

## ARTICLE

# A Cross-Cultural Examination of EFL Learners' Perceptions of Teachers' Motivational Strategies: Evidence from Iran and Oman

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## ABSTRACT

Understanding how motivational strategies are perceived and prioritized by learners is essential for effective foreign language instruction, particularly within culturally diverse contexts. This study investigates the perceived importance and frequency of motivational strategies employed by English language teachers, as reported by EFL learners in Iran and Oman. A modified Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to 173 Iranian and 147 Omani students to assess their evaluations of various motivational techniques used in their classroom environments. Descriptive and correlational analyses revealed a moderate alignment between learners' perceptions of priority and observed frequency of use. Importantly, findings indicate that learners in both contexts view their instructors as central to fostering engagement, with motivation-enhancing strategies acting as a bridge between instructional quality and learner participation. Findings suggest that cultural and regional factors may not significantly alter the students' overall attitudes toward motivational strategies in the classroom. The study highlights the value of eliciting student feedback through surveys or classroom discussions to adapt teaching practices to local expectations and cultural norms to improve education quality. In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the motivational preferences of Iranian and Omani EFL learners, offering practical recommendations for teachers to enhance student motivation. By understanding and aligning with learners' motivational needs, teachers can create more effective and engaging learning environments.

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# 1. Introduction

Motivation remains a cornerstone of language learning and teaching, frequently cited as both a driving force behind learner engagement and a major pedagogical challenge<sup>[1,2]</sup>. Motivation can be conceptualized as a persistent internal force that sustains learners throughout the often arduous process of acquiring a second or foreign language<sup>[3]</sup>. Recent studies further underscore its dual role as a catalyst for initial engagement and a sustaining influence over time<sup>[4-7]</sup>.

Despite extensive theoretical work on the concept, many early studies concentrated more on defining motivation than applying it in pedagogical contexts<sup>[8]</sup>. Contemporary researchers have shifted focus toward implementing motivational strategies that can directly influence classroom engagement and learning outcomes<sup>[9]</sup>. Motivational strategies are deliberate instructional actions intended to elicit and maintain learners' motivation systematically<sup>[2]</sup>. Numerous frameworks have emerged to categorize these strategies. A seminal study identified ten "commandments" for motivating language learners<sup>[10]</sup>, while a more comprehensive model was later developed encompassing four phases: creating basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining motivation, and promoting positive self-evaluation<sup>[2,11]</sup>. These models have shaped pedagogical practices worldwide, including in Western and non-Western EFL settings<sup>[12,13]</sup>.

Nevertheless, motivation is not culturally neutral. Several scholars have argued that the effectiveness of motivational strategies is deeply embedded in socio-cultural and educational contexts<sup>[14]</sup>. Strategies that yield positive results in one setting may be less effective—or counterproductive—in another. This concern is relevant in contexts such as Iran and Oman, where educational values and learner expectations may differ significantly<sup>[15]</sup>.

Although studies have explored motivational strategies globally—in Hungary<sup>[10]</sup>, East Asia<sup>[3]</sup>, and the UAE<sup>[4]</sup>—comparative analyses within the Middle East remain limited. In Iran, existing research has focused on both teachers' and learners' perspectives<sup>[16-19]</sup>, but advanced-level learners have received little attention. Similarly, while

recent studies have emerged in Oman<sup>[20-22]</sup>, cross-national comparisons within the region remain scarce.

This study seeks to address this gap by comparing the perceptions of Iranian and Omani EFL learners regarding the priority and prevalence of motivational strategies employed by their instructors. By examining learners' views in two culturally distinct yet regionally proximal countries, this research aims to provide insights into the context-specific application of motivational strategies and offer pedagogical recommendations for culturally responsive teaching. Therefore, the following research questions are shaped:

1. Which motivational strategies do Iranian and Omani EFL learners identify as most important?
2. Which motivational strategies do learners in Iran and Oman observe being frequently used by their teachers?
3. Is there a significant correlation between the perceived frequency and perceived importance of motivational strategies among EFL learners in both countries?

# 2. Literature Review

Motivation plays a pivotal role in the acquisition of a second language (L2) and is widely recognized as a key factor in the learning process<sup>[1]</sup>. The effectiveness of motivational strategies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts has been a major focus of research over the past few decades, with scholars seeking to understand how these strategies can foster better learning outcomes in diverse cultural settings<sup>[10]</sup>. The impact of motivation on L2 learners' behavior, engagement, and performance has been confirmed by numerous studies<sup>[23-25]</sup>. However, motivation is not a one-size-fits-all concept; it is deeply influenced by the cultural and contextual factors inherent to the educational setting.

