

## The Effect of Goal-Orientedness and Group Cohesiveness as Two Motivational Strategies on Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension

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**Abstract.** Motivation is one of the basic factors that determines success and failure in L2 learning; thus, motivational strategies should be regarded as a crucial aspect of the theoretical analysis of L2 motivation (Cheng & Drnyei, 2007). This study was an attempt to find out the possible effects of two motivational strategies, namely 'group cohesiveness' and 'goal-orientedness' strategies on promoting learners' reading comprehension in the EFL classes. Ninety intermediate male Iranian EFL learners were chosen and they were assigned to three groups of 30 students: group cohesiveness, goal-orientedness and control. For the pre-test, the researcher used the reading part of Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE). In one of the groups, the teacher used 'group cohesiveness' motivation strategy and the other group was exposed to 'goal-orientedness'. The treatment lasted for 20 sessions and each session

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Received: February 2018; Accepted: May 2018

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took 1.5 hours. After the treatment phase, the post-test was used to assess participants' reading comprehension. Results showed that although the learners in the two experimental groups, group cohesiveness and goal-orientedness, indicated to have been significantly improved in their reading comprehension scores, there was no significant difference between the two treatment conditions. Pedagogical implications for L2 institutes, teacher educators, and also materials developers are discussed.

**Keywords:** Goal-orientedness, group cohesiveness, motivational strategy, reading comprehension

## 1. Introduction

Motivation is the initial force in L2 learning process and also a drive that keeps learners on the track. "Motivation has been considered as an individual difference, without which, even individuals with the most outstanding abilities cannot achieve long-term goals" (Drnyei, 1998). According to Dickinson (1995), the articles on the relationship between motivation and language learning over the past years have been mainly on the social-psychological approach to motivation of Gardner, Tremblay, and Masgoret (1997), which may not fully support attempts to demonstrate the link autonomy and motivation. Although there are a number of research studies that have been carried out in the field of motivation (e.g. Csizr & Drnyei, 2005; Drnyei, 2002, 2003; Gardner, 2001, Noels, 2001; Ushioda, 2011), we can see that most of research studies have been devoted to identification and analysis of the nature and different types of motivation rather than focusing on techniques that can lead us to increase motivation in foreign/second language classroom; and "the question of how to motivate language learners has been a neglected area in L2 motivation research" (Drnyei, 1998, p. 31).

Motivation, being abstract, multidimensional and inconstant makes it a big challenge for researchers of the second language education. However, there is a method to follow and that is deciding which aspect of motivation to carry out the study on. To run a scientific research study, we need to place a specific emphasis on systematic aspect of study and reduce the effect of personal subjectivity and other like ones. For example, in a study on intrinsic motivation, Deci and Ryan (1985a) stated that "intrinsic motivation will be operative when action is experienced

as autonomous” (p. 29). They also said that an autonomy-supporting learning context provides conditions for the development of intrinsic motivation, and that self-determination leads to intrinsic motivation.

Since learners and teachers’ attitude toward motivation varies in different contexts, raising their awareness of motivation by reviewing theories cannot always solely help. The more practical motivation is regarded, the better outcome can be observed in real language classrooms; and that is why this study seeks to identify and develop more effective implementation of motivational strategies and find out which strategy, namely ‘group cohesiveness’ and ‘goal-orientedness’, is more effective. Besides, language learners and teachers’ perceptions of motivation are in a wide range, which are to be known to figure out localized motivational strategies.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Motivational strategies**

According to Drnyei (2001), motivational strategies are techniques that foster the goal-related behavior of individuals; these behaviors can be promoted by a number of different ways. As Cheng and Drnyei (2007) pointed out, a quick review of the literature reveals that more research has been devoted to identify and analyze different types of motivation and validating motivational theories rather than focusing on techniques and strategies which can help teachers and learners to promote motivation and learning in the second/foreign classes.

Researchers have recommendations for motivation educators such as the limited use of rewards, using rewards to provide information about competence, and increasing student autonomy. Extrinsic rewards should be carefully used by teachers in the classroom. In comparison with intangible rewards (such as verbal feedback), tangible rewards (such as grades, candy, or special privileges) have significant negative effects on both free-choice behavior and self-reported interest (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 1999).

According to Drnyei (2001), three interrelated motivational conditions are prerequisite to motivational strategies which are: teacher student appropriate relationship, classroom having comfortable and sup-

portive circumstance, and putting groups on the same & right coherent track.

