

Rewards Anticipation and Students' Motivation: between promise and practice

Voices from EFL Teachers in Batna Middle Schools

Zidani Soraya^{1*}

Department of English Language and Literature, , University of Batna 2, Algeria, s.zidani@univ-batna2.dz

Received: 26/10/2024

Accepted: 13/03/2025

Published:12/04/2025

ملخص: على الرغم من الاهتمام الأكاديمي المتزايد بدور المكافآت خلال السنوات الماضية، فإن موقف المعلمين تجاه المكافآت والاستخدام الفعلي لها يظل مجال بحث مهملاً. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى معرفة مواقف مدرسي الطور المتوسط للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه دور المكافآت كأسلوب تعليمي. تم جمع البيانات من 70 مدرساً من متوسطات باتنة وضواحيها من خلال استطلاع عبر الإنترنت. تشير النتائج إلى وجود فجوة في استخدام مبدأ المكافآت. بينما يُظهر المعلمون موقفاً إيجابياً تجاه دور المكافآت، لا يوجد استخدام واقعي لها في اقسامهم. وفقاً لذلك، من المهم مراعاة الطريقة التي يتم بها تنفيذ هذه المبادئ، وكيف يتأثر تعليم التلاميذ بناءً على مواقف المعلمين حول تحفيز التلاميذ

الكلمات المفتاحية: المكافآت؛ المواقف؛ التحفيز؛ مدرسي المتوسطات الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

Abstract:

Despite an increasing academic focus in rewards over the last years, teachers' perceptions towards rewards remain a neglected research concern. The present study aims to get a better knowledge of Algerian EFL middle school teachers' attitudes towards rewards anticipation as a teaching practice and motivational idea in their classrooms. A random sample of 70 EFL middle school teachers from Batna was surveyed. Findings indicated that there is an attitude-use gap in reward system. While teachers show a positive attitude towards rewards, there is not a real use it their teaching practices. Accordingly, it is important to reconsider the way this teaching principle is implemented and how students' motivation is effected based on teachers' attitudes towards rewards' integration in classrooms.

Keywords: Rewards; attitudes; motivational; Algerian EFL middle school teachers.

*Corresponding author

1. INTRODUCTION

Adopting rewards is seen as a very efficacious strategy to motivate students and provide them with more opportunities while learning the language. It is claimed that rewards enable students to enhance their motivation so that their learning performance. Rewards is a principle that help to promote positive and appropriate behavior among students in classrooms. They also encourage and support active learning, experiential learning, and problem-based learning. As Aktürk (2012) stated, the teachers take on some important tasks, like employing the elements of education suitably for the goal, working with the applicable ways to achieve the required objectives.

Motivation is a psychological concept where it refers to the desire of wanting something. It significantly positively affects students' growth, interest and passion for being productive in their learning. Highly motivated students learn faster and better than the ones who get the language distasteful. Rewards is an important part of students' motivation. Rewards can raise student willingness and engagement and allows for the enhancements of learning.

Rewards can weaken students' motivation. They allow students to move away from traditional learning environments. They provide permanent learning by fostering the development of motivation. Incorporating rewards system into the classroom has proved to be beneficial yet also has some drawbacks. As students can become addicted to classroom rewards and they will not study without them; rewards also can help to motivate them to be more productive.

Previous researches have stated that the use of rewards in the classroom can also improve the classroom atmosphere (Yang, 2012). Despite all the promising benefits that might be expected from rewards anticipation. Teachers play a vital role to integrate new practices and strategies in their classrooms. Teachers should be aware of the power and impact of such teaching method when helping students to be active participants in

classrooms; they should realize that language learning, especially foreign language is a potentially stressful issue for some students.

Rewards may decrease learning when they are inappropriately integrated. They can result in the slower engagement. However, teachers should be aware about their attitudes towards rewards system as a motivational teaching practice. This should be done because attitude is an essential aspect that plays a great part in students' learning. Attitudes are a mental set, readiness to act and a psychological aspect of behaviors. They convey what we think and how we feel about a referent. Attitudes may consist entirely of cognitive or affective components. It consists of cognitive, affective and behavioral component.

As the role of reward anticipation is undeniably important, the following inquiries should be tackled:

- What are the teachers' attitudes towards implementing rewards as a teaching principle in their classrooms?
- Will rewards anticipation be the alternative teaching principle or an additional principle to motivate students, therefore their academic performance?

