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How is Students' Motivation Enhanced in English Classrooms in Unstable Socio-political Contexts?

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Abstract: In a situation where life is insecure and the future seems to hang by a thread, motivating students to learn a second language that has no immediate need in their daily lives could be challenging. This article explores the motivation to learn English as a second language of students and the use of motivational strategies of English teachers in one state of Myanmar, which has undergone civil wars for more than seventy years. Sequential explanatory mixed-method research was employed to investigate this complex phenomenon. Questionnaires, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. A pleasantly surprised finding showed that the students could still remain a certain level of motivation to learn English amidst great hardship and fear in everyday life. As for the teachers' motivational strategies, most that were observed and reported did not tend to support students' autonomy. The findings lend support to previous studies on the effects of unstable sociopolitical situations on students and teachers and highlight the needs for effective teacher trainings for pre-service and in-service teachers in such areas.

Keywords: *Motivation to learn English, motivational strategies, self-determination theory, unstable socio-political contexts.*

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Introduction

Unstable socio-political situations have been found to affect the learning of students. Child victims of war performed poorly in class—lost concentration on the lesson, had difficulty to recognize, identify, and understand, could not control their emotions, performed poorly on academic tasks, were frequently absent from the classes, and even dropped out from class (Awng, 2017; Kim, 2010; Uguak, 2010). However, no studies have focused on the situations in second language classrooms, English specifically. This study therefore sought to understand the situations of English learning and teaching in one state of Myanmar, (hereafter referenced as Jade Land), since it is a state that has undergone civil wars for over 70 years (Pitman & Htusan, 2018). Specifically, students' motivation for English learning and teachers' use of motivational strategies in English classrooms in Jade Land was examined to explore how the unstable socio-political situation in the state had affected the students and the teachers.

Motivation to Learn English as a Second Language

In learning a second language, motivation has been found to play a key role. It does not only initiate the learning but also keeps the learner stay on task (Abrar-ul-Hassan, 2014; Csizer & Dornyei, 2005; Dornyei, 2001; Koran, 2015; Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, & Ratcheva, 2013; Reeve, 2009, 2010); therefore, nurturing students' motivation is one of the teacher's tasks in the classroom (Guilloteaux & Dornyei, 2008; Loima & Vibulphol, 2016; Vibulphol, 2016; Wimolmas, 2013). According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), learners are born 'curious' and 'interested' to learn (Niemic & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000); how their psychological needs—competence, autonomy and connectedness—are fulfilled affect their internal motivation to learn (Ryan & Deci, 2016).

SDT describes motivation using two categories, *intrinsic motivation* and *extrinsic motivation*. Both types are viewed as essential for learning (Noels, Clement, & Pelletier, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation helps ensure sustainable, lifelong learning (Noel et al., 2001) while extrinsic motivation enhances engagement in the activity that the learner may find irrelevant or directly meaningless (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In a recent article, Ryan and Deci (2016) suggested to view extrinsic motivation as a continuum with four motivational regulations ranging from highly

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controlled 'external regulation' to autonomous 'integrated regulation', instead of as one independent construct. First, *external regulation*, Ryan and Deci described it as the least autonomous type of motivation. In this case, learners' behaviors are regulated or controlled by some external factors such as rewards or punishment. For example, learners work hard on their assignment in expectation of the teacher's praises. Second, *introjected regulation* was described as the motivation that drives learners to engage in learning activities to feel good about themselves. They clarified it as partially internal and external. Having this type of motivation, learners would push themselves hard in the learning to avoid feeling guilty or shameful. Third, *identified regulation*, this type of motivation was used to explain the situation in which learners recognize the value of a given action. Driven by this regulation, learners internally take control of the situation since the action is in accordance with their identified values. For example, learners who see the importance of English for their life would make more effort in the study than those who do not. Fourth, *integrated regulation* was described as the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation. With this motivation, learners do not only identify themselves with the value of a given action but also align their action with others' core interests and values. English learners with integrated regulation would feel belonged to the community of English learners. In addition, Ryan and Deci (2000) described another situation in which learners lack all kinds of motivation, so called the state of **amotivation**. Learners in the state of amotivation were described as those who performed in class just as being told with no intention to act on their own, because they did not see any value of the learning activities.

