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**TEACHER MOTIVATION AND DEMOTIVATION IN  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING CLASSROOMS**

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## ABSTRACT

Although insufficient importance has been given to teacher motivation in the literature, there has recently been a growing interest in and recognition of it. This paper aims to define motivation and demotivation in teachers and, in turn, to find out what is the real motivation and way of thinking of today's teachers. Another aim is to give visibility to teachers, their thoughts and opinions in the same way that the situation and emotions of their pupils have been given importance throughout history. To begin with, in the introduction the concept motivation is defined, one of the most important theories of motivation is explained, and the terms of L2 motivational self-system (L2MSS) and vision are clarified. Then the topic is narrowed down to teacher motivation and it is explained how teachers can acquire their ideal teaching self and creative tension. Subsequently, demotivation is defined, the main demotivating factors are mentioned, their common fear of failure is described, the importance of hope in their vision is highlighted and it is demonstrated that well treated adversities can be helpful. A study was conducted to find out how teachers construct their image of the ideal future teacher, to examine how their past experiences have affected them and to verify if they really feel oppressed by the demands and constraints of the current education system. With this objective in mind, six teachers were interviewed and after coding all the interviews, each of the conversations was subjected to a detailed analysis. The results show that most of the times their desired image of the future teacher selves and their everyday reality are different, that each experience affects each teacher individually and that several teachers have lost their hope and will to innovate. The paper concludes by stressing the importance of motivation and retaining hope in teachers' daily teaching, as well as emphasizing the usefulness of asking for help and encouraging them to do so, in whatever way they feel most comfortable.

Keywords: Motivation, demotivation, ideal teaching selves, vision, previous teaching experiences, teaching constraints, hope

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching has always been a highly valued job in society, but often, both parents and students criticise not only the education system but also individual teachers, without realising what it takes to be an educator. Unquestionably, teachers today have to face many challenges, both on a personal and professional level, and each and every problem and concern that crosses their minds can have consequences for their lives and teaching. However, there is one thing that stands out among all the different concerns: “Motivation is, without question, the most complex and challenging issue facing teachers today” (Scheidecker and Freeman, 1999: 116). In a long-term learning process, such as mastering a second language, the ultimate success of the learner or teacher will depend to a large extent on the level of motivation. Without sufficient motivation, even the most capable people cannot achieve long-term goals and what is more, appropriate courses and good teaching alone are not enough to guarantee success (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014: 20). Thus, it is essential to define and work on an in-depth analysis of teachers' motivation in order to be able to draw conclusions about the causes of certain behaviours and attitudes when they deal with problems.

As students, we tend to only look out for ourselves without thinking about what teachers go through in their everyday life. It has to be taken into account that teachers' job is more difficult than it seems, they keep in mind, not only the academic level of the class (globally), but also the individual level of each student. In conclusion, they have to balance both and create a suitable environment to facilitate their learning. On top of that, they have to put their personal lives aside and give an empowered and mentally stable image to their students, which is not always easy.

I have decided to delve into and research teacher motivation, on the one hand, to give visibility to those teachers who really need help and on the other hand, because I myself want to become an English as a foreign language teacher and I want to know how to react and perform in order not to lose motivation or, if this is unavoidable, how to regain it. Actually, countless teachers are about to lose their motivation and it is important to help them before it is too late. In conclusion, the issue of motivation and demotivation in teachers is a useful and necessary topic not only for them, but also for students to have a more dynamic, organised and prone-to-success learning process.

After having explained the reasons that have led me to choose the topic of my BA thesis, I will now focus on the concept of motivation.

## 2. MOTIVATION

As explained by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), the word motivation comes from Latin, specifically from the verb *movere*, which means “to move”. That is to say, “what moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, to expend effort and persist in action” (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011: 3). In other words, why each individual determines to do something, how long they intend to sustain the activity and how hard they will pursue this objective. Researchers focus on distinct aspects when it comes to defining this complex word; however, recent investigations have aimed attention at the role of emotions in motivational psychology (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011: 5). Furthermore, it is important to highlight that the motivation process has different stages and that researches can concentrate on the initial phase or on the subsequent effects of motivation (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011). Actually, these authors underscore that motivation performs in a cyclical relationship with learning and there can be positive cycles (in which high motivation and achievements can be perceived) or negative cycles (in which low motivation and achievements are noticed). And what makes everything more complex, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011: 6) affirm that when learning a foreign language, motivation changes over time; with the passing of hours, days, months and years, motivation varies, for better or for worse, but it always changes. It can even vary in a sole lesson.

In the second half of the 20th century, motivation theory was influenced by the cognitive revolution in psychology. As Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) explain, these theories indicate that individual cognition and perception can be affected by various social and environmental factors. The most important and influential framework of cognitive psychology of motivation is the expectancy-value framework. This framework affirms that two crucial aspects are necessary in order to get motivated; on the one hand, the expectancy of success in the specific task and the compensations it will bring, and on the other hand, the value attached to success on that task (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011: 13). If any of both aspects is absent, the effort of the individual doing the task will be practically non-existent.

In this BA thesis special heed will be paid to two concepts due to their paramount role in the development of this dissertation, namely vision and the L2 motivational self-system (L2MSS). As for the term “vision” van der Helm (2009) specified that there are seven types: religious, political humanistic, business/organizational, community, public policy and personal visions. However, in this paper it is the personal vision the one that actually matters, which is defined by van der Helm as "giving meaning to one's life, with helping to make shifts in professional careers and with coaching yourself in realising a personal dream" (2009: 98). It has frequently been compared to the term “goal”, nevertheless, vision takes into account real images related to accomplishing the goal (a considerable sensory element). This concept is decisive since a foreign language is much more than a simple communication code, the knowledge of a language is part of the individual personal “core”, it is involved in most mental exercises and builds a significant part of one's identity (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014).

