

The Impact of Teacher Motivational Practice on Improving EFL Learners' Fluency and Accuracy in Speaking

Behrang Mohammad Salehi¹, Zainab Mousa Yaseen²

¹ Izeh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Izeh, Iran

E-mail: behrangsalehi@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8168-5686>

² Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran

E-mail: zainabmousa121@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3896-2266>

DOI: 10.26907/esd.18.4.03

EDN: EVRAMR

Submitted: 4 September 2023; Accepted: 21 November 2023

Abstract

The current study sought to examine the impact of teacher motivational practice on the improvement of Iraqi high school EFL learners' fluency and accuracy in speaking. To this end, 50 female Iraqi high school students in Baghdad were selected based on a placement test. To gather the required data, two instruments, namely the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) and a speaking test were utilized. The study utilized a quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test design in which two dependent variables and one independent variable were applied. The participants joined a regular English teaching course for 18 consecutive sessions, three sessions each week. The last twenty minutes of each session was given to storytelling which was used as a motivational practice. Two different methods of storytelling were used for a cohort of students present in the control and experimental groups. After the intervention, the post-test was given to the participants to evaluate their improvement and to compare their performance with the pre-test. To analyze the data sets, an unpaired samples *t*-test was used to compare the means of the two groups. The results showed that teacher motivational practice improved Iraqi EFL high school learners' fluency and accuracy in speaking. Lastly, the results and implications of the study were presented.

Keywords: accuracy, fluency, L2 motivation, teacher motivational practice, speaking skill.

Влияние мотивационной практики преподавателя на улучшение беглости и точности устной речи учащихся, изучающих английский как иностранный

Бехранг Мохаммад Салехи¹, Зайнаб Муса Ясин²

¹ Иезский филиал Исламского университета Азад, Изе, Иран

E-mail: behrangsalehi@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8168-5686>

² Исфahanский (Хорасганский) филиал Исламского университета Азад, Исфahan, Иран

E-mail: zainabmoussa121@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3896-2266>

DOI: 10.26907/esd.18.4.03

EDN: EVRAMR

Дата поступления: 4 сентября 2023; Дата принятия в печать: 21 ноября 2023

Аннотация

Цель данного исследования – изучить влияние мотивационной практики преподавателя на повышение беглости и точности речи иракских старшеклассников, изучающих английский язык как иностранный (EFL). Для этого были отобраны 50 учениц иракской средней школы в Багдаде по результатам входного тестирования. Для сбора необходимых данных использовались два инструмента, а именно Оксфордский тест на определение уровня владения языком (OQPT) и тест на разговорную речь. В исследовании использовался квазиэкспериментальный дизайн «до-тест-пост-тест», в котором применялись две зависимые переменные и одна независимая переменная. Участники посещали обычный курс английского языка на протяжении 18 занятий, по три занятия в неделю. Последние двадцать минут каждого занятия отводились на рассказывание историй, которые использовались в качестве мотивационной практики. Два разных метода рассказывания историй использовались для группы студентов, представленных в контрольной и экспериментальной группах. После вмешательства участникам был предложен пост-тест, чтобы оценить их прогресс и сравнить результаты пост-теста с показателями до-теста. В анализе полученных данных использовался непарный выборочный t-тест для сравнения средних показателей двух групп. Исследование показало, что мотивационная практика преподавателя улучшила беглость и точность речи иракских учащихся старших классов. В заключение представлены результаты и выводы исследования.

Ключевые слова: точность, беглость, мотивация изучения иностранного языка, мотивационная практика преподавателя, навык говорения.

Introduction

Being able to communicate in English fluently is a demanding goal that many L2 learners wish to achieve. Hedge (2000) defined speaking as “a skill by which people are judged while first impressions are being formed” (p. 261). Thus, mastery of the speaking skill is regarded as an important aspect of people’s lives, especially in English as a Second Language (ESL) and/or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situations where maintaining communication is one of the main objectives of the school curriculum. Nevertheless, speaking is a difficult and complicated skill, and learners can acquire it more effectively through group work (Celce-Murcia, 2001) and engaging activities.

