



THE IMPLICIT MOTIVATING ROLE OF EFL TEACHERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN HUNGARY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract:

Since the teacher's implicit motivating role is an under-researched area in L2 motivation (Kálmán, 2023), this comparative qualitative study aims to explore the perceptions and experiences of EFL learners and EFL teachers regarding teachers' interactional, attitudinal, and behavioural patterns in the EFL classroom. This study draws upon qualitative data from two interview studies, which were previously conducted in order to compare EFL learners' and teachers' perspectives (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). The comparative study involved twelve secondary school EFL learners and twelve secondary school EFL teachers. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic content analysis. The results revealed that both participant groups reported several implicit motivating aspects of EFL teachers. Comparing learners' and teachers' perspectives, several common themes emerged from the data analysis: EFL teachers' encouragement, humour, kindness, support, patience, cheerfulness, enthusiasm, adaptability, empathy, and conscientiousness were identified as motivational aspects of EFL teachers by both groups of participants. However, differences were also found between the two perspectives: learners perceived teachers' curiosity and open-mindedness, while teachers perceived their optimism, social behaviour and trustworthiness as motivating aspects in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: implicit motivation, EFL classroom, learner and teacher perspectives, secondary education, Hungarian context

1. Introduction

In the past decades, motivation has been considered an essential factor of second language (L2) learners' success, which *"has been the subject of intensive research"* (Lamb, 2017, p. 301). The teacher's essential role in L2 motivation has also been studied from various perspectives (see, e.g., Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Henry & Thorsen,

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2018; Kálmán, 2023; Lamb, 2017; Lamb & Wedell, 2015; Mezei & Csizér, 2005; Noels *et al.*, 1999). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) emphasised that the teacher's behaviour in the L2 classroom significantly enhances learners' motivation. Additionally, Lamb (2017) pointed out that *"the aspects of teacher behaviour which appear to have the most motivational impact on language learners are those that relate to the human side of teaching"* (p. 330). Although L2 motivation has been an extensively researched area, the primary focus of research has been the teacher's explicit role in motivating L2 learners (see, e.g., Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Lamb, 2019); however, L2 learners are also motivated by implicit factors, and the specific aspects of teachers' implicit roles have yet to be explored and conceptualised (Kálmán, 2023).

This research aims to identify the implicit motivating aspects of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in the secondary school classroom in a Hungarian context. The study endeavours to explore the implicit motivational influence of EFL teachers, considering both the perspectives of EFL learners and teachers (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). This study seeks to delve into the affective dimensions of EFL teachers motivating EFL learners without the teacher's awareness of this influential role, and to investigate the implicit motivating aspects as manifested in their interactions, attitudes, and behaviours in the EFL classroom (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). The present comparative study draws on interview data previously collected and analysed in two separate studies in order to compare learners' and teachers' perspectives (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). Although the results of this comparative study are not generalisable, the emerging themes could provide a solid basis for quantitative studies to test the findings on a larger sample.

Based on the theoretical background and the aim of this research, the research questions were established as follows:

- 1) How do the interactions, attitudes, and behaviours of secondary school EFL teachers influence EFL learners' motivation from the EFL learners' perspectives?
- 2) What aspects of secondary school EFL teacher interactions, attitudes, and behaviours do EFL learners perceive to be motivating?
- 3) How do the interactions, attitudes, and behaviours of secondary school EFL teachers influence EFL learners' motivation from the EFL teachers' perspectives?
- 4) What aspects of secondary school EFL teacher interactions, attitudes, and behaviours do EFL teachers perceive to be motivating for EFL learners?

2. Literature review

The theoretical background of this study was provided by Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System, which considers the L2 teacher as a constituent of the L2 learning experience in the theory. Dörnyei (2009) referred to this as *"situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience"* (p. 29). The other two components of the theory were the learners' ideal L2 selves and ought-to L2 selves. Csizér (2019) claimed that although L2MSS *"has generated an impressive body of research"*, *"the L2*

learning experience has not received sufficient attention, and it is of particular importance to investigate how past and present language learning experiences help or hinder the current learning process" (p. 87). Kálmán (2023) also argued that the L2 learning experience has attracted limited consideration in L2 motivation research. This comparative study focuses on the EFL teacher's role related to EFL learners' learning experiences – exploring the teachers' and the learners' perspectives.

