

Demotivation Factors in Foreign Language Learning

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Abstract: This study initially attempts to discuss motivation and demotivation in the field of second language acquisition and additionally to explore the main factors causing demotivation in learning English among university students of vocational school. Demotivation, an understudied area in SLA is a relatively new issue for researchers. In this respect, this study attempts to explore the main factors causing demotivation in learning English among vocational school students. In the search of the reasons of demotivation, a 35-item questionnaire, which was developed by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009a), was filled by 60 university students. Descriptive statistics were employed in order to identify the most and the least demotivating factors grouped into 6 main categories such as (a) Class Characteristics (b) Class Environment (c) Experiences of Failure (d) Lack of Intrinsic Motivation (e) Class Materials and (f) Teacher. Findings from this study indicated that Teacher Competence was not a very strong cause of demotivation compared to Class Characteristics and Class Environment. This study also showed that learners did not perceive Inadequate Class Materials as demotivating. Finally this paper discusses participants' own factors for demotivation with an open-ended question in the questionnaire provided to the participants.

Key words: Demotivation, Demotivating factors, Language teaching

Introduction

Motivation is at the central of interests and investigations as it is accepted to improve learning. Researchers have put special attention on motivating factors and the way they influence learning process for almost 40 years now since Gardner and Lambert (1972) emphasized it in their studies (cited in Dörnyei, 1998). Gardner's work, in this sense paved the way to paying attention to motivational concerns in L2 studies as

noted by Oxford (1994). Demotivation can be considered as “the external factors causing a decrease in motivational level” (Dörnyei, 1994). However, demotivation, relatively new issue having a negative effect on students’ learning in the field of second language learning has been scarcely researched (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). As a result, the literature review on demotivation is quite limited. Therefore, the literature review of this study is organized around two main points. The first part examines the definition and factors of demotivation while the second part reviews a set of empirical studies on demotivating factors in learning a language in various contexts among different groups of participants.

Literature Review

Definition and factors of demotivation

Motivation provides learners with the primary trigger to start learning the L2 and later the driving force to enhance learning process in long term. As Dörnyei (1998) stated, individuals with necessary skills can not manage language goals without sufficient motivation even with a suitable curricula and teaching (p.117).

Dörnyei (2001), identified demotivation as “the specific external forces” that decrease or diminish the motivation in learning (p.143). Undoubtedly, conducting a research study on demotivation will be of decisive importance as many teachers regard their learners as demotivated in their daily classrooms within various educational contexts (Ghadirzadeh et al., 2012, p. 189).

One of the main factors in learning a second language is undoubtedly is motivation as it provides learners with a sustainable effort to master a language. However, recently there has been a shift towards demotivation which is “another side of motivation” (e.g. Falout and Maruyama, 2004; Kikuchi& Sakai, 2009b) in second language learning. Demotivation, as defined by Dörnyei (2001), is a decrease or drop in level of motivation starting from an external force before being an internalized process (Ghadirzadeh et al. , 2012).

Demotivating factors can be grouped under two main subheadings as internal factors (i.e. reduced self-confidence, attitudes of group members, etc.) and external factors (i.e. textbook/reference, book-related issues, teachers' personalities, etc.). Internal factors are student-self related ones leading negative outcomes while external sources of demotivation are those resulting from the outside such as the teachers, books, learning environment, etc. (Jomairi, 2011). In this respect, having great importance for learning goals, the motivation is to be sustained and reinforced by preventing demotivating factors from daily classrooms (Moskovsky et al., 2011).

Recent research studies on demotivation

Research investigating motivation vary in many aspects even though the majority of them focused on the relationship between motivation and language learning success (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Kurum, 2011; Tarhan& Balban, 2014.). However, demotivation has been scarcely researched in various contexts (Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009a; Dörnyei, 2001; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Falout, 2012; Tsuchiya, 2004; Gorham & Christophel,1992) with very differing purposes. Among them are determining demotivating factors in learning English, discovering other variables affecting learners' motivation such as the characteristics, age, gender, culture, (Falout& Maruyama, 2004; Tsuchiya, 2004; Gorham& Christophel, 1992). A review of significant research studies will be discussed below.

