tesol hungary

Conference Selections

Three TESOL Treats

Edited by
Jasmina Sazdovska
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Introduction

Three TESOL Treats is a Conference Selection of three papers presented at the TESOL-Hungary Conferences held in Siófok in 2024 and in 2022. All three papers are non-peer-reviewed and have undergone some editing by the team. During the editing process, when the need arose, AI tools were used to double-check the referencing and to improve readability.

Starting with the most recent paper from the 2024 To Infinity and Beyond Conference, Andrea Molnárné László brings us an overview of AI-assisted teaching and some AI tools along with the detailed description of five sample tasks. Her paper discusses the key fields being developed through AI-assisted teaching, including increasing an understanding of the mechanism and practical limitations of AI tools, fostering sustained engagement with evolving digital contexts, encouraging learner autonomy, and the responsible use of digital tools.

Turning to the 2022 New Perspectives Conference, Zsuzsanna Soproni offers an insight into the benefits of attending courses on Hungarian Sign Language. Inspired by her own experience with such a course, she conducted a small-scale survey of the perceptions of Hungarian Sign Language learners. The results of the survey indicate that after attending the course, participants paid more attention to body language, gestures, articulation, and eye contact. For practising sign language, learners found that video materials were indispensable.

The final paper by Bochra Kouraichi focuses on the use of motivational strategies by EFL teachers in Tunisian higher education. Her study uses a questionnaire and classroom observation to examine elements of the ARCS model: attention, relevance, confidence, and

satisfaction. The paper concludes that relevance-producing strategies like asking referential questions were found to be the most frequently used, while attention-getting strategies were the least applied.

We hope you enjoy reading the volume and look forward to seeing you again at the 2025 Bloom Conference. This and previous conference compilations are available at www.tesol-hungary.org.

The TESOL-Hungary Editorial Team

2024

AI-Assisted Learning: A New Dimension in Language Teaching

Andrea Molnárné László

Learning based on using artificial intelligence (AI) refers to an approach where, alongside the teacher and the student, AI becomes a tool in the educational process. In this model, the instructional work is enhanced by AI, facilitating not only personalised learning but also integrating competence and personality development tasks. When working with AI, interactions occur not only between the teacher and the student or between students and students but within a triad of student–teacher–AI. Communication in AI-assisted learning, therefore, involves three agents: the teacher, the student, and the AI tool(s), and it can be both verbal and written (Molnárné László, 2023a).

Using AI allows the teacher to step back, giving space for student development. Thus, learners have significant freedom to choose not only what to learn but also how to approach it. The teacher's role is mainly that of a facilitator and mentor as AI-assisted learning is capable of generating new knowledge for the student and reinforcing their existing knowledge. The learning environment is distinctly digital. Students can engage individually, but group tasks are also possible, where students collaborate to complete a project with AI acting as a supportive partner. Individual learning allows for differentiation and personalised learning, while group work focuses more on project tasks, with AI offering support.

Technological innovation in education brings with it a profound responsibility for educators. Past knowledge cannot remain static, nor can competitive, future-ready learners be prepared without reinterpreting, redefining, and reframing the role of the teacher. The rise of

AI in education, therefore, does not diminish the need for teachers but repositions the need. Teachers are no longer mere transmitters of information but must become designers of learning experiences**,** mentors**,** and critical mediators between students and digital systems. They play a crucial role in cultivating ethical awareness, digital literacy, and the ability to question and contextualise AI-generated content. Furthermore, teachers are essential in scaffolding students' critical thinking**,** supporting their emotional and social development, and ensuring that technology is used in pedagogically sound, inclusive, and meaningful ways. Without this human element, even the most advanced AI tools risk becoming irrelevant or even harmful in educational settings. The success of AI integration, therefore, depends not on the technology itself but on how well teachers are prepared, supported, and empowered to harness its potential with professional confidence and pedagogical insight.

The integration of AI into education marks a significant shift in how teaching and learning are conceptualised and delivered. This transformation is underpinned by both scientific evidence and international policy frameworks. The *Beijing Consensus on Artificial Intelligence and Education* (UNESCO, 2019), adopted at the International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Education, laid out comprehensive guidelines for the responsible and inclusive use of AI in schools, emphasising its potential to personalise learning, improve educational outcomes, and reduce inequalities. This vision is reinforced by findings from Lee and Chen (2021), who demonstrated that AI can enhance student motivation and performance through adaptive instruction, real-time feedback, and engaging classroom environments. The *UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence* (UNESCO, 2021) further emphasises the need for human-centred, transparent, and equitable AI integration, calling for strong safeguards to ensure that technological innovation aligns with fundamental rights and educational values. At the same time, scholars such as Nagy (2023) caution against overreliance on AI, warning that it may reduce student agency and encourage passive

learning habits. Particularly in secondary education, it is crucial to balance digital tools with active, hands-on learning that promotes creativity, collaboration, and social-emotional development.

Teaching Context

The integration of AI in schools must go beyond simplifying tasks such as lesson planning or administering grades. The emphasis should shift towards learning activities that encourage critical thinking, creativity, and deeper student engagement. Such tasks can help learners grasp both the potential and the limitations of AI technologies, keep them informed about ongoing technological developments, and improve their ability to interact effectively and responsibly with AI systems. Developing critical thinking is vital in this process; educators must explicitly address the risks of AI use and guide students in learning how to verify AI-generated content.

In my own practice, I implemented AI-assisted language instruction in my English classes, working with 90 students aged 9 to 17, across Years 3 to 11. Most students had four English lessons per week, apart from Years 3 and 4, who had two. AI was integrated regularly into both classroom instruction and structured homework assignments, transforming traditional pedagogical practices and supporting linguistic development alongside critical engagement with technology. This approach complemented conventional methods while encouraging deeper cognitive involvement. AI-supported learning activities were conducted in both school and home settings. Students accessed AI tools using either personal or school-provided laptops connected to the internet via home networks or institutional infrastructure, ensuring a consistent learning experience across environments.

Over time, the students became familiar with a variety of AI tools, which they gradually incorporated into their classroom activities. Importantly, they were not using these

tools passively. I guided them through understanding how the technologies worked, focusing on how to formulate effective prompts to achieve accurate and useful results. Together, we explored ways to communicate purposefully with AI.

In addition to practical usage, we addressed the broader implications of working with AI, including limitations, potential biases, and ethical considerations. In many cases, we explored the same task across different AI platforms, comparing output and discussing the accuracy of responses, their creativity, and their relevance to language learning. These comparative exercises sparked valuable conversations about how different systems interpret prompts and generate content, giving students deeper insight into the architecture and functionalities of the tools they were using. For instance, we investigated how platforms such as ChatGPT, Grok, Microsoft Copilot, DeepSeek, and Perplexity responded to identical prompts. Students were working with the free versions of the AI tools throughout the project. Some platforms provided more detailed or imaginative output, while others excelled in concise, fact-based responses or integration with real-time web search. Through this process, students began to recognise the individual strengths and design purposes of each system and to appreciate the importance of selecting the most suitable tool for specific educational or communicative goals.

By embedding this level of critical reflection into the learning process, students not only improved their language skills but also developed a more nuanced understanding of how AI functions. They stopped perceiving AI as an unquestionable authority and began to view it as a collaborative partner—one whose capabilities must be understood and whose limitations must be recognised.

AI can be meaningfully integrated into any curriculum-based topic, whether it involves grammar practice, vocabulary development, or oral communication tasks. Its

flexibility enables teachers to adapt it to a wide range of pedagogical aims, including differentiation, creativity, and project-based learning. AI supports both teacher-led and student-led approaches, making it appropriate for individual work, pair tasks, or group projects.

One particularly important topic that emerged through our classroom use of AI was the phenomenon of hallucination—when AI systems generate responses that sound plausible but are in fact incorrect or entirely imaginary. We spent considerable time discussing why hallucinations occur, and students were introduced to the idea that large language models generate output based on statistical patterns in training data, rather than genuine understanding or factual reasoning. The students reviewed real examples in which AI confidently produced false claims, including fabricated references, misattributed quotations, and distorted historical facts. We analysed how different platforms managed uncertainty: Some would invent plausible-sounding details when lacking information, whereas others were more transparent, expressing doubt or redirecting the query. These discussions helped students understand the technical limitations of current AI models and highlighted the dangers of relying on such tools without critical oversight, particularly in academic settings.

To help students develop strategies for dealing with hallucination, we practised verification techniques. These included cross-checking information with trusted external sources, identifying red flags in AI-generated responses, and modifying prompts to observe how changes affected output accuracy. This stage of the process noticeably enhanced the students' digital literacy and critical reading skills. They came to understand that AI is not a neutral or infallible source, but a tool whose output requires human judgement, contextual interpretation, and ethical scrutiny.

Importantly, students also learned that AI requires a fundamentally different kind of trust. While traditional technologies—like calculators or mechanical systems—tend to inspire automatic trust because of their predictable output, AI demands a more sceptical and analytical approach. Because generative AI can present convincingly false information, students must learn to approach it with critical awareness, verifying and evaluating every response. In our classroom practice, we explored how to identify linguistic cues that suggest uncertainty or fabrication and how prompt phrasing can influence the quality and credibility of AI responses. Through this process, we redefined the concept of trust in the context of human–AI interaction. Rather than encouraging blind acceptance or outright rejection of AI-generated content, students were taught to engage with it reflectively and responsibly. Hallucinations were treated not as failures but as educational opportunities—moments that could support the development of sharper critical faculties. By learning when and why hallucinations occur, the students became more thoughtful and responsible digital citizens, capable of navigating a world in which technology plays an increasingly central role, but where intelligent use requires awareness, intentionality, and informed decision-making.

This dual focus on language acquisition and digital literacy forms the foundation of the pedagogical approach outlined above. Through the integration of AI, students do not only engage more actively with language learning but also develop the analytical mindset and technological fluency needed to thrive in a world shaped by rapid digital transformation.

Sample Tasks

In the following section, I will present a range of carefully designed task types that illustrate how AI can be integrated into language instruction. Each example highlights a specific aspect of language learning, such as grammar, speaking, writing, or vocabulary development, and demonstrates how AI tools can be used not just to automate but to deepen

and enrich the learning process. These tasks are drawn from real classroom experience and are intended to show how AI can support meaningful, curriculum-aligned learning while encouraging creativity, critical thinking, and learner autonomy.

Prompt Writing From Memory

In this task, students are presented with a text, image, or diagram previously generated by ChatGPT in response to an unknown prompt. The selected AI-generated content is shown to the whole class either via a projector or individually on students' screens. They are given a few minutes to carefully examine and memorise the material, paying attention to not only the factual content but also to the structure, language, tone, and level of detail. No contextual clues or source prompt is provided at this stage. After the initial observation phase, students are asked to reverse-engineer the prompt: Based on what they see, they are to infer what kind of input likely led the AI to generate that specific output. They then formulate their own version of the prompt, trying to match both the topic and the communicative style (e.g., informative, persuasive, descriptive) as closely as possible. Once they have written down their version of the prompt, they test it directly by entering it into ChatGPT (or another large language model). The goal is to compare the output they receive with the original AI-generated version shown earlier.

