

# What Are the Best Practices to Foster Students' Motivation in Multilingual Schools? The Teachers' Perspective

Ada Bier (Corresponding author)

Dept. of English and German Philology, Translation and Interpretation

University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU)

Paseo de la Universidad 5, 01006 Vitoria-Gasteiz (Álava/Araba), Spain

E-mail: [ada.bier@ehu.eus](mailto:ada.bier@ehu.eus)

David Lasagabaster

Dept. of English and German Philology, Translation and Interpretation

University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU)

Paseo de la Universidad 5, 01006 Vitoria-Gasteiz (Álava/Araba), Spain

E-mail: [david.lasagabaster@ehu.eus](mailto:david.lasagabaster@ehu.eus)

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## Abstract

This contribution focuses on teachers' perspectives on ways of motivating students in multilingual education settings where a local minority language co-exists with a State majority language, English as a lingua franca and additional immigrant languages. The findings we will be reporting on are from a study that was carried out in the two regions of the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain and of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia in Italy. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 42 primary and secondary school teachers from both contexts, and data were analysed by means of content analysis following Dörnyei's (2001) and Henry et al.'s (2018) taxonomies. Motivational activities described by teachers were categorised based on the language/s in which they were carried out. Empirically supporting Dörnyei's and Henry et al.'s proposals, findings show that activities with authentic and teacher-created materials are prevalent, whatever the language,

while textbooks appear to be almost never used. Designing activities that involve the use of authentic materials requires that teachers possess solid pedagogical and linguistic skills, a circumstance which makes the development of language awareness and motivational skills a priority in teacher education and professional development courses. Based on such findings, implications for future research are discussed.

**Keywords:** Motivational practices, Multilingual education, Minority language, Basque, Friulian, English as a foreign language

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *Motivating Students*

Motivation is energy. It is especially crucial in education, as it is the stimulus that pushes individuals to make choices, to act, to invest effort, to persist and to show dedication for a particular task (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). This contribution focuses on teachers' perspectives on ways of motivating students in their learning (Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014) within two multilingual education contexts (Lasagabaster, 2017), where a minority language co-exists with a State majority language, a lingua franca and additional immigrant languages.

Taking Henry et al.'s (2018, 2019) study on motivational teaching as our point of departure, we set forth to analyse a collection of best practices that were found among Basque and Friulian teachers in their specific educational settings, i.e. the Basque Autonomous Community (Spain) and the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy). In so doing, we wish to contribute to the discussion about effective teaching within multilingual education systems, thus joining other researchers working in similar contexts and sharing the concern as to how multilingual education can change dominant language ideologies and outdated practices.

### 1.2 *Research on Motivational Practice*

As of today, the taxonomy Dörnyei established in his *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom* (2001) is still the most extensive and in-depth inventory of the elements affecting learners' motivation in class. Aware of the fact that “a great deal has been written in the past about *what* motivation is”, and that “very little has been said about *how* this theoretical knowledge can be applied in the actual classroom” (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 2, emphasis in the original), the scholar offered an extensive array of over 100 specific strategies aimed at making teaching practice more motivationally sensitive. Dörnyei then grouped these strategies into 35 macro-strategies, which, in turn, were then organised into four broad categories, each centring around a specific aspect of the overall motivating process. The first category, *creating the basic motivational conditions*, focusses on the importance of good relations, both between the teacher and the students, and among students themselves. The second, *generating initial motivation*, is concerned with fostering favourable attitudes towards classroom activities. The third, *maintaining and protecting motivation*, encompasses strategies aimed at capturing students' motivation (e.g. with stimulating and enjoyable activities that set forth clear goals) and holding it. The fourth and last, *encouraging and*

*protecting positive retrospective self-evaluation*, aims at rounding off the learning experience with motivationally effective feedback.

Although empirical research appears to substantiate the importance of motivational strategies (Lamb, 2019), studies on motivating factors account for only around a third of the overall output (Boo et al., 2015). As a confirmation of the fact that motivational strategies are an under-researched theme (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007), it should be noticed that in the motivation chapter of *The Psychology of the Language Learner Revisited* Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) mention motivational strategies only once, when dealing with new research developments. Furthermore, in the most recent review of the literature on motivation studies (Al-Hoorie, 2017), research on motivation strategies is not even mentioned.

The few studies inquiring into this topic provided the field with interesting results, which lead to think that motivational strategies are worth investigating further (for a thorough review, see Lamb, 2019). For instance, it was discovered that the motivational practices of English teachers in South Korea and Iran were related to the motivated learning of their students (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012). In a mixed-methods study carried out in South Korea, Poupore (2015) discovered that incorporating content related to students' main life interests (e.g. relationships, challenges) was intrinsically motivating because it was viewed as personally appealing. Similar results were also found by Alrabai (2016) in Saudi Arabia, where students' motivation was positively impacted by creating a sense of connection between their English lessons in school and their life outside of it. The experimental study conducted by Moskovsky et al. (2013), which was conducted in Saudi Arabia as well, revealed that students who had received motivational teaching looked to be more motivated than those who had not. Finally, a few studies investigated teachers' perceived importance of motivational strategies in various contexts, and interesting cross-cultural differences emerged. For example, while the macro-strategy of selecting interesting tasks was ranked rather high by Hungarian teachers (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998), that of making the learning tasks stimulating was not perceived as important in Taiwan (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007). In a similar vein, while Saudi teachers perceived the macro-strategy of making learning stimulating and enjoyable as important (Alrabai, 2011), South Korean teachers ranked it much lower (Guilloteaux, 2013).

