

Directed Motivational Currents: A Case Study from the Perspective of Mandarin Teachers in an Indonesian Islamic School

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Abstract

In 2013, Dornyei introduced the Directed Motivational Current (DMC) theory, gaining academic attention for focusing on personal goals and aspirations in second language (L2) education. Most research discusses DMC dimensions and their application to L2 learners, but there is a gap in studies on whether DMC exists among L2 teachers. This study uses qualitative research to explore a Mandarin teacher's intense and enduring motivation in an Indonesian Islamic secondary school. It aims to identify a core feature of DMC in the teacher's motivation and confirm the effectiveness of its structure. The findings show that the teacher's motivation demonstrates characteristics such as aiming for long-term goals, having a significant contributing structure, and positive emotions, highlighting the practical value of the DMC framework in supporting long-term motivation among L2 teachers.

Keywords: directed motivation current, mandarin teacher, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Motivation is a critical factor in foreign language teaching, as it directly impacts the effectiveness of language instruction. Meanwhile, teachers are key in guiding and supporting students, helping them overcome language barriers, and improving their learning efficiency (Guilloteaux, 2008). However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding applying motivational theories, specifically Directed Motivational Currents (DMC), in Mandarin teaching. The DMC theory, the latest advancement in the study of motivation in second language (L2) acquisition, provides a novel perspective on sustaining high motivation levels over extended periods (Dastgahian et al., 2018). This study aims to address this gap by exploring the occurrence and characteristics of DMC in the context of Mandarin teaching from the perspective of Mandarin teachers.

According to Dornyei and Henry (2016), all DMC phenomena are characterized by three core elements: goal/vision orientation, a salient facilitation structure, and positive emotional energy. Goal/vision orientation involves a clear and compelling end goal that directs the individual's efforts. The salient facilitation structure provides a well-defined pathway with sub-goals and activities that systematically lead toward the overarching objective. Positive emotional energy refers to the uplifting and motivating emotional experiences that sustain the individual's engagement and drive throughout the process. These elements create a powerful motivational dynamic that can significantly enhance language learning and teaching effectiveness.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to both theoretical and practical domains. Theoretically, it extends the application of DMC theory to a new educational and cultural context, offering insights into how motivational currents can be harnessed in Mandarin teaching. By examining DMC in the specific setting of an Islamic school, the study provides a deeper understanding of the interplay between culture, motivation, and language learning. Practically, the findings can inform teacher training and curriculum development. By identifying effective motivational strategies and understanding the unique context of Islamic schools, educators can develop tailored interventions to support Mandarin teachers. This can lead to improved teaching practices, greater student engagement, and better educational outcomes in Mandarin language programs.

Given these considerations, it is crucial to investigate the application of Directed Motivational Currents (DMC)

theory among Mandarin teachers. This study aims to examine the primary features of DMC as experienced by Mandarin teachers. The study seeks to address three key questions:

- (1) Does the motivational flow of Mandarin teachers exhibit characteristics of goals or visions consistent with DMC?
- (2) Does their motivational flow demonstrate contributory structural characteristics that align with DMC principles?
- (3) Does the motivational flow of Mandarin teachers align with the positive emotional attitudes characteristic of DMC?

2. Literature Review

Muir and Dornyei (2013) introduced the concept of DMC, and since then, DMC theory has developed significantly. This development is evident in the publication of the book “DMC-aggregation Intervention Framework in Language Learning.” The book not only delves deeply into the theoretical aspects of DMC but also highlights its unique characteristics and practical value in second-language classroom teaching through comparison with other relevant theories. The advancement of theoretical exploration has established a strong basis for subsequent empirical research. The focus of DMC research has shifted from theoretical exploration to empirical studies.

2.1 The Definition of DMC

DMC is “a process of sustained engagement in a series of rewarding tasks, primarily driven by their potential to lead the individual to a highly valuable goal” (Dornyei et al., 2015). This heightened motivation compels individuals to pursue specific goals within a defined timeframe. The theory of L2 motivation draws from psychology, educational theory, and previous L2 motivation theories, emphasizing the interconnectedness of cognition, motivation, and emotion, making it a rich and unique study area. These insights have significant implications for research in Mandarin teaching and acquisition, as well as for enhancing Mandarin classroom instruction and improving the teaching proficiency of Mandarin teachers and their students’ language skills. Dornyei and Henry (2016) identify three core characteristics in all DMC phenomena: goal/vision orientation, salient facilitation structure, and positive emotional energy.

