



A Comparative Study of English Language Teachers' Motivational Strategies in State and Private Primary Schools

Iyehezekiel^{1*}

¹Universitas Pamulang

*dosen02400@unpam.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the differences in motivational strategies employed by English language teachers in state and private primary schools in Indonesia. Grounded in Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System and Henry's three-level model of language learning motivation, the research aims to examine both the perceived importance and frequency of use of specific motivational strategies in classroom settings. Using a survey-based quantitative method, data were collected from 200 English teachers across 32 primary schools in Tangerang Selatan during the 2024–2025 academic year. Two questionnaires, adapted from Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) framework, assessed teachers' beliefs and practices regarding 30 motivational strategies. Results from independent samples t-tests indicate no significant difference between the two groups in terms of the importance attributed to motivational strategies. However, private school teachers reported significantly more frequent use of diverse, student-centered strategies, particularly those involving authentic materials, group work, and cultural content. The findings highlight the impact of institutional resources, class size, and teacher autonomy on motivation practices. Implications suggest the need for increased support for state school teachers through resource provision and professional development focused on motivational pedagogy.

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INTRODUCTION

It is well established that a learning environment designed to enhance motivation, along with a highly motivated student, positively influences learning outcomes. Conversely, low levels of motivation and factors presumed to negatively affect motivation often lead to academic failure, such as the inability to achieve academic goals.

In the context of second or foreign language learning, motivation is recognized as one of the critical factors influencing success. It is described as the driving force that initiates, directs, and sustains the process of language acquisition (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2020). According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021), motivation in language learning refers to "the dynamic, constantly changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized and acted out".

Until the 1990s, foundational research on the role of motivation in language learning was largely influenced by the socio-educational model developed by Gardner. However, more recent perspectives, such as Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System, have reframed language learning motivation through the lens of self-concept. This model posits that language learning is uniquely tied to learners' visions of themselves as competent L2 users, integrating identity, aspiration, and emotional engagement. Consequently, language learning involves not only acquiring linguistic rules or specific skills but also constructing an ideal L2 self that embodies the sociocultural behaviors and communicative competence of the target language community. Within this framework, the success of foreign language learning is believed to be closely linked to the learner's internalized self-guides and their identification with the target language.

In their research, Lambert and Gardner identified two types of motivation in language learning: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation arises from the learner's desire to successfully integrate into the target language community. In contrast, instrumental motivation refers to the learner's desire to acquire the language for pragmatic benefits such as career advancement or financial gain.

From the 1990s onwards, a more innovative approach to understanding motivation in language learning began to emerge (Lamb, 2017; Ushioda, 2016; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Henry, 2015). This new approach, described as a "motivational renaissance" by Ushioda (2016), focused on empirical research and emphasized teachers' perceptions of motivation and how these perceptions translated into classroom practices. In recent years, increasing efforts have been made to bridge the gap between motivation theories in educational psychology and practices in second language education.

In recent decades, research on motivation in second language (L2) learning has undergone substantial theoretical and empirical refinement. Early work, particularly the socio-educational model of Gardner and Lambert (1972), focused on integrative and instrumental orientations, positing that learners are motivated either by a desire to integrate with the target language community or by practical goals such as academic or professional advancement. While these constructs remain

relevant, they have been complemented and, in some contexts, reinterpreted through newer frameworks.

Among the most influential contemporary perspectives is Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985; Ryan & Deci, 2020), which emphasizes the quality—not just quantity—of motivation. SDT distinguishes between intrinsic motivation, where learners engage in tasks for inherent satisfaction, and extrinsic motivation, driven by external rewards or pressures. Crucially, SDT posits three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—as fundamental to optimal motivation and engagement. In language learning contexts, when students perceive that these needs are being supported by teachers and the learning environment, they are more likely to demonstrate sustained and self-regulated learning behaviors (Noels et al., 2000).

However, motivation is not solely a psychological construct; it is also shaped by cultural and institutional contexts. In Indonesia, as in many other Asian countries, collectivist cultural values—emphasizing harmony, group cohesion, and respect for authority—play a prominent role in shaping student-teacher relationships and classroom dynamics (Hofstede, 2001). This collectivist orientation can have both enabling and limiting effects on motivational strategy efficacy.

