Comparing Student and Teacher Perceptions of Motivational Teaching Strategies

Craig Manning

Stephen Henneberry

Akiko Kobayashi

1. Introduction

Motivation has always been a central issue in education and has even been referred to as "the most complex and challenging issue facing teachers today" (Sheidecker & Freeman, 1999:116 in Dörnyei, 2001). Attempting to address this issue, recent research has gone beyond simply defining motivation, and focused on the development of motivational strategies for the classroom (William & Burden, 1997; Dörnyei, 2001; Brophy, 2004). In 1994, Gardner & Tremblay drew attention to the need for proper identification of the types of strategies that were actually effective. Dörnyei & Csizér (1998:215) took up this challenge and conducted an empirical study, asking English teachers to identify the strategies that increased student motivation. The study led to the publication of their ten commandments for motivating language learners. Dörnyei (2001) later built upon this by providing a framework of more than 100 specific motivational strategies, which he divides into the following four stages,

1. Creating the basic motivational conditions
2. Generating initial motivation
3. Maintaining and protecting motivation
4. Encouraging positive self-evaluation

However, while this framework for motivational strategy use is well defined, effective implementation in the classroom can be challenging. A number of factors have been identified to influence the success of implementation, such as students' level of motivation (Hiromori, 2006), language proficiency (Sugita & Takeuchi, 2010), and teachers' perceptions of strategy importance (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). In the study on teachers' perceptions, Cheng & Dörnyei asked 387 teachers in Taiwan to rate a list of motivational strategies by ⑴ perceived importance and ⑵ frequency of use in their teaching practice. The results showed a disparity between teacher perceptions of importance and frequency leading to the underutilization of important strategies.

Considering the findings from above, it seems that further research is needed into the difference between the perceived importance of motivational strategies and their frequency of use in the classroom. A better understanding of the nature of these differences can foster reflective practice and help bridge the gap for more effective implementation. Additionally, research into student perceptions of importance and frequency of motivational strategies may provide both insight into students' needs and evidence of motivational strategy effectiveness.

The aim of this study is to foster more effective implementation of motivational strategies through a better understanding of their perceived importance and frequency of use the classroom. Perceptions of both teachers and students in the classroom are explored to allow for a fuller understanding. The study seeks to identify differences between perceived importance and frequency of use of motivational strategies in a university foreign language classroom. The research questions are as follows,

　　　　1．Which motivational strategies do students identify as most important？

　　　　2．To what degree do participants' perceptions of motivational strategy importance differ with their own perceptions concerning frequency of use？

　　　　3．To what degree do teacher and student perceptions of motivational strategy importance differ？

　　　　4．To what degree do teacher and student perceptions frequency of use of motivational strategy differ？

　　　　5．Which motivational strategies are underutilized compared to perceived importance？

2．Participants and context

Two freshmen English communication classes were asked to join this study. In addition to the two teachers, 70 first-year university students participated. This group consisted of 40 male students and 30 female students. Four of these students had previously studied abroad. The average English level was low to pre-intermediate. Their English ability may best be classified as level A2 according to the

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR),

> "Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need" (Council of Europe, 2001).

The required communicative English courses included approximately 25 students per class. The classroom activities included small group discussion, conversation practice, vocabulary and grammar-focuses drills, and meaningful outcome-focused tasks. The students were instructed by one of two American male teachers with 9 to 15 years of English teaching experience in Japan. For the duration of this paper, the teachers will be referred to as 'Teacher A' and 'Teacher B'. Their classes will be referred to as 'A class' and 'B class' respectively.

3．Data collection

A survey was created using Dörnyei's (2001) framework for teacher's motivational strategy use. The survey items can be located in Appendix. The survey was given to students in Japanese, their native language. The teachers were also given the survey in their native language, English. The two versions of the survey were created using Dörnyei's (2001) book, which is available in both English and Japanese.

The first section of the survey was comprised of 35 items, using a 6-point Likert scale, to measure student perceptions regarding the importance of each motivational strategy as they influence learning motivation. The second section of the survey was comprised of 35 items, using a 6-point Likert scale, to ask about student perceptions regarding the teacher's use of motivational strategies. Finally, students were asked to answer the following open-ended questions,

1. What are the teacher's strengths ?
2. What improvements would you suggest to the teacher ?

The responses collected from these open-ended questions were used as a qualitative reference to help interpret the quantitative results.