In addition, the second fundamental concept that needs to be defined is the L2MSS: “The L2MSS includes the concepts of possible selves and future self-guides, and is comprised of the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self, as well as aspects of instrumentality” (Martinóvic, 2017: 133). According to Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014: 22), L2MSS proposes three main sources of motivation: the learner's inner desire to become an effective L2 user, social pressures from the learner's environment to master the L2, and the actual experience of participating in the L2 learning process. Therefore, an ideal L2 self is “the representation of the L2 attributes one wishes to acquire if one is able to master one's L2” (Magid, 2013: 228).

After considering one of the most important theories of motivation and two essential terms in this paper (vision and L2MSS), it is necessary to focus on teacher motivation, on which the study and its results and conclusions are based.

### 3. TEACHER MOTIVATION

Throughout history, teacher motivation has been insufficiently investigated due to the fact that student motivation has been the main objective of most studies in this field of research. Although several studies have been carried out on student motivation, it is well known that in order to have a motivated pupil, a motivated teacher is needed in any

classroom. Despite the paucity of research on teacher motivation, there are some very interesting researches that justify distinct behaviours of certain teachers in the process of teaching a second language.

Teacher motivation is defined by Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014: 123) as “a complex and multi-faceted construct in which four key aspects must be mentioned; a prominent intrinsic component, a strong interrelationship with contextual factors, a featured temporal dimension highlighting its role as career motivation and finally, a particularly fragile nature of teacher motivation”. Firstly, “teaching” as a career goal has always been related to the inner aspirations of educating people, imparting knowledge and values, and making possible the progress of a community or a whole nation (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011). Secondly, the environment plays a very influential role in job motivation, “it is the work, not the worker, which affects persistence and performance” (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011: 163). Thirdly, it is essential to know that teacher motivation includes not only the motivation to teach, but also the motivation to be a teacher as a long-lasting profession. And finally, the fourth aspect that Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) analyse is that even though teaching can make teachers deeply satisfied, we find teachers who are frustrated, alienated or uninterested at every stage of education.

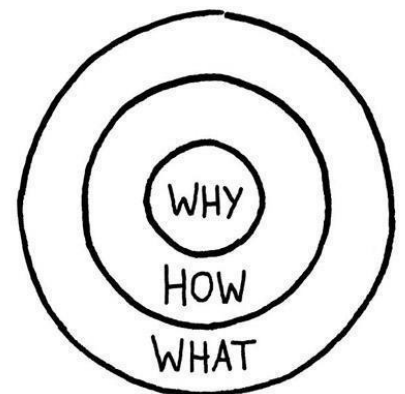
The main condition for the motivational ability is that obviously it has to exist and so does the teachers’ vision, which is the ability to think of the future with imagination. As Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) point out, the flame of teacher vision is the most important step in any language teacher motivational plan. If teachers want to see who they want to become in the future, they need to probe into their past and present experiences (as potential sources of their vision) and study a series of good teaching images that come from theories, teacher’s intuitions or role-models.

### 3.1 IDEAL LANGUAGE TEACHER SELVES

It is believed that for a teacher to become an ideal educator, each of them must adopt the following three processes: a deeper understanding of who they actually are, a reflection on the larger goals that guide their work, and a construction of a visual portrayal of their desired teaching selves (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014: 125).

Regarding the first process, a well-founded teaching vision must be compatible with the talents, gifts and passions that make us who we are. According to Campbell (1904-1987), each individual has to follow his/her bliss, that is, to be commensurate with one's heart and inner capacities. This operation is essential in order to construct a model teacher self-image. Moreover, the second step in the process is to revise images of their past practices, in fact, experiences are transformed into assumptions about how to learn a language and how to teach it and what teaching practices must be averted. Past learning experiences, whether positive or negative, usually leave a mark on the teacher's practice as they are associated with the image of the teacher they want to become. The last step is to look back to the encounters that made us become teachers. One of the main motivations for pursuing a career in language teaching is the love of language and a strong L2 self, while another is to remember the teachers who encouraged us.

The second process focuses on the whys: "Why do we want to become a teacher? What do we believe teaching and teachers are for? And why and how do languages matter?" (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014: 130). A predominant problem is that some teachers think that pupils' motivation does not concern or affect them at all and that they, as teachers, do not have to act on it. These teachers often think that motivation is not rooted in the world of teaching, even though it is essential for motivation. If a professional has this concept of teaching, any effort to fundamentally change his/her motivational behaviour is doomed to fail. Sinek (2009) suggested the idea of the "Golden Circle" to justify the success and influence; distinct leaders started from the why and progressed to the how and what. Sinek argues that people are inspired by why everything



**Figure 1. Motivating learners, motivating teachers: Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014: 134)**

is done, not by what leaders actually do, thus inspiring people to act rather than manipulating them to act. On the contrary, most educational programmes concentrate on the "what" (the subject to be studied), followed by the "how" (methodology) and leaving the "why" last (which is the most important factor as reported by Sinek). The values of every instructor are displayed in diverse ways while teaching; how they treat their students, their behaviour regarding success and failure, or what they add and eliminate in the syllabus. Since we



(as human beings) cannot help but bear out “why”, it is essential that, through reflection on behaviour, instructors are subject to strict scrutiny to understand whether they really represent the kind of teacher they want to be.