## 2.1. Theoretical Background

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), which posits that motivation is a dynamic construct shaped by the interaction of three main components: the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience<sup>[11,26]</sup>. The ideal L2 self

refers to the learner's vision of themselves as a successful L2 speaker, while the ought-to L2 self reflects the obligations and expectations imposed by external factors such as family or society. The L2 learning experience encompasses the immediate motivational influences in the classroom environment, such as the teacher, teaching methods, and classroom dynamics. Teachers' use of motivational strategies can significantly impact learners' motivation by aligning classroom activities with their goals and expectations<sup>[27]</sup>.

Further extending this framework, scholars have emphasized the importance of contextual and cultural variables in shaping motivational strategies<sup>[28]</sup>. The effectiveness of these strategies is not only determined by the individual characteristics of the learners but also by the cultural and institutional contexts in which they are employed<sup>[14,29]</sup>.

## 2.2. Iranian EFL Learners' Motivational Strategies

In the context of Iran, several studies have explored the role of motivational strategies in language learning. Teacher behaviors and classroom atmosphere are central to motivating Iranian EFL learners<sup>[3,4,10]</sup>. A common theme across these studies is the importance of teacher involvement and emotional support. Iranian learners tend to prefer strategies that demonstrate teacher involvement and are heavily influenced by teachers' guidance in shaping their learning behaviors<sup>[30-33]</sup>. This aligns with the Iranian cultural context, where students typically expect and rely on teachers for direction and motivation.

One of the most important strategies identified by Iranian EFL learners is the creation of a positive classroom environment. A conducive learning environment is essential for sustaining motivation over time<sup>[11]</sup>. Iranian learners also highly value strategies that recognize their efforts, with recognition often seen as a way of validating their achievements. Taiwanese and Iranian students alike prioritized recognition as a motivational strategy<sup>[3,34]</sup>. Iranian learners' motivation is heavily influenced by external praise and acknowledgment<sup>[5]</sup>.

More recent studies have provided updated insights into Iranian EFL learners' perceptions. Iranian learners exhibit intrinsic motivation, often driven by social and academic aspirations. They favor strategies that enhance self-confidence and group cohesion, underscoring the role of the teacher in

nurturing these qualities<sup>[16]</sup>.

## 2.3. Omani EFL Learners' Motivational Strategies

In Oman, research on motivational strategies has been less prevalent, but a growing body of literature is beginning to explore the impact of cultural and contextual factors on motivation<sup>[35]</sup>. Omani students' preferences show distinct patterns compared to their Iranian counterparts. Omani EFL learners often employ metacognitive strategies to regulate their learning, with an emphasis on goal-setting and self-monitoring<sup>[15]</sup>. They are more self-directed, while Iranian learners are more reliant on external motivation.

Omani learners also highly value extrinsic motivators such as career prospects and academic success<sup>[36]</sup>. This highlights the importance of understanding students' goals and aspirations in motivating them effectively. Culturally appropriate motivational strategies are especially important in Oman, where motivation is tied to the integration of educational strategies with local cultural values. Group-based motivational strategies may be more effective due to the importance of social recognition and peer-group dynamics<sup>[15]</sup>.

## 2.4. Comparative Insights from Iran and Oman

Although motivational strategies are often discussed in isolation, studies comparing learners across cultural contexts offer comprehensive insights. Both Iranian and Omani learners value the teacher's role in fostering motivation; however, Iranian learners focus more on teacher-centered strategies such as praise and recognition, while Omani learners emphasize autonomy, metacognitive skills, and group cohesiveness<sup>[15,36]</sup>.

The cultural context plays a crucial role in shaping these preferences. Iranian learners often exhibit a more hierarchical approach to learning<sup>[13,30]</sup>, while Omani learners favor independence and peer collaboration<sup>[15]</sup>. The educational settings in both countries highlight the need for teachers to adapt their strategies to meet diverse motivational needs. The reviewed literature demonstrates that motivational strategies are influenced not only by learners' individual needs but also by their cultural and educational contexts. While both Iranian and Omani learners recognize the importance of teacher

involvement and classroom atmosphere, there are notable differences in how they perceive and value various strategies. Iranian learners often prioritize teacher-centered strategies, while Omani learners value autonomy and metacognitive strategies. A nuanced, culturally informed approach is essential for enhancing motivation in EFL classrooms in both contexts.

