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Abstract

Motivational strategies are under-researched and studies so far conducted have been in sociolinguistic contexts where English is not extensively encountered outside the classroom. Given additionally that little is known about strategies relating to the design and content of classroom activities, the purpose of this study is to identify and critically evaluate strategies focusing on activity design and content in classroom activities that, in a setting where students have extensive extramural English encounters, teachers have found to be effective in generating motivation. Using Dörnyei's (2001) taxonomy of motivational strategies as an analytical tool, 112 descriptions of motivational activities provided by a randomly-drawn sample of secondary EFL teachers in Sweden ($N = 252$) were content-analyzed with a focus on design and content. Providing support for Dörnyei's proposals, the results reveal the prominence of activities that enable students to work with authentic materials ('cultural artefacts produced for a purpose other than teaching') and in ways that can be experienced as authentic. Activities involving digital technologies and providing opportunities for creativity are also prominent. Use of authentic materials places high demands on teachers' pedagogical and linguistic skills. In contexts where students respond positively to such activities, teachers' language awareness skills become of significant importance.

Keywords: L2 motivation; motivational strategies; activity design; extramural English; authenticity

Motivational Strategies and the Reframing of English: Activity Design and Challenges for
Teachers in Contexts of Extensive Extramural Encounters

Introduction

As part of the shift towards more cognitive, situated perspectives in second language acquisition in the 1990s, researchers began to investigate the strategies teachers use to generate and maintain students' motivation (e.g., Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Williams & Burden, 1997). To date, Dörnyei's (2001) book *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* provides the most comprehensive and detailed account of the factors that impact on students' classroom motivation, including an inventory of "the methods and techniques to generate and maintain the learner's motivation" (p. 2). Despite their practical importance, motivational strategies have been under-researched (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). Not only is it the case that in foreign/second language (L2) motivation research theoretically-focused studies substantially outnumber those reporting on practically-oriented ways of increasing learners' motivation, but current trends of investigating the role of imagination and exploring the dynamical aspects of learner motivation have also contributed to the lack of interest in motivational strategies (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). To give an example, it is illuminating to note that in the motivation chapter of their book *The Psychology of the Language Learner Revisited*, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) make just one mention of motivational strategies (and this in the context of methodological developments).

Not only do motivational strategies fail to feature among the current directions motivation research is taking, the studies that have been conducted have been in sociolinguistic contexts such as Iran (Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012), Korea (Guilloteaux, 2013; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008), Saudi Arabia (Alrabai, 2011, 2016; Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, & Ratcheva, 2013) and Taiwan (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007) where English is not extensively encountered in environments outside the classroom. However, in many settings today,

English is in the process of losing its foreign language status (Graddol, 2006). Not only is it becoming a ‘must have’ skill (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2017) but in some places English is a necessity for orientation in everyday environments (Henry & Cliffordson, 2015, advance access). Consequently, strategies proven to be effective in generating and maintaining motivation in the above-listed contexts may differ from those in settings where English is more frequently encountered and has become an important social literacy. Further, given ‘traditional’ education regimes, pedagogical practices and teacher–student relationships characteristic of such settings, differences in strategy use may be revealed where the curriculum offers greater flexibility, teachers have greater autonomy, and teacher–student relationships are more symmetrical.

To summarize, L2 motivation research lacks experience-based insights from teachers (Ushioda, 2008), and previous studies have focused on a broad range of strategies rather than particular types. In particular, little is known about strategies relating to the design and content of classroom activities (Poupore, 2014). Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify and critically evaluate motivational strategies revealed in teachers’ descriptions of activities that are effective in generating motivation in a setting where English is constituent in students’ everyday lives.

Motivational Strategies

Dörnyei’s (2001) taxonomy of motivational strategies provides both a catalogue of factors teachers need to take into account when selecting or designing learning activities, and a theoretical framework that can be used to analyze motivational dimensions. However, even though some motivational strategies, such as displaying appropriate teacher behavior, fostering good teacher-student relations and promoting learner self-confidence “do appear to be valued universally by teachers and learners” (Lamb, 2017), Dörnyei’s framework neither can, nor is intended to function as a universally-applicable template. Motivational strategies

are not “rock-solid golden rules” (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 30). Rather, they take the form of principled proposals that, depending on educational, contextual and linguistic circumstances, may differ in efficacy. Indeed, given the diversity of contexts in which English is currently learned and the difficulty of characterizing “the interactions among motivation, context and pedagogy in a generalised sense” (Ushioda, 2013a, p. 235), the particularities of cultural and educational settings are likely to “render some strategies completely useless/meaningless” while highlighting others as “particularly prominent” (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 30).

Cross-cultural differences relating to motivational activities are clearly evident in the research. For example, while in their Hungarian study Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) found that the macro strategy of ‘selecting interesting tasks’ was ranked sixth out of 18 macro-strategies, in a Taiwanese context Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) found that the motivational strategy ‘make the learning tasks stimulating’ was ranked only seventh of ten macro-strategies. Similarly, Alrabai (2011) found that Saudi teachers ranked the macro-strategy of making learning stimulating and enjoyable fifth of nine general strategies, while in a Korean context Guilloteaux (2013) found that the same strategy ranked next to bottom of 12 macro-strategies investigated.

Cross-cultural differences notwithstanding, the design and content of activities constitutes an important part of teachers’ motivational practice. In Dörnyei’s (2001) taxonomy, these strategies encompass setting up challenges and competitions, offering tangible rewards, personalizing content, including creative, interesting and fantasy elements, providing intellectual challenges and creating tasks with concrete products. In two studies using the Motivational Orientation of Language Teaching (MOLT) observation schedule, it was found that Korean and Iranian English teachers’ motivational practice was linked to students’ motivated learning behavior (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012). Using an experimental design to assess the impact of Saudi English teachers’ motivational

strategies on students' motivation, Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini and Ratcheva (2013) found that students who had received teaching which, among other things, included the strategies of (i) making tasks more attractive by adding new and humorous elements, and (ii) relating content and tasks to students' backgrounds and everyday experiences, were more motivated than those in a control group. In similar experimental study, also in a Saudi Arabian context, Alrabai (2016) found that strategies that included establishing relevance between L2 English students' learning in class and their lives outside the classroom had a positive effect on their motivation. Finally, in a mixed-methods study from Korea, Poupore (2014) found that activity content relating to immediate personal life themes (such as relationships and challenges) was perceived to be intrinsically interesting and, thus, motivational.