Using these motivational strategies can be beneficial for both teachers and learners. These strategies occur at four stages as the following (Dörnyei, 2001, pp. 28-29):

1. Generating the basic motivational conditions
2. Generating initial motivation
3. Maintaining and protecting motivation
4. Encouraging positive self-evaluation

#### **2.1.1. Group cohesiveness motivational strategy**

Dörnyei (2001) defined group cohesiveness motivational strategy in this way: a cohesive learner group is one which is together; in which there is a strong feeling of 'us'; and which students are happy to belong to. That is, cohesiveness refers to the members' commitment to the group and to each other. Dörnyei continued that "it is the 'magnetism' or 'glue' that holds the group together" (2001, p. 42). As Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998) suggested, group cohesiveness is often manifested by members seeking each other out, providing mutual support, and making each other welcome in the group.

The components of this motivational strategy are provided in Dörnyei (2001) as: try and promote interaction, cooperation and the sharing of genuine personal information among the learners, use ice-breakers at the beginning of a course, regularly use small-group tasks where students can mix, encourage and if possible organize extracurricular activities and outings, try and prevent the emergence of rigid seating patterns, include activities that lead to the successful completion of whole group tasks or involve small-group competition games, and promote the building of a group legend.

#### **2.1.2. Goal-orientedness motivational strategy**

Goal-orientedness motivational strategy is one of the strategies to motivate L2 learners to help them really understand or accept why they are involved in a learning activity; therefore, teachers are strongly advised

to describe the goals of the class before, during and after the course (Dörnyei, 2001). As Hadfield (1992) argues, “it is fundamental to the successful working of a group to have a sense of direction and a common purpose. Defining and agreeing aims is one of the hardest tasks that the group has to undertake together” (p. 134).

The components of this motivational strategy are presented in Dörnyei’s (2001) work. These components are: having the students negotiate their individual goals and outline a common purpose, and displaying the final outcome in public, drawing attention from time to time to the class goals and how particular activities help to attain them, and keeping the class goals achievable by re-negotiating if necessary.

The main focus of this motivational strategy is on explaining the goals of the lesson before, during and after each session. In fact, this motivational strategy highlights the goals of the lesson and each session to be fully negotiated with the learners. This motivational strategy requires that at the beginning of the class, the teacher introduce the topic of the lesson, along with the goals of each lesson, provided both by the course book followed by other goals by the teacher (Dörnyei, 2001).

## **2.2. Theoretical background of reading in EFL**

Last decades witnessed a special interest in second language learning, with a special attention to reading skill. This interest, which is increasing, has in turn caused an increase in demand for high-quality second language materials, as well as effective reading courses (Pressley, 2002). Research has shown that developing reading skills in a foreign or second language is a dynamic and interactive process, taking place by students who will put their background knowledge to use, as well as their schema and also their grammatical knowledge. They will also utilize their knowledge in their L1 and in real world, the goals that they have set for themselves, which helps them to achieve a comprehension of the text they are reading. Furthermore, the views of second language acquisition (SLA) of reading and its nature are considered to be shaped by their own social, cultural, and personal histories (Tierney, 2005).

In the reading process, one needs to not only comprehend the direct meaning of the text but understand its implied meanings. According

to Tierney (2005), “the learning of reading is not only learning to recognize words; but learning to understand texts” (p. 51). Reading involves a high degree of cognitive capability available for understanding of the texts (Pressley, 2002). For instance, as Pressley (2002) pointed out, skilled readers know that comprehension can be gained from reading activity. They know how to connect what is being read to their prior knowledge, how to foretell the next issues in the text, and how to summarize what is being read.

Reading comprehension is significant in that, as Tierney (2005) believed, it is regarded as one of the main goals of L2 learners as they try to have a comprehension of the world they are living in, as well as a comprehension of themselves, which enables them to ponder about, and also react to what they have just read. To shed light on this issue, Grabe (1991) believes that reading is a basic L2 skill that those who are learning the language feel the need to master when they are reading in academic contexts.

According to Carrell and Eisterhold (1983), second language learners’ reading theory has been affected during the past decades by Goodman’s (1970) ideas, who considers reading as a “guessing game by means of it, the reader builds again a message which has been encrypt by a writer” (p. 554). Grabe (1991) illustrated Goodman’s comprehension of reading as “active process of understanding where students must be taught strategies to read in efficient way (e.g., guess from context, define expectations, make speculations about the text, skimming, etc.” (p. 377).