The third process is generating an image of their desired teaching selves. The teachers will habitually create images of themselves and their practice, and the more intense, definite and meaningful the images constructed by teachers, the more likely they are to develop their practice in the desired direction while engaging in teaching (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014). For this reason, my first exercise of the study will be a guided imagery through their ideal classroom, in this way, they will be given the opportunity to visualise their desired future classroom environment and teaching role among other aspects.

After going through these three processes, the teacher will already have a great basis for becoming an ideal teacher, but first of all, he or she has to undergo the test of truth. And here is where the creative tension comes in.

### 3.2 CREATIVE TENSION

The theory of Language Teacher Conceptual Change (LTCC) proposes that in order to change teacher assumptions, it is essential to realize “a dissonance between the desired and the actual teaching selves” (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014: 138). In fact, according to Golombek and Johnson (2004) and Kubanyiova (2012), teachers will only have a significant improvement when they truly realize the divergence between their vision and reality. Only when they figure out that their present situation is not as beneficial as they believe, there will be a transformation. Therefore, this situation can cause creative tension, which is defined as “a situation where disagreement or discord ultimately gives rise to better ideas or outcomes” (Collins dictionary, n.d, first definition).

As reported by Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014), distinct ways of developing creative tension have been found. The first one is called peer observation and consists of observing lessons of different teachers (so that the teacher can reflect on his/her techniques and behaviours) and afterwards, having other teachers seeing the class of this teacher so that he/she receives feedback. The second approach is self-observation, specifically, to watch themselves in a video recording, which leads to a self-thinking in which they are their own critics. Thirdly, student feedback can be collected. In order to

carry this out, the most practical method is obtaining specific answers with questionnaires. Fourthly, focus-group interviews could be carried out, which involves teacher group debates (collective experience of group brainstorming). It is optimal for programme evaluation- to evaluate the effectiveness of a given course and to understand what works or does not work and why. Finally, the last way is action research. It is a general term used to identify related research methods, including various procedures handled by teachers in order to acquire a deeper awareness of their instructional atmosphere and develop their performance. Moreover, Dörnyei and Kubanyiova add an extra approach, in which teachers must describe their own memoirs. With this method, teachers can also raise and challenge established ways of thinking about motivational teaching, especially when they are asked to focus on creative conflicts in their own practice. Furthermore, this technique facilitates the examination of their vision to a large extent. For these reasons, I have chosen this additional procedure (memoirs) for the study below, in an attempt to examine and analyse teachers' visions through conflicts found in their everyday teaching.

Before analysing teacher demotivation, it has to be said that although student demotivation is thought to be the responsibility of teachers, Dewaele, Franco Magdalena and Saito (2019) demonstrated that, compared to students' FLCA (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety) formation, teachers have a stronger influence on students' FLE (Foreign Language Enjoyment). In every teacher's class there are external factors that deteriorate pupils' motivation: class size, academic level of pupils and compulsory courses, to name but a few. Teachers are rarely able to change this situation and have to accept these factors as part of their working conditions (Sakui and Cowie, 2012). Moreover, teachers try to use techniques to make students enjoy the learning lectures and to prevent students from losing motivation. Teachers who consider the long-term development of students are especially aware of the importance of motivating students (Dörnyei, 2001 in Sugita and Takeuchi, 2010). Teamwork is a really accurate example of teachers' efforts when making their lectures dynamic. Lacey, Andrea, Walker and William (1991) showed that group work can increase students' motivation, interest and participation, among other factors.

However, although the demotivation of pupils is an issue that has always been given a lot of importance, the demotivation of teachers themselves must also be taken into account, but unfortunately it has been largely neglected.

#### 4. TEACHER DEMOTIVATION

In this section, I will define demotivation, list demotivating factors in teachers, explain teachers instability and influence, describe their common fear of failure, and demonstrate that well treated adversities can be helpful justifying it with the Reality Check Appraisal and the results of a study by Kubanyiova (2012). Finally, I will highlight the importance of hope in their vision.

Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) reveal that teaching may go beyond the technical knowledge of language codes and provide opportunities to better understand ourselves, build true relationships and enrich our identity. Nevertheless, for a demotivated teacher, that is impossible to achieve. As Kiziltepe (2008) illustrates, demotives are the negative counterparts of motives; a motive increases an action tendency and on the contrary, a demotive decreases it. Dörnyei (2001: 142–143, in Apple, Da Silva and Fellner, 2017) stated that demotivation emerges from specific external causes that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or a continued action. He also clarified that a demotivated person is someone who was once motivated, but has lost interest for some reason. Thus, a demotivated teacher is expected to be an individual who was once motivated but has lost its ambition for some specific reasons in the teaching environment (Kiziltepe, 2008). Armida (2019) states that although failure has not been discussed enough, it needs to be talked about with acceptance, rather than humiliating people when they do it. She confesses: “We want them [students] to learn and when we fail to find the formula to meet their needs, we keep struggling to find it. So many of us struggle alone because we aren’t in an environment where failure can be discussed” (Armida, 2019: para. 12).

