

Factors affecting the use of L2 motivational strategies: Teachers understanding of motivation and beyond

Tim S. O. Lee

Centre for Applied English Studies, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Although second language (L2) motivational strategies are not as well-researched as L2 motivation, considerable research has been conducted in the last two decades to investigate the frequency of use, the attached importance, and the perceived effectiveness of these strategies. What remains scarce is qualitative, exploratory research on a wide range of potential factors that may affect the actual use of strategies. Based on in-depth interviews with three Hong Kong community college English teachers, this paper 1) analyses teachers' perceptions of L2 motivation with reference to existing research and their own experience; and 2) identifies factors other than understanding of motivation that affect teachers' use of motivational strategies. Results indicate that the way teachers see L2 motivation is profoundly dependent on their L2 learning and teaching experience, and that a variety of factors pertaining to teachers, students, and institutions are influential in the use of strategies.

Keywords: L2 motivational strategies; L2 motivation; community colleges; Hong Kong

Introduction

Motivation is an important contributing factor to success in second language (L2) learning. In fact, L2 motivation is often believed to trump language aptitude and learning conditions in terms of importance (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). Extensive research on the nature of L2 motivation and its effects on L2 learning has generated a large body of distinctive theories and frameworks of L2 motivation, which Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) have categorized into four main types: social psychological, cognitive-situated, process-oriented, and social-dynamic.

Strategies to stimulate L2 motivation are defined by Dörnyei (2001) as techniques and consciously exerted influences that can bring about goal-related behaviour and other systematic, long-term positive changes in L2 learning. Such strategies can be employed by teachers, parents, peers, and the learners themselves, in a classroom or any other situation. Many researchers believe that teachers ought to shoulder the bulk of the responsibility to motivate students (see, for example, Chambers, 1999; Dörnyei, 2001). Within the scope of what teachers can do with classes, L2 motivational strategies become teachers' instructional interventions to raise and maintain certain aspects of students' L2 motivation (Guilloteaux, 2013; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008).

The most influential study of L2 motivational strategies analysed Hungarian English teachers' rating of the frequency of use and perceived importance of 51 strategies (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). The methodology from this study has become a standard used in similar studies that correlate teachers' frequency of strategy use with related perceptions (e.g. perceived importance or effectiveness). Such studies have been

conducted in culturally diverse settings, for example Japan (Sugita & Takeuchi, 2010), Oman (Al-Mahrooqi, Abrar-Ul-Hassan, & Asante, 2012), South Korea (Guilloteaux, 2013), Taiwan (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007), and the US (Ruesch, Bown, & Dewey, 2012). The effectiveness of the adopted L2 motivational strategies has also been researched by gathering data from students as well as teachers in settings such as China (Wong, 2014), Iran (Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2011), Japan (Sugita & Takeuchi, 2010, 2012), Saudi Arabia (Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, & Ratcheva, 2013), South Korea (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008), Spain (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Bernaus, Wilson, & Gardner, 2009), and the US (Ruesch et al., 2012). These studies all confirm the motivating power of some of the investigated strategies in the corresponding ethnolinguistic contexts.

The effectiveness of L2 motivational strategies in some contexts has been verified, yet research on what facilitates or inhibits teachers' use of L2 motivational strategies has remained scarce. There is no widely cited framework of factors that affect strategy use in general. One noteworthy attempt to investigate such factors was Cowie and Sakui (2011), which examined English teachers' perspectives on L2 motivation and the strategies they employed. Specifically, it checked the teachers' understanding of L2 motivation with reference to theories and jargon, evaluated the teachers' belief in their ability to enhance their students' L2 motivation, and recorded four groups of L2 motivational strategies used by the teachers. The study suggests that teachers' understanding of L2 motivation is the product of acquiring research-related knowledge and witnessing motivated behaviour in class, and such understanding influences teachers' strategy use.