2. Method and Tools

To acquire comprehensive profiles of teachers' attitudes, the paper employed quantitative data (surveys). The teachers' survey was developed to collect data concerning attitudes and practices of teachers while instructing EFL course.

A sample of 70 middle school teachers in Algeria took part in the study. They were all working in middle schools in Batna. The reason behind Batna governorate is the accessibility of teachers. All teachers agreed voluntarily to take part in the study. 70 teachers (55 males and 15 females) were chosen randomly to meet the aim of the study. The participants' professional experience ranged from one to 13 years: 29 % of them had 1-5 years of service and 71% had 6-13 years of work. The participants were informed that their perspectives

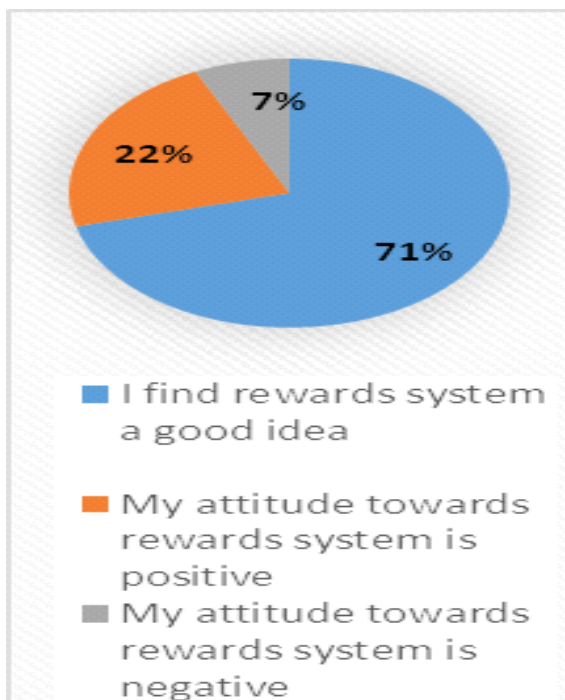
would not be used anywhere outside the research.

The validity of the survey was realized via face validity by administering it to three teachers of middle school. They made some modifications after which they considered it as a valid survey. As for survey reliability, it was administered to a sample of 12 teachers. Statistical analysis indicated that Alpha Cranach is (0.7) which seems reliable.

3. Results and Discussion

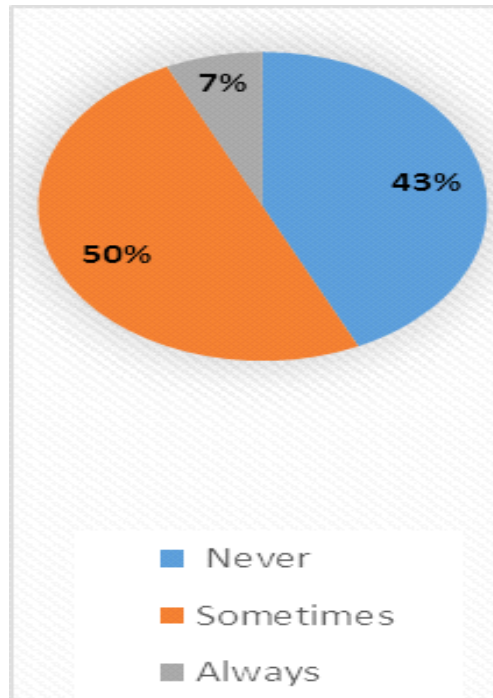
The findings of the study have important implications for teachers' professional development and educational reward anticipation issue; their attitudes were split between supporter to the adoption and those who are against the adoption.