Organising a Trip

Students should be divided into small groups, with each group receiving a virtual budget (e.g., €1,500) and a clearly defined target audience—such as families with young children, elderly individuals with limited mobility, or business travellers with restricted time availability. The groups are tasked with designing an optimal multi-day trip that meets the specific needs, interests, and constraints of their assigned audience. They are expected to use a range of AI-based tools (such as ChatGPT, AI-powered travel planners, translation tools,

and interactive mapping applications) to search for suitable destinations, plan itineraries, estimate costs, and ensure logistical feasibility. The activity explicitly trains students in applying AI tools for complex, real-world planning tasks, where decisions are made after considering multiple interrelated variables. Each group is required to justify their choices, that is, why certain activities were included or excluded; how accessibility, cost, or timing influenced the design; and in what ways the final itinerary reflects the assumed values and preferences of the target group. Students are encouraged to conduct comparative prompt testing to refine their planning strategies, for instance, by asking ChatGPT for a "budget-friendly 3-day itinerary in Barcelona for a family with a toddler" and then refining the prompt to adjust for mobility needs or dietary restrictions.

Once the planning phase is complete, groups present their trip proposals to the class, and the outcomes are evaluated according to clearly defined criteria. These may include how effectively the itinerary fits the needs of the target audience, how diverse and culturally rich the selected activities are, how well the group managed their budget, and how thoughtfully they responded to real-world constraints (e.g., travel time, language barriers, local climate). This evaluation can be conducted either informally through peer review and teacher feedback, or formally with the help of a scoring sheet that includes innovation, practicality, inclusiveness, and digital tool integration.

As an alternative output format, students may choose to visualise their proposed itinerary through digital means. For example, they can use Canva to create an infographic-style poster summarising the key elements of the trip, such as destination highlights, daily activities, transportation plans, and budget breakdowns. Alternatively, they may design a digital flipbook or interactive presentation (e.g., using Genially or Book Creator) that narrates the journey day-by-day, integrating text, visuals, and even AI-generated images or voice narration. These examples of creative output allow students to synthesise factual and

logistical content into coherent, audience-friendly communication products, thus engaging multimodal literacy skills alongside practical planning competencies.

Beyond logistical problem-solving, this task promotes transversal skills such as teamwork, project management, communication, and empathy. By attempting to meet someone else's—rather than their own—needs, students practice perspective-taking and are challenged to go beyond their default assumptions about what makes a trip enjoyable or successful. Moreover, the iterative use of AI throughout the process reinforces critical reflection: Students experience firsthand the difference between generic output and precise, context-sensitive information that results from thoughtful, well-formulated prompts. Through this activity, learners move from using AI as passive consumers to employing AI tools as intelligent assistants in authentic, socially relevant scenarios, thereby developing both their digital literacy and their capacity for autonomous, purpose-driven learning.

Exploring Family Resemblance Through AI-Generated Imagery

As part of a thematic unit on "Family" (Molnárné László, 2023b) in the language or social studies curriculum, students are invited to engage with generative AI tools to explore the concept of physical resemblance and family identity. In this task, each student uses the Leonardo.ai platform to generate an AI-created portrait that resembles one of their parents (or another close family member), based on descriptive input provided by the student. Students begin by writing a detailed prompt in English (or the target language of instruction), describing the physical appearance, age, clothing style, and facial expression of their chosen family member. For example: "A middle-aged woman with short brown hair, wearing glasses and a blue sweater, smiling gently, seated in a kitchen with warm light." This process encourages both descriptive precision and linguistic creativity while also requiring students to reflect on personal observation and visual memory.

Once the prompt is complete, students input it into Leonardo.ai and generate an image. They are allowed to iterate the prompt a few times to improve the likeness, learning how subtle changes in wording affect the AI tool's visual output. Students are encouraged to compare the generated image with an actual photograph (privately, not submitted) and evaluate how closely the AI captured key features. The activity fosters digital literacy by introducing students to prompt-based image generation and critical thinking as they assess the limitations and interpretative nature of AI-rendered images.

Collaborative AI-Assisted Cookbook Project

As part of their AI-integrated language learning activities, students complete a creative task that develops their descriptive writing, speaking skills, and critical engagement with AI-generated content. The project begins with a homework assignment in which each student uses an image generation tool—such as DALL·E, Bing Image Creator, or another AI-based visual platform—to create a picture of their favourite dish. Alternatively, students may take a photo of the meal at home if it is something they have access to in real life. The focus should be on generating or selecting a clear, detailed image that could inspire others to describe and reconstruct the dish.

At the start of the following lesson, students upload their food images to a shared platform such as Padlet, Google Slides, or a class folder. The images are displayed without any identifying names so that others do not know who created which one. Each student then chooses one image created by a peer (i.e., any image other than their own) and writes a recipe based solely on what they see. This includes a guess at the ingredients, the preparation steps, and where the dish might originate from. If the task is completed in pairs, students first discuss their interpretations in the target language before jointly composing the written

description. This promotes spontaneous speaking, idea-sharing, and negotiation of meaning in an authentic context.

After completing their own version of the recipe, students input the same image (or describe it in detail) into a large language model such as ChatGPT, asking it to generate a recipe for the same dish. The AI's output is then compared with students' own texts. Learners reflect on how similar or different the two descriptions are in terms of vocabulary, sentence structure, creativity, and accuracy. They also consider how well the AI understood the visual cues, what it guessed correctly, and where it failed to meet expectations. Once both versions have been analysed, the teacher reveals who the original creator of the image was. The student presents the actual name of the dish, the real ingredients, and how it is typically prepared. This can lead to lively discussions about what was guessed correctly, which elements were misleading, and how the assumptions made by both students and the AI tool differed from reality. The entire activity takes place in the target language, both in student-to-student interaction and in communication with the AI tool. This ensures that language learning remains central while digital literacy and 21st-century skills are meaningfully integrated into the process.

Hallucination Hunting

In this classroom activity, students explore the limits of AI-generated content by engaging in a critical thinking task focused on hallucination detection. The task begins with a prompt designed to encourage creativity and potentially trigger factual inaccuracies: "Describe a little-known but fascinating natural phenomenon that only occurs in one specific location on Earth and explain the science behind it." Students enter the prompt into Perplexity AI and generate a complete response of approximately 150–200 words.

After reading through the AI's answer, students are asked to carefully examine the content and identify every factual claim it makes. These may include specific place names, scientific processes, statistics, or timelines. Students then copy the full response and paste it into ChatGPT, using a follow-up prompt such as "please fact-check this passage. Point out anything that is inaccurate, unverifiable, or potentially fabricated." ChatGPT's analysis helps students understand which parts of the original text are reliable, which may be exaggerated, and which are likely to be hallucinations. In the next phase, students are invited to return to Perplexity and attempt to refine their prompt in order to produce a more accurate version. They may rephrase the original request, introduce a known real-world example, or ask for cited sources. Students are encouraged to repeat this process up to three times, each time submitting the new response to ChatGPT for checking and comparing the results. As they progress, they observe how changing the input affects the reliability, style, and factual accuracy of the output. This iterative approach allows them to see whether clarity and specificity in prompting lead to more trustworthy results.

Key Fields Being Developed

The Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (European Commission, 2018) offered a comprehensive framework that identifies key competence areas essential for personal development, active citizenship, social inclusion, and employability. This framework emphasises the development of four interrelated dimensions: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and autonomy, which form the foundation for competence-based education and provide guidance for designing effective learning environments across all educational levels. Considering these four dimensions, the activities described in this article are well-suited for fostering development in the following areas:

1. In terms of knowledge, the instructional design was intended to develop a conceptual understanding of AI, particularly its underlying mechanisms and practical limitations. Students were not merely introduced to AI as a tool, but they engaged in activities that made them critically reflect on how these systems function. For instance, they compared the output yielded by the same prompt across multiple platforms (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Perplexity, and DeepSeek) and documented differences in structure, content depth, and factual consistency. These activities revealed to them that AI systems do not *know* in a human sense but rely on probabilistic pattern generation based on training data.

2. Attitude development was embedded in the workflow of classroom and homework tasks through the cultivation of dispositions that support sustained cognitive engagement in uncertain and evolving digital contexts. Students were required to formulate their own prompts, critically evaluate the responses they received, and revise their queries iteratively when results were unclear or inaccurate. This recursive process trained them in persistence and precision as they learned that effective use of AI depends on carefully composed input and patience with trial and error. For example, one group of students working on a vocabulary expansion task became increasingly skilled at reformulating their prompts to avoid overly simplistic or repetitive definitions. Rather than becoming frustrated with ambiguous responses, they exhibited curiosity about why the AI tool had misunderstood them and adjusted their language accordingly. Moreover, students were systematically encouraged to work in pairs or small groups to solve problems or evaluate AI output, which promoted the development of interpersonal communication, tolerance of ambiguity, and openness to diverse viewpoints. In these collaborative settings, interaction with both peers and AI provided an opportunity for cultivating trust, resilience, and

reflection. The need to explain, defend, or critique AI output strengthened their ability to identify key ideas, question assumptions, and articulate uncertainty—a set of skills vital for navigating contemporary knowledge environments.

3. The development of cognitive and digital skills was supported through scaffolded tasks that required learners to independently gather, evaluate, and synthesise information using AI tools. Instead of relying on AI for final answers, students were encouraged to use it as a springboard for further exploration. In one task, they had to write a comparative cultural description of two English-speaking countries using AI to draft an outline and subsequently verify each section using academic or governmental websites. This process required them to actively control information flow, select relevant sources, and develop original formulations. Furthermore, students engaged in metacognitive activities in which they analysed their own information search strategies—what keywords they had used, how they had modified questions, and what kinds of results they had received. Over time, students became increasingly aware of how prompt design influences AI output and learned to recognise the linguistic signals of uncertainty or vagueness in responses. Skills such as abstract thinking, keyword-driven summarisation, and the construction of structured arguments were explicitly taught and practised in these contexts. Additionally, by revisiting the same problem through multiple AI interfaces and approaches, students developed the capacity to compare, contrast, and synthesise divergent answers, and in so doing, they strengthened their analytical thinking, pattern recognition, and inferencing abilities. These are not general digital competences but specific, transferable skills aligned with high-level cognitive processes.

4. Finally, autonomy was not treated as a background goal but as an explicit instructional target. From the outset, students were told that part of their responsibility

was to judge the usefulness, reliability, and relevance of AI-generated content. They were given tasks with open-ended outcomes, such as preparing a mini-presentation on an unfamiliar topic using AI as their primary assistant, where the success of the work depended not on the tool but on their ability to shape and direct it. They had to decide which prompts to use, how to filter the answers, and how to integrate information into their own linguistic output. In doing so, they moved away from dependence on teacher guidance and became more self-reliant in their decision-making. The iterative nature of many AI interactions—requiring refinement, clarification, and elaboration—also habituated them to working through initial failure rather than abandoning the task.