Paran (1996) rejected Goodman’s (1970) view of reading as an activity containing guesses which the readers reconstruct during their reading process. Paran believed Goodman’s view means that “one does not read all the sentences similarly, however one depends on some words to get an idea of what kind of sentence (e.g. an explanation) is likely to follow” (p. 25).

In a study to examine adaptation of motivational strategies, Sugita McEown and Takeuchi (2014) chose 222 university students. They adapted the motivational strategy according to students’ English proficiency levels and their original motivational intensity levels in order to under-

stand the process by which instructors influence students' motivation. Results of their study indicated that the two clusters did not exhibit a similar trend in terms of the relationship between frequency of motivational strategy use by teachers and students' motivation except with respect to two motivational strategies.

Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) conducted a replication survey of the previous study in order to identify the motivational strategies that teachers can implement to motivate learners in Asian context Taiwan. In their study, Cheng and Dörnyei explored the motivational strategies that Taiwanese English teachers implement by focusing on first how important the teachers consider certain motivational strategies and second the frequency of their use of these strategies in the class. Two Chinese versions of questionnaires with the same set of strategies were used which were based on the motivational strategies offered in Dörnyei (2001) to prevent any language-based interference. Participants were 387 teachers of English in Taiwan, teaching in a wide range of contexts from elementary schools to universities. The only difference between these two questionnaires was their rating scales: the first questionnaire included six response options regarding the degrees of importance ('not important' to 'very important') and the second questionnaire was based on the degrees of frequency ('hardly ever' to/ 'very often'). The data produced several interesting findings, the analyses of results indicated that some strategies are transferable across different cultures and some strategies are culture-bound. However, some other motivational strategies are required to be substituted with the intransferable ones, which is the expected result of this study.

In another similar study, Vibulphol (2016) investigated L2 learners' motivation and learning of English and the ways in which the teachers supported the students' motivation and learning in natural classroom settings. He collected the data from students and their teachers in twelve English language classrooms in Thailand. The findings of his study indicated that most students had a relatively high level of motivation, and many reported having internal interests in learning English; however, it was also found that a few students in almost every class showed a lack of motivation.

In the Iranian context, there have been studies in the field of motivational strategies such as that of Papi and Abdollahzadeh (2012) with the aim of providing observational evidence on the relationship between teachers' use of motivational strategies and students' motivated behavior. They selected 741 male learners of English from 26 secondary school classes taught by 17 teachers to participate. Then they measured teachers' use of motivational strategies and the students' motivated behavioral codes using a classroom observation instrument originally developed by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008), as well as a questionnaire that consisted of both situation-specific and general-motivational scales. They found that the teachers' motivational practice is significantly related to the students' motivated behavior.

Furthermore, to find out about student reactions to content-based instruction in EFL reading classes, Kobayashi (2015) carried out a survey on motivational strategies with EFL reading classes at two Japanese universities. He used content-based instruction (CBI) in a collaborative classroom setting to foster a comfortable learning community to discover their notions about CBI, English learning motivation, and improvement of English proficiency. He gave questionnaires to the students three times during the academic year. Results of his study showed that content-based instruction promotes students' language learning and motivates them to learn by analyzing their responses.

Most of the research studies in the field of motivation have been carried out in order to explore the nature and different types of motivation instead of its implementation in the classroom. Motivation refers to "the reasons underlying behavior" (Guay, et al, 2010, p. 712) and that is among key-role factors for language learners, which is integrated with learners' autonomy. However, studies on how much applying motivational strategies can help learners develop better reading comprehension are scarce. In fact, the literature does not feature if applying motivational strategies, namely group cohesiveness and goal-orientedness, have any effect on different skills, especially reading comprehension. Therefore, the following research questions are proposed:

1. Does applying 'group cohesiveness' motivational strategy have any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension?



2. Does applying 'goal-orientedness' motivational strategy have any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension?

3. Is there any significant difference between motivational strategies, group cohesiveness or goal-orientedness, in their effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension?

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Design of the study**

This quantitative study followed a quasi-experimental design. The study employed a pre-test and post-test design with two experimental and one control groups, and tried to investigate which one of the motivational strategies had more statistically significant effect on improving Iranian learners' reading comprehension.

#### **3.2. Participants**

In order to carry out the present study, first of all, 120 EFL learners were chosen through convenient sampling. In other words, these participants were the intermediate learners of Nasir English School in Tehran, where the researchers could conduct the study. All these participants were male.