As Kálmán (2023) pointed out, there is a distinction between teachers' explicit and implicit roles in L2 motivation. By explicit role, Kálmán (2023) considered the teachers' conscious uses of motivational strategies. By implicit roles, he referred to those motivational aspects that teachers might not be aware of but have a positive impact on learners' motivation. The foundations of motivational strategies were laid by Dörnyei (2001), by creating 35 macro-strategies, which were extended to 102 micro-strategies (Lamb, 2019). From the teachers' perspectives, using these motivational strategies in the classroom might depend on their own beliefs regarding the effectiveness of the motivational strategies (Lamb, 2019). In contrast, from the learners' perspectives, age and culture-related aspects also have a role in which motivational strategies they prefer (Lamb, 2019). Concluding their study conducted in a Hungarian context, Mezei and Csizér (2005) suggested that motivational strategies should be uncovered before learners, as the power of employing motivational strategies might be provided by the fact that learners are not cognizant of them.

Regarding the teachers' implicit motivational role, research demonstrated that L2 teachers' supportive communicative style increased learners' intrinsic motivation (Noels *et al.*, 1999), and L2 teachers establishing positive relationships with the learners contributed to motivated learning behaviour (Henry & Thorsen, 2018). Furthermore, Lamb and Wedell (2015) investigated the personal qualities of inspiring L2 teachers, such as the teacher's kindness, patience, humour, and having a good relationship with the learners. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) highlighted the impact of the teacher's enthusiastic, motivated and inspired behaviour on learners' motivation. Mezei and Csizér (2005) also found that the teacher's positive attitudes, humour and enthusiasm contributed to a motivating learning environment. Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2010) affirmed that teachers' interpersonal relationships with learners play a crucial role, as well as the *"teacher's support, empathy, and cooperation are indispensable components"* of the teacher's success (p. 430). Lamb (2017) emphasised the role of the teacher's empathy, while Kálmán's (2023) findings also supported that teachers who had extraordinary motivating agency were empathetic, kind, supportive, enthusiastic, conscientious, joyful, and charismatic.

3. Methodology

Seeking to find answers to the research questions, qualitative research methodology was applied, since *"qualitative methods are useful for making sense of highly complex situations"* (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 30). Moreover, its nature is *"exploratory – its purpose is to discover new*

ideas and insights, or even generate new theories" (Croker, 2009, p. 9). Considering that this study aims to explore EFL learners and teachers' experiences and perceptions of EFL teachers' implicit motivational role, qualitative research was designed.

The above-formulated two sets of research questions were divided into two studies: the first study (aiming to find answers to the first and second research questions) was an interview study conducted with EFL learners (Pálffy, 2024), whereas the second study (in order to answer the third and fourth research questions) was an interview study carried out with EFL teacher participants (Pálffy, in press). This present study is aimed at comparing the results of the two interview studies: identifying similarities and differences between the experiences and perceptions of the two groups of participants.

The research instruments – two semi-structured interview guides – were designed in 2022 to gain qualitative data from the two target groups of participants (EFL learners and EFL teachers) (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). The semi-structured interview guide *"identifies the key topics to be covered,"* allowing the researcher *"sufficient flexibility to probe some aspects in depth"* (Richards, 2009, p. 186). First, the semi-structured interview guide was developed for EFL learners (Pálffy, 2024), which was adapted to provide an insight into the EFL teachers' perspectives (Pálffy, in press). Twelve interviews were carried out with EFL learners (Pálffy, 2024), and the same number of teacher participants were interviewed in the second study as well (Pálffy, in press). The semi-structured interviews were conducted online (there was one in-person interview) between Spring 2022 and Autumn 2024 (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). All interviews were carried out in Hungarian (the first language (L1) of all participants), and most of the interviews lasted approximately 30-40 minutes. The data was recorded and transcribed, which was then coded (following Dörnyei's (2007) guidelines) in order to identify specific patterns emerging from the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As for the biographical data of the participants of the interview studies, EFL learner participants' ages ranged between 15 and 19 years (Pálffy, 2024), while EFL teachers' ages ranged from 25 to 59 years (Pálffy, in press). In the interview study conducted with learner participants, four female and eight male EFL learners participated (Pálffy, 2024). In contrast, ten female and two male EFL teachers were interviewed in the study conducted with teacher participants (Pálffy, in press). Regarding their learning and teaching experiences, participants were asked to provide their approximate years of EFL learning and EFL teaching. EFL learners reported the approximate years of learning English between three and eleven years (Pálffy, 2024), while EFL teachers' teaching experience ranged from one to thirty years (from the most experienced until the least experienced teachers participated in the study) (Pálffy, in press). Considering the participants' school type in which they were attending and teaching, learners and teachers were interviewed from different types of secondary schools in Hungary (e.g., general secondary schools, vocational secondary schools, bilingual secondary schools, and practice secondary schools).