The data were collected at the beginning of July of 2011, after classroom routines had been well established, but before students experienced stress relating to final exams. The surveys were implemented using the questionnaire function on moodle. Moodle is an online learning management system that the students frequently use to submit homework. As such, they were familiar with the method of implementation.

4．Ranking the importance of each motivational strategy

To answer the first research question, descriptive statistics were used to determine which motivational teaching strategies students identify as most important. The analysis yielded a rank order of the 35 items concerning the importance of each motivational strategy based on student perceptions. The results have been summarized in the tables below. Table 1 presents the top five items and Table 2 presents lowest-ranked five items.

Table 1　The top five motivational strategies

Rank	A class (Average, SD)	B class (Average, SD)
1	No.5 Create a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom. (5.13, 0.61)	No.5 Create a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom. (5.09, 0.06)
2	No.25 Help diminish language anxiety by removing or reducing the anxiety-providing elements in the learning environment. (4.85, 0.11)	No.6 Promote the development of group cohesiveness. (4.93, 0.75)
3	No.24 Build learners' confidence by providing regular encouragement. (4.71, 0.20)	No.10 Raise the learners' intrinsic interest in the L2 learning process. (4.65, 0.25)
4	No.35 Use grades in a motivating manner, reducing as much as possible their demotivating impact. (4.69, 0.22)	No.25 Help diminish language anxiety by removing or reducing the anxiety-providing elements in the learning environment. (4.63, 0.97)
5	No.6 Promote the development of group cohesiveness. (4.67, 0.94)	No.2 Take the students' learning very seriously. (4.50,1.06)

Table 2　The lowest-ranked five motivational strategies

Rank	A class(Average, SD)	B class(Average, SD)
31	No.7 Formulate group norms explicitly, and have them discussed and accepted by the learner. (4.13, 0.10)	No.9 Promote the learner's language-related values by presenting peer role models. (3.85, 0.81)
32	No.21 Use goal-setting methods in your classroom. (4.13, 0.61)	No.21 Use goal-setting methods in your classroom. (3.83, 0.83)
33	No.9 Promote the learner's language-related values by presenting peer role models. (4.08, 0.65)	No.22 Use contracting methods with your students to formalize their goal commitment. (3.80, 0.57)
34	No.22 Use contracting methods with your students to formalize their goal commitment. (4.02, 0.72)	No.34 Offer rewards in a motivational manner. (3.76, 0.17)
35	No.4 Develop a collaborative relationship with the student's parents. (3.04, 1.44)	No.4 Develop a collaborative relationship with the student's parents. (2.78, 1.26)

The results in Table 1 show that students in both classes attached high value to creating a supportive atmosphere, promoting group cohesiveness, and diminishing language anxiety. As these three strategies appear on both lists, they should be

considered first when generalizing the results to apply in other classrooms. In addition, the students highly valued building confidence, taking learning very seriously, raising intrinsic interest, and reducing the demotivating impact of grades as much as possible.

There was also some consensus concerning the least important strategies. Students in both classes least valued the teacher having a collaborative relationship with the students' parents, using contracting methods to formalize goals, using goal-setting methods, and promoting language-related values by presenting peer role models. Again, these may be transferable when generalizing the results for similar teaching contexts. In response to having a relationship with parents, new university students may want to distance themselves from their parents. Placing little value on making decisions about class rules suggests that students feel it is unnecessary for them to participate in the creation of class rules. Not valuing the use of goal-setting methods may imply that students do not wish to have expectations placed on them. Using peer role models could also be interpreted as forcing expectations on students. In addition, students placed little value on explicitly formulating group norms and offering rewards in a motivational manner. Explicitly formulating group norms is connected to expectations. Not valuing rewards is likely connected to reducing the demotivational impact of grades.

In summary, the rank order results indicate that students value strategies connected to enjoying class and making friends. They value efforts to develop intrinsic motivation and build confidence while minimizing the importance of extrinsic rewards, such as grades. The results also suggest that students do not want too many expectations placed on them.