A research study that represents a novelty in the field is the one carried out by Henry and colleagues (2018, 2019), who inquired into the motivational teaching practices of secondary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Sweden. The Swedish scholars carried out a questionnaire survey and collected over a hundred descriptions of activities that participating teachers had carried out in their classes and found to be effective for promoting students' motivation. Starting from Dörnyei's taxonomy (2001), they developed an *ad hoc* coding schedule whose aim was to systematically analyse the design and content of the learning activities. Their results reveal the predominance of activities that allow students to work with authentic materials, that is, with "cultural artefacts produced for a purpose other than teaching" (Henry et al., 2018, p. 8), and which involve the use of digital technologies, enabling students to express their creativity.

Henry et al.'s study (2018, 2019) is a novelty in the field for two main reasons. First, in response to the call by Ushioda (2008), who denounced the lack in L2 motivation research of experience-based insights from teachers, it directed its focus on the design and content of activities as created and implemented in classrooms by teachers themselves. Second, it is different from previous studies because of the very context in which it was carried out. Sweden, in fact, is a setting where English is extensively encountered outside of classrooms and represents a relevant part in students' out-of-school life (e.g. media consumption, social media use), unlike what happens in the contexts listed above (i.e. Hungary, Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Taiwan, or in the contexts under scrutiny in our study). The Swedish researchers emphasised that in many settings nowadays – Scandinavian countries featuring prominently among them – English is losing its foreign language status (Graddol, 2006; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) and it is becoming a necessary skill (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2017; Henry & Cliffordson, 2017; Henry et al., 2018, 2019). Therefore, strategies that work in socio-cultural contexts where English is mainly found at school may not be as effective in others, where, instead, English is close to becoming a necessary social literacy (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Lamb, 2019).

As we have seen, investigations on motivational practices are few and the existing ones focus predominantly on EFL. To our knowledge, multilingual contexts where a local minority language co-exists with a State language and EFL at school have not been investigated yet. Our contribution aims at breaking some ground in that direction and analyse a collection of best motivational teaching practices that were found in two such contexts. Before delving into the research, let us explore the settings of interest for the present investigation.

### *1.3 Two Multilingual Research Contexts*

As part of a larger research project aimed at comparing two European multilingual contexts in search of best practices (Bier & Lasagabaster, 2023a), the study we will be reporting on was carried out partly in the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) in Spain, and partly in the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG) in Italy. The former context is internationally known as a success case of revitalisation of a minority language, Basque, within a multilingual educational system that also includes Spanish and English (Cenoz, 2009). The latter context, FVG, which is less known in international educational research, is as well characterised by linguistic diversity (Fusco, 2019), and efforts are being made there to implement the teaching of the Friulian minority language in schools (Burelli, 2015; Martini & Zanello, 2021), while it coexists with Italian and English in the curriculum.

The BAC is one of Spain's 17 Autonomous Communities. It is a bilingual community where both Basque, the minority language, and Spanish, the State language, are official languages with equal status. According to the last sociolinguistic survey, there are 680,629 bilingual speakers, and the highest percentage is found in the 16-24 age range (74.5%). Such percentage has tripled in the last thirty years, as it was around 25% in 1991 (Basque Government, 2021). In the BAC there are three linguistic models in which children can complete their studies, and these are greatly responsible for the composition of the number of new speakers of Basque: model A, with Spanish as the main medium of instruction; model B,

with both Basque and Spanish as media of instruction; and model D, with Basque as main medium of instruction. Nowadays, model D is by far the most popular model, registering 65.9% of enrolments in the 2020/21 school year (Bier & Lasagabaster, 2023a).

Language education research is especially rich in the BAC. Therefore, due to space constraints, just a brief selection of the most recent output will be referred to here. Specifically, two main lines of investigation should be mentioned; on the one side, worthy of note are the studies carried out by Cenoz and colleagues on translanguaging as a pedagogical, sustainable approach to be adopted in trilingual schools where the minority language is generally the main medium of instruction (e.g. Cenoz & Gorter, 2011, 2017, 2021; Leonet et al., 2017; Cenoz & Santos, 2020). On the other, there are studies focussing on the psychological side of the teaching and learning processes, such as those on teachers' beliefs and attitudes (e.g. Bier & Lasagabaster, 2023b; Gartziarena & Villabona, 2022) and on students' attitudes and motivation (e.g. Lasagabaster, 2015, 2017; Lázaro-Ibarrola & Azpilicueta-Martínez, 2021). As far as we are aware, however, no previous studies inquired into the specific topic of motivational practices in the Basque multilingual education system.