This integrated, competence-oriented design ensured that AI was not a novelty or shortcut but an element of a structured learning process, promoting depth, reflection, and intellectual independence across knowledge domains.

Summary

In summary, AI-assisted learning has the potential to transform language education, offering personalised, interactive, and efficient learning environments. This approach enhances language proficiency and supports the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and technological literacy—skills essential for the 21st-century job market. My work underscores that AI-assisted learning is not just an approach but a shift that empowers students to take active roles in their learning. This foundation prepares them for future success.

By the end of an AI-assisted learning activity, students will have gained practical insight into the strengths and limitations of AI tools, developed a more critical eye for misinformation, and improved their ability to evaluate information thoughtfully—

competencies that are increasingly vital in today's AI-influenced world. Although some parents initially expressed hesitation, possibly due to unfamiliarity or concerns about technology, two years of classroom experience has shown that these fears were unfounded. In fact, many of the parents who were initially cautious have since become supportive, even enthusiastic, recognising the value of their children engaging with current, future-facing learning methods. They now appreciate that their children are not only acquiring language and literacy skills but are also becoming digitally literate, adaptable learners in tune with the demands of the modern world.

Effective AI integration is not a futuristic ambition but a present-day necessity that requires thoughtful implementation and professional readiness. As both educators and students become more confident in navigating AI tools, the classroom evolves into a dynamic, responsive space that mirrors the real-world digital environments learners will encounter beyond school. Ultimately, AI in education is not about replacing the human element but about enhancing it by enabling teachers to focus on what they do best: inspiring, guiding, and empowering the next generation.

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2022

Exploring the Perceptions of Hungarian Sign Language Learners

Zsuzsanna Soproni

The aim of this paper is to summarise the empirical research findings of a small-scale exploratory study on adult learners' experience of learning to use Hungarian Sign Language (HSL) in courses they attended in their free time. First, relevant background information will be presented. After clarifying the research methodology and describing the sample, both quantitative and qualitative findings will be presented and discussed with an emphasis on the rich description of the learning experience of 31 HSL learners. Implications of the study include that learning to use a sign language can have a role in educating and sensitising future generations in terms of both communication and intercultural skills because HSL courses provide an enjoyable opportunity to gain insight into the ways the unique language and culture of a minority function. Learning to use a sign language could also help instil a feeling of solidarity with people living with disabilities.

The motivation for the project stemmed from the fact that the author had attended some HSL courses herself, and the learning experience had a profound impact on her. Those interested in learning to use HSL may join HSL courses organised by Siketek és Nagyothallók Országos Szövetsége (SINOSZ), the Hungarian Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, whose mission is "to secure social acceptance of people who are Deaf or hard of hearing and to advocate for the establishment of education, employment and transportation conditions that promote independent living" (Siketek és Nagyothallók Országos Szövetsége, n.d.-a). SINOSZ offers HSL courses at all levels, from beginner to

HSL interpreting. Teachers are sign language users themselves with different levels of hearing loss and education. The methodology applied greatly depends on the individual teacher, but in the author's experience, lessons are playful and interactive with a lot of pair and groupwork despite being quiet and requiring full concentration.

Literature Review

This review first describes how deafness and hearing impairment are defined and classified and then discusses their relevance in the Hungarian context. In order to have some understanding of the role of HSL, the number of hearing-impaired people in Hungary and the contexts in which HSL is used will be explored. After familiarising the reader with sign languages and their attributes, the recognition of and policies affecting HSL are also discussed, and a critical review of studies on sign language learning comprising hearing participants is also included.

Deafness and Hearing Impairment in Hungary

Although there are many different classifications of deafness and hearing impairment and there is no "absolute yardstick" (Clark, 1981, p. 493), someone who has hearing thresholds of 20 dB or better in both ears is considered to have full hearing. However, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), "over 5% of the world's population – or 430 million people – require rehabilitation to address their disabling hearing loss (including 34 million children)" (World Health Organization, 2025). In Hungary, there are contradicting sources concerning the number of citizens who are affected. Kósa and Lovászy (1997) estimated that 1.6% of the population were Deaf or had some level of hearing loss around the turn of the century. According to census data from 2011, 8,571 people described themselves as Deaf, and 63,014 people had hearing impairment (Horváth et al., 2018–2019, p. 4). In 2022, 24,224 people reported having hearing impairment while only 6,392 people reported

being Deaf (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2022). The census figures in both years are under 1% of the total population, which is well below the 5% estimate of the WHO. The reason for this, according to Horváth et al., probably is that the census forms were not entirely clear for respondents and that respondents may not have wanted to stigmatise themselves with the labels which are often seen as discriminatory (Horváth et al., 2018–2019, p. 4). Furthermore, in 2022, the number of people who reported some disability but did not specify their disability was higher than in previous years, and the number of people who did not wish to respond was also exceptionally high at 2.8 million (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2022). Therefore, census data may be misleading.

Hearing loss may range from mild to severe loss. In the Hungarian context, the expression hearing-impaired denotes both those with hearing impairment and those who are Deaf (Horváth et al., 2018–2019). In Hungary, people who have a hearing threshold value between 30 and 90 dB are considered hearing-impaired, while those with a hearing threshold of 90 dB are considered Deaf (Csizér et al., 2008, p. 342). Many children who are hearing-impaired and grow up with hearing parents struggle to learn the spoken language. They may or may not learn to sign, depending on the extent of their disability, the beliefs of their parents, or their time of joining a Deaf or hard of hearing community (in kindergarten, school, or sports clubs) where they may meet HSL users. Children in families where a sign language is used by the parents are likely to acquire the sign language as their first language. Even in these families, Hungarian parents usually teach the articulation and lip-reading of the spoken language to their children, both of which are believed to help communication with society at large (Szabó, 2013). As far as education is concerned, parents in Hungary usually face the dilemma whether to send their child to a special segregated school for the Deaf or to an integrated mainstream school. In a special Hungarian school for the Deaf, it is the oral approach that is used: Deaf children will be taught to speak as well as they can even though

they cannot fully rely on acoustic output. One form of additional help for the Deaf is a 2-year preparation period, during which learners focus on learning to read, write, and speak. It is only after this 2-year preparatory period that children will start following the standard curriculum. The children in special schools for the Deaf are likely to learn from and practise sign language with each other. In a study on sign language, Kontráné Hegybíró et al. (2008) found that in Hungary, "the vast majority (71.2%) of respondents who knew sign language learned to sign from their peers in childhood, 18 percent from a sign language teacher, and only every tenth respondent (10.8%) said they learned to sign from their parents" (p. 11). At school, the children who are living in families where they use a sign language will informally teach their hard of hearing or Deaf peers to do so, too. The majority (77.7%) of the Deaf use sign language with their friends, and only 4.6% uses sign language with their teachers (Kontráné Hegybíró et al., 2008, p. 12). Based on the responses of the Deaf respondents in the study, Kontráné Hegybíró et al. concluded that there would be a need for more teachers to learn to use HSL because more information could be transmitted this way (p. 14).

In contrast, a Deaf or severely hard of hearing child can also attend mainstream schools, where they are to progress with the other children but without practising sign language (Horváth et al., 2018–2019, pp. 29–32). By the time they grow up, many of the hearing-impaired or Deaf children develop a very high competence in lip-reading and learn to communicate in writing so as to better integrate into society (Horváth et al., 2018–2019, pp. 16–17). In a questionnaire study, Kontráné Hegybíró et al. (2008) found that in their subsample of Deaf respondents (n = 131), 91% learnt to sign, but 8% stated they were not competent sign language users (p.11).

What follows from the recognition of HSL by the Hungarian state (2009. évi CXXV. Törvény a magyar jelnyelvről és a magyar jelnyelv használatáról) and the recognition of sign languages in general by the Council of Europe (2020a) as well as the need to assist the

integration of sign language users in society is that there ideally should be sign language users who can act as bridges between first language or proficient sign language users and the rest of society. Equality of opportunity or accessibility for sign language users and many Deaf citizens would mean breaking down communication barriers with the help of competent sign language users and technological solutions. The fact that 90% of Deaf people are born to parents who can hear (National Association of the Deaf, n.d.) or into families where hearing loss has never occurred before (Lancz, 2004; Szabó, 2013) also necessitates the teaching of sign language(s) to both parents and teachers. However, Kontráné Hegybíró et al. (2008) found that not many parents of Deaf children learn how to sign (p. 12). In short, the greater someone's hearing loss is, the more likely it is that they will rely on sign language (Horváth et al., 2018–2019, p. 18). The importance of sign language, however, does not mean that the Deaf do not wish to improve their competence in Hungarian, as Kontráné Hegybíró et al. pointed out (p. 14), so many of them are bilinguals, competent in both Hungarian and HSL. However, the hearing are reluctant to learn to use sign language despite its importance in educational contexts or in the service industry.

For lack of space, the above review cannot cover in depth the issues of cochlear implants and hearing aids. Cochlear implants are small electronic devices with an external part behind the ear and an internal part that is surgically placed under the skin of a Deaf person. They can help to provide a sense of sound to a Deaf or hard-of-hearing person from a young age. It is worth mentioning that according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (2024), approximately 736,900 cochlear devices were implanted worldwide as of December 2019. A hearing aid helps make sounds louder and only has external parts: a microphone, an amplifier, and a speaker.

Hungarian Sign Language

Sign languages are highly developed visual languages. There is no single sign language across the planet; even the fingerspelling alphabets of various communities differ (Start ASL, n.d.) despite the existing similarities. There is an International Sign Language, nevertheless, and if they spend enough time together, many sign language users from different countries could learn to understand each other to some extent.

The Hungarian Sign Language is one of approximately 300 sign languages in the world (Kiprop, 2019). Even though Hungary is a small country, there are seven dialects within HSL, which correspond to the schools of the Deaf in seven larger cities (i.e., Budapest, Debrecen, Eger, Kaposvár, Sopron, Szeged, and Vác). The first school for the Deaf was established in Vác in 1802 by András Cházár based on his experience in Vienna (Cházár András EGYMI, n.d.). These specialised schools have greatly contributed to the establishment of the Deaf community in Hungary (Horváth et al., 2018–2019, p. 9).

HSL is a language in its own right: It has an extensive vocabulary, idioms, and complex grammar. According to SINOSZ, “sign language is different from other minority languages, in that it is a visual language- facial expressions, body language and visual placements are all important components of sign language” (Siketek és Nagyothallók Országos Szövetsége, n.d.-b). Signs are formulated in a number of ways. The most important element is the *handshape*, but its location, orientation, movement, and the expressions of the eyes and the face all contribute to meaning. There are signs that indicate letters of the alphabet, whereas others indicate concrete objects, abstract notions, or even longer expressions or idioms. In HSL, there are two sets of signs for the alphabet (the dactyl and the phonomimic alphabets), which goes against standardisation to some extent but seems to work well. The signs for the letters of the alphabet are rarely used, only to disambiguate proper

nouns, for example. In fluent sign language, it is not letters that are signed but complete words and concepts. The signing space is the *window* in front of the user, a roughly square shaped three-dimensional area from the waist to the top of the head and from one elbow to the other, which is used for positioning signs.

