

# Relationship between Specialization of Teaching Subject and Teaching Experiences with Teacher's Motivational Strategies

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## Abstract

Motivational strategies refer to the approaches taken by teachers in determining and maintaining students' motivation in the teaching process. Teachers play a key role in determining the direction of students' motivation in their classrooms. This quantitative pilot study employed survey research design to provide preliminary evidence on the types of motivational strategies used in teaching the English Language. The study also aimed to identify whether there is a relationship between teacher's specialization and length of teaching experience with teacher's use of motivational strategies. A total of 33 Primary School English Committee Leaders were selected through simple random sampling. The study instrument was adopted from the Motivational Strategies Questionnaires. Data analysed using SPSS version 26, showed that "appropriate teacher behavior" was the most frequent used strategy, while "encouraging students' autonomy" was the least used motivational strategy. Meanwhile, correlation analysis showed that there was no significant relationship between teachers' specialization and length of teaching experience with teachers' motivational strategies. The implications of this study are important for the teacher training department where consideration on the motivational strategy approach used by teachers need to be incorporated in the training they organise.

## Keywords

Motivational Strategies, Specialization, Teaching Experience, English Language Teacher, Teaching English Language

## 1. Introduction

The teaching and learning process is a two-way interaction between the teacher

and the student to ensure an effective learning process. Teachers play an important role in ensuring that the learning environment created is able to shape and maintain students' motivation to learn (Pavelescu, 2019). Teachers' ability to provide positive emotions during the learning process helps in nurturing students' motivation in learning. On the other hand, unsupportive learning environment lowers students' motivation in learning. In this process, teachers play a significant role in maintaining students' interest in learning through the approaches and strategies used in the classroom (Omar et al., 2020). Although students are able to form their own motivation to learn, the approaches taken by the teacher in the teaching process shape the direction of students' motivation and help in maintaining students' motivation in their learning process. The importance of teacher's role is emphasized by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) who described the teacher as the main social figure who affects the motivational quality of a learning process either positively or negatively. This is because every behavior of the teacher in the classroom will have an influence on students' motivation. The significance of teacher's action in the classroom is so vital that it is considered as part of the "motivational tool" in the classroom.

Several factors contribute to teacher's ability to motivate students in the learning process. Xhaferi (2017) in his study listed teacher's knowledge and teacher's experience as factors that contribute to teacher's ability in motivating students through their teaching. Meanwhile, Mehrpour and Moghaddam (2018) in their study found that there are differences in the selection of motivational approaches chosen by teachers in their teaching process. They discovered that teachers with long experience in the field of education chose teaching approaches that gave autonomy to students while novice teachers chose a more explicit and verbal teaching approach in their teaching.

Based on the existence of differences between the factors of teaching experience and teacher knowledge, this study sought to examine the effect of these factors on the motivational strategies chosen by teachers in their teaching process. In addition, the selection of motivational strategies by teachers was also studied to identify the motivational strategies used in the Malaysian context. Previous studies (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Guilloteaux, 2013) from various contexts have shown that motivational strategies used by teachers are cross-cultural where there are significant similarities between the motivational strategies chosen by teachers.

## 2. Literature Review

Motivation is considered to be the main contributing factor in the success of a second language learning process (Gan et al., 2019; Omar et al., 2020). Motivation plays a role in determining the direction of student learning in the learning process and becomes the basis for the teaching process carried out by the teacher in the classroom.

Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) in their study related to motivational strategies in

the second language learning process investigated the perception and use of motivational approaches by teachers. At the initial stage, they found 51 motivational strategies used by teachers. The results of their study later revealed that there are 10 motivational strategies considered the most critical by teachers. The ten strategies were then compiled to be used as the basis for their proposed ten commandments in motivating students.

**Table 1** below shows 10 motivational strategies used by teachers.

Motivational strategies refer to the teaching approach used by teachers in the teaching process that aim to form and subsequently maintain student motivation to learn (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). All ten motivational strategies listed in **Table 1** are different. Dörnyei (2001) later divided these strategies into 4 levels which are 1) creating a basic motivating atmosphere; 2) generating initial motivation; 3) maintaining and protecting motivation; and 4) encouraging positive self-evaluation.