For the purpose of homogeneity, prior to conducting research, a Solutions Placement Test (Edwards, 2007) as a proficiency test, was given to the students, and 90 students were selected as the participants to the study based on the results of their proficiency test. Students whose scores fell within the range of one standard deviation above and below the mean were chosen as homogeneous participants for this study. These 90 EFL learners, who constituted the final participants of the study, were randomly assigned to one control and two experimental groups with 30 students in each one. Therefore, the sampling procedure was convenient sampling in the first and random sampling in the second stage.

#### **3.3. Instrumentation**

The instruments that were used in this study were a Solutions Placement Test for homogenization and the reading comprehension part of Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE) for pre-test and post-test. To

determine the participants' level of proficiency, the Solutions Placement Test (Edwards, 2007) was applied. For the current study, those students whose scores were within the intermediate level were taken into account based on the following rubric score: 0-20 elementary, 21-30 pre-intermediate, 31-50 intermediate.

The test was developed by Edwards (2007) which included 61 questions from a wide range of question types including 50 multiple choice questions, 10 reading questions and 1 writing question and the participants had 90 minutes to answer them. Out of the population of the current study, 90 were chosen on the basis of Solutions Placement Test results. The test can assess students' knowledge of key grammar and vocabulary and reading comprehension and a writing task from elementary to intermediate levels.

The pre-test was used to assess participants' reading comprehension. For the pre-test, the researcher used the reading part of Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE). The tests were taken from FCE Samples Handbook published in 1996 by Cambridge University Press. With regard to the reliability of this tests, Grossmann (2010) reported an average reliability of .92 for the entire FCE test for the period 2000-2003 and an average reliability of .84 for the reading section for the same period. The content validity of the test was also checked and approved of by three university instructors in the present study. After the treatment phase, the post-test was used to assess participants' reading comprehension.

The post-test consisted of four reading tasks, and the participants had 1 hour 15 minutes to take the four parts. Participants were asked to read the texts and answer the follow-up questions. The number of questions for all of the four parts was 35. It is also noteworthy that the pre-test and post-test were exactly the same, just the order of questions were different.

### **3.4. Data collection procedure**

First of all, a Solutions Placement Test was administered to homogenize the learners. Out of 120 students, 90 were chosen on the basis of Solutions Placement Test results. In other words, those students whose scores in

this test fell within one standard deviation above and below the mean were chosen as the participants of the study.

After that, the learners were assigned to three groups of 30 students and took the reading exam as the pre-test of reading comprehension. In one of the groups, the teacher used 'group cohesiveness' motivation strategy. The other group was exposed to 'goal-orientedness' as motivation strategy applied to their classrooms by the teacher. The treatment lasted for 20 sessions and each session lasted for 1.5 hours.

During the course of the treatment, each group was exposed to a set of motivational strategies different from those of the other group. These steps were adopted from Dörnyei's (2001) proposed procedures for applying the motivational strategies in the classroom. For the 'group cohesiveness' group, the following procedures were taken based on Dörnyei (2001):

- Try and promote interaction, cooperation and the sharing of genuine personal information among the learners.
- Use ice-breakers at the beginning of a course.
- Regularly use small-group tasks where students can mix.
- Encourage and if possible organize extracurricular activities and outings.
- Try and prevent the emergence of rigid seating patterns. ” ” Include activities that lead to the successful completion of whole-group tasks or involve small-group competition games.
- Promote the building of a group legend.

As for the 'goal-orientedness' group, the following steps and procedures were taken based on Drneyi (2001):

- Have the students negotiate their individual goals and outline a common purpose, and display the final outcome in public.
- Draw attention from time to time to the class goals and how particular activities help to attain them.
- Keep the class goals achievable by re-negotiating if necessary.

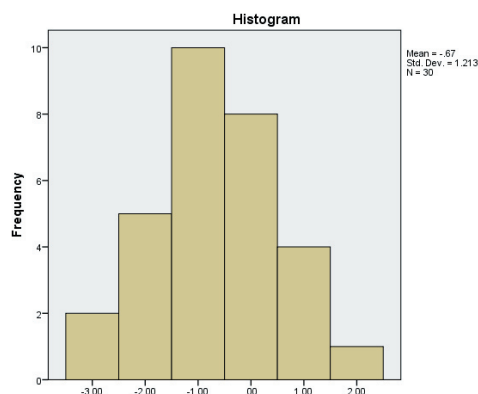
At the end of the treatment, the learners took another reading comprehension exam to test their reading comprehension as post-test. The result of this post-test was compared with the result of the pre-test to see if there was a difference between the scores.