Fig.1. Teachers' attitude towards reward systems



Source: prepared by the researcher

Fig.2. Use of rewards by respondents

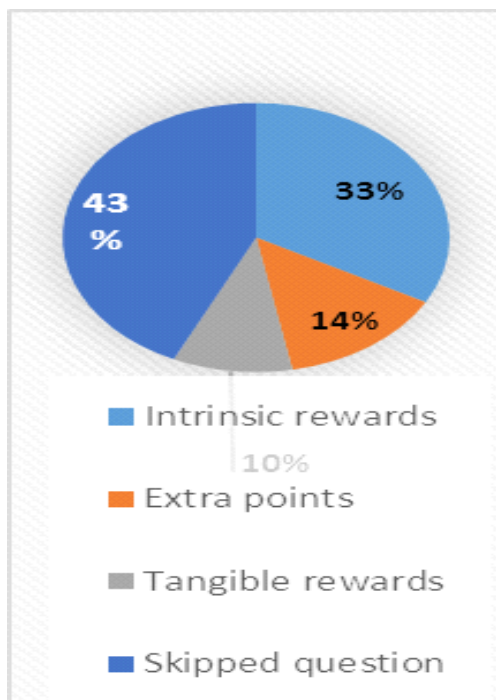


Source: prepared by the researcher

When addressing teachers' attitude towards rewards adoption. Results show that teachers find rewards a good idea (71%) and a positive thing (22%). In addition, teachers have a favorable attitude towards rewards adoption. Regarding the fully utilizing of rewards, Results show that 43% of the respondents have never used rewards in their classrooms. Among the remaining 57% that have used gamification in their courses, 7% use rewards on a regular basis. Some inconsistencies were found when participants were asked about their use of rewards, as shown in figure 2. Although some teachers found rewards system a good idea and positive, they do not necessarily use them (43%)

Rewards system seems to remain a teaching principle used by few teachers on a regular basis in their classrooms (7%). Nevertheless, the findings indicated a positive teacher's perceptions, yet a gap found to affect their views towards rewards system. The focal challenge preventing teachers to adopt rewards as a teaching principle in their courses are teachers' pessimism, teachers' fear that students will not perform without them (offering rewards is unrealistic), and lack of financial support (Aypay, 2018)

Fig.3. Rewards used in the classroom



Source: prepared by the researcher

Data reveal that the answer to what types of reward system are teachers using in the classroom is as follows: 33 % use intrinsic rewards. 14 % give extra points to students. 10 %

use tangible rewards. 33 % of teachers argued that students are not motivated by tangible rewards; intrinsic rewards must have some influence on students' learning for at least some students. Some point out that past research suggests tangible rewards has an influence on students' motivation (Davis et al. 2006) and argue that gift is one motivator among many.

However, the present data conflicts with an idea that students are more motivated by tangible rewards rather than verbal or written praise. The results reflect that intrinsic motivation is beneficial and preferable by teachers because it leads to satisfaction and higher production. It is often reflected in students' competence, knowledge and ability. Intrinsic reward is typically more beneficial in the long term. Praise is the most efficient external motivator for learning as intrinsic motivation results in great productivity. Yet it is not easy to motivate students intrinsically.

Table 1. Teachers' perspectives on the role of rewards in raising students' motivation

	Teachers' perceptions	
	n	%
1. Rewards are beneficial in the classroom		
Strongly disagree	0	00
disagree	5	07
neutral	0	00
agree	35	50
strongly agree	30	43
2. There is a lack of interaction/motivation among students in the classroom.		
Strongly disagree		
disagree	0	00
neutral	0	00

agree	35	50
strongly agree	35	50

3. I give rewards to motivate my students

strongly disagree	1	02
disagree	0	00
neutral	5	07
agree	14	20
strongly agree	50	71

4. I give rewards to avoid negative behaviors

strongly disagree	0	00
disagree	30	43
neutral	20	28
agree	7	10
strongly agree	13	19

5. Students should be rewarded for academic performance

strongly disagree	0	00
disagree	5	07
neutral	25	36
agree	33	47
strongly agree	7	10

6. Rewards help students become more self-confident

strongly disagree	0	00
disagree	5	07
	25	36

Rewards Anticipation and Students' Motivation: between promise and practice

Voices from EFL Teachers in Batna Middle Schools

neutral	40	57
agree	0	00
strongly agree		
7. Students are more motivated by rewards		
strongly disagree	1	02
disagree	0	00
neutral	5	07
agree	14	20
strongly agree	50	71
8. Students can become addicted to classroom rewards		
strongly disagree	22	31
disagree	18	26
neutral	00	00
agree	30	43
strongly agree	0	00
9. Reward systems teach students how to manipulate		
strongly disagree	15	21
disagree	30	43
neutral	0	00
agree	20	29
strongly agree	5	07
10. I will prefer to teach without reward systems classroom as there is no any kind of bribe	15	21
strongly disagree		
disagree	30	43
neutral	5	00
agree	20	29

Source: prepared by the researcher

Findings stated that some teachers (43%) are skeptical of the role of rewards because of the lack of experience assuming that if the student learn for rewards, it will be difficult to transition to intrinsic engagement. The higher the familiarity with reward, the more intense students' addiction to motivation. Similarly, (Aypay,2018) examined the negative effects of reward system on students' learning where the results indicated that the field experience and reluctance had a positive influence on their attitudes.