On the one hand, the emphasis on relatedness and interdependence aligns well with the SDT principle of supporting students' need for belonging. Teachers who foster collaborative environments and nurture strong relational ties can effectively boost motivation through group-specific strategies, such as cooperative learning or peer support systems (Chirkov et al., 2003). On the other hand, the high power distance and reliance on teacher-centered instruction in many Indonesian classrooms may constrain opportunities for developing learner autonomy, a central component of intrinsic motivation in SDT.

Furthermore, cultural expectations may lead students to value extrinsic forms of motivation—such as grades, social recognition, or familial approval—more than intrinsic engagement, particularly at younger ages. As a result, motivational strategies that rely heavily on autonomy-supportive teaching (e.g., allowing students to choose tasks or set personal goals) may need to be adapted to fit local norms without undermining their core function (Tanaka, 2009).

To address this cultural complexity, Ushioda (2011) advocates for a “person-in-context relational view” of motivation, which emphasizes the dynamic interplay between individual learners and their sociocultural environments. This perspective encourages educators to consider how contextual factors—such as school policy, family expectations, peer norms, and teaching traditions—influence how motivational strategies are perceived and enacted in real classrooms.

Taken together, these frameworks highlight that effective motivational teaching in L2 classrooms must go beyond universal prescriptions. It requires a context-sensitive approach, attuned to both psychological needs and cultural

realities. In Indonesian schools, particularly those constrained by large class sizes and limited resources, this involves recognizing how teachers navigate institutional challenges while striving to meet their students' motivational needs through adaptive strategies.

Lamb (2017) and Ushioda (2016) initiated practice-based discussions on motivation, later expanded by Henry (2015) and Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021). Within this framework, numerous studies inspired by the socio-educational legacy of Gardner have investigated the factors influencing students' motivation to learn a language within classroom settings. For instance, Henry (2015) explored not only integrative and instrumental factors but also the effects of internal dispositions, learning contexts, and pedagogical approaches on motivation. He categorized motivation into three interrelated levels:

In Henry's (2015) model, motivation in second language learning is understood as operating across three interrelated levels. The language level pertains to learners' attitudes toward the target language, its speakers, and its culture. It also includes perceptions of the practical value or utility of learning the language, which align closely with the concepts of instrumental and integrative motivation.

The learner level encompasses internal and individual factors such as self-confidence, anxiety, previous experiences with language learning, perceptions of self-efficacy, and the evolving sense of learner identity. These elements shape how a student engages with language learning tasks and responds to challenges in the learning process.

The learning situation level refers to the immediate educational context and is subdivided into three domains. The first is course-specific motivation, which involves the learner's interest in the course content, its relevance to their goals, and the overall design of the instructional material. The second is group-specific motivation, which relates to classroom dynamics, peer collaboration, and the social atmosphere within the learning group. Lastly, teacher-specific motivation concerns the influence of the teacher, including their rapport with students, the feedback they provide, their instructional style, and the strategies they use to encourage learner autonomy and sustain engagement.

Similarly, Williams and Burden (1997) argue that motivation is influenced not only by internal factors—such as the learner's attitudes toward the language and culture, self-confidence, and sense of achievement—but also significantly by external factors, including teaching materials, classroom atmosphere, and particularly, the teacher.

Taking these factors into account, Dörnyei and Otto (1998) developed a taxonomy of motivational strategies for use by teachers in classroom practice. This taxonomy includes strategies aimed at creating a motivating environment,

establishing positive teacher-student relationships, engaging learners in classroom activities, and supporting students' self-assessment and personal development.

In their study involving Hungarian English teachers, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) utilized a questionnaire developed based on a motivational taxonomy. The results revealed that teachers considered their own classroom behavior to be the most influential strategy in affecting student motivation. When various motivational approaches in educational psychology and second language education are considered, a common underlying principle emerges: *"Every student can be motivated to learn in the right environment, and it is possible to create such an environment in the classroom"* (Hofstede, 2001). Although it may be unrealistic to assume that all students are inherently motivated to learn, student motivation is a dynamic quality that can be enhanced through deliberate effort.

Applied to the classroom setting, these insights underline the importance of teachers employing intrinsic motivational strategies—those that foster students' interest in learning the target language, engaging in classroom activities, and appreciating the materials used—rather than relying solely on extrinsic motivation strategies based on rewards and punishments.

Parallel to the global rise in the value attributed to English language learning, interest in English education has steadily increased across all educational levels in Turkey. English instruction is increasingly demanded from early grades, both in state and private schools. However, especially in state schools, the desired level of language proficiency often remains unattained. Teachers play a crucial role in the success of language instruction; achieving effective language teaching requires not only subject-matter and language knowledge but also pedagogical competence—specifically, knowledge of strategies to motivate students in the classroom and the conscious implementation of such strategies.