Let us now move on to the second research context. FVG is one of the 20 Regions in Italy and, more specifically, one of its 5 Autonomous Regions. One of the most important reasons for its Special Statute is its linguistic diversity, as four languages are recognised: Italian, the State official language, German, Slovene, and Friulian, which, like Basque, is a unique minority language, that is, it does not have a majority status anywhere. According to the last sociolinguistic survey, figures for Friulian speakers vary between 420,000, who are the regular speakers, and 600,000, if occasional speakers are considered as well (ARLeF, 2015). Unlike in the BAC, in FVG Friulian is not a medium of instruction in schools, nor is it an obligatory subject; the main medium of instruction there is Italian. Based on a national and two regional laws, nowadays Friulian ought to be compulsorily offered in the schools located in the Friulian-speaking territory (roughly corresponding to the former provinces of Udine, Pordenone and Gorizia) as an optional subject, subjected to the choice of pupils' families, who can decide whether they wish to make use of the opportunity to have Friulian taught to their children or not, for no less than 30 hours a year (Bier & Lasagabaster, 2023a).

The FVG context is less known than the Basque one in international language education research. Among the reasons that could explain such circumstance is the low status the Friulian minority language enjoys (Bier & Lasagabaster, 2022), which might explain the low level of interest in investigating Friulian-related issues. The most recent output in the field of language education can be grouped into two main categories (for a thorough review, see Burelli, 2015, and Martini & Zanello, 2021). On the one hand, worthy of note are reports documenting school projects involving the promotion of the minority language, alongside Italian as the main medium of instruction and English as the compulsory FL taught in all school levels (Cantarutti, 2011; Burelli, 2012; Fusco, 2012). On the other, we should mention CLIL-related research output: from an action research study on CLIL at kindergarten level (Perini & Senesi, 2012), to a large project aimed at providing effective solutions for training CLIL teachers of Friulian, by means of a hybrid, face-to-face and online, professional development course (Menegale & Bier, 2020) and of a Massive Open Online Course (Bier &

Menegale, 2020). In addition to these studies and as part of the present comparative BAC-FVG research project, future teachers' habits of language use and attitudes towards languages in contact were investigated (Bier & Lasagabaster, 2022).

To the best of our knowledge, no study so far investigated motivational practices adopted by teachers in their classrooms either in the BAC or in FVG. The two contexts of interest for our research study are different from the one investigated by Henry and colleagues (2018, 2019), not only because English is not as present in students' everyday life as it is in the Swedish context, but especially because a local minority language is present instead (Basque/Friulian), alongside a State majority language (Spanish/Italian) and English as the main FL taught at school.

#### *1.4 Research Questions*

In the light of the gaps identified in the literature reviewed so far and by retracing the path laid down by the Swedish researchers (Henry et al., 2018), with our study we aim at answering the following research questions:

RQ1. After analysing the motivational activities described by the teachers taking part in our study, what are the subcategories that stand out within each of the five focal areas proposed by Henry et al. (2018)?

RQ2. Are there differences in the motivational features of activities depending on the language considered, that is, the minority language or English?

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Participants, Sampling and Design*

In the autumn of 2022, a series of semi-structured interviews was carried out in the BAC and in FVG with 42 primary and secondary school teachers (Table 1).

Table 1. Interviewees: School level

| <b>School level</b>                        | <b>BAC</b> | <b>FVG</b> |
|--|------------|------------|
| Primary (6-10 year-old students)           | 6          | 9          |
| Lower secondary (11-13 year-old students)  | 3          | 6          |
| Higher secondary (14-18 year-old students) | 11         | 7          |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>20</b>  | <b>22</b>  |

Interviewees, 33 females and 9 males, had a mean age of 43 years old in the BAC and 44 years old in FVG, and taught a variety of subjects (Table 2). Thirty-three were in-service teachers and nine were pre-service teachers who had just ended their university training and had internship experience.



Table 2. Interviewees: Subjects and language/s taught

| <b>Subjects and language/s taught</b>        | <b>BAC</b> | <b>FVG</b> |
|--|------------|------------|
| Primary school class teacher                 | 3          | 6          |
| Special Education/Support teacher (Friulian) | 0          | 3          |
| Basque                                       | 4          | 0          |
| Italian and History (Friulian, English)      | 0          | 5          |
| English                                      | 7          | 2          |
| German                                       | 1          | 1          |
| Spanish as a foreign language                | 0          | 1          |
| Geography and History (Basque)               | 1          | 0          |
| Philosophy and Ethics (Basque, English)      | 1          | 0          |
| History and Philosophy (Friulian)            | 0          | 1          |
| Physics and Chemistry (Basque, English)      | 1          | 0          |
| Mathematics and Physics (Friulian)           | 0          | 1          |
| Management (Friulian)                        | 0          | 1          |
| Arts and Crafts (Basque, English)            | 1          | 0          |
| Technology (English)                         | 0          | 1          |
| Music (Basque)                               | 1          | 0          |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>20</b>  | <b>22</b>  |

We purposefully selected in-service teachers based on our direct contacts. Having both worked in teacher training and knowing a number of teachers who were good at motivating students, we decided to contact them directly so that they could share their experience with us. Pre-service teachers, instead, represent a small convenience sample, thanks to the contacts established in the previous phase of the project, which included a large-scale survey of future teachers' language attitudes in both contexts (Bier & Lasagabaster, 2022, 2023b).

The reason why we did not opt for random sampling is that our aim was *not* that of obtaining a generalisable picture of the situation in the two research contexts. Rather, adopting a “person-in-context” relational approach to teachers (Ushioda, 2009), we were interested in collecting a variety of best motivational teaching practices that we knew we could find among our contacts.

