

**TEACHERS' MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES IN TEACHING READING AT THE TENTH GRADE
OF SMA NEGERI 1 PERCUT SEI TUAN**

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ABSTRAK

This study aimed to analyze the motivational strategies used by the teacher in teaching reading at SMA Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan. This study applied a qualitative descriptive research design. The data were collected through classroom observation using observation sheets and classroom recordings during the teaching and learning process. The data were analyzed based on the motivational teaching practice framework proposed by Dörnyei (2001), namely creating basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive self-evaluation. The findings showed that the teacher implemented all four categories of motivational strategies during reading instruction. Among the four categories, maintaining and protecting motivation became the most dominant strategy, as it was frequently applied through group discussions, teacher encouragement, vocabulary assistance, and interactive classroom activities. The teacher also implemented creating basic motivational conditions by establishing a supportive classroom atmosphere, generating initial motivation by relating reading materials to students' daily experiences, and encouraging positive self-evaluation through positive feedback and reflection activities. The implementation of these motivational strategies helped increase students' participation, engagement, and confidence during reading activities and supported a more interactive learning environment.

Keywords: Motivational Strategies; Reading Instruction; EFL Classroom; Reading Motivation; Teacher Motivation

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the essential skills in English language learning because it enables students to obtain information, expand vocabulary, and develop language proficiency. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, reading plays a particularly important role since students have limited opportunities to encounter English outside the classroom. Through reading activities, students are exposed to various language features and are encouraged to construct meaning from written texts. According to Grabe (2009), reading is an interactive process that involves the reader's background knowledge, linguistic competence, and comprehension strategies in order to understand written information.

Despite its importance, reading remains one of the most challenging language skills for many EFL learners. Students often experience difficulties in understanding texts due to limited vocabulary, unfamiliar grammatical structures, and lack of background knowledge. These difficulties may affect students' confidence and willingness to participate in reading activities. As a result, many students become passive during classroom instruction, avoid answering questions, and show limited engagement in reading tasks. Such conditions may reduce the effectiveness of reading instruction and hinder students' learning progress.

One factor that significantly influences students' engagement in reading activities is motivation. Motivation plays an important role in determining students' willingness to participate, persist, and invest effort in learning tasks. According to Dörnyei (2001), motivation is responsible for initiating, directing, and sustaining human behavior toward a particular goal. In language learning contexts, motivated students tend to participate more actively, complete learning tasks enthusiastically, and demonstrate greater persistence when encountering difficulties. In contrast, students with low motivation are more likely to avoid participation and display passive learning behavior.

In reading instruction, motivation is particularly important because reading activities often require concentration, persistence, and active involvement. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) argue that motivated readers are more likely to engage with texts, apply reading strategies effectively, and achieve better comprehension outcomes. Therefore, enhancing students' motivation has become an important concern for English teachers, especially in EFL classrooms where reading is frequently perceived as difficult and less interesting by students.

To foster students' motivation, teachers are expected to implement appropriate motivational strategies during classroom instruction. Teachers' motivational strategies refer to deliberate actions and classroom practices designed to influence students' motivation positively. According to Dörnyei (2001), motivational teaching practice consists of four major dimensions, namely creating basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive self-evaluation. Through these strategies, teachers can create supportive learning environments, stimulate students' interest, sustain their engagement, and help them develop confidence in their learning abilities.

Several previous studies have emphasized the importance of motivational strategies in language learning. Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) reported that teachers who actively applied motivational strategies were more successful in promoting students' participation and positive attitudes toward learning. Similarly, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) found that reading motivation is strongly associated with reading engagement and achievement. These findings indicate that motivation is an essential factor in supporting students' success in language learning, particularly in reading activities.

However, many previous studies primarily focus on students' motivation or employ quantitative approaches to measure motivational levels. Although such studies provide valuable information, they often offer limited insight into how teachers actually implement motivational strategies in classroom settings. Furthermore, studies specifically investigating teachers' motivational strategies in teaching reading at the junior secondary school level remain relatively limited, particularly in Indonesian EFL contexts.