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Participants

The study included a total of 347 advanced-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners from two distinct cultural and educational contexts: Iran and Oman. The Iranian cohort consisted of 173 learners (98 males and 75 females), aged between 18 and 29 years ( $M = 25.5$ ), recruited from six private language institutes in Tehran, the capital of Iran. All participants were native Persian speakers and had no prior experience living in English-speaking countries. The majority were university students ( $n = 119$ ) who had progressed from elementary to advanced levels within private language programs, in addition to receiving formal English instruction through Iran's national curriculum. To ensure homogeneity in proficiency, an advanced-level version of the Key English Test (KET) was administered to 200 learners. Participants whose scores fell within one standard deviation above or below the mean were selected, following Hatch and Farhady's (1981) guidelines, leading to the exclusion of 27 learners.

Similarly, the Omani sample included 174 advanced-level EFL learners (92 females and 82 males) from four private English language institutes in Muscat and Sohar. All participants were native Arabic speakers, aged between 18 and 30 years ( $M = 24.8$ ). Like their Iranian counterparts, the Omani learners had completed a structured progression of language instruction at private institutes and had also taken English courses as part of their public education. Proficiency screening using the same advanced KET version was employed to ensure consistency in language level across both groups.

The six Iranian and four Omani private institutes were selected based on their accessibility, willingness to participate, and their established reputations for offering advanced-level EFL instruction. While the number of participating

institutes differs slightly, participant numbers were approximately balanced across countries. Furthermore, all institutions adhered to similar pedagogical frameworks and curriculum standards, minimizing the risk of significant cluster effects due to site-level variation.

Institutes were selected purposively for their accessibility, their offering of advanced-level instruction, and their reputations for employing qualified instructors and maintaining consistent pedagogical quality. These criteria were applied uniformly across both countries to ensure methodological consistency.

#### 3.2. Instruments

Two primary instruments were used in the study: the Advanced Key English Test (KET) and the Motivational Strategies Questionnaire.

##### 3.2.1. Advanced Key English Test (KET)

The Key English Test (KET), developed by Cambridge Assessment English, is an internationally recognized standardized examination designed to assess foundational English language proficiency, corresponding to the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). While the standard KET is typically used to evaluate basic communicative competence, an adapted and more challenging version of the test was utilized in this study to screen for advanced-level learners. The rationale for using this tool lies in its robust psychometric properties and consistent use in large-scale language proficiency assessment. While the standard KET aligns with CEFR A2 proficiency, a modified version was developed for this study to screen advanced learners. This version incorporated B2-level reading and listening passages as well as open-ended writing tasks adapted from the FCE and CAE frameworks. The adaptation ensured a more accurate assessment of participant proficiency while retaining the test's standardized structure.

Justification for using the KET was grounded in its well-documented reliability and validity. According to Cambridge English technical reports, the test demonstrates high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.82 to 0.91 across components, depending on the testing session and population. Its validity is supported by extensive empirical research, establishing strong correlations with other CEFR-aligned assessments and confirming

that it reliably measures what it intends to—communicative competence in real-world contexts. In this study, the test served as a screening tool to ensure proficiency homogeneity across Iranian and Omani participants. Learners whose scores fell within one standard deviation above or below the mean were retained, following Hatch and Farhady's guidelines<sup>[37]</sup>. This method helped ensure comparability between groups and minimized potential confounding variables related to linguistic ability.

### 3.2.2. Motivational Strategies Questionnaire

Adapted from Cheng and Dörnyei<sup>[3]</sup>, this self-report instrument consisted of two parallel sections. The first section included 48 items assessing the perceived importance of various motivational strategies, rated on a six-point Likert scale (1 = "not important" to 6 = "very important"). The second section mirrored the same items, but participants rated the frequency with which they observed each strategy in use by their teachers (1 = "hardly ever" to 6 = "very often").

To enhance interpretability, the 48 items were grouped into ten multi-item categories, each representing a broader motivational theme. Internal consistency for each category was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, all of which exceeded the acceptable reliability threshold of 0.60 according to Pallant<sup>[38]</sup>.