However, as previously indicated, there are to our knowledge no empirical studies investigating motivational strategies where focus is systematically directed to the design and content of learning activities. Furthermore, in the above-listed studies, the data generated stem either from teachers' rankings of the relative importance of activity-focused strategies (Alrabai, 2011; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Guilloteaux, 2013), controlled observations of teaching where activity-focused strategies constituted one component of broader measures of teachers' practice (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012), or experiments designed to measure the impact of teachers' motivational strategies on students' motivation (Alrabai, 2011; Moskovsky et al., 2013). Our study takes another approach by focusing on teachers' descriptions of activities they have found to be effective in everyday classroom teaching. The current study also differs from previous work in that it examines strategy use in a setting where English is extensively encountered outside of classrooms and is constituent in students' everyday lives.

English in Transformation

In motivation research the changed role of English as a ‘world auxiliary language’ (Lo Bianco, 2014) and indispensable in cross-cultural communication (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008) has been evident for some time (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2017). A decade ago in their large-scale longitudinal study of Hungarian students’ motivation, Dörnyei and his associates (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006) first identified the effects of this shifting status. Although remaining the most popular language to learn, the correlational link between choosing English and students’ motivation was found to be decreasing, a finding interpreted as indicating that English was becoming “a self-evident part of education” (p. 144). Concurrent changes have also been observed in learners’ identifications with English. Today, many people develop a distinct identification with the sociocultural loading of global English that is associated with “a non-parochial, cosmopolitan, globalized world-citizen identity” (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015, p. 79). Depending on the sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts in which encounters with English take place, this identification can result in the development of a *bicultural* identity, where an English-mediated global identity exists alongside an L1-mediated local identity (Lamb, 2004). It can also result in a *hybrid identity* where the sense of being a globally involved, English-speaking person is central in experiences of selfhood, and identity experiences are equally likely to be mediated by English as by the L1 (Henry & Cliffordson, 2015, advance access).

The sense that English is losing its foreign language status (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; cf. Graddol, 2006) is particularly evident in Scandinavian settings where “an overwhelming Anglicization” has taken place (Cabau, 2009, p. 134). Not only are state and commercial TV stations in Scandinavian countries “practically running a continuous course in spoken English” (Hultgren, Gregersen, & Thøgersen, 2014, p. 17), but young people spend substantial periods of their leisure-time in English-mediated digital environments, not least

compared to the English they receive each week in school (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). As in most educational systems, in Sweden English is a core subject, and most students begin learning the language as early as the first grade. Generally, students have two to three lessons a week (depending on local time allocations), and from grade 7 are taught by specially-qualified subject teachers.

The process of Anglicization in society generally, and the gap between the time spent in English-mediated environments outside school and the time spent learning English in school have implications for motivation. Not only do students express the feeling of a difference between experiences speaking/using English in school and their ‘extramural English experiences’ (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016), but that school experiences lack the authenticity of leisure-time experiences. These dissonances affect students’ attitudes to learning English and their motivation (Henry, 2013, 2014; Henry & Cliffordson, 2015, advance access). Both directly and indirectly, students’ attitudes and classroom behaviors impact on teachers’ motivational strategies. Some strategies, such as those relating to the design and content of activities, are more likely to be affected than others. Specifically, because students’ extramural English experiences can be rich, meaningful and varied, the responses of teachers are likely to be most noticeable in strategies connected to the *design* of activities and the selection of *content*.

Purpose

The motivational strategies Dörnyei (2001) proposes are techniques generally found to be effective, his taxonomy functioning as “a summary of this practical knowledge” (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013, p. 7). Despite the practical importance of motivational strategies, empirical research has not been extensive (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007) and little is known about strategies focused on the design and content of classroom activities (Poupore, 2014). Further, as mentioned, the research that has taken place has been conducted in settings where English is

not widely encountered in everyday domains. Given additionally that L2 motivation research generally lacks experience-based insights from teachers (Ushioda, 2008), the study sets out to address the following research question:

In a setting where English is a part of students' everyday lives, and in relation to the design and content of activities, what motivational strategies appear as effective in generating motivation in the classroom?

Method

Design and Participants

As part of the Motivational Teaching in Swedish Secondary English (MoTISSE) project, during autumn 2014 a questionnaire focusing on teachers' professional practice and containing the open question "*Describe an activity or task that you have carried out with your pupils which you experience has motivated them*" was sent to 252 teachers of English in grades 6–9 (students aged 12–16) at 64 randomly-selected secondary schools in two regions of western Sweden. At each selected school, all teachers of English were identified, each receiving an email containing information about the study and a link to the questionnaire. Following reminders, questionnaires were received from 112 teachers (response rate: 44%). Of these, 97 teachers provided a written response to the open question. Because some respondents described more than one task/activity, the dataset comprises 112 descriptions.

The participating teachers, 83 women and 14 men, had a mean age of 42.5 (SD = 10.0). One question in the questionnaire asked about their teaching experience, and another whether they held a certificate for teaching English. As shown in Table 1, the majority of the participants were certified teachers with long work experience.

Table 1. *Participants' work experience and teacher certification.*

		Number of years working as an English teacher				Total (N)
		0–5 years (n)	6–10 years (n)	11–20 years (n)	> 20 years (n)	
Certification for teaching English	<i>Yes</i>	13	14	31	17	75
	<i>No</i>	11	4	3	4	22
Total		24	18	34	21	97

Data Analysis

With the aim of providing a quantitative description of the motivational strategies revealed in the teachers' texts, a content analysis was conducted (Krippendorff, 2012). This was carried out in five stages: data inputting; familiarization with the data; drawing up a coding schedule (including five focal areas); coding; and, finally, a reliability check.

Stage one: Data inputting. The texts were entered into NVivo 10.0.

Stage two: Familiarization with the data. The authors familiarized themselves with the data and collective discussions were held about observable motivational strategies.

Stage three: Drawing up the coding schedule. Based on these discussions, and drawing on the motivational macro-strategies in Dörnyei's (2001) taxonomy, a coding schedule was created. This is now described.