Based on the researcher's preliminary observation at SMA Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan, the English teacher frequently attempted to encourage students' participation during reading lessons. The teacher used various activities such as group discussions, vocabulary assistance, questioning sessions, and positive reinforcement to maintain students' engagement. Nevertheless, several students still appeared hesitant to participate actively, especially when asked to read, answer questions, or express opinions related to the reading text. Some students tended to remain silent and lacked confidence when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary or difficult comprehension questions. These classroom conditions indicate that motivational strategies play an important role in supporting students' participation and engagement during reading instruction.

Considering the importance of motivation in reading activities and the limited number of studies focusing on teachers' motivational strategies in junior secondary EFL classrooms, this study aims to explore the motivational strategies employed by an English teacher in teaching reading at SMP Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan. Specifically, the study focuses on identifying the motivational strategies used by the teacher and examining how those strategies are implemented during reading instruction.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. Qualitative research is used to describe and analyze phenomena that occur naturally in a particular setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study aimed to investigate the motivational strategies used by an English teacher in teaching reading and to describe how those strategies were implemented during classroom instruction. Therefore, a qualitative approach was considered appropriate for obtaining detailed information regarding teachers' motivational practices in an EFL classroom.

This study was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan. The subject of this study was an English teacher who taught eleventh-grade students. The observed class consisted of 20 students. Meanwhile, the object of this study was the teacher's motivational strategies in teaching reading, particularly those proposed by Dörnyei (2001), namely creating basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive self-evaluation.

The data of this study were collected through classroom observation. The researcher conducted direct classroom observations to identify the motivational strategies used by the teacher during reading activities. During the observation, classroom interactions were recorded using video recordings to obtain detailed and accurate data.

In this study, the data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, the researcher selected and categorized the data related to teachers' motivational strategies obtained from classroom observations and recordings. Second, the data were displayed in the form of descriptions and tables to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the analysis of the motivational strategies used by the teacher and their implementation during reading instruction.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

DATA

The data of this study were obtained through classroom observation and video recordings conducted during an English reading lesson in an eleventh-grade classroom consisting of 20 students. The observation focused on identifying the motivational strategies employed by the teacher during reading instruction and examining students' responses toward those strategies.

Based on the observation, the teacher demonstrated various motivational practices throughout the lesson. These practices were observed before, during, and after reading activities.

Data 1

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher greeted students warmly and created a positive classroom atmosphere. The teacher encouraged students to participate actively and reminded them that making mistakes was a natural part of learning. The classroom recording showed that the teacher stated:

"Don't be afraid to answer. We are learning together."

After receiving encouragement from the teacher, several students who initially remained silent began responding to questions and participating in classroom interaction.

Data 2

Before introducing the reading text, the teacher attempted to attract students' interest by connecting the lesson topic to their daily experiences. The reading material discussed social media and online communication, topics that were familiar to most students.

The teacher asked:

"How many of you use social media every day?"

Most students raised their hands and actively responded to the question. Some students also shared their experiences related to the topic. The observation indicated that students became more interested in the lesson after the teacher related the reading topic to their daily lives.

Data 3

During the reading activity, the teacher organized students into small groups and instructed them to discuss the content of the text collaboratively. Students worked together to identify the main ideas and answer comprehension questions.

The classroom recording revealed that the teacher frequently encouraged students by saying:

"Good job."

"Excellent answer."

"Keep trying."

These expressions were repeatedly used throughout the lesson. The observation showed that students became more confident and willing to share their opinions during group discussions.

Data 4

Several students experienced difficulties understanding unfamiliar vocabulary found in the reading text. Instead of directly providing answers, the teacher encouraged students to discuss the meaning with their group members before offering explanations.

The teacher stated:

"Discuss it with your group first. You can help each other."

As a result, students actively collaborated and attempted to solve the problem together before receiving assistance from the teacher.

Data 5

At the end of the lesson, the teacher asked students to reflect on what they had learned from the reading activity. Several students volunteered to summarize the main ideas of the text and share their learning experiences.