Previous studies related to motivational strategies involving many different contexts have shown interesting research findings for each one. Studies by Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) and Guilloteaux (2013) found that appropriate teacher behaviour is considered as the most important strategies by teachers. On the other hand, a study by Arabai (2014) found that good relationship with students is the most important motivational strategy. Meanwhile, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) and Guilloteaux (2013) in their respective studies found that the strategy of familiarising learners with L2-related values was rated by teachers as the least frequently implemented strategy. However, in the context of a study conducted by Arabai (2014), familiarising learners with L2-related values was rated as one of the strategies that are considered important. The findings from these studies reveal that some motivational strategies are more universal and can be used across cultures, while some approaches are more culture-specific in terms of impact and relevance. Therefore, the findings from this present study would be able to provide better understanding and insight on the motivational strategies used by teachers within the study context of Malaysia and further contribute to the field of education.

Teachers play a significant role in shaping students' motivation in the learning process. According to the study by Jerome and Samuel (2017), experienced

**Table 1.** List of 10 motivational strategies.

| Motivational Strategies   |
|---|
| Appropriate teacher behavior  |
| Recognize students' effort  |
| Promote learners' self-confidence Create a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom |
| Present tasks properly  |
| Increase learners' goal-orientedness Make the learning tasks stimulating                    |
| Familiarize learners with L2-related values   |
| Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms  |
| Promote learner autonomy  |

teachers have the ability to be more sensitive to the needs and wants of students in the classroom when compared to new teachers. Podolsky et al. (2019) in their study found a positive relationship between the length of a teacher's experience and the level of student achievement. This shows that the teacher's teaching can have an impact on students' learning. This is supported by Barrot (2016) who found that teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience are more inclined to use student-centered approach by taking into account the aspects of learning styles, interests and needs of the students compared to novice teachers. The finding suggests that teachers' experience gained through the length of time they have been teaching directly affects the teaching approach they choose. Furthermore, studies have shown that the low self-efficacy of novice teachers affects their teaching compared to experienced teachers who have higher confidence in motivating students (Shohani et al., 2015).

Apart from the factor of teachers' teaching experience that affects the approach used by teachers in the classroom, teachers' subject knowledge is also important. Mohd Sharif and Masnan (2020) in their study found that teachers who received specialized training corresponding to the subject being taught had better subject knowledge. Based on their study's findings, they concluded that there is a relationship between teacher's subject knowledge and teacher's understanding of the subject. This indicates the existence of a relationship between the specialized training received by teachers and the knowledge related to the subject being taught.

The knowledge of teachers who received training in the specialization taught has also been found to have an impact on their teaching. Wiens et al. (2019) who examined the teaching methods used by teachers who have had training in the specializations that correspond to the subjects being taught discovered that these teachers are better at teaching the subject compared to the teachers without such training. Additionally, their knowledge about the variety of instructional approaches was also proven to be better compared to teachers who did not receive specialized training in the subject being taught.

## 2.1. Research Objectives

The objectives for this study are:

- 1) To find out the motivational strategies used by primary school English teachers.
- 2) To find out if there is a relationship between specializations of teaching subject and the motivational strategies of primary school English teachers.
- 3) To find out if there is a relationship between the teaching experience and the motivational strategies of primary school English teachers.

## 2.2. Research Questions

The research questions aimed to be answered from this research are:

- 1) What are the motivational strategies used by primary school English teachers?

2) Is there a relationship between specialization of teaching subject and motivational strategies of primary school English teachers?

3) Is there a relationship between the teaching experience and the motivational strategies of primary school English teachers?

### 2.3. Research Hypothesis

The hypotheses established for this research are:

H1: There is no relationship between specialization of teaching subject and motivational strategies of primary school English teachers.

H2: There is no relationship between the teacher's teaching experience and the motivational strategies of primary school English teachers.

### 3. Methodology

This pilot study is a quantitative study. The quantitative approach was chosen because it matched the research questions which required the numerical data obtained to be inferentially analysed to discover if there is a relationship between the study variables (Black, 1999). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), survey research design is suitable for studies that aim to obtain appropriate data related to the attitude of a population on an issue being studied. This design was therefore chosen for the present study as it suited the purpose of the study that aimed to investigate the relationship between specialization and length of teaching experience with motivational strategies.