Recognition and Policies

As of 2019, 41 countries recognised sign language as an official language; 26 of these are in Europe, and Hungary is one of them (Kiprop, 2019). The European Parliament (EP) issued two resolutions, in 1988 and 1998, that aimed to ask member states to recognise sign languages (Wheatley & Pabsch, 2012). The first Deaf Member of the EP happened to be a Hungarian, Ádám Kósa, who was a member of the EP from 2009 to 2024 (Magyarország Kormánya, n.d.).

From the point of view of language policy, there are three important milestones in the recent history of HSL. The most locally relevant is the publication of the 2009 act (2009. évi CXXV. Törvény a magyar jelnyelvről és a magyar jelnyelv használatáról) that acknowledges HSL as an independent and natural language of a minority in Hungary. Act CXXV of 2009 guarantees that the hearing-impaired have the right to use sign language interpretation and special communication systems financed by the state. This, for example, allows primary or secondary school pupils to have sign language interpretation for up to 400 hours every school year (2009. évi CXXV. Törvény a magyar jelnyelvről és a magyar jelnyelv használatáról). Another important publication in the field is the Common European Framework (CEFR) Companion Volume, which was first published in 2018 by the Council of Europe. The volume revisits many of the themes of the CEFR, but it also introduces innovative concepts and approaches, one of which is the inclusion of sign languages in many of its descriptors (Council of Europe, 2020a). A third, perhaps less well-known publication is the international

sign language version of the CEFR Companion Volume, which has the potential to contribute to international cooperation between sign language users in the long run (Council of Europe, 2020b).

Studies on Sign Language Learning

There is some literature on sign language instruction in the United States where American Sign Language (ASL) is the third most studied language in higher education following Spanish and French (Goldberg, 2013, p. 2). A study conducted by Reading and Padgett (2011) detailed a programme in which service learning and ASL instruction were combined. Service learning is the combination of formal school-based learning and community work to deal with a problem in society (Honnett & Poulsen, 1989). In the Reading and Padgett study, members of the Deaf community served as communication partners for college-aged hearing students. Together, they did service-learning projects along with students learning ASL. The study showed that hearing students who participated in service-learning experiences with the Deaf community gained insight into the lives of the minority group. The undergraduates did not only develop their ASL proficiency, but through their connections with the Deaf community, they also developed cultural awareness (Reading & Padgett, 2011). Another study that compared the attitudinal changes of two groups in a sample of 98 university students completing ASL courses and Deaf culture courses concluded that it is important for ASL instructors to integrate more cultural information into ASL curricula (Lee & Pott, 2018).

Methods

The terms qualitative, naturalistic, and ethnographic are often used interchangeably (Szabolcs, 2001, p. 17), and, indeed, all these adjectives may be used to describe the main research method of this study. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the way learners see

sign language learning, the qualitative research paradigm was selected. The open-ended statements in the online questionnaire provided an opportunity for sign language learners to verbalise their views concerning the learning process they had experienced during their sign language courses. One objective of the study was to present rich descriptions of the ways the learners perceived their learning to sign. Since HSL and sign language learning are examined via the "eyes of the participants" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 17), this study is also a naturalistic inquiry. Its ethnographic character is demonstrated by its goal of using "insider accounts" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 169) to examine and characterise "the lived experiences" of learners (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). The study may also be considered emic and participatory since the author herself attended a sign language course at the time and thus had an insider's perspective. The responses were also quantified but only to a limited extent.

The research this paper summarises was conducted in July and August 2022. The views on learning to sign are based on the responses collected through an online questionnaire. The research question focused on how sign language learners perceive their studies and HSL itself. The participants comprised a nonrepresentative sample of 31 learners, all studying at SINOSZ in Budapest. Their ages ranged between 15 and 60 ($M = 34$, $SD = 13.02$), and they studied at different levels and in different groups. Only two of the respondents were male. The respondents filled in an anonymous online questionnaire on a voluntary basis. They were all native speakers of Hungarian and all reported being speakers of minimum one additional language, although some spoke as many as four. Thus, the respondents can be seen as experienced language learners, though their competence levels are not known. One teenage respondent attended the HSL course because she was hard of hearing and was told that she was likely to lose her ability to hear. She studied in a mainstream secondary school and had many Deaf friends. Only one other respondent stated that she had frequent contact with the Deaf community. The respondents were enrolled students at

SINOSZ and had completed more than one course at the time of the data collection, but it is not known how many different teachers they had had. However, it is a policy of SINOSZ to expose learners to different sign language teachers.

The questionnaire was devised on the basis of the author's experience and was validated with two potential respondents and an HSL expert from SINOSZ. The final questionnaire was administered in Hungarian and had three sections. In the first section, biographical data were collected. The second section, where respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with 13 Likert-type statements, allowed limited quantitative analysis. These items allowed the examination of means and correlation. In the third section, which was analysed qualitatively, respondents were given the opportunity to freely describe their experiences with the help of 10 sentence beginnings. The textual data collected will be presented in a raw format as well as in a more systematic way with the help of the constant comparative method (Creswell, 1998; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Szokolszky, 2004). In order to avoid researcher bias, a second coder was involved in the analysis of the data. As it can be seen in the Appendix, the questionnaire aimed at eliciting views on sign language and sign language learning and not feedback on specific courses or teachers.

Results and Analysis

In this section, the results of the study will be presented starting with the few quantitative findings and continuing with the qualitative ones. Although the sample size was relatively small ($N = 31$), it is worth looking at the responses of the second section in a quantitative manner. The quantitative findings will be followed by an overview of the textual data collected in the third section and a thematic analysis. An attempt was also made to

analyse some of the data with the help of an artificial intelligence (AI) qualitative analysis tool.

Many of the respondents in the study expressed very positive attitudes towards the experience of sign language learning. One called it “fun”, another “marvellous”. Adjectives such as “special”, “extraordinary”, “super”, and “exciting” were often used. Some even found the class activities funny. For two of the respondents, the chance to learn to sign was a “dream” come true. For some, it was an adventure, a challenge, or a transformational experience. One respondent highlighted that the course sensitised her to seeing disabilities differently. Even though the participants saw the learning experience as fascinating, it also proved challenging: Some wrote the classes “required 100% of their attention”, which adequately summarises the intensity of the learning experience.

The respondents rated their success in foreign language learning and their success in sign language learning as quite good or good on average. However, there is next to no correlation between these two self-reported indices of sign language and foreign language learning. The Pearson correlation (measuring the relationship between two variables) indicates that there is a very small nonsignificant negative relationship between success in language learning and success in sign language learning, $r(28) = -.037$, $p = .843$. This means that no clear pattern can be detected in the data. Although the correlation is nonsignificant, the lack of correlation probably indicates that learning to sign is seen as something different from foreign language learning or that it requires different skills from those necessary for spoken languages. A learner who is successful at learning an additional language may not necessarily be equally successful in learning to sign. In the author’s experience, when it comes to learning to sign, the visual, spatial, and tactile nature of sign language makes it necessary for the learner to activate skills that are different from first or second spoken language learning. This finding is not entirely in line with the ratings given to the statements

that sign language is completely like a foreign language and sign language learning is entirely like foreign language learning, which were given average ratings of about 2.83 (see all detailed ratings in Table 1), the ratings being somewhere in the middle of the range. The mean rating (*M*) is the figure that would characterise respondents as a group. Standard deviation (*SD*) in Table 1 indicates how spread out the responses were in the sample.

Table 1

Ratings Given to Statements in Section 2

Statements	*M*	*SD*
Success in foreign language learning (LL)	2.90	1.18
Success in sign LL	3.63	0.85
Sign L is completely like a foreign L	2.80	1.21
Sign LL is completely like foreign LL	2.87	1.35
Easier to learn how to sign than a foreign L	3.80	1.06
I pay more attention to my gestures	3.73	1.36
I pay more attention to my articulation	3.60	1.42
I have been gesticulating more	3.40	1.45
I pay more attention to other people's body language	3.80	1.37
I pay more attention to my own body language	3.63	1.24
I am better at noticing other people’s emotions	3.10	1.53
I am better at expressing my own emotions	2.93	1.57
I have maintained better eye contact with the people I talk to	3.60	1.45

The statement that it is easier to learn how to sign than to learn a foreign language received a high average rating (M = 3.80), and so did the statements about changes in the communication styles of the respondents, which they attribute to attending a HSL course (M = 3.10–3.80). Based on their responses, we can conclude that learners are aware that since they started learning to sign, they have started to pay more attention to their gestures, their articulation, and they have been gesticulating more; they have started to pay more attention to other people's body language as well as their own, and they have become better at noticing other people's emotions. A somewhat lower rating was given to the statement which was about whether or not respondents had become better at expressing their own emotions since they started learning to sign (M = 2.93). In terms of eye-contact, respondents indicated that they had improved their ability to maintain eye-contact with the people they communicate with (M = 3.6).

The analysis of respondents' completions of the unfinished sentences allowed the researcher to gain further insights into the shared learning experience. In what follows, some of the respondents' comments, which were translated into and sometimes paraphrased or summarised in English by the author, are discussed. Altogether 229 comments of varying lengths were collected (1–77 words). When asked about what the greatest experience in sign language learning for them was, sign language learners emphasised the fact that they entered a completely "new world" by starting to learn to sign. One respondent called it a new "culture", whereas others stressed the importance of having access to a different linguistic community. Many learners felt the experience was very special, with involvement they had never experienced. For some "it was like an adventure", a challenge, or an opportunity. For others, learning to sign was like a hobby, involving even relaxation. One respondent noted that it was not at all like learning a foreign language. Another compared it to "learning a

poem", yet another to "learning three half-known foreign languages at the same time". The latter wording clearly emphasises the complexity inherent in learning a visual language.

The question that aimed to elicit in what ways HSL is different from Hungarian was finished in many different ways, with many noting that there is more nonverbal communication, and the focus is on metacommunication. Respondents added that HSL "is concise", or that it "has a special grammar, for example, classifiers". It is quite telling that one respondent added that HSL "is less and more at the same time" than Hungarian. Many stressed that HSL is "more to-the-point" and that it is "much more important for the communicator to focus on the other speaker with their whole being". One respondent remarked that there are more "supplementary sign systems at work", probably meaning that hand signs, their positioning, mouthing, lip-reading, and facial expressions are integral, inseparable, and parallel elements of sign language communication.

The respondents shared some linguistic insights when they were asked in what ways a sign language resembles or differs from Hungarian and in what ways learning a sign language resembles learning a foreign language. As they remarked, learners have to "practise and learn the words", "master the vocabulary", have a "vocabulary notebook", and learners "may forget it" and "have to learn the idioms", which may be true for any language learning situation. All these remarks reinforce the status of HSL as a language in its own right. Another theme that came up was the similarity between HSL and foreign languages or languages in general in terms of competence levels. Respondents pointed out that learners and users are at different competence levels when using sign language. Some remarks touched upon the way the sign language is taught: There are practice exercises and homework similarly to other language learning contexts. One learner commented that it is difficult to develop "above a certain level", a certain ceiling, which many language learners can relate to. Another learner stressed

that through sign language the learner can get to know the habits and the culture of sign language users or the Deaf.