According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), *"Teachers often use a bag of tricks—techniques they have discovered through their own experience—to motivate students"* (p. 212). Due to their varying backgrounds and experiences, teachers differ in how much importance they place on motivational strategies and how they implement them. Building on this premise, the present study seeks to identify the motivational strategies that English teachers working in different institutions believe to be important and actively apply in their teaching practice.

The aim of this study is to examine the differences between the motivational strategies that English language teachers, working in state and private primary schools, consider important and those they implement in their classrooms. In this context, the research seeks to answer the following primary questions:

1. Is there a difference between the motivational strategies deemed important by English language teachers working in state and private primary schools?
2. Is there a difference between the motivational strategies employed by English language teachers working in state and private primary schools?

METHOD

The sample of this study consists of 200 English language teachers working in 18 state and 14 private primary schools in Tangerang Selatan during the 2024–2025 academic year. The participants were selected using a random sampling method.

A questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. The questionnaire was based on the one developed by Dörnyei (1994) and later adapted by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998), which consists of 51 motivational strategies used in a study conducted with Hungarian English language teachers. Initially, the questionnaire was piloted with a randomly selected group of 30 Indonesian English teachers. Based on feedback from both the teachers and field experts, considerations such as clarity, appropriateness, applicability of the items, and adherence to the original categorization were taken into account. As a result, the number of items was reduced to 30. The revised questionnaire was then re-administered to a different group of 10 Indonesian English teachers to test its reliability.

The final version of the questionnaire retained the categories from the original instrument: teacher behavior (items 1, 2), environment (items 3, 4), activities (items 5, 6), relationship with students (item 7), self-confidence (items 8–11), interest (items 12–15), autonomy (items 16, 17), use of experience (item 18), goal orientation (items 19, 20), culture (items 21, 22), group work (items 23, 24), effort (item 25), usefulness (item 26), reward (item 27), classroom rules (item 28), student materials (item 29), and student comparison (item 30) (see Table 1).

As in Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) study, data on teachers' experiences with motivational strategies were gathered through two separate questionnaires: (a) the perceived importance of each strategy and (b) the frequency of strategy use. Both questionnaires contained the same items, each followed by a five-point Likert scale. In addition to the questionnaires, a personal information form was included to collect demographic data such as gender, age group, and the name of the institution where the teacher was employed.

The importance questionnaire was administered to 104 teachers, while the usage frequency questionnaire was administered to 106 teachers. The rationale for distributing different questionnaires was to prevent response bias that might occur if teachers influenced their answers about frequency based on their previously stated importance ratings. Teachers in the same school were given different questionnaires to maintain this separation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To test whether there was a statistically significant difference between state and private school English teachers in terms of the importance they attach to motivational strategies and the frequency with which they use them, an

independent samples t-test was employed. Statistical analyses were conducted using the SPSS/PC software package, and the significance level was set at .05.

In interpreting the data, the researcher also drew upon informal verbal interviews conducted with teachers between 2024 and 2025, as well as reflective journal notes kept by teacher candidates in the English Language.

The data from the study will be analyzed in two parts: findings derived from the importance questionnaire and those from the frequency of use questionnaire.

The table below presents the mean scores of importance given to motivational strategies by Indonesian English teachers working in state and private primary schools, along with the differences in perceived importance between the groups.

As shown in Table 1, there is no statistically significant difference between English teachers working in different types of schools regarding the importance they attach to motivational strategies. In both groups, the two teacher-related items (items 1 and 2) were reported as the most important strategies. This finding aligns with the result of Dörnyei (1994), which were previously mentioned.

Following these, items related to the classroom environment (items 3 and 4) and building a positive relationship with students (item 7) were prioritized.

Although no statistically significant differences were observed in the group means, it is noteworthy that private school teachers placed relatively more importance on three items related to capturing students' interest (items 12, 13, 14) and two items concerning group work (items 23, 24), compared to their counterparts in state primary schools.