Teacher Motivational Strategies

According to SDT, teachers may enhance students' motivation in two different styles—controlling and autonomy supportive (Reeve, 2000, 2009, 2011). Ryan and Deci (2000) argued that the two motivational styles affect the students' motivation in different ways. The students in autonomy supportive classrooms have been found to be intrinsically motivated, believe in their own competence, and have high self-esteem; in contrast, the students working with controlling-style teachers are motivated using external sources and might even lose their motivation—performing only as told—and thus reaching the state of 'amotivation' (Chen & Vibulphol, 2019; Loima & Vibulphol, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vibulphol, 2016). The different use of motivational styles was found to be contributed to a few factors including teacher beliefs (Turner, Christensen, & Meyer, 2009) and contextual factors (Chen & Vibulphol, 2019; Hornstra, Mansfield, van der Veen, Peetsma, & Volman, 2015). Hornstra et al. elaborated that teachers' motivational styles were influenced by a number of contextual factors, such as pressure from administrators, institutional requirements, pressure from students, and even pressure from the teachers themselves. Furthermore, Ng and Boucher-Yip (2014) suggested that the context of teaching was not limited to the school context but also included the context of the teacher, i.e. internal thoughts and ideas.

Context of Jade Land

Jade land was selected to be the context of this study since it is a state in Myanmar, which has been identified as an 'alert' country on the Fragile States Index (Messner, 2017, 2018). In addition, Jade land has not rested from civil wars since Myanmar gained independence in 1948 (Awng 2017; Ireland & Benthuyesen, 2014). The development of Jade Land, including education, has been affected by the civil war a great deal (Lut, 2013; South & Lall, 2016). Due to the civil wars, teachers have fled to schools in more secured areas, schools have been damaged, and families in Internally Displace Persons (IDPs) camps are not able to cover the additional cost of education for their children (Lut, 2013). Awng (2017) further noted that the high drop-out rates and insufficient educational opportunities at all levels from basic to higher education. High school graduates did not pursue their higher education study due to the lack of opportunities to receive education in other states while the degrees granted by local institutions are not recognized (Awng, 2017; Lut, 2013). Moreover, they could not find a job easily in Myanmar government controlled areas (Lut, 2013; South & Lall, 2016).

Regarding English as a second language, Jade Land requires students at all basic education levels to study English (Lall, San, San, Myat, & Khaing, 2013) because of the important role of English following the political and economic changes in Myanmar (Fen, 2005; Ireland & Van Benthuyesen, 2014). However, access and exposure to English for the locals of Jade Land is quite limited. The locals use their own mother tongue in everyday conversations, and some use Chinese to do business. There are not many English speaking visitors in Jade Land, so there is no pressing need for English in daily communication. In addition, access to English learning resources online is minimal and the instruction in English classrooms is mainly conducted in the mother tongue (Linn, 2016). Promoting the learning of English as a second language in Jade Land is therefore challenging.

Methods

The present study employed a mixed-method sequential explanatory design. The quantitative data from questionnaires were used to provide an overall understanding of the phenomenon while the qualitative data from the observations and interviews were used to explain the statistical data (Creswell, 2013).

Participants

The participants of this study were upper secondary school students and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Jade Land. Five upper secondary schools from the eastern and central regions of the state were purposively selected. Once the permission was obtained to conduct the study at the school, one eleventh grade English class in the school was randomly selected. The English teacher teaching the selected class was first informed of the study. Once he or she agreed to participate, the students in the class were asked to join. All the participants were given an informed consent form which described the objectives of the study, their role in the study, and assurance that their identity would be kept confidential. They were also made aware that their participation was voluntary. All five teachers being contacted agree to participate in the study; therefore, five classes with 172 students were observed.

As shown in Table 1, 132 students completed the questionnaires. After the observation of each class, the observed teacher and two students—identified by the questionnaire data as high and low motivated students—were interviewed. The participants were referred to in this study using pseudonyms to protect their identity, i.e. class 1, T1 (teacher in class 1), S1H (student in class 1 with high motivation), S2L (student in class 1 with low motivation).

Classes 1 and 3 were in boarding schools that were founded for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) students specially whereas classes 2, 4 and 5 were attended by both local students (*Please, note that "local students" refer to those who live in the local areas since the war has not been active.*) and IDP students. The number of students in each class was varied, ranging from 20 to 45. The setting of the five classes was quite similar. First, they were all set up in a traditional classroom setting with rows of students' desks facing the blackboard where the teacher's desk was. Second, most of the classrooms were small and had limited space between students' desks for the teachers to move around.