An interesting comment focused on the difficulties of learning to sign: One respondent said it was impossible to learn to sign without a teacher (i.e., on one's own). The presence of the sign language user and the video materials certainly make it a much easier task as this language needs to be seen primarily. Learners' willingness to act was also mentioned by one respondent.

In contrast, others highlighted that learning a sign language is incomparable with learning a foreign language, here probably referring to the visual–spatial nature of HSL. They pointed out that using a sign language requires them to use different parts of their brains. One revealing comment was that we "are not learning the spoken form of a written language" since HSL does not have a written form, although a complicated transcription system does exist. Some respondents identified differences between language learning and sign language learning that were not well-substantiated. In this way some misunderstandings also made their way into the pool of responses. For example, two respondents remarked that "there is no complex grammar or tenses", and the focus needs to be on the vocabulary in sign language learning, which is not the case and sign language users and teachers would strongly disagree.

In terms of what enhances their HSL learning, respondents emphasised the importance of the "the online video dictionary" and error correction in the classroom by the "native sign language teacher". "Practising with friends who are Deaf" also makes it easier to acquire HSL. Contact and interaction with Deaf sign language users and teachers appear to be essential. Being a "visual learner" and having a good "visual memory" greatly enhance sign language learning. Apart from the usual language learner problems such as being too busy to study at home, what makes sign language learning more difficult according to the

respondents is not having enough opportunities to practise with sign language users. One respondent noted that having Deaf teachers sometimes makes it difficult to follow explanations, and it would perhaps be better to have hard-of-hearing teachers, who can better connect these two worlds. The ambiguity of hand signs and shapes and the complexity of the position, orientation, movement, and direction of signs also make the learning process slower.

Practising is very important, respondents say, and so is using the videos for revision. They also watch additional videos on YouTube to further improve their signing skills. Note-taking is considered useful but difficult as there are so many attributes to note down. In the flow of the lesson, there is not sufficient time to take detailed notes, and even when there is, the notes do not always make sense at home later. Even "teaching my friends to sign" was mentioned by respondents as being helpful. Many wrote that immersion in a sign language using community helps or would help. One respondent was a teacher at a school for the hard of hearing, and another respondent had Deaf friends, so for them this immersion was an existing circumstance. Visualising words was mentioned as a way to more effectively memorise words, with the example of the sun and the sun rising. The closed fingers in this hand sign turn and slightly move towards the face as the fingers gradually open. As Figure 1 illustrates, static entries in a dictionary are of not much help; video recordings are far more useful, which was corroborated by respondents many times.

Figure 1

The Starting and Finishing Handshapes for the "Sun" and the "Sun Rising" Signs (Siketek és Nagyothallók Országos Szövetsége, n.d.-c)

As part of additional comments, it was emphasised by one respondent that a better methodology for the teaching of sign languages could and should be worked out. It was also mentioned that the existing HSL dictionary (partially available on the SINOSZ website and fully available for registered course participants) needs to be expanded to assist learners in the future.

Emerging Themes

After reading and rereading respondents' comments several times, the researcher found that there seem to be seven themes that keep occurring: videos, contact with the Deaf community, practice, vocabulary and handshapes, grammar or the lack of it, simplicity, and the world of the Deaf. The seven themes were confirmed by an independent co-coder, who had no experience learning to sign but was an experienced applied linguistics researcher.

The two most frequently occurring themes are the video materials available to learners and the need to practise. The two topics are also interrelated as learners suggested that the video materials provide further practice opportunities, which are not always sufficient during the classes. It is not always clear whether learners referred to the online video dictionaries that are operated by SINOSZ or other organisations or to other video recordings which are available on YouTube, but what seems to be clear is that most learners find these indispensable for learning to sign. There were 14 allusions to videos in general in the textual comments as well as 14 references to practice. The videos are especially useful for learners who only have lessons once a week, but they can supplement any number of weekly classes. Contact or the lack of contact with sign language users or Deaf people was also mentioned 12 times, which suggests that communication with sign language users is seen as a valuable opportunity both for learning and practising as well as building relationships with this special community.

The need to learn and the focus on the learning of handshapes or vocabulary items was brought up 12 times, which indicates that learners were clearly aware of the importance of these units in sign language. The high frequency may indicate that vocabulary items are seen as a prerequisite, or a first step, for learning to sign. The fact that issues concerning vocabulary came up so many times might be due to other factors as well. One of these could be that the instruction and the instructors focused on vocabulary and not grammar in the initial stages of the courses. Another could be learners' preconceptions about the existence of grammar in this context. HSL grammar or the lack of grammar was also cited 10 times. The concept of sign language grammar seems to be a less well-understood or perhaps taught aspect of HSL in the eyes of the respondents.

There were two more issues that were frequently referred to by the respondents. One of these was the respondents' view that HSL is simple and to-the-point. This is seen both as a positive and a negative feature. Some learners appreciate that when we sign we focus on the most important elements of the message, while others believe that there are fewer words to select from. Some respondents worded it like this: "I cannot express shades of meaning", or "there are no synonyms, no hidden meaning". One respondent remarked that class interaction occasionally focused on simple, informal, or sometimes even "obscene issues". Respondents, however, seemed to agree that learning to sign opened up a new world to them, a new culture, enabling them to "peek into the society and the everyday lives of the Deaf". The fact that HSL communication focuses on the essence of the message made HSL an unexpectedly honest way of interaction in the eyes of the respondents.

Out of curiosity, an AI tool was used to analyse the responses to one of the unfinished statements that elicited the most replies. Twenty-seven of the 31 respondents wished to add their views to the unfinished sentence that started in the following way: For me, the most

effective method of learning sign language is to... The free version of the AI tool AILYZE proposed the following themes:

1. Learning environment and attitude: Immersion, playfulness, and focus
2. Communication and interaction: Active practice, teaching, and daily use
3. Learning resources: Multimedia and written support
4. Cognitive techniques: Visualisation and concept clarification
5. Practice methods: Repetition, self-study, and organisation

The AI analysis tool successfully tackled comments in Hungarian. From the above list, it appears that the tool identified five key themes, but both the subthemes and the written analysis showed that the analysis lacked clarity and was sometimes as complex as the raw data. Without going into great detail, the AI-assisted analysis, however, emphasised that according to the respondents, the learning environment plays a crucial role in fostering engagement in sign language learning. Learners believe that immersion, playfulness, and focused attention appear to be essential elements that enhance learning. Immersion, involving interaction with native or fluent signers, promotes active learning. Respondents also suggest that playfulness and watching videos enhance motivation and deepen understanding.

It was interesting to see that similarly to the analysis carried out by the researchers, the AI analysis identified video materials as versatile learning aids, offering exposure, practice, and reference opportunities. According to the AI tool, video materials, sign language dictionaries, and written notes are seen as essential tools for enhancing the comprehension and the retention of vocabulary. Notes and written materials support learning by capturing specific details and guiding practice systematically.

Discussion

Based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected in this study, we can state that learning to sign was an enriching experience for most of the participants. The study revealed positive attitudes towards sign language learning, which is evidenced by respondents' descriptions of it as an amazing and enjoyable experience. While some participants in this study thought some class activities were humorous, others saw them as a challenge, an adventure, a dream come true, or a life-changing experience. All these detected positive approaches towards sign language learning probably go beyond the actual learning, and as a result of the learning experience, the positive attitudes are felt towards the Deaf community as well—as it was found by Lee and Pott (2018) in the American setting.

Respondents saw sign language instruction as a cultural experience as well: They appreciated the fact that by attending these courses they had an insight into the lives of sign language users and the Deaf. As is frequently the case in language classes, too, sign language instructors often reveal interesting cultural information or "fun" facts about the target language environment(s) and their lives during the classes. For example, it is eye-opening to learn how a Deaf parent can hear their child's crying or the doorbell (technological solutions help transform noise into light). Another example could be the advice on how to attract a deaf or hearing-impaired person's attention if they are not looking at the speaker. Learners are advised to approach and face the person or, if that is more practical in a large room, to quickly switch the lights on and off for this purpose. Respondents enjoyed the combined language and culture lessons and felt as if they had entered a different quiet universe which was similar to theirs but at the same time different in many ways. Thus, the lessons could also be seen as intercultural training sessions as the courses allow participants to establish a link with the world, culture, and context of the Deaf. These findings corroborate the research results of a study conducted in the US with 98 university students, where the researchers

concluded that it is important for ASL instructors to integrate more cultural information into the course programme (Lee & Pott, 2018).

Respondents also pointed out that HSL learning activated different parts of their brains. They noticed that sign language users have a different way of thinking. The literature also emphasised this difference. According to Horváth et al. (2018–2019), HSL users think in images and have visual representations in their minds as opposed to those who can hear and have abstractions in their minds (Horváth et al., 2018–2019, p. 29).

The study also revealed that the sign language learning experience made learners think about their own mother tongue and second language use and prompted comparisons between them. Respondents pointed out that they had to activate similar as well as different cognitive processes and to get accustomed to using the signing space instead of traditional channels of communication. They also had to get used to using a visual and spatial language system instead of their oral mother tongue. In addition to sign language instruction, HSL learning also appears to work as intensive communication training since many of the respondents witnessed a transformation as regards their communication in their mother tongue. Most of these changes concerned the development of their nonverbal communication skills. Respondents reported that since they had begun learning to sign, they became more expressive, more aware of their body language, and more emotionally perceptive during communication with others. Thus, the sign language learning experience enhanced the development of the nonvocal and nonverbal communication skills of the respondents, which could in the long run contribute to the development of their oral language skills in both their first and their second language competence.

Articulation perhaps deserves some elaboration here. In HSL, many handshapes and signs are accompanied by mouthing the Hungarian equivalent of the word (but not all). The

more fluent someone is in signing, the less mouthing is required. However, in the initial stages of sign language learning or with less competent sign language users, sign language users, learners, and teachers need to supplement their communication with mouthing and lip-reading. This means that mouthing and articulation are given a lot of weight in the classroom; learners therefore acutely realise the importance of articulation and may transfer this awareness to other communication contexts, both in their first or additional spoken languages.

One key takeaway from the study is the crucial role that video recordings play in the learning process. It is easy to understand the significance of the availability of video-conferencing platforms for the Deaf community, but the presence of smart devices in the classroom could boost sign language learning. Some recordings accessible on the internet or in a virtual learning environment are used as dictionary entries, others as comprehension tasks, and learners, too, are expected to hand in their homework as video recordings. In sum, these could be used for practice in and out of class as well as recording signs for easier practice and memorisation. Language teachers can easily see the relevance of using recordings in class since listening exercises have long been used in the teaching of languages. Thus, viewing exercises in the sign language classroom can be seen as the equivalents of listening exercises in language classrooms. The importance of video recordings is even greater in sign language learning and classes since—as the learners in this study pointed out—they often had difficulty with traditional note-taking. Many emphasised that there are very many aspects of handshapes that would need to be noted. Perhaps taking video notes, that is, recording either the teacher or the learner(s) themselves would be more time-efficient and would better assist the learning process. Hence, the smartphone may become an indispensable device for learners interested in improving their sign language competence.