While eliciting teachers' knowledge of research is useful, overreliance on it may yield invalid results. Teachers familiar with research may find some results implausible. Teachers unfamiliar with research work may still construct their own views on L2 motivation based on experience, observation, and reflection. Because teacher knowledge is continually reconstructed (K. E. Johnson & Golombek, 2002) their perception of L2 motivation will evolve as they gain experience. Thus, enquiries into teachers' perceptions of L2 motivation should take into account the impact of learning and teaching experience.

Due to insufficient research, it remains unclear why some teachers may be reluctant to adopt L2 motivational strategies. It is also hard to evaluate how deeply any recommended strategy will permeate into actual teaching. In view of the research gap, this exploratory study sets out to first delineate teachers' understanding of L2 motivation, in terms of research-related notions and real-life exposure to L2. It then examines the degree to which the reported understanding and other factors affect teachers' use of strategies. These are crucial steps in formulating a comprehensive and transferrable framework of the determinants of strategy use. The following two research questions underlie the present study:

1. How do English teachers understand L2 motivation, with reference to research and experience?
2. To what extent do English teachers' understanding of L2 motivation and other factors affect their use of L2 motivational strategies?

The context

The study was carried out at a community college in Hong Kong. The official languages in Hong Kong are Chinese and English but English is often regarded as more prestigious. Most international schools and universities in Hong Kong take pride in

adopting English as the medium of instruction (Danielewicz-Betz & Graddol, 2014). Despite its prestige, English in Hong Kong is not a lingua franca by Kirkpatrick's (2011) definition because the majority of residents speak Cantonese as their first language, and English is seldom needed in intra-ethnic communication (Evans & Green, 2001). This phenomenon has made numerous researchers conclude that Hong Kong does not meet the condition for fostering its own nativised English variety, or Hong Kong English (see, for example, R. K. Johnson, 1994; Luke & Richards, 1982; Pang, 2003). The dominance of Cantonese is also believed to be partly accountable for the mediocre overall English proficiency in Hong Kong, with few people possessing more than basic literacy skills (Li, 2011).

Community colleges in Hong Kong, unlike their counterparts in North America, have a short history of just over a decade. They are the government's answer to a rising demand for higher education and increasing youth unemployment (Education Commission Report, 2000). Applicants for Hong Kong community colleges typically did not gain entry to publicly-funded universities, and seek associate degrees as an alternative route into university education (Kember, 2010). Teachers at community colleges face the challenge of motivating students who have had less successful learning experiences but who need to improve their academic performance considerably to compete for university places (Tong, 2014).

Methodology

The data reported here was collected through individual, semi-structured interviews with three tertiary English teachers at a community college in Hong Kong. The interviews occurred in the later part of a larger study looking at teachers' use and perceptions of L2 motivational strategies. Data from earlier parts of that study (e.g. from questionnaires, journal writing, and classroom observation) informed the selection of interviewees but has no other bearing on the current paper. After careful examination of the earlier data, the researcher invited these teachers for interviews because of their diverse teaching and educational backgrounds (see Table 1), plus their ability to discuss L2 motivation in detail.

Although the sample size is small, the careful selection of teachers with disparate educational and teaching backgrounds ensured representation of the full spectrum within the college. The interview (see Appendix 1 for guiding questions) elicited understanding of L2 motivation and considerations in the use of L2 motivational strategies. The interviews were conducted in the teachers' own offices, and were audio-recorded with the teachers' permission. Cantonese was used because it is the mother tongue of the researcher and the three teachers and thus may allow for deeper discussion. The teachers were not explicitly asked to refer to any researchers' names, frameworks, or theories, to allow greater freedom to describe L2 motivation in their own terms and to prevent worries about unfamiliarity with L2 motivation literature. In addition, the researcher refrained from stating any predictions about the findings, since research participants who provide self-reported data have a tendency to match their reports to researchers' expectation, or to what is regarded as positive or superior in specific research contexts (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