5 . Relationships between importance and frequency

To answer the second research question, correlations were used to determine the strength of the relationship between perceptions of importance and perceptions concerning frequency of use. The results located in Table 3 can by used to compare the degree of difference for what should be done and what actually takes place according to each group's perceptions. For example, if the data representing Teacher A's perceptions of each strategy's importance matched Teacher A's perceptions regarding the frequency of use exactly, the correlation coefficient would be 1.000. Therefore, the closer the figures in Table 3 are to one, the better the teacher's or group's perceptions regarding philosophy align with their perceptions of practice.

Table 3　Correlations between perceptions of importance and frequency of use

	Teacher A	Teacher B	A class	B class	Average	SD
correlation coefficient	0.849	0.757	0.811	0.819	0.809	0.038

The results in Table 3 show that each group reported similar differences between how important the strategies were and how often they were perceived as being used. To further analyze these results, the correlation coefficient can be squared to produce a relational percentage (r^2). The average in this case, $(0.809)^2$, yields a relational percentage of 65%. In other words, statistically, the item's perceived importance will directly determine the frequency of use 65% of the time. If time limitations are an influential factor in this correlation, the strategies should be prioritized for use in class.

It may be worth doing a follow up study to determine if this relational percentage is consistent in similar teaching contexts and to identify what the influential factors are. If the correlation coefficient can be improved, the survey could be used for other purposes. For example, it could be used as a diagnostic tool to predict teaching practices of teachers-to-be, using their beliefs, before they actually step foot in a classroom. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper, gaining a better understanding of the correlation between teaching beliefs and practice could have far reaching implications.

6．Comparing perceptions about importance

To answer the third research question, correlations were used to determine if student perceptions regarding the importance of motivational strategies are different from their teacher's. The results in Table 4 indicate how well student and teacher perceptions match. An unpaired T-test, assuming unequal variances, was also used to determine if the students' responses were significantly different than their teacher's. These results have also been included in Table 4. If the correlation coefficient is 1.000, the teacher and students agree perfectly about the importance of each strategy's importance. If the correlation coefficient is zero, the teacher and students disagree completely.

Table 4 Correlations between student and teacher perceptions about importance

	A class & Teacher A	B class & Teacher B	Average
correlation coefficient	0.704	0.679	0.692
p-value	0.0054	0.0034	

The results in Table 4 show that the students' beliefs about the importance of each strategy are different from their teacher's in both classes. Furthermore, the p-values are less than 0.05, meaning the differences are statistically significant. This difference could be caused by different understandings of the learning process. Teachers may place importance on practices that have been shown to lead to better learning outcomes, whereas students may place importance on how they want to study. This difference is not entirely unexpected.

7．Comparing perceptions about frequency

To answer the fourth research question, correlations were used again to determine if student perceptions regarding the frequency of motivational strategy use differ from their teacher's. The results in Table 5 indicate how well student and teacher perceptions regarding what actually took place in class match. An unpaired T-test, assuming unequal variances, was used once more to determine if the students' responses were significantly different than their teacher's. If the correlation coefficient is 1.000, the teacher and students agree completely about how often each strategy is being used in class. If the correlation coefficient is zero, the teacher and students disagree completely.

Table 5　Correlations between student and teacher perceptions about frequency of use

	A class & Teacher A	B class & Teacher B	Average
correlation coefficient	0.644	0.399	0.522
p-value	0.0016	0.0473	

The students and teachers are reporting on the same classroom events. If the teachers and students were entirely accurate and objective, the correlation coefficients in Table 5 should be 1. However, the correlation coefficients are both considerably low and significantly different. Item analysis was conducted to give further insight into this difference. The results have been summarized in Table 6.

Table 6　Item analysis regarding frequency of use

	A class & Teacher A	SD	B class & Teacher B	SD
Number of strategies the students thought were used more often than the teacher	27	0.87	22	0.92
Number of strategies the students thought were used less often than the teacher	8	0.28	13	0.58

The results in Table 6 show that students perceived a greater number of strategies to be used more often than the teachers. One explanation for this is that teachers feel they should be using the strategies more often and therefore underreport their use. These results highlight how different the students' and teacher's experiences are during the same class.