Kikuchi and Sakai (2009a), conducted a quantitative study through a 35-item questionnaire developed by themselves aiming at identifying demotivating factors among Japanese learners. They listed the following five main categories a) learning contents and materials, b) teachers' teaching styles, c) inadequate school facilities, d) lack of intrinsic motivation, e) test scores. The results indicated that the Learning Contents and Materials and Test Scores factors ranked the highest demotivating factors for many Japanese high school students, especially for less motivated learners. Teachers' Competence and Teaching Styles were not found as strong causes of demotivation contrary to what previously suggested in many studies.

Likewise, Dörnyei (1998) investigated the sources of demotivation listing the factors in 9 groups. Among them are teachers' personalities, competence, teaching methods, inadequate school facilities, reduced self-confidence, negative attitude toward the foreign language studied, compulsory nature of the foreign language study, interference of another foreign language, attitudes of group members.

Another research was carried out in China, Germany, Japan and America by Zhang (2007) and the results showed that the most demotivating factor in their English language learning as teachers' incompetence. Similarly, in the study of Gorham and Christophel (1992), teacher behavior ranked the highest demotivating factor among learners. The researchers concluded that teachers could promote learner motivation simply by preventing demotivation. Negative teacher behaviour was recognized as the most demotivating factor in the US (Millette & Gorham, 1997; Kim, 2011) and Japan (Potee, 2002).

However, contrary to what many researchers agreed that demotivation is mainly external, some researchers conducted studies on internal factors such as lack of self-confidence and negative attitude within learners themselves (Arai, 2004; Falout, et al., 2009; Tsuchiya, 2004; Ikeno, 2002). In this respect, research concerned with the internal sources of demotivation was employed by Ikeno (2002) and the results showed that both internal factors such as the lack of a sense of control over what one is learning and feelings of inferiority about one's English ability, and external ones to name teachers' inability, exam-oriented classes were the main demotivating factors. Besides, Tsuchiya (2004) found that the following nine demotivators having negative effect on unsuccessful learners, namely teachers, classes, the compulsory nature of English study, a negative attitude toward the English community, a negative attitude toward English itself, reduced self-confidence, negative group attitude, the lack of positive English speaking models and ways of learning.

Another research was conducted by Falout and Maruyama (2004) with an aim to find out whether demotivating factors differ between high and low proficiency learners

before entering to college by employing a 49-item questionnaire constructed on the basis of nine categories suggested by Dörnyei (1998). The results showed that external factors were blamed for demotivation among learners, thus, protecting self-beliefs, provides remotivation of students. Falout and Maruyama (2004) also suggested that lower level learners were less likely to regard external factors as demotivating compared to higher proficiency learners.

When Turkish context is considered, there is a lack of research on demotivation (Kızıltepe, 2008; Tunaz& Erdoğan, 2012; Aydın, 2012). In Kızıltepe's study (2009), it was aimed to find out the causes of demotivation among teachers at a public university. The results indicated that students, economics, structural and physical characteristics, research and working conditions were among the main demotivating factors.

Although the research concerning with the relationship between demotivation and proficiency level has been carried out many times, the effect of other variables such as gender, age and, culture on the sources of demotivation has not adequately researched. Hence, this study aims to shed light on this point of view and fill the gap in this respect.

Methodology

This paper aims to find out demotivation factors causing decrease in motivation for learning English among vocational school students. With this aim, the possible variables such as gender and academic specialisation of the students were taken into consideration. Research questions are listed below.

1. What is the most and the least demotivating factor in learning English for vocational school students?
2. Is there a difference between self-reported demotivation factors of participants with regards to their gender?
3. Is there a difference between self-reported demotivation factors of participants with regards to their class?

4. Is there a difference between students' self-reported demotivation factors with regards to their academic specialisation?

Setting and Participants

The distribution of the participants in this current study were demonstrated in terms of gender, class and department in Table 1.

Table 1. The distribution of gender, class and departments of the participants

Department	Class	Female	Male	Total
Tourism	First	8	7	15
	Second	9	6	15
Marketing	First	6	4	10
	Second	3	7	10
Food Technology	Second	9	1	10
Total		35	25	60

As shown in the Table 1 above, the participants are 60 first and second year students from Malkara Vocational School who major in Tourism, Food Technology and Marketing departments. They are selected randomly and of these 60 students, 35 are female participants (n= 35) and the number of male participants employed in the study is 25 (n= 25). 25 students are studying in their first year and 35 participants taught by the researcher in the spring semester of 2014 are in their second year.