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) enumerate six factors that deteriorate teacher motivation: high stress level, the increasing restrictions on teacher’s autonomy, practitioners’ delicate self-efficacy, difficulty of maintaining intellectual challenge in a routine space and system, insufficient occupational structure, and the deficient economic conditions. Teachers hear all kinds of voices, which in one way or another erode their vision, trying to convince them that these visions are inaccessible, unimaginable, uneconomical, useless, annoying or outright absurd. Dörnyei and Kubanyiova’s (2014) advice is to ascertain that the vision each one amuses is personal. It is widely known that if teachers only had to chase their ideal selves, teaching would be a more charming job. However,

unluckily, they have to face distinct pressures, needs and requirements in their everyday practice and that is the reason why teachers most of the time aim attention at other's assumptions instead of enjoying their work and focusing on themselves and their illusions. It is at this point that instability is created in the mind of teachers between what they really want to become and what is externally imposed on them in order to be the "ideal teachers" that society demands them to be (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014). This situation, obviously, is a meaningful crisis which causes demotivation in a large number of teachers.

It should be taken into account that pupils look at the behaviour of teachers, as they are role models for them, and this instability can create an erroneous image of the teacher that some pupils will embody and take as a reference. In addition, teachers themselves can also internalize their own performance and eventually at some point, they will no longer see the intentions, philosophies and values that brought them into teaching initially (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014). In conclusion, when teachers must follow external guidelines, the imposed image does not have to become their own image.

Usually when a teacher feels that his or her teaching progress is not ideal, he or she tries to innovate. This is always risky, as the class environment and attitudes may improve or become even worse than before. Understanding the cause of this fear of failure could provide clues that demonstrate why some teachers may give up their dream of becoming "visionary teachers", while others remain energetic and try to reach their dreams despite the initial adversities (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014). This fear often threatens teachers' self-consciousness because it is embedded in the desire to maintain their self-image. Dörnyei and Kubanyiova recognized that until the root of this fear is eliminated, any situation where there is a risk of self-exposure and embarrassment can threaten the teacher's vision (2014: 151). Therefore, they believe that in order to help teachers protect their vision, they must understand the origin of their fear and then encourage them to either consider fear an important part of their teaching process, or replace it with a vision that is more conducive to student learning and teacher success.

Adversity can be a fatal blow to our vision, but with the right treatment, it can become an ally. That something undesirable can become favourable is a phenomenon known in various fields of psychology. For instance, when class groups are organized at the beginning there is a "storming phase" where students avoid disruptions but later, after a

period of adaptation, they start discussing and debating. The first phase is not damaging as long as the process is adequately controlled and does not generate problematic issues. The vivid sense of having a frustrating outcome is not only detrimental, but absolutely beneficial, as long as it is balanced by a corresponding positive self-image in the same realm: we can be motivated to do something both to achieve the desired result and to avoid an unfavourable one (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014: 152). As an example Palmer (2007: 39) confesses “My fear that I am teaching poorly may be not a sign of failure but evidence that I care about my craft. My fear that a topic will explode in the classroom may be not a warning to flee from it but a signal that the topic must be addressed”.

Ultimately, some fears are crucial to consolidate teachers' determination to act in accordance with their ideals. The previously mentioned LTCC by Kubanyiova (2012), suggests the Reality Check Appraisal, which refers to the teacher's assessment of external and internal resources related to new ideas, educational development and reforms (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014). For instance, this may involve teachers' assessing their own self-efficacy, contextual constraints like time and resources, or student's expectations. An interesting finding is that, although the contextual constraints and pressures are almost the same for all teachers participating in Kubanyiova's study, some of them interpret the situation as a threat and therefore as a sign to quickly extinguish the flame of a new emerging vision, while others approach the same restraints as a challenge to be faced rather than avoided (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014: 153). Accordingly, teachers face differently the challenges that lead them to demotivation, which makes each of them protect their vision (their main objective) in distinct ways.

To conclude, it has to be said that it is essential to have a strong vision in order to be able to combat demotivation or not to fall into it, since vision rests in hope: “Where there is no hope, the vision perishes” (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014: 155). In fact, Rick Snyder (2002, in Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014) has a “hope theory” which explains that people with high hopes find ways to achieve problematic or even seemingly unachievable goals. On the contrary, people with low hopes do not demonstrate flexibility looking for alternative routes when the main one is blocked. Therefore, we should always try to find an angle or future aspect that provides us hope.

Thus, our perception and attitudes will transform and we will not only improve ourselves but also our surrounding environment.

Before starting to explain and analyse the study, it is important to clarify its rationale. And one of the main reasons is to inspect if teachers still have the aforementioned mentioned *hope*. First of all, I will analyse what teachers would like their ideal classroom to be like, and then I will ask them about their bad experiences during their professional career. All these questions are made in order to compare what they would like to see in their classes with what they actually have or have had to go through. Finally, I will ask them a question about what their motivation would be like if they did not have the limits, pressure and requirements that the current education system imposes on them. This last question will be essential to find out whether these negative constraints are the main factors for teachers in losing motivation.

## 5. THE STUDY

This study is designed to scrutinize the opinions of teachers. Being a student, it would have been easier to do the study taking into account students' beliefs, but I decided to do this study to give visibility to the ideas, feelings and thoughts of teachers; to prove if teachers retain their hopes and initial motivation. I decided to interview teachers, because I considered it to be the better research tool to analyse and understand their attitudes in depth. I could have also used questionnaires, but this instrument would not have allowed me to delve into their thoughts and beliefs to the same extent. What teachers would like to have or see in their classrooms will be compared to what they actually have. As mentioned above, there are various unfavourable factors that condition teacher motivation and this study also aims to demonstrate how this negativity affects teachers and their daily teaching practice.