## 4. Results

This research used six independent samples t-tests to measure the difference between the learners' pre-test and post-test. The software that was used for data analysis was SPSS for Windows. All statistical tests conducted to address the questions in the study used 0.05 as the minimum probability level of significance. The SPSS statistical version 21 was used for the computation in the analysis of the data.

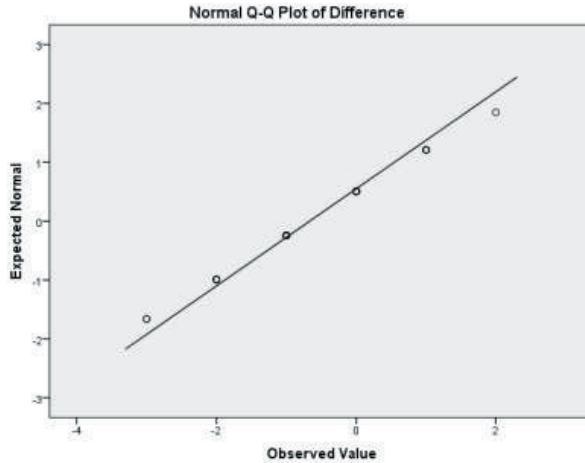
### 4.1. Normality

In order to carry out a t-test, an assumption needs to be met. t-test demands that the distribution of samples must be approximately normal. Therefore, to test for the normality of the data, the histogram of the data distribution was calculated by SPSS and the results of the histogram are presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The normality of the data

This figure shows that the data are normally distributed, which further indicates that the samples are normally distributed. The kurtosis and skewness are also normal. In order to further check the normality assumption, the Q-Q plot of the data are presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** The Q-Q plots of normality of distribution

Figure 2 shows that the dots are on or close to the diagonal line, which means that the data are normally distributed. Test of homogeneity of variances is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.602	2	87	.550

The Levene test for the homogeneity of variances was carried out and the results show that the variances were homogenous. The results indicated that the significance of the homogeneity for reading comprehension was .55. Since the significance of the Levene's test is larger than the p-value (.05), it can be concluded that the participants were homogeneous in terms of their reading comprehension scores in the pre-test.

### **Descriptive statistics pre and post-test**

Initially, the descriptive statistics for the data gathered through all the measures were checked by using the SPSS 21. As mentioned earlier, the criteria for reading comprehension was set based on participants' scores on their pre and post-test. In order to check the effect of using group cohesiveness and goal-orientedness motivational techniques on the reading

comprehension, two independent-samples t-tests were run. According to the results, the first research question was checked. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of independent-samples t-tests including the mean and the standard deviation of the control and experimental groups' pre and post-test scores regarding reading comprehension.

**Table 2:** Group Statistics of Two Groups' Pre and Post-test Scores

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
reading pre-test	3.0667	30	1.20153	.21937
reading post-test	3.7333	30	1.25762	.22961

Table 2 shows the descriptive data. This shows that the mean score of the participants of the two groups in the pre-test was 3.0, whereas their mean scores in the reading comprehension post-test was 3.7. This shows an improvement in the learners' reading comprehension.

#### 4.2. Inferential statistics

The first research question sought to find out if group cohesiveness motivational strategy had a significant effect on the learners' reading comprehension. The results of the independent-samples t-test for the pre-tests is as follows.

**Table 3:** Means of the group cohesiveness and control group in pre-test

Group Statistics					
	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pre-test	group cohesiveness	30	3.1000	1.21343	.22154
	control	30	3.0000	1.20344	.21972

Based on Table 3, the mean of the group cohesiveness in reading comprehension pre-test was 3.1 and the mean of the control group was 3. The results of the comparison between these tests are as follows.

**Table 4:** Comparing means of group cohesiveness and control group in pre-test

		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Interval Difference	Confidence of the Difference
						Lower	Upper	
pre- test	Equal variances assumed	.320	58	.750	.10000	.31202	-.52458	.72458
	Equal variances not assumed	.320	57.996	.750	.10000	.31202	-.52458	.72458

Table 4 illustrates that with regard to group-cohesiveness motivational strategy, the difference between the learners' pre-test in the group cohesiveness and control groups was not significant ( $p > .05$ ), showing that their reading comprehension was not significantly different in pre-test before the treatment. The post-tests are compared in the following tables.