2.1.1 Goal/Vision Orientation

The theory of goal orientation originates from the goal-setting theory, which states that human behavior is driven by the goals they set for themselves. Goal/vision orientation refers to the learner’s spontaneous behavior and following a specific path toward a set goal or vision. A clear goal or vision is essential to focus the learner’s efforts, energy, and time, stimulate strong behavioral motivation, and achieve satisfactory results (Locke et al., 1990). Therefore, having a goal or vision is crucial for generating motivation and is the most important feature of motivation. Goals determine behaviors and achievements, with short-term goals particularly important (Wei, 2023).

Furthermore, vision and goal do not have completely equivalent meanings. Dornyei and Kubanyiova (2014) pointed out that while vision and goal refer to the directional aim toward achieving a future state, they differ in their characteristics. In addition to a goal’s abstract and cognitive aspects, vision encompasses sensory elements, such as tangible images associated with accomplishing the goal. For instance, while obtaining a medical degree is a goal, envisioning oneself as a practicing doctor represents a vision. The latter entails the learner visualizing themselves receiving the degree and engaging in medical practice. Essentially, the vision of becoming a doctor includes sensory experiences associated with the profession. Therefore, a vision emerges as a goal combining the learner’s fantasies with practical objectives. The intensity of the directed motivational current is contingent upon the extent of fantasy associated with the given goal (Dornyei et al., 2014)—thus, the greater the degree of imagination, the higher the intensity of the motivational currents.

2.1.2 Salient Facilitation Structure

The salient facilitation structure is the second defining feature of DMC. It represents the current motivation and the result of motivational behavior. Like ocean currents, once directional rapids are formed, they follow a clear path in jumps and spirals. This structure acts like a perceptual road map, arranging the route to achieving the goal. The three elements of this unique structure are: (a) a series of repetitive behavioral practices carried out without conscious control, where all efforts are made to achieve goals. A powerful motivational system turns existing behavior into a “motivational autopilot,” internalizing motivational behavior as part of the motivational current, no longer controlled by an individual’s emotional state. (b) A regular progress check process in which sub-objectives

are achieved provides positive feedback. Motivational behavior takes the form of sub-goals, which signal progress toward the goal and serve as a means for evaluating and testing progress. Achieving each sub-goal not only indicates progress but also triggers follow-up behavior. In other words, sub-goals have powerful motivational functions as they mark progress and provide immediate feedback and motivation for continued learning. (c) A clear starting point is particularly important. DMC is not formed naturally but is a conscious and clear behavior initiated by learners for a specific purpose (Chang, 2016). Furthermore, the “motivated autopilot” concept is closely associated with the current theory (Muir & Dornyei, 2013). Current theory investigates the overall experience of learners when they engage in particular activities. This theory posits that intense concentration on a task is a potent driving force. When a learner becomes fully immersed in a task, individual attributes such as motivation, cognition, and emotion become fully integrated into the activity, while external factors such as time and environment recede into the background, thus inducing a state of optimal engagement for the learner. During this state, the current structure has a positive procedural impact. The completion of habitual behaviors by the learner is manifested in the achievement of sub-goals. Subsequently, the attainment of these sub-goals generates and sustains significant energy, facilitating a series of subsequent behaviors.

2.1.3 Positive Emotional Energy

The third characteristic of DMC is that when learners engage in activities to bring themselves closer to their goals, they experience positive emotional states. This positive emotional state is not merely the inherent pleasure derived from the activity itself but rather the happiness derived from anticipating the achievement of a goal. It is closely linked to realizing the ultimate goal and represents not a transient state of happiness but an enduring sense of well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff, 2013). This sense of well-being is attained by realizing the learner’s self-potential and self-mission. During the current state of motivation, positive emotional states have a pervasive and amplifying effect. They can transform otherwise mundane and tedious tasks into enjoyable experiences because they align with the learner’s core values and contribute to attaining higher-level goals. Consequently, learners focus on honing their skills and talents, pursuing life goals, or both. Learners can achieve ultimate fulfillment only through engagement in these activities (Waterman, 1993), and the intensity of the motivational current remains undiminished.