Table 1. Demographic information of the interviewees

	Teacher B	Teacher L	Teacher W
Nationality	Hong Kong Chinese	Hong Kong Chinese	Hong Kong Chinese
Qualifications	BA in English MA in Translation and Interpretation Postgraduate Diploma in Education	BEd in English Language Education MA in TESOL	BA in English MPhil and PhD in Applied Linguistics
Research Interests	--	Task-based language teaching	L2 motivation
Teaching experience at the community college level	7 years	11 years	6 years
Other teaching experience	Project Yi Jin ¹ , 5 years	Primary school, 2 years	None
Length of interview	51'28''	57'53''	62'39''

After the interviews, the recordings were transcribed and then translated into English. The English transcriptions were sent to the teachers for checking. The data was coded using NVivo software to identify themes. The researcher was the only coder thus eliminating any possible inter-coder error. Special attention was paid to the agreement between the teachers' perspectives on L2 motivation and existing theories and frameworks, together with the different levels of significance of the factors the teachers considered when they used L2 motivational strategies

Findings

This section will look first at the teachers' understanding of L2 motivation and will then consider the factors which affect their use of L2 motivational strategies.

Understanding of L2 motivation

Definitions and research-related knowledge

Each interviewee was asked to provide a succinct definition of L2 motivation. As shown below, teacher B's definition centred on students' initiative to learn; Teacher L's definition incorporated extrinsic and intrinsic motivation; and Teacher W's definition was the most comprehensive, covering diverse types of interest, attitude, and effort.

Teacher B: I think L2 motivation means that teachers make students take the initiative to learn a language in class and after class.

Teacher L: L2 motivation in my eyes is students' extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to learn a L2...it pushes them to learn continually

Teacher W: A motivated student is interested in the language and the course, whether it is

pure interest or work-related interest...the attitude is positive. But more important is the effort exerted on the language learning.

These definitions hinted at differing degrees of knowledge of research on L2 motivation. Neither Teacher B nor Teacher L was able to provide any detailed account of leading L2 motivation theories. Teacher W, in contrast, showed familiarity with two researchers. She was also able to elaborate on the origins or the practical applications of some theories.

Teacher W: The first one I learned about was Gardner's, which originated from educational and social psychology. We learn a language because of the role it plays in the society. To me it is the most conventional definition. And then Dörnyei's is more practical, based on classroom settings, but not only adult learners' motivation to learn a L2. Instead, it is for people who receive compulsory education in classroom...how we face influence from the society in formal education. There is another concept, international posture, that interest me, because it best explains why so many people have been learning English under globalization...and also willingness to communicate.

Influence of L2 learning and teaching experience

After defining L2 motivation and recalling any research-related knowledge, the interviewees detailed how their L2 learning and teaching experience shaped their understanding of L2 motivation. Teacher B regarded her interaction with English-speaking nuns as a motivating experience in her L2 learning, which might explain why she stressed taking the initiative in her definition of L2 motivation.

Teacher B: There were a lot of nuns in my secondary school, nuns from the UK and the US, who did not speak Chinese at all. So there were plenty of chances to use English after class, when I got along with the nuns.

When asked about the relevance of her teaching experience in her understanding of L2 motivation, Teacher B raised contact time and class size as determinants of students' L2 motivation.

Teacher B: Of course I will try to motivate them, but we do not meet very often, like once or twice every week, and the course is short too...it is only three months, and I cannot change any habits regardless of how often we meet. It is just a very short span.

Teacher B: My students also told me that they were in really big classes in the past. There were like 30 to 40 students in one secondary class, so the teacher gave each of them limited attention...individual students received very little help from the teachers. They did not even have the chance to know what their language problems were, let alone get motivated.