Dörnyei (2001) sets out a four-part framework grouping together a diverse range of methods that can generate and sustain students' motivation. These are, respectively, (i) creating the basic motivational conditions, (ii) generating initial motivation, (iii) maintaining and protecting motivation, and (iv) encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. Each overarching category is subdivided into a range of *macro-strategies* (35 in total), which are further subdivided to encompass a total of over 100 specific strategies (Dörnyei, 2001, pp. 137–144). Five of these macro-strategies (the original numbering in parentheses) focus on the design and content of activities. When creating the schedule, two aims were paramount; first, while remaining as close as possible to Dörnyei's taxonomy, to also take consideration of

contextual factors and, secondly, as far as possible, to create units with clear and unambiguous conceptual boundaries and without overlap (Neuendorf, 2015). Our five focal areas are described below.

Focus and content. This area covers strategies relating to the *focus* and *content* of activities. It encompasses Dörnyei's (2001) strategies of promoting 'integrative' values (11), making the teaching materials relevant (15) and making learning stimulating and enjoyable by including interesting content (18:ii). Further, taking account of students' extensive exposure to English outside school (Sundqvist, 2009), this focal area additionally included the category 'popular culture'. Also, because in the Swedish National Curriculum ethical issues form a specific area of content, and because the exploration of ethical issues can be highly motivational (Henry, 2013), 'ethical issues' was included as a separate category.

Categories: *Popular culture; National cultures; Intercultural content; Everyday issues in the world in which students live; Interests, experiences and future plans; Ethical issues.*

Sources. The focus of this area is on strategies related to the *sources* of materials used. As part of the macro-strategy of "promoting 'integrative' values" (11), Dörnyei (2001) advocates the use of authentic materials in activities with a sociocultural focus. Although authenticity is a contested concept, Gilmore (2007) makes clear that "most researchers use the term to refer to cultural artefacts like books, newspapers, magazines, radio and TV broadcasts, web sites, advertising, music and so on" (p. 107). Similarly, Tomlinson (2012) argues that an authentic text can be regarded as one "which is produced in order to communicate rather than to teach" (p. 162). In considering the sources of materials, authentic materials are operationalized as 'cultural artefacts produced for a purpose other than teaching'. ***Categories:*** *Authentic materials; Teacher created/manipulated materials; Textbook materials; Other learning materials; No materials used.*

Products and performances. This area of focus concerns strategies connected with the outcomes of activities and relates to Dörnyei's (2001) strategy of selecting/creating tasks with a tangible outcome (18:ix). Two issues are of concern. In that Dörnyei, Henry and Muir (2016) suggest that an activity that involves an end product which is presented to or performed for an external audience can be highly motivational, the first is whether or not any final product remains within the classroom (here categorized as either 'internal' or 'external'). The second involves the question of its authenticity (discussed above).

Categories: *Internal/non-authentic; Internal/authentic; External/authentic; No product or performance.*

Challenges and competitions. This area focuses on strategies where activities encompass a personal or intellectual challenge or some sense of competition. This corresponds to three of the characteristics of attractive tasks identified by Dörnyei (2001): a challenge requiring students to solve problems, to find hidden information or to discover something (18:i); an intriguing element that generates curiosity (18:iv); a competitive element (18:viii).

Categories: *Competition; Challenge; Curiosity; None of these characteristics.*

Personal expression. This area focuses on strategies where activities encompass scope for personal expression and choice and is subdivided into three categories: opportunities for creativity (Dörnyei, 2001) (18:vi), opportunities to work with topics of personal relevance (18:vii), and opportunities for choice (29). ***Categories:*** *Creativity; Personal relevance; Choice; None of these characteristics.*

At this stage two observations need to be made. First, it should be noted that some aspects of Dörnyei's (2001) motivational macro-strategy of 'making learning stimulating and enjoyable by increasing the attractiveness of tasks' (18) – specifically 'an exotic element' and 'humour' – were not included in the coding schedule. This was due to no obvious evidence of such characteristics when in stage one (see above) the dataset was first analyzed. Further,

because the teachers' descriptions of motivational activities were separated from a surrounding pedagogical context, we were unable to discern whether an activity involved 'something novel' (cf. Dörnyei, 2001, p. 76). Secondly, even though we had initially intended to include working constellations in the analyses (i.e., overlapping in part with strategy 19), this proved impossible due to insufficient information in the descriptions.

Stage four: Coding. Next, all four researchers went through the data together, identifying uncodeable responses (for instance, the response did not describe an activity, or the description was too vague). As a consequence, 18 descriptions were excluded. Thereafter, in line with the advice of Hak and Bernts (2009), the researchers split into pairs to separately code the remaining 94 descriptions.

During the coding process allocation to a category was determined by asking 'What is it about this activity that makes it motivational?'. In all cases, coding was made to a single category only; in cases where coding to more than one category was possible, the category deemed most plausible was selected.

Stage five: Reliability check. The two sets of coded data were then compared using the data comparison function in NVivo. The level of agreement ranged between 94.3% (Personal expression: no personal expression, $n = 38$) and 100% (Sources: textbook, $n = 1$). The Cohen's kappa coefficients ranged from .39 (Sources: teacher created, $n = 8$), to 1.0 (Sources: textbook, $n = 1$). For all categories the average was .752. According to Landis and Koch (1977), this indicates a substantial agreement. Given this agreement, a second round of post-hoc consensual coding was not deemed necessary. In what follows, the categorizations of the first coding-pair are reported.

Results

The results are presented separately for each focal area. An overview is separately provided in the Supporting Information (online).