2.2 *The Status of Related Research*

There is an increasing amount of research on DMC theory from various fields. Previous studies have mainly focused on four aspects. The first aspect is verifying the three significant characteristics of DMC in individuals (students). Secondly, the research has become more specific and detailed, focusing on the emotional attributes of DMC, the parameters that trigger DMC, and the context-sensitive factors that affect the operation of DMC in the classroom (Sak, 2019). Then, there is the study of the relationship between DMC motivation and social demographic characteristics (Ghani et al., 2017). The last aspect is the research on the scale and questionnaire of DMC. Additionally, it involves the influence of DMC theory on language learners’ psychological variables such as self-concept, self-confidence, and autonomy (Zarrinabadi et al., 2017). Despite the increasing number of studies on DMC, the research is still in its early stages, especially empirical studies under different backgrounds, all aimed at Mandarin learners, with no studies on Mandarin teachers. This study reviews the related research in the first aspect.

Dornyei et al. (2015) believe that goal/vision orientation, salient facilitation structure, and positive emotional energy are three indispensable parts of a complete DMC experience. Henry et al. (2015) confirmed the existence of motivational current experience in Mandarin learning for the first time through an empirical study. Three eligible Swedish female immigrants were selected, and the data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and retrospective interviews between the ages of 26 and 35. The results confirm the existence of motivation current and its main characteristics: it is a high-intensity and long-term incentive form; it exists in the prominent promotion structure, accompanied by positive emotion. This study not only fills the gap in DMC theory in empirical research but also confirms the existence of individual motivation in language learning. Ibrahim (2016) investigated the emotional dynamics of seven motivational current participants through phenomenological and semi-structured interviews. He pointed out that those who experienced DMC mainly used positive emotions and occasionally used negative emotions to regulate their emotional state to maintain their learning commitment. Safdari and Maftoon (2017) studied a middle-aged Iranian Italian learner whose mother tongue is Persian. They tracked the participant’s learning experiences through three semi-structured interviews, collected the research corpus, and used topic coding analysis to sort out the data. It was found that the three core features of the DMC hypothesis can be reflected and confirmed by the participants’ experiences.

This review identifies two critical gaps in the current literature: (1) existing studies are primarily theoretical and

lack practical validation and feedback, and (2) current research focuses predominantly on learners, neglecting investigations into teachers. Given its considerable importance and value, these gaps suggest a need to examine the DMC characteristics of teachers guided by DMC theory.

3. Method

3.1 Research Instruments

This study employed retrospective qualitative interviews and explanatory phenomenological analysis (Henry, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2008). During the interviews, participants were asked to articulate their motivation levels and create graphical representations of their motivation trajectories to identify periods of high-intensity motivation. The recordings, charts, and word clouds were then analyzed to determine whether participants experienced significantly heightened motivation at specific times and if the intensity exceeded their typical experience. Subsequently, participants were invited to a second interview to further explore periods of high-intensity motivation and provide additional insight on topics discussed in the initial interview. Transcripts of both interviews were thoroughly analyzed, resulting in a corpus of 20,000 words.

To triangulate the findings and ensure robustness, the study analyzed the performance of students taught by Teacher W in the Indonesian National Chinese Competition. The students' results in written tests, speeches, and talent shows were used to corroborate the interview findings and provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study.

3.2 Research Participants and Setting

This study was conducted as a case study with one participant. It is not common to find learners caught up in the DMC, so the opportunity to find such a case is valuable and should not be ignored by researchers. The participant was selected using opportunistic sampling, which is appropriate for qualitative research methods (Dornyei, 2007). Not everyone will experience the DMC. Therefore, this study initially sought assistance from Mandarin teacher managers and collected the teaching outcomes of Mandarin teachers in recent years. Subsequently, following the interview and the drawn motivational trajectory maps, one teacher was ultimately identified, Teacher W, who was acclaimed as "one of the best national Mandarin teachers," "National outstanding Mandarin instructor," and "National distinguished Mandarin educator." had taught Mandarin at Islamic schools in Indonesia and had extensive experience teaching Mandarin for many years. He coached over 20 students to participate in the Indonesian National Mandarin competition and achieved remarkable results. Upon his Mandarin teaching during preparation for the national Mandarin competition in Indonesia, he was deeply excited and decided to prepare himself for the upcoming event by teaching Mandarin as a priority. He started to work vigorously and with full commitment, as with earners with DMCs. According to the students' report and W's retrospective account, he demonstrated the characteristics attributed to experiencing the DMC.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The study analyzed W's semi-structured interview records to determine the motivation trajectory. The aim was to examine changes over time in self-mapping and to establish a model for a series of retrospective interview studies (Chan et al., 2015; Henry, 2015; Yashima & Arano, 2015) to confirm that W experienced high-intensity motivation at specific times. The interview outline included the main elements of DMC. After identifying the subject, the study collected new records of the second interview. The initial and follow-up interviews were transcribed word for word, and the participant created a more detailed motivational trajectory chart. The objectives were to focus more specifically on the periods of high motivation shown in the motivational trajectory chart, to allow participants to provide more detailed recollections, and to identify issues of interest discussed during the first interview. The study reviewed the 4x2 recordings and transcribed materials several times, adding comments, notes, and explanations to the transcriptions. Then, the study read each transcribed material three more times, with the first reading focusing on the description of goal/vision orientation, the second on explaining motivation intensity and key motivation structures, and the third on analyzing positive emotions. Finally, the study refined and categorized these three aspects, gathering the details of each segment to determine the commonalities and differences expressed by the subjects across these aspects.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