There are numerous factors that affect the process of language learning. Among these, motivation is considered one of the most deciding factors that affects the amount and success of L2 learning (Lam & Law, 2007). Research has demonstrated that EFL learners with stronger motivation seem to be more successful and efficient in their

language learning (Berenji & Saeidi, 2017; Lamb, 2011; Tsai, 2012). Teacher motivational practices can be viewed as interpersonal behaviors that teachers habitually and intentionally display to encourage students to take part in the academic activities or tasks they organize (Reeve, 2016). Research shows strong evidence in favor of motivational practice in promoting student engagement and learning in classroom (Printer, 2021; Zhou et al., 2023). Needless to say, teachers in general and English Language Teaching (ELT) practitioners in particular, play an important role in their learners' educational and academic attainment through strategies and practices they employ in classroom settings (Markley, 2004).

Improving EFL learners' speaking skill has always been one of the most essential tasks for language teachers (Wigglesworth & Elder, 2010). Therefore, English teachers need to employ some practices to motivate their language learners to improve their speaking skill in both accuracy and fluency. Most research on the issue pertains to teachers and students' perceptions and teacher class observations, yet experimental research is relatively absent. Literature shows scant evidence regarding the effects of teacher motivational practice on upgrading the speaking skill of Iraqi high school EFL learners. Therefore, in this study, an attempt was made to bridge this gap.

Literature Review

Second Language Motivation

Gardner and Lambert (1972) commenced pioneering research into learning motivation. They called on researchers to concentrate on individuals' emotions and beliefs about language learning. They tended to estimate the effects of these variables on student achievement and progress, rather than focusing solely on individual differences. Since then, motivation has been extensively researched in education and other fields such as Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and psychology in language learning and teaching.

In L2 research, Dörnyei (2001) described motivation as a "real mystery" and as "the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it [and] the effort expended on it" (p. 8). Likewise, Williams and Burden (1997) stressed that motivation is not only enthusiasm or passing interest in a language task, but also the maintenance of that interest and attempt to reach certain goals in learning. Dörnyei et al. (2015) noted that motivation can fluctuate considerably in the same classroom context and that these fluctuations have not yet been investigated closely. Similarly, Waninge (2014) suggested there may be varying degrees of motivation during class due to factors such as the environment, a particular activity, a test result, a homework assignment, or a classroom experience. Each of these elements could positively or negatively influence student motivation in the classroom.

EFL Teachers' Motivational Practices/Strategies

Second language practitioners and researchers have long maintained that teachers play a key role in the L2 learning process, and, as a result, support the application of research on language motivation (Dörnyei, 1994; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). In a seminal study, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) investigated how to motivate EFL learners based on the classroom data obtained from 200 English teachers teaching at various language centers in Hungary. The teachers were asked how important they took account of a total of 51 strategies and how often they applied them in their teaching. A set of ten motivational macro-strategies were compiled based on the teachers' responses.

Following Dörnyei and Csizér's (1998) study, other researchers made several attempts to examine the use of motivational techniques. For instance, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) examined the use of motivational strategy among 387 Taiwanese EFL teachers. It was indicated that motivational macro-strategies were somehow similar to the ones

emerged in Dörnyei and Csizér's study. The findings are indicative of the fact that some motivational techniques could be transferred across various cultural and ethno-linguistic contexts. However, some dissimilarities were also found between Taiwanese and Hungarian teachers with respect to culture-sensitivity or culture-dependency of some of these strategies.

In an observational study, Papi and Abdollahzadeh (2012) sought to examine the relationship between 17 Iranian EFL teachers' use of motivational practices and 741 students' motivated behavior. Based on the data derived from classroom observation, a questionnaire, and a post-hoc rating scale, the findings demonstrated that teachers' motivational strategies and the students' motivated behavior were correlated significantly.