### 5.1 PARTICIPANTS

In order to have a wide array of experiences and opinions I interviewed six English teachers of different ages, genders, schools and contexts. A man who is teaching in a quite multi-racial school with 5 years of teaching experience, a woman who started teaching eight years ago, a woman who has been teaching for more than twenty years, a woman who is fifty years old and has started to teach this year (she was the secretary of

the school until this academic year), an educator who has had to overcome a major personal crisis after having taught for 10 years, and an instructor who has been teaching for more than thirty years. My objective was to rely on a heterogeneous sample made up of individuals whose experiences were likely to differ considerably because of their different personal and contextual factors. This would potentially provide me with rich data and a more general picture of the teaching profession than had I chosen a more homogeneous sample. Although there is a gender mismatch in the sample, this is just a reflection of the percentage of women teaching foreign languages in our schools, as their presence is much more habitual than that of their male counterparts.

Table 1. Main features of the participants.

	Gender	Teaching experience	Type of school
Teacher 1	Male	5 years (3 in the actual school)	Public
Teacher 2	Female	8 years (3 in the actual school and works in an academy at the same time)	Private / teaching academy
Teacher 3	Female	About 20 years (previously worked in an academy)	Private
Teacher 4	Female	Less than a year	Private
Teacher 5	Female	Around 10 years	Public
Teacher 6	Female	More than 30 years	Public

It needs to be pointed out that the participants were willing to help. Even though I told them not to delve into certain topics or memories if they didn't want to, many were candid and told me about their biggest fears and insecurities, which could be regarded as an indication of the validity of the data gathered. In fact, validity refers to the precision with which a method measures what it purports to measure. If the research is

highly valid, it means that the results it produces correspond to actual attributes, characteristics and changes in the physical or social world.

## 5.2 THE INSTRUMENT

The questions which were used to carry out this study were taken from the book “Motivating learners, motivating teachers”, particularly from chapter eight (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014: 137-143). Nevertheless, the last question, the one that I have used as the concluding one, is a question designed by me as a resource to answer the question that has been my main inspiration to decide on this topic for my final thesis.

Leaving aside the last question, the rest can be divided into two exercises with different purposes; the first exercise enables teachers to start the previously mentioned process of constructing and expressing their ideal teaching context, whereas the second exercise puts the teacher’s vision into test focusing on the conflicts found in their everyday life. Specifically, the first exercise consists of five questions. An additional objective of this exercise was to find out what teachers would like to see and feel in their ideal classroom so that they could individually compare it with what they actually experience in their everyday teaching. In contrast, the second activity consists of seven questions and another important objective is for teachers to be honest about their teaching experience, to unburden themselves and realise their mistakes. Ultimately, the aim of the last question is to see whether teachers feel free or, on the contrary, they are oppressed and unwilling to innovate.

### **EXERCISE 1:**

Imagine you are taking me on a tour around your ideal classroom. You can look around the room and you can hear and see the activities going on...

1. What do you see, feel and hear when you walk around your ideal classroom?
2. What are you doing in your ideal classroom? What is your role? Why?
3. What are your students doing in this ideal classroom? What role(s) do the students play? Why?
4. What kinds of things are the students learning in your ideal classroom? For instance, what activities, topics or texts are they working on? Why are those important for them to learn?



5. What is the relationship between what goes on in your ideal classroom and the kind of society you would like to see in the twenty-first century?

### **EXERCISE 2:**

6. Can you talk about a time when you taught a specific course / group of students and suddenly realized how much you didn't know?
7. Was there ever a time that you felt you failed in a job badly?
8. Did you have a time in your teaching when you worked with students who accomplished well beyond what you or anyone may have expected?
9. Did you ever go through a personal/professional crisis that helped you realise and begin to live out important values that may have been previously obscured from you?
10. Did you ever take part in an event where you felt you put your career on the line?
11. Was there ever a time you felt you couldn't go on or were about to give up?
12. Did you ever do something that no one knew about but which gives you a great sense of accomplishment today?

### **LAST QUESTION:**

If you did not have all the barriers and restrictions that you have nowadays (regarding methodology, teaching materials, what to teach, etc.), would your motivation and your way of teaching change?

After signing the consent form (see the Appendix), the voice of each participant was recorded with a mobile phone. Each transcribed interview was then analysed based on the thematic analysis explained in the fourth chapter of the "Handbook of Research Method in Psychology" written by Braun and Clarke (2012). The results of the study were then linked to the previously summarized theoretical framework in order to approach and analyse the participants' attitudes and beliefs, and their motivational stance.

### **5.3 PROCEDURE**

It is significant to note that the interviews were all conducted in English, as teachers felt comfortable enough to express their ideas and opinions in their language of instruction.

Subsequently, all the interviews were transcribed into a word document and each one was subjected to a thematic analysis. This analysis has six phases, the first one is familiarizing with the data, the second generating initial codes, the third searching for themes, the fourth reviewing potential themes, the fifth defining and naming the themes and the sixth producing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2012). After familiarizing with the data and coding all the interviews (which lasted between eight and twelve minutes on average), I realized that I had too much information and, due to space constraints, I selected only the main themes mentioned by teachers. The analysis of the data unearthed two central themes in the first exercise, and three in the second exercise and in the last question.

## 6. RESULTS

In this section the most meaningful and decisive themes will be presented, explained and illustrated with quotations from the interviews.

Table 2. Summary of the main themes in response to each of the activities.