4. Results and discussion

Data analysis revealed several similarities and some differences between the two target groups of participants – EFL learners and teachers – in their perceptions and experiences. During the data analysis of the studies, EFL teachers’ interactions, attitudes, and behaviours were identified from the perspectives of EFL learners and EFL teachers. The tables below present the emerging themes – focusing on the commonalities as well as the distinctions between the two groups’ perspectives. Each emerging theme will be illustrated by examples from both the learners’ and teachers’ interviews.

Regarding EFL teachers’ interactions, the following patterns emerged from the data analysis – as confirmed by both learners’ and teachers’ interviews: *positive interactions and encouragement, communicating according to the vision of learners’ future L2 selves, speaking learners’ language, and having a sense of humour* (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). When EFL teachers interacted positively and encouraged EFL learners as well as communicated according to the vision of their future L2 selves (what learners can ideally achieve in the future), spoke learners’ language (used same or similar language and expressions as learners in their interactions), and reacted with humour in specific situations, seemed to motivate EFL learners and were identified as emerging themes in both interview studies. Several learner and teacher participants alluded to these emerging themes, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Emerging themes – EFL teachers’ interactions

EFL learners’ perspectives	EFL teachers’ perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• positive interactions and encouragement• communicating according to the vision of students’ future L2 selves• speaking students’ language• having a sense of humour	

As one of the learner participants reflected on the *positive interactions and encouragement* of the EFL teacher related to their essential role in motivating her, emphasising the teacher’s *positive interactions* in general at the same time:

“My teacher encouraged me a lot, which positively impacted my language learning. (...) I am convinced that it is important for an English teacher to encourage and positively interact with students.” (Learner Participant 12) (Pálffy, 2024, p. 186)

From the teachers’ perspectives, the same theme emerged from the data analysis; for instance, as one of the teacher participants described her interactions in the EFL classroom related to encouraging learners:

“Well, what my students see is that I encourage them (...), they really like that. Besides that, they do not have to stress in my classes, that they do not have to be afraid of me (...),

even if they were not prepared, we can still solve this together, and we can find a solution.”
(Teacher Participant 11) (Pálffy, in press)

Considering the situations when EFL teachers *communicated according to the vision of learners’ future L2 selves*, a learner participant recalled the following situation, which he mentioned as one of his positive experiences related to his EFL teacher:

“My teacher saw what I could achieve with my abilities. She gives positive feedback when she realises my improvement, or when there is no improvement, she also reflects on it. She encourages me to maintain learning and draws my attention to what I can achieve with English in the future. (...) A few weeks ago, we had to collect students’ names who were aiming to take a higher-level final exam in English. When I signed up for it, I could see that she was not surprised at all. She was aware of my abilities and expected me to take the higher-level English final exam.” (Learner Participant 1) (Pálffy, 2024, p. 186)

From the teachers’ point of view, one of the teacher participants emphasised the importance of *communicating according to the vision of learners’ future L2 selves* as follows:

“I really believe that each of my students can learn English because if I do not believe that, then they definitely will not (...), and I think a teacher has such an important role in the lives of their students that it can change their whole lives (...). I believe that, and whenever we have a situation in the lesson, I tell my students what I believe.” (Teacher Participant 2) (Pálffy, in press)

Related to EFL teachers’ interactions in connection with *speaking learners’ language* and their *sense of humour*, as one of the learner participants described her teachers’ interactions in the EFL classroom:

