

# Teachers' motivation, classroom strategy use, students' motivation and second language achievement<sup>1</sup>

MERCÈ BERNAUS, ANNIE WILSON

*Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona,*

ROBERT C. GARDNER

*University of Western Ontario,*

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this study was to investigate student motivation and achievement in English and their relation to teacher motivation and strategy use in the classroom. Research participants were 31 teachers in Catalonia (Spain) and the 694 students in their classes. The unit of analysis was the English class.

The results of our study suggest that teacher motivation is related to teacher use of motivating strategies, which in turn are related to student motivation and English Achievement. Thus, any change in the educational system that promotes higher levels of teacher motivation should result in improved levels of education of the students.

**Key words:** teacher's motivation, students' motivation, motivating strategy use, FL achievement.

**Motivación del profesorado, uso de estrategias en la clase, motivación del alumnado y logros en segundas lenguas.**

**RESUMEN:** Este estudio pretende investigar la motivación de los estudiantes y sus logros en el aprendizaje del inglés relacionado con la motivación del profesor y el uso de estrategias en el aula. Los participantes en este trabajo de investigación eran 31 profesores en Cataluña y los 694 estudiantes de sus clases. La clase se utilizó como unidad de medida en los análisis.

Los resultados de nuestro estudio insinúan que la motivación del profesor está relacionada con el uso que hace el profesor de estrategias motivadoras, que a su vez se relacionan con la motivación del alumnado y sus logros en inglés. De manera que cualquier cambio en el sistema educativo que fomente la motivación del profesorado puede beneficiar la educación de los alumnos.

**Palabras clave:** motivación del profesor, motivación del alumnado, uso de estrategias motivadoras, logros en LE.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many articles have been written about students' motivation and second language achievement and many models have been proposed to explain the phenomena (eg., Clément, 1980; Gardner, 1985 and MacIntyre, Clément & Noels, 1998). In each of these models it is claimed that motivation is important in learning a second language but the concepts used to explain how and why it is important differ from model to model. These models identify characteristics of the individual that account for differences in second language achievement hypothesizing that these variables influence what goes on in the language classroom. For example, Gardner (2007) states that when discussing the roots of motivation to learn a second language in the school context it is necessary to consider it from the point of view of both the educational context (as we would for any school subject) and the cultural context (which is generally not that relevant to most other school subjects). That is, he proposes that studying a second language is unlike studying most other subjects in that it involves taking on elements of another culture (i.e., vocabulary, pronunciations, language structure, etc.), while most other school subjects involve elements common to one's own culture. This two-fold characterization suggests therefore that both educationally relevant and culturally relevant variables should be considered when attempting to understand the process by which a second language is learned.

Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) have proposed a somewhat different perspective referred to as the process model of L2 motivation, based on Heckhausen and Kuhl's (1985) theory of volition because they wanted to emphasize the dynamic nature of motivation within the classroom context. The model consists of two elements. The first is identified as the action sequence, defined as "the behavioural process whereby initial wishes, hopes and desires are first transformed into goals then into intentions, leading eventually to action and hopefully to accomplishment of the goals, after which the process is submitted to final evaluation" (p. 47). The second is identified as the motivational influence, or "all the energy sources and motivational forces that underlie and fuel the behavioural process" (p. 47). Thus, this model is different from the others in that it focuses on the here and now of what transpires during a language class, but it is comparable in that it refers to the sources that "underlie and fuel the behavioural process", which is, of course, the intent of the other models referred to above.

The link between the two classes of models was investigated by Bernaus, Moore and Cordeiro (2007). They adapted some variables from Gardner's socio-educational model and some from Dörnyei and Otto's process model and found relationships between variables from the two models. For example, measures of "post-actional evaluation" from Dörnyei and Otto's (1998) model correlated with measures of Attitudes toward the Learning Situation from Gardner's (1985) model.