8．Checking frequency against importance

To answer the fifth research question, item analysis was conducted on the students' data to identify strategies that are being underutilized compared to their relative importance. The results have been summarized in Table 7.

Table 7 Identifying underutilized motivational strategies

	A class & Teacher A	SD	B class & Teacher B	SD
Number of underutilized strategies	25	0.19	7	0.07

The results in Table 7 successfully identify the number of items that the teachers can use to improve their teaching practices. These items have been listed in Table 8. The average frequency was subtracted from the average importance for each item to give a relative difference. These differences indicate the relative degree to which the strategy is being underutilized.

Table 8 Underutilized motivational strategies

A class & Teacher A		B class & Teacher B	
Strategy number	Relative difference according to students' perceptions(Importance – Frequency)	Strategy number	Relative difference according to students' perceptions(Importance – Frequency)
No. 34	0.64	No. 11	0.23
No. 11	0.49	**No. 25**	**0.12**
No. 35	**0.48**	No. 8	0.11
No. 12	0.46	No. 12	0.08
No. 4	0.44	**No. 6**	**0.08**
No. 24	0.43	**No. 10**	**0.04**
No. 5	**0.43**	No. 7	0.01
No.3	0.41		
No.23	0.37		
No.14	0.36		
No.1	0.32		
No. 26	0.26		
No. 25	**0.25**		
No. 16	0.20		
No. 7	0.20		
No. 30	0.18		
No. 2	0.08		
No. 29	0.07		
No. 33	0.06		
No. 20	0.06		
No. 13	0.03		
No. 15	0.03		
No. 8	0.02		
No. 31	0.02		
No. 6	**0.01**		

Table 8 shows exactly which strategies are being underutilized and to what extent from the students' perspective. Items that were among the top five most important motivational strategies for each class have been highlighted. These strategies were more likely to appear on the list because they are more highly valued. Many of the items in Table 8 are being marginally underutilized. However, the teachers may want to use the strategies at the top of the list more often.

9 . Further implications

It is worth noting that the research methods used in this study could also be conducted as a form of professional development without much effort. The survey was implemented as homework, so it did not require time in class. The analysis used in the previous section was a simple combination of averaging and subtraction. The results obtained are immediately useful for identifying underutilized motivational strategies for language teachers, making it possible to improve teaching practices. Furthermore, the results give teachers a better understanding of what motivates their students. If the students are motivated, the language teacher's job becomes much easier.

10. Conclusion

The research instruments in this study were created using Dörnyei's (2001) motivational strategy checklist for language teachers. Student and teacher perceptions for each strategy's importance and frequency of use in the classroom were quantified. The resulting data were analyzed to rank the strategies in order of importance. The relationship between perceptions of importance and frequency were examined and the correlations were found to be similar for each group. Teacher perceptions regarding each strategy's importance were also compared with student perceptions and a moderate degree of difference was observed. In addition, perceptions about frequency of use were compared and an even greater degree of difference was observed. Item analysis was conducted and it was suggested that teachers underreport the use of motivational strategies because they feel they ought to be using them more often. Finally, student perceptions about frequency were compared with their perceptions of importance, resulting in a list of underutilized motivational strategies. In the process of conducting this study, insights were gained as to which teacher behaviors students find motivating. Furthermore, the research method itself was found to be a useful tool for professional development for language teachers and has been used to improve teaching/learning practices for language instruction. It is hoped that this research model will serve as a tool for other language teachers and will lead to an increase in motivation amongst language learners.

References

Brophy, J. (2004) *Motivating students to learn (2nd Edition)*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cheng, H. F. & 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, 153-174.

Council of Europe (2001) CEFR illustrative descriptors. Retrieved on April 1, 2011, from http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/？L=E&M=/documents_intro/Data_bank_descriptors.html

Dörnyei, Z. & Csizér, K. (1998) Ten commandments for motivating language learners: results of an empirical study. *Language Teaching Research*, 2(3), 203-229.

Dörnyei, Z. (2001) *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gardner, R. C. & Tremblay, P. F. (1994) On motivation, research agendas, and theoretical frameworks. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78, 359-368.

