

# THEORY AND METHODOLOGY OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

UDC 811.13

DOI: 10.17223/24109266/9/11

## A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE ON THE USE OF MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES BY THEIR ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LITERATURE INSTRUCTORS IN AN OMANI UNIVERSITY

**R. Al-Mahrooqi<sup>1</sup>, C.J. Denman<sup>1</sup>, F. Al-Hasani<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Sultan Qaboos University (Al-Khoudh, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman)

<sup>2</sup> Higher College of Technology (Al-Khuwair, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman)

E-mail: mrahma@squ.edu.om; denman@squ.edu.om; darsait23@yahoo.com

**Abstract.** Motivation has been recognized as one of the most influential factors in language learning. This study examines the frequency of use of motivational strategies by English-language literature instructors at the tertiary level in Oman as viewed by their students. A previous study [1] focused on teachers' views of the frequency and importance of 48 motivational microstrategies, divided into 10 macrostrategies, in the Omani classroom. Findings indicate that teachers regarded all strategies as important while the degree of importance assigned to them correlated well with frequency of use. As that study involved only teacher participants, the current research utilized a modified version of its questionnaire to explore the frequency with which 65 Omani English-language literature learners believe these motivational strategies are employed by their instructors. Results suggest that participants believe their instructors often employ five of the featured macrostrategies. These include promoting self-confidence, creating a pleasant classroom environment, and making learning tasks engaging. However, the remaining five macrostrategies, such as promoting building group cohesiveness and familiarizing learners with L2 values, were rarely employed. These findings are compared to those from the previous study before a number of implications for motivating learners in Omani classrooms are offered.

**Keywords:** motivation; literature; EFL / ESL; Oman.

### **Introduction: Motivation in L2 Language Learning**

Motivation can be conceived at a basic level as meaning something that makes individuals act in a certain way. Brown defines it as “an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one towards a particular action” [2: 117]. A fuller definition offers motivation as “the dynamically 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” [3: 64].

Motivational and social psychology both attempt to explain human behavior and offer explanatory paradigms or theories such as those around expectancy-value, goals, self-determination, and social behavior. From a socio-educational approach L2 learning consists of three main components [4]. That is, learners consistently make every effort to work hard, they express a desire to accomplish their goal of acquiring a language, and they realize that they enjoy and appreciate the learning process.

In L2 learning, therefore, motivation “serves as the oil that lubricates the other parts of the language-learning mechanism and enables them to move freely and thus produce results” [1: 37]. Indeed, it also “serves as the initial engine to generate learning and later functions as an ongoing driving force that helps to sustain the long and usually laborious journey of acquiring a foreign language” [5: 153].

In 2002, Dörnyei and Csizér revisited the classroom-based or “situated approach” to motivation that was so prevalent in the 1990s [6], while Gardner [4] also focused on the influence of the classroom in the L2 learning process. Gardner referred to three concepts that could be influential in successful language learning: the past, the present, and the future. The past could simply refer to the emotional and cognitive baggage students bring with them to the learning process. That is, from this perspective, the learners’ past experiences are a rich source that arms them with stable knowledge. Moreover, even learners’ present physical worlds could make a difference, with influential factors including the classroom, the teacher, materials used, and teaching methods. The future, Gardner continues, refers to the intended use of the foreign language and a willingness to communicate with it.

Given the importance of these elements to learner motivation within L2 contexts, this paper explores student perspectives of the frequency of use of motivational strategies employed by English-language literature teachers in an Omani university. In doing so, it builds upon a previous study by Al-Mahrooqi, Abrar-ul-Hassan, and Asante [1] which examined teachers’ views of the importance and frequency of use of 48 motivational microstrategies, divided into 10 macrostrategies, from teachers’ perspectives within a similar research context. While participants in that study highlighted the importance of utilizing all featured motivational strategies, whether or not Omani students believe these strategies to be actually employed in Omani classrooms was not examined. Moreover, the study was quite general in nature, surveying EFL instructors teaching various courses at schools, colleges and universities. This research, therefore, sought to employ a modified version of the questionnaire used featured in Al-Mahrooqi et al., from a student perspective, the frequency with which the motivational strategies featured on that questionnaire are used within Omani English-language tertiary-level literature classrooms. After examining frequency of use, student perceptions were then compared to teachers’ perceptions as reported by Al-Mahrooqi et al. Implications of findings for classroom practice are discussed.

## **Literature Review: The Role of Teacher Strategies**

For individuals to successfully acquire a target language, they need factors that encourage them to strive hard and persist in the face of failure. They need to use strategies that produce successful learning and, in this regard, the motivational strategies the teacher employs could be extremely influential. However, this claim has not found full acceptance as little empirical research has been conducted to substantiate it, with this being especially the case in the Arabian Gulf context.

Success in L2 achievement requires the presence of knowledgeable and well-trained teachers aware of the significance of their roles as language instructors. Cheng and Dörnyei [5] surveyed the use of motivational strategies among 387 Taiwanese teachers with a focus on two main considerations: perceptions of the importance of motivational strategies and their frequency of use. Findings from this study indicate that some motivational strategies can be “transferable” across cultures.