There have been a number of educators who have proposed ways in which motivation can be developed and supported. For example, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) present 10 commandments for teachers that are directed at improving student motivation while Williams and Burden (1997) describe ways in which teachers can motivate their students. Effectively, the role of classroom dynamics and the learning environment are important to motivation and second language acquisition in formal contexts (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Gardner, 1985, 2007), although there appears to be little research that directly investigates the relation between the application of these strategies and the motivation and language achievement of individual students in the classroom.

Some studies have indicated that what takes place in the classroom can influence students' attitudes and motivation. For example, Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, & Mihic (2004) found that over the course of the year, university students' level of motivational intensity, desire to learn French, attitudes toward learning French, integrative orientation, French course evaluation, and French class anxiety decreased significantly. Of particular relevance, however, was that for three of these measures, desire to learn French, attitudes toward learning French, and French course evaluation, the magnitude of the decreases were greater for students who obtained low grades in the class. Similar results were obtained by Gardner and Bernaus (2004) with high school students in Spain learning English as a foreign language. In that study, scores on integrativeness, motivation, language anxiety, instrumental orientation, and parental encouragement decreased significantly from the beginning to the end of the year. Again, of greater relevance, there was also a significant interaction between the level of achievement attained in the class and changes over time in attitudes toward the learning situation. The top one-third of the students in terms of final grades showed an increase in attitudes toward the learning situation; the middle third showed little change, and the bottom third demonstrated decreases in attitudes toward the learning situation. Thus, both studies suggest that students' attitudes, motivation, and language anxiety change over the course of study, and that often this change is moderated by students' final achievement in the class.

Bernaus and Gardner (2008) focussed more directly on the relations between students' motivation, language achievement and teacher's didactic strategies used in the EFL class in Spain. This study involved 31 language classes and 694 students, obtaining data from both teachers and students on the use of two classes of teaching strategies, traditional and innovative. In addition, data were obtained from the students on characteristics from the socio-educational model of second language acquisition as well as achievement in English. Bernaus and Gardner found that integrativeness, motivation, and instrumental orientation were significantly related to the measure of English achievement when the student was the unit of analysis, and also when the class was the unit. No significant correlations were found with the teacher ratings of strategy use at the class level, but a number of significant correlations were obtained when the class mean ratings of strategy use were applied. That is, when strategy use is defined in terms of the teacher's perceptions there is no evidence of a relationship with the affective characteristics of the class as a whole, but when strategy use is assessed in terms of students' mean perceptions as a class, these differences are related to the affective characteristics of the class.

Certainly in the literature we find studies on teachers' beliefs, attitudes and motivation (Tragant, 1996; Kassabgy, Boraie, and Schmidt, 2001), teachers' use of strategies in L2 classrooms (Donitsa-Schmidt, Inbar and Shohamy, 2004; Madrid, D., 2002), and students' motivation, strategy use and pedagogical preferences in FL learning (Schmidt and Watanabe, 2001). Few studies, however, have thoroughly evaluated student and teacher factors together.

Tragant (1996) studied three EFL teachers and the relationship between their beliefs about learner training and their in-class practice, but found no relationship between the two. Kassabgy, Boraie, and Schmidt (2001) examined language teacher's values and goals regarding teaching along with teacher's perceptions of job and career satisfaction and rewards. The results showed that as a group, teachers emphasise the importance of intrinsic over extrinsic rewards.

Other studies investigated whether differences in methodology influenced learner's attitudes towards the target language and their speakers. Donitsa-Schmidt, Inbar and Shohamy (2004) demonstrated that learners who were taught spoken Arabic in Israel instead of the traditionally taught Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) had more positive attitudes toward the language. They proposed that the difference occurred because spoken Arabic is the dialect elementary-aged children are more likely to encounter in their daily lives. Other researchers examined students' motivation, strategy use and pedagogical preferences in FL learning (Schmidt and Watanabe, 2001), and found that motivation does affect learners' strategy use and pedagogical preferences. Unfortunately, these data are all based on student perceptions of strategy use; the authors did not investigate actual strategy use in class.