Regarding the motivation level, the distribution of participants is remarkably different. 17 participants majoring at Tourism department have moderate level of motivation while 11 of them have high motivation for learning English. On the contrary, 11 learners in Marketing have moderate level while 5 of them have high motivation level. In general, 35 participants have moderate level for learning English.

Instruments

The data was collected via two-part survey. The first part included some biographical information such as gender, English level, the departments of the

participants, the self-reported motivation level. The second instrument used in this study was The EFL Demotivational Questionnaire constructed by Kikuchi and Sakai (2009a), which has been adapted by the researcher into Turkish for determining the subjects' self-reported demotivation factors causing low or no willingness level for learning English.

It is a well-established instrument employed in studies for finding demotivating factors for learning English under 6 main headings, to name (a) Class Characteristics (b) Class Environment, (c) Experiences of Failure (d) Lack of Intrinsic Motivation, (e) Class Materials and (f) Teacher. It consists of 35 items which are grouped under the main groups mentioned above. For each statement, there are 5 choices ranging from 1: Not true; 2: Mostly not true; 3: Not either true or untrue; 4: To some extent true; and 5: True.

Two more questions are also included in the questionnaire about motivation level of the participants and sources of demotivation to learn English: "How motivated are you to learn English?" The participants were required to choose one of the following alternatives: 1: no motivation; 2: little motivation; 3: moderate motivation; and 4: high motivation. The second question was an open-ended one: "What are the factors causing motivation and demotivation in English classes?". The participants were expected to write their own ideas here.

Procedure of Data collection

To obtain the data, subjects were given the questionnaire on demotivation factors and the detailed instructions to complete it in class. They finished the survey in 10-15 minutes and were informed that their responses would be used only for the present research study and would not affect their grades.

Data analysis

The obtained data of the research were analysed with the help of the Statistical Package of Social Science (version 20) SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including

frequencies, means, standard deviations were used to explore the demographic data. Additionally, independent samples t-test was used for analysing the gender and class differences on their comments for demotivating factors in English classes. One-way analysis of variance analysis (ANOVA) was used to compare the three departments. In addition, the .05 level of statistical significance was set at all statistical tests in the present study.

Findings

In this part of the study, the research questions are answered in the light of the findings.

RQ.1: What is the most and the least demotivating factor for vocational school students?

Regarding the second part of the questionnaire, Table 2 presents the rank ordering of the demotivation factors according to their mean values from the most to least.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Most Demotivating Factors.

Demotivating item	mean
(2) Most of the lessons focused on translation.	3.05
(3) Most of the lessons focused on grammar	3.03
(31) English was a compulsory subject.	2.93
(1) I seldom had chances to communicate in English.	2.87
(4) Most of the lessons were entrance examination oriented.	2.73

As shown Table 2, participants mostly mentioned the statements “Most of the lessons focused on translation”, “Most of the lessons focused on grammar” and “English was a compulsory subject” and “Most of the lessons were entrance examination oriented”. It can be concluded from this finding that participants lose their motivation mostly because of the lessons focusing on grammar, translation and exams. Additionally, Table 3 illustrates the mean values of the least demotivating factors among participants.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of the Least Demotivating Factors.

Demotivating item	mean
(13) Teachers made one-way explanations too often.	1.67
(14) Teachers' explanations were not easy to understand.	1.53
(11) Teachers' pronunciation of English was poor.	1.30
(15) Teachers shouted or got angry	1.20
(12) Teachers ridiculed students' mistakes.	1.13

As shown Table 3, the least mentioned statements by the participants were found as follows: "Teachers ridiculed students' mistakes." ($M=1.13$), "Teachers shouted or got angry" ($M=1.20$) "Teachers' pronunciation of English was poor" ($M=1.30$). It can be concluded from this table that participants do not perceive teacher and teaching style as demotivating which is a satisfactory result for the researcher. Thus, it can be implied that learners' motivation is increased by teacher's efforts. Similarly, Table 4 demonstrates the summary of mean values for each category of demotivation factors along with standard deviations.