The classroom recording showed that the teacher provided positive feedback by saying:

"Your understanding is much better today. Keep improving."

The observation indicated that students responded positively to the feedback and appeared more confident when discussing their learning progress.

DATA ANALYSIS

According to Dörnyei (2001), motivational teaching practice consists of four main dimensions, namely creating basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive self-evaluation. Based on the classroom observation conducted during reading instruction at SMA Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan, the researcher found that the teacher implemented all four categories of motivational strategies throughout the teaching and learning process. The implementation of each strategy can be described as follows.

a. Creating Basic Motivational Conditions

According to Dörnyei (2001), creating basic motivational conditions refers to establishing a supportive and positive classroom atmosphere that encourages students to participate in learning activities. This strategy aims to reduce students' anxiety and build a sense of security in the classroom.

Data 1

Teacher : "Don't be afraid to answer. We are learning together."

Student : (Several students began responding to the teacher's questions.)

Data 1 shows that the teacher implemented the strategy of creating basic motivational conditions at the beginning of the lesson. Before starting the reading activity, the teacher encouraged students to participate actively and reminded them that making mistakes was a normal part of the learning process. This statement was delivered when some students appeared hesitant to answer the teacher's questions and preferred to remain silent.

b. Generating Initial Motivation

Dörnyei (2001) explains that generating initial motivation involves stimulating students' interest and increasing their willingness to engage in learning activities. One way to achieve this is by relating learning materials to students' interests, experiences, and real-life situations.

Data 2

Teacher : "How many of you use social media every day?"

Student : (Most students raised their hands and shared their experiences.)

Data 2 demonstrates the teacher's effort to generate students' initial motivation before the reading activity began. Rather than introducing the reading text immediately, the teacher first discussed social media and online communication, which were closely related to students' daily lives.

c. Maintaining and Protecting Motivation

According to Dörnyei (2001), maintaining and protecting motivation refers to strategies that help sustain students' engagement and enthusiasm throughout the learning process. Teachers may use collaborative activities, encouragement, praise, and learning support to prevent students from losing interest during classroom activities.

Data 3

Teacher : "Good job."

Teacher : "Excellent answer."

Teacher : "Keep trying."

Data 3 shows that the teacher implemented motivational strategies to maintain students' engagement during reading activities. The teacher organized students into small groups and encouraged them to discuss the reading text collaboratively. Throughout the activity, the teacher continuously provided verbal encouragement and positive reinforcement. Therefore, Data 3 can be categorized as maintaining and protecting motivation.

Data 4

Teacher : "Discuss it with your group first. You can help each other."

Student : (Students discussed the vocabulary and attempted to find the meaning together.)

Data 4 also reflects the implementation of maintaining and protecting motivation. During the reading activity, several students experienced difficulties understanding unfamiliar vocabulary. Rather than immediately providing the answers, the teacher encouraged students to collaborate with their group members.

d. Encouraging Positive Self-Evaluation

According to Dörnyei (2001), encouraging positive self-evaluation involves helping students recognize their progress, achievements, and learning development. Positive feedback is important because it strengthens students' confidence and promotes favorable attitudes toward future learning activities.

Data 5

Teacher : "Your understanding is much better today. Keep improving."

Student : (Students smiled and confidently shared their learning experiences.)

Data 5 shows that the teacher implemented the strategy of encouraging positive self-evaluation at the end of the lesson. After completing the reading activities, the teacher invited students to reflect on what they had learned and provided positive feedback regarding their performance.

Based on the analysis, the teacher implemented all four categories of motivational strategies proposed by Dörnyei (2001) during reading instruction. Data 1 represented creating basic motivational conditions, Data 2 represented generating initial motivation, Data 3 and Data 4 represented maintaining and protecting motivation, while Data 5 represented encouraging positive self-evaluation.