A longitudinal survey conducted in Saudi Arabia [7] included a nationwide examination of teachers’ use of motivational strategies involving 296 students and 14 teachers. The two-stage study attempted first to discover the importance of using 53 strategies in the classroom. Teachers rank-listed strategies with the ten most frequently employed used in the study’s second stage with seven teachers asked to use these top ten strategies in their classrooms and the other seven not explicitly required to employ these. Classroom observations and post-lesson evaluation sessions were used to determine the extent to which these strategies were employed. Two motivation questionnaires were then administered to students at the start and end of the semester-long research. The study revealed that the student group whose teachers explicitly employed the top ranked motivational strategies had higher levels of L2 motivation.

Within Oman, Al-Mahrooqi et al. [1] attributed Omani student demotivation to various socio-cultural factors. In this study, 286 EFL teachers were surveyed to determine what motivational strategies they used in Omani schools, colleges, and universities. A questionnaire developed in Cheng and Dörnyei [5] was used as the main research instrument. As stated above, findings indicate that teachers regarded all 48 microstrategies as important. Moreover, they regarded the motivational strategy of showing care to students as the most important of all, a finding that was also witnessed in the previous research and which appears to confirm anecdotal evidence from the Arab Gulf suggesting that the personal relationship between students and teachers is one of the most important motivational factors.

Tsui [8: 146] claims that many EFL / ESL teachers tend to waste too much time attempting to get students to respond to their questions and activities in class. The author stressed that “talking equals learning” while also

emphasizing that students cannot be forced to participate unless they are ready. This investigation covered secondary school students from grades 7-11 and was based on action research project reports from 38 ESL teachers at the University of Hong Kong. Tsui concluded that Asian students are generally reticent and reserved in class and suggested that five critical factors hinder learner motivation in East Asian contexts. These are a high level of anxiety with low English proficiency, a lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes, teachers' intolerance of silence, an uneven allocation of turns which creates feelings of unimportance, and incomprehensible input due to a failure to understand the teacher. These results revealed the extent to which personal traits and teachers' classroom roles can affect learners' willingness to participate.

Additionally, selection of appropriate interactive activities such as peer and small group work is known to increase student talking time and willingness to communicate using the L2 [9-11]. Group work fosters L2 oral communication and, consequently, promotes L2 acquisition. An ethnographic study investigating the reasons for reticence among Chinese students learning English as part of a business course tends to support these suppositions [12]. The study collected data from interviews with students and their lecturers and found that some affective, socio-cultural, and educational factors were common causes of student reticence and hesitation. Issues such as losing face, diffidence, unsafe class atmospheres, a lack of incentives, and learning passivity were offered as potentially leading to demotivation. A major finding of the study was that both male and female students claimed that "interactive discussions were possible if the conditions were right" [Ibid.: 81]. Or, in other words, creating an encouraging environment that allows participants to interact comfortably and collaboratively, such as in small group work, can increase learner motivation.

As these studies demonstrate, understanding the agency and effectiveness of motivational strategies is linked to the teacher's role. Hence, it is essential to think of the methods teachers adopt to motivate their learners. Rost [13] summarizes these in three 'layers' with the teacher always acting as the key "motivator". For example, student passion is one "core" element that teachers could trigger to motivate their learners. Considering student interests and personalizing materials is also extremely effective for eliciting a deeper level of commitment and motivation. Changing student reality is the second layer, where, again, the major motivator is the teacher who is responsible for strongly connecting the student to language through "quality instruction". Teachers need to spend sufficient time with their students not only inside class but also outside of it. This involves spending time searching for homework tasks that have "quality" and are "authentic", such as websites, readers, self-access worksheets and quizzes, audio, video, and multimedia learning resources, and assisting students to assess and select what is

suitable among these. In this way, the teacher helps learners to monitor their learning through making choices, planning their program, and achieving attainable sub-goals. The third layer comprises “connecting to learning activities”. The motivator is urged to broadly connect the learner through diverse approaches, including personalizing tasks, involving all learners in all tasks, arranging exploratory in-class activities, and providing feedback throughout the learning process.

The current research acknowledges the potential influence of a variety of L2 motivational strategies as outlined above. In doing so, it employs a questionnaire based on Al-Mahrooqi et al. [1] which was, in turn, derived from the instrument used by Cheng and Dörnyei [5]. The research explores the frequency with which Omani English-language literature students believe their instructors to employ 10 motivational macrostrategies comprised of 48 microstrategies within their literature classes and compares these perceptions with those of their teachers as reported by Al-Mahrooqi et al. Research questions are offered below.

## **Methodology**

### *Research Questions*

As stated above, while previous studies have focused on EFL teachers’ use of motivational studies, few, especially within the context of the Arab Gulf, have examined students’ views. In fact, as of the time of writing, to the extent of the researchers’ knowledge, no studies conducted in Oman have examined this issue from students’ perspectives. This study, therefore, endeavors to achieve this by addressing the following research questions:

1. What are the most and least frequently employed motivational strategies in Omani English-language tertiary-level literature classes as perceived by Omani students?
2. How do Omani students’ perceptions of the frequency of motivational strategies used in these classes relate to teachers’ perceptions as reported in Al-Mahrooqi et al. [1]?

