mastering English.	60	20%	205	68,3%	35	11,7%	0	0%
	33. My teacher increases English use in class.	108	36%	192	64%	0	0%	0	0%
	34. My teacher English-speaking cultures, including history and customs.	117	39%	183	61%	0	0%	0	0%
	35. My teacher uses authentic cultural materials.	0	0%	171	57%	129	43%	0	0%
	36. My teacher invites senior students to share their English learning experiences.	0	0%	160	53,3%	140	46,7%	0	0%
	37. My teacher invites English-speaking foreigners to class.	0	0%	179	59,7%	121	40,3%	0	0%
IX - Promote group cohesiveness and group norms	38. My teacher encourages students to share personal experiences.	0	0%	197	65,7%	103	34,3%	0	0%
	39. My teacher explains the importance of class rules.	96	32%	183	61%	21	7%	0	0%
	40. My teacher allows students to get to know each other.	109	36,3%	191	63,7%	0	0%	0	0%
	41. My teacher encourages students to work toward the same goal.	0	0%	176	58,7%	124	41,3%	0	0%
	42. My teacher lets students suggest class rules.	0	0%	198	66%	102	34%	0	0%
X - Promote learner autonomy	43. My teacher adopts the role of a facilitator.	105	35%	195	65%	0	0%	0	0%
	44. My teacher encourages peer teaching and group presentations.	112	37,3%	188	62,7%	0	0%	0	0%
	45. My teacher teaches self-motivating strategies.	119	39,7%	181	60,3%	0	0%	0	0%
	46. My teacher allows students to assess themselves.	114	38%	186	62%	0	0%	0	0%
	47. My teacher gives students choices in how and when they will be assessed.	58	19,4%	193	64,3%	49	16,3%	0	0%
	48. My teacher involves students in designing and running the English course.	35	11,7%	142	47,3%	123	41%	0	0%

The perceptions of 300 vocational students revealed that EFL learners strongly value motivational strategies that provide emotional support, clear instruction, and practical learning experiences. Students showed high appreciation for teachers who demonstrate care and enthusiasm. 70% strongly agreed that their teachers cared about them, and 59.7% rated teacher enthusiasm as “very important.” One student (S1) shared, “*I feel more confident when the teacher cares and talks to us like a friend.*” However, traits such as teacher authenticity were less emphasized, with 65% considering it only slightly important or unimportant. This strong preference for teacher care and enthusiasm aligns with earlier studies. For instance, Xie and Derakhshan (2021) found that when EFL teachers showed care and understanding, students became more motivated and confident. Similarly, Dörnyei (2001) emphasized that supportive teacher behaviors are key to developing students’ “ideal L2 self,” which increases their motivation to learn.

Recognition of students’ efforts was also a key motivator. 65% strongly agreed that their teachers acknowledged their hard work, and 63.3% viewed recognizing progress as “very important.” Students appreciated feedback and rewards, as reflected by S11: “*We get points or small rewards just for trying. It makes me feel more confident and happy to speak English.*”

When it comes to building self-confidence, students emphasized the value of positive feedback and achievable tasks. Over half (55.7%) said positive feedback helped boost their confidence, and 59.7% strongly agreed that tasks matched their ability. However, grammar remained a concern. One student (S7) admitted, “*I know communication is important, but I still feel shy if I make grammar mistakes.*” This indicates that while students appreciate communicative approaches, they remain sensitive to formal correctness.

Creating a pleasant classroom atmosphere was seen as crucial. Students appreciated engaging lesson openers (60.7% strongly agreed) and supportive environments for risk-taking (68.7% agreed). As student S6 remarked, “*Fun games and warm-ups help me relax and feel comfortable. I don’t feel scared to speak or make mistakes.*” Humor was valued but not central only 17% rated it as “very important.”