Conclusion

In an ideal world, the parents and teachers of Deaf children as well as other stakeholders like service workers or interested language learners would need to be given free or subsidised opportunities to at least familiarise themselves with but perhaps to develop higher competences of Hungarian or other sign languages for several reasons. First and foremost, this would create a society with fewer obstacles for the Deaf and more equality of opportunity and accessibility for this particular disadvantaged group. Not only would more contact between these groups integrate the Deaf better into society, but it would also help the majority society develop solidarity with less advantaged groups, build intercultural sensitivity, and improve nonverbal communication skills. A concomitant could be that sign language learners would better understand their own and others' communication, their first language acquisition, and their second language learning. Through doing a beginner-level sign language course, perhaps foreign language teacher trainees, especially monolingual ones who aim to teach their mother tongue, could perhaps learn to better appreciate the learners' difficulties, efforts, and the stress of learning as well as become more aware of the cultural dimension of language learning. A 1-year-long awareness-raising immersion into sign language learning could also benefit university students majoring in psychology, special needs education, sociology, or the medical sciences.

For the Hungarian education system as a whole, one implication is that HSL, its learning, or some kind of sensitisation could be part of the curriculum on an optional basis. Like the respondents of this study, learners would encounter a completely "new world" with various benefits. Perhaps as part of Hungarian language classes, or as an optional session during extracurricular programmes or project weeks, HSL instruction could be offered in secondary education or in higher education, and thus young people would know more about this disability, this language, communication with members of the Deaf community, and

communication in general. HSL could also be offered as a second or third language option, although it may present organisational difficulties to attract a sufficient number of interested learners in one school. As a result, more learners could end up as HSL users with some signing competence. In addition, through practical introductory or sensitisation sessions, people without disabilities could easily and enjoyably learn to stand in solidarity with those with disabilities. Interacting with the help of HSL, learning to sign, and learning more about sign language and the culture of sign language users could greatly contribute to the development of that solidarity.

Personal Reflections

A study that was largely motivated by the author's personal experience of learning HSL cannot be complete without the personal reflections of the author. The HSL course was like a window into a different universe. The experience allowed the author to gain insight into the world of a minority that has a unique culture and language. In this context, sign language and its use, at least in the first two years of studying, appears to be very direct and honest, sometimes brutally, sometimes embarrassingly honest. Emotions in the world and the communication practices of the Deaf seem to be much more important than in traditional communication. Emotions are more honestly and clearly expressed; what is more, they are much more clearly understood. This might have an effect on the HSL users as well: They seem to express their emotions overtly. They also seem to possess more empathy and have better antennae to attune to and decipher their communication partners' intentions and feelings. This might be partly due to the fact that communication is more intensive as it is carried out using the whole body and that the brain is fully engaged. There may also be other factors at work, which would need to be researched, for example, disadvantaged communicators may reach a higher level of competence in certain areas to compensate for the disabilities they have.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This was a small-scale study conducted in Hungary over a short period of time. No data were collected on how many HSL courses participants had completed, how many teachers they had had, or what sign language competence they had reached. The sample was not representative; the respondents were, however, in the best possible position to illuminate their sign language learning experience since they had fresh memories of learning to sign. A larger sample, a longitudinal approach, and nonparticipating researchers could in the future make the findings better substantiated. The findings in this study are specific to the Hungarian context of 31 self-motivated adult learners in Budapest. They also explicitly focus on the learning of HSL but may with caution be adapted to similar contexts where young adults and adults are willing to learn the language of and establish connections with members of the Deaf minority.

Although the research instrument was specifically aimed at eliciting responses on sign language and sign language learning in general and not eliciting feedback on specific courses or teachers, some responses may have been influenced by the given course, the class atmosphere, the group cohesion, the teacher, or the methodology applied by the teacher, which may distort the findings.

Apart from increasing the sample size and the duration of data collection, perhaps gathering insights from sign language instructors could contribute to refining the tentative conclusions of this exploratory study. Further research could address the quality and features of sign language instruction.

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Appendix

Dear sign language learner,

In my research I aim to explore how learners perceive sign language learning. I would also like to find out to what extent it resembles or differs from foreign language learning. Thank you for your help.

By proceeding you consent to your data being used for research purposes. The data collected do not allow the identification of your identity. Participation in the research is voluntary and anonymous.

You will be asked to give some personal data (e.g., age) and individual impressions. It is important to respond honestly.

Filling in the questionnaire will take about 10 minutes.

Thank you,

Soproni Zsuzsanna

Section 1

Age (Please give a number)

Sex (Male / Female)

Do you speak/are you learning/have you ever learnt any foreign languages? Yes / No

If you selected yes in the previous question, please select the languages (Multiple answers possible):

English German French Italian Spanish Other

If you selected 'other' above, please write the language you speak/are learning/have learnt here:

Section 2

Do you consider yourself successful in learning foreign language(s)? (5=I communicate very well compared to the time invested, 1=I do not communicate well at all compared to the time invested.)

Do you consider yourself successful in sign language learning? (5=I communicate very well compared to the time invested, 1=I do not communicate well at all compared to the time invested.)

For the statements that follow, please indicate the extent to which you agree with them (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree).

Sign language is completely like a foreign language for me.

Sign language learning is completely like foreign language learning for me.

It is easier for me to learn how to sign than to learn a foreign language.

Since I started learning to sign, I have started to pay more attention to my gestures.

Since I started learning to sign, I have started to pay more attention to my articulation.

Since I started learning to sign, I have been gesticulating more.

Since I started learning to sign, I have started to pay more attention to other people's body language.

Since I started learning to sign, I have started to pay more attention to my own body language.

Since I started learning to sign, I have become better at noticing other people's emotions.

Since I started learning to sign, I have become better at expressing my own emotions.

Since I started learning to sign, I have started to maintain better eye contact with the people I talk to.

Section 3

You can finish the following unfinished sentences in any way you want to reflect your sign language learning experiences.

The greatest experience in learning to sign was that...

Learning to sign for me is like...

Sign language differs from Hungarian in that it...

Sign language resembles Hungarian in that it....

Learning sign language resembles learning a foreign language in that it...

Learning sign language differs from learning a foreign language in that...

It helps my learning to sign that...

It makes my learning to sign difficult that...

For me, the most effective method of learning sign language is to...

If you couldn't write down any of your important insights about sign language learning above, but you think it's important, please do it here.

The Use of Motivational Strategies by Tunisian EFL Teachers: A Classroom-Oriented View

Bochra Kouraichi

For over 60 years, research on language learning motivation has been abundant and has offered numerous insights for L2 teachers as well as L2 learners (Al-Hoorie & MacIntyre, 2020). Keller (2010) defined motivation as follows: "Motivation refers broadly to what people desire, what they choose to do, and what they commit to do" (p. 3). In this vein, Csizér (2020) criticised L2 motivation definitions that are centred around the language learner and do not involve the learning setting. She claimed that "classroom learning cannot be fathomed without teacher-student and student-student interactions" (p. 9). She pointed out that a definition of L2 motivation should include the classroom environment and highlight the fact that motivation is not static. Combining the researchers' and teachers' perspectives of motivation, Csizér (2020) put forward the following definition of L2 motivation:

> an interactional process which subsumes effort and persistence to learn a foreign language and which is co-constructed by teachers and students alike in the classroom with an effect on activities and learning taking place both within and outside the classroom. (p. 11)

In this context, the present study seeks to contribute to the field of studies on classroom motivational practice in the Tunisian higher education context by taking both teachers' and students' perspectives into consideration and aims to offer ways to enhance students' motivational behaviour.

Research Context

Tunisia is a North-African country where Arabic is the first language, and French is the second language. In Tunisia, English is taught in state primary schools from Grade 5 (and, in some schools, Grade 4). It is the most common foreign language after French. Still, there is a significant difference between the use of these two languages. Indeed, French plays an important role in Tunisia as a de facto second language along with Tunisian Arabic, which has many embedded French loanwords and syntactic structures (Boukadi & Troudi, 2017). English is mostly restricted to instructional contexts and is not as frequently used by students as French outside of the classroom (Abdeljaoued & Labassi, 2021). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that digital media stand out in this context since a growing majority of ads and foreign series are presented in English, which makes teenagers exposed to English more than ever before.

Language Learning Motivation Research

Motivation research started in Canada (Gardner, 1985), a bilingual country where French and English are spoken. Social psychology researchers were primarily interested in learners' attitudes towards the language other than their mother tongue, their motives for learning it, as well as the learners' views of its speakers. Two types of motivation were identified in the Canadian context: instrumental and integrative. The applicability of integrativeness with the global spread of English became a controversial issue (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009) as the concept originally assumed a clear target language community, which

becomes problematic when English functions as a global lingua franca rather than being tied to a specific cultural group. The conceptualisation of L2 motivation then transformed from being viewed as a fixed personal trait to being conceptualised as a dynamic construct that is bound to temporal and contextual changes. This has been an important change as the first theories of L2 motivation (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gardner, 1985) considered learners' L2 motivation as a static dichotomy of instrumental versus integrative or intrinsic versus extrinsic. This perception has gradually shifted into a more dynamic view that involves complex systems of interaction. Additionally, the notion of self has come into the foreground (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009) and has been developed into the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS, Dörnyei, 2005). The L2MSS model includes three components, namely the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience. The latter entails "the impact of the L2 teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, and the experience of success" (Dörnyei & Ryan 2015, p. 88).

In line with the inclusion of the L2 learning experience, Ushioda (2013b) urged L2 motivation researchers to focus more on "teacher- and classroom-focused empirical studies to investigate how teachers' instructional and interactional practices contribute to shaping processes of motivation in their classrooms" (p. 237). Ushioda (2013a) proposed that English—because of its global status—has gained a privileged status in educational policy and in the job market. In fact, the issue of motivation is all the more present on the agenda of teachers and students alike. However, as pointed out by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), the L2 motivation research might lack "a level of sophistication that would allow scholars to translate research results into straightforward educational recommendations" (p. 104).

Motivational Strategies

Keller (2010) opened his seminal book on motivational teaching with a photo depicting two teachers debating whether they should be held responsible for motivating their students. While the image raises the question rhetorically, the field has long acknowledged that teachers play a central role in student motivation. Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) affirmed this when they stated that "teachers' motivational practice does matter" (p. 72). Indeed, the importance of teachers' motivational strategies was already emphasised during the early cognitive-situated period of motivation research. For instance, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) proposed a set of ten motivational teaching commandments based on a large-scale study conducted in Hungary. Reinforcing the assumption that learners are not fixed in their motivational states, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) asserted that "*most* students' motivation can be 'worked on' and increased" (p. 113). Along these lines, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) defined motivational teaching strategies (MotS) as the instructional techniques deployed "to consciously generate and enhance student motivation, as well as maintain ongoing motivated behaviour and protect it from distracting and/or competing action tendencies" (p. 103).