### *Research Instrument*

An English-language version of the questionnaire based on Al-Mahrooqi et al. [Ibid.] was utilized. The questionnaire featured 48 items each representing a specific motivational microstrategy. These, in turn, were divided into 10 macrostrategies. The macrostrategies featured were: “exhibit proper teacher behavior”, “recognize students’ effort”, “promote learners’ self-confidence”, “create a pleasant classroom climate”, “present tasks properly”, “increase learners’ goal-orientedness”, “make the learning tasks

stimulating”, “familiarise learners with L2-related values”, “promote group cohesiveness and group norms”, and “promote learner autonomy”. All microstrategies were introduced by the phrase “My literature teacher...”. Participants were asked to indicate how frequently their English literature teachers employed the motivational strategies featured on the questionnaire on a 5-point Likert response scale. Possible responses were as follows: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Often, 4 = Very Often, and 5 = Always.

Although the sample size was not large enough to accurately calculate a reliability coefficient for the macrostrategy groups with any degree of accuracy, Al-Mahrooqi et al. [1] reported Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0.60 or above for six of the ten groups on their frequency questionnaire while Cheng and Dörnyei [5] reported coefficients of around 0.70 or above for seven of the ten macrostrategy groups.

### *The Sample*

The sample consisted of 65 second and third year English majors attending courses in Oman’s only public university. All participants had taken literature classes at the university’s Language Centre and / or English Department. Questionnaires were administered in four classes by the first author and a fellow instructor, with students informed about the nature of the research and reminded that participation was entirely voluntary and would not, in any way, impact upon their standing in the class. Moreover, potential participants were informed that their participation would be confidential and their responses anonymous. Of the 80 students that volunteered to respond to the questionnaire, 65 returned it fully completed.

### *Analysis*

Descriptive analysis was performed on both the macrostrategy groups and individual items representing microstrategies within these groups in order to ascertain means. All 48 items across the 10 macrostrategies were positively worded, with response means closer to 1 indicating that participants believed their teachers rarely employed the motivational microstrategy or macrostrategy and response means closer to 5 indicating that participants’ believed their instructors always employed these motivational strategies. A mid-point of 3.00 represents a rough dividing line between less frequently and more frequently used strategies.

## **Results**

Overall group means for the 10 questionnaire macrostrategy groups are featured in Table 1. Of the 10 questionnaire groups, five recorded means of 3.00 or above which indicates that participants believe their instructors often engaged in these motivation strategies. These were for “presents tasks

properly" ( $M = 3.37$ ), "exhibits proper teacher behavior" ( $M = 3.21$ ), "make the learning tasks stimulating" ( $M = 3.10$ ), "create a pleasant classroom environment" ( $M = 3.08$ ), and "promote learners' self-confidence" ( $M = 3.06$ ). The remaining five macrostrategies all received means between 2.00 and 3.00 which indicates that respondents believe their instructors only rarely employed them. The motivation macrostrategies whose means fell within this range were "recognize students' efforts" ( $M = 2.94$ ), "promote group cohesiveness and group norms" ( $M = 2.85$ ), "promote learner autonomy" ( $M = 2.84$ ), and "increase learners' goal-orientedness" ( $M = 2.74$ ). Questionnaire items, or specific microstrategies, associated with each of these groups are discussed in detail below.

Table 1

**Questionnaire macrostrategy group means**

Questionnaire Group	Mean	SD
Exhibits proper teacher behaviour	3.21	0.89
Presents tasks properly	3.13	1.00
Make the learning tasks stimulating	3.10	0.76
Create a pleasant classroom environment	3.08	0.75
Promote learners' self-confidence	3.06	0.89
Recognize students' effort	2.94	0.79
Familiarize learners with L2-related values	2.90	0.74
Promote group cohesiveness and group norms	2.85	0.77
Promote learner autonomy	2.84	0.77
Increases learners' goal-orientedness	2.74	0.89

Table 2 features responses for the questionnaire group "exhibits proper teacher behavior" ( $M = 3.21$ ). Of the five items related to this group, four received means above 3.00 which indicates that participants' believe their instructors employ them often. The items that received the highest mean were "are able to be themselves in front of students" ( $M = 3.60$ ) and "share with students that they value literature as a meaningful experience" ( $M = 3.47$ ). This is closely linked to the questionnaire item from this group that received the next highest mean – "show enthusiasm for teaching" ( $M = 3.15$ ). These two microstrategies taken together suggest that participants' instructors tend to be enthusiastic about English language literature and manage to convey this enthusiasm to their learners. The remaining item from this macrostrategy group that recorded a mean above 3.00 was "show students that they care about them" ( $M = 3.13$ ), although, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, respondents believe that they only rarely managed to "establish good rapport with students" ( $M = 2.81$ ).

Table 2

Exhibits proper teacher behavior

Item	Mean	SD
Are able to be themselves in front of students	3.60	1.08
Share with students that they value literature as a meaningful experience	3.47	1.02
Show enthusiasm for teaching	3.15	1.17
Show students they care about them	3.13	1.21
Establish good rapport with students	2.81	1.01
Group: Exhibits proper teacher behavior	3.21	0.89

Table 3 indicates that, of the two items associated with the macrostrategy “present tasks properly” ( $M = 3.13$ ), both received means above 3.00. These items were “give clear instructions by modeling” ( $M = 3.16$ ) and “give good reasons to students as to why a particular task is meaningful” ( $M = 3.11$ ). Both these microstrategies relate to instructors’ abilities to clearly convey to learners why a task is important and how learners should go about performing the classroom activities offered by their teachers. This finding, therefore, suggests that participants’ English-language literature instructors have both an awareness of their learners’ backgrounds and abilities which allows them to place classroom tasks within a meaningful context and the ability to clearly communicate with their students.