Table 1. Importance Given to Motivational Strategies by English Teachers in State and Private Primary Schools

Strategy No.	Strategy Description	State School Mean (X1)	Private School Mean (X2)	SD (X1)	SD (X2)	t	p
1	Preparing lessons regularly	4.57	4.52	0.56	0.76	0.41	0.17
2	Entering lessons enthusiastically and setting an example for students	4.68	3.66	0.51	0.56	0.62	0.23
3	Creating a positive atmosphere in class	4.28	4.24	0.46	0.59	0.54	0.19
4	Using humor and laughter in class	4.00	4.21	0.82	0.86	0.56	0.54
5	Giving clear instructions	4.01	4.04	0.92	0.62	0.23	0.92
6	Explaining the aim and benefit of each activity	3.52	3.65	0.94	0.82	1.04	0.18
7	Building positive relationships with students	4.11	4.52	0.72	0.63	-2.6	0.63
8	Providing positive feedback to students	3.92	4.12	0.73	0.54	3.1	0.07
9	Enabling students to feel successful in the classroom	4.00	4.06	0.73	1.04	0.30	

10	Viewing mistakes as a natural part of learning	4.01	4.20	0.82	0.74	-	0.29
11	Conducting level-appropriate activities	3.64	4.06	0.81	0.22	0.60	
12	Conducting engaging and interesting activities	3.74	4.43	0.60	0.70	1.60	
13	Using a variety of materials	3.95	4.32	0.90	0.60	0.70	
14	Using different types of activities in lessons	3.52	4.14	0.73	1.60	-2.1	
15	Motivating learning not just with grades but through capturing interest	3.62	3.73	0.74	0.80	-2.3	
16	Encouraging students to use new structures/words	3.67	4.32	0.94	0.70	-1.7	0.18
17	Encouraging students' questions and other contributions	3.23	3.87	0.87	0.83	-3.8	0.51
18	Designing lessons to incorporate students' personal experiences	3.13	3.91	1.15	0.73	-4.3	
19	Helping students set realistic goals for learning	3.81	3.54	0.90	0.75	-0.5	
20	Setting specific learning objectives for students	3.40	3.82	0.91	0.72	-1.1	
21	Introducing students to the target culture	3.24	3.87	0.92	0.71	-0.2	0.58
22	Using authentic materials	3.24	3.93	0.78	0.83	0.56	0.44
23	Including group work	3.23	4.31	0.70	0.64	1.10	0.71
24	Occasionally changing the seating arrangement in class	4.03	3.51	0.80	0.75	-	0.86
25	Emphasizing effort as the key to success	3.30	4.20	0.75	0.76	0.19	0.23

X1 = State school mean (n=54)

X2 = Private school mean (n=50)

Table 2 presents the mean scores of motivational strategy use among English language teachers working in state and private primary schools, as well as the differences between these groups.

Table 2. Use of Motivational Strategies by English Language Teachers: State vs. Private Primary Schools

Strategy	State Mean (X ₁)	Private Mean (X ₂)
1. Preparing regularly for lessons	4.48	4.77
2. Entering the classroom enthusiastically and serving as a role model	4.22	4.38
3. Creating a positive classroom environment	3.85	4.02
4. Making jokes and laughing in class	3.52	4.12
5. Providing clear instructions	4.08	4.17
6. Explaining the purpose and benefits of each activity	3.42	3.71
7. Establishing good relationships with students	3.62	3.93

8. Providing positive feedback to students	4.14	4.29
9. Helping students feel a sense of achievement in class	4.05	4.23
10. Considering mistakes as a natural part of learning	4.04	4.11
11. Implementing activities appropriate to students' levels	4.29	4.34
12. Using engaging activities	3.82	4.48
13. Using a variety of materials	3.21	4.63
14. Conducting lessons with diverse types of activities	3.43	4.53
15. Motivating students not only through grades but also through engagement	3.35	4.59
16. Encouraging students to use new structures/vocabulary	3.22	3.87
17. Encouraging questions and other forms of student participation	3.52	3.68
18. Relating the topic to students' personal experiences	3.94	4.41
19. Helping students develop realistic learning goals	3.33	4.25
20. Setting specific learning objectives for students	3.13	4.34
21. Introducing students to the target language's culture	2.72	4.87
22. Using authentic materials	3.84	4.89
23. Incorporating group work	3.05	4.72
24. Occasionally changing the classroom seating arrangement	3.29	4.65
25. Emphasizing that effort is the key to success	3.36	3.93
26. Discussing the benefits of language learning	3.85	3.74
27. Providing various rewards in addition to grades	3.03	4.41
28. Implementing some classroom rules suggested by students	3.19	4.04
29. Allowing students to prepare and/or present materials or activities	3.51	4.78
30. Avoiding comparing one student to another	3.42	3.74

