

The Factors Affecting Learners' Motivation in English Language Education

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Abstract: Teachers and researchers have broadly accepted motivation/demotivation as one of the most important elements in foreign language (L2) learning. The present research investigated the role of motivation and factors affecting students' motivation in teaching/learning English as foreign language. Parental, environmental, and teacher's attitude-related factors were examined. Participants were 40 first grade students studying in English Language Teaching department. The participants were given a survey which consisted of several statements related with the mentioned factors. The current study showed that there were strategies and behaviours that motivate students but suppress positive attitudes towards English learning. The findings showed that learners were more motivated when their parents supported and encouraged them to learn English. The research also revealed that reinforcing the learner beliefs also motivated students and they were more motivated when they worked with their friends. Furthermore, the findings of this study suggested many behaviors and strategies which motivate learners.

Keywords: motivation, demotivation, foreign language learning, strategy, behavior.

Introduction

Motivation plays a very important role in enhancing the students' English learning performance. Dornyei (1998) put stress on the influence of motivation, which is considered as a key to learning a second language (L2) and one of the biggest factors affecting language learners' success. It is widely accepted that the more motivated learners are, the more successful they would be at learning the second/foreign language. The learners who choose English subject as major and study it as a foreign language are concerned towards the motivational factors that play a major role in academics, development of skills and practicing English language in day-to-day use. The present research explored the parental, environmental, and teacher's attitude-

related motivational factors among learners, and helped to understand which strategies can enhance ESL/EFL learning most among these factors. In the section of teacher's attitude-related factors, roles of the teachers and their implementation of specific motivational strategies in their classrooms were researched. In the section of parental factors, the study examined which parental behaviors and beliefs about the English education of their children influenced children's motivation more to learn English. Also, environmental components that motivate ESL/FL learners were investigated.

Literature Review

English learning and teaching is considered to be complex and need special effort. Teachers and researchers have extensively accepted motivation/demotivation as one of the most important elements in second/ foreign language (L2) learning. The current research reveals the role of motivation and the factors affecting students' motivation in teaching-learning English as foreign language.

Motivation

Motivation is a term frequently used in both educational and other research contexts. In educational contexts, motivation is what triggers us to act to learn English, to learn to teach English, or to teach it. This basic explanation acknowledges the four elements that it includes:

- * The reasons why we want to learn
- * The strength of our desire to learn
- * The kind of person we are
- * The task and our estimation of what it requires of us.

(McDonough, 2007, pp. 369-371)

According to teachers and researchers, motivation affects the rate and success of L2 learning. Moreover, motivation provides the primary impetus to start learning L2 and later the driving force to maintain the long and repeatedly annoying learning process; actually, all the other elements associated with L2 acquisition presuppose

motivation to some extent. Without enough motivation, even adults with the most extraordinary skills cannot achieve long-term goals, and neither are suitable curricula and good teaching sufficiently on their own to guarantee student accomplishment. But, high motivation can make up for significant inadequacy both in one's language competence and learning conditions. According to Masgoret and Gardner (2003), a motivated learner expands effort, takes responsibility, has goals, desires, enjoy the process and learning. As mentioned by Oxford and Shearin (1996), motivation is a critical, vital aspect of which learners are fully involved in learning process.

Demotivation

Having looked into the nature of L2 motivation, only the positive side of motivation has been described. Unfortunately, during the learning process students may become negatively influenced as well. Certain negative influences have a significant effect on motivation. They may relate to particular learning-related experiences (e.g. public humiliation, poor test results) or social learning events (e.g. the personality and the behavior of the teacher, the classroom community) (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011). This dark side of motivation, called demotivation, has not been considered as a research topic until recently. Even though, its crucial role in the learning process has been confirmed (Dörnyei and Ushioda, op.cit.).

Dörnyei (1998) described demotivation as specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action. Demotivated learners show a lack of interest in the L2 or L2 community culture, hesitate to participate in any class activities, have no intimate affiliation with the teacher and/or peers. Consequently, they show ever-growing diffidence in classroom environment. Eventually, these learners end up with appalling learning outcomes, which in turn aggravate remaining motivation. Once such a wicked circle materializes, it turns almost unbreakable (Trong Tuan, 2011).

The factors of lack of motivation

We can say that lack of motivation occurs because of many reasons. To give examples for these reasons we may mention the following: Lack of belief in one's abilities, being a shy person, lack of knowledge, not studying enough for the courses, etc. Besides, we should consider that these may be physical or mental problems of the student (Ersöz, 2004). In addition to these reasons, the results of a study that was carried out between teachers and students suggest that there are some factors that affect students' willingness. For example, memorization, teacher's explaining the subjects in a boring manner, teacher's ignorance of students' psychological condition, difficult and dull subjects, and reluctance to learn. All these factors make the learning process difficult (Jafari, 2013).