Table 3

Presents tasks properly

Item	Mean	SD
Give clear instructions by modeling	3.16	1.13
Give good reasons to students as to why a particular task is meaningful	3.11	1.04
Group: Present tasks properly	3.13	1.00

Table 4 features items related to the questionnaire group “make the learning tasks stimulating” ( $M = 3.10$ ). Three of the six items featured on this questionnaire group recorded means above 3.00 which suggests that participants’ thought their instructors often employed them. These were “introduce various interesting topics” ( $M = 3.63$ ), “make tasks challenging” ( $M = 3.53$ ), and “make tasks attractive by including novel and fantasy elements” ( $M = 3.15$ ). These results suggest that participants’ literature instructors are sufficiently aware of their learners’ levels of cognitive development and personal interests to incorporate these into lessons that are stimulating while still being challenging. The remaining three microstrategies here were all related to the encouragement of learner creativity and the use of various presentation methods and materials. These items received means between 2.00 and 3.00 which indicates that participants believe that their instructors



only rarely employ them. These were “present various auditory and visual teaching aids” ( $M = 2.76$ ), “encourage students to create products” ( $M = 2.53$ ), and “break the routine by varying the presentation format” ( $M = 2.52$ ). These findings imply that learners’ believe their instructors tend to employ similar teaching strategies and aids across lessons, while focusing more on task achievement than fostering creativity.

Table 4

**Make the learning tasks stimulating**

Item	Mean	SD
Introduce various interesting topics	3.63	1.12
Make tasks challenging	3.53	0.90
Make tasks attractive by including novel and fantasy elements	3.15	1.10
Present various auditory and visual teaching aids	2.76	1.14
Encourage students to create products	2.53	0.99
Break the routine by varying the presentation format	2.52	1.11
<b>Group: Make the learning tasks stimulating</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>0.76</b>

Table 5 features items related to the macrostrategy group “create a pleasant classroom environment” ( $M = 3.08$ ). The items that received the highest means from this group were “avoid social comparison” ( $M = 3.68$ ) and “bring in and encourage humor” ( $M = 3.13$ ). While participants claim that their English-language literature instructors were likely to use humor and try to create an egalitarian classroom atmosphere, they only rarely attempted to “create a supportive classroom climate that promotes risk-taking” ( $M = 2.61$ ) and to “use short and interesting opening activities to start each class” ( $M = 2.39$ ). This latter finding stands in contrast to participants’ beliefs that their instructors tend to use a variety of interesting topics ( $M = 3.63$ ) as reported in Table 4. Moreover, the fact that instructors were reported to rarely encourage risk taking may be related to the more traditional teacher-centered classrooms that are often found across the Arab world [14] and could therefore be linked to the lack of encouraging creative learning.

Table 5

**Create a pleasant classroom environment**

Item	Mean	SD
Avoid social comparison	3.68	1.16
Bring in and encourage humor	3.13	0.93
Create a supportive classroom climate that promotes risk-taking	2.61	0.98
Use a short and interesting opening activity to start each class	2.39	1.11
<b>Group: Create a pleasant classroom climate</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>0.75</b>

Of the five microstrategies related to the group “promote learners’ self-confidence”, three recorded means above 3.00 (see Table 6). These were “provide students with positive feedback” ( $M = 3.23$ ), “encourage students

to try harder" ( $M = 3.21$ ), and "design tasks that are within the students' ability" ( $M = 3.10$ ). The first two of these items relate to the use of various forms of positive reinforcement and encouragement within the classroom. The final item among this group about instructors designing tasks that are within students' abilities relates to a microstrategy featured on Table 4 about making learning tasks challenging. Again, the fact that participants believe their instructors to make classroom tasks challenging yet within their abilities suggests that their teachers are aware of the importance of integrating language instruction into their literature classes.

The two items from this group that received means below 3.00, thereby suggesting that participants believe their instructors to only employ them rarely, were "make clear to students that communicating meaning effectively is more important than being grammatically correct" ( $M = 2.73$ ) and "teach students learning techniques" ( $M = 2.61$ ). Regarding the former item, it is often reported that Omani students' strongest core English language skill is oral communication, with their instructors perhaps not seeing the necessity of explicitly highlighting the importance of communication over accuracy to their learners. This may be especially the case in literature classes where the exploration of content could conceivably be privileged over the development of the kinds of English-language communicative skills that teachers may already assume their learners to possess. In terms of the latter item, it is interesting to note the fact that students did not believe their instructors to teach them the learning techniques they need to become independent learners is also reflected in the claim that these instructors did not focus on self-motivating techniques as reported in Table 6.