**Table 5:** Means of the group cohesiveness and control group in post-test

group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
post-test	group cohesiveness	30	4.6000	1.16264	.21227
	control	30	3.7333	1.11211	.20304

Based on Table 5, the mean of the group cohesiveness in reading comprehension post-test was 4.6 and the mean of the control group was 3.7. The results of the comparison between these tests are as follows.

**Table 6:** Comparing means of group cohesiveness and control group in post-test

		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper	
post- test	Equal variances assumed	2.950	58	.005	.86667	.29374	.27868	1.45465
	Equal variances not assumed	2.950	57.886	.005	.86667	.29374	.27866	1.45468

By looking at Table 6 and comparing the mean scores, it can be said that the post-test scores of the group cohesiveness were significantly higher than the post-test of control group. Therefore, it can be said that group cohesiveness motivational strategy had a significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension.

The second research question sought to find out if goal-orientedness motivational strategy had a significant effect on the learners' reading comprehension. The results of the independent-samples t-test is as follows.

**Table 7:** Means of the goal-orientedness and control group in pre-test

group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pre-test	goal-orientedness	30	3.1333	1.19578	.21832
	control	30	3.0000	1.20344	.21972

Based on Table 7, the mean of the goal-orientedness in reading comprehension was 3.1 and the mean of the control group was 3. The results of the comparison between these tests are as follows.



**Table 8:** Comparing means of goal-orientedness and control group in pre-test

		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper	
pre- test	Equal variances assumed	.430	58	.668	.13333	.30974	-.48668	.75334
	Equal variances not assumed	.430	57.998	.668	.13333	.30974	-.48668	.75335

Table 8 illustrates that with regard to goal-orientedness motivational strategy, the difference between the learners' pre-test in the goal-orientedness and control group was not significant ( $p > .05$ ), showing that their reading comprehension did not significantly differ from each other in pre-test before the treatment. Their post-test results were also compared with another independent samples t-test, which is presented in the following tables.

**Table 9:** Means of the goal-orientedness and control group in post-test

group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
post-test	goal-orientedness	30	4.8000	1.27035	.23193
	control	30	3.7333	1.11211	.20304

Based on Table 9, the mean of the goal-orientedness in reading comprehension post-test was 4.8 and the mean of the control group was 3.7. The results of the comparison between these tests are as follows.

**Table 10:** Comparing means of goal-orientedness and control group in post-test

		t-test for Equality of Means								
		t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
						Lower	Upper			
post- test	Equal variances assumed	3.460	58	.001	1.06667	.30825	.44963	1.68370		
	Equal variances not assumed	3.460	57.003	.001	1.06667	.30825	.44940	1.68393		

By looking at Table 10 and comparing the mean scores, it can be said that the post-test of the goal-orientedness and control groups were significantly different. Therefore, it can be said that goal-orientedness motivational strategy had a significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension.

In order to see whether there was a difference between the two experimental groups in their performance in reading comprehension, two other independent samples t-tests were carried out and the results are as follows. First, the descriptive results are presented in Table 11 below:

**Table 11:** Means of the goal-orientedness and group cohesiveness in pre-test

group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pre-test	group cohesiveness	30	3.1000	1.21343	.22154
	goal-orientedness	30	3.1333	1.19578	.21832

Based on Table 11, the mean of the goal-orientedness in reading comprehension was 3.1 and the mean of the group cohesiveness group was 3.1. The results of the comparison between these tests are as follows.

**Table 12:** Comparing means of goal-orientedness and group cohesiveness in pre-test

		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper	
pre- test	Equal variances assumed	- .107	58	.915	-.03333	.31104	- .65594	.58927
	Equal variances not assumed	- .107	57.988	.915	-.03333	.31104	- .65594	.58928

Table 12 illustrates that with regard to goal-orientedness motivational strategy, the difference between the learners' pre-test in the goal-orientedness and group cohesiveness group was not significant ( $p > .05$ ), showing that their reading comprehension did not significantly differ from each other in pre-test before the treatment. Their post-test results were also compared with another independent samples t-test, which are presented in the following tables.

**Table 13:** Means of the goal-orientedness and group cohesiveness in post-test

group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Mean	Error
post-test group cohesiveness	30	4.6000	1.16264	.21227	
goal-orientedness	30	4.8000	1.27035	.23193	

Based on Table 13, the mean of the goal-orientedness in reading comprehension post-test was 4.8 and the mean of the group cohesiveness was 4.6. The results of the comparison between these tests are as follows.