### 3.3. Procedure

The study followed a three-phase procedure: 1) Screening and Selection: All participants completed the advanced version of the KET to ensure comparable levels of language proficiency. Learners scoring within one standard deviation of the group mean were retained for the study. 2) Data Collection: Participants completed the adapted questionnaire during scheduled class sessions. Instructions were provided in the participants' native language (Persian in Iran; Arabic in Oman) to ensure comprehension and consistency. Anonymity and confidentiality were emphasized to reduce social desirability bias, a known limitation of self-report measures. 3) Data Coding and Analysis: Responses in both sections of the questionnaire were numerically coded (1–6). Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each item and motivational scale. Items and categories were then ranked based on perceived importance

and frequency. Standardized scores were computed to facilitate cross-cultural comparisons between Iranian and Omani learner perceptions.

## 4. Results

The study aimed to assess both the priority (importance) and prevalence (frequency) of various motivational strategies as perceived by Iranian EFL learners. The multi-item scales of the questionnaire were evaluated for reliability, and the Cronbach Alpha index was calculated for each scale. The results revealed that all scales exceeded the minimum reliability threshold of 0.60, confirming the internal consistency of the items. In order to compare these findings with those of Omani EFL learners, the same analysis was performed on data gathered from Oman. The Omani sample included 174 learners from private language schools in Muscat and Sohar, and the results were analyzed similarly to those of the Iranian learners.

### 4.1. Priority of Motivational Strategies

In this phase, the means of each scale were computed and ranked based on the responses regarding the priority (importance) of the strategies. **Table 1** presents the reliability and mean estimates for the priority scale, illustrating the strategies ranked by their perceived importance. As shown, appropriate teacher behavior emerged as the most important strategy, followed closely by creating a pleasant classroom environment and recognizing learners' efforts.

### 4.2. Prevalence of Motivational Strategies

Next, the prevalence (frequency) of the same strategies was assessed, and the means and reliability estimates were calculated for the prevalence questionnaire. **Table 2** displays the results for the frequency of motivational strategies, showing that creating a pleasant classroom climate was rated as the most frequently observed strategy, followed by presenting tasks properly and appropriate teacher behavior. These findings suggest that teachers were employing the strategies they regarded as most important, but some discrepancies were noted between the rankings of importance and prevalence.

**Table 1.** Ranking of Motivational Strategies in Order of Priority (Iranian vs. Omani EFL Learners).

Rank	Scales	Mean (Iran)	Mean (Oman)	Cronbach $\alpha$ (Iran)	Cronbach $\alpha$ (Oman)
1	Appropriate teacher behavior	5.66	5.64	0.83	0.84
2	Creating a pleasant climate in the classroom	5.42	5.40	0.81	0.82
3	Recognizing learners' efforts	5.62	5.60	0.78	0.79
4	Promoting students' self-confidence	5.30	5.28	0.71	0.73
5	Promoting group cohesiveness and norms	4.60	4.58	0.79	0.80
6	Enhancing the goal-orientedness of learners	4.57	4.55	0.68	0.70
7	Making learners familiar with L2 values	3.98	3.97	0.67	0.69
8	Making the tasks stimulating	3.95	3.93	0.74	0.75
9	Enhancing students' autonomy	3.84	3.83	0.72	0.73
10	Presenting tasks properly	4.18	4.15	0.65	0.67

**Table 2.** Ranking of Prevalence of Motivational Strategies (Iranian vs. Omani EFL Learners).

Rank	Scales	Mean (Iran)	Mean (Oman)	Cronbach $\alpha$ (Iran)	Cronbach $\alpha$ (Oman)
1	Creating a pleasant climate in the classroom	5.15	5.12	0.81	0.82
2	Presenting tasks properly	5.11	5.08	0.78	0.79
3	Appropriate teacher behavior	4.98	4.96	0.77	0.78
4	Promoting students' self-confidence	4.87	4.85	0.68	0.70
5	Making the learning tasks stimulating	4.73	4.70	0.77	0.78
6	Promoting group cohesiveness and norms	4.65	4.62	0.76	0.77
7	Enhancing the goal-orientedness of learners	4.33	4.31	0.71	0.72
8	Recognizing learners' efforts	3.88	3.85	0.75	0.76
9	Promoting students' autonomy	3.43	3.40	0.80	0.81
10	Making learners familiar with L2 values	3.22	3.20	0.67	0.68

### 4.3. Comparison of Priority and Prevalence Rankings (Country-Specific)

In this phase, Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient was calculated separately for both Iranian and Omani EFL learners to assess the relationship between the priority and prevalence rankings of motivational strategies. **Table 3** summarizes the correlation results for the priority and prevalence rankings for Iranian EFL learners.