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.

Hiromori, T. (2006) The effects of educational intervention on L2 learners' motivational development. *JACET Bulletin*, 43, 1-14.

Matsushita, K. (2002) Gakusei syouhi syugisya to daigaku jyugyou kenkyu: gakusyuu katsudou no bunseki wo toushite [Research on teaching at university in an era of student consumerism in Japan: An analyzing learning activity]. *Kyoto University Researches in Higher Education*, 8, 19-38.

Scheidecker, D. & Freeman, W. (1999) *Bringing out the best in students: How legendary teachers motivate kids*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Sugita, M. & Takeuchi, O. (2010) What can teachers do to motivate their students？ A classroom research on motivational strategy use in the Japanese EFL context. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 4, 21-35.

Takagaki, M. & Tazume, H. (2006) Daigaku no jyugyoukaizen ni tomonau gakusei no jikohyouka no henyou no bunseki: kyouikushinrigaku no jyugyou wo jirei toshite [Analysis of lecture self-evaluation by students accompanied with instructional improvement: a case study on an educational psychology course]. *The Bulletin of Japanese Curriculum Research and Development*, 28, 4, 1-9.

Williams, M. & Burden, R. L. (1997) *Psychology for language teachers*. UK: Cambridge Language Teaching Library.

Key words: motivation, motivational strategies, language learning, language teaching.

（Craig Manning, Stephen Henneberry, Akiko Kobayashi）

Appendix Questionnaire items adopted from Dörnyei's (2001) motivational teaching strategies

	(1) Creating initial motivation
No. 1	Demonstrate and talk about teacher own enthusiasm for the course material, and how it affects teacher personally.
No. 2	Take the students' learning very seriously.
No. 3	Develop personal relationship with students.
No. 4	Develop a collaborative relationship with the student's parents.
No. 5	Create a pleasant and supportive atmosphere in the classroom.
No. 6	Promote the development of group cohesiveness.
No. 7	Formulate group norms explicitly, and have them discussed and accepted by the learner.
No. 8	Have the group norms consistently observed.
	(2) Generating initial motivation
No. 9	Promote the learner's language-related values by presenting peer role models.
No. 10	Raise the learners' intrinsic interest in the L2 learning process.
No. 11	Promote "integrative" values by encouraging a positive and open-minded disposition towards the L2 and its speakers, and towards foreignness in general.
No. 12	Promote the students' awareness of the instrumental values associated with the knowledge of an L2.
No. 13	Increase the students' expectancy of success in particular tasks and in learning in general.
No. 14	Increase students' goal-orientedness by formulating explicit class goals accepted by them.
No. 15	Make the curriculum and the teaching materials relevant to the students.
No. 16	Help to create realistic learner beliefs.
	(3) Maintaining and protecting motivation
No. 17	Make learning more stimulating and enjoyable by breaking the monotony of classroom events.
No. 18	Make learning stimulating and enjoyable for the learner by increasing the attractiveness of the tasks.
No. 19	Make learning stimulating and enjoyable for the learner by enlisting them as active task participants.
No. 20	Present and administer tasks in a motivating way.
No. 21	Use goal-setting methods in your classroom.
No. 22	Use contracting methods with your students to formalize their goal commitment.
No. 23	Provide learners with regular experiences of success.
No. 24	Build learners' confidence by providing regular encouragement.
No. 25	Help diminish language anxiety by removing or reducing the anxiety-providing elements in the learning environment.
No. 26	Build learners' confidence in their learning ability by teaching them various learner strategies.
No. 27	Allow learners to maintain a positive image while engaged in the learning tasks.
No. 28	Increase student motivation by promoting cooperation among the learners.
No. 29	Increase student motivation by actively promoting learner autonomy.

No. 30	Increase the students' self-motivating capacity.
⑷ **Encouraging positive self evaluation**	
No. 31	Promote effort attributions in students.
No. 32	Provide students with positive information feedback.
No. 33	Increase learner satisfaction.
No. 34	Offer rewards in a motivational manner.
No. 35	Use grades in a motivating manner, reducing as much as possible their demotivating impact.