X₁: Mean score for state school teachers (n=56)

X₂: Mean score for private school teachers (n=50)

The motivational strategies that show statistically significant differences in usage between English language teachers at state and private primary schools are as follows:

- Using various materials (Item 13) ($p < .01$)
- Conducting lessons with diverse types of activities (Item 14) ($p < .01$)
- Motivating students not only through grades but also through engagement (Item 15) ($p < .02$)
- Introducing students to the target language's culture (Item 21) ($p < .001$)
- Using authentic materials (Item 22) ($p < .01$)
- Incorporating group work (Item 23) ($p < .02$)
- Occasionally changing the classroom seating arrangement (Item 24) ($p < .04$)
- Allowing students to prepare and/or present materials or activities (Item 29) ($p < .02$)

As seen in Table 2, not only for the significantly different items, but across all motivational strategies, the mean scores for teachers working in private primary schools are higher compared to those for state school teachers.

Findings from oral interviews with English teachers working in state and private primary schools, as well as journal entries written by pre-service teachers during their internships, reveal several challenges specific to state primary school settings. One of the most prominent issues is that, due to financial constraints, English teachers in state schools are unable to supplement the Ministry of National Education's textbooks with additional materials. Moreover, when teachers attempt to request parents to purchase supplementary books or materials, they often face resistance.

Class sizes in state schools range between 35 and 55 students, whereas in private schools, the typical class size is around 20 to 24. This discrepancy further limits the ability of state school teachers to incorporate diverse activities into their lessons (p. 14). While private schools often include skills-based activities such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking both inside and outside the classroom, state primary schools tend to focus heavily on textbook-based reading and grammar exercises.

Due to financial limitations, visual and auditory teaching aids are also rarely used in state school classrooms. As a consequence, students' communicative competence does not develop adequately. This creates a vicious cycle: because students struggle with speaking, classroom activities such as discussions or presentations are avoided, and English classes in many state schools are conducted primarily in Indonesian.

Teachers in state primary schools report that they can only engage students through grades, as students often fail to recognize the importance of learning English, parents are generally unhelpful or indifferent, and teachers struggle to find engaging materials. Strategies aimed at introducing students to the target language culture and using authentic materials in lessons are among the most significantly distinguishing factors between state and private schools, largely due to the inadequacy of books and materials available in state schools (Lamb, 2017).

Private schools, on the other hand, provide students with access to both curricular and extracurricular resources that easily introduce cultural elements of the target language. In addition, teachers in private primary schools tend to have more frequent communication with native English-speaking instructors, benefit from in-service training by such instructors, and often have greater opportunities for international experience compared to their counterparts in state schools. As a result, they are generally more familiar with the culture associated with the target language and are better positioned to convey this knowledge to their students.

Language classrooms are expected to focus on developing communicative competence in the target language. Therefore, it is important for students to

regularly participate in pair or group work activities aimed at enhancing their speaking skills. However, the large number of students and classroom arrangements that are not conducive to group work hinder the implementation of such activities in state schools. In contrast, many private primary schools use group activities on engaging and age-appropriate topics as a way to motivate students to learn English. State schools, however, tend to retain traditional classroom seating arrangements and rely on monotonous teaching methods, which make it especially difficult to motivate younger students (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Consequently, under such conditions, state school students are rarely given the opportunity to prepare or present materials, or participate in creative activities such as drama. Most private schools include an "English corner" in the classroom to allow students to display their own work, but such spaces are rarely found in state primary schools.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that there is no significant difference between state and private primary school teachers in terms of the importance they attribute to motivational strategies. However, statistically significant differences emerge between the two groups in actual classroom practice.

In state primary schools, motivational strategies—although widely acknowledged as essential in English language teaching—are not sufficiently implemented due to several constraints, such as students and their families perceiving English merely as a school subject, overcrowded classrooms, and limited financial resources. While it is well known that the variety and appropriateness of classroom activities, the attractiveness of the teaching materials, and the learning environment all play a crucial role in fostering student motivation, state schools tend to rely more heavily on extrinsic motivational strategies, such as grades.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that English teachers, especially those working in state primary schools, become more familiar with the range of motivational strategies available and apply them in the most effective manner possible within their specific teaching contexts. However, for such implementation to be feasible, it is essential to increase the allocation of resources to English courses and classroom environments in state primary schools.

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