Among these categories, maintaining and protecting motivation appeared most frequently during the lesson. The teacher continuously encouraged students through collaborative learning activities, peer support, praise, and positive reinforcement. These strategies helped students remain engaged, participate actively, and demonstrate greater confidence throughout the reading activities. Overall, the implementation of motivational strategies contributed positively to students' participation and engagement during reading instruction.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that the teacher implemented all four categories of motivational strategies proposed by Dörnyei (2001), namely creating basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive self-evaluation. These strategies were applied throughout the reading lesson to encourage students' participation, maintain engagement, and support students in completing reading activities. Among the four categories, maintaining and protecting motivation appeared most frequently during classroom instruction.

The implementation of creating basic motivational conditions was observed at the beginning of the lesson when the teacher encouraged students to participate without being afraid of making mistakes. The teacher attempted to establish a supportive classroom atmosphere by reassuring students that mistakes were a natural part of learning. This finding supports Dörnyei (2001), who argues that a positive classroom climate is one of the fundamental conditions for developing students' motivation. When students feel accepted and supported by their teacher, they are more likely to participate actively in learning activities. The finding is also consistent with Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), who reported that teachers who create supportive classroom environments tend to promote higher levels of student engagement and participation.

Another important finding was the implementation of generating initial motivation through the use of topics related to students' daily experiences. Before introducing the reading text, the teacher connected the lesson to students' familiarity with social media and online communication. This strategy successfully attracted students' attention and increased their interest in the reading activity. The finding supports Dörnyei's (2001) view that students are more motivated when learning materials are perceived as relevant to their personal interests and experiences. Similarly, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) emphasize that students' engagement in reading activities increases when reading materials are meaningful and connected to their real-life contexts. In the present study, students responded enthusiastically when discussing familiar topics, indicating that relevance plays an important role in generating learning motivation.

The findings also showed that maintaining and protecting motivation was the most dominant motivational strategy used by the teacher. During reading activities, the teacher continuously encouraged students through praise, collaborative learning activities, and learning support. Students were organized into groups, encouraged to discuss ideas, and motivated through positive expressions such as "Good job," "Excellent answer," and "Keep trying." In addition, the teacher encouraged students to work together when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary instead of immediately providing answers. These strategies helped students remain actively engaged throughout the lesson and prevented them from losing interest when facing learning difficulties.

This finding is consistent with Dörnyei (2001), who states that maintaining students' motivation requires continuous support, encouragement, and opportunities for meaningful participation. The finding also supports Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), who argue that social interaction and collaborative learning can strengthen students' engagement in reading activities. In the present study, collaborative learning not only helped students understand the reading text more effectively but also increased their confidence in expressing ideas and solving problems together.

Furthermore, the study found that the teacher encouraged positive self-evaluation by providing constructive feedback and inviting students to reflect on their learning experiences. At the end of the lesson, students were given opportunities to summarize the reading text and evaluate their understanding. The teacher then acknowledged students' progress by

providing positive comments regarding their improvement. As a result, students appeared more confident and willing to discuss their learning achievements.

This finding supports Dörnyei (2001), who emphasizes that positive feedback can strengthen students' self-confidence and promote favorable attitudes toward future learning. When students recognize their own progress, they are more likely to develop positive expectations about their ability to succeed. The finding is also in line with Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), who found that teachers' positive feedback contributes significantly to students' motivation and persistence in language learning. Overall, the findings indicate that motivational strategies play an important role in supporting students' engagement during reading instruction. Through the implementation of supportive classroom conditions, relevant learning topics, collaborative activities, continuous encouragement, and positive feedback, the teacher successfully promoted students' participation and maintained their interest throughout the reading lesson. These findings suggest that motivational strategies are not only useful for increasing students' willingness to participate but also for helping students overcome difficulties and develop confidence in reading activities. Therefore, the implementation of motivational strategies should be considered an important component of effective reading instruction in EFL classrooms.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, it was found that the teacher implemented four motivational strategies proposed by Dörnyei (2001), namely creating basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive self-evaluation during reading instruction at SMA Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan. Among these strategies, maintaining and protecting motivation was the most frequently implemented strategy. The findings indicate that the teacher consistently applied motivational practices to encourage students' participation and engagement throughout the learning process. Therefore, the implementation of motivational strategies played an important role in supporting students' motivation and creating a positive learning atmosphere in the reading classroom.

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