While Teacher B made no attempt to match her discoveries with any L2 motivation theories, her sharing was congruent with various theories. The English-speaking nuns were likely to be her significant others, which refer to parents, teachers, and peers in Williams and Burden's (1997) framework; she agreed that teachers play a key role in motivating students to learn a L2, and this aligns with Dörnyei's (1994) and Williams and Burden's (1997) situational views on L2 motivation; she commented that short contact time might result in little change in students' L2 motivation, so she appeared to

understand L2 motivation as an evolving and dynamic trait, as proposed by Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) and Ushioda (1998); and the scant attention from her students' previous teachers might have resulted in the students' unclear L2 problems, needs, and goals. Such ambiguities, according to Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) and Locke and Latham (2002), are inhibitive factors in motivation.

Similar to Teacher B, Teacher L was able to recall certain L2 learning and teaching experiences that shaped her understanding of L2 motivation. During secondary school, she had been deeply impressed by a supply English teacher, because he was in many ways superior to the original teacher. She reported the supply teacher's lessons as her earliest memory of feeling motivated to learn English, which parallels Dörnyei's (1994) view that the teacher's personality, behaviour, and style can be situational motives for students' L2 learning. It is also consistent with Gardner's (1985) concept of the integrative motive, which is partly made up of attitudes towards to the L2 teacher.

Teacher L: I first knew about the existence of my L2 motivation during secondary school because of a supply teacher. I studied in an elite school, so the supply teacher assigned to our school was highly proficient, near native. We all looked forward to his lesson...also, he did a lot of sharing in class, about his study abroad and in an international school, and his learning methods. We all listened intently. And he prepared a lot of interactive activities for us. Other teachers were different, as they cared about exam drills only.

I: To put it simply, part of your L2 motivation at that time was the teachers' professionalism, personality, preparedness, and so on?

Teacher L: Right.

As regards the influence of teaching experience on her understanding of L2 motivation, Teacher L replied that thoughtful task design was vital to the maintenance and enhancement of students' L2 motivation.

Teacher L: I realized that I needed to consider my students' background when designing tasks. A class I taught was composed of new immigrants, and to them mastery of English was paramount. Using various activities was fine, provided that the activities pertained to the course content...there was another group of Band-5 students at a vocational institution, and they exhibited no L2 motivation at all. All I could do was to devise activities for them to learn...oh it was not really to learn, but to have some fun, or they would fall asleep.

Teacher L's understanding of L2 motivation, like Teacher B's, could be adequately explained with existing theories, even though neither teacher associated any theories with their experience. Teacher L summarized that she needed to prepare useful or fun L2 tasks for different groups of students. The two groups of students, new immigrants and vocational students, had dissimilar preferences for L2 tasks, which might be due to differences in their perceived value of English, self-concept, attitudes, affective states, and society's expectations of them. These are factors covered by Williams and Burden's (1997) social constructivist framework of L2 motivation. It is worth noting that Teacher L defined L2 motivation with the extrinsic-intrinsic dichotomy, yet she did not report observing any intrinsically motivated behaviour from herself or any student.

Unlike Teacher B and Teacher L, whose recollections were theory-free, Teacher W related some L2 motivation theories to her L2 learning experience.

Teacher W: There were two stages. In primary school and secondary school, I was no different from the other students...But why do I approve Gardner's and

Dörnyei's theories? I started to read English books and listen to English songs at Secondary Three, and then I developed an interest in English-speaking countries and their cultures. It made me want to read and listen to English better, so that I could understand the meaning of the movies, cartoons, songs, etc.

I: So...theories like Gardner's and Dörnyei's are valid to your learning experience? In the beginning you emphasized

Teacher W: Instrumental.

I: And then you identified with cultures...

Teacher W: Yeah...I read English books, fiction, and listened to songs because my school did not offer English literature subjects, and all the training was for exams...my English teacher at Secondary Four encouraged us to read more, and I learned about the existence of English story books because of her!

Teacher W's L2 motivation went through a major shift, from more instrumental to more integrative, during her secondary education. It is hence no surprise that interest and work-relatedness are indispensable components of her definition of L2 motivation. Relevance and interest are two of the conditions for enhanced motivation proposed by Keller (1983) and Crookes and Schmidt (1991), as well as being course-specific motivational components in Dörnyei's (1994) framework. Teacher W also mentioned the specific teacher who cultivated her genuine interest in English by encouraging her to read English story books. This was a teacher-specific motive in Dörnyei's (1994) classification, and Teacher W was aware of its existence in her L2 motivation.