Table 6

**Promote learners' self-confidence**

Item	Mean	SD
Provide students with positive feedback	3.23	1.08
Encourage students to try harder	3.21	1.01
Design tasks that are within the students' ability	3.10	1.01
Make clear to students that communicating meaning effectively is more important than being grammatically correct	2.73	1.07
Teach students learning techniques	2.61	1.08
<b>Group: Promote learners' self-confidence</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>0.89</b>

"Recognize students' efforts" ( $M = 2.94$ ) was one of the five questionnaire groups that received an overall mean below 3.00, thus suggesting that instructors were generally unlikely to employ this macrostrategy (see Table 7). Two items from this group received means above 3.00. These were "promote effort attributions" and "recognize students' efforts and achievements". Both these microstrategies received means of 3.08, which suggests that participants' believe their instructors often use them to boost student

motivation. On the other hand, respondents believe that their teachers only rarely made sure that their “grades reflect students’ effort and hard work” ( $M = 2.81$ ) and “monitor students’ progress and celebrate their victories” ( $M = 2.48$ ). It is an interesting contrast that, despite the fact participants believe their instructors recognized their efforts, they nonetheless did not think that their grades reflected their hard work. Some evidence from Oman suggests that many students think that their instructors should pass learners despite their actual level of classroom achievement [15], with grades often seen as more a reflection of the relationship between instructor and learner than an accurate representation of performance.

Table 7

## Recognize students’ effort

Item	Mean	SD
Promote effort attributions	3.08	1.05
Recognize students’ efforts and achievements	3.08	1.18
Make sure grades reflect students’ effort and hard work	2.81	1.25
Monitor students’ progress and celebrate their victories	2.48	1.32
<b>Group: Recognize students’ effort</b>	<b>2.94</b>	<b>0.79</b>

Table 8 features items related to the questionnaire group “familiarize learners with L2-related values” ( $M = 2.90$ ). Although the mean for this group suggests that participants’ instructors only rarely attempted to familiarize their learners with the cultural values associated with English language cultures, of the seven items related to this group, five received means of 3.00 or above. For example, participants maintain that their instructors usually “use only English in the class” ( $M = 3.74$ ), and that they were, indeed, likely to “familiarize students with the cultural background of the literary pieces they discuss” ( $M = 3.65$ ). This latter finding, in particular, suggests that English-language literature instructors are aware of the importance of introducing learners to the cultures associated with the English language and / or its literary products – the importance of which has been highlighted by a number of scholars [16–18]. Moreover, participants also believe that their instructors were likely to “introduce authentic cultural materials” ( $M = 3.00$ ) in the classroom.

Participants also state that their instructors often reminded them of “the benefits of literature and mastering English” ( $M = 3.48$ ) and that they “encourage students to use English outside the classroom” ( $M = 3.44$ ). It has been suggested that many Omani students, at least at the tertiary level, fail to see the value of mastering the English language despite the dominance it has attained in a number of domains both within Oman and across the wider Arab Gulf [19, 20]. The fact that participants believe their instructors often remind them of English’s potential benefits suggests that they are aware of this challenge and are actively attempting to address it.

While participants claim that their instructors often employed five of the motivational microstrategies from this group, the remaining two items recorded means between 1.00 and 2.00 which suggests that participants believe their instructors either never or very rarely employed them. These were “invite English speaking foreigners to class to speak about literature” ( $M = 1.76$ ) and “invite senior students to share their English and literature learning experiences” ( $M = 1.74$ ). Both of these strategies involve inviting outside “experts” to the classroom, with the apparent reluctance of instructors to extend this invitation perhaps a result of cramped curricula that allows little extra time. However, it could also be that inviting close role models (i.e., other Omani learners further along their language and / or literature learning careers and native English speakers that learners may only have limited opportunities to interact with outside the classroom) to the classroom could be an ideal way of increasing learner motivation and highlighting some of the more concrete advantages of engaging with their learning.

Table 8

**Familiarize learners with L2-related values**

Item	Mean	SD
Use only English in the class	3.74	0.97
Familiarize students with the cultural background of the literary pieces they discuss	3.65	1.01
Remind students of the benefits of literature and of mastering English	3.48	1.23
Encourage students to use English outside the classroom	3.44	1.20
Introduce authentic cultural materials	3.00	1.07
Invite English speaking foreigners to class to speak about literature	1.76	1.17
Invite senior students to share their English and literature learning experiences	1.74	1.09
<b>Group: Familiarize learners with L2-related values</b>	<b>2.90</b>	<b>0.74</b>

Of the five items related to the macrostrategy group “promote group cohesiveness and group norms” ( $M = 2.85$ ), only two recorded means above 3.00 (see Table 9). These were “encourage students to share personal experiences and thoughts” ( $M = 3.37$ ) and “explain the importance of participation in class discussions” ( $M = 3.06$ ). Participants believe that their literature instructors often engaged in these motivation microstrategies, which suggests that teachers value active participation in their classes and encourage the input of students’ values and opinions. However, despite this, participants believe that their teachers only rarely allowed “students to get to know each other” ( $M = 2.90$ ), which may be due to the relatively high level of English language proficiency students in the sample have already obtained and instructors’ beliefs that these types of activities are therefore not appropriate for such mature learners. Moreover, despite a number of findings here

suggesting that instructors may appreciate the value of creating learner-centered classrooms, it is interesting to note that participants believe their instructors only rarely “let students suggest class activities” ( $M = 2.05$ ), and thus had little influence on the course the lesson would take. However, despite this, differentiated learning may be a somewhat common feature of English classrooms in Omani tertiary institutions, with participants claiming that their instructors only rarely expected them to “work towards the same goal” ( $M = 2.85$ ).