Interviews were semi-structured and divided into four main parts. The first part, as well as serving as a warm-up phase, was aimed at collecting general background information (e.g. type of school, subject taught, language/s, etc.). The second part focussed on participants' beliefs about languages and multilingualism (Arocena Egaña, 2017; Haukås, 2016). The third part contained questions targeting classroom practices (Arocena Egaña, 2017; Haukås, 2016; Henry, 2018, 2019; Iversen, 2020), and the fourth was the final one, aimed at wrapping up the interview.

In order to inquire into participants' direct experiences of motivational classroom practice, we

asked them the following question:

“Could you describe an activity or task that you have carried out with your pupils which in your view has motivated them and was successful for language learning?” (adapted from Henry et al., 2018, p. 6)

Since the majority of interviewees described more than one activity, our dataset comprises 70 descriptions overall.

Interviews were carried out in Spanish in the BAC and in Italian in FVG. In the former context, they had an average duration of 46 minutes, 62 in the latter; they were audio-recorded and then transcribed with the aid of the Sonix online software (<https://sonix.ai/>).

## 2.2 Data Analysis

With a view to obtaining a quantitative summary of the motivational activities described by interviewees, a content analysis was conducted (Dörnyei, 2007) with the aid of NVivo 12.

In order to analyse teachers' responses, we adopted Henry et al.'s (2018, pp. 8-9) coding schedule, which comprises five main focal areas:

- i. *Focus and content*. This focal area stems from Dörnyei's (2001) advice of promoting integrative values (strategy 11, p. 55), making the teaching materials relevant (strategy 15, p. 66), and making learning stimulating and enjoyable by including interesting content (strategy 18ii, p. 76). Taking into account that both exposure to English outside school (Sunqvist, 2009) and the exploration of ethical issues (Henry, 2013) can be motivational, the subcategories included in the focus and content focal area are the following: *popular culture; national cultures; intercultural content; everyday issues in the world in which students live; interests, experiences and future plans; ethical issues*. In order to obtain a better fit to our contexts – where the *local* dimension was particularly important, we slightly transformed the second subcategory into *national and local cultures*. The reason for this was that a number of descriptions in our data referred to the same type of content that Henry et al. would assign to the *national cultures* subcategory; however, such content made more specific reference to the context's *local* culture (e.g. Basque and Friulian culture or history).
- ii. *Sources*. This area tackles the importance of designing activities that promote integrative values (Dörnyei, 2001, strategy 11, p. 55), something that can be obtained by incorporating the use of authentic materials. Henry et al. operationalise authentic materials as “cultural artefacts produced for a purpose other than teaching” (2018, p. 8), in line with the definition of authentic texts given by Tomlinson: “[texts] produced in order to communicate rather than to teach” (2012, p. 162). The subcategories included in the Sources focal area are the following: *authentic materials; textbooks; teacher-created and manipulated materials; other learning materials*.
- iii. *Final products and performances*. This focal area originates from Dörnyei's (2001) advice of creating tasks with a tangible outcome (strategy 18ix, p. 77) and Dörnyei et



al.'s (2016) recommendation to include an end product to be performed for an audience. The more authentic the activity and the more external the audience, the higher the chances for the activity to be motivational for pupils. The subcategories included in this focal area are thus the following: *internal/non-authentic*; *internal/authentic*; *external/authentic*.

- iv. *Challenges and competitions*. This area focusses on the need to include a challenge, where students are required to solve problems, to discover something, to find hidden information (Dörnyei, 2001, strategy 18i, p. 76), or an intriguing element that fosters curiosity (18iv, p. 76), or a competitive element (18viii, p. 77). The subcategories included in this focal area are thus the following: *challenges*; *competitions*; *curiosity*.
- v. *Personal expression*. This focal area stems from Dörnyei's (2001) recommendations to incorporate a fantasy element that may stimulate creativity (18vi, p. 76), to deal with topics of personal relevance to students (18vii, p. 76), and to promote learner autonomy by giving them opportunities for choice (29, p. 108). The subcategories included in this focal area are the following: *creativity*; *personal relevance*; *choice*.

In line with Henry et al. (2018, p. 9), each activity description was coded to one subcategory only in each of the five focal areas. Moreover, activities that did not match with any of the subcategories of a specific focal area were coded under the “no (characteristic)” label.

### 3. Results

In the following subsections, we will present results separately for each focal area. Reference will be made to the general profile of motivational activities, i.e. without making distinctions based on language (RQ1), and to the specific profile of activities regarding the minority language and English separately (RQ2). Being out of the scope of the present contribution, no specific reference will be made to activities in other languages (e.g. French, German, or Spanish).

#### 3.1 Focus and Content of Activities

As regards the first focal area, we found that in general motivational activities tend *not* to foresee the use of specific content, that is, there is content but it is *not* what makes the activity motivational (Table 3). Nearly a third of activities was codified under this subcategory (30.9%), which is also the most frequent one in the case of activities involving English (35%).