Table 1. Information about the Participants

Classes	Number of students in the class	Number of the students completing the questionnaire	Teachers	Interviewed students	
				High motivation	Low Motivation
1	30	25	(T1) 32-year-old female teacher with a Bachelor's degree in Theology	(S1H) 16-year-old female student	(S2L) 16-year-old female student
2	40	24	(T2) 36-year-old female teacher with a Bachelor's degree in Law and a one-year Teacher Training certificate	(S3H) 18-year-old male student	(S4L) 17-year-old male student
3	20	20	(T3) 25-year-old female teacher with a Diploma in Education	(S5H) 16-year-old female student	(S6L) 19-year-old male student
4	45	40	(T4) 27-year-old female teacher with a Bachelor's degree in Geography and a one-year Teacher Training certificate	(S7H) 17-year-old female student	(S8L) 16-year-old male student
5	37	23	(T5) 40-year-old female teacher with a Bachelor's degree in English	(S9H) 16-year-old female student	(S10L) 17-year-old female student

The percentage of students completing the questionnaire in the five classes varied from class to class. Only the students from Class 3 completed the questionnaire at the level of 100%; followed by Class 4 with 88%, while class 1 completed it with 83%. Classes 5 and 2 filled out the questionnaire with 62% and 60 %, respectively. The five teachers participating in this study were all female. Their ages ranged from 25 to 40 years old. With the exception of Teacher 3 (T3), all held Bachelor's degrees in a different field: Theology, Law, Geography and English. Besides, some of them had already completed a one-year course of Teacher Training. For the ten students chosen for the interviews, their ages ranged from 16 to 18 years old. Among the five high motivation students, four were female and one was male; while the low motivation students consisted of two females and three male students.

Research Instruments

Four instruments were used to collect the data. A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data while classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student interviews were employed to collect qualitative data.

Motivation questionnaire

A questionnaire adapted from Standage, Duda, and Ntoumanis (2005) was used to collect the quantitative data. The questionnaire consisted of twenty 7-point Likert scale items used to examine intrinsic motivation (4 items), three regulations of extrinsic motivation (12 items) and amotivation (4 items). Sample items assessing each type of motivation are:

- I learn English because of the enjoyment that I feel while learning English. (*Intrinsic motivation*)
- I learn English because I can learn skills which I could use in other areas of my life. (*Introjected regulation*)
- I learn English because it is important to learn English. (*Identified regulation*)
- I learn English because it is a rule. (*External regulation*)
- I learn English but I really feel I am wasting my time in English. (*Amotivation*)

The items were translated from English into the mother tongue of the students and ensured content validity by using back translation. The translated questionnaire was tried out with a group of participants with similar characteristics to the participants to check the reliability. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.72, suggesting that the questionnaire items had internal consistency.

Classroom Observation

Non-participatory observations were used to investigate students' motivation and the teacher's motivational practices. Each class was observed once. Students' participation, volunteering, and responses in class activities and teachers' instructional practices during the class time were note-taken.

Teacher Interview

After each observation, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the teacher. All the interviewed were audio recorded. The teachers were interviewed using the questions adapted from Honstra et al., (2015) to examine their views on students' motivation, their use of motivational strategies, and the factors that may have affected their motivational strategies. The interviews were conducted in both English and the mother tongue of Jade Land, depending on the teacher's preference. Sample questions are as follows:

1. What did you do to keep the students' attention in the lesson?
2. What do you think are the key factors that may have affected their motivation?
3. How do you describe the political situation in the state?
4. How has the situation affected the students' motivation and learning?

Student Interview

In each observed class, two selected students, one with high motivation and the other with low motivation, were interviewed. The interview questions were developed by the researcher. The interviews aimed at examining the student's motivation in learning English and learning experiences, in regard to the unstable socio-political context. All students' interviews were conducted in the mother tongue of Jade Land and audio recorded. Sample questions are as follows:

1. How important is English to you?
2. How do you do in English lessons?
3. What do you think about this English class?
4. How do you feel about the situations in the state?

Data Collection

After obtaining the consent to participate from the teacher, the motivation questionnaire was administered to the students in his or her class. The class was then observed for one lesson and the teacher was interviewed afterwards. Last, the motivation questionnaires were analyzed to indicate one student with the highest level of motivation and the other with lowest level of motivation in each class for the student interviews.