The respondents of the study comprised all Heads of the English Language Committee (N = 33) from primary schools that are located in a district of Kelantan, a state on the east coast of Malaysia. The participants were chosen through Simple random sampling. An online questionnaire through Google Form was used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire consisted of 2 parts, namely Part A and Part B. Part A consisted of questions related to the demographics of the respondents, while Part B contained 32 statement items related to motivational strategies. This questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the frequency of strategies used by teachers in their teaching process. The Motivational Strategy Questionnaires from Cheng and Dörnyei's (2007) study were adopted for Part B of this study's questionnaire.

Before the study was conducted, the instrument underwent a validation process to producing valid and reliable results (Oluwatayo, 2012). This instrument was translated from the original instrument in English to Malay by experts in both languages using the forward-backward method. Finally, the translated instrument was reviewed by field experts to ensure that the instrument is suitable to be used and that each and every item is able to measure what is needed by the study's goals (Taherdoost, 2016).

All the responses collected through Google Form were exported into Microsoft Excel before performing the analysis using the SPSS software. Inferential and descriptive analyses were both carried out on the data. Descriptive analysis

involving mean and standard deviation was used to answer the first research question. As for the inferential analysis, Pearson correlation test was used for parametric data and the Spearman Rho test was used for non-parametric data in order to see the relationship between the variables.

**Table 2** shows mean score interpretation used in the study.

As for the inferential analysis, Pearson correlation test was used for parametric data and the Spearman Rho test was used for non-parametric data in order to see the relationship between teacher's specialization and length of teaching in relation to motivational strategies. **Table 3** shows the interpretation of effect size based on the correlation coefficient value as proposed by Davis (1971).

#### 4. Findings

This section presents the results of the analysis performed on the respondents' demographic data. **Table 4** shows the profile of all the respondents.

A total of 33 respondents participated in the survey. Results showed that 24 of the respondents (72.7%) are female while 9 respondents (27.3%) are male. In terms of age group distribution, respondents aged between 51 - 60 years old made up the smallest group with only 2 respondents (6.1%) while those in the age group between 41 - 50 years old constituted the largest group with a total of 12 respondents (36.4%). This is followed by those in the age group of between 31 - 40 years with a total of 10 respondents (30.3 %) and those between 20 - 30 years old with a total of 9 respondents (27.3%).

**Table 2.** Mean score interpretation.

| Mean Score  | Level of Interpretation |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| 4.01 - 5.00 | High                    |
| 3.01 - 4.00 | Medium High             |
| 2.01 - 3.00 | Medium Low              |
| 1.00 - 2.00 | Low                     |

Source: Nunnally & Bernstein (1994).

**Table 3.** Guidelines for the interpretation of effect size for correlations.

| Mean Score  | Level of Interpretation |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| 0.70 - 1.00 | Very Strong Association |
| 0.50 - 0.69 | Substantial Association |
| 0.30 - 0.49 | Moderate Association    |
| 0.10 - 0.29 | Low Association         |
| 0.00 - 0.09 | Negligible Association  |
| 0.70 - 1.00 | Very Strong Association |

Source: Davis, 1971.

**Table 4.** Demographical profile of study respondents.

| Demographic                   | Sub-profile       | Number | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------|----------------|
| Gender                        | Male              | 9      | 27.3           |
|                               | Female            | 24     | 72.7           |
| Age                           | 20 - 30 years old | 9      | 27.3           |
|                               | 31 - 40 years old | 10     | 30.3           |
|                               | 41 - 50 years old | 12     | 36.4           |
|                               | 51 - 60 years old | 2      | 6.1            |
| Professional Specialization   | English           | 25     | 75.8           |
|                               | Science           | 4      | 12.1           |
|                               | Malay Language    | 1      | 3.0            |
|                               | Others            | 3      | 9.1            |
| Length of teaching experience | 1 - 5 years       | 6      | 18.2           |
|                               | 6 - 10 years      | 15     | 45.5           |
|                               | 11 - 15 years     | 6      | 18.2           |
|                               | 16 - 20 years     | 2      | 6.1            |
|                               | >20 years         | 4      | 12.1           |

Concerning their teaching specialization, the results showed that the majority of the respondents have English specialization as their background with 25 respondents (75.8%), followed by 4 respondents specialising in Science (12.1%), 3 respondents (9.1%) specialising in “Other” subjects and only 1 respondent (3.0%) specialising in the Malay language. Concerning the length of teaching experience, the results showed that almost half of the respondents, at 15 respondents (45.5%), reported having English language subject teaching experience of between 6 to 10 years. The respondents having English language subject teaching experience of between 16 to 20 years constituted the smallest group, with a total of 2 respondents (6.1%), while 4 respondents (12.1%) reported having more than 20 years of teaching experience in the subject. Respondents with 1 to 5 years and 11 to 15 years’ experience are both with 6 respondents (18.2%) respectively.