“I always attend my English teacher’s lessons with pleasure, which are enjoyable. I think the reason is that my teacher is funny, youthful, and has a good sense of humour. I felt that we were on the same wavelength.” (Learner Participant 6) (Pálffy, 2024, p. 186)

The same theme emerged from the interviews conducted with teachers, as two EFL teachers explained, related to the motivational role of these interactions, which not only create a positive atmosphere in the lessons but also enhance learners’ motivation:

“If the atmosphere of a lesson is good, and (...) I am on the same wavelength with students (...), and I speak their language, which is definitely motivating (...), and I think it has to come naturally. It has to feel natural; we cannot force it.” (Teacher Participant 8) (Pálffy, in press)

“We laugh a lot in the classroom. I not only bring plenty of funny materials to the lessons but also (...) having a sense of humour and reacting to issues with humour can be very effective.” (Teacher Participant 2) (Pálffy, in press)

As for the motivational role of EFL teachers’ attitudes and behaviours, several commonalities were found between the perceptions and experiences of EFL learners and teachers. However, specific distinctions also seemed to emerge from the data analysis, which is presented in Table 2. First, the similarities between EFL learners’ and teachers’ perspectives will be discussed, followed by the differences between the experiences and perceptions of the two groups of participants.

Table 2: Emerging themes – EFL teachers’ attitudes and behaviours

EFL learners’ perspectives	EFL teachers’ perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • friendliness, kindness • helpfulness, support, caring • patience, calmness • cheerfulness, joyfulness, happiness • enthusiasm, passion • adaptability • empathy, understanding • conscientiousness, persistence 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • curiosity • open-mindedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • optimism • social behaviour • honesty, trustworthiness

Both EFL learners and teachers referred to the EFL teachers’ *friendliness* and *kindness* in relation to the teacher’s motivational role (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). One of the learner and teacher participants reflected on these key motivational aspects of EFL teachers’ behaviours as follows:

“She is a really kind person (...), and she is really friendly with us. (...) She could transfer her personality and her positive energy to us when she entered the classroom.” (Learner Participant 7) (Pálffy, 2024, p. 187)

“I am very kind and friendly, and I can easily approach people (...). I am usually in a good mood, I smile a lot (...)” (Teacher Participant 3) (Pálffy, in press)

Another common emerging theme between learners’ and teachers’ perspectives among EFL teachers’ implicit motivational aspects was the teachers’ *helpfulness*, *support* and *caring* (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). From the EFL learners’ point of view, a specific description of these motivational attitudes and behaviours is as follows:

“It was most motivating how helpful and supportive my teacher was. (...) Even if we did not ask for it, she was always there to help and support us (...), and she was actively doing

what we did not even need to ask. (...) I would say she was more like a mentor.” (Learner Participant 12) (Pálfy, 2024, p. 187)

One of the EFL teacher participants reflected on these key motivational aspects in the following way, while sharing her latest positive experience related to EFL teaching:

“I have highly motivated students (...). The most common feedback I receive from them nowadays is that I am their “second mother”. (...) I just asked my students yesterday to provide me with feedback, and there were some open-ended questions at the end. The most common answer was that they felt that I love and take care of them, and I think this is the reason behind this title.” (Teacher Participant 2) (Pálfy, in press)

Both groups of participants’ interviews revealed that EFL teachers’ *patience* and *calmness* have a positive impact on learners’ motivation (Pálfy, 2024; Pálfy, in press). One of the learner participants referred to these motivational aspects related to his EFL teacher, who motivated him the most.

“She is a really-really patient and calm person, and we could see that and feel that we are the first for her, our knowledge. If there was someone for whom it was more challenging to learn English or a specific grammatical structure that we were learning at the moment, she always put effort into it in order for that person to acquire that as well.” (Learner Participant 9) (Pálfy, 2024, p. 187)

EFL teachers also reflected on these implicit aspects that enhance EFL learners’ motivation. A teacher participant described his calm and patient behaviour in the EFL classroom as follows:

“I am patient, and I am basically a peace-seeker, so I always create an atmosphere where tension and conflict cannot occur (...). When students do not seem to get involved in the lesson, well, obviously, I approach them patiently (...). Then do not talk to me, then just talk to your partner (...), but do it in English.” (Teacher Participant 6) (Pálfy, in press)