Focus and Content

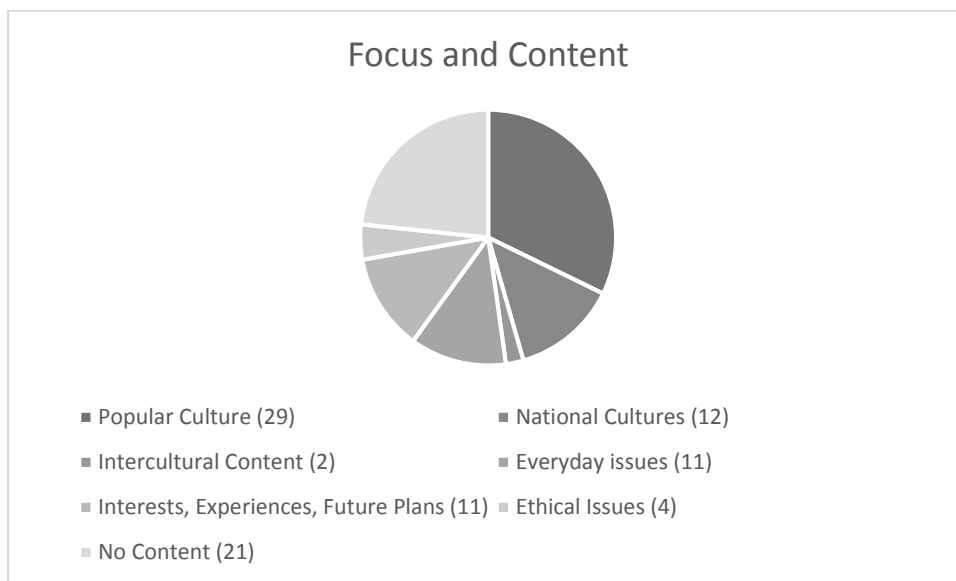


Figure 1. Focus and Content. $N = 94$. Uncodeable = 4.

Popular culture. (29 descriptions). By far the largest category in this focal area is the use and exploration of popular culture. The analysis and interpretation of popular films (e.g., *The Hunger Games*, *Jumanji*, and *Akeelah and the Bee*) and comparisons of film adaptations with original texts (e.g., *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, *The Book Thief*, *The Vampire's Assistant*, and *The Freedom Writers Diary*) form the content of many of the motivational activities teachers describe. Other popular cultural products are film clips and videos accessed on Internet sites (frequently YouTube). Often, these involve music or people whom students are likely to hold in esteem, such as celebrities, musicians and athletes. Other forms of popular culture include poetry, blogs, contemporary youth literature and audio books.

National cultures. (12 descriptions). The exploration of national cultures corresponds with Dörnyei's (2001) motivational strategy (11) of selecting activities and materials with a sociocultural focus which encourage students to conduct explorations of target language (TL)-communities and promote contact with TL-speakers and cultural products. The activities described often form part of a theme where English-speaking countries are in focus.

Activities frequently include creative and investigative elements, such as making video-blogs of imaginary visits to places of interest or creating travel documentaries, as well as use of Internet resources to explore different social phenomena, aspects of everyday life, and ways of speaking/communicating in English-speaking countries.

Intercultural content. (2 descriptions). While Hadfield and Dörnyei (2013) point to the motivational properties of intercultural activities (for instance, setting up ‘entering the L2 community’ projects), only two activities with intercultural content are found among the descriptions: an imaginary dialogue with a person in the USA who survived 9/11, and an eTwinning project with a class in France.

Everyday issues in the world in which students live. (11 descriptions). In this category activities where the Internet is used to follow current events feature prominently, sites consulted including YouTube and the online BBC news service. Topics range from pros and cons relating to the sale of sweets in school, to effective ways of combating crime. Here too, a number of the activities involve students carrying out their own investigations and making videos, news reports and radio programmes.

Interests, experiences and future plans. (11 descriptions). These are activities that provide opportunities for students to identify and work with topics of personal interest and which draw on experiences and/or allow the articulation of future desires. Activities that involve expressing views included a game entitled ‘Would you rather?’ and writing a letter to a newspaper. Personal reflections on important events and experiences in students’ lives were in focus in a journaling activity, while in an activity entitled ‘My future’ students imagined a future career and carried out an interview with someone in that occupation.

Ethical issues. (4 descriptions). Here topics in focus are the environment and climate change, human rights, animal rights, and sex and relationships. It is noteworthy that three of the activities formed parts of collaborative projects involving other subjects.

Sources

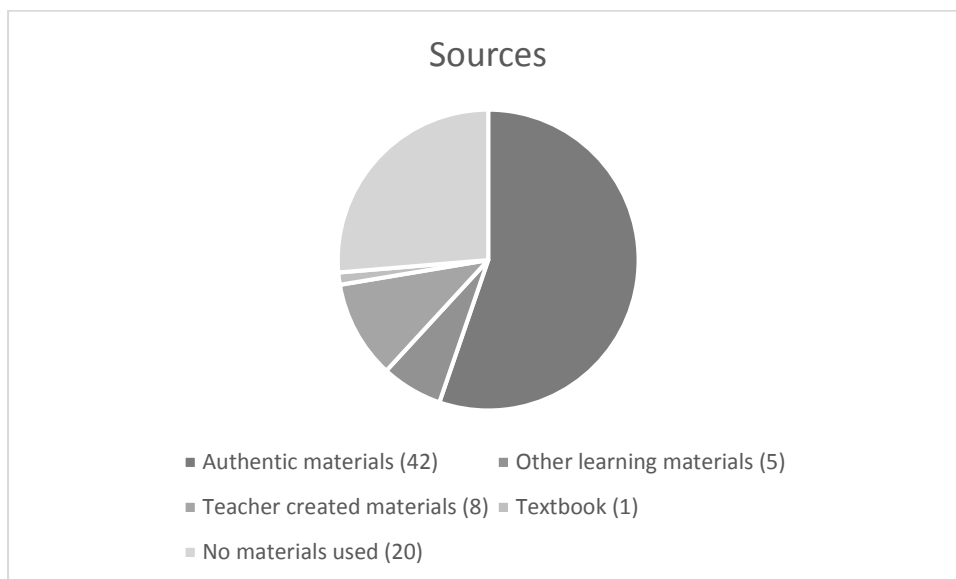


Figure 2. Sources. $N = 94$. Uncodeable = 18.

Authentic materials. (42 descriptions). A substantial majority of activities involved the use of authentic content, that is to say cultural artefacts produced for a purpose other than teaching (Gilmore, 2007; Tomlinson, 2012). These include films, short stories, poems and novels, online audiobooks, songs, music videos, YouTube clips, blogs and Internet news sites.

