

Motivation through different eyes: teachers' and learners' perceptions of the strategies used in Portuguese L2 classes

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Resumo: O presente artigo analisa as percepções de aprendentes e professores de Português Língua Estrangeira (PLE) quanto ao uso de estratégias motivacionais em sala de aula. O objetivo cinge-se a analisar se há uma prática de ensino reflexiva, revelada mediante uma apreciação fidedigna do uso e do impacto das estratégias no contexto de ensino. Além disso, analisam-se as semelhanças e diferenças entre as percepções das professoras e dos aprendentes quanto às estratégias consideradas como mais e menos motivadoras. Os resultados obtidos a partir do paradigma dos métodos mistos revelaram uma relativa congruência entre as percepções das professoras e o uso das estratégias efetivamente observado, mas uma relativa desconformidade entre as percepções das professoras e dos aprendentes quanto ao impacto motivacional das práticas usadas em aula. Algumas implicações para o ensino de língua estrangeira são discutidas, bem como caminhos para futuras investigações.

Palavras-chave: Estratégias motivacionais. Percepções. Ensino e aprendizagem de língua estrangeira.

Abstract: The present paper analyses Portuguese L2 learners' and teachers' perceptions of the use of motivational strategies in class. The purpose is to investigate whether the practice of a reflective teaching is implemented, to be attested through a true perception of the use and the impact of strategies in the classroom. Additionally, it seeks to investigate similarities and differences between the learners' and the teachers' perceptions of the most and least motivating strategies. The findings obtained through a mixed-method paradigm reveal a relative congruence between the teachers' reported use of the strategies and the real practices observed, but a relative dissonance between the teachers' and the learners' perceptions of the motivational impact of the strategies used in class. Some implications to L2 teaching are discussed, as well as possible topics deserving future investigation.

Keywords: Motivational strategies. Perceptions. Portuguese L2 teaching and learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation has a strong impact on the process of acquiring an L2 (GARDNER, 1985, 1991; CLÉMENT, 1980; DÖRNYEI, 2001; DÖRNYEI, USHIODA, 2011), and teachers can act as promoters of motivation in their classes (ARNOLD-MORGAN, FONSECA-MORA, 2007; GARRET, YOUNG, 2009; DÖRNYEI, 2009; DEWALE, 2011; MERCER, DÖRNYEI, 2020). In a recent study, Costa (2022) investigated the impact of teachers' strategies on students' motivation to learn Portuguese L2. The findings revealed that the frequent use of motivational practices by both teachers who took part in the study accounted for the maintenance of high motivational levels in their groups, and that the variance in some of the measures was likely due to the emphasis each teacher placed on certain strategies as well as their overall attitude in class. This confirms, in the context of Portuguese L2 classes, what had already been found in previous studies on EFL (LAMB, 2007; HARDRÉ, SULLIVAN, 2008; BERNAUS, GARDNER, 2008; BERNAUS, WILSON, GARDNER, 2009; ASTUTI, 2013; ALSHEHRI, 2017; HENRY, THORSEN, 2018).

Building on data provided in Costa (2022), the present study aims at adding up to previous investigations, by looking at how teachers' perceptions of their use of motivational strategies in the context of Portuguese L2 classes conform or contrast with the classroom practice registered through observations, while also assessing how congruent teachers' and learners' perceptions of the practices and factors located in the classroom dynamics are. Furthermore, it is proposed that specific elements pertaining to the interplay between individual and contextual factors can be unveiled through a comparative analysis of teachers' and students' perceptions.

Despite the great amount of work dedicated to the study of either teachers' or learners' perceptions regarding motivational strategies in L2 classes, studies on how teachers' and students' perceptions agree or clash still seem to be lagging behind (BERNAUS, GARDNER, 2008; RUESCH, BOWN, DEWEY, 2011). Yet there is abundant evidence that teachers' and learners' perceptions may differ significantly (RAVIV, RAVIV, REISEL, 1990; BERNAUS, GARDNER, 2008). In addition, while some motivational strategies may be universal, others are culturally bound, which calls for the study of educational practices in varied cultural contexts to attain a fuller comprehension of how motivation can impact the process of L2 learning (RUESCH, BOWN, DEWUEY, 2011).

The analysis of teachers' perceptions of the classroom dynamics sheds some light on how teachers' educational practices conform with their beliefs about teaching, which, in turn, can potentially lead to greater awareness and critical reflection. What is more: knowing how learners react to these practices can inform more efficient teaching strategies in the future. Endorsing these claims is the concept of teachers as "reflective practitioners" advanced by Schön (1983, *apud* WILLIAMS, BURDEN, 1997, p.54), which can be summarized as an effort to "subject their everyday professional practices to ongoing critical reflection and make clear their own particular world view by means of this consideration" (WILLIAMS, BURDEN, 1997, p.54). According to the social-constructivist view, this endeavor should be a "shared process in which both teachers and learners are engaged in a multilevel process of action, monitoring, reflection, feedback and further action" (*ibidem*, p.55).

This study adopts Dörnyei's (2001) framework of motivational strategies as a theoretical model guiding the analysis of the empirical data obtained in qualitative and quantitative instruments. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions are outlined:

- a) do the teachers' beliefs about the motivational strategies used in class conform to the actual strategies implemented in the classroom?
- b) is there a convergence between the learners' and the teachers' perceptions concerning the motivational strategies used by the latter?

