

English Applied Linguistics PhD Program

Graduate School of Linguistics

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**The Use of Motivational Strategies in the  
EFL Classroom: Teachers' and Students'  
Perspectives in Tunisian Universities**

PhD Dissertation Summary

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## **1. Introduction**

The proliferation of research on language learning motivation has spanned over 60 years and still attracts novice scholars to investigate new contexts and target new populations. Language motivation research offers insight into the factors that influence learners' motivations. However, it has received little attention in the Tunisian higher education context (Lachheb 2013, Hermessi 2019).

Through a scrutiny of the previous literature, this study aims to fill a gap by bridging L2 motivation theories and classroom practice, and by drawing on fresher insights from language psychology and applied linguistics as well as instructional design and education fields. The present study seeks to contribute to the scarce field of studies on classroom motivational practice in the Tunisian higher education context by taking both teachers' and students' perspectives into consideration and aims to offer ways to enhance students' motivational behavior. In so doing, this project relies on various L2 motivation theories, namely Dörnyei's (2001) process model of motivational teaching and Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2MSS model of L2 self-perception as well as Keller's (2010) ARCS instructional model.

## **2. Aims and Research Questions**

The primary aim of this thesis is to explore the MotS used by EFL teachers in Tunisian universities and to determine the extent to which students find them effective. It also aims to investigate the influence of these motivational practices on students' self-perception. The present research attempts to contribute to the L2 motivation research by addressing a new context. This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the motivational strategies that Tunisian EFL teachers employ?
2. Is there a significant difference between students' perception of MotS and their teachers' reported use of MotS?
3. What is the relationship between teachers' self-reported use of MotS and their actual classroom practice?
4. In what ways is teachers' motivational practice related to students' EFL self-perception?

## **3. Thesis Outline**

This thesis consists of six chapters. This first chapter has introduced the research components, including the theoretical background, the research context, the researcher's

motivation to conduct the research project, and the rationale behind it. After the first introductory chapter, the thesis will unfold as follows. The second chapter reviews recent literature that is deemed relevant to this study. It provides a state-of-the-art of the current L2 motivation theories. The chapter also reviews the shifts in the conceptualization of language learning motivation and outlines the theories that inform this study. The third chapter addresses the methodological concerns of this research, such as recruiting participants, choosing the research instruments, describing the research context, presenting the quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis, and discussing issues arising in relation to reliability and validity. The fourth chapter outlines the findings of the study in light of the main research questions by reporting the quantitative and qualitative results. The fifth chapter discusses the findings in comparison to previous similar studies. This thesis concludes with the sixth chapter, summarizing the main findings and the limitations of the thesis. This chapter also offers insights into the main contributions of the study on the empirical, theoretical, and pedagogical levels. Final remarks for implications for future research will equally be put forward.

#### **4. Methodology**

The data collection process was carried out during the academic year of 2021-2022. The whole process covered nearly two semesters, starting from September 2021 and ending in May 2022. A call for teacher participants was shared in the fall semester when the pilot study was conducted. Then during the spring semester, the main data for this study were collected. During the data collection period, classes were held in-person and masks were compulsory in classrooms as per the Covid-19 regulations. Heads of English departments were first contacted via phone or email and written or oral consent was obtained before the start of the data collection process. A Google form was then shared on Facebook with my network and in groups of teacher associations in Tunisia to recruit teachers willing to participate in the study.

The present research involved 13 institutions from 9 public universities which cover 10 governorates across the country. The participants were recruited from different universities in Tunisia by using both convenience and snowball sampling methods to reach out to participants willing to answer the questionnaire and participate in the classroom observation. Convenience sampling was followed by snowball effect through teachers asking other colleagues to participate. A total of 46 teachers of English from nine universities answered the questionnaire while nearly half agreed to take part in classroom observations. A total of 264 students from

various majors were recruited. Student participants and teacher participants were contacted at the beginning of the spring semester.

The data were analyzed through a mixed-method approach. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative results, the present study aims to compare both sets of data and get a thorough picture of teachers' motivational practice.

## **5. Findings**

The present study was set out to examine Tunisian EFL teachers' motivational practice through questionnaire administration to both students and teachers. It also explores whether students recognize the MotS deployed by their teacher based on Keller's (2010) ARCS model. This study equally aimed to zoom in on EFL teachers' use of MotS at university level through classroom observation. Another goal was to explore ways teachers' MotS affect students' self-vision in light of the L2MSS model. For these aims, a sample of 264 Tunisian university students were recruited from different parts of the country as well as 46 teachers of English. Questionnaires were administered to students and teachers during the spring term of 2022. In addition, classroom observations were conducted in February 2022 with 21 participating teachers. Teachers' questionnaire results highlighted their frequent use of confidence-building strategies. The observation results, on the other hand, showed teachers' reliance on relevance-producing strategies. Along these lines, students reported using relevance-producing strategies most often. However, the significant difference between students' and teachers' perception of the MotS used showcase that the deployed MotS are not appealing to enhance students' motivation. Moreover, the correlation analysis between the ARCS strategies used by teachers and students' L2MSS has shown the effectiveness of implementing the ARCS model to develop students' self-vision.

## **6. Conclusion**

The main aims of this research lay in investigating the use of MotS by Tunisian EFL teachers and whether their students find them effective. It also looked at the difference between teachers' reported use of MotS through their questionnaire answers and their actual motivational teaching during classroom observation. The last goal was to explore the correlation between teacher's MotS and students' self-perception. Combining different

theoretical L2 motivation frameworks, this study has highlighted the connections between different models and the possibility to combine them. On the methodological level, this study has contributed to the limited L2 motivation research using mixed methods. Through comparing quantitative questionnaire data with qualitative observation data, this study could bring to the surface one of the advantages of mixed-method research. The pedagogical contribution of the present research is presented through the recommendation to implement the results found in teacher training programs. Although this study yielded insightful results, it had some limitations related to the absence of post-lesson teacher interviews and its focus on English majors. Still, this study has contributed to the ever-growing L2 motivation research by studying a less researched context, Tunisia.

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