One study did investigate both teachers' and students' perceptions. Jacques (2001) assessed both teachers' and students' motivation and preferences for instructional activities in the classroom. He reported relationships between some motivational characteristics and perceptions of strategy use, within the student sample and within the teacher sample. He did not investigate cross sample relationships, though he did report that teachers tended to rate a number of instructional activities more highly than the students.

Madrid (2002) examined 319 students and 18 teachers from Primary, Secondary and Upper-Secondary Education in order to find out how powerful 18 motivational classroom strategies were. Students' global motivation perception was observed and compared with the strategies used in class. The results show that certain strategies are more powerful than others to enhance students' global motivation. The strongest and most powerful motivational strategies, among the controlled variables, according to the students' and teachers' perceptions, are the following: The use of audiovisual resources and new technologies, group work, satisfying the students needs and interests, student participation in class, good grades and fulfilment of students' success expectations, and praises and rewards. The author concludes that teachers should promote and put into practice those motivational strategies, which increase the students interest, attention and satisfaction.

A new study by Guillautaux and Dörnyei (2008) examined the link between the teachers' motivational teaching practice and the language learning motivation of their classes. They investigated 40 ESOL classrooms in South Korea involving 27 teachers and more than 1,300 learners. The students' motivation was measured by a self-report questionnaire and a classroom observation instrument specifically developed for that investigation, the motivation orientation of language teaching (MOLT). The MOLT observation scheme was also used to assess the teachers' use of motivational strategies, along with a posthoc rating scale filled in by the observer. All analyses were performed using the class as the defining unit. The results show a clear relationship between teacher's motivational teaching practice and the language learning motivation of their classes. Although the authors did not examine the relationship between teacher's motivational teaching practices and language achievement of the classes, they state that it would be useful to confirm that the use of these practices translates into improved levels of achievement. As noted earlier, however, Bernaus and Gardner (2008) found that language achievement of the class is not related to motivational strategy use reported by the teachers but it is when reported by the students. Taken together, these two studies highlight the complexity of issues involved in this type of research. The present study investigates these issues further.

It is based on data used by Bernaus and Gardner (2008) but directed to a question not investigated in that study. That study investigated the relationship of teachers' and students' perceptions of strategy use in the classroom and related it to student characteristics. This study investigates the relations among measures of attitudes, motivation, language anxiety, English achievement, and perceived strategy use obtained from the students on the one hand, and the teacher's motivation and perceived strategy use on the other. In order to analyse these correlations we took the class as the unit of analysis because this is where the views of the teachers and the students come together. In our opinion teacher motivation is the most important variable because if teachers are not motivated the whole notion of strategy use is lost. This study is unique therefore because it is one of the first that directs attention to these types of variables as they apply to the class as a whole, and, because it investigates the relationships among all of these measures.

## 2. METHOD

Subjects for this investigation were 31 English teachers and their students (N = 694) from the Catalan Autonomous Community of Spain. Students were in their last year of compulsory secondary education. They were 15 years old. The sample was made up of 50% public schools and 50% private schools subsidized by the Catalan Government. Schools were distributed over Catalonia and were situated in small, medium and large towns.

The teachers and students in 31 secondary school classes in Catalonia were administered a series of questionnaires designed to identify the strategies used by the teachers in the EFL class. The strategies used by the teachers in the EFL class, included in the questionnaires, are based on the EFL teaching experience of one of the authors and on classroom observation; the researchers made the distinction between traditional and innovative strategies. In addition, students' language attitudes, motivation, and language anxiety were assessed by 12 variables usually measured by the AMTB. Rather than use the full AMTB, however, the mini-AMTB (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993) was used. The mini-AMTB consists of one item corresponding to each scale on the AMTB. When using the mini-AMTB it is recommended that attention be directed toward the major attributes in the Socio-Educational Model (Gardner, 1985) by aggregating the item scales, rather than using the scales individually. Thus, the variables resulting from the mini-AMTB are Integrativeness, Attitudes toward the Learning Situation, Motivation, Language Anxiety, Instrumental Orientation, and Parental Encouragement.

Following is a description of the measures administered to the teachers and the students that were also used by Bernaus and Gardner (2008).