Data Analysis

In the quantitative phase, the questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The mean scores obtained from the questionnaire were used to interpret the levels of intrinsic motivation, the three types of extrinsic motivation (i.e. identified regulation, introjected regulation, and external regulation), and amotivation using the following criteria:

<u>Mean Scores</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
1.00 - 2.40	Very low level of motivation
2.41 - 3.81	Low level of motivation
3.82 - 4.22	Moderate level of motivation
4.23 - 5.63	High level of motivation
5.64 - 7.00	Very high level of motivation

In the qualitative phase, the interviews data was transcribed and the observations field notes were expanded to achieve the whole pictures of the teaching and learning contexts. Then, the data were read several times to analyze the students' motivation, the use of teachers' motivational strategies, and the factors that might affect the teachers' motivational strategies. After that, the data were coded, categorized and themed by coding method suggested by Saldana (2015).

The reliability of the qualitative data was assured by reading the codes many times and refining the categories and themes. Furthermore, the emerging themes from classroom observations were triangulated with the interviewed data from the teachers and the students.

Findings

The Motivation to Learn English of Eleventh Grade Students in Jade Land

The questionnaire data findings were favorable. As shown in Table 2, the students in Jade Land, overall, possessed relatively high levels of motivation, both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Their intrinsic motivation was shown to be at 'high' level ($\bar{x} = 5.31$, S.D. = 1.47) and the type of extrinsic motivation that obtained the highest score was identified regulation (very high, $\bar{x} = 6.42$, S.D. = 0.83) while the external regulation obtained the lowest score at 'moderate' level ($\bar{x} = 4.09$, S.D. = 1.71). When observing the score from each class, the same trend was found, except for class 3. The score of introjected regulation of class 3 was at 'low' level ($\bar{x} = 3.70$, S.D. = 1.53), comparatively different from those of the other four classes.

These findings suggest that the students in Jade Land recognized the instrumental value of English, and also had personal interest in learning English. The 'low' level of amotivation observed in the data, overall ($\bar{x} = 2.44$, S.D. = 1.59) and class by class, supports this conclusion. The majority (over 70%) of the students 'disagreed' with the questionnaire items addressing amotivation such as "I learn English but I do not really know why," or "I learn English but I really feel I am wasting my time in English," showing that the students perceived the value of learning English.

Table 2. Motivation to Learn English of Eleventh Graders in Jade Land

Classes	Intrinsic motivation		Identified Regulation		Introjected Regulation		External Regulation		Amotivation	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Class 1 (n=25)	4.86 (High)	1.45	6.03 (Very High)	1.03	4.86 (High)	1.54	3.57 (Moderate)	1.46	2.54 (Low)	1.52
Class 2 (n=24)	6.00 (Very High)	0.90	6.56 (Very High)	0.67	5.47 (High)	1.49	4.43 (High)	1.54	2.21 (Low)	1.38
Class 3 (n=20)	4.11 (Moderate)	1.78	6.02 (Very High)	0.83	3.70 (Low)	1.53	4.17 (Moderate)	1.73	2.72 (Low)	1.42
Class 4 (n=40)	5.21 (High)	1.36	6.46 (Very High)	0.56	4.94 (High)	1.70	3.83 (Moderate)	1.56	2.29 (Very Low)	1.57
Class 5 (n=23)	6.08 (Very High)	0.90	6.64 (Very High)	0.63	4.82 (Moderate)	1.73	4.64 (Moderate)	1.95	2.63 (Low)	1.83
Over all (n=132)	5.31 (High)	1.47	6.42 (Very high)	0.83	4.79 (High)	1.71	4.09 (Moderate)	1.71	2.44 (Low)	1.59

The interview data supports the questionnaire findings about the students' high level of 'identified regulation' and 'intrinsic motivation'. All students, regardless of the levels of motivation identified by the questionnaire, reported that they recognized the importance of learning English, seeing the value of English or education, in self-improvement, travelling, and future job opportunities. In Excerpt 1, the 'high motivation' student (S3H) from Class 2 reported being aware of the role of English as an international language. He also saw that English brought a kind of status to the users, saying "If we know English, people are impressed." Regardless of the level of motivation identified in the questionnaire, the 'low motivation' student in Class 2 (S4L) shared the same perception of the role of English in the world nowadays,

as shown in Excerpt 2. (*Please note that some excerpts were originally in the mother tongue of Jade Land but are presented here in English to protect the identity of the participants*).