Textbooks. (1 description). In just one description does source material come from a textbook. Interestingly, this activity was supplemented with authentic materials:

“We read a textbook text on plastic surgery and the students then had to find out as much as they could about the topic (mostly from the Internet)”. [translated from Swedish]

Teacher created/manipulated materials. (8 descriptions). Materials designed or adapted by teachers were primarily flashcards and other materials used for playing games, but also protocols used for discussion and text analysis.

Other learning materials. (5 descriptions). In this category we find web-based language learning tools and programs (training receptive skills and vocabulary), as well as a radio

program produced for schools by the Swedish public service broadcaster, and material provided as part of an eTwinning project.

No materials used. (20 descriptions). With the exception of an activity where students wrote newspaper articles, all involved forms of competition or challenge (for example, speaking on a subject for a minute) and do not appear as requiring use of materials (see below).

Final Products and Performances

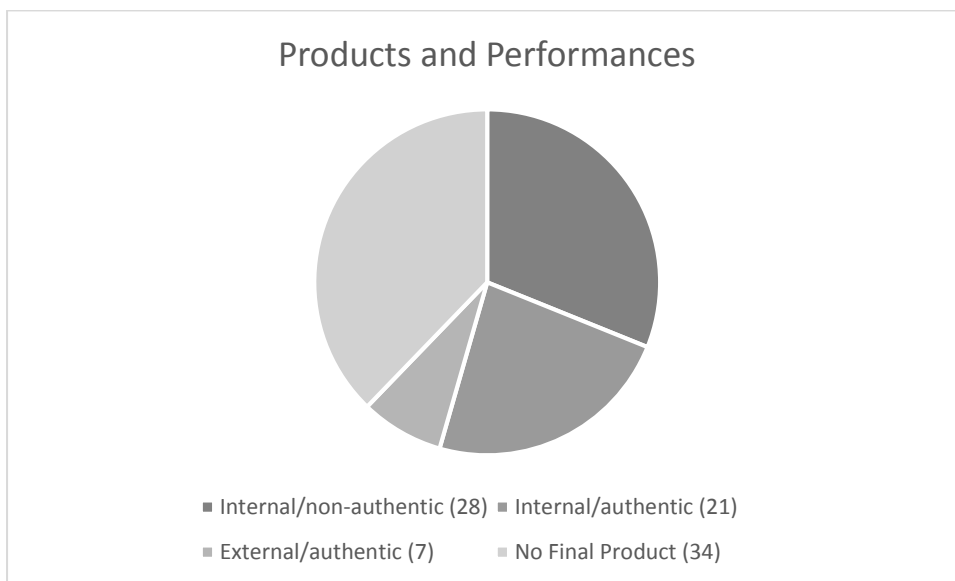


Figure 3. Products and Performances. $N = 94$. Uncodeable = 4.

Of the activities coded in this area, more than two thirds involved a final product or performance, a strategy which Dörnyei (2001, p. 77) suggests has the potential to “engage students to an unprecedented extent”. Using the same definition of authenticity as previously, these products/performances are categorized first as authentic/non-authentic, and secondly as either remaining in the classroom (internal), or being additionally disseminated outside of the classroom (external).

Internal/non-authentic. (28 descriptions). Products/performances were of a type generally only found in classrooms. The majority of these involved oral presentations (often

accompanied by powerpoint or keynote slides), different types of essay, film and book reviews, drama activities and for/against debates.

Internal/authentic. (21 descriptions). Authentic products/performances created and enacted in the confines of classrooms included news programs, reports and documentaries (recorded on students' computers using tools such as iMovie); podcasts; radio programs; advertising videos; food programs; travel programs; weather forecasts; screenplays; films of scenes from novels or plays that pupils interpret and act out; personal diaries; recipes; and classroom parties.

External/authentic. (7 descriptions). Of the products/performances disseminated beyond the classroom, five involved different types of blogging. The other two activities involved a music-based project performed for other classes and parents, and the creation of an information video about the school presented to new students.

Challenges and Competitions

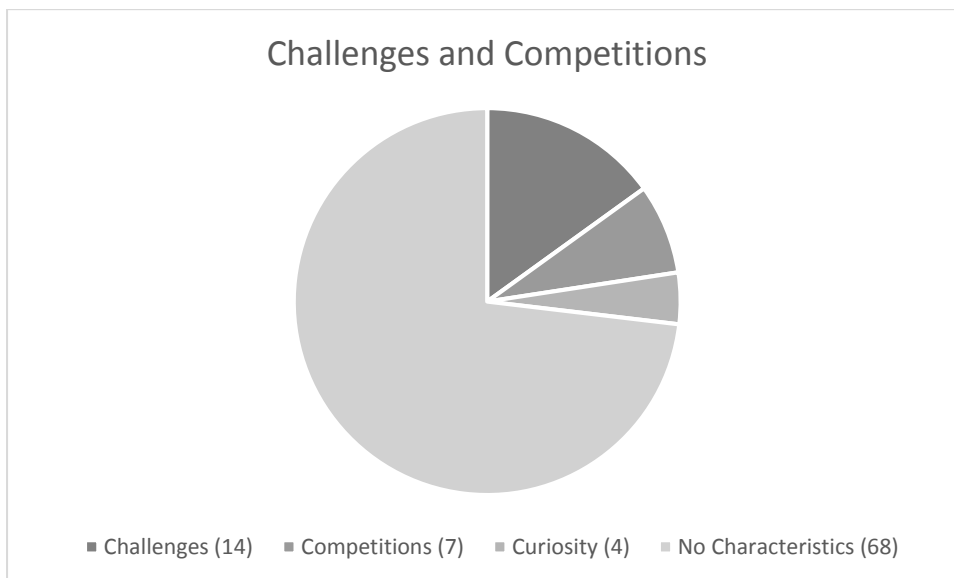


Figure 4. Challenges and competitions. $N = 94$. Uncodeable = 1.

Just over a quarter of the activities involved some form of personal or intellectual challenge or a competition.

Challenges. (14 descriptions). Activities involving an intellectual challenge included games where students had to explain the meanings of words on cards, or come up with reasons justifying or motivating a particular view or course of action.

Competitions. (7 descriptions). Here activities involved quizzes, games and structured debates (students having to construct convincing arguments on predetermined topics ranging from human rights issues to the merits of homework).