In her report of teaching experience, Teacher W did not specify any theories or researchers' names, yet her report bore close resemblance to a number of L2 motivation theories.

Teacher W: Speaking of the students' needs...GPA is always their first priority, and I cannot change that. So I always tell them how to do a task and how to practice for a better result...they have little interest in languages. They simply want a pass or better, and I do it to retain their attention. In classes of higher proficiency, I tell them they have to master English not only because of course requirement but also the workplace, and what is happening in the world. If they have more knowledge they will have more choices in the future.

Teacher W: Most of them are instrumentally motivated, but a few of them, when I showed them some health-care-related articles from BBC News, they responded quite positively.

Teacher W readily admitted that her students' L2 motivation was predominantly instrumental, and she presented the tasks meticulously as a means to maintain her students' instrumental motivation. Presenting tasks properly is a teacher-specific motivational component proposed by Dörnyei (1994). Another means Teacher W adopted to motivate her students was to provide additional texts which were interesting and relevant. The issues of interest and relevance were also mentioned by Teacher L, and they are fundamental concepts in L2 motivation research. Teacher W appeared to prefer explaining the importance of L2 learning in terms of international posture rather than integrativeness, as she stated connecting oneself to international happenings as one major goal of learning English. International posture is as an inclination to relate oneself to the international community but not to a specific L2 group (Yashima, 2009; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004). All these practices were evidence of Teacher W's incorporation of theories into teaching.

Factors that affect strategy use

Significant factors

All interviewees identified a small number of influential factors that affect their use of L2 motivational strategies. Teacher B named students' proficiency level, her teaching experience, and preparation time as the most decisive factors.

Teacher B: Students' level has been key, especially in the last two years. At this college, we can see what grades the students obtained in the public assessment in the class register, so we know which groups are more proficient and which groups less. This definitely changes the way I plan for a lesson. Experience also matters...there are different ways to carry out the same strategy.

Teacher B: Preparation time is crucial...sometimes a task may appear short, just a few minutes long, but much more time is needed to search for relevant materials and devise corresponding activities...I first look at how much available time I have, and then decide if I will use these strategies or other.

Teacher W's answer was strikingly similar to Teacher B's. The three considerations raised by Teacher W as the most crucial were: preparation time, task difficulty level, and teaching style. Both teachers regarded students' readiness, preparation time and effort, and perceptions of effective and personalized teaching as the primary factors influencing their choices of L2 motivational strategies.

Teacher W: How much to prepare, the time needed, and the difficulty level, these are tangible factors. What is next is my own teaching style, and what kinds of tasks I am accustomed to.

Teacher L's response was somewhat different. Like the others, she mentioned teaching experience, expertise and students' background but she also took into account institutional factors like class sizes, freedom and support.

Teacher L: Students are the most important. Their level, background, and the class size too. What you can do in a 25-student class is so different from in a 125-student one. A very important factor. Teaching experience and knowledge also matter. If the response to a strategy is not that positive, I will not use it that often. The institutional setting...whether there is freedom and support.

Teacher L: It is easy to book a language laboratory to make some strategies more feasible, like watching movies together.

Teacher L: There are sharing sessions conducted by awarded teachers. They are not specific to L2 teachers, but if you go to one conducted by an English lecturer, you can easily see some strategies demonstrated.

Less significant and insignificant factors

In spite of the comprehensiveness of the three teachers' description of their understanding of L2 motivation, such understanding did not exert great influence on the teachers' strategy use. Teacher B and Teacher L stated that they did not consider or incorporate their understanding of L2 motivation when choosing or employing L2 motivational strategies. In comparison, Teacher W had been learning Spanish, and she felt that her motivation to learn Spanish might have subtly changed the way she taught English.