Excerpt 1

S3H: English is very important. *English is used everywhere in the world right now.* English is useful for our nation and people. *If we know English, people are impressed.* English is useful for every individual person. [...] I also think that English is very important. Let's say, there are English words even on the cover of snack packages.

(Interview S3H, 25-31)

Excerpt 2

S4L: English is very important. Because English is used as the main language in the world.

(Interview S4L, 20-21)

Furthermore, most students in the interviews reported their joy in learning and using English, indicating a certain degree of intrinsic motivation. Excerpts 3 and 4 show a sign of intrinsic motivation of the 'high motivation' students, (S9H) and (S7H).

Excerpt 3

S9H: *I never feel bored* when I learn English. *I love learning* English. Learning English is *interesting*.

(Interview S9H, 22-23)

Excerpt 4

S7H: I am *very interested* in English. Learning English is *fun*.

(Interview S7H, 40)

In the same vein, some teachers in the interviews reported that their students showed interest in learning English activities and participated in class actively, as shown in Excerpts 5 and 6.

Excerpt 5

Teacher 1: When I invited my students to translate the history of our leaders from mother tongue into English they *participated in the activity very actively*. // because they were *interested* in it.

(Interview T1, 67-70)

Excerpt 6

Teacher 3: The students in my class always *pay attention* to the lessons. They participate in all learning activities *actively*. I never see that they are sleepy in the class.

(Interview T3, 13-15)

Considering the findings at the classroom level, the observations revealed different trends from the questionnaires. Only three classes, Class 1, Class 3 and Class 5 were observed to be highly motivated. In these classes, the students participated in all learning activities actively. Even though some students did not discuss much in the group activities, they followed the discussions of their group members attentively. Some students engaged in the learning activities as volunteers. Furthermore, when their teachers asked questions, they gave responses to the teacher quickly and actively. When the teachers explained the lessons, they listened to the teachers attentively and took notes in their books without being told by the teachers. Most students could maintain their motivation until the end of the lessons. They were attentive and active in learning from the beginning to the end of the lesson. The interviews with the three teachers and six students in these three classes also showed the same trend that most students were motivated to learn English. They were fully aware of the importance of English.

For Classes 2 and 4, the observations and questionnaires did not show the same trend. The questionnaires showed high levels of motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, while the observations revealed a different view. When the class started, only a few students were in the classroom and they did not seem to be ready for the class. Their desks were all empty with no books or materials. When the teacher came into the class, they did not stop chatting or playing. Most students were late for the class, and some did not show up until almost the end of the period. During the class, most students did not focus on the study; they teased or talked with one another, and some fell asleep during the class. Very few students listened to the teacher in these two classes. When they were asked to discuss the lessons with their classmates, only a few students participated. Most students sat in a dormant way from the beginning of the class until the end. The interviews with the two teachers and four students support the findings from the observations. The two students with low motivation from these two classes reported that even though they recognized the importance of

English, they did not understand the lessons, and could not keep up with it, so their attention wandered during the instructions. Both teachers said that they had observed that most students were not interested in learning.

Effects of the Unstable Situations in Jade Land on Students' Motivation

Based on the interviews, the students' motivation to learn seemed to be significantly affected by the ongoing war in Jade Land. Two themes emerged from the data: first, the unstable atmosphere there offered no hope for the future, nullifying the importance of education, as described by S4L and S9H in Excerpts 7 and 8.

Excerpt 7

S4L: I feel like *it [the civil war] blocks my life* from improvement. We just have to accept others' help. We just have to eat food that other people give because we are Internally Displaced Persons IDPs. I also feel like our education is blocked because of this unstable situation. That's why I feel like *we don't have any hope*.

(Interview S4L, 95-98)

Excerpt 8

S9H: Due to the war my parents *cannot earn money* to support my education. // So it is very *difficult to continue my education* in big cities.

(Interview S9H, 69-85)

Another theme that emerged in the data was the fear caused by the war, which seemed to distract the students from learning, as shown in Excerpts 9 and 10.

Excerpt 9

S9H: My feeling is that I am *very afraid* when we hear the noise of bombing. We can hear the noise of the bombs around here. Because of that fear, I *cannot concentrate* on learning.

(Interview S9H, 69-85)

Excerpt 10

Teacher 5: When the bombs were dropped near our school, our students were *very afraid* and it really disturbed our students in their learning like they became weak in studying. Some students *do not want to study* any more. The students told me that after the bombs were dropped near the school, they always feel fear.