#### Teachers’ Motivational Strategies

The results from the descriptive analysis showing the mean value and standard deviation of the frequency of use of motivational strategies by the respondent teachers in the teaching process are presented in **Table 5**. Based on the results, the strategy of appropriate teacher behaviour obtained the highest frequency value ( $M = 4.505$ ,  $SD = 0.392$ ) followed by recognising students’ effort strategy which also showed a high level of frequency of use ( $M = 4.450$ ,  $SD = 0.392$ ). The strategy of promoting learner autonomy had the lowest mean value, showing a moderately high level ( $M = 3.828$ ,  $SD = 0.465$ ).

**Table 5.** Analysis of frequency of use of motivational strategies.

| Motivational Strategy                                     | Mean  | SD    | Level of Interpretation |
|---|-------|-------|-------------------------|
| Appropriate teacher behaviour                             | 4.505 | 0.392 | High                    |
| Recognise students' effort                                | 4.450 | 0.334 | High                    |
| Promote Learners' self-confidence                         | 4.333 | 0.436 | High                    |
| Create a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom | 4.033 | 0.577 | High                    |
| Present tasks properly                                    | 4.417 | 0.503 | High                    |
| Increase the learners' goal-orientedness                  | 4.076 | 0.453 | High                    |
| Make the learning tasks stimulating                       | 4.083 | 0.518 | High                    |
| Familiarise learners with L2-related values               | 4.248 | 0.307 | High                    |
| Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms            | 4.098 | 0.467 | High                    |
| Promote learner autonomy                                  | 3.828 | 0.465 | Moderately High         |

### Relationship between Motivational Strategies and Professional Specialization

**Table 6** shows the results of Pearson's correlational analysis for motivational strategies and the teachers' specialization. Analysis showed that the Pearson correlation coefficient value for the relationship between the group work promotion strategy and specialization was [ $r = -0.50, p = 0.784$ ]. Meanwhile, the coefficient value obtained for the strategy of creating a fun learning atmosphere was [ $r = -0.115, p = 0.523$ ].

**Table 7** shows the results of Spearman's correlation analysis. The Spearman correlation coefficient value obtained for the relationship between motivational strategies and specialization showed a non-significant finding. Based on the results, the coefficient value obtained for appropriate teacher behaviour strategy was [ $r_s = 0.200, p = 0.265$ ], indicating a weak correlation. Meanwhile, goal-oriented learning improvement strategy obtained a coefficient value of [ $r_s = 0.157, p = 0.383$ ], indicating a very weak correlation. The other strategies recorded coefficient values at a negligible association.

Based on the Pearson and Spearman coefficient values presented in **Table 6** and **Table 7**, all motivational strategies recorded insignificant correlation values. Therefore, H1 failed to be rejected. There was no significant relationship between specialization and teacher motivational strategies.

### The Relationship between the Length of Teaching Experience and the Teacher's Motivational Strategies

The results presented in **Table 8** show the Pearson correlation coefficient values for the relationship between the length of teaching experience and motivational strategies of the teachers. The Pearson correlation coefficient value obtained for the strategy of promoting group work was [ $r = -0.050, p = 0.784$ ]



**Table 6.** Results of Pearson's correlation analysis for motivational strategies and professional specialization.

| Motivational Strategies                                   | Professional Specialization |               |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------|
|   | r                           | Sig. <i>p</i> |
| Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms            | -0.50                       | 0.784         |
| Create a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom | -0.115                      | 0.523         |

**Table 7.** Results of spearman's correlation analysis for motivational strategies and professional specialization.

| Motivational Strategies                     | Professional Specialization |               |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------|
|   | $r_s$                       | Sig. <i>p</i> |
| Appropriate teacher behaviour               | 0.200                       | 0.265         |
| Recognise students' effort                  | -0.034                      | 0.852         |
| Promote learners' self-confidence           | -0.007                      | 0.971         |
| Present tasks properly                      | 0.009                       | 0.961         |
| Increase learners' goal-orientedness        | 0.157                       | 0.383         |
| Make the learning tasks stimulating         | -0.087                      | 0.628         |
| Familiarise learners with L2-related values | -0.035                      | 0.848         |
| Promote learner autonomy                    | 0.063                       | 0.726         |