In view of the EFL context of Saudi Arabia, Alrabai (2014) investigated the motivational practices of 36 teachers' and their 826 students' perceptions of foreign language motivation in the language classroom. Data were collected on several motivational techniques, including establishing a close rapport with students, designing and presenting stimulating learning tasks, developing autonomous learning, boosting learners' self-confidence, and alleviating language anxiety. The results showed that teachers' attitudes about using such techniques were generally similar to those of the learners' perceived motivation used in the language classroom. The findings also suggested that motivational techniques were not commonly used in the English classroom and that positive aspects of learner motivation were often ignored in teachers' practices.

In a quantitative study in the Pakistani EFL context, Kakar and Pathan (2017) investigated motivational strategies used by teachers to motivate students to learn English. It was pointed out that increasing learners' autonomy and familiarizing learners with L2-related values were regarded as the two primary sources of motivational strategies. In view of an online learning context, Hazaymeh (2022) conducted research on 62 Emirati EFL teachers' attitudes on motivational strategies. They used technological devices to engage and interact with their students. Ten motivational strategies were proposed to help learners succeed in the online environment. It was pointed out that technology-mediated learning offers great advantages to keep students motivated to learn English efficiently. In the Costa Rican EFL context, Jones (2019) wanted to find out if there was any relationship between teacher motivational strategies and student motivation. Based on student self-report questionnaire and class observation data, it was found that there were significant correlations between student motivation and all aspects of the teacher's motivational practice except 'teacher talk', indicating that talkative teachers might hinder student motivation. In a classroom investigation, Hsu (2020) aimed at examining the relationship between 12 Taiwanese EFL teachers' use of motivational teaching strategies and high school students' motivated behavior in rural areas. The findings showed that teachers' motivational practices were correlated with their students' motivated behaviors. Moreover, they were not directly related to students' perceived motivational states.

In a recent study, Min and Chon (2021) examined EFL teachers' motivational strategies and learners' motivational practices. The results suggested that the learners underused teachers' motivational practices owing to difficulties with a lack of variability in motivational strategies, motive alignment, and natural consequences. On the other hand, teachers' strategies for gaining attention and building confidence significantly predicted learners' language proficiency. In a critical review of literature, Howard (2023) probed into the effectiveness of EFL teachers' motivational strategies. The study confirmed the theoretical stance that intrinsic motivation is a prerequisite for EFL learner behavior, and that it can be promoted by teachers if they use teacher motivational strategies consciously and tailor them specifically.

It is noteworthy that most of the reported studies relied upon teachers and/or students doing self-reports in light of the importance and frequency of using motivational strategies rather than empirical research, which validates the case for doing such an investigation.

EFL Teachers' Motivational Practices and Learners' Speaking Ability

Dörnyei (2018) argued that despite the decisive role of the teacher in the classroom, research on student motivation is more extensive than teacher motivation. Thus, teacher motivation could emanate from their own willingness to teach and the influence of student motivation. From a practical perspective, research into the effect of teacher motivational practice on developing the speaking ability of students seems sparse. Although there have been some studies using motivational techniques in EFL contexts (Khodabandeh, 2018; Yan & Zhao, 2019; Yang et al., 2022), the bulk of research has focused on teacher observation or student-teacher perceptions, yet the practical aspect of teacher motivational practice has been neglected so far.

In a semi-systematic review of literature, Yan and Zhao (2019) examined the use of storytelling to enhance students' speaking proficiency in various EFL contexts. It was revealed that storytelling could be effective in improving speaking fluency of EFL students in both secondary and tertiary educational settings. In an experimental study, Khodabandeh (2018) explored the impact of storytelling on speaking fluency of 30 Iranian EFL learners via Telegram. Four stories were taught to both control and experimental groups through the online class. The students of the treatment group were to provide a summary of the retold stories, while the control-group students had to answer comprehension questions related to the stories. Two interviews were conducted before and after the treatment. Findings of comparing the interviews indicated the significant impact of storytelling.