The second most frequent subcategories characterising the general profile of the activities described by interviewees are *national and local cultures* and students' *interests, experiences and future plans* (23.5% in both cases). These are also the predominant features of motivational activities involving the minority language (32.5% in both cases). Activities focussing on the *local culture*, which were prevalent in the Friulian context, especially included CLIL modules on the local history and geography: from the Celts in Friuli to the disaster of the Vajont dam (a tragedy happened in 1963 when, during the initial filling of the newly built dam, an enormous landslide caused a gigantic wave in the artificial lake and

millions of cubic metres of water overtopped the dam and brought massive destruction and deaths to the villages there below), from the study of the geomorphology of the regional territory to typical Friulian dishes. Activities on *national cultures* included, for example, CLIL modules in English on the Roaring Twenties and on the birth of the American power in the XIX century. Activities focussing on students' *interests, experiences and future plans* included the preparation of video-recorded conversations in Basque with a peer about future plans after finishing high-school, or debates in Basque on topics of interest for students (e.g. polyamory, crypto-currencies), or simulations (e.g. a typical Friulian restaurant, an English town where each student runs a shop).

If we compare our results with those obtained by Henry and colleagues for English, we notice few differences, as the two most frequent subcategories are the same, but inverted. In our case, the most frequent is *no content* (35%) and the second most frequent is *popular culture* (25%); for Henry et al. (2018) it is the opposite, *popular culture* first (32.2%) and then *no content* (23.3%). This circumstance may be due to contextual and cultural differences. While in Sweden “cultural products from [English] native-speaking contexts constitute a sizeable proportion of media offerings and are instantly accessible online” (Henry et al., 2018, p. 18), this is not the case either in the BAC or in FVG. In our two research contexts, the use of the State language – Spanish and Italian respectively – is still rather strong, and the presence of English out of school, albeit growing, is still not as massive as it might be in Sweden (Bier & Lasagabaster, 2022, 2023b).

Table 3. Focus and content of activities: results

| Subcategories   | RQ1 |       | RQ2               |       | English        |       | English                             |       |
|---|-----|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------|-------|-------------------------------------|-------|
|   | TOT |       | Minority language |       | English (only) |       | (comparison with Henry et al. 2018) |       |
|   | nr. | %     | nr.               | %     | nr.            | %     | nr.                                 | %     |
| 1.1 popular culture                                     | 7   | 10.3% | 1                 | 2.5%  | 5              | 25.0% | 29                                  | 32.2% |
| 1.2 national and local cultures                         | 16  | 23.5% | 13                | 32.5% | 2              | 10.0% | 12                                  | 13.3% |
| 1.3 intercultural content                               | 2   | 2.9%  | 0                 | 0.0%  | 1              | 5.0%  | 2                                   | 2.2%  |
| 1.4 everyday issues in the world in which students live | 2   | 2.9%  | 1                 | 2.5%  | 1              | 5.0%  | 11                                  | 12.2% |
| 1.5 interests, experiences and future plans             | 16  | 23.5% | 13                | 32.5% | 3              | 15.0% | 11                                  | 12.2% |
| 1.6 ethical issues                                      | 4   | 5.9%  | 2                 | 5.0%  | 1              | 5.0%  | 4                                   | 4.4%  |
| 1.7 no content  | 21  | 30.9% | 10                | 25.0% | 7              | 35.0% | 21                                  | 23.3% |
| <b>Total</b>  | 68  | 100%  | 40                | 100%  | 20             | 100%  | 90                                  | 100%  |
| uncodeable  | 2   |       | 0                 |       | 0              |       | 4                                   |       |

### 3.2 Sources

With reference to the second focal area, we found that in general *authentic materials* tend to

be preferred (Table 4). More than 40% of activities was codified under this subcategory (43.8%), which is also the most frequent one in the case of activities involving English (50%). Activities adopting *authentic materials* included, for example, using YouTube as a source of inspiration to prepare Do-It-Yourself videos in English. Another activity foresaw starting from the official statistics published by the Basque Government (e.g. number of car accidents, or number of people playing sports in the three provinces making up the BAC) and the European Union (e.g. average wages in EU countries) to prepare graphs in English and make comparisons.

The second most frequent subcategory characterising the general profile of the activities described by interviewees is *teacher-created and manipulated materials* (35.9%), which is also the most frequent one in the case of activities involving the minority language (50%). Such activities, especially frequent in the Friulian context, included a CLIL unit on floating (science) and the history of Archimedes, a project on Friulian poetry, and CLIL lessons of Friulian history. As for the Basque context, such activities included, for example, games to practice Basque grammar, or history-themed role-plays.

Our results are in line with those obtained in Sweden for English, as in both cases the most frequent subcategory is the same, that is, *authentic materials* (50% in our case, 55.3% in Henry et al., 2018). It should also be noted that in all contexts only one activity was carried out with the aid of textbooks, which indicates that textbooks are set aside when teachers strive to motivate their students.

An interesting difference between our findings and Henry et al.'s (2018) regards the second most frequent subcategories. While in our case it is *other learning materials* (e.g. apps, physical artefacts) for English (22.2%) and *authentic materials* for the minority language (34.2%), in Sweden there were 20 activities (26.3%) which were codified as using *no materials*. We believe that this might be linked with the data collection instrument. Henry et al. (2018) adopted an open-ended questionnaire question, whereas a semi-structured interview was used in our case. While our instrument allowed us to collect thick data and ask participants to provide details on their activities (e.g. types of materials used), the written questionnaire question might have not offered the same possibility, and for that reason a higher number of activities might have been codified as not adopting materials.