An important factor in motivation to learn a second language is its socio-functional validity. From the student's perspective, learning a second language may or may not be worthwhile depending upon its social reality, because language learning has an important social function when the learner has a reason for using the acquired knowledge and skills to communicate with other people of importance in his or her environment. In other words, when no out-of-class validity exists, language learning loses its functional relevancy and lack of motivation becomes a problem (Jafari, op. cit.).

Beside these factors that may stem from the students, students' peers also affect students' attitudes toward the language learning outcomes, since students may like learning the language when their peers like it. Furthermore, students' previous learning experiences influence their present learning outcomes. If they are successful, they may be predisposed to learning success. On the other hand, if unsuccessful, they will expect failure. In addition, the knowledge from their past learning experiences is considered as the knowledgeable background from which they are able to continue studying at present and in the future. Students with good past learning knowledge can study well at present. Further information about extrinsic motivation has been provided by Trong Tuan (2012, p.432).

Environmental factors also affect learners' motivation. Even if they try to motivate themselves, the environmental factors like classroom management prevents them. For example, if the classroom is too crowded and there is not enough light, it demotivates students, because it creates difficulty in studying due to troublesome conditions (Trong Tuan, op. cit.). On the contrary, physical conditions such as lighting, good atmosphere, order of desks, showing all kinds of visuals, useful materials have excellent development on learning (Trong Tuan, op. cit.). In sum, students can be affected by their learning environment and physical conditions of their classroom as their friends or peers do.

Teachers' attitudes

Students' learning motivation is directly affected by the teacher and the teaching techniques that are supported with appropriate guidance and advice. Learners appreciate the distinctive paths offered to them to follow for better understanding and learning. Appropriate guidance or advice to students and fully-developed learning strategies support the flow of knowledge from the teacher to the learner. Motivation acts as a driving force that encourages the learner to learn, initiate the learners to adopt appropriate skills as well as facilitate them to use for gaining knowledge.

Furthermore, teachers and their teaching methods also affect students' motivation. Students' interest in school and wish for learning are affected by such factors as teachers, instructors, school circumstances, and their friends in classroom. But when compared, teachers are seen to be the most important factor due to the fact that they have important role in the students' learning. Teachers' feedback influences students' learning motivation when they realize that s/he follows their individual development (Trong Tuan, 2012).

Teachers should motivate students towards the topic of the day just at the opening stages of the lessons. Moreover, teachers should vary the activities, tasks and

materials because students are reassured by the existence of classroom routines that they can depend on. Thus varying the activities, tasks and materials can help to avoid demotivation and increase students' interest level (Trong Tuan, op. cit.).

Parental factors

Learning begins in the family. So parents, as a noteworthy social-relevant element impacting kids' inspiration and the accomplishment, have gotten considerable consideration in general education (Butler, 2015). Concentrating on parental inclusion in kids' learning, Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) estimated that the kids' parent-related motivation or what they called parent-oriented motivation would clarify the positive after effects of parental involvement and its part in understudies' scholastic engagement and accomplishment at secondary school level (Butler, op.cit.). Above all, Cheung and Pomerantz's information demonstrated that parent-oriented inspiration was a novel sort of inspiration, unmistakable from extraneous and inherent inspirations and that it exceptionally clarified the beneficial outcomes of parental contribution on the students' accomplishment (Butler, op.cit.).

The literature suggests that parents' general beliefs about English education showed marginal or no significant correlation with the children's motivation. However, parents' beliefs about their own children's competence and the associations were stronger as the grade level increased (Butler, op.cit.). In the instance of an outsider with regard to children's L2 learning, significant discoveries on the part of the parental variables in the past studies were incorporated as follows: (1) although lower socioeconomic status parents and dialect minority parents communicated their ability and regularly got intends to help their kids in their scholar duties for school, their help had a tendency to have insignificant effects; (2) making rich proficiency home situations encouraged the kids' dialect and educational improvement and (3) the kids' utilization of L1 and L2 at home connects with education advancement in L1 and L2 separately (Butler, op.cit.). Wigfield et al. (2006) identified the following four major parental factors influencing children's outcomes, such as school achievement and motivation: (1) parent, family, and neighborhood characteristics (including major

socioeconomic status indicators such as household income, parental education and parental occupation); (2) parent specific behaviors (parental involvement in child's study and school, teaching strategies, training values, etc.); (3) parents' general beliefs and behaviours (parenting styles, values of school achievement, efficacy beliefs, etc.) and (4) parents' child-specific beliefs (perception of their child's competence, expectations for the child's success, etc.) This model indicates that these four parental factors together with child factors (i.e. child and siblings' characteristics such as gender, aptitude, birth order, etc.) influence the child's outcomes. It's thought that all these factors, including the child outcomes, mutually influence each other, directly and/or indirectly. Moreover, there are cultural differences in the associations among these factors (Butler, 2015).