In conducting this study, ethical considerations were carefully addressed. All participants provided informed consent before participating, ensuring they understood the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks or benefits. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were maintained throughout the research process, with all data anonymized and securely stored. The potential impact of the research on the participants was considered, and steps were taken to minimize any negative effects, including offering psychological support if

needed. This ethical framework protected the participant's rights and well-being throughout the study.

4. Results

When analyzing the data for high-level duration, this study classified the data according to the duration of motivation intensity, goal/vision orientation, motivation structure, and positive emotions. These aspects were elaborated and demonstrated in sequence. In presenting data on the core characteristics of DMC, efforts were made to emphasize participants' narratives.

The interview results revealed an intense and sustained motivational current in teacher W. The detailed descriptions highlighted how this motivational energy continuously drives his Mandarin teaching. The teacher's self-assessment trajectory (Figure 1) showed that his high-intensity motivation lasted three months, aligning with the teaching guidance and preparation for the Indonesian National Mandarin speech competition between March and May (Figure 1). During this period, classes were not suspended. The teacher's daily routine was fully focused on Mandarin teaching. He stated, "Daily life revolves around teaching. I am busy from 5:30 in the morning until 10:30 at night. I often forget to eat in the morning and only sleep for half an hour at noon. Even at night, I continue practicing with students in the dormitory. The learning atmosphere is particularly vibrant." Despite feeling pressured, the teacher also felt motivated, comparing his performance only with his previous self. The study analyzed survey data and confirmed the existence of this robust and enduring motivational current, similar to the findings of Henry (2015). The intense motivation for Mandarin learning and clear goals made other aspects of life less significant, with all efforts directed towards achieving the set goals, as noted by Dornyei et al. (2015).



Figure 1. The Self-assessment motivation trajectory of W

4.1 Driven Goal/Vision: Direction

The intensity of the DMC hinges on the level of imagination regarding the given goal (Dornyei et al., 2014). The greater the degree of imagination, the more intense the motivational current. Concurrently, goals within these motivational streams can also be construed as investment objectives, encompassing investment in future careers for pragmatic reasons or investment in language proficiency and aspirations for integration into higher-level social circles (Norton, 2013).

In the interview, teacher W delineated his future long-term goals clearly, focusing on his aspirations for accolades in the upcoming Indonesian National Mandarin speech competition and his subsequent coaching plans. His motivation to teach Mandarin and mentor students for the competition stems from a desire to surpass the accomplishments of previous instructors, ensure no regrets in youth, enhance personal value through student participation in competitions, refine teaching skills, and bolster the school's reputation. While discussing the factors influencing his experience of DMC, he also underscored internal factors such as improving his teaching proficiency and gaining recognition within the international Mandarin education community, thereby earning acknowledgment from schools and students.

Drawing from W's description of periods characterized by high intensity and sustained motivation (as shown in Interview Excerpt 1 and Figure 2), this study analyzed the survey data and confirmed the existence of this robust and enduring motivational current. Similar to the findings of Henry (2015), high motivation for Mandarin learning and clear goals make other aspects of life less significant, with all efforts directed towards achieving the set goals. Learners experiencing a DMC realize they are highly productive, and their behavioral capabilities far surpass their initial expectations (Dornyei et al., 2015).