Table 4. Sources: results

| Subcategories                                 | RQ1 |       | RQ2               |       |                | English |                                     |       |
|---|-----|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------------------------|-------|
|   | TOT |       | Minority language |       | English (only) |         | (comparison with Henry et al. 2018) |       |
|   | nr. | %     | nr.               | %     | nr.            | %       | nr.                                 | %     |
| 2.1 authentic materials                       | 28  | 43.8% | 13                | 34.2% | 9              | 50.0%   | 42                                  | 55.3% |
| 2.2 textbooks                                 | 2   | 3.1%  | 1                 | 2.6%  | 1              | 5.6%    | 1                                   | 1.3%  |
| 2.3 teacher-created and manipulated materials | 23  | 35.9% | 19                | 50.0% | 3              | 16.7%   | 8                                   | 10.5% |

|                              |    |       |    |       |          |              |           |              |
|------------------------------|----|-------|----|-------|----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| 2.4 other learning materials | 8  | 12.5% | 4  | 10.5% | <b>4</b> | <b>22.2%</b> | 5         | 6.6%         |
| 2.5 no materials used        | 3  | 4.7%  | 1  | 2.6%  | 1        | 5.6%         | <b>20</b> | <b>26.3%</b> |
| <b>Total</b>                 | 64 | 100%  | 38 | 100%  | 18       | 100%         | 76        | 100%         |
| uncodeable                   | 6  |       | 2  |       | 2        |              | 18        |              |

### 3.3 Final Products and Performances

As regards the third focal area, the most popular final products are *internal* to the classroom and *non-authentic* (Table 5). Slightly less than a third (27.1%) of activities was codified under this subcategory, which is also the most frequent one in the case of English (35%). Typical activities of this kind were, for example, end-of-the-unit recap games using digital apps (e.g. Kahoot) to practice the contents acquired.

*No final product* appears to be the second most frequent subcategory characterising the general profile of the activities described by interviewees (25.7%), and it is also one of the two most frequent ones in the case of activities involving the minority language (30%). It is noteworthy, though, that for Basque/Friulian the same proportion of activities involved *external* and *authentic* final products (30%). Such activities included, for example, theatrical representations of fables or historical periods for an audience of schoolmates and parents, the publication of booklets containing the materials students produced (i.e. texts, drawings) during projects, or the preparation of a short YouTube video telling the life of historical characters.

When comparing our findings with those obtained in Sweden for English, a situation similar to the one we found in the Focus and content focal area is observed. The two most frequent subcategories are the same but inverted; in Henry et al.'s (2018) case, *no final product* is the most frequent (37.8%) and then *internal/non-authentic* (31.1%) follows. It should be noticed, however, that the most frequent subcategory in the Swedish context is the same we found for Basque and Friulian.

Table 5. Final products and performances: results

| Subcategories              | RQ1       |              | RQ2               |              | English        |              | English                             |              |
|----------------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
|                            | TOT       |              | Minority language |              | English (only) |              | (comparison with Henry et al. 2018) |              |
|                            | nr.       | %            | nr.               | %            | nr.            | %            | nr.                                 | %            |
| 3.1 internal/non-authentic | <b>19</b> | <b>27.1%</b> | 9                 | 22.5%        | <b>7</b>       | <b>35.0%</b> | <b>28</b>                           | <b>31.1%</b> |
| 3.2 internal/authentic     | 16        | 22.9%        | 7                 | 17.5%        | <b>5</b>       | <b>25.0%</b> | 21                                  | 23.3%        |
| 3.3 external/authentic     | 17        | 24.3%        | <b>12</b>         | <b>30.0%</b> | 4              | 20.0%        | 7                                   | 7.8%         |
| 3.4 no final product       | <b>18</b> | <b>25.7%</b> | <b>12</b>         | <b>30.0%</b> | 4              | 20.0%        | <b>34</b>                           | <b>37.8%</b> |
| <b>Total</b>               | 70        | 100%         | 40                | 100%         | 20             | 100%         | 90                                  | 100%         |
| uncodeable                 | 0         |              | 0                 |              | 0              |              | 4                                   |              |

### 3.4 Challenges and Competitions

As for the fourth focal area, we found that the vast majority of motivational activities – both in general (44.3%) and with reference to specific languages, i.e. minority language and English (30%) – tends to foresee the presence of *challenges* (Table 6). More than half of teachers' descriptions referring to the minority language include a cognitive challenge (52.5%), that is, an activity that stimulates students to exercise their High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS: Bloom, 1956). Examples are the creation of poems or slogans and the preparation of presentations on specific themes (e.g. ethical, historical). In the case of English, both *challenges* and *competitions* (30%) appear to be salient in interviewees' activities, such as the organisation of breakout rooms, in presence and online, on specific topics (e.g. Halloween/Christmas, movies), end-of-the-unit Kahoots, role-plays and simulations of real-life activities (e.g. a shop) with a competitive element.