Table 9

**Promote group cohesiveness and group norms**

Item	Mean	SD
Encourage students to share personal experiences and thoughts	3.37	1.04
Explain the importance of participation in class discussion	3.06	1.21
Allow students to get to know each other	2.90	1.26
Ask students to work toward the same goal	2.85	1.10
Let students suggest class activities	2.05	1.11
<b>Group: Promote group cohesiveness and group norms</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>0.77</b>

Closely tied to these findings, Table 10 suggests that participants believe their instructors to only rarely “promote learner autonomy” ( $M = 2.84$ ). Only one of the six microstrategies related to the development of autonomous learners recorded a mean above 3.00. This was “encourage peer teaching and group presentation” ( $M = 3.26$ ). Peer instruction has been suggested to be viewed somewhat positively by Omani learners [21], despite a number of potential concerns about the quality and scope of this practice. While the mean for this item does indicate at least one element of a more student-centered classroom, the remaining items related to this macrostrategy indicate that Omani classrooms are still largely teacher-centered. For example, participants believe that their instructors only rarely gave them “choices in deciding how and when they will be assessed” ( $M = 2.98$ ), to “involve students in designing and running the literature course” ( $M = 2.55$ ), and to “allow students to assess themselves” ( $M = 2.52$ ). Moreover, participants claim that their instructors only rarely “adopt the role of ‘facilitator’” ( $M = 2.94$ ), which suggests that English-language literature teachers may still be viewed by their learners more as “givers of knowledge” and sources of information. Finally, learners claim that their teachers were unlikely to “teach self-motivation strategies” ( $M = 2.50$ ), thus leaving them more or less dependent on their instructors to increase and maintain their motivation.

The macrostrategy group “increase learners’ goal-orientedness” received the lowest overall mean ( $M = 2.74$ ), with all of the four items associated with this group recording means between 2.00 and 3.00. For example, participants state that their instructors only rarely encouraged them to “set

learning goals” ( $M = 2.95$ ) and to “develop realistic beliefs about English language learning” ( $M = 2.92$ ).

Table 10

## Promote learner autonomy

Item	Mean	SD
Encourage peer teaching and group presentation	3.26	1.09
Give students choices in deciding how and when they will be assessed	2.98	1.02
Adopt the role of a ‘facilitator’	2.94	1.11
Involve students in designing and running the literature course	2.55	1.04
Allow students to assess themselves	2.52	1.11
Teach self-motivating strategies	2.50	1.05
<b>Group: Promote learner autonomy</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>0.77</b>

Closely related to this point, participants also claim that their teachers rarely “discuss course objectives and review them regularly” ( $M = 2.18$ ). These findings may be accounted for by the fact that many experienced literature instructors employed in the Omani context were trained in traditional methodologies such as New Criticism, while a few have been trained via reader response principles with the focus on teachers’ input and literary analysis. These teachers, therefore, are unlikely to incorporate learners’ personal needs into the curriculum and / or to encourage a critical examination of these objectives. Moreover, the kind of test-driven instruction that is often claimed to dominate classrooms across the Arab world [22] may also make it far more unlikely for instructors to encourage their learners to develop realistic beliefs about the nature of language learning than to prepare them with the skills and “facts” they will need to be successful on their exams. The final microstrategy from this group is “discuss course objectives and review them regularly” ( $M = 2.18$ ). As the presentation of specific and meaningful lesson goals is often claimed as an important aspect of good teaching practice [23], this is an area that English-language literature instructors in Oman may benefit from focusing more on in the future in order to build their learners’ goal-orientedness.

Table 11

## Increase learners’ goal-orientedness

Item	Mean	SD
Encourage students to set learning goals	2.95	1.30
Help students develop realistic beliefs about English language learning	2.92	1.19
Find out students’ needs and build them into curriculum	2.50	0.90
Discuss course objectives and review them regularly	2.18	1.21
<b>Group: Increase learners’ goal-orientedness</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>0.89</b>

## **Discussion**

The primary goal of this research was to ascertain the frequency with which Omani students believe their instructors to employ the motivational strategies featured in the questionnaire to motivate them in their English-language literature and to compare these beliefs with the perceptions of instructors as reported in Al-Mahrooqi et al. [1]. Results suggest that participants believe their instructors to employ half of the ten questionnaire motivation macrostrategies often and the remaining five rarely. The five macrostrategies that respondents claim to be used often in their literature classes were “presents tasks properly”, “exhibits proper teacher behavior”, “make the learning tasks stimulating”, “create a pleasant classroom environment”, and “promote learners’ self-confidence”. It is interesting to note that four of these five macrostrategies were also featured in the top five ranked strategies in terms of frequency in Al-Mahrooqi et al.’s investigation on which this research is largely based although, unfortunately, that study did not report frequency means for macrostrategies. In fact, the only motivational macrostrategy that recorded a mean above 3.00 here that was not ranked in the top five of the original research was “make the learning tasks stimulating”. This strategy, as discussed above, recorded a mean of 3.10 here although was ranked sixth in terms of frequency of use by instructor participants in Al-Mahrooqi et al. [Ibid.].