2. THE STUDY OF TEACHERS' AND LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING STRATEGIES

The role of perceptions on teaching has long caught the attention of researchers. Back in 1992, it was already claimed that teachers' theoretical beliefs impact the way they perceive, process and act towards information in their classroom (JOHNSON, 1992). In the same year, Pajares maintained that "clusters of beliefs around a particular object or situation form attitudes that become action agendas" (1992, p.319). The advantages of a close cooperation between researchers and L2 teachers have been long advocated (see PICA, 1998), situating L2 research in the problems experienced in everyday educational practice (SPOLSKY 1999; UCCELLI, SNOW, 2008; HULT, 2008).

The study of perceptions in the field of L2 teaching and learning has been undertaken from the perspectives of teachers, learners, and both teachers and learners, and through varied research methods: quantitative, qualitative and a mixed-method paradigm. Taking special

interest in how students' motivation upon entry to school changed after 20 months of formal schooling, Lamb (2007) reported on the results of a longitudinal study developed in a mixed-method model consisting of closed and open questionnaires, class observations and interviews with a focal group of learners in a school in Indonesia. Similarly, Gan (2021) based his study on students' perceptions, this time using a qualitative-only approach consisting of interviews, diaries and follow-up emails, in order to investigate how learners' attitudes, strategies and motivation might differentiate successful students from the others. Focusing now on teachers, Hardré and Sullivan (2007) studied the influence of high school teachers' perceptions and individual difference characteristics on teachers' use of motivational strategies in their classrooms. While this research does not pertain to the domain of L2 studies, it illustrates well how the correspondence between teachers' perceptions and their actual use of strategies can be investigated following a mixed-method paradigm. Another study that explores teachers' perceptions was conducted by Cekiso (2017), whom, by focusing on the perceptions of nine teachers in three South-African schools, investigated the relevance of their initial training, their awareness of reading strategies and their beliefs of how these strategies might impact their students' reading skills.

Some studies have explored both teachers' and students' perceptions for attaining a more comprehensive picture of classroom beliefs regarding motivational teaching strategies. Bernaus and Gardner (2008) investigated their perceptions of a cohort of innovative and traditional strategies in 31 EFL classes in Catalonia. The study was purely quantitative, consisting of a closed questionnaire where teachers and learners informed their perceptions of the frequency of 26 strategies; a second part of the questionnaire answered only by the learners to measure affective and motivational variables; and tests to measure students' performance. Astuti (2013) is another example, investigating the context of EFL teaching and learning in Indonesia under Dörnyei's (2001) framework on motivational teaching strategies, which is also the construct informing this study. The purpose was "to explore the nature of the teaching and learning process (...) with a particular focus on how teachers generate and enhance students' motivation to learn English" (ASTUTI 2013, p.16). Once again, a similarity with the purpose of the present study is remarked, though we propose a mixed-method approach *in lieu* of the mono-method choice of the author.

3. DÖRNYEI'S (2001) FRAMEWORK OF MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES

Dörnyei's (2001) process-oriented model accounts for motivation in L2 classes as a fluctuating attribute, "going through some ebbs and flows" (Dörnyei, 2001, p.19). Accordingly, motivation is said to consist of several different phases, and different strategies are proposed for teachers to cover the whole classroom motivational dynamics. This process-oriented theory is underpinned by the realization that firstly motivation must be generated, then maintained and protected, and finally assessed through a retrospective evaluation of the experience, which may or may not lead to future investment.

For each of these phases, a cohort of strategies is suggested, totaling 35 strategies which can be subdivided into numerous actions. Thus, for *creating motivational conditions*, the key categories are: appropriate teachers' behaviors to create a good relationship with students; a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere; and a cohesive group of learners with appropriate group norms. For *generating initial motivation*, the four categories are: enhancing learners' language sense and attitude; increasing learners' expectancy of success; increasing learners' goal orientation; making the teaching material relevant to learners; and creating realistic learners' beliefs. For *maintaining and protecting the motivation*, the following key units are underscored: making learning stimulating and enjoyable; presenting activities in a way that emphasizes their utility and motivates students; setting specific learners' goals; protecting learners' self-esteem and increasing their confidence; caring for students' good social image in class; fostering cooperation; creating learners' autonomy; and showing them some self-motivating strategies. Finally, for *encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation*, the list contains the following actions: promoting effort attributions in students; providing motivational feedback; increasing learners' satisfaction; offering rewards and grades in a motivating way.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Participants

Participants were two groups of learners of Portuguese L2 classes in Lisbon. Each group consisted of eight students from the level B1.2 (CEFR). Due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, classes were held online. As a whole, 15 classes were observed, 8 in one group, 7 in the other, between March 16th, 2021, and May 15th, 2021. The students lived and worked in Portugal and were between 24 and 48 years old. In the first group, henceforth T1, the mean age was 32, while

in the second (T2), 35. Students in T1 were originally from Germany, Croatia, Spain, Greece (2), Italy (2), and the Netherlands. Students in T2 were from China, Slovakia, the USA, France, Mexico, Poland, and Russia. Both groups consisted of 6 women and 2 men, whose qualifications ranged from high school to graduate degree. The teachers were two female, European Portuguese L1 speakers. The teacher in T1, henceforth P1, was 46 years old and had been working at that institution for 7 years. The teacher in T2, from now on P2, was 59 and had been working at the school for 22 years. They both hold a master's degree in Linguistics.