- I: Has your teaching style been influenced by your understanding of L2 motivation?
- Teacher W: Actually the two have some relationship. I am now learning Spanish at night. The tasks I do there, I will see if I can use them too in my class, such as pair tasks, conversation, guiding questions, etc. I hope to make my students more focused using group tasks.
- I: Can I say that your motivated experience in Spanish learning has become part of your understanding of L2 motivation, and then it bears some ongoing influence on your teaching style?
- Teacher W: Sort of. What others do, what courses I have taken. I will consider how to use them in my class.
- I: But in comparison, the influence from the preparation and your teaching style is much bigger, isn't it?
- Teacher W: Yes. Whether I am comfortable with the strategies is one thing, but whether they will take too long is another.

The comments Teacher W made on the link between her Spanish learning and her teaching practice revealed that she would critically evaluate the motivating power of the strategies she experienced in her Spanish lessons, along with the suitability of those strategies to her teaching. She also confirmed that her understanding of L2 motivation would constitute part of her teaching style, which was a key factor determining her strategy use. It seems, therefore, that her understanding of L2 motivation indirectly affected her strategy use. Its effect, however, was limited, as she admitted that such understanding was only a minor factor, compared with the ones she reported earlier.

There was no evidence that personal benefits such as a sense of accomplishment, less resistance in teaching, and knowledge acquisition and verification were a major driving force behind the three teachers' strategy use. Teacher B and Teacher W reported explicitly that they would not consider any personal benefits before adopting L2 motivational strategies. Teacher W, in contrast, did see some personal benefits, since interacting with students and offering help in group work and consultation provided genuine enjoyment to her. However, such enjoyment was brought by only a small number of strategies involving group work, which reduced the occurrences, and probably significance, of personal gains.

- Teacher W: If it is group work or mini consultation, I do enjoy it. I enjoy talking with them and monitoring their progress. I will be pleased if they seem eager to hear my opinions or get my help. It is good to fulfil my job requirement and at the same time help them.
- I: Let me check here. Helping them is a plus to you, and the interaction with them is an enjoyment to you. Is that right?
- Teacher W: Yeah.

Teacher B and Teacher W described policies as neither supportive nor obstructive. On the one hand, the two teachers did not see any encouragement or support from the college. On the other, they both agreed that once course content and assessments were completed, there would be a high degree of freedom to use L2 motivational strategies. They did not speak favourably of college policies as a pushing factor for their strategy use as Teacher L did.

Teacher B: Although what needs to be done in a course is kind of fixed, we still have a lot of freedom. The way you deliver every lesson...it is not like you cannot even change the PowerPoint slides. The bottom line is that you manage to cover all the content in the course. And then you can do what you want. The degree of freedom here is high.

I: It sounds like it is not that the college offers any encouragement, but that it offers you a lot of freedom. What is rigid is the course...

Teacher B: That is right. If you can finish the teaching and the students can learn it all, that will be fine.

I: But it does not provide any support for the use of strategies, like workshops...

Teacher B: Of course not.

Teacher W: I don't think there is encouragement, but it is positive in my eyes, because there is no constraint on your pedagogical practice here. If you can finish what the teaching plan says, and the test and the assignments are taken care of, you will be okay. The freedom here is enormous.

At the end of the interviews, the researcher raised issues including sharing among colleagues, print and non-print guidelines on the use of L2 motivational strategies, and types of English courses, none of which had previously been mentioned by the interviewees. None of the interviewees attributed any strategy use to these factors, which suggests their effect on the use of strategies was minimal.

The factors affecting L2 motivational strategy use of the three teachers varied although there is some consistency across them in terms of those considered most significant and not significant (Table 2).