Curiosity. (4 descriptions). Two of these activities involved watching the beginning of a film/reading the opening chapters of a book, and then imaging what would happen next. The third involved creating the life-history of a person in a picture, while the fourth involved selecting a prize-winner from a list of worthy candidates. In these latter cases responses were compared between groups.

Personal Expression

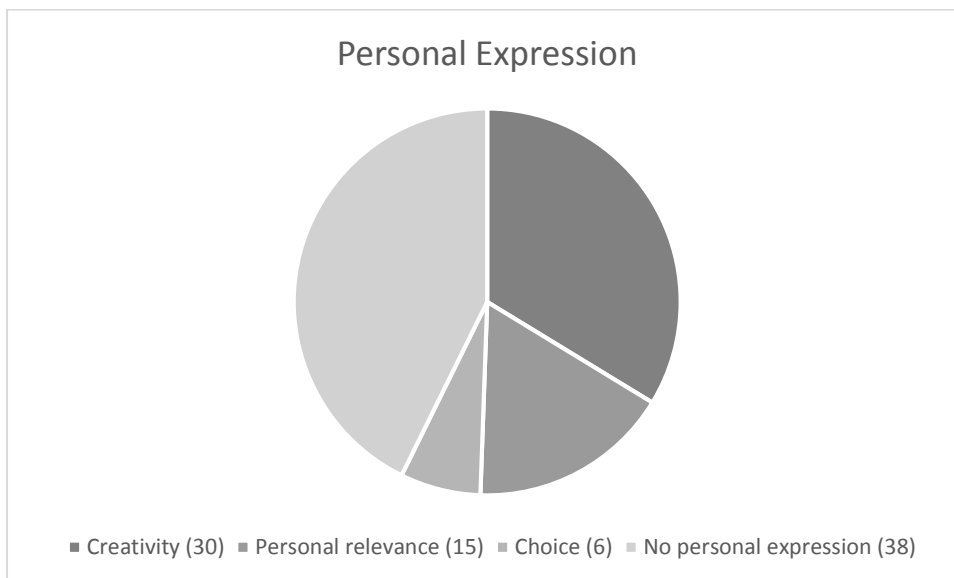


Figure 5. Personal Expression. $N = 94$. Uncodeable = 5.

Dörnyei (2001) suggests that pedagogical strategies which provide students with opportunities to select activities and assignments, and make choices about topics and materials, can all generate motivation (strategy 29). Additionally, actively promoting learner

autonomy and giving students opportunities to voice opinions and express preferences can have the effect that “motivational dispositions and identities evolve and are given expression” (Ushioda, 2011b, p. 21).

Creativity. (30 descriptions). Opportunities for creativity are highly prominent in teachers’ descriptions. Creative activities include those corresponding to Dörnyei’s (2001) category (18:6) that can “trigger fantasy”, or which encourage students to use “their imagination for creating make-believe stories, identifying with fictional characters or acting out pretend play” (p. 76). Examples of such imaginative activities include speculating about how a novel or film might end and then writing a screenplay or filming a dramatization. Other examples include the creation of fictional life-histories, and making a news program that along with serious reports includes imaginative, ‘made-up’ items. Other activities are of the type that Hadfield and Dörnyei (2013) describe as involving creative processes – writing stories, poems, letters and dialogues, making posters and creating songs – and which Ushioda (2011a, p. 204) suggests can encourage students “to view the target language as a means of self-expression and self-development”. Examples include different forms of role-playing, planning a surprise party for a classmate, writing scripts and recording radio programs, creating a TV program on a subject of interest, writing poems/song lyrics and posting them on the Internet, interviewing (using self-created protocols), and video-blogging.

Personal relevance. (15 descriptions). Motivational activities providing students with opportunities for personal expression are of varying kinds. They include different forms of diary-writing and journaling activities that allow students to engage with issues where they have personal interests (for instance, digital gaming), and the investigation and presentation of music genres and artists. For example, one activity invited students to explore personal memories associated with a particular song. In another, entitled ‘My Future’, students created an imaginary CV for an aspired-to occupation.

Choice. (6 descriptions). Descriptions of motivational activities providing students with opportunities for personal expression through making choices include choosing topics (e.g., selecting a news item from a number of online news sites, an article in a newspaper, or choosing a news story to follow over a week) and materials (often from online sources).

Discussion

The results of this principled empirical inquiry into the design and content of motivational activities reveals a close correspondence between the strategies that secondary school teachers of English in Sweden experience as motivational, and the macro-strategies catalogued by Dörnyei (2001). In this way the results provide important empirical support for his proposals. In what follows we offer a critical assessment of our findings, focusing not only on strategies strongly represented in teachers' descriptions, but also those largely absent.

Humor, Challenges and Competitions

First, the reason why there were no examples of humor is not because the activities described were not fun. (On the contrary, in many descriptions teachers make comments indicating that the activity created a lot of enjoyment.) However, humor itself never appears as a core motivational property. While for younger students, or similarly-aged students in contexts where the everyday presence of English is less extensive, humor may indeed play an important motivational role, teachers of grade 6–9 students in Sweden do not appear to regard humor as a strategy effective in generating motivation. One reason may be that, in competition with online genres (e.g., YouTube videos), teachers may feel ill-equipped to use this strategy successfully.

The same arguments probably hold for the category 'challenges and competitions'. Given the novelty of the current study, it is difficult to offer comparisons with other contexts or age groups. Having said this, it is interesting to note that considerably less than a quarter of activities had a discernible element involving an intellectual challenge or competition. We

again suspect that because in the current setting students have extensive extramural encounters with English (Sundqvist, 2009), they find activities that provide them with opportunities to engage with English in self-authentic ways more motivating than the word-games, puzzles and debates more generally typical of English language teaching (Henry, 2013).

Culture and Intercultural Activities

One of the more surprising results was the relative scarcity of activities with an intercultural focus and/or aimed at developing “intercultural empathy” (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013, p. 354) (just two descriptions: the dialogue with a 9/11 survivor and the eTwinning project).