4.2 Materials and procedures

This study adopted a mixed-method model, as defined by Creswell (2015), combining qualitative and quantitative methods. The data analyzed herein was collected by Costa (2022), through the following instruments: a) a class observation grid based on Guilloteaux's and Dörnyei's (2008) *MOLT*; b) a class observation journal; c) a teachers' motivational strategies questionnaire; and d) learners' and teachers' individual semi-structured interviews.

The analysis ensued as thus: teachers' strategies registered in the classroom observation grid were firstly analyzed quantitatively by calculating the mean score for each strategy employed by P1 and P2. Then, a second measure was added, namely the mean scores for the teachers' perceptions of these strategies, obtained through the quantitative questionnaire in which answers were registered in a five-point *Likert* scale varying from "always" to "never". These two instruments were then crossed and further triangulated with qualitative data collected in the observation journal and the teachers' and learners' interviews, which were also the source for the analysis of their perceptions of the most and least motivating classroom practices. The interviews were held on *Zoom*, in Portuguese, and recorded with the permission of the participants. A content analysis of the transcriptions of these interviews and of the journal data was carried out.

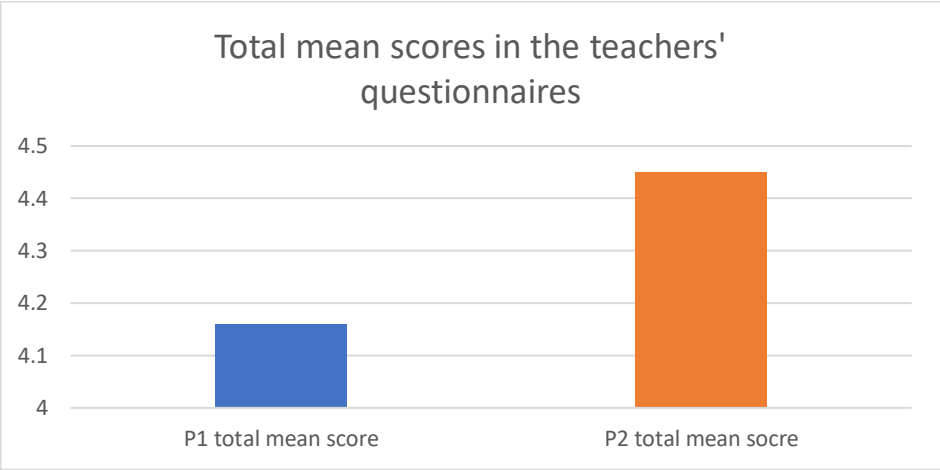
5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Teachers' perceptions of the use of motivational strategies and the use registered in class observations

The comparison between the frequency of use of strategies informed by P1 and P2 reveals that they both believed to use the group of strategies in the questionnaire quite frequently, with

a global mean score above 4 in a scale 1-5. Yet the frequency informed by P2 is higher than the one informed by P1 (**Figure 1**).

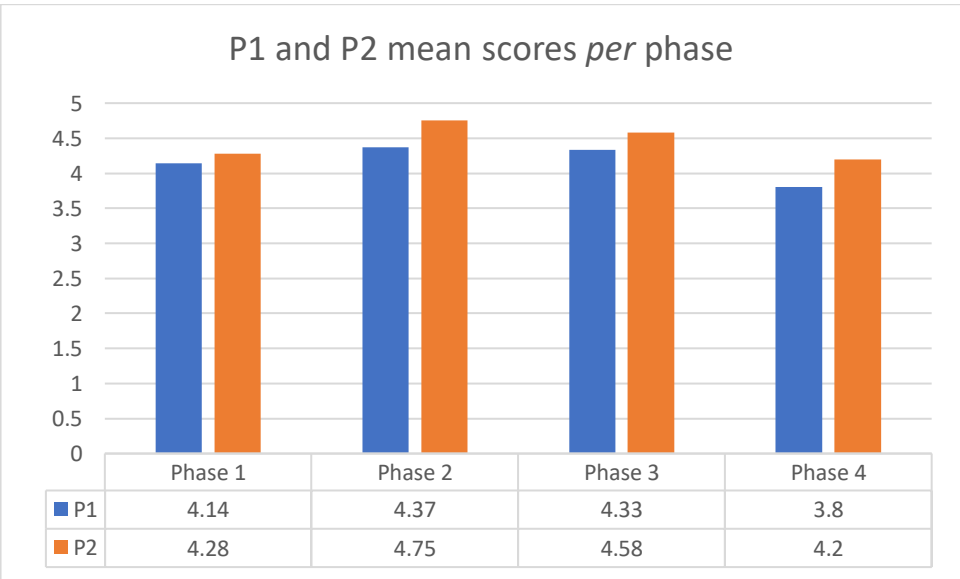
Figure 1: Total mean scores of P1 and P2



Source: Costa (2022), p.66

The analysis of the mean scores in each phase also confirms P2’s superiority. Interestingly, P1 and P2 show the same order in the ranking of the highest mean scores in each phase of Dörnyei’s model. The highest mean score calculated for both teachers corresponds to **phase 2** (*generating the initial motivation*), followed by **phase 3** (*maintaining and protecting learners’ motivation*), then **phase 1** (*creating basic motivational conditions*) and, finally, **phase 4** (*encouraging retrospective self-evaluation*). **Figure 2** shows the ranking.