Lamb (2019) highlighted the importance of teachers' use of motivational teaching strategies as such use "has the potential to speak directly to teachers, since it deals centrally with their conscious behaviours and the impact on learners" (p. 288). Furthermore, Lamb pointed out that the overall majority of teachers believe that it is their duty to motivate learners to varying degrees. He stated that "there will be times (e.g., Monday morning?) or tasks (grammar revision sessions?) when deliberate attempts to motivate may feel more urgent, and of course some learners for whom such efforts will be more necessary" (p. 287).

Ushioda (2022) considered the use of MotS as a ‘nudging practice’. She pointed out that “teachers have an educational and moral responsibility to steer students toward making optimal choices” (p. 14). However, she warned teachers against the ethical considerations of over-employing MotS as she believes that students may become reliant on their teachers’ use of MotS and would be unable to build their independent sense of agency and control over their learning process (Ushioda, 2022). Instead of consciously applying MotS, she supports the view of “nurturing students’ own motivation to learn” (Ushioda, 2022, p. 11).

In the Hungarian high school context, Kouraichi and Lesznyák (2022) explored the use of MotS by EFL teachers through online and in-person classroom observations and through administering a questionnaire to students and to teachers. Teachers’ reported use of MotS was compared with their students’ questionnaire answers, which confirmed the effectiveness of the teachers’ strategies. Interestingly, classroom observations highlighted the importance of more attention-getting strategies in contrast with the satisfaction-generating strategies reported in the questionnaires. Moreover, teachers who were observed both during face-to-face and online classes were found to employ MotS more frequently in online classes.

The ARCS Model

The attention, relevance, confidence, satisfaction (ARCS) model was proposed by Keller (2010). The four elements of the model are as follows:

- **Attention** focuses on capturing and sustaining learners’ interest through stimulating and varied instructional methods.
- **Relevance** ensures the material connects with learners’ goals, experiences, or needs, making it meaningful to them.
- **Confidence** involves helping learners believe they can succeed by providing clear expectations and achievable challenges.

- **Satisfaction** refers to reinforcing learning through rewards, feedback, or a sense of accomplishment that motivates continued effort.

The ARCS model was driven by the complexity of conceptualising motivation, which can be due to "the complexity of environmental, cultural, and personal factors that interact to influence a person's motivation at any given point in time" (Keller, 2010, p. 12). To illustrate his point on the complexity of motivation, Keller (2010) used the metaphor of 'leaves or a rock'. He raises the question of whether motivation should be compared to a pile of dry leaves or to a rock. Some people would view motivation as a pile of leaves since it "can be unstable, frequently changing, elusive, and easily modified by external forces" (Keller, 2010, p. 21). If we apply this view to a classroom context, students can be highly motivated at one point, and then their motivational state might quickly drop. As a matter of fact, even though teachers employ motivational techniques, their effectiveness might be short-lived. Those who would opt for the rock metaphor, consider motivation "as being determined, single minded, strong willed, and resistant to change" (Keller, 2010, p. 21).

In his model, Keller (2010) classified motivation into the four ARCS categories, which "enable you to quickly gain an overview of the major dimensions of human motivation, especially in the context of learning motivation, and how to create strategies to stimulate and sustain motivation in each of the four areas" (p. 44). Consequently, the application of these strategies is straightforward for teachers, who might choose to bear in mind these four elements to enhance their students' motivation.

Research Questions

The present research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the motivational strategies that Tunisian EFL teachers in higher education employ?
2. Is there a significant difference between students' perception of MotS and their teachers' reported use of MotS?
3. What is the relationship between teachers' self-reported use of MotS and their actual classroom practice?

Methods

This study applies mixed methods research, which is a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analysing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research data in a single study or a longitudinal inquiry. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative results, the present study aims to compare both sets of data and obtain a thorough picture of teachers' motivational practice.

Data Collection

The data collection was carried out during the academic year 2021–2022. The process covered nearly two semesters, starting from September 2021 and ending in May 2022. The call for teacher participants was shared in the autumn semester of 2021 when the pilot study was conducted. Then, during the spring semester, the main data for this study were collected. During the class observation phase of the data collection period, classes were held in person, and masks were compulsory in the classroom due to COVID-19 safety measures. Heads of English departments in Tunisian universities were contacted via phone or email, and written or oral consent was obtained before the start of the data collection process. A Google form

was shared on Facebook with my network and in groups of teacher associations in Tunisia to recruit teachers willing to participate in the study. A total of 46 teachers of English from nine universities answered the questionnaire while nearly half agreed to take part in the classroom observations. Student participants and teacher participants were then contacted at the beginning of the spring semester of 2022.

Participants

A total of 264 undergraduate students were recruited (English majors: n = 248 and non-English majors: n = 16). Table 1 below gives more information on the student participants. Interestingly, some respondents (n = 36) did not indicate their age and/or their gender. However, most students were between 19 and 24 years old, which is the usual age for undergraduate students in Tunisia. Only a few participants were aged 25 or above. Student participants were recruited from different universities across Tunisia. However, the majority were from one university, which was the easiest to access.

Out of the total number of participants, 21 teachers volunteered to take part in the classroom observation phase. Given the relatively large number of observations scheduled over a short period of time and the different universities involved, only one class observation was scheduled per teacher. The study involved participants with a wide range of experience as some were novice teachers, midcareer, and even approaching retirement. All participants were Tunisian with Arabic as their first language, French being the second, and English the third language.

Table 1

Participants

	Age	Gender	
		Female	Male
Students	19–30	171	57
Teachers	28–59	42	4

Questionnaire

The instructional materials motivational survey (IMMS) was originally designed by Keller (2010). It follows the main four categories of the ARCS model: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. Min and Chon (2020) adapted the original IMMS and designed a teacher version. The difference between the original questionnaire designed by Keller and the version that was developed by Min and Chon is mainly the degree of explicitness in the wording of items. Their adapted version includes 40 items listed as close-ended statements and was validated in the Korean context. The same items were addressing either students or teachers. In the student version, items start by "Teacher gives...", whereas in the teacher version items are formulated as questions "Do you use …?". Both the student and teacher questionnaires of Min and Chon's study were used in the present study. The administered versions had two parts. The first part collected participants' background information including their age, gender, university, and years of teaching experience (for teachers). In the teacher version, the second part asked participants to report on the MotS they employ, while in the student version, participants were asked to evaluate their teacher's motivational practice. The following are examples of each of the ARCS categories:

- Attention (10 items): For example, teacher varies teaching materials or presentation style when necessary.
- Relevance (10 items): For example, teacher clearly explains the relevance of the lesson to what I already know.
- Confidence (10 items): For example, teacher tells us about what we will be able to do after successfully completing the lesson.
- Satisfaction (10 items): For example, teacher shows personal interest when I work hard or complete an assignment successfully.

Classroom Observation

The motivational orientation of language teaching (MOLT) observation scheme that was developed by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) was used for the class observations. The MOLT scheme was designed following two main frameworks: Dörnyei's (2001) process model of motivational strategies and Spada and Fröhlich's (1995) classroom observation scheme, which is the communicative orientation of language teaching (COLT). The MOLT observation scheme comprises two major parts. The first part is used to report the teachers' use of motivational strategies. It includes 25 items that are grouped into four categories: teacher discourse, participation structure, encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation, and activity design. Teacher discourse includes elements such as arousing students' curiosity or attention, stating the communicative purpose or utility of the activities, providing appropriate strategies and/or models to help students complete an activity successfully, and other similar activities. Apart from this formal discourse, teachers may also engage in informal social conversations with students. Whether or not students work in pairs or groups is determined by the participation structure. To promote positive retrospective self-evaluation, teachers should discuss exercise answers with the class without expressing any judgement or

criticism of the students' answers, concentrate on what can be learned from the students' mistakes, help students learn from their own mistakes, revise their work, or review and correct their peers' work, among other strategies. Activity design looks at whether an activity gives students the chance to express their personal opinion; includes elements of curiosity, creativity, or fantasy; poses an intellectual challenge; results in the creation of a tangible product; and promotes individual or team competition.

The second part of the observation scheme documents students' motivated behaviour that can be measured in terms of three variables: attention, engagement, and volunteering. Students show attention when two-thirds or more are eagerly following the teacher's talk and movements, noticing their classmates when they participate, watching any visual or listening to auditory stimuli provided by their teacher. Engagement is measured when at least two-thirds of the class are actively participating in a discussion with the teacher, working on their assignments, or exhibiting any nonverbal body sign that they are engaged with the teacher. Students' volunteering is noted when one-third of the class volunteer to engage in a speaking activity without the teacher assigning them to speak, for instance.

The MOLT scheme followed a time sampling method, which "gives a chronological representation of the flow of the whole class, that is, the distribution of the particular phenomenon throughout the class" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 180). The observer records minute-by-minute the above-mentioned variables as each minute elapses on the timer. Following Spada and Fröhlich's (1995) recommendation, whenever more than one event is observed under the same category, only the event that lasts longer should be recorded in a 1-minute segment.

All classroom observations were done during the spring semester of the academic year 2021–2022 (February–March 2022). A total of 21 face-to-face classes were observed. They were taught by 21 teachers from different universities and different classes (language,

culture studies, literature). Only four teachers were teaching ESP classes, while 19 taught English majors. Following COVID-19 measures, only the researcher could observe classes after the approval of the head of institutes or department chairs. During the classroom observation, the researcher was a nonparticipant-observer (Dörnyei, 2007). Since the observer used an observation scheme, structured observations were carried out (Dörnyei, 2007).

During each of the class observations, I chose a place in the classroom where I could get a clear view of all the students as well as the teacher. To be unobtrusive I usually sat at the back equipped with the observation scheme (on which I also took notes) and my phone to use as a timer. Before each classroom visit, the researcher showed the teachers the MOLT observation scheme. However, they did not get a copy of the scheme in order not to impact on their lesson planning. When the class was over, the researcher had a short conversation with the teachers, who would often ask to check the observation scheme and were eager to know what had been recorded. The researcher took this chance to double check the reliability of the coding and to hear the participants' perspectives. All participating teachers confirmed the adequacy of my coding and at times commented on the class dynamics, students' levels of engagement and even explained why they had overused a specific item (e.g., by stating the purpose of an activity). Agreement between the observer and the teachers attested to the reliability of the observation results.

Observation Analysis

The analysis of the MOLT observation data followed the procedure proposed by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) and Guilloteaux (2013). At a second stage, quantitative comparisons were made between teachers' questionnaire data and their observation results through the ARCS categories. As suggested by Dörnyei (2007), "processing structured

observational data is relatively straightforward and can be further analysed by means of statistical procedures" (p. 185). In fact, no inferential statistical tests were used for the analysis. SPSS was only used to compute standardised *z*-scores.