Interview Excerpt 1:

Whenever I see the gleaming trophy for the Best Tutoring Teacher of the Indonesian National Mandarin speech

competition displayed in the school showroom, a trophy from a former teacher's glory days, I feel a pang of envy. As a seasoned Mandarin educator, I understand the significance this trophy holds. It is a rare accolade, given to only one teacher in each country annually. The principal once shared with me the profound impact this trophy had on the school, sparking a fervent desire within me to claim it for myself.

I often find myself lost in reverie, envisioning the moment when I would proudly clutch the trophy, its polished surface reflecting my accomplishments, adorning the school's honor room. With an inherent competitive streak and an aversion to conceding defeat, I have harbored an unwavering belief that I must leave my mark in foreign teaching arenas, ensuring that I harbor no regrets in the prime of my life.

The Indonesian National Mandarin speech trophy represents one of the most tangible means through which I can validate my worth as an educator. To achieve this lofty goal, meticulous preparation is paramount. In my day-to-day teaching routine, I offer comprehensive explanations of the materials pertinent to the Indonesian National Mandarin speech competition, emphasizing honing students' listening and speaking skills in English. I diligently monitor the progress of potential contenders and gather resources relevant to the competition. Additionally, I strategize specialized teaching sessions tailored to address specific competition-related topics.



Figure 2. High-frequency topics in interviews using world cloud

Based on the interviewee's responses, it is evident that teacher W is determined to win the Indonesian National Mandarinspeech competition to demonstrate his teaching skills and validate his worth. He plans to enhance his teaching by regularly instructing in Mandarin and providing specialized tutoring sessions. According to Miller and Brickman (2004), the DMC experience involves balancing long-term goals with short-term ones. Achieving short-term goals can lead to reaching long-term objectives. The goals and vision associated with Mandarininstruction can create a strong DMC phase. As Levin (2000) described, having a vision includes picturing and experiencing success and accomplishment firsthand.

4.2 Self-Promotion, Repetition of Behavioral Practices, And a Clear Starting Point: Salient Facilitation Structure

As previously mentioned (Dornyei et al., 2015), the trajectory of the DMC refers to a dynamically adaptable path aligned with the goal/vision. By integrating interview data, this path was examined from the perspective of repetitive routine behaviors, regular assessments, providing positive feedback on sub-goals, and clear starting and ending points.

Firstly, individuals within the DMC exhibit high consistency in their goal-oriented activities, establishing repetitive behavioral routines. Participants are cognizant of the recurrent pattern of goal-oriented behaviors. These routines establish a motivational autopilot, which Dornyei et al. (2015) describe as "an integral part of the DMC experience," allowing for focused learning without exerting willpower. As shown in interview Excerpt 2 and Figure 3, Teacher W discussed how his daily tutoring routines became an intrinsic aspect of his life. He emphasized his stringent daily schedule and the significance of accomplishing planned tasks each day. Pre- and post-class, he taught activities such as imparting project-related knowledge, tailoring speeches to individual student characteristics, facilitating vocabulary acquisition, and delving into Mandarin grammar.

Additionally, teacher W concentrated on practicing elaborate and extensive sentence structures, guiding students through rehearsals and revisions, and fostering their Mandarin proficiency. He led students through various settings during each class to showcase their skills, nurturing their confidence. These activities became established routineness within the motivational current.

Interview Excerpt 2:

I believe it is crucial to understand the intricacies of the Indonesian National Mandarin speech competition

thoroughly. Therefore, I commit myself to conducting daily research on the Internet and seeking guidance from experienced educators. For example, at the beginning of the training program, I carefully watched almost all the videos from past editions of the Indonesian National Mandarin speech competition. To create speeches tailored to each student, I sought insights from Mandarin experts and asked for feedback from local Mandarin acquaintances. During the preparation for the talent showcase segment of the competition, I exerted additional effort to improve my skills and create a collection of classic Mandarin talents. Throughout the tutoring process, I closely monitor the student's progress, especially their engagement levels in the classroom, drawing inspiration from the L2 motivation theory.

Additionally, I seek advice from the school principal to refine the training regimen. After lessons, I gather additional materials to support the competition and enhance my teaching abilities. I stick to a weekly plan and ensure its completion while participating in additional projects aligned with my and the student's interests to develop our skills further and gradually achieve our goals.