### 2.1. Teacher's Questionnaire

The teacher's questionnaire was presented in English and had two parts. The first one listed 26 teaching strategies, and the teachers were asked to rate the frequency with which they used each one on a scale varying from *never (1)* to *always (7)*. Twelve of the items referred to innovative strategies that teachers use in some classes. We considered as innovative strategies those that help students acquire competencies related to the use of the language for communication and they are student centered more than teacher centered. Examples of such

strategies are, *I put more emphasis on my students' communicative competence than on their discourse competence; students work in small groups*. Fourteen of the items referred to traditional strategies, which put more emphasis on language structure and they are more teacher centered. Examples are, *I make students do grammar exercises; I lay down the norms to be followed in class*. All of the strategies are presented in Bernaus and Gardner (2008). For the present investigation, two scores were computed for the strategies, Innovative and Traditional. For the teachers, the Cronbach coefficient alpha reliability of these two scales were .77 and .74 respectively.

The second part contained 12 items related to teacher's motivation and teachers were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with each item on a 5 point scale. Six of the items were positively worded, and six were negatively worded. The items were recoded before calculating the total score so that high scores indicated a high level of motivation. The Cronbach reliability coefficient for this scale was .62. The scale is presented in Appendix 1.

## 2.2. Student's Questionnaire

There were two parts to the student's questionnaire, all of which was presented in Catalan. In the first part the students were asked to rate the extent to which their teachers used each of the same 26 strategies that had been rated by their teachers, using the same seven-point scale. Scores for Innovative and Traditional Strategies were obtained in the same manner as for the teachers, using the item means for each class. The Cronbach coefficient alpha reliability for the scales were .80 and .67, respectively.

In the second part of the questionnaire, students were administered a modification of Gardner's mini-AMTB (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Bernaus & Gardner, 2008). Six variables were derived from scores on this test because some scales were aggregated. The variables and the items aggregated to form some of them are:

*Integrativeness*. This concept refers to general society-relevant attitudes associated with learning another language. It reflects a dimension of openness to other cultural communities which influences the ability or willingness to accept material from another cultural community as part of one's own behaviour. As measured by the AMTB it is an aggregate of three scales, Attitudes toward English Speakers, Interest in Foreign Languages, and Integrative Orientation. The Cronbach coefficient alpha reliability of the aggregate using the class mean response was .90.

*Attitudes toward the Learning Situation*. This refers to a class of attitudes associated with the learning situation. Although a number of aspects of the learning situation might be identified as being influential to these attitudes, the AMTB focuses on only two of them, Evaluation of the English Teacher and Evaluation of the English Course. The Cronbach coefficient alpha reliability of the class mean ratings was .91.

*Motivation*. This is the characteristic of individuals that reflects how motivated they are to learn the language. Although there are many facets of motivation varying from intended goals, effort, emotional reactions to the task, aspirations, future goals, persistence and attention, etc., the AMTB measures the three that seem the most relevant in the classroom context, effort, desire, and attitudes toward the task of learning the language (as distinct from attitudes toward the classroom task). The measures are, Motivational Intensity, Desire to Learn English, and Attitude toward Learning English. The Cronbach coefficient alpha reliability of the class mean ratings was .93.

*Language Anxiety.* This refers to the feelings of discomfort and concern students can experience when using the language. In the AMTB, it is assessed in terms of two different contexts, English Class Anxiety, and English Use Anxiety. The Cronbach coefficient alpha reliability of the class mean ratings was .84.

Two of the AMTB variables are measured using single items. They are:

Instrumental Orientation, and Parental Encouragement. Of course, there are no reliability estimates for these two single-item scales.

In addition, the students were also administered two objective measures of English Achievement. One test measured reading skills and the other listening comprehension skills. The tests were designed by experts on evaluation from the Generalitat de Catalunya-Departament d'Educació1. The two measures were aggregated to provide an overall measure of English Achievement. The Cronbach coefficient alpha reliability of the class mean scores was .98.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The focus of this study is on the classroom context. Consequently, the unit of analysis is the classroom ( $n = 31$ ), with the data from the students based on mean scores in each class. The scores for the teachers are based on the measures administered to them. Thus, this study is one of the first to investigate the relationships among motivational characteristics of the class, the use of teaching strategies as viewed by both the teacher and the students, and the level of the teacher's motivation.