Kumar (2021) investigated the impact of motivational factors in improving English speaking skills among 100 freshman students randomly selected from two Indian universities. Data analysis based on close-ended questionnaires showed that motivational strategies and L2 motivational factors influenced students' motivation to improve their speaking skill. In a mixed-methods study, Wongsu and Son (2022) explored 40 Thai EFL high school students' learning experiences and their teachers' practices. They tried to examine the effects of drama-based tasks and Facebook (FB) on students' speaking skills, attitudes, and motivation. The results demonstrated that drama-based activities and FB significantly influenced students' speaking ability and strengthened their motivation and positive attitudes about English learning. The results suggested that the use of play-based activities and FB can be creatively integrated to support learning in the EFL classroom.

There is a paucity of classroom research that has focused on teacher motivational practice and its effect on EFL students' fluency and accuracy in speaking. As such, the current study investigated the impact of teacher motivational practices on the speaking skill of EFL students by obtaining data from an Iraqi high school in Baghdad. To do so, the two research questions and attendant hypotheses were addressed:

RQ1. Does teacher motivational practice have a significant effect on the improvement of Iraqi high school EFL learners' accuracy in speaking?

RQ2. Does teacher motivational practice have a significant effect on the improvement of Iraqi high school EFL learners' fluency in speaking?

H01. Teacher motivational practice has no significant effect on the improvement of Iraqi high school EFL learners' accuracy in speaking.

H02. Teacher motivational practice has no significant effect on the improvement of Iraqi high school EFL learners' fluency in speaking.

Methodology

Research Design

The study was organized using a pre-test-post-test, quasi-experimental design (Mackey & Gass, 2016). The study included two dependent variables and one independent variable. The students' fluency and accuracy in the speaking skill were considered dependent variables, and the independent variable was the English teacher's motivational practice.

Participants

The study cohort included 50 female Iraqi high school students studying in Baghdad. The study participants were chosen based on an intact sampling method. From the general population of female students attending the high school, a target population of 50 female students were selected. They were intermediate EFL learners taking face to face classes, and their first language was Arabic. The learners' age ranged from 15 to 18 years old. They were divided into two equal intact groups and assigned to experimental and control groups with 25 students in each. They were asked to sign consent forms in which they declared their voluntary participation in the experiment. All students in the two study groups enjoyed a similar sociocultural and educational background. Notably, the gender variable was controlled in the study because only the female language learners were available. It should be mentioned that the participants had previous experience in learning English as part of their extracurricular activities.

Instruments

To gather the required data, two instruments were employed by the researchers, including the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) Version 1 and a speaking test. OQPT was applied to measure the participants' level of language proficiency. The test is divided into two parts with 60 items, and it was administered with no modifications in its standard format. Part one contains 40 items, and part two has 20 items. If students obtain a score of 24-30 out of 40 and 30-39 out of 60, they will be considered intermediate regarding language proficiency, which is comparable to B1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The reliability index of the test was examined in a pilot study using Cronbach's alpha, and it enjoyed a satisfactory level of internal consistency in the study context ($\alpha = .85$).

The speaking test was given to the students both before and after the treatment as the pre-test and post-test. It was an adapted version of a standardized test which was modified to serve the purpose of the study. The test consisted of two parts in which the participants talked about a topic and described a picture. For the first part, the participants were asked about their personal interests, hobbies, and important events in life. Then, a topic was given to the participants to discuss. Finally, a picture was given to the participants to describe. For the sake of scoring, both fluency and accuracy were considered. For accuracy, the elements of grammar and vocabulary usage in the participants' speaking performance were considered. Grammatical elements featured verb tenses, sentence structure, direct and indirect speech, causative patterns and many other elements. Vocabulary usage included aspects of pronunciation, meaning, word family, and word use. To assess their fluency, based on the conceptualization of Ellis (2009), the number of words that they produced in one minute of speech was considered. For this purpose, the participants' performance was recorded.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

First off, to evaluate the participants' level of proficiency and to assure that they were all at the same level of general English knowledge, QOPT was administered. Second, they were assigned to control and experimental groups with an equal number of participants. Before the treatment, the participants sat for the pre-test to ensure all the learners in both groups were homogenous with regard to speaking ability.