Table 4. The Summary of Mean Values of Demotivation Factors.

	N	Mean	SD
Class Characteristics	60	2.65	.393
Class Environment	60	2.30	.635
Experiences of Failure	60	2.28	.680
Lack of interest	60	2.05	.654
Class Materials	60	2.02	.519
Teacher	60	1.43	.389

Descriptive statistics were employed to investigate the demotivation factors that Malkara Vocational School students reported. According to the results of Table 4, the highest frequency of demotivation factor was Class Characteristics ($M = 2.65$), and the least frequently mentioned factor was teacher competence with the mean value of ($M = 1.43$). Class Characteristics were followed by Class Environment ($M = 2.30$), Experiences of Failure ($M = 2.28$), Lack of interest ($M = 2.05$) and Class Materials ($M = 2.02$).

RQ.2: Is there a difference between self-reported demotivation factors of participants with regards to their gender?

With regard to second research question, Table 5 indicates the results of independent samples t-test analysis for gender differences in demotivating reasons for learning English among participants. In this respect, Table 5 demonstrates the mean, standard deviation, t and p values of the participants' demotivation factors.

Table 5. Independent-samples T-test for gender differences.

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Teacher	Female	35	1.37	.383	58	-1.402	.788
	Male	25	1.51	.390			
Class Characteristics	Female	35	2.68	.426	58	.717	.469
	Male	25	2.61	.346			
Failure	Female	35	2.21	.712	58	-1.014	.412
	Male	25	2.39	.631			
Class Environment	Female	35	2.20	.660	58	-1.491	.482
	Male	25	2.44	.582			
Material	Female	35	1.94	.450	58	-1.412	.343
	Male	25	2.13	.595			
Lack of interest	Female	35	1.97	.637	58	-1.119	.503
	male	25	2.17	.675			

The results indicated that both female and male participants had similar low scores for teacher factor as a demotivator, with mean values of female participants ($M = 1.37$, $SD = .383$) and male participants ($M = 1.51$, $SD = .390$), $t(58) = -.1402$, $p = .788$ with a small effect size. It could be inferred that there is not a significant difference between these two groups in terms of teacher factor. Similarly, for other factors statistically there is not a significant difference between female and male participants.

RQ.3: Is there a difference between students' self-reported demotivation factors with regards to their class?

Concerning the third research question, Table 6 indicates the results of independent samples t-test analysis for class differences in demotivating reasons for learning English among participants. In this respect, Table 6 demonstrates the mean, standard deviation, t and p values of the participants' demotivation factors.

Table 6. Independent-sample T-test for The Class differences.

	Class	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Teacher	First	25	1.43	.413	58	.046	.963
	Second	35	1.42	.377			
Class Characteristics	First	25	2.50	.400	58	-2.539	.014
	Second	35	2.75	.359			
Failure	First	25	2.39	.738	58	1.014	.315
	Second	35	2.21	.636			
Class Environment	First	25	2.39	.568	58	.946	.348
	Second	35	2.23	.679			
Material	First	25	2.02	.550	58	.056	.956
	Second	35	2.01	.504			
Lack of interest	First	25	2.07	.627	58	.116	.908
	Second	35	2.05	.682			

According to the results of the Table 6, there is not statistically significant difference between first and second class students in terms of five groups of demotivation factors but class characteristics. First class students regard class characteristics as a demotivator with the mean value of ($M= 2.50, SD= 4.00$) and the mean value for second class students was $M=2.75, SD= .359$, $t(58)= -2.539, p= .014$. For teacher factor as a demotivator, the mean values of first class participants were calculated as ($M = 1.43, SD = .413$) and second class participants ($M = 1.42, SD = .377$), $t(58) = .046, p = .963$ with a small effect size.

RQ.4: Is there a difference between students' self-reported demotivation factors with regards to their academic departments?

For the fourth research question, the ANOVA analysis was computed to explore the difference between 3 groups of participants majoring at different departments.