It has also emerged from both the learners’ and teachers’ interview studies that EFL teachers’ *cheerfulness*, *joyfulness* and *happiness* have an implicit role in motivating EFL learners (Pálfy, 2024; Pálfy, in press). Based on the interviews, these motivational aspects appear to play a key role in the EFL classroom. As one of the learner and teacher participants reflected on it:

“She is my listening and speaking teacher (I have more teachers because I am attending a language class at my school), and she is supportive and always cheerful. She knows what she teaches, and she loves teaching. She is an enthusiastic person. Her joy and happiness come through the whole learning process.” (Learner Participant 2) (Pálfy, 2024, p. 188)

"I am a cheerful person (...) and every lesson is cheerful. I always go into the classroom in a way that I create a positive atmosphere with my attitude (...)" (Teacher Participant 3) (Pálffy, in press)

In connection with EFL teachers' implicit motivating role, *cheerfulness*, *joyfulness* and *happiness*, *enthusiasm* and *passion* were also found as commonalities between learners' and teachers' perspectives (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). For instance, one of the learner participants described his teacher's *enthusiasm* as follows:

"It might have been at the beginning of this year when my English teacher told a story about how she became an English teacher. We could see that she was enthusiastic while speaking, and indeed, she told her story in a way that made her seem happy, and we could understand how happy she was that she was teaching English. Her joyfulness while talking about how she loved English was very motivating to us." (Learner Participant 5) (Pálffy, 2024, p. 188)

From the teachers' perspectives, as one of the participants reflected on her *enthusiasm* while mentioning the opposite state of *enthusiasm* (burnout, which can be demotivating for learners) as well:

"It is important for students that I am enthusiastic and that I am not a burnout teacher whom they see in the classroom." (Teacher Participant 3) (Pálffy, in press)

Both interview studies revealed that EFL teachers' *adaptability* could enhance EFL learners' motivation from the learners' and teachers' perspectives (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). A learner and a teacher participant reflected on this implicit motivational aspect of the EFL teacher as follows:

"If it were the last lesson on Friday, she understood our situation, and we would rather have speaking lessons and roundtable discussions. We discussed various and valuable topics, and we learnt from our teacher and others' experiences as well." (Learner Participant 7) (Pálffy, 2024, p. 188)

"If a topic comes up, I can leave the subject for a short while. Then we talk about it (...), so I would say that I am spontaneous, and I always have, or usually have a plan, obviously, but sometimes, although I know where we are (...), if something comes up, or I realise what mood my students are in (...), then I adapt to them." (Teacher Participant 4) (Pálffy, in press)

In the literature, *empathy* plays a key role in motivating EFL learners (Lamb, 2017; Kálmán, 2023), which also emerged from the data analysis (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press).

Both studies confirmed EFL teachers' *empathy* and *understanding*, as these patterns emerged from both the interview study carried out with learners and with the teachers.

"She is very kind, compassionate, understanding, and empathetic with students. (...) She is very understanding; she always realises our current state and can adapt to us. The most important thing for her was not the grades but that we learnt what we should learn." (Learner Participant 5) (Pálffy, 2024, p. 188)

"Well, I think I am very empathetic. That is the first one, and I can deeply empathise with everyone (...)" (Teacher Participant 10) (Pálffy, in press)

As the last common themes, the EFL teachers' *conscientiousness* and *persistence* also emerged in both studies (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). Two examples of this are from a learner and a teacher participant, reflecting on these implicit motivational aspects:

"Surely, she always maintains a positive attitude, believing that if someone in the group does not understand something the first time, they will understand it the second time. Fortunately, she has a personality that never gives up teaching something, whether it is a new expression or way of pronunciation. (...) I appreciate my teacher's personality. She never gives up; she will explain things until everyone in the group understands them. (...) We are lucky to have this teacher." (Learner Participant 2) (Pálffy, 2024, p. 189)

"For example, if the group does not perform well on a test, then I do not start thinking about why they did not study more, but what I did not do in class or why. So, what is it that made these results bad? Perhaps we did not practise enough (...). I am conscientious (...), so we do not just turn in the lesson, and that is it, but our work should have results, both personally and professionally." (Teacher Participant 11) (Pálffy, in press)