**Table 8.** Results of Pearson correlation analysis for the relationship between the length of teaching experience and motivational strategies.

| Motivational Strategies                                   | Length of teaching experience |               |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------|
|   | r                             | Sig. <i>p</i> |
| Promote group cohesiveness and set group norms            | -0.050                        | 0.784         |
| Create a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom | 0.043                         | 0.812         |

while the value for the strategy of creating a fun learning atmosphere was [ $r = 0.043, p = 0.812$ ].

**Table 9** shows the results of Spearman's correlation analysis for abnormally distributed data. Spearman's correlation coefficient values for the relationship between motivational strategies and specialization showed non-significant findings for all motivational strategies.

Based on the Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficient values obtained in **Table 8** and **Table 9**, the values for all strategies recorded non-significant findings ( $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, H2 failed to be rejected, and there was no significant relationship between motivational strategies and the length of teacher's teaching experience.

**Table 9.** Spearman's correlation analysis for the relationship between motivational strategies and specialization.

| Motivational Strategies                     | Length of teaching experience |          |
|---|-------------------------------|----------|
|   | $r_s$                         | Sig. $p$ |
| Appropriate teacher behaviour               | -0.118                        | 0.512    |
| Recognise students' effort                  | 0.164                         | 0.362    |
| Promote learners' self-confidence           | -0.007                        | 0.969    |
| Present tasks properly                      | 0.041                         | 0.822    |
| Increase the learners' goal-orientedness    | 0.137                         | 0.445    |
| Make the learning tasks stimulating         | 0.043                         | 0.812    |
| Familiarise learners with L2-related values | -0.164                        | 0.362    |
| Promote learner autonomy                    | 0.148                         | 0.411    |

## 5. Discussions

This study aimed to identify the motivational strategies used by teachers in the teaching process in addition to identifying the relationship between professional specialization and length of teacher's teaching experience with teacher motivational strategies. In general, results showed that the strategy of appropriate teacher behavior was the most often used strategy by the teachers in this study, followed by the strategy of recognising student efforts, the strategy of presenting tasks properly, and finally, the strategy of promoting learners' self-confidence. Result from this study also shows that promotion of learners' autonomy as the least used strategy among teachers.

### Appropriate Teacher Behaviour

The findings from this study are consistent with the findings of past studies (see Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Guilloteaux, 2013; Omar et al., 2020) where all these studies shared the same result in that appropriate teacher behaviour was found to be the most frequently used strategy in teaching. Appropriate teacher behaviour refers to teachers' professional attitude in the classroom, where the teachers show caring attitude in helping and providing the students with a learning environment that supports their learning process. Teachers who choose this strategy also tend to ensure that the teaching process they carried out is in accordance with the interests and abilities of the students.

According to Muir et al. (2019), appropriate teacher behaviour is the main element that forms student's learning pattern through the example set by the teacher. Through the personal examples shown by the teacher, students' identity and confidence can be built, and this contributes further to students' motivation to learn. This is supported by Gao (2021) who maintained that effective teaching is contributed by appropriate teacher behaviour in the classroom. Teachers who show positive behaviour in the classroom are able to ensure that the teaching process is carried out successfully and produce good learning outcomes. This

shows that appropriate teacher behaviour is not only capable of producing motivation for learning among students, but it also has a direct impact on improving student learning outcomes.

### **Present Task Properly**

This strategy comes second in the most used motivational strategies by teachers in their teaching. Teachers' ability to present the task properly is significant in order to create students' positive perception towards the learning process. By presenting the task properly to students, teachers can produce a learning environment that hinders students from feeling threaten and incompetent with the task provided by teachers. Teachers should be able to deliver their expectation regarding the task assigned to students clearly as the inability to provide the needed information will result in students feeling demotivated (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007).