<b>EXERCISES</b>	<b>EXERCISE 1</b>	<b>EXERCISE 2</b>	<b>FINAL QUESTION</b>
<b>THEMES</b>	1. Classroom management 1.1. number of students 1.2. cooperative work 1.3. use of English  2. Teacher / student roles	3. Teacher failure  4. Distinct conceptualization of “failure”  5. Personal / professional crises	6. Teachers’ lack of freedom  7. Methodological limitations  8. Imposed pressure

### 6.1 IDEAL TEACHER SELVES

As mentioned above, the study is formed by two exercises and an additional question. In the first exercise the aim was to imagine their ideal classroom (their feelings,

student's attitudes, materials, or methodology). For that reason, the answers provided in this exercise are not possible or visible for them in their everyday classes, as the word "ideal" means "to be perfect". This is the key for the answers, due to the fact that various basic factors do not appear in their daily teaching and they happen to be aware of this issue. The main themes in this first exercise were classroom management and teacher-student roles. I obtained the most enlightening information from the first three questions (first, what do you see, feel and hear when you walk around your ideal classroom?; second, what are you doing in your ideal classroom? What is your role? why? and third, what are your students doing in this ideal classroom? What role(s) do the students play? why?). Regarding classroom management, there were various issues that stand out, namely the number of students, cooperative work, and the use of English. Every teacher mentioned at least once that there should not be classes with too many students; there should be classes with few students and they should be working in pairs or groups. In fact, five teachers insisted on cooperative work and recognized it as a beneficial tool, as the following quote shows: "they are working together, one is helping the other one and so on and they are in charge of doing it" (Teacher 2). Moreover, as just illustrated, they preferred their pupils to study on their own and help each other (without the teacher having to give unnecessary explanations throughout the whole class), while students use English in a natural way without having to warn them continuously that they should not speak either Spanish or Basque. Indeed, most of the interviewed instructors emphasized the fact that they found it very frustrating that the tendency of students is to speak in their mother tongue, even in their English class. This for English teachers is not pleasant and can affect their motivation very negatively.

Regarding roles, which is the second main theme of this exercise, teachers repeated that their role should be a helping role, a guiding one; not only explaining grammar and vocabulary but also "filling gaps that are unknown for them" (Teacher 3) and "helping them be original" (Teacher 5). Differently, students' role should be an active role, they should be motivated, having a good time, taking part in class and working in groups. Teacher 6 mentioned a very relevant matter, "Pupils will be free to give ideas to teachers", implying that students should not be forced to do only what teachers recommend; if they are motivated and interested in a specific topic, they can feel free to suggest that and work on it. Related to this idea, it is important to note the statement of the fourth teacher, who admitted that she felt frustrated when students did not ask

questions about aspects or concepts she knew they did not understand. This situation is absolutely common in many classrooms today, students do not tend to realize it but various teachers really found it disappointing and sorrowful. And this can also be critical for teacher motivation, because it is a clear indication of students' lack of interest.

## 6.2 IMPACT OF PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES

In the second exercise the aim was to test teachers' vision focusing on the conflicts they had experienced. I know that for many teachers it is hard to remember specific painful times, therefore, if any of them was uncomfortable in the interview, I did not insist or brood over it. The predominant themes in this exercise were teaching failure, distinct conceptualization of "failure" and personal/professional crises. The answers to questions six (Can you talk about a time when you taught a specific course/group of students and suddenly realized how much you didn't know?), seven (Was there ever a time that you felt you failed in a job badly?), nine (Did you ever go through a personal/professional crisis that helped you realise and begin to live out important values that may have been previously obscured from you?) and eleven (Was there ever a time you felt you couldn't go on or were about to give up?) were crucial when developing each of the themes.

Concerning the first theme, teacher failure, five teachers admitted that in a specific time of their teaching career they had realized how much they did not know. The majority had this feeling principally at the beginning, when they were still inexperienced and every day was an adventure: "I remember my first years, especially the first two years; I realized that till that moment I lived in a bubble" (Teacher 5). Even the first interviewed teacher confessed that he had that feeling of "not knowing" every day; that every instructor has to read regularly and go to different courses to improve his/her teaching skills. A lecturer revealed that "the problem is not that you don't know, because you know, the problem is finding the technique that allows students to follow you" (Teacher 3). In fact, it is essential to teach in an understandable and helpful way so that your students learn without problems or with as few doubts as possible. If teachers educate in a clear and sympathetic way, the communication between teacher-student will improve and motivation will also increase.

Concerning the second theme, it is important to highlight that each teacher had a different definition of “failure”. For some it was when their pupils did not ask questions when they had doubts, for others it was when they felt they were not motivating their students sufficiently, and for many others it was when their work left much to be desired despite making a considerable effort. Furthermore, each of these failures affected individuals differently and some people ended up going to extremes with these feelings. In fact, one teacher put it bluntly: “I hope that yesterday was the worst day in my teaching days” (Teacher 4). In addition, even though four educators thought that they had failed in their job badly, only two had actually thought of giving up their job: “I think there are days you feel that way, but it is usually one day and the next day you are okay” (Teacher 1). This is a very important point as it demonstrates that these teachers, in spite of all drawbacks and hindrances, still are able to sustain their motivation.

Regarding the third theme, it has to be said that every interviewed teacher declared having had a personal or professional crisis which helped them discover new important values. Every individual underlined the great importance that learning had in those situations; not only did they learn from workmates, which helped them overcome their difficulties, but they also learnt from the critical situations themselves: “you always learn from them and you always take the positive things from that” (Teacher 2). Definitely, instructors always learn something from those crises and can later apply that knowledge in their teaching. Moreover, crises in the professional sphere often also affect the personal sphere, as mentioned by one of the participants: “I realized that we can enjoy things day a day, even hour by hour, and yes, it made me, it made me think about lots of things, yes, both in my personal life and in the, in the classroom” (Teacher 3). This quotation emphasizes the clear connection between the personal and the professional lives.