Figure 2: ranking of P1 and P2 highest mean scores per phase



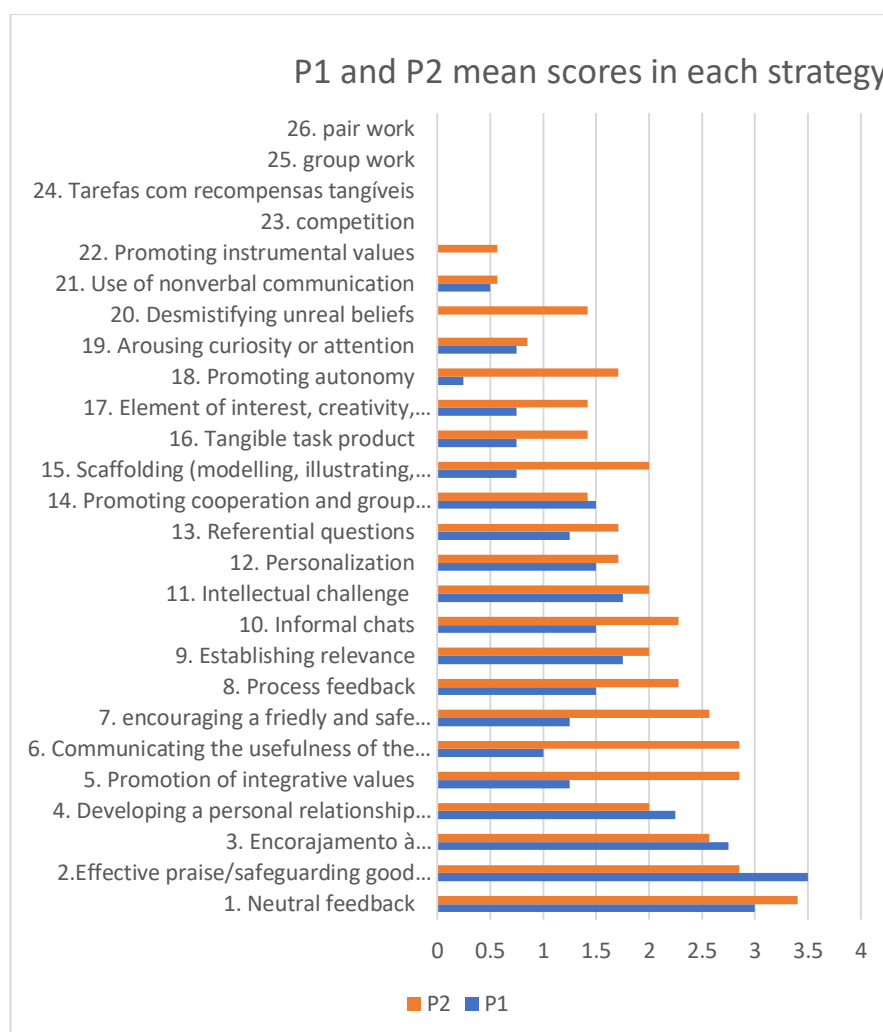
Source: Costa (2022), p.67

The analysis of the strategies grouped in **phase 1** reveals that two of the seven strategies received 5 points (“always”) from both teachers. They are “*I develop a personal relationship with my students*” and “*I create a supportive atmosphere in my classroom*”. In **phase 2**, the items that stand out with the maximum score (5 points) given by both teachers are “*I try to increase learners’ intrinsic interest in the L2 learning*”, “*I promote instrumental values associated with the L2*” and “*I try to increase learners’ possibility of success in class assignments and tasks*”. Although **phase 3** was second in the ranking, it was the one in which the greatest number of items received the maximum frequency score from both teachers (6 out of 12), which reveals a significant concern on their part for maintaining and protecting learners’ motivation. A highlight in terms of the lowest declared frequency in this phase is “*involving students in the task by requesting their mental and physical participation and by assigning them specific roles*”. **Phase 4**, which received the lowest mean score from both teachers, also includes the strategy which was perceived as the most neglected in the whole questionnaire, namely “*I offer my students rewards in a motivating way*”. P1 gave this item a score 2 (“rarely”), and P2 gave it a score 1 (“never”).

Figure 3 shows P1’s and P2’s mean scores for the observed use of each strategy. All in all, both teachers used a diversified array of motivational strategies in their classes. The data shows that all but 4 of the 26 strategies analyzed were commonly used by both teachers, and, of the 22 strategies used, only 2 were used by P2 and not by P1. Thus, the main difference between P1 and P2 is not the number of strategies used, but the frequency. As shown in **Figure 3**, the frequency observed for P1 does not reach half that of P2 in some of the strategies.