Additionally, (7%) of teachers hold an opposing attitude toward the reward systems in the classroom because it teaches students to become manipulators and addicted to classroom rewards. Findings indicate also that positive rewards anticipation experience could help teachers see the educational value of rewards.

When it comes to run effective learning practices, one must consider that happy students are the best students. Therefore, the rewards should be given to them. Importantly, reward anticipation increases the level of competition among students in their classrooms. It can boost their performance level to achieve learning goals. 64 out of 70 participants consider rewards as a motivational idea. It is similar to a one carried out by Hoffman et al.,(2009) in which all respondents agreed on the idea that using some forms of rewards to motivate students in the classrooms.

4. CONCLUSION

It can be inferred that there was a notable positive and direct relationship between rewards system and students' motivation and engagement. The rewards system considers an engaging strategy to motivate students and develop their learning performance. Through the present research paper, the researcher insisted on teachers' attitude towards reward use and its real integration in their classrooms. While teachers show a positive attitude towards reward systems, they have not fully utilized them. The study found that reward use is

beneficial and valuable in helping students to develop their learning. Teachers may use rewards as a tool for an entertaining atmosphere, which motivates the students. It is about saying that the more students rewarded the more they get their self-confidence, raise their interest and become active students.

One important aspect is that how teachers use rewards to increase students' academic performance; teachers should be aware of how motivation is implemented with students. If teachers decide on a specific reward system type or strategy, they trial the type to find out if motivation levels increase so that teacher could choose whether to adopt it with students. Nevertheless, the findings of the current research do not allow for generalization. Ultimately, one can argue that rewards anticipation can be worth integrated in Algerian middle schools. Even though it does not help all the students, it may help some to become good and active students. Thus, it is time to reconsider rewards anticipation as an effective strategy that promotes life-long motivated students.

Further research is needed to examine the differences in perceptions, strategies, and concerns between middle school, primary and secondary school teachers. In addition, future research is needed to improve a deeper understanding of how motivational strategies effect teachers' teaching practices and students' perspectives. Finally yet importantly, it should also find out differences on attitude towards the rewards system between the current users versus non-users.

5. Bibliography List:

1. Aktürk, A. O. (2012). Öğretmen adaylarının öğrenmeye ilişkin tutumlarının öğretmenlik mesleğini tercih etmenedenlerine ve akademik başarılarına göre incelenmesi. *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Kırşehir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 13(3), 283-297
2. Aypay, A. (2018). Is reward a punishment? From reward addiction to sensitivity to punishment. *International Journal of Psychology and Educational Studies*, 5(2): 1-11
3. Davis, K. D., Winsler, A., Middleton, M. (2006). Students' perceptions of rewards for academic performance by parents and teachers: Relations with achievement and motivation in college. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology: Research and Theory on Human Development*, 167(2), 211-220.
4. Yang, Y. C. (2012). Building virtual cities, inspiring intelligent citizens: Digital games for developing students' problem solving and learning motivation. *Computers & Education*, 59(2), 365–377

6. Appendix : Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

The present questionnaire is part of a research paper that deals with Algerian EFL middle school teachers' attitudes of Rewards Anticipation and Students' Motivation. As there is no right or wrong answer. Please answer all the questions as honestly as you can. Please tick the answer you think the most appropriate.

Section I: Teachers' General Information

1. Gender: Male ☐

Female ☐

2. How many years have you been teaching English:

1-5 years ☐

6-15 years ☐

16-24 years ☐

more than 25 years ☐

Section II: Teachers' familiarity, use and attitudes towards reward systems

3. How do you find reward systems in your classes?

Positive idea ☐

Negative idea ☐

Good idea ☐

4. How often do you use reward systems in your classes?

Always ☐

Sometimes ☐

Never ☐

5. What kind of rewards do you use in your classes?

Intrinsic rewards. ☐

Extra points ☐

Tangible rewards. ☐

Section III: Teachers' perspectives on the role of rewards in raising students' motivation

Statement	Strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
Rewards are beneficial in the classroom					
There is a lack of interaction/motivation among students in the classroom.					
I give rewards to motivate my students					
I give rewards to avoid negative behaviors					
Students should be rewarded for academic performance					
Rewards help students become more self-confident					
Students are more motivated by rewards					
Students can become addicted to classroom					

Voices from EFL Teachers in Batna Middle Schools

rewards					
● Reward systems teach students how to manipulate					
● I will prefer to teach without reward systems classroom as there is no any kind of bribe					

Thank you so much for your cooperation.