Table 2. Factors affecting the interviewees' use of L2 motivational strategies

	Teacher B	Teacher L	Teacher W
Teaching experience and expertise	++	++	++
Students' L2 level and background	++	++	++
Strategy preparation time and effort	++	-	++
Freedom and support offered by the college	+	++	+
Class size	-	++	-
Understanding of L2 motivation	-	-	+
Personal benefits	-	-	+
Sharing among colleagues	-	-	-
Texts on L2 motivational strategies	-	-	-
Types of English courses	-	-	-

Key: ++ Significant, + Less significant, - Insignificant

Discussion and Conclusion

The interview data demonstrates the complexity of the teachers' understanding of L2 motivation. Although they exhibited different degrees of familiarity with research, all interviewees provided detailed and thoughtful accounts of their perceptions of L2 motivation and the relevance of their L2 experience to those perceptions. Whilst not all interviewees associated their understanding of L2 motivation with research, their description of L2 motivation was largely aligned with existing theories and frameworks, particularly those which are more closely concerned with the classroom setting and teachers' roles. Teacher W demonstrated a noticeably higher level of knowledge about L2 motivation research, which may be explained by her higher educational qualifications and exposure to applied linguistics research.

In spite of the richness of the interviewees' understanding of L2 motivation, it was a somewhat insignificant factor in determining their use of L2 motivational strategies, which contrasts with the findings of Cowie and Sakui (2011). This may result from the rather homogenous L2 profiles, needs, and motives of community college students, which cause English teachers to employ similar strategies regardless of their own views on L2 motivation. Alternatively, the findings may have been influenced by a culture-specific trait among Hong Kong English teachers that was not uncovered in the interviews. The weak link between teachers' perspectives of L2 motivation and their strategy use, coupled with the reported low usefulness of strategy guidelines, implies that simply presenting L2 motivation research and lists of recommended strategies in teacher training may be insufficient to change teachers' motivational practice.

The most significant factors affecting teachers' use of L2 motivational strategies were all related to some extent to the feasibility of strategy use. This points to the possibility of a robust link between feasibility and the frequency of use of strategies. In this study it seems that the L2 teachers were preoccupied with feasibility rather than importance and effectiveness. It is impossible to compare this finding with earlier studies because they did not consider feasibility.

The exploratory study reported here, although conducted with a small number of teachers, unveils the multifaceted nature of these teachers' understanding of L2 motivation, together with the wide range of potential factors which influence their decisions to adopt L2 motivational strategies including the previously under-researched factor of feasibility. The study also shows a weak link between teachers' understanding and willingness to use strategies. Further research is needed to explore the cause of the weak link, the importance of feasibility as a determining factor in the use of strategies, and training programmes to encourage L2 teachers to make more frequent and critical use of L2 motivational strategies.

Notes

1. Yi Jin Diploma, formerly known as Project Yi Jin, is an alternative education for both Secondary 6 school leavers and adult learners in Hong Kong.

About the author

Tim S. O. Lee is a doctoral candidate in the Centre for Applied English Studies at The University of Hong Kong. He has been teaching adult learners and tertiary students since 2006. His research interests are L2 motivational practices, task-based language teaching and vocabulary acquisition.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

Understanding of L2 motivation

1. What is meant by second language (L2) motivation to you?
2. Where did you learn about L2 motivation?
3. Do you know any influential theories about L2 motivation or the researchers' names?
4. How does your English learning and teaching experience influence the way you perceive L2 motivation?
5. Has your perception of L2 motivation changed over time?

L2 Motivational strategies employed

1. In your opinion, are associate degree students motivated to learn English?
2. Do you believe that you can enhance associate degree students L2 motivation?
3. What L2 motivational strategies do you use regularly?
4. Where did you learn about these strategies?
5. Does your understanding of L2 motivation affect your use of L2 motivational strategies?
6. Can you classify these L2 motivational strategies into three or four categories?
7. Are there any L2 motivational strategies that are particularly effective in Hong Kong?
8. Are there any L2 motivational strategies that are particularly effective for associate degree students?
9. Have you benefited from the use of any L2 motivational strategies?
10. Does the college play any role in your use of L2 motivational strategies?
11. In general, what are the major factors affecting your use of L2 motivational strategies?