Secondly, according to goal-setting theory, recent goals or sub-goals wield a potent motivational influence as they symbolize advancement and offer timely feedback, fostering continual learning (Dorney et al., 2016). As shown in interview Excerpt 3 and Figure 3, teacher W disclosed that initially, he possessed limited knowledge concerning competition-related topics. Nonetheless, he opted to engage in self-directed study and sought expert guidance. Through persistent study, he observed a notable enhancement in the efficacy of his tutoring sessions. Consequently, he established short-term goals to grasp game-related knowledge incrementally. Attainment of each sub-goal catalyzed deeper immersion in his studies and adherence to planned tasks, such as speech writing and preparing Mandarin talent content. Through meticulous periodic monitoring, provision of motivation to sustain concerted effort and momentum, and alignment and assimilation with long-term objectives, motivation pathways can be delineated, with each sub-goal representing a step closer to the ultimate destination (Dornyei et al., 2015). W's delineation of sub-goals and receipt of positive feedback elucidate the pivotal role of progress checks in sustaining motivational vigor. Completing these sub-goals and the ensuing positive feedback perpetuate his motivational trajectory, instilling the realization that he remains on course to achieve the overarching goal, thus continually nurturing hope for its eventual fruition.

Interview Excerpt 3:

Crafting speeches takes finesse, and I was not an expert in this area. So, I decided to work on improving my skills. I started by having individual interviews with each student to understand their unique characteristics and needs. Then, I revised the speeches repeatedly until I was happy with the final product. When organizing the talent show, I spent lots of time developing creative ideas during my free moments. I had so many unconventional ideas and worked on them until everyone was happy. I was excited and dedicated from the start of tutoring until the students left the competition stage. I focused on helping them win and did not let anything distract me. Seeing our students win filled me with a great sense of accomplishment. Looking back on it, I still feel proud, even though I know I might not experience that intense excitement again.

Furthermore, a clear turning point in motivation shows a distinctly identifiable beginning. The combined interaction of events, thoughts, and environment acts as a trigger. When this trigger occurs, latent motivational energy can quickly surface. Among the data's four stages of strong motivation, the motivational current suddenly surged as visions and goals became clear and tangible. As shown in interview Excerpt 4 and Figure 3, W prepared diligently before tutoring students for the competition, leading to a rapid release of motivational energy. W described many catalysts that brought about his DMC-like state. He attributed this change to internal and external influences: an intrinsic desire to prove his worth through coaching Mandarin competitions and aspirations for further professional growth. Additionally, he committed to mastering the skills needed to coach Mandarin competitions, driven by a firm dedication to empowering his students for their future endeavors. The competitive environment among his peers from other schools and the school's emphasis on the importance of competition further motivated him to become a highly driven Mandarin educator.

Interview Excerpt 4:

Since I got the competition announcement, I have been thinking about the task, putting aside other personal stuff, and focusing on coaching. At that time, I did not have previous experience helping students win, so I saw it as an opportunity to work with my colleagues and avoid potential discrimination. I needed to improve my teaching skills.



Figure 3. High-frequency topics in interviews using world cloud

4.3 Unique Pleasure and Satisfaction: Positive Emotional Load

The DMC concept stands out for its overall positive emotional atmosphere and the deep satisfaction experienced by the individuals involved (Dornyei et al., 2016). Those engaged in a directed motivation currently maintain upbeat emotions. As they pursue a deeply ingrained ultimate goal, they feel joy in unlocking their potential (Dornyei et al., 2016). The positive emotions within the directed motivation stream include the satisfaction of acquiring language skills and the excitement and pleasure derived from routine learning (Muir & Dornyei, 2013). W said, “At that time, I enjoyed teaching, and it had become habitual. It was all part of a routine.” As Dornyei, Ibrahim, and Muir (2015) noted, they resembled explorers, “despite facing many challenges in their environment, they found that each step forward revealed an exciting unknown realm.” This happiness came from the anticipation of reaching the summit and the gradual achievement of various sub-goals leading them toward their destination. As shown in interview Excerpt 5 and Figure 4. W experienced different positive emotions during heightened motivation. For example, W described his feelings when envisioning his future vision daily, saying, “I feel joyful imagining the rewards waiting for me in the future.”