Most of the strategies used by both P1 and P2 belong to **phase 3** (*maintaining and protecting learners’ motivation*). There is a clear preoccupation with learners’ self-confidence and social image. Additionally, considerable attention was given by P1 to “*developing a personal relationship with the learners*”, which belongs to **phase 1**. P2, in turn, emphasized actions aiming at “*promoting integrative values focusing on the L2 culture and on L2 speakers*”, which belongs to **phase 2**, as well as “*creating an atmosphere of support*” (**phase 1**). As for the most neglected motivational practices by P1 and P2, the former was omissive mostly regarding strategies belonging to **phase 3** (though this phase is also where her most frequent strategies belong). As for the latter, the least frequently observed strategies were “*promoting instrumental values*” (**phase 2**) and “*arousing learners’ curiosity towards the task*” (**phase 3**).

Figure 3: P1's and P2's use of motivational strategies



Source: Costa (2022), p.71

Some preliminary general observations are due regarding the analysis of the correlation between the observed use of the strategies and the teachers' perceptions. Firstly, it can be noticed that the greater frequency informed by P2 is also attested in the class observations. Additionally, when the focus is placed on the most neglected strategies, the same correspondence between their informed perceptions and the real practice can be attested. The fact that “tasks with tangible rewards”, which are among the least-frequently informed strategies by both teachers, were not even once observed in class is illustrative. Finally, under Dörnyei's process framework, both teachers reported as the most frequently used strategies those belonging to **phase 2**. However, the results found in the class observations reveal that both P1 and P2 made greater use of the strategies pertaining to **phase 3**, revealing a mismatch.

Looking now at the teachers' individual results, P1's observed most frequent strategies were: 1. “Efficient appraisal/ safeguarding a good social image/ promoting self-confidence”;

2. “*neutral feedback*”; 3. “*encouraging self-correction/ peer correction*”; and 4. “*developing a personal relationship with the students*”. The first two strategies got the highest score in the perception questionnaire. The third, which was given a mean score above the median in the observation grid, received the highest score in the questionnaire, which reveals a close perception, though relatively overrated, the same accounting for the strategy in the fourth position in the ranking.

There has been, however, some disagreement between the perceived and the actual use of certain strategies on the part of P1. The fact that this teacher reported a maximum frequency for “*promoting instrumental values*” without having implemented such strategies in class is illustrative. Another example is an informed maximum frequency for “*creating a supportive environment*” while a frequency below the median was attested in the classroom observations. Also overrated were the following strategies: “*communicating the usefulness of the task*”, “*using a creative element*”, and “*stimulating students' curiosity*”. Finally, P1's perception of “*promoting autonomy in class*” was only partly incongruent: this strategy was overestimated with a “sometimes” in the questionnaire, when, in practice, a much lower frequency was observed. However, the answer provided in the questionnaire corresponds, in fact, to the lowest value given by P1 in **phase 3**.

As for P2's results, the most frequently observed strategies were the delivery of “*neutral feedback*”; “*efficient appraisal/ safeguarding a good social image/ promoting self-confidence*”; “*promoting integrative values*”; and “*communicating the usefulness of the task*”. The first two got a maximum frequency in the questionnaire, matching the teachers' real practice. The third was also a frequently observed strategy, and, in fact, this result also conforms to the greater frequency of this strategy seen in T2 when compared to T1. Finally, P2's perceived use of “*communicating the usefulness of the task*” also matches the high frequency observed in class.

As previously noticed for P1, P2's data reveal some incongruence between the two instruments. The perception of the “*use of activities with a creative element*”, for example, was overrated, as were “*promoting integrative values*” and “*arousing students' curiosity*”, although these last two strategies may have been occasionally observed. Also, P2 gave “*demystifying unreal beliefs about learning the L2*” a maximum frequency, while its use was only occasional. Her perceived use of this strategy, however, matches her superiority in regard to P1's use, so once again a relative congruence can be noticed.

To sum up, both P1 and P2 seem to be engaged in a reflective classroom practice, as signaled by the relative conformity between their beliefs and the actual classroom practices

observed, regardless of some occasional mismatch between some of the data in the two instruments. This conclusion is underscored mainly by the individual analysis of the strategies, given that when their practices are examined under Dörnyei's framework, there is a relative incongruence between the teachers' perceptions and the observed strategies. Yet the difference between the mean scores corresponding to **phase 2** and **phase 3** in the teachers' questionnaires is relatively small (see **Figure 3**), and thus does not rule out the interpretation of an overall conformity between the data.

5.2 Teachers' and learners' perceptions of the motivational practices

5.2.1 Learners' perceptions of the most and the least motivating practices

When asked what, in their opinion, were the most motivating practices, students from T1 mentioned the **oral debates** as their favorite classroom activity. The activities that were ranked as the second most motivating ones by this group were **reading** and **grammar exercises**. Third in the ranking were **writing tasks**, **oral presentations**, and the **combined use of all activities**.

As the oral debates also represented the most commonly observed strategy in class, this topic was further explored in the interviews. Many students in T1 remarked that the debates were good because they allowed them to practice the content presented in class. For some, it was an opportunity to get to know each other, making up for the lack of personal contact due to the online format of the classes. Student A103, for example, remarked that *"I really enjoyed that we had the chance to speak a lot at the classes (...) especially when everyone spoke, because it was also hard for all students to speak, mainly on Zoom"*. The discussions that revolved around the Portuguese culture and that of other Portuguese speaking countries, like Brazil, as well as the culture of the learners' countries were mentioned as highly motivating.