**Table 14:** Comparing means of goal-orientedness and group cohesiveness in post-test

		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper	
post- test	Equal variances assumed	-.636	58	.527	-.20000	.31441	-.82935	.42935
	Equal variances not assumed	-.636	57.551	.527	-.20000	.31441	-.82945	.42945

By looking at table 14 and comparing the mean scores, it can be said that the post-test of the goal-orientedness and group cohesiveness were not significantly different. Therefore, it can be said that there was no difference between the effect of goal-orientedness motivational strategy and group cohesiveness on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension.

## 5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of two motivational strategies, i.e. goal-orientedness and group cohesiveness, on upper intermediate Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension. As the results of the study suggested, both group cohesiveness and goal-orientedness motivational strategies had a significant effect on Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension. It was also shown that learners in the goal-orientedness group scored slightly higher than the group cohesiveness group, but this difference was not statistically significant.

The results obtained in this study can be justified by referring to intrinsic/extrinsic motivation dichotomy. The two motivational strategies tested in the present study, namely goal-orientedness and group cohesiveness, belong to the intrinsic side since no external reward is offered to the students. According to Deci and Ryan (1985b), intrinsically-motivated people do an activity for its own sake rather than for outside

pressure or promised reward. The developed theory is the promotion of more effective learning achieved both through learners being intrinsically motivated and operating in "autonomy supporting and informational conditions" (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, p. 19), which will enhance intrinsic motivation.

Previous research studies have shown that offering rewards to learners, who were previously intrinsically motivated, can reduce intrinsic motivation and eventually diminishing the effectiveness of learning (DeCharms, 1984; Deci & Ryan, 1985a). Therefore, frequently testing and grading (depending on how they are viewed by learners) won't encourage learning. The effect of tests, grades and feedback devices generally appears to be of discouragement. Some learners (probably those who are primarily focused on learning and learning objectives) are able to perceive grades and feedback as informational events, which do not threaten their self-determination but providing useful information for further decision making.

Others (who value high grades for the status but not the indication of the learning achieved) perceive tests and grades as controlling, which reduce the learners' self-determination (Grolnick & Ryan, 1985). As we have seen the intrinsic/extrinsic theory of motivation explicitly relates motivation to autonomy. Intrinsic motivation helps learners take responsibility for learning (self-determination).

As Duffy and Roehler (1983) stated, learners do not operate in controlling structures and events but in informational structures. Goal-orientedness and group cohesiveness are among motivational strategies which create informational structures in the classroom. That is another reason why they were demonstrated to be successful in improving EFL learners' reading comprehension in the present study.

From among the studies that yielded more or less the same results when compared with this study, in a classroom-oriented investigation of the effects of motivational strategies on student motivation, Guilloteaux and Drnyei (2008) investigated 40 ESOL classrooms in South Korea involving 27 teachers and more than 1,300 learners, to try to examine the link between the teachers' motivational teaching practice and their students' language learning motivation. The students' motivation was

measured by a self-report questionnaire and a classroom observation instrument specifically developed for this investigation, the motivation orientation of language teaching (MOLT). They also used the MOLT observation scheme to assess the teachers' use of motivational strategies, along with a post hoc rating scale filled in by the observer. The results of their study indicated that the language teachers' motivational practice was linked to increased levels of the learners' motivated learning behavior as well as their motivational state.

Cheng and Drnyei (2007) studied the use of motivational strategies in language instruction within EFL teaching in Taiwan. Their large-scale empirical survey reported a modified replication of the Drnyei and Csizr (2006) study: 387 Taiwanese teachers of English were asked to rate a list of comprehensive motivational strategies in terms of how much importance they attached to these and how often they implemented them in their teaching practice. The results of their study indicate that the list of motivational macro-strategies that emerged in this study bears a certain amount of resemblance to the list generated by Drnyei and Csizr's survey amongst Hungarian English teachers, which provides reassurance that at least some motivational strategies are transferable across diverse cultural and ethnolinguistic contexts. However, as they found, there are also dissimilarities between the Taiwanese and the Hungarian findings, indicating that some strategies are culture-sensitive or even culture-dependent.