According to Omar et al. (2020), this strategy of presenting task properly is a reflection of teachers' accountability towards their role as educators. Teachers who take pride in their work will try their best in presenting the task to their students in order to produce results that meet the learning outcomes. Presenting the task properly to students do not only helps students in understanding the purpose of the task and the accomplishment that they will achieve through the task. This strategy will also benefit students in providing the suitable strategies in order to complete the task given and whets students' learning appetites (Dörnyei, 2001). By implementing this motivational strategy in classroom it will help teachers in providing students the opportunity to work on their own and further improve their motivation in learning.

### **Promote Learner Autonomy**

Based on the results of the study, it is shown that the strategy of encouraging students' autonomy is the least used motivational strategy by teachers in their teaching process. This strategy refers to the trust given to students by teachers in controlling their own learning process. This control includes the aspect of determining learning goals, the materials used in the learning process, and also the form of assessment to be carried out. According to Phuong and Vo (2019), students who are given autonomy in the English language learning process will show an increase in their achievement. Past studies have shown that the strategy of encouraging students' autonomy is the least used motivational strategy by teachers in the teaching process (Alrabai, 2014; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). This is likely to be closely related to the conservative Asian culture where giving autonomy to students in the classroom is seldom practised and is not a norm (Omar et al., 2020).

Teachers have full autonomy in controlling the direction of their own teaching but at the same time, they need to follow the curriculum that has been prescribed. Therefore, teachers are more inclined to plan and supervise the learning process themselves without the involvement of students. A study by Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) in the context of Taiwan also showed the same findings with the lowest mean value for the strategy of promoting autonomy.

Based on the mean findings, this study found that the student effort recognition strategy is one of the motivational strategies that teachers often choose. According to Lamb (2017), the recognition of students' efforts shown by teachers is a form of autonomous support for students. In this strategy, teachers recognise the efforts made by students through praises or rewards. Through this strategy, teachers are still giving the students some autonomy through recognition of the efforts made by the students in their own learning process. Through the support shown to students, students will feel more valued, and this would further increase their motivation in the learning process.

#### **The Influence of Asia's Learning Culture**

In Asia's learning culture, teachers are considered as the main manager of the classroom who regulates every aspect of the classroom. The learning process is mainly teacher-centred where teachers are fully responsible in determining the entire aspect of the teaching process from choosing the learning objectives to deciding the students' evaluation process. Study shows that teachers in Asian culture show a congruity between their belief on autonomous learning and the practice of learners' autonomy in their classroom (Ismail et al., 2020). Even though teachers believe on the importance of autonomous learning, there's discrepancy between the former and the actual implementation of autonomy in classroom in Asian classroom.

Study by Lamb (2017) also shows that learners' autonomy is regarded as less essential by teachers in Asian classroom setting. The influence of Asian teachers' belief is on learners' autonomy is reflected through teachers' selection of motivational strategies used in their classroom with strategies that focus on teachers namely appropriate teachers' behaviour and recognise students' efforts as the most used strategies and the promotion of learners' autonomy as the least used strategy in their teaching process.

According to Cheung (2018), teachers in Asian setting adopted controlling manners in dealing with students in classroom. Teachers prefer strategies that allow them to have the full control over students' learning and how they wanted the classroom to be. Strategies that encourage students to take charge of their learning specifically the strategy of promoting learners' autonomy is the least favoured strategy to be used by teachers in their classroom. This can be seen in previous studies by (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Guilloteaux, 2013; Omar et al., 2020) that ranked promotion of learners' autonomy as the least implemented strategies in their classroom.

#### **The Relationship between Professional Specialization and Duration of Teaching Experience with Motivational Strategies**

The discussion in this section examines the findings of the inferential analysis that was performed on the data. The results of the Pearson and Spearman correlation analysis showed that overall, there was no significant relationship between specialization and motivational strategies. Thus, the null hypothesis for the second research question (RQ2) in this study failed to be rejected. The analysis also showed that there was no significant relationship between the duration of

teaching experience and motivational strategies. Similarly, the null hypothesis for the third research question in this study (RQ3) also failed to be rejected.