The students participated in a regular English teaching course for 18 sessions, with three sessions each week. The last 20 minutes of each session were devoted to storytelling, which was used as the motivational practice in this study (Printer, 2021). One of the researchers, a high school teacher in Iraq, was responsible for running sessions on storytelling. She was present at high school five days a week for educational and research activities. She was granted permission to do research by administration. Two different methods of storytelling were used for the control and experimental groups. For the control group, a story was presented to the students in each session and they were asked to summarize it for the next session. For the experimental group, the participants were divided into five groups each with five students. Instead of summarizing the story, the students role-played the story as they did in their conversation tasks. In each session, one group did the role-play. After completing the activity, the other students summarized the story. The treatment lasted 42 days starting from late September 2022. After the treatment, the post-test was given to the students to evaluate and compare their performance with that of the pre-test. Two experienced raters as ELT experts were invited to evaluate the answers provided by the participants based on the specified criteria used for assessing the students' accuracy and fluency in speaking.

The obtained data of the study were analyzed via SPSS software v. 26 using an independent samples t-test to compare the results of the experimental and control groups. To check the normality of the distribution and the equality of variances, Skewness and Kurtosis, and Levene's test were also run.

Results

First of all, it is important to establish a basic set of assumptions of the parametric tests prior to comparing the control and experimental groups in terms of their performance. As noted by Pallant (2020), assumptions about the use of parametric tests include normality of distribution, homogeneity of variances, and independence of interval variables and measurements. The values of kurtosis and skewness and the attendant z-scores were computed to test the first assumption.

Table 1. *Skewness and Kurtosis Indices*

	<i>Skewness</i>		<i>Kurtosis</i>	
	Stat	Std. E	Stat	Std. E
EG	-.11	.32	-.62	.74
CG	.16	.31	-.75	.61

Table 1 presents the skewness and kurtosis indices. As for the treatment group, the z-scores of skewness and kurtosis are $-.11$ and $-.62$ respectively. In addition, the z-score of skewness equals $.16$, and kurtosis z-score equals $-.75$ for the control group. When the z-score values are compared to criterion values for the normality of distribution, it is indicated that a score which falls between $+1.96$ and -1.96 is significant at $p < .05$. Clearly, none of the z-scores is greater or less than ± 1.96 , showing a normal distribution of the

scores. Moreover, to test the assumption of the equality of variances, Levene's test was conducted.

Table 2. *Levene's Test of Equality of Variances*

	<i>Levene Statistic</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Mean	.08	1	48	.72
Median	.07	1	48	.71
Median with adjusted df	.07	1	43.02	.71
Trimmed mean	.08	1	48	.72

Based on Table 2, Levene statistic is not significant at $p \leq .05$. Hence, the difference between the variances of the groups is not significant and is approximately equal, so the second assumption is satisfied. Because the underlying assumptions of the parametric tests were met, an independent samples t-test was run. As the distribution of the indices confirmed the normality of the data and the equality of variances, further statistical analyses were performed to address the research questions.

Table 3 presents the results of descriptive statistics of the pre- and post-test scores for the experimental group (EG) and control group (CG) on speaking accuracy. As shown, the pre-test mean score of EG in speaking accuracy is 15.5 and SD = 1.18. In addition, the post-test mean score of EG for speaking accuracy is 19 and SD = 1.12. Moreover, speaking accuracy pre-test mean of CG is 18.50 and SD = 1.45 while speaking accuracy post-test mean score of CG is 18.50 and SD = 1.67.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics for EG and CG in Speaking Accuracy Pre-test and Post-test*

	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Pre-test	Control	25	18.5	1.45
	Experimental	25	15.5	1.18
Post-test	Control	25	18.5	1.67
	Experimental	25	19	1.12

As exhibited in Table 4, the mean score of EG in speaking fluency pre-test is 18 with the standard deviation of 1.70, whereas speaking fluency post-test of this group indicates a mean score of 22 with the SD of 1.03. Moreover, speaking fluency pre-test mean of CG is 18.50 and SD = 1.07. Further, speaking fluency post-test mean score of CG is 19 and SD = 1.23.