In a very similar study to the one reported above, Drnyei and Csizr (2006) presented the results of a large language attitude/motivation survey in second language studies. The research team gathered data from over 13,000 Hungarian language learners on three successive occasions: in 1993, 1999 and 2004. The examined period covered a particularly prominent time in Hungary's history, the transition from a closed, Communist society to a western-style democracy that became a member of the European Union in 2004. Thus, their study provides an 'attitudinal/motivational flow-chart' describing how significant sociopolitical changes affect the language disposition of a nation. The investigation focused on the appraisal of five target languages - English, German, French, Italian and Russian - and this multi-language design made it

also possible to observe the changing status of the different languages in relation to each other over the examined 12-year period. Thus, the authors were in an ideal position to investigate the ongoing impact of language globalization in a context where for various political/historical reasons certain transformation processes took place with unusual intensity and speed. The results of their study was a unique blueprint of how and why language globalization takes place in an actual language learning environment.

In an article to introduce a set of motivational strategies that a supervisor might use to heighten subordinate work motivation and performance, Oldham (1976) studied the application of six separate dimensions: Personally Rewarding, Personally Punishing, Setting Goals, Designing Feedback Systems, Placing Personnel, and Designing Job Systems. Results of his study show highly significant, positive relationships between five of the strategies and two independent ratings of effectiveness criteria. A comparison of these results with those obtained when using measures of 'consideration' and 'structure' as independent variables also was made in his study which showed the motivational strategies to be better predictors of effectiveness than 'consideration' or 'structure'.

In finding the effects of teachers' motivational strategies on learners' motivation, Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, and Ratcheva (2013) did a controlled investigation of second language acquisition. They used a quasi-experimental design to assess the effects of motivational strategies used by Saudi English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers (N= 14) on Saudi EFL learners' (N= 296) self-reported learning motivation. The experimental treatment of their study involved class-time exposure to 10 preselected motivational strategies over an 8-week period; the control group received traditional teaching methods. The results of their study revealed a significant rise in learner motivation over time exclusively or predominantly among experimental vs. control learners, which held robust even when controlling for pretreatment group differences.

However, in social psychology, there is an active research domain, group dynamics that focuses on how the group's collective behavior influences its members' development of beliefs and action. However, Drnyei and Murphey (2003) argue that group-related matters have not

been given their due importance in L2 studies.

Another different finding with regard to one of the motivational strategies under study by this research, that is goal-orientedness, Cheng and Drnyei (2007) surveyed this macro-strategy and found that English teachers are either not entirely sure about the value of setting learner goals or have difficulty in putting this strategy into practice in their teaching contexts. They further argue that a lack of recognition of the utility of goal setting may also be due to the fact that language teachers often believe that the official curricula outline a set of institutional objectives that are readily servable.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the results of the data analysis, it can be concluded that within different strategies for improving motivation in EFL learners, group cohesiveness is a very powerful one, as it has been revealed that it had a significant effect on the learners' reading comprehension scores. In addition, the results can be generalized to upper intermediate EFL learners. Therefore, if we want to increase motivation in upper intermediate learners, group cohesiveness can be considered a good technique for that.

In addition, due to the fact that it was revealed that goal-orientedness is a significantly effective motivational strategy on Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners, it can be concluded that this strategy can be used to increase the learners' reading comprehension scores. In other words, teachers who want to find a good motivational strategy to increase their learners' reading comprehension scores, they can opt for goal-orientedness strategy, which has proved to be effective in this regard.

Another conclusion that can be taken from the results of this research is that for having better learners in reading comprehension, either one of the two motivational strategies, group cohesiveness and goal-orientedness, can be used. To say it more exactly, choosing one of the two techniques studied in this research study can be up to the teacher based on the desires of the learners. Teachers can also alternate between the two techniques and not worry about one of them being a better choice,



because it was found that there was no significant difference between them.

The findings of the current study can have a number of pedagogical implications for L2 institutes, teacher educators, and also materials developers. Foreign language institutes are suggested to maintain a more flexible view towards the use of motivational strategies in their classes and allow their teachers to use the motivational strategies and techniques in the classroom.

Foreign language teachers are recommended to include motivational strategies in their lesson plans and predict the areas of difficulty the learners may face with, using motivational strategies as facilitating tools for overcoming hurdles on the path of learning the target language.

Moreover, materials developers can also exploit the findings of the study in developing course books and other supplementary materials to be taught in language classrooms. Fortunately, this has been observed in a number of course books. This trend can be applied to newer course books as well to maximize learners' grasp of the materials taught in the classroom through using motivational strategies.

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