The fact that not all students had the same chance to speak was resented by a few, who claimed that some liked to speak too much and thus deprived others of the opportunity to participate. It was also remarked that the debates were excessive, as student A104's comment illustrates: *"by and large I really liked the debates (...) but I think the teacher should interrupt more, because sometimes we talked for too long"*. Some comments expressed the idea that such debates sometimes took up time that could have been better used in grammar practice, as illustrated by student A104's remarks: *"I'd rather have classes where I can practice more grammar; because, if I want to speak, I can do that with my friends, my peers"*. Student A106

also criticized the fact that sometimes the discussions involved subjects that were not clearly related with the language, which she referred to as “*empty talk*”.

As for the least motivating strategies, some students in T1 referred to **grammar and vocabulary**, claiming that they were too difficult, or that they should be assigned for homework. **Writing tasks** and **homework** were also mentioned, the latter due to the short time in-between classes to do them, especially because most students worked. In the second position, students mentioned both **reading tasks**, mainly when deprived of a follow-up activity that further explored the content of the text, and the focus on **a single activity** during the entire class.

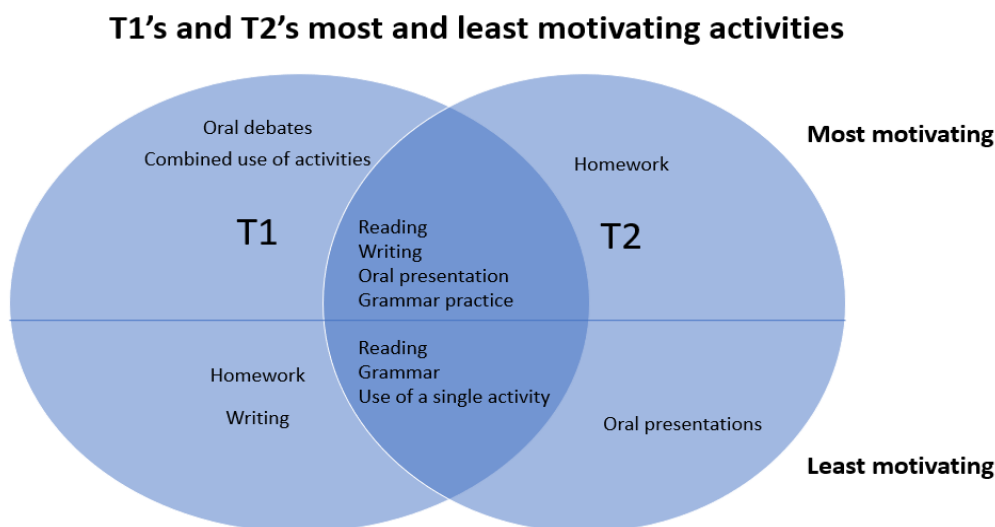
As for T2, the most motivating strategy mentioned was **grammar and vocabulary**, which shows a particular appreciation for learning forms and vocabulary. Student A204, for instance, stated that her favorite activities were those that explored idioms and other informal expressions. Another strategy much enjoyed was **oral presentations**. Student A102 remarked that those were motivating because “*I learned about many new things when my classmates did their presentations and I think it was quite interesting*”. Yet, similarly to students in T1, some criticized the amount of time spent on those activities. Student A206, for example, claimed that “*the presentations helped, but they were too long (...) sometimes they lasted for 2 hours. And also, when we discussed a theme, each person spoke individually and then remained silent for a long time, 30 minutes*”. For some students, still, it was the **reading tasks** that were the most motivating, highlighting their adequacy to their level: “*look, I think the best strategy was the short stories, the texts, because we had time to read them, which were kind of long, during the week and then get to class and comment or say things about the text (...) because our level requires something like that*” (student A205). Students A203 and A204 also referred to home tranquility as the reason for their preference for **homework** and **writing tasks**.

As the least motivating strategies, this group mentioned **reading, oral presentations, grammar and vocabulary**, and the use of **a single activity**. As for the first, a point made was that reading aloud “*was good for our pronunciation, but it seemed like a waste of time, it was repetitive. I'd already read it at home*” (student A206). Others resented that there were no follow-up debates after reading. The oral presentations were also referred to as lacking a moment of interaction or follow-up tasks where the whole group would engage. As for grammar, a criticism regarded the complexity of the verb tenses in Portuguese and how confusing it was for students to keep up with the rich Portuguese verbal morphology.

Finally, some students brought up the theme of insufficiency. Thus, students A201 and A203 mentioned that they would have enjoyed having more tasks focusing on grammar and vocabulary, respectively. The bulk of the students pointed out that there was too little interaction among them in the tasks, and, whenever there was some, it was always the same two or three students to speak. This lack of interaction, attributed by some to the online format of the classes, led to alternative ways of communication, such as via *Whatsapp* or email, as stated by student A204 and attested in the class observations.