The correlations among the 12 variables were factor analysed using principal components analysis and rotated to simple structure using the varimax procedure. Three factors were obtained with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, accounting for 67% of the variance, but the eigenvalue for the fourth factor was .99. Examination of the Scree plot suggested that the fourth factor should be included, and inspection of the residual correlations confirmed this. With four factors, 85% of the residuals were less than .10. The four factor solution accounted for 75% of the total variance.

Factor I obtained appreciable loadings (.40 or greater) from the measure of English achievement and four of the AMTB variables. The pattern of loadings indicated that high levels of English Achievement were obtained in classes with high levels of Integrativeness, strong Parental Encouragement to learn English, an Instrumental Orientation to learn English, and high levels of Motivation. The two AMTB measures not defining this factor are Language Anxiety and Attitudes toward the Learning Situation. It seems reasonable, therefore, to identify this as an *Integrative Motive* dimension. In this context, it suggests that achievement in English is higher in classes that can be characterized as integratively motivated. It should be noted that one of the measures contributing to this factor is Parental Encouragement, indicating that classes that differ in integrative motivation might well receive differential support from parents of the students involved. It is consistent with the theory of integrative motivation that it receives support from the home environment (see, for example, Gardner, 1985; 2007).

**Table 1.** *Varimax Rotated Factor Matrix.*

	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor IV
English Achievement	.79	-.02	-.34	.17
Integrativeness	.84	.32	.14	.15
Attitudes to Learning Situation	.33	.83	.10	-.15
Motivation	.64	.60	.07	.13
Language Anxiety	-.28	-.04	.08	-.67
Instrumental Orientation	.82	.32	.14	-.14
Parental Encouragement	.87	.14	.25	.12
Innovative Strategies (Teachers)	-.08	.14	.27	.80
Traditional Strategies (Teachers)	.07	.06	.88	.22
Innovative Strategies (Students)	.01	.83	-.02	.30
Traditional Strategies (Students)	.18	.61	.61	-.19
Teacher Motivation	.27	.48	.18	.20

Factor II was defined by five measures. Classes, in which the students felt that both Innovative and Traditional strategies were used frequently, evidenced favourable Attitudes toward the Learning Situation and high levels of Motivation, and had teachers with high levels of Motivation. The most notable feature of this factor is that it identifies characteristics of the class that are associated with teacher Motivation. Thus, it seems meaningful to define this factor as *Teacher Motivation*. It is clear that there is an association between how motivated teachers are to teach English, the extent to which their students perceive them as using strategies, the students' evaluation of the learning situation and their motivation to learn English. In our opinion, this is a crucial finding in the field of motivation and second language learning. Educational authorities and parents are convinced that a teacher's motivation plays an important role in the process of language teaching/learning, and these results confirm these expectations.

Factor III was defined by two measures. In classes where the teachers reported using Traditional Strategies, students agreed. Thus, this factor seems best identified as a *Traditional Strategy Use* dimension. It seems particularly informative that there is agreement between teachers and students about the use of Traditional Strategies but not Innovative ones. Quite probably, this is because many of these strategies are obviously directed toward teaching the language, while innovative strategies might well appear to the students to be more fun-related activities because they are directed more toward the student using the language rather than "learning" it. It should be noted, also, that there is the suggestion that this use of Traditional Strategies is associated with lower levels of English Achievement (the loading is -.34). Although only suggestive, this could be a very informative finding that deserves further investigation.

Factor IV was also defined by two variables. Classes where teachers reported using Innovative Strategies tended to have lower levels of Language Anxiety than other classes. It has often been proposed that strategies can be employed in the classroom to reduce anxiety and the structure of this factor supports this belief. As a consequence, this factor is defined as *Teacher Innovative Strategy Use*. There is considerable research indicating that language



anxiety is negatively associated with language achievement (cf., Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986), and it is encouraging to see that extended use of innovative strategies is associated with decreased language anxiety.