**Table 3.** Correlation between Priority and Prevalence Rankings for Iranian EFL Learners.

Spearman's Rho	Importance	Frequency
Prevalence		
Priority		0.39**
<i>p</i>		<0.01

Note: \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in **Table 3**, the correlation results show a weak but significant positive correlation ( $\rho = 0.39$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between the perceived importance and frequency of the motivational strategies. This indicates that the strategies considered most important by the Iranian EFL learners are

also those observed most frequently in the classroom, although some strategies were prioritized over their actual use.

**Table 4** summarizes the correlation results for the priority and prevalence rankings for Omani EFL learners.

**Table 4.** Correlation between Priority and Prevalence Rankings for Omani EFL Learners.

Spearman's Rho	Importance	Frequency
Prevalence		
Priority		0.35**
<i>p</i>		<0.01

Note: \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

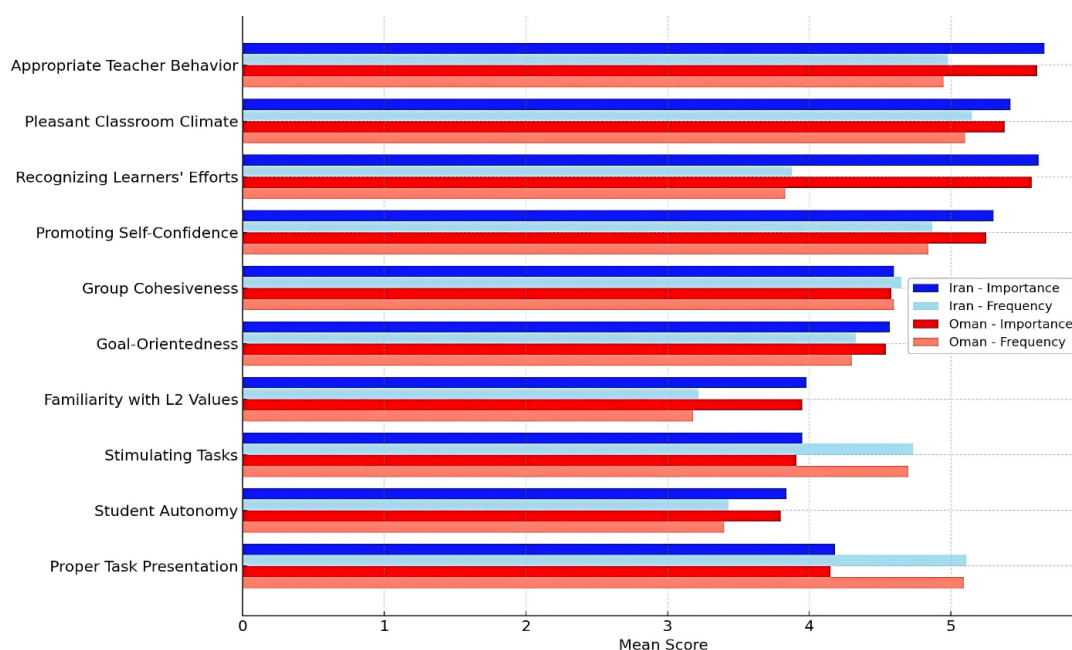
According to **Table 4**, the correlation results indicate a weak but statistically significant positive correlation ( $\rho = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between the perceived importance of the motivational strategies and their frequency of use. This suggests that the strategies viewed as most important by Omani EFL learners are also the ones most frequently observed in the classroom. However, it's worth noting that some strategies were given higher priority in terms of importance than their actual usage in practice. The findings indicate

that Omani EFL learners show almost identical perceptions regarding the importance and frequency of motivational strategies as their Iranian counterparts. This suggests that cultural and regional factors may not significantly alter the students' overall attitudes toward motivational strategies in the classroom.