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics for EG and CG in Speaking Fluency Pre-test and Post-test*

	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Pre-test	Control	25	18.5	1.07
	Experimental	25	18	1.70
Post-test	Control	25	19	1.23
	Experimental	25	22	1.03

Research question one attempted to examine the effect of teacher motivational practice on improving Iraqi EFL learners' accuracy in speaking. With this end in view, the performance of the two groups was compared for speaking accuracy via independent samples t-test. Table 5 provides the results of independent samples t-test for speaking accuracy.

Table 5. *Independent Samples T-test Results for Speaking Accuracy*

				<i>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</i>		<i>t-test for Equality of Means</i>		
Groups	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
EG	25	19	1.12	7.22	0.00	2.49	48	0.00
CG	25	18	1.67					

As portrayed in Table 5, the mean of EG group is 19. (SD = 1.12), and that of the CG group is 18 with the level of significance of .00. Since the significance level is less than 0.05 set for the study, $F(2, 48) = 7.22, p < .05$, it can be inferred that the two groups were significantly different in terms of speaking accuracy. Thus, the first null hypothesis is rejected.

Research question two investigated the effect of the teacher motivational practice on improving Iraqi high school EFL learners' fluency in speaking. In so doing, the two groups were compared with respect to speaking fluency after the instruction (see Table 6).

Table 6. *Independent Samples T-test Results for Speaking Fluency*

				<i>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</i>		<i>t-test for Equality of Means</i>		
Groups	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
EG	25	22	1.10	9.01	0.00	2.30	48	0.00
CG	25	19	1.34					

As presented in Table 6, the mean of the EG is 22 (SD = 1.10), and that of the CG is 19 (SD = 1.34) with the level of significance of .00. Since the level of significance is less than 0.05 set for the study, $F(2, 48) = 9.01, p < .05$, it can be inferred that there is a distinct difference between the two groups in terms of speaking fluency. Accordingly, it is concluded that teacher motivational practice improved Iraqi EFL learners' speaking fluency compared to the pre-test. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

The present investigation examined the effect of teacher motivational practice on improving Iraqi high school EFL learners' fluency and accuracy in speaking. The analysis of the findings pointed out that teacher motivational practice had a positively clear effect on improving Iraqi high school EFL learners' accuracy and fluency in speaking. The findings of the current study almost overlap with the research carried out to examine the role of teacher motivational practice in light of improving L2 learners' speaking ability. All in all, it can be seen that the effect of teacher motivational practice significantly enhanced the learners' speaking fluency and accuracy levels.

Based on the study findings, there was a notable difference between the experimental and control groups regarding the impact of motivational practice on speaking accuracy of the EFL learners, which is in line with the results derived from Kumar (2021), Papi and Abdollahzadeh (2012), Wongsu and Son (2022), and Yan and Zhao (2019). The results corroborate the literature in that teacher motivational practice in the EFL class is an important element in reducing the learner's anxiety and increasing their motivated behavior (Alrabai, 2014; Howard, 2023; Hsu, 2020; Jones, 2019). The findings indicate that developing L2 learners' oral accuracy depends to a large extent on teacher motivational strategies for creating a relaxing atmosphere in the classroom context and developing

autonomy among the learners (Kakar & Pathan, 2017). This can be materialized by choosing interesting topics for speaking and providing positive feedback to the learners. Thus, it is imperative that teachers focus on particular aspects of stories such as grammatical structures when the learners' fluency is involved.

Congruent with previous research done by Howard (2023), Khodabandeh (2018), Min and Chon (2021), Wongsu and Son (2022), and Yan and Zhao (2019) motivational practice presented by the teacher promoted L2 learners' speaking fluency. When the learners are provided with ample opportunities to practice their speaking with stories, dramas, and other motivational strategies, they can develop skills required for successful oral fluency (Yang et al., 2022).