### 6.3 CONSTRAINTS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

In the case of the last question, the principal themes were teachers’ lack of freedom, methodological limitations and imposed pressure. Related to the first theme, the fact that teachers have to face different demands in their everyday teaching is well reflected in the responses of five of the six interviewed teachers. “We lose a lot of time doing paperwork that does not help us [...] courses that are not of our interest and doing

things that are not related to our teaching practice” (Teacher 1), confessed a desperate teacher, while another lecturer added the following: “Maybe if you were free to design or prepare your class, the way of working the subject would be different, you could work with more practical things, so that, the students could realize that what they are studying is really useful” (Teacher 4). Consequently, not only teachers' motivation would improve, but also that of pupils.

In the case of methodology, teachers admitted that they are limited by distinct factors, but that they have the opportunity to create and work with other topics or activities in addition to the compulsory ones. They also said that there is a lot of material available for teachers, but that it often takes extra motivation to look for innovative exercises and subjects (motivation that is in short supply and diminishes over time).

I think my motivation would be different because I think the way we teach or the methodology we use always have an impact on that. But it's true that apart from what the government tells us to do, we always have that opportunity to create and to prepare our lessons in our own way. So I always try to do other things apart from the ones that we are forced to do, right? And I think that motivation is really important, especially if you are teaching a language. (Teacher 2)

As far as imposed pressure is concerned, it refers to both pupils and teachers. Teachers most of the time have to prepare their students for a final examination and they declared that frequently it is not the most important matter. Teachers were aware that the most important thing is that students have fun and learn in a dynamic way, but it is often difficult to strike a balance between the two options. Moreover, the second teacher added:

And it is true that there will be some students that will love that language you are teaching, but there will be others who will hate it. So, it's quite hard and we always have these struggles to make those students who hate the language, I don't know, be interested in it. (Teacher 2)

In other words, even in those cases in which the teacher is highly motivated, it is difficult to make certain students feel motivated as they already have negative feelings and prejudices towards the subject: they simply do not like English and they hold a very

unfavourable attitude towards the foreign language. This can lead teachers to become absolutely demotivated.

After having pointed out every important aspect of each of the exercises, those features will be analysed in an attempt to draw some conclusions.

## 7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this section, I will endeavour to link the results of my study with the theoretical issues raised in the review of the literature in order to reach an overall conclusion.

With regard to the first exercise, there are several points to note. Firstly, one of the aims of this exercise was to generate an image of their desired teaching selves. As Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) reveal, the clearer and more significant the images constructed by teachers, the more likely it is that their teaching practice will go in the desired direction. As mentioned above, the word "ideal" means that it is perfect or the best possible (in this case for them) and therefore, every time teachers responded with something that they did not have in their classroom, that could be a reason why their motivation decreased. In this exercise both themes (classroom management and teacher/student roles) are clearly interrelated. The results of this activity can be nicely summarized in the following quotation:

I feel a little bit disappointed, why? Because my ideal classroom is far from the classroom I see when I go up to my class. Why? I used to expect more motivated students and I don't find that in my classroom. So, my ideal classroom has just disappeared (Teacher 4).

Definitely, as Snyder (2002) would say, it can be perceived that this teacher is losing the all-important hope that helps to find solutions to everyday problems. Moreover, students' lack of motivation has been mentioned various times as a demotivating factor among teachers. In reality, teachers want to find active and motivated roles in students and they get frustrated when students do not ask their doubts or thoughts. By now, teachers may have realized that being friendly, not excessively strict and encouraging everybody to use the FL regularly in class (as they have indicated in their answers), stimulates their learners' progress (Dewaele, Franco Magdalena and Saito, 2019).

Concerning cooperative work, Lacey, Andria, Walker and William (1991) observed that using group work in the classroom can increase students' motivation, interest, participation, learning and retention. Group activities can also improve the quality and quantity of student participation, promote the thinking skills developed in the classroom, increase the level of self-esteem of the participants and teach students social skills to use in their future life. Surely, this is the reason why the teachers in my study repeatedly stress the importance of group work, which indicates that the participants' teaching experience and the results of research studies concur that cooperative work should be a key feature of the English as a foreign language class.

In the second exercise, the three themes (teacher failure, distinct conceptualizations of "failure" and personal/professional crises) are closely related, so they can also be analysed together. As the conclusion of all the answers, it is necessary to recall Dörnyei and Kubanyiova's (2014) explanation that all past learning experiences, positive or negative, have left an imprint on each teacher's practice because they are related to the image of the teacher they want to be. However, it has to be said that there are different attitudes towards those negative experiences, as there are teachers who, at the slightest problem, become blocked and do not want to continue fighting, whereas others, like Teacher 2 below, gain strength and face difficulties with a positive and healthy attitude (second theme):

I think there are always bad things or negative things and positive, right? At the beginning when I started working not only at school but also in the academies, it was like I always tried to... focus on the bad things, and then I realized that that didn't, I mean, that I was not going to achieve anything by doing that, so I try to be the opposite and just I focus on the positive aspects. It's true that the negative ones are sometimes the ones we remember, but I think we can change that, we have to think of the positive ones which are the ones we are going to take into account in the end. (Teacher 2)

So, in this reflection it can be perceived that the second teacher is full of hope and that according to Snyder's "hope theory", she is able to find different ways to overcome hurdles and eventually achieve her goals. Therefore, answers related to the first (teacher failure) and third themes (personal and professional crises) and this teacher's statement, which shows that the first negative incidents made her change her mind, justify what



Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) claimed about bad experiences. In fact, those experiences do not always have to be damaging as long as they are adequately controlled and do not generate insurmountable problematic issues.