Regarding task presentation, clarity was a top priority. Over half (56%) agreed their teachers provided clear instructions and examples, while only 12% cared much about understanding task purposes. This was reflected in S2’s comment: “*I like it when the teacher gives an example... but I don’t always need to know why we’re doing it.*” This suggests that vocational students prefer

direct, example-driven instruction over abstract justifications. According to Ellis (2003), when teachers give clear instructions and provide examples, learners are more confident and perform tasks more effectively, especially in lower-level or vocational contexts. Similarly, Nguyen and Boon (2022) found that Vietnamese EFL students valued clear guidance over theoretical explanations of task purposes, as they preferred practical support that helped them complete activities correctly.

Students also responded positively to goal-oriented strategies. Seventy percent strongly agreed that their teacher encouraged goal-setting. However, fewer rated strategies such as building realistic beliefs or reviewing class goals as very important. According to S10, *“My teacher often asks what we want to improve and reminds us of our goals. It helps me focus more.”* This indicates that while students appreciate goal reminders, more complex goal-setting strategies may require additional support.

Stimulating tasks received mixed responses. Most students favored visuals and varied presentation, but disliked overly difficult or abstract tasks. S3 explained, *“I get confused and don’t know what to do”* when tasks are too strange. This supports a need for practical, accessible content.

Students expressed general support for exposure to English-speaking cultures, with 88.3% agreeing their teachers encouraged English use outside the classroom. However, strategies like inviting foreigners or using authentic cultural materials received moderate support.

Group cohesion strategies were moderately valued. Students enjoyed working with peers and sharing experiences, with S9 noting, *“Group work helps me feel more connected with classmates.”* However, strategies like setting shared goals or classroom rules were not major motivators. These findings match those of Gillies (2016), who found that cooperative learning improves student interaction and motivation, especially in language classrooms. Similarly, Nguyen (2020) reported that Vietnamese EFL students felt more confident when they had a chance to build friendships and work in groups, even if formal rules were less important to them.

Finally, learner autonomy was moderately supported. While 65% agreed that their teacher acted as a facilitator and encouraged peer teaching, fewer valued full independence. Only 11.7% said they were involved in course design, and 19.4% rated assessment choices as very important. Student S3 noted, *“I like it when the teacher lets us work in groups and decide how to do a task. It makes me feel more responsible for my learning.”* This suggests students enjoy some freedom but still expect guidance. This result is similar to Little (2007), who found that while learner autonomy is useful in language learning, students still need guidance and structure from teachers.

Overall, vocational EFL students favor motivational strategies that are supportive, clear, and practically relevant, while showing less interest in abstract, highly autonomous, or imaginative tasks.

4.3. The Resonance of Teachers’ and Students’ Perceptions of Motivational Teaching Strategies

This section compares how EFL teachers and students at a vocational school in Khanh Hoa perceive motivational teaching strategies. Both groups agreed that motivation is vital in language learning, with strong alignment on several key strategies. Proper teacher behavior was highly valued by both sides. Most students (70%) and all teachers agreed that showing care and enthusiasm plays a major role in increasing motivation. Similarly, both groups rated recognition of student effort as essential, highlighting the value of praise, feedback, and acknowledging progress. Building learners’ self-confidence also showed strong consensus. All teachers and 55.7% of students considered positive feedback very important, with both groups supporting tasks suited to students’ abilities. A pleasant classroom atmosphere, engaging lesson openers, and encouragement were widely appreciated for reducing anxiety and increasing participation. Clarity in task presentation was another shared priority. Both teachers (60%) and students (44%) stressed the importance of clear instructions, while fewer students needed detailed explanations of task purposes. Goal-setting was also valued, but more complex strategies like reviewing goals or customizing content received moderate support. Some differences appeared in preferences for task design. While teachers favored varying task formats, students were less enthusiastic many preferred straightforward, practical tasks over abstract or fantasy-based ones. Cultural elements and group work were appreciated but not seen as top motivators. Autonomy was moderately supported by both groups, but students preferred guided choice rather than full control. In conclusion, both teachers and students favored strategies that provide emotional support, clarity, and structured learning. Although teachers were more open to creative methods and autonomy, both groups leaned toward practical approaches that align with the vocational context. These findings highlight the need for motivational strategies that are supportive, clear, and realistically tailored to learners’ needs.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the perceptions of EFL teachers and students at a vocational school in Khanh Hoa Province regarding