The first step of the observational data analysis consisted in computing all the MOLT data through an Excel sheet for each lesson. This was calculated through entering the tally marks that corresponded to the number of minutes for each activity. As some classes started or ended at different times, all classes were standardised into a 45-minute observation time frame. The frequency of each variable was calculated then entered into SPSS to compute *z*-scores, which were compared to the *z*-scores generated from teachers' questionnaire results for all ARCS categories. The MOLT items that document teachers' motivational teaching were categorised according to the ARCS categories (Kouraichi & Lesznyák, 2022). Attention-getting strategies are represented through social chat, arousing curiosity, and creative elements. Relevance-producing strategies include elements such as signposting, stating purpose, establishing relevance, promoting integrative and instrumental values, referential questions, and personalisation. The confidence-building strategies are composed of scaffolding, promoting cooperation or autonomy, pair work or group work, intellectual challenge, and tangible task product. The satisfaction-generating strategies are tangible rewards, individual or team competition, neutral or process feedback, self or peer-correction, class applause, and effective praise. The mean length of each strategy is presented in minutes (see Table 2).

Findings

Table 2 illustrates the frequencies of the MOLT items that are designed by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008). The MotS observed follow Dörnyei's (2001) process model of motivational teaching. First, teachers' motivational practice is reported in terms of four categories: teacher discourse, activity design, participant structure, and positive retrospective self-evaluation. The second part reported students' motivated behaviour, which is documented through students' attention, engagement, and volunteering. The results of the student questionnaire were not analysed as they are not part of the research questions for the present study. More focus was given to teachers' observed use of MotS as compared to their questionnaire responses.

Under the category of participant structures, group work was the most frequently observed strategy. Teachers opted for structuring teamwork in groups more often than in pair work. As for teacher discourse, scaffolding was the most frequently used strategy followed by signposting, establishing relevance, and stating purpose. During the class observations, some items from the observation scheme were not observed. These include promoting integrative and instrumental values, promoting autonomy, personalisation, tangible task product, and team competition.

The relevance-producing strategies that pertained mainly to the teacher discourse category were the most frequently observed MotS. These strategies aim to remind the students of previously learned material and refresh their minds about relevant knowledge. Moreover, teachers made sure to state the purpose of tasks to motivate students to work on them. Making students in higher education aware of the goals as well as benefits and takeaways of a particular task would encourage them to complete it successfully. Examples of relevance-producing strategies include statements like "what did we see last week?", "by the

end of this lesson, you will be able to …", "do you remember this structure?", "look at us nowadays!". It goes without saying that teachers tend to repeat the instructions over and over again, hence the importance of signposting.

Table 2

Observed Frequencies of MOLT Variables

Strategies	Mean	Min	Max	Strategies	Mean	Min	Max
Group work	15	0	21	Arousing curiosity	1.4	0	2
Process feedback	5.9	0	14	Promoting cooperation	1		1
Pair work	4.8	0	12	Tangible rewards	1	0	1
Referential questions	3.6	0	6	Creative element	1	0	1
Scaffolding	3.3	0	11	Individual competition	1	0	1
Establishing relevance	3.1	0	6	Neutral feedback	1	0	1
Intellectual challenge	3	0	3	Promoting integrative values	-	-	-
Stating purpose	2.8	0	5	Promoting instrumental values	-	-	-
Signposting	2.7	0	7	Promoting autonomy	-	-	-
Self/peer correction	2.5	0	5	Personalisation	-	-	-
Effective praise	1.7	0	3	Tangible task product	-	-	-
Social chat	1.5	0	2	Team competition	-	-	-
Class applause	1.5	0	2				

The following are some examples of MotS strategies by a sample of the participating teachers. Teacher 1 taught a writing class. She was helping students through eliciting their

answers (e.g., saying parts of a word: “contro….versial”). She stated the purpose of an activity: “Today we will watch a series. The purpose is to listen carefully and find out …” She then presented a PowerPoint presentation about argumentative essays. She explained the purpose of argumentative essays and provided steps to write one. In a fun atmosphere with many jokes, the teacher answered a phone call then told students, “it’s a colleague who is coming to pick up something”. At the end of class, she moderated a debate by asking guiding questions: “Do you agree with parents? Are you for or against drinking alcohol?” She made sure to provide positive feedback with words of encouragement like: “Nice! I knew you could do it!”. Teacher 2 taught a drama class. The class started with a presentation by three students on Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*. Once the presentation was over, the teacher tried to elicit students’ feedback: “What do you think of your friends’ presentation?”. She also gave presenters feedback on their time management and presentation skills as well as the content they presented. Then she said, “now let’s move to ... we are going to delve deeper into the dichotomy of realism and reality”, “Let’s go back to the idea of …”. Teacher 3 taught a translation class. She started by checking students’ homework. She asked students about the translation problems that they had encountered when translating proverbs. She then asked them to check each other’s translations through peer feedback. She asked students: “How did you solve the problems you found? Did you use Linguee?” She praised a student by saying: “Look at your friend’s work! Thank you for your good work!”. Later, she gave a PowerPoint presentation about translation frameworks, the role of technology, multimodal genres, and examples of localisation. Teacher 6 taught an American culture class. She prepared a PowerPoint presentation about the Republican Party and factors that had contributed to its election victory. First, she apologised by saying: “Sorry the classroom was only assigned yesterday”. She tried to refresh students’ memory by asking: “What did we cover last week?”. She used signposting: “During the previous tutorials, I have explained what’s meant by...”, “I

am going to give you 2 minutes…", "I would like to focus on... while reading", "We are going to see why they won by a slim majority....", "We mentioned that", "This leads us to talk about....". Teacher 7 gave a class on Arab American literature. A group of four students gave a presentation that focused on key concepts in Arab American literature entitled: "How do we define Arab-ness?". The teacher tried to elicit peer feedback before giving her own feedback. She then facilitated a discussion: "What do you notice as literature students?"; "This is a good example of hyphenation from the text". The class of Teacher 8 was about the structure of the US government. The teacher started the class by drawing a diagram on the board then started a discussion. Students were very involved, and the teacher praised them by saying: "That's a very good idea! Very interesting questions, thank you". Teacher 18 gave students a handout with grammar exercises, gave them time to work on the exercises individually then corrected the exercises. The teacher first explained adverb construction (quick–quickly, fluent–fluently, beautiful–beautifully). She also explained the difference between adjectives describing people and things (interested–interesting, motivated–motivating, bored–boring). Table 3 shows how much time was spent on each of the ARCS strategies.

Table 3

Observed ARCS strategies

ARCS	Attention	Relevance	Confidence	Satisfaction
Mean	0.8	7.6	6.4	7.1

The overall means for the time spent using each of the ARCS strategies highlight the use of relevance-producing strategies first (M = 7.6 min), followed by satisfaction-getting strategies (M = 7.1 min), and then confidence-building strategies (M = 6.4 min). Attention-

getting strategies (M = 0.8 min) come last with a considerable difference. Unlike the IMMS results reported by teachers in which confidence-building strategies were ranked first, classroom observations revealed that teachers resort to relevance-producing strategies the most. The only resemblance in the use of MotS is with the least used attention-getting strategies, which was revealed through both the questionnaire and the observation results.

It is worth restating that the MOLT categories are categorised under the four constituents of the ARCS model. Social chat, arousing curiosity, and creative elements are categorised under attention-getting strategies. Relevance-producing strategies are represented by elements such as signposting, stating purpose, establishing relevance, and referential questions. The confidence-building strategies include scaffolding, promoting cooperation, pair work or group work, and intellectual challenge. The satisfaction-generating strategies are composed of tangible rewards, individual competition, neutral or process feedback, self- or peer-correction, class applause, and effective praise. According to the results shown in Table 3, the teachers who were observed used relevance-producing strategies frequently. These MotS included signposting, stating the purpose of an activity, establishing relevance to previous knowledge, and posing referential questions. Interestingly, students' IMMS results also confirm the frequent use of relevance-producing strategies. Some MOLT items such as promoting instrumental and integrative values were totally absent during all classes observed. Hermessi (2017) explored the attitudes of Tunisian teachers of English towards including cultural aspects of English-speaking communities and found that cultural issues were considered too problematic or sensitive. It is probably for this reason why integrative or instrumental values were absent from the participants' classes. Moreover, even though group work was often used in their classes, there was no team competition. Group work was used only to facilitate tasks and promote cooperation among individual members.

At a second stage, standardised *z*-scores were computed in SPSS to compare the questionnaire results with those found during the observations. Interestingly, *z*-scores of observations and questionnaires for each teacher vary. Some teachers' *z*-scores are both positive. Some have two negative scores. Other teachers have one positive and one negative score for either of the instruments. The latter result is due to the fact that teachers either underestimate their actual use of MotS or use MotS more frequently than stated in the questionnaire answer. This difference in judgement may have been influenced by my presence as an observer or a colleague and by the participants' attempts to score higher on the MOLT scheme.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the use of MotS by Tunisian teachers of English at university level and their students' perceptions of it. Relevance-producing strategies were documented as the most frequently used MotS during the observations. These strategies include asking referential questions and ways of establishing relevance under the category of teacher discourse. Confidence-building strategies were ranked in the second position with items like stating the purpose of an activity and scaffolding. Satisfaction-generating strategies included effective praise and process feedback. Attention-getting strategies are an important factor in enhancing students' motivation (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008). However, they were the least used MotS in this study. This finding could be due to the short effect of these strategies since students' attention cannot be stimulated for a long time, especially with university students. Moreover, the attention-getting strategies might be the most challenging. Indeed, despite the spread of IT and the internet nowadays, Tunisian university classrooms are still not equipped with internet-based and digital learning tools despite the fact that using technological means has proved to be motivating for Tunisian university students (Lachheb, 2013). Still, given the lack of these facilities, it is challenging

for EFL teachers to deploy online games, quizzes, or at times even the video projector to arouse students' attention. In the present research, going beyond the MOLT items was not an option since it was structured in a minute-by-minute way. Thus, taking notes of other strategies was quite challenging. Moreover, for the purpose of the study to compare the MOLT and ARCS categories, closely following the scheme was important. In fact, the comparison of teachers' *z*-scores revealed that there were some differences between reported and observed behaviour. Some teachers underestimated their motivational practice. It could also be the case that during the observation, the teacher employed more MotS than originally planned due to students' engagement. In other cases, teachers used fewer MotS than reported in the questionnaire. Reasons could include the teacher's underuse of MotS in general or any unexpected circumstances that might have affected the teacher's lesson plan. For instance, the teacher could be demotivated due to an administrative problem that occurred before class or due students' showing up late to class or not doing their assignments, which might result in a different lesson than planned.

Despite the effectiveness of Dörnyei's (2001) MotS expressed by teachers and learners, Lamb (2019) contended that "teachers do not use them as frequently as one would expect from their stated importance, and when they do, students do not always recognise them" (p. 295). This argument supports the result of the present study that students did not recognise the MotS used by their teachers and have a significantly different perspective on the reported use of MotS. Dörnyei's (2001) taxonomy could yield interesting results when combined with Keller's (2010) ARCS model, as suggested by the findings.

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