Table 7. ANOVA Results for Departmental Differences.

	df	Mean	F	p
Teacher	2	.122	.801	.454
	57	.153		
Class character	2	.045	.283	.754
	57	.159		
Failure	2	.387	.831	.441
	57	.466		
Class Environment	2	.219	.532	.590
	57	.411		
Material	2	.134	.489	.616
	57	.274		
Lack of interest	2	.142	.323	.725
	57	.439		

One-way ANOVA was performed to determine the difference between different group of participants, to name Tourism, Marketing and Food Technology. As shown in Table 7, there were no significant differences among three departments in terms of their perceptions for demotivating factors in learning English.

Regarding the open-ended question in the questionnaire which is "What are the factors causing motivation and demotivation in English classes". Some of the answers were as follows: exams, lack of speaking class, lack of basic English competence. 80% of the participants regarded exams as a significant demotivator in EFL classes.

Discussion

Data analysis shows several important findings. Firstly, the first research question deals with the most and least demotivating factors in learning English among participants. In general, the most frequently mentioned demotivating factor by all participants at Malkara Vocational School was Class Characteristics ($M=2.65$) which can be explained by students' unwillingness for grammar, exam and translation-oriented lessons. Thus, it can be implied that learners' motivation can be increased via more communicative activities including real life conversations, language games, etc. In contrast, the least demotivating factor was teacher ($M= 1.43$) on the contrary to what many studies suggested (Zhang, 2007; Gorham & Christophel, 1992; Kim, 2011). That reveals the teacher's focus on learners motivation and her use of motivational strategies in her classrooms for increasing learners' motivation.

As shown in Table (5), the second issue discussed was the relationship between gender and the demotivating factors. Analysis results showed that both female and male participants regard class characteristics mostly as demotivating while they perceive teacher factor as a non-demotivator. In this respect, there were no significant differences between female and male participants in terms of their demotivating factors on the contrary to what previous Tsuchiya (2004) reported. Similarly, the findings did not reveal statistically significant differences in terms of class.

Data analysis did not reveal significant differences for the third research question which dealt with the relationship between academic specialisation and demotivation factors. As shown in Table (7), results of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) did not reveal any significant differences among three departments. The mean scores for teacher factor as a demotivator lie between $M = 1.36$ (Marketing) and $M = 1.49$ (Tourism).

Conclusion

In general, some of the results revealed significant points on demotivation factors for participants in learning English. The most salient finding is that among six groups of demotivation factors, the most mentioned one by all participants was class characteristics which includes such reasons as learners' being unsatisfied with the course contents and pace, focus on grammatical structures, focus on university entrance exams and the memorization of the language; while the least one is teacher factor. It is a fortunate result for the researcher which implies that teacher's attitude, teaching competence, language proficiency, personality, and teaching style do not demotivate the learners.

In this regard, it might be the case that students tend to prefer lessons not to focus on grammar or exams but to focus on interaction and communication instead. Thus, social activities, role plays are to be placed in the curriculum design more than ever to encourage the students to perform more communicative goals. The results of the present study reveal no specific differences among students majoring at different departments and classes. That shows academic specialisation and class of the participants do not have an effect on their demotivating factors.

All in all, in the current study, three variables were taken into consideration, namely gender, class and academic specialisation. While the differences in demotivation may be explained by these three variables to some extent, some other variables should be paid attention for their role in demotivation such as motivation level, beliefs, attitudes, social background, personality, proficiency of learners etc.

Limitations of the study

The following points can be stated as the limitations of the present study:

1. The subjects in this study represent only Malkara Vocational School students at Namık Kemal University.

2. The participants answering the questionnaire were chosen randomly, so the number of them was limited. Therefore, the results can not be generalized to a larger group.
3. Because of the limited time, semi- structured interviews with participants which contribute to getting more reliable data were not included in the study.
4. The demotivating factors investigated in the survey were limited to six categories in a questionnaire constructed by Kikuchi and Sakai (2009a), as a result, not all demotivating factors were included.

Suggestions for further research

The findings and discussion of the study reveal several significant issues, which need further research. One of the main concerns for future studies is to understand and identify learners' reasons for demotivation in learning English so as to find the most suitable material, method and technique for learners' differing cognitive, emotional and linguistic needs. While the differences in demotivation may be explained by three variables (gender, class, academic departments) to some extent, some other variables should be paid attention for their role in demotivation such as motivation, beliefs, attitudes, social background, personality, proficiency etc. In addition to learners, demotivation among teachers can also be researched in a further study.

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