The five macrostrategies that participants believe their instructors to employ rarely in the current study were “recognize students’ efforts”, “familiarize learners with L2-related values”, “promote group cohesiveness and group norms”, “promote learner autonomy”, and “increase learners’ goal-orientedness”. Again, all but one of these strategies also featured in the five least frequently employed macrostrategies by instructors in Al-Mahrooqi et al. [1], with only “recognize students’ efforts” being ranked in that investigation as the fourth most frequently employed macrostrategy. However, despite this, student participants here agreed with instructors in the original research that they were far less likely to use the remaining four motivational strategies.

## **Conclusion and Limitations**

A number of potential limitations affect attempts to fully address both research questions posited here. The first is related to the relatively small sample size of only 65 Omani students, and the fact that this limited number cannot be said to reflect the Omani tertiary population of English-language literature learners with any degree of accuracy. In fact, it is quite possible that a number of extraneous variables, including participants’ relationships with their instructors, preconceptions they may hold about the English lan-

guage and literature and its teaching, and the grades they have achieved and / or expect to achieve in their courses, may all influence participants' questionnaire responses. Moreover, as most students were drawn from only four classes from Oman's only public university, the particular socio-cultural exigencies of the capital city in which the university is located and / or the literary classrooms concerned may influence the results reported here.

In terms of the second research question that sought to compare these findings to those from Al-Mahrooqi et al. [1], it should be explicitly highlighted that any comparison between two samples drawn at different times from a more or less dynamic population is bound, by its very nature, to be problematic. In particular, the 286 teacher participants featured in the original research were not drawn at the same time as the 65 student participants here and, therefore, the population could be conceived of as significantly changing within the data collection period due to the influence of a number of factors including attrition, changing government policies, the social context in which education is taking place, differing levels of funding, changes in administrative and other support staff and so on. Moreover, even if instructors and students were sampled from the same research context at the same time, there is still the chance that any discrepancies in findings in terms of the frequency with which featured macrostrategies are employed would be due to specific classroom practices favored by individual teachers rather than trends across the entire government-funded education system. The authors explicitly acknowledge these areas of concern and, for these reasons, note that any comparison between the two studies must be performed with a great deal of caution.

However, despite these concerns, it should be reiterated that participants in both the current research and in the original study hold very similar perceptions about the frequency with which the ten motivational macrostrategies featured on the questionnaire were employed in Omani English-language literature classrooms. Therefore, it may be possible to claim that English-language instructors in the Omani context are capable of offering instruction in ways that their students believe to be appropriate and motivating. Moreover, this tends to contribute to the creation of a pleasant and supportive classroom environment in which learners can build their self-confidence and, ultimately, take the kinds of chances that allow them to build their English-language proficiency and understanding of English-language literature.

However, despite these positives, it may be the case that English-language literature instructors in Oman do not, despite the introduction of the Basic Education system at the primary and secondary levels that places learner independence at the heart of the curriculum, attempt to promote learner autonomy. This general lack of belief among instructors in the value of engendering learner autonomy, which may be related to the relatively low



value placed upon this as a motivational strategy, has recently been explored in some depth in the Omani context [24, 25]. Moreover, this lack of focus on guiding learners to become independent as a means of increasing their motivation may also be related to a lack of goal-orientedness as a motivating factor as the presentation and discussion of classroom learning goals may be a means through which learners can gain confidence and thereby be weaned of an over-reliance on their instructors.

Finally, while the fact that neither students nor instructors believe the promotion of group cohesiveness was commonly employed as motivating factor within English-language literature classrooms may be due more to cultural norms in which group cohesiveness is already interpreted by instructors as being high or that subgroups based on ethnic / tribal / linguistic lines exist within the classroom that are too strong for teachers to overcome, the lack of focus on familiarizing learners with English-language related cultural values is a contentious issue within the Arab world. In particular, although a number of scholars highlight the importance of learning about the cultures related to the English language in order to learn the language itself and/or gain a greater understanding of its literature [26, 27], others claim that exposing learners to these cultural values can be harmful to their sense of identity [28, 29]. It may be that instructors within Oman are mindful of these claims and tend to err on the side of caution when presenting English-language literature to their learners and hence avoid explicitly instructing them about Western socio-cultural values. This is an area that relates directly to the claim that the 48 microstrategies featured in Al-Mahrooqi et al. [1] are compiled from “Western sources”, with this again potentially influencing the frequency with which they are employed by instructors within the Omani context.

### *References*

1. Al-Mahrooqi, R., Abrar-ul-Hassan, S., Asante, C. (2012). Analyzing the use of motivational strategies by EFL teachers in Oman. *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research*. 8 (1). pp. 36-76.
2. Brown, H.D. (1987). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
3. Dörnyei, Z., Ottó, I. (1998). Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation. *Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*. 4. pp. 43-69.
4. Gardner, R.C. (2001). Integrative motivation: Past, present and future. URL: <http://publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/docs/GardnerPublicLecture1.pdf>
5. 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 (1). pp. 153-174.
6. Dörnyei, Z., Csizér, K. (2002). Some dynamics of language attitudes and motivation: Results of a longitudinal nationwide survey. *Applied Linguistics*. 23. pp. 421-462.
7. Alrabai, F. (2010). *The use of motivational strategies in the Saudi EFL classroom*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia.