Teaching English through technology, especially when motivational practice in the class is involved may give rise to positive and creative thinking and a pleasant teaching atmosphere (Yang et al., 2022). In sum, motivated behavior and motivational practice often go hand in hand. Thus, learner motivation and success rely heavily on the way teachers deal with their students and engage them in class activities using various motivational techniques and practices in an attempt to make the most of their teaching.

This study suffered some limitations. The study was conducted on 50 female Iraqi students studying in Baghdad; thus, the results of the study would not be generalizable to other groups. Regarding delimitations of the study, the participants were deliberately selected from EFL learners studying English at high schools, which made the research as manageable as possible. In addition, the scope of the study was delimited to the teacher motivational practice and students' speaking accuracy and fluency and other variables such as personality characteristics and other language skills were not taken into consideration.

Conclusion

The current study sought to examine the impact of teacher motivational practice on Iraqi EFL students' speaking accuracy and fluency. It is assumed that teacher motivation plays a key role in developing a learner's performance and competence. However, it seems that motivated behavior of learners is under the influence of a variety of factors, namely motivational strategies of language teachers. By focusing on EFL learners in an under-researched context like Iraq, this study revealed that teacher motivational practice through storytelling plays a vital role in developing EFL learners' oral proficiency. The findings support research into L2 motivation and motivated behavior utilizing motivational techniques. As such, the findings could inform EFL teachers, administrators, and curriculum developers about including motivational practice of various forms in online and in-person teaching environments in Iraq.

The current findings suggest that in Iraqi private and public schools, a dire need is felt for a wind of change in policy and practice regarding generating motivation in teachers to teach English through novel and innovative techniques. Several practical implications arise from this study, including reducing students' level of anxiety, increasing their autonomy, and enhancing the student-teacher rapport.

Future studies may use a different research approach (e.g., ethnographic research) and instrument (e.g., interview) because of the complex nature of motivation. The differences in motivational practices among teachers in universities, public high schools, and private language schools can be studied. In addition, since Iraq is a country with different ethnicities, the ethnic differences in teachers' motivational practices can be investigated.

Statement on Open Data and Ethics

The authors announce that the collected data are available and can be accessed on request. The participants presented their informed consent to partake in this study.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors certify that they have no conflict of interest, financial or otherwise for the work related to this study.

References

- Alrabai, F. (2014). Motivational practices in English as a foreign language classes in Saudi Arabia: Teachers beliefs and learners perceptions. *Arab World English Journal*, 5(1), 224–246.
- Berenji, S., & Saeidi, M. (2017). Technology mediated instruction and its effect on cognitive scaffolding, motivation and academic performance in EFL context. *Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice*, 10(21), 72–96.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2001). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (3rd ed.). Newbury House.
- Cheng, H. F., & Dörnyei, Z. (2007). The use of motivational strategies in language instruction: The case of EFL teaching in Taiwan. *International Journal of Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1(1), 153–174. <https://doi.org/10.2167/illt048.0>
- Dörnyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(3), 273–284. <https://doi.org/10.2307/330107>
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Pearson Education Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1075/hop.5.mot1>
- Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. (1998). Ten commandments for motivating language learners: Results of an empirical study. *Language Teaching Research*, 2(3), 203–229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/136216889800200303>
- Dörnyei, Z., Henry, A., & Muir, C. (2015). *Motivational currents in language learning: Frameworks for focused interventions*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315772714>
- Ellis, R. (2009). The differential effects of three types of task planning on the fluency, complexity, and accuracy in L2 oral production. *Applied Linguistics*, 30(4), 474–509. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amp042>
- Gardner, R., & Lambert, W. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second-language learning*. Newbury House.
- Hazaymeh, W. A. (2022). EFL teachers' perceptions on the motivational strategies for a successful online learning environment. *Journal of Positive School Psychology and Wellbeing*, 6(1), 1190–1202.
- Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and learning in the language classroom: Oxford handbooks for language teachers*. Oxford University Press.
- Howard, N. J. (2023). The effectiveness of teacher motivational strategies in EFL contexts: A critical review of the literature. *MEXTESOL Journal*, 47(1), n1.
- Hsu, H. W. (2020). A classroom-oriented exploration of rural high school teacher's motivational practice on student motivation. *English Teaching & Learning*, 44(3), 229–254. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42321-019-00043-0>
- Jones, M. (2019). The impact of EFL teacher motivational strategies on student motivation to learn English in Costa Rica. *UGA Working Papers in Linguistics*, 4, 15–33.
- Kakar, S. K., & Pathan, Z. H. (2017). Exploring the motivational strategies practiced by Pakistani EFL teachers to motivate students in learning English language. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(2), 117–123. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v7n2p117>
- Khodabandeh, F. (2018). The impact of storytelling techniques through virtual instruction on English students' speaking ability. *Teaching English with Technology*, 18(1), 24–36.
- Kumar, T. (2021). 'Desire to learn, learn to shine': Idolizing motivation in enhancing speaking skill among L2 learners. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 16(1), 411–422. <https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v16i1.5542>