Activities with a product-oriented approach to exploring culture were much more prominent (e.g., listening to native-speaker accents on YouTube, planning a tea party). In these descriptions focus is firmly on “English-speaking countries”, the only exception being when particular countries (the USA, England and Australia) are targeted. This too is perhaps surprising. While in the case of English, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) question “the continued relevance to L2 motivation of notions of ‘target language culture’ and ‘native speakers’” (p. 114), Byram (2003) argues that the move away from native-speaker models and cultures to the exploration of intercultural contexts can have “significant positive effects on motivation and self-concept” (p. 9). Even though these perspective-shifts from product to process views of culture have been incorporated into educational policy (for example, the formulation “different contexts and areas where English is used” replacing “English-speaking countries” in the 2011 revision of the Swedish National Curriculum), the results clearly show that exploration of national cultures remains an effective motivational strategy.

In a setting where cultural products from native-speaking contexts constitute a sizeable proportion of media offerings and are instantly accessible online, this may not be surprising. It is important not to underestimate the appeal of English and its inextricable association with

popular music, leisure-time activities, consumerism and the allure of Hollywood. Indeed it is for this reason that Phillipson (2008) describes English as a ‘lingua emotiva’. Given that for many young people (at least in countries across Europe) the most popular artists, films, digital games and branded consumer products originate from or are closely associated with English-speaking countries, it becomes possible to understand why activities that invite exploration of these national cultures generate motivation.

Popular Culture and Authentic Materials

It is for the same reasons that in the focal area ‘focus and content’, the exploration of popular culture forms the most prominent category. Similarly, in the focal area ‘sources’, activities that draw on or make use of authentic materials form a sizeable majority. Further, it is important to note that in many of the activities exploring national cultures and everyday issues, use is made of authentic materials.

In this sense the results provide a valuable contribution to the debate on the nature and role of authenticity in English language teaching (ELT) generally (Pinner, 2016), and materials selection and activity-design in particular (Gilmore, 2007, 2011; Tomlinson, 2012). Given the notable absence of materials specifically developed for instructional purposes, the results provide strong empirical support for the argument that authentic materials do have a positive impact on students’ motivation. This finding is important. While many researchers champion the motivational properties of authentic materials (see Gilmore, 2007, and Tomlinson, 2012, for reviews of this research), robust empirical support is hard to find, not least in that the quasi-experimental studies so far carried out have yielded contradictory results (Gilmore, 2007). While unlike these previous studies the current study cannot shed light on causal factors, at the same time it is not afflicted by the validity problems of experimental research. On the contrary, because it draws on the descriptions of motivational activities carried out in

everyday conditions provided by a large and randomly-drawn sample of teachers, the results have strong ecological validity.

Given the dominating presence of authentic materials in these teachers' descriptions, a question that arises concerns the consequences of a practice in which professionally-produced learning materials may not play a central role. The use of authentic materials places high demands on teachers' pedagogical and linguistic skills. Challenges include finding ways of bringing students' attention to focal forms, generating engagement with language features, and developing effective methods for assessing students' skills (Ellis, 2010). While there is support for the argument that authentic input can have a positive impact on skills development (Gilmore, 2011; Shirai, 2013), not all teachers possess the linguistic knowledge and/or pedagogical skills needed to create learning opportunities effective in developing students' grammatical competence. Moreover, the time available to create materials is unlikely to approach that which, in all likelihood, is required to build effective skills-development features into learning activities. In that language awareness is not simply facilitated by rich and varied input, but is a consequence of the principled design of activity components that direct learners' attention to targeted linguistic forms (Gilmore, 2011; Svalberg, 2009), this skills/time dilemma presents a significant challenge to teachers working in contexts where students respond positively to authentic materials.

Opportunities to Act as Other than 'Learner' or 'Student'

Strongly emphasized among the motivational strategies proposed by Dörnyei (2001) is the need for teachers to continually strive to connect with students as unique individuals. This is encompassed in the challenge to make materials relevant (15), to make tasks attractive by including interesting content (18:ii) and personal elements (18:vii), to enlist students as active participants (19), and to actively promote learner autonomy (29). However, in addition to centering activities around interesting and personally meaningful topics, making use of

relevant and engaging materials and providing students with genuine opportunities for choice and participation, the making of connections also involves creating spaces where students can give expression to aspects of their identities other than simply those of ‘student’ or ‘learner’.

As both Ushioda (2011a, 2011b) and Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) make clear, in most learning situations, students rarely have opportunities to act beyond their student/learner identities. Drawing on Zimmerman’s (1998) concept of *transportable identities*, these authors make the point that in instructed learning it is students’ social positions and situated, institutional identities that are generally made salient. This is equally true of communicative activities where students’ discourse or interactional identities – the communicative roles they adopt in structured interaction – are generally activated. However, it is the third type of identity in Zimmerman’s model, the student’s transportable identity, which encompasses their mix of uniquely individual personal characteristics that Ushioda (2011a, 2011b) and Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) suggest to be most likely to generate motivation.

In settings such as Sweden where the L2-mediated ‘global’ elements of young people’s bicultural identities are robust and where hybrid identities can develop (Henry & Cliffordson, 2015, advance access), activities that fail to connect with students’ transportable identities represent lost opportunities. Specifically, the predominant activation in language learning activities of students’ situated and discourse identities, and the concurrent marginalization of their transportable identities, means that they are unable to link classroom experiences to current and future identities as TL speakers/users. Not only is this highly problematic in that future identities are less likely to be invoked (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014), but a lack of opportunities to ‘speak as themselves’ (Ushioda, 2011b) can generate negative comparisons between differing experiences of encounters with English (Henry, 2013). It is for this reason hardly surprising that in substantially more than half of the descriptions, strategies facilitating the triggering of students’ transportable identities can be found. Often activation occurs

through the encouragement of creativity, engagement with topics with potential personal relevance, and the provision of opportunities for choice. As Ushioda (2011a, p. 204) explains, it is precisely when students experience “a sense of continuity between what they learn and do in the classroom, and who they are and what they are interested in doing in their lives outside the classroom” that their transportable identities are invoked. In many of the activities teachers describe, not only are there opportunities for personal expression, but also for the *performance* of transportable identities when, for example, students create cultural products such as blogs, radio shows and videos.