The last question was the most important for me, as I have always thought about how teachers see this issue. In this question, the principal themes were teachers' lack of freedom, methodological limitations and the imposed pressure. Regarding the first theme, Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) pointed out that teachers have to face different constraints, commitments and limiting conditions in their daily teaching work. Our results confirm this and, in fact, such limitations are widely quoted by the participants, as reflected by the sense of frustration recurrently found in their responses. The first teacher admits that they are habitually forced to do too much paperwork and the fourth professor adds that she would do more practical exercises if she could. So, our analysis brings to light two of the demotivating factors mentioned by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011): the increasing restrictions on teacher's autonomy and the difficulty of maintaining intellectual challenge in a routine space and system. Indeed, teachers often cannot do as much as they would like in their classrooms, because most of the time they have to pay attention to the requirements placed on them from outside, instead of enjoying their work and focusing on themselves and their illusions (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014). This is a serious issue because it can create mental instability between what they really want to become and what is imposed on them by a crammed curriculum that leaves little space for teachers' ideal selves and ideal teaching practices.

Regarding methodology, they say that there is a wealth of materials available but that it takes extra motivation to innovate in the classroom. Therefore, here appears the fear of failure that innovation could bring (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014). Certainly, Armida (2019) explains that, although failure has not been sufficiently discussed, we must get people to talk about it as acceptable, instead of humiliating people when they are unable to seize opportunities and cannot sort out problems. In doing so, the fear of failure that Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) talk about would diminish significantly and teachers' motivation would increase when trying innovative activities and subjects in their classrooms. There is therefore a need to find a balance between teachers' ideal teaching practices and their fear of failure.

As for the third theme, imposed pressure, teachers mainly have to prepare their students for the final examination and they declare that generally it is not their main concern. Teachers know that what is crucial is that students enjoy and learn in a dynamic way, but it is often complicated to strike a balance between both. So, indirectly a reference is made to Sinek's "Golden Circle" (2009), as the widespread idea that most educational programmes concentrate on the "what" (in this case the final examination), followed by the "how" (methodology) and that they leave the "why" (in this situation, to enjoy) last, is reinforced. Although the latter is the most important question (why), it is once again preceded by what and how.

In general, the answers to this question have made me realize that most teachers do not feel completely free when teaching and therefore, it is often difficult to remain motivated when several factors limit and hinder your work and ambition, that is, your ideal teaching practices.

## 8. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

Being a teacher is a much more complex job than it seems, so motivation is essential if you aim to become a successful practitioner. It is important to be able to detect when you are losing motivation and to know how to act so that it does not disappear completely. It is a very delicate subject (I am well aware that there is no magic solution), but it is essential to ask for help before it is too late. You can ask for help from your colleagues, from the school board or even from students themselves, as Armida (2019) did. As she claims: "If you think it's hard to admit that you are failing to your colleagues, try admitting that to a group of students who you've known for years, developed relationships, and who have even honoured you for being a good teacher" (para. 25). It is essential to maintain the above mentioned hope and to seek ways and means so that individual perception and attitudes improve. Every teacher has to take into account what Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) stated about bad experiences: if these experiences are properly controlled and do not generate major problematic situations, they will not be harmful. If teachers, when they undergo a crisis, make a deeper understanding of who they actually are, reflect on the larger goals that guide their work, and construct a visual portrayal of their desired teaching selves, they will be more likely to become their ideal teaching selves (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014).

Obviously, there will be times when motivation is lower than usual, as is the case in every facet of our lives, but educators have to try to find strength and innovate whenever they can, because this will allow them to break away from the methodology and the pressure imposed from the school system and to sustain their motivation. As the saying goes, where there is a will there is a way.

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# **Appendix: Informed consent form**

## **FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO**

**Título del Trabajo Fin de Grado (TFG):**

**Contacto:**

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Correo electrónico: garaziarratibel3@gmail.com

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**Confidencialidad:**

Todos los datos personales proporcionados por los participantes serán tratados de manera confidencial y solo serán empleados para la recogida de datos del estudio, en ningún caso serán proporcionados a terceros. Los participantes también serán tratados de manera anónima y no podrán ser identificados en ningún momento. Asimismo, los datos serán tratados según la Ley de Protección de Datos vigente.

**Beneficios del estudio:**

El investigador se encargará de proporcionar personalmente una copia de los resultados del estudio a los participantes que así lo desearan.

**Procedimiento:**

El estudio se compone de tres partes.

La primera parte se basa en imaginar “el aula ideal” de cada uno y responder preguntas que tienen que ver con ello.

En la segunda parte la visión de los profesores se pondrá a prueba y el profesor/profesora tendrá que responder a preguntas sobre experiencias conflictivas del pasado

En la tercera parte (OPCIONAL) se imaginarán una situación conflictiva y tendrán que ser capaces de cambiarla a través de su actitud y gestos faciales.

**Participantes:**

Si existe o existiera alguna duda a la hora de la participación, se responderá gustosamente. Para más información, por favor póngase en contacto con la persona cuyos datos aparecen en el encabezamiento de esta carta. En todo momento el participante se reserva el derecho a la no participación en el estudio y a retirarse del estudio sin necesidad de dar explicaciones.

**Este documento no es un contrato, es una explicación escrita de lo que se hará durante el estudio. La firma indica que se le han explicado las bases del estudio y que se acepta la participación. En ningún momento la persona que firma tiene responsabilidad alguna. Usted se quedará con una copia después de firmar.**

**Nombre:**

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**(Firma)**

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**(Fecha)**