8. Tsui, A.B. (1996). Reticence and anxiety in second language learning. *Voices from the language classroom: Qualitative research in second language education*. K.M. Bailey, D. Nunan (eds.). New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 145-167.
9. Chen, T. (2003). Reticence in class and on-line: Two ESL students' experiences with communicative language teaching. *System*. 31 (2). pp. 259-281.
10. Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
11. Long, M., Porter, P. (1985). Groupwork, interlanguage talk, and second language acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*. 19 (2). pp. 207-228.
12. Jackson, J. (2002). Reticence in second language case discussions: Anxiety and aspirations. *System*. 30 (1). pp. 65-84.
13. Rost, M. (2006). *Generating student motivation*. New York: Pearson Education.
14. Kripps, A.K. (2013). High tech and low tech out-of-classroom language learning for Arabic L1 speakers of English. *Arab World English Journal*. 4 (1). pp. 152-160.
15. Roche, T., Sinha, Y., Denman, C.J. (2015). Unravelling failure: Belief and performance in English for Academic Purposes programs in Oman. *Issues in English education in the Arab world*. R. Al-Mahrooqi, C.J. Denman (eds.). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. pp. 37-59.
16. Alkire, S. (2007). Teaching literature in the Muslim world: A bicultural approach. *Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal*. 10 (4). URL: <http://tesl-ej.org/ej40/a3.pdf>
17. Denman, C.J. (2012). Cultural divides between Arab-Muslim students and Western literature: Implications for the English language classroom. *Literacy, literature and identity: Multiple perspectives*. A. Roscoe, R. Al-Mahrooqi (eds.). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. pp. 1-20.
18. Karahan, F. (2007). Language attitudes of Turkish students towards the English language and its use in Turkish context. *Journal of Arts and Sciences*. 7. pp. 73-87.
19. Al-Mahrooqi, R., Denman, C.J., Ateeq, B.A. (2015). Adaptation and first-year university students in the Sultanate of Oman. *Issues in English education in the Arab world*. R. Al-Mahrooqi, C.J. Denman (eds.). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. pp. 60-82.
20. Charise, A. (2007). 'More English, less Islam?': An overview of English language functions in the Arabian / Persian Gulf. Retrieved from The University of Toronto, Department of English. URL: <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~cpercyc/courses/eng6365-charise.htm>
21. Denman, C.J., Al-Mahrooqi, R. (2014). Peer feedback in the writing classrooms of an Omani university: Perceptions and practice. *Proceedings of Bilkent University School of English Language 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference: Teachers Exploring Practice for Professional Learning*. Ankara: Bilkent University Press.
22. Al-Kaddah, S. (2010). Transforming student teacher practices through action research reflective practice: Call for reform in UAE Education. *Developing a nation through educational Emiratisation*. M. O'Brian (ed.). Abu Dhabi: HCT Press. pp. 33-42.
23. Marzano, R.J. (2009). *Designing and teaching lesson goals and objectives*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
24. Chirciu, A.R. (2015). Teachers' views on learner autonomy in the Omani context. *Issues in English education in the Arab world*. R. Al-Mahrooqi, C.J. Denman (eds.). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. pp. 233-256.
25. Chirciu, A.R., Mishra, T. (2015). Looking through the crystal ball: Exploring learner autonomy within the classroom dynamic interrelational space. *Issues in English education in the Arab world*. R. Al-Mahrooqi, C.J. Denman (eds.). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. pp. 257-282.

26. Cruz, J.H. (2010). The role of literature and culture in English language teaching. *RE Linguistica Aplicada*. 7. pp. 1-16. URL: [http://relinguistica.azc.uam.mx/no007/no07\\_art09.htm](http://relinguistica.azc.uam.mx/no007/no07_art09.htm)
27. Gao, F. (2006). Language is culture: On intercultural communication. *Journal of Language and Linguistics*. 5 (1). pp. 58-67.
28. Asraf, R.M. (1996). Teaching English as a second or foreign language: The place of culture. *English and Islam: Creative encounters* 96. International Islamic University Malaysia, Department of English Language and Literature, Malaysia. pp. 349-367.
29. Karmani, S. (2005). Petro-linguistics: The emerging nexus between oil, English, and Islam. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*. 4 (2). pp. 87-102.

*Resived 02.05.2017*

**Information about the authors:**

**Rahma Al-Mahrooqi** – Ph.D., Associate Professor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Post-graduate Studies and Research, Sultan Qaboos University (P. O. Box 50, PC 123, Al-Khoudh, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman). E-mail: [mrhama@squ.edu.om](mailto:mrhama@squ.edu.om)

**Christopher Denman** – Ed.D., Researcher, Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Post-graduate Studies and Research, Sultan Qaboos University (P. O. Box 50, PC 123, Al-Khoudh, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman). E-mail: [denman@squ.edu.om](mailto:denman@squ.edu.om)

**Faiza Al-Hasani** – M.Sc., Lecturer, Higher College of Technology (PO Box 1691, PC 133, Al-Khuwair, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman). E-mail: [darsait23@yahoo.com](mailto:darsait23@yahoo.com)