motivational teaching strategies, based on Cheng and Dörnyei's (2007) framework. The findings showed that both groups highly valued supportive teacher behavior, clear instruction, and emotional encouragement. Students appreciated strategies such as showing care, recognizing effort, and giving positive feedback, while teachers also supported these but were slightly more open to promoting learner autonomy and varied activities. Both groups preferred practical, structured tasks over highly creative or abstract ones, reflecting the vocational context. Although the study provided useful insights, it was limited to one school, with a small number of teachers and a short data collection period. Some students may also have misunderstood certain concepts due to unfamiliarity or language differences. For future research, larger and more diverse samples, longer-term studies, and deeper investigation into how strategies are applied in practice are recommended. The study highlights that combining emotional support with practical, engaging instruction is key to improving student motivation in vocational EFL classrooms.

Conflicts of Interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest

References

- Benson, P. (2001). Teaching and research in English as a foreign language: *A critical approach*. Routledge.
- Cheng, H., & Dörnyei, 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.
- Chu, J., Loyalka, P., Li, G., Gao, L., & Song, Y. (2018). Stereotype Threat an Educational: A Field Experiment in Chinese Vocational High Schools. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 4, 1–11.
- Chu, H. L., Lin, Y. L., & Lin, C. H. (2018). The effects of job relevance and self-efficacy on learning satisfaction in vocational education. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 70(3), 455–474. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2018.1437066>
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Self-determination theory and basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness. *Journal of Personality*, 76(6), 1427–1475.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Csizer, K. (1998). Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners: Results of an Empirical Study. *Language Teaching Research*, 2(3), 203–229.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and Researching Motivation* (2nd ed.). Harlow, England: Pearson Education.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Fen, C., & Kiat, P. (2015). A Review of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations of ESL Learners. *International Conference on Culture, Languages and Literature 2015*, 24–31. Kuala Lumpur.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Gillies, R. M. (2016). Cooperative learning: Review of research and practice. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(3), 39–54.
- 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.
- Lamb, M. (2008). Motivation and learner autonomy in Indonesia. *Asian EFL Journal*, 10(4), 270–290.
- Lawrence, A. S. A., & Hanitha, T. (2017). A Study on Teachers' Motivational Strategy and Academic Achievement of Higher Secondary Students. *Aarhat Multidisciplinary International Educational Research Journal*, 6(1), 89–98.
- Little, D. (2007). Language learner autonomy: Some fundamental considerations revisited. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1(1), 14–29.

- McShane, S. L., & Von Glinow, M. A. (2021). *Organizational behavior* (9th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
- Nguyen, H. T. T. (2020). The effects of group work on EFL learners' speaking anxiety and motivation. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 36(4), 123–134.
- Nguyen, T. T., & Boon, Y. (2022). EFL students' perceptions of teacher support in task-based instruction in Vietnamese vocational schools. *Journal of Language and Education*, 8(1), 55–67.
- Oxford, R. L., & Shearin, J. (1994). Language Learning Motivation: Expanding the Theoretical Framework. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(1), 12-28.
- Oymak, C. (2018). *Career and technical education programs in public school districts: 2016–17* (NCES 2018-028). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018028.pdf>
- Sternberg, R. J., & Sternberg, K. (2016). *Cognitive psychology* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Sucuoglu, E. (2017). Analysis of Motivational Strategies used by English Language Teachers Teaching at Secondary Schools. *Procedia Computer Science* 120, 189– 195. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.228>
- Tran, T. T., & Baldauf, R. B. (2007). Demotivation: Understanding resistance to English language learning - The case of Vietnamese students. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 4(1), 79–105.
- Ushioda, E. (2003). Motivation as a socially mediated process. In D. Little, J. Ridley, & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom: Teacher, learner, curriculum and assessment* (pp. 90–102). Authentik.
- Van Lier, L. (1996). *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy and authenticity*. Longman.
- Xie, F., & Derakhshan, A. (2021). A conceptual review of positive teacher interpersonal communication behaviors in the instructional context. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 708490.