The data reveals that there is considerable congruence among the perceptions of the two groups regarding the most and the least motivating classroom practices, though the order they are placed in the ranking may vary slightly in each group. The following activities are mentioned by both groups as the most motivating: **reading, writing, oral presentations**, and **grammar practice**. The least motivating are: **reading, grammar and vocabulary**, and the use of a **single activity**. Figure 4 shows T1 and T2 learners' shared and dissonant perceptions.

Figure 4: Learners' perceptions of the motivational practices



Some of the shared perceptions flag phenomena which may deserve the attention of teachers and researchers alike. First, learners in both groups seem to appreciate oral debates: in T1 it was cited as the most motivating activity; in T2, the insufficiency of oral interaction was brought up. In the latter, students' oral production was alternatively explored through individual presentations, which were mentioned by some as their favorite task. As for debates, it was resented by both groups that some students spoke more than others. The excessive amount of time dedicated to these tasks was a shared negative perception in both groups, something also

identified in Dewaele and colleagues (2017), who found that the amount of time spent on speaking was related to ever growing levels of *foreign language enjoyment* (FLE), but only up to 50-60 percent of the time dedicated to this activity, after which the levels dropped off briskly. Thus, teachers should moderate such debates, preventing that only a few students speak and that these activities last for too long.

Another topic regards learners' appreciation of grammar and vocabulary tasks. Students in both groups reported to enjoy activities which they could clearly relate to the use of formal L2 structures. These were T2's favorite activities and T1's second preferred ones. Some learners were critical of oral debates under the argument that they took up time that could have been better spent on grammar practice. Interestingly, a similar remark appears in Astuti (2013), as one of the students in the focal group criticizes the teacher's use of humor (telling jokes) in class, asserting that the class would be better off if more formal content were focused. Apparently, students perceive a trade-off between learning the L2 and casual interactions.

That learners are motivated by learning the formal properties of the L2 and by a certain sense of consciously practicing the language seems unquestionable, as attested in the journal notes referring to their overall motivation in volunteering to read their answers during the correction of the grammar exercises. Yet it would be important to know if the way the teachers presented and explored the grammar content in follow-up tasks had an impact on students' motivation, a relationship that future studies could investigate. A final remark concerns the fact that such tasks were also mentioned as both groups' least motivating activities, often based on the difficulty or complexity of some (morpho)syntactic structures of the L2.

Finally, both groups referred to the motivating impact of teachers combining an array of strategies in class. Conversely, the use of a single strategy during the whole class was frowned upon by both groups.

5.2.2 Teachers' perceptions of the most and the least motivating practices

When asked which practices had a positive impact on the group, P1 highlighted the **oral tasks** as the most engaging ones. She reported having used a strategy of **combining several skills** in these tasks always considering the profile and goals of the group: *"I would start from the interpretation of a text, an interpretation exercise, and then go on to discussing it (...) we ought to consider our audience (...) in these evening groups all the students work in Portugal (...) their main goal is to actually develop their ability to express themselves well"*. When asked the same question, P2 did not mention any specific strategy.

P1 mentioned the **grammar tasks** as the least successful strategy, based on the **rupture of the rhythm** of the class. Her conception of grammar as dull resonates the beliefs expressed by teachers in L1 studies, as informed by Watson (2015), and seems to influence her attitude towards grammar in class. P1 claimed that, to make such tasks more motivating, she **embedded them in the oral tasks**, or sometimes she simply assigned them for **homework**. P2 mentioned the **listening tasks**, *“because some students disagreed with the correct answers given for the items”*. She added that when these tasks were assigned for **homework**, it was better, but did not mention any specific strategy to make them more motivating in class.

When asked whether they considered their groups to be motivated, both teachers said yes, bolstered on different arguments. P1 emphasized the **dynamism of the group**: *“(...) the students in the group know each other, they'd had face-to-face classes before, so they were always quite motivated, since day one, and, even yesterday during the oral evaluation, they managed to be quite dynamic”*. P2, in turn, based her answer on their **commitment with the course**: *“I think so, otherwise they wouldn't have done all the assignments. They always told me when they would be absent or late by email, none of them missed more classes than they were allowed to”*.

P1 mentioned student A107 as the least motivated student, because he was the **quietest** student in the group, but then she added that *“I don't know whether he was the least motivated or whether it is just his personality (...) because he **never failed to do his homework**”*. As the most motivated ones, she mentioned students A102 and A106. When asked which strategies she used with the most and least motivated learners, P1 mentioned that her only strategy was to occasionally make interventions to **encourage** student A107 to participate, as the others were **naturally motivated**. Referring to the two most participating students, she claimed that sometimes she had to **moderate** the debate a bit.

P2 mentioned students A207 and A208 as the least participating ones, arguing that her strategy was also to **prompt** them to speak: *“two of the students were very quiet, A207 and A208, so I called on them more often (...) I would say jokingly: will you volunteer, or shall I ‘volunteer’ for you?”*. Like P1, P2 added that perhaps it was not that they were not motivated, because even the quietest two **did what they were supposed to do** and **participated** when asked to. As for the most motivated, she mentioned student A201, who *“wanted to learn, was careful, respectful with her own work.”*; student A202, who *“broke a leg, but still did all she could to **keep up with the classes**”*; student A203; and, finally, student A205. Like P1, P2 stated

that she did not use a specific strategy with them, but rather chose to use a **linear** approach as a group.