Despite the possible limitations of this study, it has clear implications for future research. A major limitation is that strategy use was not investigated directly, but rather was based on perceptions of teachers and students. Future research could profit from an investigation involving classroom observations by independent observers, and relating these observations to perceptions by both teachers and students similar to those studied here. It would be important in such an investigation to disguise the purpose of the observations in order to objectify the relations between the three types of assessment. Another possible limitation of the present study is the use of the mini-AMTB rather than the full AMTB. The apparent advantage of the mini-AMTB is that it is based on 12 single items and thus takes relatively little time to administer. The disadvantage is that items themselves are notoriously unreliable, while the full scale AMTB (which takes less than 20 minutes to administer) is more stable from a sampling point of view and permits the assessment of reliability of each of the measures.

Future research, following these recommendations, therefore, could strengthen our understanding of the role of strategy use in the classroom and determine the accuracy of both teacher and student perceptions. Our interpretation here is that, to a considerable extent language achievement is associated with characteristics linked to integrative motivation, which the students bring with them to the class and is relatively independent of strategy use (Factor I). Teacher motivation is, however, influential in the use of strategies as perceived by the students and can influence their attitudes toward the learning situation and motivation (Factor II). Students and teachers both recognize the use of traditional strategies, but in these classes there is a tendency for this to be related to lower levels of English achievement (Factor III). Finally, teacher's perceptions of innovative strategy use is characteristic of classes where language anxiety is low, probably because there is less concern with assessment in these classes (Factor IV). Thus, the question of the role of the teacher and the use of strategies can be seen to be more complex than normally thought when it comes to language learning.

The results of this study attest to the importance and implications of those obtained in a study by Pedró, Lloret, Carrasco, Plandiura, Mominó, and Meneses (2008) with a sample of 4.600 primary and secondary Catalan school teachers. That study shows that 43% of teachers' were satisfied with their jobs, but that they lacked trust that the educational system would be improved. Our results suggest that both students and teachers need to be motivated. If teachers are motivated, students are more actively involved in class activities and feel more motivated.

We agree with the authors of the Catalan study who propose a more strict selection of applicants to faculties of Education in order to improve the quality of the Educational system. We concur that the criteria for selection should include personality attributes and motivation to become a teacher as well as knowledge of the subject matter. Faculties of Education should offer only enough places to satisfy projected needs in the near future, as this would make the career more competitive, thus raising the status of teachers as the authors claim is the case in Finland and Korea. In addition, we believe that public schools in Catalonia should have more autonomy in selecting teachers in order to be able to choose the right candidates who would be highly motivated for their profession in order to improve the quality of public education. The results of our study suggest that teacher motivation is related to teacher use

of motivating strategies, which in turn are related to student motivation and English Achievement. Thus, any change in the educational system that promotes higher levels of teacher motivation should result in improved levels of education of the students.

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**Appendix 1**  
*Teacher Motivation Questionnaire*

Indicate how much you agree or disagree from the following choices:

- Strongly Agree* (1)  
*Agree* (2)  
*Neither agree nor disagree* (3)  
*Disagree* (4)  
*Strongly disagree* (5)

	<i>Strongly agree</i>			<i>Strongly disagree</i>	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I'm fully satisfied with my job.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The teachers in my school really work as a coherent team.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I wish the Educational Authorities valued my job as I deserve.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I wish I could change to a new school.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I wish I had more homogeneous classes.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I worry about mixed ability classes.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My present job helps me to fulfil all the objectives I have as a teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The Director and her/his team are doing an excellent job at our school.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I wish I could teach another subject.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The Educational Authorities are doing their best to improve public schools quality.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I would like to have another job.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My students' achievements really motivate me to get on with my job.	1	2	3	4	5

Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers.

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i. You can see in detail the results of the students' English test in the publication of the Consell Superior d'Avaluació del Sistema Educatiu (2008)