If we compare our results with those obtained in Sweden, this is the focus area where the difference is the most pronounced. Notably, almost three quarters of the activities described by Henry et al.'s (2018) participants foresaw *no characteristics* (73.1%), which, instead, is the second most frequent in our case (25% in the case of English and the minority language, 27.1% in general). The Swedish researchers once again explained this circumstance with students' extensive extramural encounters with English (Sundqvist, 2009), due to which they find activities allowing them to engage with English in self-authentic ways more stimulating than those that are more usually typical of English classrooms, like debates, puzzles and word games (Henry et al., 2018, p. 17).

Table 6. Challenges and competitions: results

| Subcategories          | RQ1 |       | RQ2               |       | English        |       | English                             |       |
|------------------------|-----|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------|-------|-------------------------------------|-------|
|                        | TOT |       | Minority language |       | English (only) |       | (comparison with Henry et al. 2018) |       |
|                        | nr. | %     | nr.               | %     | nr.            | %     | nr.                                 | %     |
| 4.1 challenges         | 31  | 44.3% | 21                | 52.5% | 6              | 30.0% | 14                                  | 15.1% |
| 4.2 competitions       | 12  | 17.1% | 5                 | 12.5% | 6              | 30.0% | 7                                   | 7.5%  |
| 4.3 curiosity          | 8   | 11.4% | 4                 | 10.0% | 3              | 15.0% | 4                                   | 4.3%  |
| 4.4 no characteristics | 19  | 27.1% | 10                | 25.0% | 5              | 25.0% | 68                                  | 73.1% |
| <b>Total</b>           | 70  | 100%  | 40                | 100%  | 20             | 100%  | 93                                  | 100%  |
| uncodeable             | 0   |       | 0                 |       | 0              |       | 1                                   |       |

### 3.5 Personal Expression

As regards the last focal area, we found that the majority of activities – both in general (32.9%) and with reference to specific languages, i.e. minority language (32.5%) and English (35%) – stimulates *creativity*. A third of activities in each case was codified under this subcategory (Table 7). Examples are activities involving the creation of videos, costumed presentations of historical periods, comic strips, stories and poems. In the case of

Basque/Friulian, an equally frequent subcategory was *no personal expression* (32.5%).

The second most frequent subcategory characterising the general profile of activities described by interviewees was *no personal expression* (27.1%), whereas in the case of activities involving English it was the inclusion of *choice* (30%). Examples are activities where students themselves, in pairs, had to create a Kahoot for their peers to practice the contents of a unit; breakout rooms, where students had to decide how their team should play; a history project on Irish history, which stemmed directly from students' curiosity and where they were directly involved in the selection of contents to be dealt with.

If we compare our results with those obtained by Henry and colleagues, we notice that, once again, the most frequent subcategories are the same, but inverted. In the Swedish context, the majority of activities for English involved *no personal expression* (42.7%), and the second most frequent subcategory was the promotion of *creativity* (33.7%), which was the most salient feature in our descriptions. As in the case of Sources, here as well we suppose that the *no personal expression* findings might be linked with the data collection instrument. While our instrument (a semi-structured interview) provided us with rich data from which many details on interviewees' activities could be obtained, the questionnaire question (Henry et al., 2018) might have not offered the same possibility.

Table 7. Personal expression: results

| Subcategories              | RQ1 |       | RQ2               |       |                |       | English                             |       |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------|-------|-------------------------------------|-------|
|                            | TOT |       | Minority language |       | English (only) |       | (comparison with Henry et al. 2018) |       |
|                            | nr. | %     | nr.               | %     | nr.            | %     | nr.                                 | %     |
| 5.1 creativity             | 23  | 32.9% | 13                | 32.5% | 7              | 35.0% | 30                                  | 33.7% |
| 5.2 personal relevance     | 13  | 18.6% | 7                 | 17.5% | 3              | 15.0% | 15                                  | 16.9% |
| 5.3 choice                 | 15  | 21.4% | 7                 | 17.5% | 6              | 30.0% | 6                                   | 6.7%  |
| 5.4 no personal expression | 19  | 27.1% | 13                | 32.5% | 4              | 20.0% | 38                                  | 42.7% |
| <b>Total</b>               | 70  | 100%  | 40                | 100%  | 20             | 100%  | 89                                  | 100%  |
| uncodeable                 | 0   |       | 0                 |       | 0              |       | 5                                   |       |

#### 4. Discussion

In response to our first research question – After analysing the motivational activities described by the teachers taking part in our study, what are the subcategories that stand out within each of the five focal areas proposed by Henry et al. (2018)? – we have found that the most frequent general profile characterising the activities we collected foresees *no specific content*, in the sense that there is content but it is not what makes the activity motivational (focal area 1). Then, it includes the use of *authentic materials* (focal area 2) and final products/performances that are of the type usually found only in classrooms, i.e. *internal* and *non-authentic* (focal area 3). Finally, the general profile of motivational activities encompasses the presence of *challenges* (focal area 4) and the promotion of students'



*creativity* (focal area 5).

In response to our second research question – Are there differences in the motivational features of activities depending on the language considered, that is, the minority language or English? – we have found that the most frequent profile of motivational activities involving English in all five focal areas is the same as the general profile identified in response to RQ1. As for the minority language, Basque and Friulian respectively, while the most frequent profile in focal areas 4 (*challenges*) and 5 (*creativity*) is the same as for English, it differs in the first three areas. The most frequent content employed appears to be coming from *local cultures* and from students' *interests, experiences and future plans* (focal area 1). Sources are usually *teacher-created and manipulated materials* (focal area 2), and a final product is generally either an *external, authentic* product or it is *not* foreseen (focal area 3).