(Interview T5, 118-121)

Teachers' Use of Motivational Strategies in EFL Classrooms in Jade Land

In all five classrooms, a variety of motivational strategies was observed. Both controlling and autonomy-supportive strategies were identified, however, not all the teachers would be considered as autonomy-supportive. The tendency to employ controlling strategies was more evident.

Controlling motivational strategies. The five teachers were observed often utilizing various controlling motivational strategies. They tended to conduct the class using their own perspectives and forced the students to think, feel and behave in a specific way. Four main controlling strategies were identified, including *using punishment, rushing the students to complete a task, giving answers directly, and using competition*.

Using punishment. Three out of five teachers used punishment to pressure the students to perform in a certain way. Examples of the punishment included beating, standing up and sitting down or reciting English poems from the textbook. In the observation of Class 4, the teacher beat the students who missed her English classes and warned them not to miss the class again, as shown in Excerpt 11.

Excerpt 11

Teacher 4: Next time, don't miss the classes. *If you miss the classes again, you will be beaten more.*

(Observation T4, 36-37)

Rushing the students to complete a task. All of the teachers rushed the students to complete the task at hand, instead of giving them quiet time to concentrate on the task. The following are examples of the teachers' statements recorded from the classes:

"Have you finished reading? Read the passage *as quickly as possible*. // you have only 3 minutes left."

(Observation T2, 15-24)

"Now you have 7 minutes left. *Do it quickly! Do it quickly! Hurry up! Hurry up!*" (Observation T3, 51-52)

"Have you finished copying these sentences? *Write them down as quickly as possible* or else I will erase them now"

(Observation T4, 94-96)

"Now *you have 10 minutes left*. How is your progress? (Observation T1, 56)

Giving answers directly. Some teachers supplied the answers by themselves when asking students, a question. They were not patient enough to let the students explore ideas by themselves. The following is an example from the observation of Class 5.

Excerpt 12

Teacher 5: What is the synonym of 'absorb'?

The synonym of 'absorb' is 'suck'. (*giving the answer directly by the teacher*)

(Observation T5, 74-75)

Using competition. Three teachers reported to be in favor of using competition in their classroom (see Excerpts 13-15); however, only Teacher 5 was observed to actually use it in the classroom. In Excerpt 13, she explained how competition could keep students awake in the afternoon periods.

Excerpt 13

Teacher 5: My teaching period is in the afternoon. Some students become sleepy and bored in my teaching periods so I have to create more interesting activities for them. *I invite them to participate in the competition types of activities.*

(Interview T5, 66-68)

Excerpt 14

Teacher 1: When I explain the lesson, I let my students do group discussions, pair work and *competitions*.

(Interview T1, 52-53)

Excerpt 15

Teacher 3: I *create competitions* like playing vocabulary games and sentence construction games so that students become more interested in learning activities.

(Interview T3, 27-29)

Autonomy-supportive motivational strategies: In this study, five autonomy-supportive strategies were found in the observations including: *giving clear instructions, designing interesting activities, encouraging students, inquiring of students' needs, and asking critical questions.*

Giving clear instructions. This strategy was observed in the active classrooms—Classes 1, 3, and 5. The three teachers gave clear instructions before they began the learning activities to help the students understand what they were going to do in the learning process. Excerpt 16 shows how Teacher 1 gave clear step-by-step instructions before the task.

Excerpt 16

Teacher 1: Today we are going to learn about 'say something'. Before we start, I want to divide you into 5 groups. Each group will get 3 pairs of paper scripts with questions and answers. You have to match those paper scripts. Once you have paper scripts, you have to discuss in your groups and match the papers. When you finish matching, you have to give your matched papers to me.

(Observation T1, 29-33)

Designing interesting activities. This strategy was also observed in only the three active classes. The activities such as matching paper scripts, group discussions and playing games were used to attract students' interest. In the interview with Teacher 1, she stated that she utilized lots of learning activities to motivate students.

Excerpt 17

Teacher 1: I *do lots of activities* like showing pictures, giving listening tasks, asking them to find the meaning of the words, showing them movies, [...], letting them practice critical thinking, letting them do sentence constructions, [...], letting them do group discussion and pair work. I also teach English poems as songs with a melody according to the students' request.

(Interview T1, 49-54)

Encouraging students. In the class of Teacher 5, she was observed to encourage students to perform in the learning activities. When she tried to encourage the students who were hesitating to say something about Hellen Keller in their group competition. Teacher 5 used supportive statements to encourage the students, as shown in Excerpt 18.