Regarding the distinctions between the perspectives of the two groups of participants, the following themes emerged from the interviews conducted with EFL learners. However, they did not emerge from the interviews carried out with EFL teachers: the *curiosity* and *open-mindedness* of the teacher appear to play an implicit role in motivating EFL learners. As a learner participant stated:

"We talk a lot with her. She is teaching in a way that topics are coming up in the lessons, and she is curious about our opinions. She is interested in what is going on with us, and we talk a lot in the lessons (...). Her lessons are very interesting, and I enjoy participating in the discussions during the lessons. I like to talk to the teacher, so I enjoy the lessons; I like her lessons." (Learner Participant 4) (Pálffy, 2024, p. 188)

Related to the themes that emerged from the interviews conducted with EFL teachers but did not emerge from the interviews with learner participants, EFL teachers'

optimism, social behaviour, honesty, and trustworthiness were found to enhance EFL learners' motivation as perceived and experienced by EFL teachers. EFL teachers' *optimism* is exemplified by the following (as one of the teachers described her attitudes and behaviour):

"(...) I am usually in a good mood, I smile a lot, and I am very optimistic about things, I think." (Teacher Participant 3) (Pálfy, in press)

EFL teachers' *social behaviours* also emerged from data analysis in the study conducted with teacher participants. As one of the teachers stated:

"(...) The other one is that I am very social, and I have an extensive social network (...). I enjoy communicating with people." (Teacher Participant 10) (Pálfy, in press)

EFL teachers' *honesty and trustworthiness* were also emerging patterns related to EFL teachers' implicit motivational aspects.

"I think teachers have to be very human and understanding because students are struggling with so many problems these days, so I really think that you have to be professional not only in your subject, but also human. Suppose someone is not born with the ability to empathise with students. In that case, it is terribly difficult to learn so it is not enough for a teacher (...) to be at the top professionally, I think that in terms of relationships, you have to do your best, because students can realise from the first moment what kind of attitude you have, for example, or if you are not honest, and then it is very challenging to expect honesty and openness from students if you are not honest as a teacher." (Teacher Participant 5) (Pálfy, in press)

The above-discussed findings from the thematic content analysis – similarities and differences between the two groups of participants' perceptions and experiences related to EFL teachers' implicit motivational aspects – showed that both EFL learners and teachers could recall and reflect on implicit motivational aspects which positively influence EFL learners' motivation (Pálfy, 2024; Pálfy, in press). Specific EFL teacher interactions and attitudinal and behavioural patterns in the EFL classroom are believed to have strengthened EFL learners' motivation by EFL learners and teachers (Pálfy, 2024; Pálfy, in press). In general, teacher participants could identify more implicit motivational aspects compared to learner participants.

Several emerging themes overlap between the perspectives of EFL learners and teachers. Regarding EFL teachers' interactions, key motivating aspects included the *encouragement* provided by teachers and interactions by which they strengthened learners' ideal L2 selves, as well as their interactions in the classroom, which included a *sense of humour* and speaking the same language as learners (Pálfy, 2024; Pálfy, in press).

These results confirm that the teacher's humour has a positive impact on learners' motivation (Lamb & Wedell, 2015; Mezei & Csizér, 2005).

Related to EFL teachers' attitudes and behaviours, EFL teachers' *friendliness* and *kindness*, *support* and *caring*, *patience* and *calmness*, *cheerfulness*, *joyfulness* and *happiness*, *enthusiasm*, *adaptability*, *empathy*, *conscientiousness* and *persistence* were found to be implicit motivating dimensions of EFL teachers by both target groups of participants (Pálfy, 2024; Pálfy, in press). The results of this comparative study confirm that teachers' support (Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2010; Kálmán, 2023; Noels *et al.*, 1999) and empathy (Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2010; Kálmán, 2023; Lamb, 2017) are essential implicit motivational aspects in EFL learning. Moreover, the results also proved that the teacher's kindness (Kálmán, 2023; Lamb & Wedell, 2015) and patience (Lamb & Wedell, 2015) also enhance learners' motivation. The results of this comparative study confirm that teachers' enthusiasm (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Kálmán, 2023; Mezei & Csizér, 2005), happiness and joyfulness (Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2010; Kálmán, 2023) are key motivational aspects in EFL learning. The findings of this study also provided evidence that teachers' conscientiousness enhances learners' motivation (Kálmán, 2023).