Although minor discrepancies were detected, mainly due to the specific socio-cultural contexts where data were collected, these findings reveal that there is correspondence between the activities described by our interviewees in the BAC and in FVG and those by Swedish teachers (Henry et al., 2018, 2019). Such circumstance, therefore, allows us to claim that our results empirically support both Henry et al.'s (2018) and Dörnyei's (2001) taxonomies.

A finding which is especially worthy of notice is that in the two contexts under scrutiny in this paper (BAC and FVG) too, it appears that teachers make little use of textbooks and prefer to use authentic or teacher-created/manipulated materials to design motivationally effective activities. Not only is this in line with findings obtained by our Swedish colleagues, but it also seems to point to the fact that such preference does not depend on the socio-cultural context, being the most frequent choice in contexts as diverse as Sweden, on the one side, and the BAC and FVG, on the other.

Such circumstance poses high demands on teachers' linguistic and pedagogical skills, and this is especially true in the case of those who are not language teachers but use the target language as medium of instruction (e.g. CLIL teachers, and subject-teachers in Basque-immersion schools). Not all teachers may possess the necessary linguistic competence or pedagogical skills to design activities that be effective in promoting growth in learners' language competence. In addition to that, the preparation of such effective activities requires a lot of time, which, likely, most teachers do not have. This 'skills-time dilemma' (Henry et al., 2018, p. 19) is an issue that has important implications for teachers' professional practice and should be addressed in teacher education as well as in professional development programmes, where the promotion of language awareness (Svalberg, 2012) and motivational skills (Kubanyiova, 2012; Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014) ought to be of primary concern.

With a view to raising teachers' awareness of the linguistic and pedagogic features of learning activities, sharing the motivational materials they created and experimented in class with colleagues – maybe through an online shared repository – could be an effective opportunity to promote collaboration and boost reflection on teaching practice. Collaboration among teachers ought to be aimed at the creation of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991)

where members mutually support and learn from each other, by reflecting together on their teaching practice. Future developments should foresee a direct involvement of researchers and teacher trainers in such shared practice, and future research ought to aim at exploring its effects on the linguistic and pedagogical quality of activities and materials designed.

## 5. Conclusion

Teachers' perspectives on ways of motivating students were the focus of our contribution. We retraced the path laid down by Henry et al. (2018, 2019) in Sweden and carried out an investigation of best motivational teaching practices in two multilingual education settings. Empirically supporting Dörnyei's (2001) and Henry et al.'s (2018) proposals, our findings reveal that activities with authentic and teacher-created materials are prevalent, irrespective of the language, while textbooks appear to be almost never used when teachers aim at boosting their students' motivation. In the literature authenticity has been subject to three main types of interpretations (Clavel-Arroitia & Fuster-Márquez, 2014): (i) It may refer to classroom materials, (ii) it may be concerned with the assignments students have to carry out, often labelled as task authenticity (Buendgens-Kosten, 2014), and (iii) it may have to do with classroom interaction. In this paper, the activities selected and highlighted by the teachers were related to the first of the interpretations. When selecting the most motivating tasks, only two of our participants chose a textbook, which would confirm the belief that whereas textbooks include correct language it often differs from genuine language use (Buendgens-Kosten, 2014), and this seems to be a key question to language teachers.

Although it is rather habitual to claim that authentic materials boost motivation, such claim is rarely tested. After considering teachers' selection of activities, the recommendation to be drawn is that teachers should strive to use appropriate authentic materials in their classes. Our participants were teaching different languages but the majority concurred that the type of materials used in their more motivating tasks were authentic. The activities mentioned by the participants were characterised by a genuine purpose to communicate rather than simply work on the production of correct language forms. Grammar and practice activities could obviously be part of the task at hand, but the main emphasis was placed on meaning and communication, which is why the teachers chose topics which were close to the experience and the real world needs of their students. Siegel (2014) compared ELT textbooks and naturally occurring student conversations and observed large discrepancies between how some topics were treated (including students' school lives). These findings led the author to recommend the incorporation of topics that "are authentic to the specific interests and contexts of the L2 users" (Siegel, 2014, p. 374).

A word of caution should be entered at this stage, because the materials that may seem real to students in one context may not always seem genuine to learners from another part of the world, although nowadays globalisation is helping to bridge the gap between distant settings. In any case, it would be advisable to analyse this question in other contexts and make comparisons between different countries. Our results reveal clear parallelisms with the Swedish school setting, but this may not be the case with other parts of the world such as central Africa or south-east Asia, to name but two. In fact, whereas authors such as

Kiczkowiak point out that the nature of English as the current global lingua franca should contribute to offering students “truly authentic and global materials” (Kiczkowiak, 2020, p. 8), this is not the case of minority languages such as Basque and Friulian, which often have to make reference to their much more limited context, speakers and history.

Last but not least, based on such findings, it is thought that the creation of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) – where teachers share their materials and reflect on their teaching practice – could be a good opportunity for improving the quality of their work, and future empirical research should be aimed at exploring this issue.

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No potential conflict of interest is reported by the authors.

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