Mobile Devices: Autonomy, Creativity, Self-Efficacy and Authentic Performance

Although both the inputs (sources) and outputs (products) of activities formed analytical categories in this study, focus was not directed to the ways in which performance was facilitated through the use of particular techniques, aids or equipment. Nevertheless, it is clear from teachers’ descriptions that the use of mobile devices (laptops, tablets and phones) is an important motivational strategy: “The students used their mobiles to record the rehearsals”; “When they had completed a script they recorded their forecasts on their phones or computers”; “Make a program about it and record a documentary using their iPads”; “They make a film on their iPads”. Being able to use their phones to do the same types of *creative* things during a lesson as they do outside the classroom – for example, taking pictures of a product or recording the performance of an event – enables students to experience a closer fit between the social and communicative practices in classroom and leisure-time discourse arenas. Specifically, the use of mobile devices appears to open up a *performative space*. Within this performative space, engaging with an activity that invites creativity enables students to experience flexibility, immediacy and autonomy, and generates opportunities for them to speak *and to act* as themselves (Ushioda, 2011b, p. 15). These experiences generate positive emotion that, in turn, develops and sustains motivation to engage with learning tasks

(Ushioda, 2013a, 2013b). Because they are making creative and imaginative use of familiar devices in familiar ways, a “fusion” (Ushioda, 2011a, p. 207) is created between the ways that students use technologies in and outside the classroom, Ushioda (2011a) explaining how this can “help reduce the barriers between L2 learning and life” (p. 207). Moreover, when students engage in a creative and identity-congruent activity, this can increase experiences of *self-efficacy* (Bandura & Schunk, 1981) and *self-authenticity* (Vannini & Burgess, 2009; see also Henry, 2013), and can further enhance motivational energy (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; see also Henry & Cliffordsson, 2015, advance access).

Projects

Not only is much of the source material in motivational activities authentic, but authenticity is a highly prominent feature of end-products; one third of all the coded descriptions involved the creation of an authentic artefact or performance. Of these, nearly all emerge from activities where students were involved in creative processes. Such end-products and performances include, for example, making news programs and documentaries, screenplays, films, podcasts and Internet blogs. Although it was not possible to code activity descriptions in terms of working constellations or temporal qualities (the data not permitting reliable differentiation between individual, pair and group work, or reliable estimates of time expended), what is clear is that many activities were collaborative, taking place over timeframes longer than a single lesson. In their descriptions, teachers often referred to them as ‘projects’.

Although projects are commonplace in many educational contexts, and project-based learning has been part of second language education for some three decades (Beckett, 2006), surprisingly little empirical research has been carried out into the motivational effects of projects in ELT (Muir, 2016). Furthermore, research that does exist suggests that language learners can sometimes have negative attitudes to projects (see, e.g., Beckett, 1999). Why,

then, are so many examples of project-like activities to be found among these teachers' descriptions?

Given the right combination of circumstances, language learning projects can be highly motivating. When a project works, enthusiasm and goal-targeted behaviors can spread among a group of students in a ripple-effect as a function of processes of cognitive, emotional and goal contagion (Dörnyei et al., 2016). This can result in an entire class of language learners being caught up in a tide of motivational energy, not unlike the ways in which Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow has been found to occur at group-level in school classrooms (Shernoff, 2013). When this happens, everybody in the room will be aware of an increased energy and focus (Dörnyei et al., 2016; Sundqvist, in preparation). Such occasions are likely to be imprinted in teachers' memories, thus explaining why descriptions of creative, goal-oriented projects are so prominent in the data.

Conclusion

Although the taxonomy of motivational strategies provided by Dörnyei (2001) has received widespread recognition, empirical investigation has taken place in only a handful of questionnaire and quasi-experimental studies. These have been carried out in settings where English is not extensively encountered outside classrooms (and where it may still retain a foreign language status). Further, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have so far focused specifically on strategies relating to the design and content of activities. Given that, in different forms and guises, communicative activities form the mainstay of contemporary ELT (Ellis, 2010), this is surprising. Caution is always needed when extrapolating beyond the social, educational and linguistic circumstances of an investigated setting. Moreover, future research is needed in order to more closely investigate how engaging with a 'motivational activity' *becomes* motivational in the context of the teacher's pedagogical approach and teacher–student relationships. In this regard ethnographic studies where analyses of

motivational activities are triangulated with the perspectives of teachers and, most importantly, participant students, would be of great value. Nevertheless, the results provide unambiguous support for the validity of motivational strategies (Dörnyei, 2001) that relate to the content and design of activities. With the exception of ‘humor’ and ‘exotic elements’, all of these strategies are found in the teachers’ descriptions of motivational activities. It is also noteworthy that activities involving the use of professionally-designed materials are almost entirely absent. Those involving challenges, competitions or the triggering of curiosity also appear less frequently among teachers’ descriptions.

Generally the results indicate teachers’ awareness of a need to provide students with learning opportunities that enable them to interact with English in ways that might avoid some of the negative motivational dissonances experienced between informal engagement with English outside school, and formal lessons in school (Ushioda, 2013a, p. 234). However, as Ushioda makes clear, this is only one challenge currently facing teachers of English in settings where out-of-school encounters are extensive. Equally important, she argues, is the need to achieve a balance between fluency and accurate control over form, and to address differences in requirements vis-à-vis informal social proficiency, and the more exacting standards required as students progress along academic and career pathways. Given the extensive presence of authentic materials in these teachers’ descriptions, and the demands placed on pedagogical and linguistic skills when working with authentic texts, the question to be asked is whether teachers have the necessary time and/or expertise to attune to the affordances of authentic materials in ways that meet the *full spectrum* of students’ linguistic needs (cf. Gilmore, 2011). Thus, while the major motivational challenge facing teachers of English in countries where it is being reframed as a general social literacy may indeed be the need to provide activities that students experience as relevant, meaningful, and which connect with their experiences of speaking/using English in informal domains (Ushioda, 2013a), these

activities need also to be modelled in ways that develop linguistic competence. This is no easy task, not least in that teacher education generally fails to provide sufficient knowledge of underlying systems of language and the skills needed to draw students' attention to grammatical features of texts, to identify learner errors, and to provide useful explanations (Svalberg, 2012). Consequently, in contexts where students respond positively to activities constructed around authentic texts, an important future direction for English teachers' professional practice is to develop enhanced skills of language awareness. This should be a major priority for both preservice and in-service programs of ELT education.

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