By comparing P1's and P2's perceptions of the most and the least successful strategies, the two teachers refer to different practices. Thus, P1 related a successful strategy to learners' engagement in activities, and a poor one to the rupture of the class dynamics. Additionally, P1 reported an alternative strategy to motivate students for grammar practice, showing some critical reflection. P2, on the other hand, seemed to have a less clear-cut concept of successful strategies, fudging this question. When asked to point out what the least successful strategy was, she mentioned the listening tasks, arguing that students rebutted her responses. This behavior, however, could be interpreted as a sign of high motivation on the part of the learners, by engaging in a discussion in the L2. She avoided a reference to any specific strategy to make them more motivating and simply mentioned that she would assign such tasks for homework. When justifying their perceptions of motivation, once more they revealed different conceptions. P1 emphasized the dynamism of the group, whereas P2 highlighted their commitment to the course. They both revealed an awareness of the students who participated more and less in their groups. **Table 1** summarizes the main differences and similarities in P1's and P2's perceptions.

Table 1: Teachers' perceptions of the motivational practices

	P1	P2
Most successful strategy	<i>Oral tasks</i>	No answer
Least successful strategy	<i>Grammar tasks</i>	<i>Listening tasks</i>
Alternative strategy for motivating learners	<i>Combining different skills</i>	No mention
Conception of motivation	<i>Dynamism and interaction</i>	<i>Commitment to the course</i>
Conception of lack of motivation	<i>Rupture of class dynamics</i>	<i>Confronting the answers</i>
Perception of most motivated students	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Commitment</i>
Perception of the least motivated students	<i>Lack of participation and commitment</i>	<i>Lack of participation and commitment</i>
Strategy to cope with most motivated students	<i>Linear</i>	<i>Linear</i>
Strategy to cope with the least motivated students	<i>Encouraged them to speak</i>	<i>Encouraged them to speak</i>

5.2.3 Correspondence between learners' and teachers' perceptions of classroom motivational practices

By comparing the learners' and the teachers' reported perceptions, some inferences regarding their beliefs of class dynamics can be made. Firstly, it seems that T1 and P1 share a closer perception than T2 and P2. T1 reports the *oral debates* as the most motivating strategy used by P1, who, likewise, mentions the *oral tasks* as the most successful strategy, and students' *engagement* in these activities as a clear sign of motivation. Additionally, P1 showed awareness of some students' greater participation during the interactions, also highlighted in T1 students' interviews. Grammar figured in the first place in T1's ranking of the least motivating strategies, and P1 shared the same perception. Both P1 and T1 based their answers on the difficulty of some grammar points presented in class, and the fact that she sometimes chose to assign these tasks for homework was positively referred to by some learners.

When looking at P2's and T2's perceptions, much less agreement is attested in the answers, partly due to P2's avoidance to name specific activities as motivating. Her reported perception of motivation is mostly related to learners' commitment, while her criterion for choosing the least successful activity was based strongly on learners' refuting her answers. The greater participation of a few students during the oral debates was not associated with motivation by P2; rather, those were precisely the ones she refers to as the most combative ones.

A final remark concerns learners' and teachers' beliefs regarding students' motivation. Students welcomed activities that focused on grammar and vocabulary learning, on a par with more communicative and interactive activities. This is true of both groups, but T2 expressed a greater appreciation for grammar practice, whereas T1 for oral debates. Both teachers, however, failed to perceive learners' appreciation for grammar, interpreting students' motivation based either on participation in oral activities (P1) or on commitment to the course (P2). The fact that grammar was also mentioned by learners from both groups as one of the least motivating strategies is not contradictory, as learners' criticism of grammar was restrained to content that they considered to be too difficult or confusing to take in.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The findings show a relative conformity between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices, which advances the conclusion that both P1 and P2 engaged in a reflective educational practice. Additionally, regarding participants perceptions of the most and the least

motivating practices used in class, it was found that students shared many perceptions. A reason for that could be the similarity of the motivational strategies used by both teachers, despite the different levels of frequency observed, which may have made students' learning experiences more similar than not. As for the teachers, it was observed that their perceptions regarding learners' motivation differed considerably. In addition, P1's perceptions seemed to match more consistently her group's perceptions of the strategies.

A possible implication of these findings is the extra attention that teachers should place on the length of time dedicated to oral activities. Another point regards the use of mixed strategies in class, with a red flag raised to single-strategy classes. A final remark relates to grammar teaching. Participants in this study claimed to appreciate the feeling that they were learning L2 structures while engaging in class activities, rating grammar as motivating, so long as it is not too difficult or confusing. This counters teachers' negative perceptions of grammar, as expressed herein by P1 and reported in other L1 studies.

Some limitations in this study pertain both to the participants and to the instruments used. It is proposed that future research could focus on larger samples, to assure more statistical effects. Also, it might be fruitful to have learners answer the motivational strategies questionnaire, to check whether their perceptions of the use of each of the strategies match those of the teachers. Nonetheless, it seems unquestionable that this study has successfully achieved its main purpose, which was to buttress the claim that teachers should practice a reflective teaching as a means of identifying achievements and shortcomings related to their educational practice.

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