As indicated by **Tables 3 and 4**, both Iranian and Omani EFL learners demonstrate a weak but significant correlation between the priority and prevalence rankings of motivational strategies. The Iranian learners have a slightly higher correlation ( $\rho = 0.39$ ), while Omani learners show a correlation of 0.35. This similarity in the correlation values suggests that both groups perceive the strategies they find most important as also being those that are most frequently applied in their classrooms. The results of this study reveal that Omani and Iranian EFL learners share almost identical perceptions regarding the importance and frequency of motivational strategies in language learning. Both groups

prioritize teacher behavior, a pleasant classroom environment, and the recognition of learners' efforts as the most influential strategies. Additionally, the correlation between the priority and prevalence rankings for both groups shows a significant but weak relationship, indicating that learners perceive the strategies they deem most important as those that are most frequently applied by their teachers. Although there are slight differences in the exact values of the correlations, these differences are minimal, suggesting that the motivational needs of Iranian and Omani EFL learners are largely similar. This finding underscores the cross-cultural consistency in the motivational strategies that are considered effective in enhancing language learning experiences across different regions.

**Figure 1** compares the importance and frequency of motivational strategies for Iranian and Omani EFL learners. It visualizes how each country perceives the significance and application of various strategies in language learning.



**Figure 1.** Comparison of Motivational Strategies: Iran Vs. Oman (Importance and Frequency).

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a set of consistent trends in the motivational strategies that Iranian and Omani EFL learners value most. Both groups prioritize motivational strategies that emphasize appropriate teacher behavior, creating a pleasant classroom climate, and recognizing stu-

dents' efforts. These findings align with those of Dörnyei and Csizér<sup>[1]</sup>, who suggested that teacher behavior plays a pivotal role in motivating learners in language learning contexts. The high ranking of teacher behavior in both Iranian and Omani learners' perceptions suggests a shared cultural emphasis on teacher authority and influence in educational settings. This is consistent with the results of Ahmadi et

al.<sup>[23]</sup> and Arumi and Astuti<sup>[31]</sup>, and Isae and Barjesteh<sup>[39]</sup>, who found that teacher behavior is crucial for Iranian learners, and a similar view is also reflected in the Omani context. A qualitative study by Umami et al.<sup>[30]</sup> emphasizes the importance of diverse teaching strategies and blended learning environments in enhancing educational performance by incorporating students' interests and cultural backgrounds.

Creating a positive classroom environment emerged as the second most important strategy for both Iranian and Omani learners. This finding reinforces Dörnyei's assertion<sup>[2]</sup> that a pleasant learning environment is essential for fostering intrinsic motivation in language learners. The emphasis on classroom atmosphere is echoed in the research of Cheng and Dörnyei<sup>[3]</sup>, who highlighted its importance in Asian contexts, including Iran and Oman. This is further supported by researchers Isae and Barjesteh<sup>[32]</sup>, whose findings revealed that high-impact educational practices involving classroom self-management, student engagement, and student success create better classroom outcomes.

However, while the pleasant environment was also ranked highly in Iranian studies (e.g., Isae and Barjesteh<sup>[25]</sup>), Omani learners seem to view it with similar importance. The shared preference for a positive classroom atmosphere suggests that both sets of learners perceive the environment as a critical factor in their language learning experience—a finding supported by Zaremarzoni et al.<sup>[29]</sup>, who linked environmental factors with increased motivation and academic engagement.

The next strategy that both Iranian and Omani learners found significant was recognizing learners' efforts. This result is consistent with findings by Cheng and Dörnyei<sup>[3]</sup> for Taiwanese learners, where external recognition of effort was seen as essential for maintaining motivation. Iranian learners' preference for recognition is well documented in previous research<sup>[5,12,17]</sup>. Similarly, this study's findings align with recent research by Al-Aufi and Al-Kalbani<sup>[27]</sup> in Oman, which revealed that praise and acknowledgment from teachers are key motivators for Omani learners as well. Interestingly, while some studies (e.g., Dörnyei and Csizér<sup>[11]</sup>) report this strategy as less significant in other contexts, the strong preference for recognition across both Iranian and Omani learners suggests a cultural pattern that values external affirmation and validation, particularly in achievement-oriented societies.

Furthermore, both groups indicated a strong interest in strategies that enhance self-confidence, with Iranian learners showing a particular inclination for teacher feedback that boosts their belief in their own abilities. This is consistent with the work of Safdari<sup>[24]</sup> and Isae and Barjesteh<sup>[25]</sup>, who found that Iranian learners are motivated by positive reinforcement and supportive teacher behavior. For Omani learners, this aligns with the findings of Al-Mukhainiyah<sup>[28]</sup>, who emphasized that Omani learners also view self-confidence-building strategies as critical for their success in language learning. This suggests a shared understanding across these regions about the importance of teacher support in developing learner confidence.