The findings of this study are in line with a previous study by [Sugita McEown and Takeuchi \(2014\)](#) where the researchers found no significant relationship between motivational strategies and teachers' teaching experience. This suggests that the teacher's knowledge in the subject being taught does not affect the approach used in motivating students in the classroom. According to a study by [Hornstra et al. \(2015\)](#), most teachers choose a more traditional approach because of external factors even though they have the freedom to choose the motivational strategies to be used in the teaching process. Among the external factors mentioned by the teachers include performance standards, high-stakes testing, and pressure from outside parties such as administrators, colleagues and parents. Therefore, it can be surmised that the motivational strategies chosen by teachers are often greatly influenced by these elements. Teachers have to conform to the social standard in ensuring that the learning goals are achieved according to the standards that have been set or prescribed.

A study by [Lamb \(2017\)](#) also found that teacher factor is not a determinant in the strategy approach used by teachers. Hence, despite the teachers having great teaching background and able to use various motivational strategies in the teaching process, the most important determining factor is the teaching context. In this present study, the study context was a district in the rural part of Kelantan where the level of English proficiency is at a moderate to low level. The selection of motivational strategies used by the teachers need to take into consideration the ability and willingness of the students to accept the approach used. In this regard, the motivational strategies used by the teachers not only need to take into account the teachers' ability most importantly, the teachers need to consider the extent of the students' capabilities to accept the approach used.

[Sato and Oyanedel \(2019\)](#) in their study found a difference in the selection of approaches used by teachers. Their findings indicate that teachers tend to choose strategies that are more suited to their students' interest as compared to strategies that are more effective for teaching but do not meet the interests of the students. This shows that there is a contradiction in the strategy actually chosen by the teacher for use in the classroom with what is more practical for the students' well-being. In this study, even though the teachers' background was diverse in relation to the period of teaching experience and knowledge of content and pedagogy through specialization, no significant relationship was found between these two factors and the teacher's motivational strategies. This suggests that there is a possibility that a similar situation is also happening in the context of this study, in that the strategy chosen by the teacher is based on students' interests and needs.

The findings of [Graham et al.'s \(2020\)](#) study on the influence of the length of teaching experience on teacher teaching also support the findings of the correlation analysis found in this present study. Both the novice teachers and experienced teachers in this study did not show any difference in terms of the ap-

proach they used in teaching. Nevertheless, Liu et al. (2020) in their study found that the factors of teaching experience and specialization are not the determinants for selection of motivational strategies used by teachers. According to the study, teacher's perception of students' self-motivation is a contributing factor in the selection of motivational strategies. When students are intrinsically motivated to learn, teachers tend to use as many motivational strategies as possible that suit the needs of students to maintain and further increase student motivation to learn.

Therefore, this study supports the findings in the study conducted by Graham et al. (2020), Lamb (2017), and Sato and Oyanedel (2019) which showed that the selection of motivational strategies by teachers is not influenced by the teacher's background factor but takes into account the student's ability factor in accepting the approaches used. Their findings further support the results of the analysis of this present study which found that there is no relationship between the length of teaching experience and the specialization of the teachers with motivational strategy.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the strategy of appropriate teacher behaviour is the most frequently used strategy by teachers while the strategy of promoting student autonomy is the least preferred strategy by teachers. The findings of the study also show that there is no relationship between the specialization of teachers and the length of teaching experience with the teachers' motivational strategy. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies explore the determining factors for the motivational strategies used by teachers to further understand this topic.

The results of this study provide important implications for teacher training where the most frequently used strategies in the teaching process need to be refined and improved. This is important so that the training received by the teachers is in line with the approach they use in the teaching process. Difference between the approach received by the teachers in the course and the actual approach they use in the classroom will create a conflict of interest and will further make the course the teachers receive fail to add value to their teaching.

## 7. Recommendations

Future studies should consider including a larger number of respondents since this study only involved a small number of respondents. Through the involvement of a bigger number of respondents, the study findings can provide a broader and more comprehensive picture on teachers' use of motivational strategies. Furthermore, the topic of motivational strategies has not been widely discussed in the Malaysian context. A study with a larger number of respondents can contribute to new ideas about motivational strategies used by teachers in the country. Another recommendation is for future studies to consider using a

mixed method approach in conducting the study. Through this approach, researchers can obtain more comprehensive data through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods such as survey questionnaires, interviews, observations and field studies. Data from these methods can be used to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic.

To conclude, the findings of this study have proven that there is no relationship between teacher's professional specialization and the length of teaching experience with the teacher's motivational strategies. Therefore, further research on the factors that influence the selection of teacher motivational strategies should be carried in order to have a better understanding of the influencing factors.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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