Distinctions were also found between the perceptions and experiences of the two groups of participants. EFL learners identified the teachers' *curiosity* and *open-mindedness* as motivational aspects (Pálfy, 2024). In contrast, EFL teachers reported that they believed *optimism*, *social behaviour*, *honesty* and *trustworthiness* enhanced EFL learners' motivation (Pálfy, in press).

5. Recommendations

Future investigations could include administering questionnaires to both EFL learners and teachers, which would allow the findings of this qualitative study to be tested on a larger sample and therefore gain more generalisable results (Pálfy, 2024; Pálfy, in press). Another potential direction for future research could involve identifying the implicit motivational aspects unique to EFL teachers, as well as those which are specific to teachers of other subjects. Future research could also include conducting studies in different cultural contexts to identify implicit motivational aspects of EFL teachers' interactional, attitudinal, and behavioural patterns that could be specific to other contexts, as this study was conducted in a Hungarian context.

This study focuses on the implicit motivational role of EFL teachers in order to explore how teachers enhance learners' motivation unconsciously in the EFL classroom. As the study might raise stakeholders' awareness of these implicit motivational aspects, it does not indicate that teachers' unconscious interactions, attitudes, and behaviours in the EFL classroom will necessarily become conscious, but this would be the subject of future studies. In case any of the teachers' interactional, attitudinal or behavioural patterns would become more conscious, it would not reduce the significance of this comparative study's findings as these are inseparable aspects of the teachers'

personalities which are “*those characteristics of the person that account for consistent patterns of feeling, thinking, and behaving*” (Pervin & John, 2001, p. 4).

6. Conclusion

This comparative study explored the perceptions and experiences of twelve secondary school EFL learners and twelve secondary school EFL teachers regarding the implicit motivational role of EFL teachers in terms of their interactions, attitudes, and behaviours in the classroom. This study confirms that it is essential to investigate the implicit motivational role of EFL teachers (Kálmán, 2023), as interviews conducted with both EFL learners and teachers revealed that several implicit motivational aspects might enhance EFL learners’ motivation (Pálffy, 2024; Pálffy, in press). It was found that EFL teachers’ unconscious interactions related to *humour* and *encouragement* positively influenced learner motivation. Concerning EFL teachers’ attitudinal and behavioural patterns, EFL teachers’ *friendly, kind, supportive, caring, patient, calm, cheerful, joyful, happy, enthusiastic, adaptive, empathetic, conscientious, and persistent* attitudes and behaviours seemed to have a positive implicit impact on EFL learners’ motivation.

This study might be beneficial for several stakeholders, as it might increase their awareness of the implicit motivating role of EFL teachers and the identified interactional, attitudinal, and behavioural patterns, which seem to enhance EFL learners’ motivation. EFL teachers could realise that their interactions, attitudes, and behaviours in the EFL classroom could have an implicit role in motivating EFL learners. Moreover, it would also provide a new perspective to their own teaching practice, as they could reflect on their unconscious interactions, attitudes, and behaviours, which could positively (or negatively – but this was outside the scope of this study) influence EFL learners’ motivation. The results of this study could be integrated into teacher training programs to raise awareness among both teacher trainers and trainees about teachers’ interactional, attitudinal, and behavioural patterns that enhance learners’ motivation. Furthermore, teacher trainees, besides learning methodological tools and explicit motivational strategies, could also understand the role of implicit motivation. In the long run, EFL learners would also benefit from the results of this study, as the stakeholders’ awareness of the teachers’ implicit role might influence teaching practice positively.

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Conflict of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Anna Pálffy is currently pursuing her PhD at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, Hungary. She obtained her master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and Teaching Hungarian Language and Literature in 2021 from the same institution. Her keen interest in learner motivation has inspired her to investigate the implicit role that EFL teachers play in motivating their students. To this end, she is conducting a mixed-methods study that examines the implicit factors influencing the motivation of EFL learners.

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