When comparing the prevalence and frequency of these strategies, both Iranian and Omani learners reported that their teachers frequently applied strategies like creating a positive classroom environment and presenting tasks effectively. This is in line with the findings of Bagheri Nevisi and Farhani<sup>[15]</sup>, who suggested that Iranian teachers actively foster a positive environment. Likewise, Omani studies confirm that teachers in Oman emphasize an engaging classroom climate and use task-based approaches to enhance motivation. This consistency in the application of these strategies in both contexts highlights the universal appeal of a supportive, dynamic classroom atmosphere as a cornerstone of motivational practice.

It is important to note, however, that there are slight differences in the frequency rankings between the two groups. For instance, Iranian learners ranked promoting group cohesiveness higher than their Omani counterparts, a finding that may reflect cultural differences in collectivism versus individualism. As noted by Cents-Boonstra et al.<sup>[33]</sup>, collectivist cultures tend to place a higher value on group harmony and cohesion, a factor that may influence Iranian learners' preferences. Omani learners, on the other hand, showed slightly higher rankings for the importance of task-stimulation strategies, potentially reflecting the increased use of communicative language teaching methods in Oman<sup>[20]</sup>.

In terms of the correlation between the priority and prevalence rankings of these strategies, both Iranian and Omani learners showed a significant, though weak, positive correlation ( $\rho = 0.39$ ). This suggests that learners in both countries perceive the strategies they deem most important as those that are most frequently implemented by their teach-

ers. While this correlation is not particularly strong, it does indicate that teachers are generally aware of the motivational needs of their students and strive to apply the strategies that learners find most effective. This is a positive outcome, reinforcing the importance of aligning instructional practices with learners' motivational preferences, as emphasized in the work of Dörnyei<sup>[2,37]</sup>.

Overall, the findings indicate that Omani EFL learners show almost identical perceptions regarding the importance and frequency of motivational strategies as their Iranian counterparts. This suggests that cultural and regional factors may not significantly alter the students' overall attitudes toward motivational strategies in the classroom.

## 6. Conclusions

This study offers insights into learner-perceived motivational strategies that may resonate across similar EFL contexts beyond Iran and Oman. The shared emphasis on teacher behavior, classroom climate, and recognition suggests that these strategies may hold universal relevance in culturally diverse learning environments.

This study highlights the value of aligning instructional practices with learners' motivational preferences in EFL contexts. The consistent prioritization of teacher behavior, classroom climate, and recognition across Iranian and Omani learners underscores the practical importance of these strategies in enhancing learner engagement. Rather than focusing solely on cultural variation, the findings suggest that certain motivational practices may have cross-cultural relevance, especially in similarly structured educational settings.

The implications for language instruction are clear: teachers should engage in regular dialogue with learners to identify their motivational needs and adapt strategies accordingly. Simple tools such as feedback forms or classroom discussions can help instructors refine their methods to sustain learner motivation. Additionally, teacher training programs should emphasize motivational strategy development, particularly in fostering supportive classroom climates and recognizing student effort—both of which were highly valued by learners.

From a research perspective, future studies should explore these dynamics across varying proficiency levels and broader cultural contexts. Triangulating self-reports with

classroom observations or teacher interviews would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how motivational strategies are applied and received. Investigating teachers' perspectives could also yield useful insights into how well learner needs are understood and met in practice.

This study provides valuable insights into the motivational preferences of Iranian and Omani EFL learners, offering practical recommendations for teachers to enhance student motivation. By understanding and aligning with learners' motivational needs, teachers can create more effective and engaging learning environments. The study also opens avenues for future research, particularly in exploring diverse learner populations and employing mixed-methods approaches better to understand the complexities of motivation in language learning.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, H.B. and H.I.; methodology, P.V.; software, H.G.; validation, H.B., P.V. and H.I.; formal analysis, S.S.; investigation, S.S.; resources, H.I.; data curation, H.B.; writing—original draft preparation, H.I.; writing—review and editing, H.B.; visualization, P.V.; supervision, H.B.; project administration, H.I. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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## Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of Ayatollah Amoli Branch of Islamic Azad University, Amol, Iran.

## Informed Consent Statement

All participants provided informed consent before taking part in this study. They were thoroughly informed about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Participation was entirely voluntary, with participants free to withdraw at any time without any consequences. All collected data were treated with strict confidentiality and used

exclusively for the purposes specified in the research.

## Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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