Excerpt 18

Teacher 5: *Don't be shy. You can do it. Try to say something. (Teacher 5 kept continuing to encourage). This is an opportunity to practice your speaking skill in the class. So, please let us participate in the activity altogether. No need to be shy because all of you are friends. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Your friends will support you.*

(Observation T5, 43-47)

Inquiring of students' needs. Based on Reeve (2016), inquiring about students' needs is one of the autonomy-supportive strategies to motivate the students. In this study, Teacher 3 was the one who was observed to use this strategy. In the classroom, before she started the lessons, she checked with the students as to what they wanted to learn (see Excerpt 19).

Excerpt 19

Teacher 3: Before we start anything, I would like to ask you a question. What do you want to learn today?

Students: About punctuation.

(Observation T3, 16-17)

Asking Critical questions. Teacher 5 was the only one who was observed to ask critical questions. Teacher 5 asked many questions including the questions about the facts, 'yes or no questions' and critical questions. Excerpt 20 shows the way in which this Teacher posed questions to the students.

Excerpt 20

Teacher 5: What diseases can be caused from mosquitoes? (Observation T5, 76)

Discussion and Conclusion

These findings about students' high levels of identified regulation and intrinsic motivation were not consistent with previous findings (Fen, 2005; Ireland & Benthuisen, 2014). The students in the present study still showed that they valued the importance of learning English and had internal interests, even though life outside of the classroom in Jade Land was far from secure or safe. The motivation in learning English may be the result of the country's policy in welcoming international business in 2010 and the requirement for English in higher education (Fen, 2005; Ireland & Benthuisen, 2014).

Nevertheless, the interviews and observations suggest that numerous students' motivation to learn in general had been affected by the unstable situation in their state. This same finding was revealed in a number of studies in other areas with similar issues (Awng, 2017; Lut, 2013; Uguak, 2010). When future careers or educational opportunities cannot be envisioned or foreseen, students may not be able to self-sustain motivation for long. In such contexts, the role of teachers is therefore critical in creating an effective and diverse learning atmosphere with music, drawing, games, puzzle activities, collective sports activities, story-telling, and constructive plays in order to support students and motivate them in their learning (Feuerverger, 2011; Uguak, 2010).

Unfortunately, the findings from the observations in the present study tend to suggest that the students' intrinsic motivation might not have been nurtured effectively by the teachers. All the classrooms were observed to be teacher-centered, with the teachers exercising controlling strategies more than autonomy supportive strategies, even knowing that the students lacked motivation. Pelletier, Seguin-Levesque and Legault (2002) observed a similar trend. They argued that when teachers perceived that their students were not self-determined in learning, they seemed more likely to utilize these strategies.

To sum up, the students in this study identified the importance of learning English and possessed interests in learning English. It seemed likely that the students were motivated in learning English even in the unstable socio-political society. Nevertheless, the students' motivation was affected detrimentally by the war in Jade Land, in the state of Myanmar. The teachers utilized more controlling strategies to boost students' motivation, being conscious of students' lack of interests amidst ongoing civil war.

Limitations of the Study

First, since this mix-method study only aimed at explaining the situation in one context, that being Jade Land, the state of Myanmar; generalization and application of the findings in other contexts should be made with caution. Second, the data was collected from only one classroom in each school due to the time of the observation which was close to the end of the semester when the teachers had to complete all the lessons and prepare the students for their matriculation

examination. This might have limited the observation of the pattern in students' behaviors and the teachers' use of motivational strategies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, further investigations and related topics are recommended as follows:

First, the findings in the present study give a glimpse of what may happen with the learning and motivation of the students in an area where students' lives are threatened by uncontrollable external forces, in this case a civil war. However, the generalization of the findings was conducted with caution due to the small number of observations. Therefore, a longitudinal study may be indicated to gain further insights into a consistent pattern of the teachers' use of motivational strategies as well as students' change of motivation over time.

Second, the teachers in this study were found to employ controlling strategies even though they all showed concerns about the students' lack of interest in learning due to the war. This finding suggests that the teacher might not be aware of the effects of controlling strategies on students' intrinsic motivation. Therefore, the findings from this study suggest a critical need for higher quality teacher education. Effective teachers' motivational strategies need to be emphasized in teacher training and professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers for schools in unstable socio-political situations in order to overcome the challenges that the students in such contexts have.

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