- Lam, S. F., & Law, Y. K. (2007). The roles of instructional practices and motivation in writing performance. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 75(2), 145–164. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JEXE.75.2.145-164>
- Lamb, E. (2011). Fragile identities: Exploring learner motivation, learner autonomy and motivation through young learners' voices. *The Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, Special Issue*, 14(2), 68–85.
- Markley, T. (2004). Defining the effective teacher: Current arguments in education. *Essays in Education*, 11(1), 1–14. <https://openriver.winona.edu/eie/vol11/iss1/6>
- Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2016). *Second language research: Methodology and design* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Min, M. H., & Chon, Y. V. (2021). Teacher motivational strategies for EFL learners: For better or worse. *RELC Journal*, 52(3), 557–573. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688219900812>
- Pallant, J. (2020). *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using IBM SPSS*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Papi, M., & Abdollahzadeh, E. (2012). Teacher motivational practice, student motivation, and possible L2 selves: An examination in the Iranian EFL context. *Language Learning*, 62(2), 571–594. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2011.00632.x>
- Printer, L. (2021). Student perceptions on the motivational pull of Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS): a self-determination theory perspective. *The Language Learning Journal*, 49(3), 288–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2019.1566397>
- Reeve, J. (2016). Autonomy-supportive teaching: What it is, how to do it. In Wang, J. C. K., Liu, W. C., & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Building autonomous learners: Perspectives from research and practice using self-determination theory* (pp. 129–152). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-630-0_7
- Tsai, Y. R. (2012). Investigating the relationships among cognitive learning styles, motivation and strategy use in reading English as a foreign language. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 3(13), 188–197.
- Waninge, F. (2014). Motivation, emotion and cognition: Attractor states in the classroom. In Z. Dörnyei, P. MacIntyre & A. Henry (Eds.), *Motivational dynamics in language learning* (pp. 195–213). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783092574-016>
- Wigglesworth, G., & Elder, C. (2010). An investigation of the effectiveness and validity of planning time in speaking test tasks. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 7(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15434300903031779>
- Williams, M., & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wongsa, M., & Son, J. B. (2022). Enhancing Thai secondary school students' English speaking skills, attitudes and motivation with drama-based activities and Facebook. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 16(1), 41–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2020.1853134>
- Yan, G., & Zhao, X. (2019). A review of the use of storytelling to improve students' oral proficiency in EFL teaching. *European Journal of English Language Teaching*, 5(1), 44–62. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3334120>
- Yang, Y. T. C., Chen, Y. C., & Hung, H. T. (2022). Digital storytelling as an interdisciplinary project to improve students' English speaking and creative thinking. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 35(4), 840–862. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2020.1750431>
- Zhou, S. A., Hiver, P., & Al-Hoorie, A. H. (2023). Dynamic engagement: A longitudinal dual-process, reciprocal-effects model of teacher motivational practice and L2 student engagement. *Language Teaching Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688231158789>