Interview Excerpt 5:

I think intrinsic motivation comes into play here. You feel obliged to do your best once you've committed to something. You work on it diligently daily and slowly but surely progress. After a month or two, coaching for the Mandarin competition becomes much easier. Moreover, when you finally succeed, it is just pure joy! I mean, you feel really happy! When you truly learn something, the little challenges do not bother you as much. You feel so happy and accomplished. It is fulfilling, especially seeing the students progress and become more motivated to learn. I remember getting so caught up in tutoring for the competitions that I forgot to eat. Even on the train to the capital for the competitions, I was there, helping students practice in their seats. People on the train would notice and praise our dedication to learning. An hour before the competition, I found myself backstage, rehearsing with the students. Moreover, I completely forgot to eat again on the day of the competition. Looking back, I still feel that same happiness, and those memories are as vivid as ever.

When individuals fully engage in DMC, their learning journey often leads to deep personal fulfillment. The satisfaction and sense of accomplishment derived from learning and achievement significantly differ from fleeting moments of inner joy. This unique emotional experience within the motivational current becomes apparent through the participant's self-reflection on teaching activities. However, alongside these feelings of fulfillment, the participant also acknowledged moments of hardship, frustration, and disappointment. For example, as shown in interview Excerpt 6 and Figure 4, W expressed, “Initially, I found it quite challenging. Despite repeatedly correcting students' pronunciation, they continued to make mistakes, leading to moments of frustration.” Similarly, he added, “When students struggle to grasp my teaching content, I feel a sense of frustration and disappointment.” It is not uncommon for Mandarin teachers to experience anxiety, even within the experience of DMC.

Interview Excerpt 6:

Coaching speeches and nurturing talents can sometimes feel like a daunting task. There were moments when I felt discouraged, but I reminded myself not to give up. Although negativity crept in momentarily, it only accounted for a small fraction, perhaps just 10%, compared to the overwhelming positivity that fueled my determination to excel. I felt frustrated when faced with obstacles, such as students struggling to grasp my teaching content. However, I remained steadfast in my belief that there must be alternative approaches to help them comprehend. After all, I have always been diligent in my efforts. Moreover, my genuine interest in the task at hand keeps me motivated. Overall, I maintain an optimistic outlook, firmly believing that I will overcome any challenges that come my way.



Figure 4. High-frequency topics in interviews using word cloud

In summary, the emotional experience within DMC is complex, encompassing both satisfaction and negative emotions, which aligns with the principles of complex system theory. However, the predominance of positive emotions outweighs the negative ones, ensuring that teachers remain focused on their teaching goals and sustain their DMC. This is attributed to individuals' ability to build their self-efficacy through positive emotions, effectively mitigating negative emotional burdens. The interview data from the participants supported this claim.

4.4 The Effect of Teacher's DMC on Students' Outcomes

Table 1. The results of the Indonesian National Chinese Competition

Student	Written (100points)	Speech (100 points)	Talent Show (30 points)	Total Score (100 points)	Ranking (Non-Chinese)	Overall Ranking
A	100	25.1	35.3	90.4	1	3
B	100	24.8	34.1	88.9	2	4
C	100	24.5	33.6	88.1	3	7
D	100	23.1	33.7	86.9	4	9
E	96	23.1	32.5	84.5	5	14
F	95	22.7	31.7	82.9	6	16

Table 1 shows that the six students taught by Teacher W from March to June performed exceptionally well. Among the top overall rankings, they secured one of the top three positions, one of the top five positions, and four of the top ten positions. The students performed even better in the non-Chinese group, with four taking the top four places and achieving full marks in the written test. According to the on-site records of the competition, Student W won the best performance award for his outstanding talent. Student S won the non-Chinese championship and placed third overall, and Student M, despite making mistakes during her performance, remained calm and persistent, earning respect for her efforts.

Teacher M mentioned that after the competition, the students felt that the three months of immersive tutoring had significantly improved their Chinese skills. They also agreed that the teachers' high level of commitment during this period deeply inspired them. This motivation ultimately led to their excellent results. At the same time, the teacher noted that at the end of the competition, the intense motivation he experienced for three months suddenly disappeared and had not returned for a long time. This observation aligns with Figure 1, which illustrates the Self-Assessment Motivation Trajectory and confirms the characteristics of DMC.

5. Discussion

The results of this study underscore the significant impact of Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) on teacher performance and student outcomes. The study reveals that Teacher W's intense and sustained motivation profoundly influenced his Mandarin teaching effectiveness and his student's performance in the Indonesian National Chinese Competition.

5.1 Intensity and Duration of Motivation

The data supports the notion that high-intensity DMC can lead to exceptional achievements. Teacher W's motivation was particularly intense, lasting for three months, which aligns with Dornyei et al.'s (2015) observations about the role of sustained motivation in driving learner outcomes. Teacher W's focused daily routine and commitment, including extended hours of work and intensive preparation, reflect the robust motivational currents described by Henry (2015). The teacher's experience aligns with the findings of Dornyei et al. (2014), who argue that high levels of imagination and goal orientation contribute to the intensity of DMC. The successful

outcomes of Teacher W's students further corroborate the idea that clear goals and sustained motivation can lead to significant performance improvements.

5.2 Goal Orientation

Teacher W's clear goal-setting and self-assessment trajectory align with previous research emphasizing the importance of vision and goal clarity in sustaining DMC. The detailed descriptions of Teacher W's aspirations, including his desire to surpass previous achievements and gain recognition, reflect the findings of Norton (2013), who highlights the role of investment in both personal and professional growth. This goal-oriented motivation helped drive Teacher W's high level of commitment, which in turn positively impacted his students' performance.

5.3 Salient Facilitation Structure

The results of this study also illustrate how routine behaviors and structured practices contribute to maintaining high levels of motivation. Teacher W's consistent and goal-oriented routines, such as regular assessments and feedback, resonate with the goal-setting theory discussed by Dorney et al. (2016). His structured approach to teaching and coaching aligns with motivational currents, where repetitive routines and clear milestones facilitate sustained engagement and achievement (Dornyei et al., 2015).

5.4 Positive Emotional Energy

Teacher W's reflections revealed the positive emotional experiences associated with DMC. His enjoyment and fulfillment, despite facing challenges, support Dornyei et al.'s (2016) view that positive emotions are integral to the DMC experience. Teacher W's enthusiasm and satisfaction with his teaching activities highlight the emotional rewards that can accompany intense motivational periods.

6. Recommendations

Based on the results, several recommendations are proposed to enhance educational effectiveness and sustain motivation. Educators should be encouraged to set clear, ambitious goals for themselves and their students, as this can create a focused and sustained motivational current, akin to what was observed with Teacher W. Additionally, developing and maintaining consistent, goal-oriented routines is essential for improving teaching and learning. Integrating structured feedback and regular assessments into teaching practices will support ongoing motivation. Emphasizing the positive aspects of teaching and learning is also crucial; educators and students should be encouraged to reflect on and celebrate their achievements to reinforce positive emotional experiences. Finally, providing opportunities for professional development can significantly contribute to educators' motivation and effectiveness. Professional development programs should focus on enhancing both pedagogical skills and personal growth.

7. Limitations

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. The focus on a single teacher and his students may restrict the generalizability of the findings; a larger sample size involving multiple educators and student groups could offer a broader understanding of the impacts of DMC. Additionally, relying on self-reported data from Teacher W and his students may introduce potential biases; incorporating additional data sources, such as observational data and external evaluations, could yield a more comprehensive assessment. Finally, the study's focus on Mandarin teaching within a specific cultural context may limit the applicability of the findings to other educational settings. Cross-cultural studies could help validate these findings in diverse educational environments.

8. Conclusion

This study employs a case study design to conduct interviews and analyze the primary features of Directed Motivational Currents (DMC) among Mandarin teachers. The findings confirm DMC's existence and operational characteristics, including goal/vision orientation, prominent facilitation structure, and positive emotional energy. These elements were consistently observed in Teacher W's approach, validating the theoretical framework of DMC in Mandarin education. The initiation and persistence of DMC were driven by Teacher W's specific objectives and vision for advancing his teaching proficiency, demonstrating how goal alignment can sustain motivation over time. Additionally, the study reveals that teachers engaged in DMC experience positive and occasional negative emotions. Despite these challenges, the predominant positive emotions and effective self-regulation strategies enable teachers to focus on their goals. This nuanced emotional experience further enriches the understanding of DMC in educational contexts.

The findings provide valuable insights into the practical application of DMC theory in foreign language instruction. Educators are encouraged to focus on motivational impacts by setting clear goals and visions,

establishing and achieving proximal sub-goals, and utilizing feedback and self-regulation strategies to manage emotional fluctuations. Future research with more diverse samples is needed to explore DMC's long-term effects and broader applicability across different educational settings.

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Authors contributions

Dr. Samah and Dr. Sultan were responsible for study design and revising. Dr. Dong was responsible for data collection and drafted the manuscript. Dr. Yan revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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The authors that we have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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