Classroom features or environmental factors

Motivating students as well as teachers is not an easy job. It really requires effort. Apart from parental and student-related factors, classroom features or environmental factors also affect students' motivation. These factors are not related to the teacher but to the environmental conditions such as classroom size, order of desks, demographic factors, situations, technological learning tools in the classroom, climate, weather conditions, etc. Knowing and trying to find solution for these problems will provide more friendly and motivated environment for both learners and teachers.

Students learn new information in their classroom with their friends. That's why we cannot deny the effect of the peers in the learning process. Like the parental factor; students' peers also affect students' attitudes toward the language learning outcomes since students may like learning the language when their peers like it. Furthermore, students' previous learning experiences influence their present learning outcomes. When they were successful learners before, they would tend to learn the way of success for their later life. In addition, the knowledge from their past learning experiences is considered as the knowledgeable background from which they are

able to continue studying at present and in the future. Students who have successful learning background can study well at present.

When we begin to talk about classroom features, we can say that physical conditions such as lighting, atmosphere, order of desks, showing all kinds of visuals, useful materials have significant influence on learning. Also, if the classroom has many students and not enough light, it demotivates students because it creates difficulty in studying due to disadvantageous.

Methodology

Participants

In our research, our participants were 1st grade upper intermediate students in the English Language Teaching Department of Uludağ University. There were 40 students (20 male and 20 female). Their ages were between 18-20 years. They graduated from the language departments in high schools from different regions of Turkey. That is why, they had different background knowledge. Some of them had learnt English under hard circumstances. Those students who had experienced poverty, natural disasters and terror attacks had less knowledge and fluency level in English than others who lived in big peaceful cities which give them opportunity to improve their English level. Nevertheless, all of them have had motivation related problems, although these varied greatly. They have been learning English at least for seven years. The participants were chosen randomly from the English Language Department of Uludağ University.

Instruments

A questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. The questionnaire consisted of both qualitative and quantitative data questions and statements. Statements were formed according to the research questions. We extracted some probable related factors from the research questions. The questions and statements were formed using these extracted probable factors. The questionnaire was divided into three sections and each research question was analyzed in each section. In the

first part of the questionnaire, there were Likert-scale questions and the second part consisted of open-ended questions. The open-ended questions gave us a chance to analyze the data more clearly. Quantitative statements were very useful to analyze the data and create charts from it. To be able to get information easily, we divided the first part into 3 titles as *Classroom Effect*, *Parental Factors* and *Attitudes of Teacher*. As it could be understood from their names, the Classroom Effect part dealt with the classroom materials and environmental features. The Parental Factors part had some statements about the learners' parents and how they helped them to enhance their motivation. In the Attitudes of Teacher part, statements focused on teachers' ability to use teaching methods and teachers' behaviours towards the learners to help them to become motivated learners.

All of the sections had 8 statements and they were given to the participants to mark from 1 (I don't agree) to 5 (I agree definitely). With the help of these 24 statements, we got our data practically in a short time. In the last part, we asked an open ended question. The question was as follows: *Is there anything else which demotivates you while you are learning a foreign language?*

The questionnaire was designed to collect some information about their problems or learn more about their parental background knowledge. This questionnaire would be appropriate to use to learn and identify which problems students face or how their parental situations affect their motivation.

Procedure

The research provided valuable data that helped to learn the answers of the research questions. The questionnaire was applied to 40 students in their free time in the university. The students were given unlimited time to respond to the questions. A total of 40 questionnaires have been returned from the applicants and all of them were used the analysis.

First, the results of each factor's statement were analyzed on an individual basis. Afterwards, we calculated the percentages and ratio of each item in the factors in order to find out the aspect and which items had influence on students' motivation. In addition, data were analyzed statistically to find the significance of each motivational factor, and afterwards, 3 separate charts (see Table 1, 2, and 3) were prepared accordingly.

The questionnaire was created by taking into account the validity and reliability issues. In the questionnaire, each aspect had similar and adequate representation in questions. All of the items were written under the related factors and unrelated items were eliminated from the questionnaire in order to increase validity. The statements were made clear to understand and were put in a form that was testable. Furthermore, the questionnaire was applied to 3 students twice in various times in order to check reliability. Responses of the 3 students were almost the same in the second questionnaire test.

In this study we assumed that all participants had responded to the questions in an honest and candid manner. Moreover, we assured that all participants had a sincere interest in participating in our research. Also, it was assumed that all participants were similarly experienced in English learning.

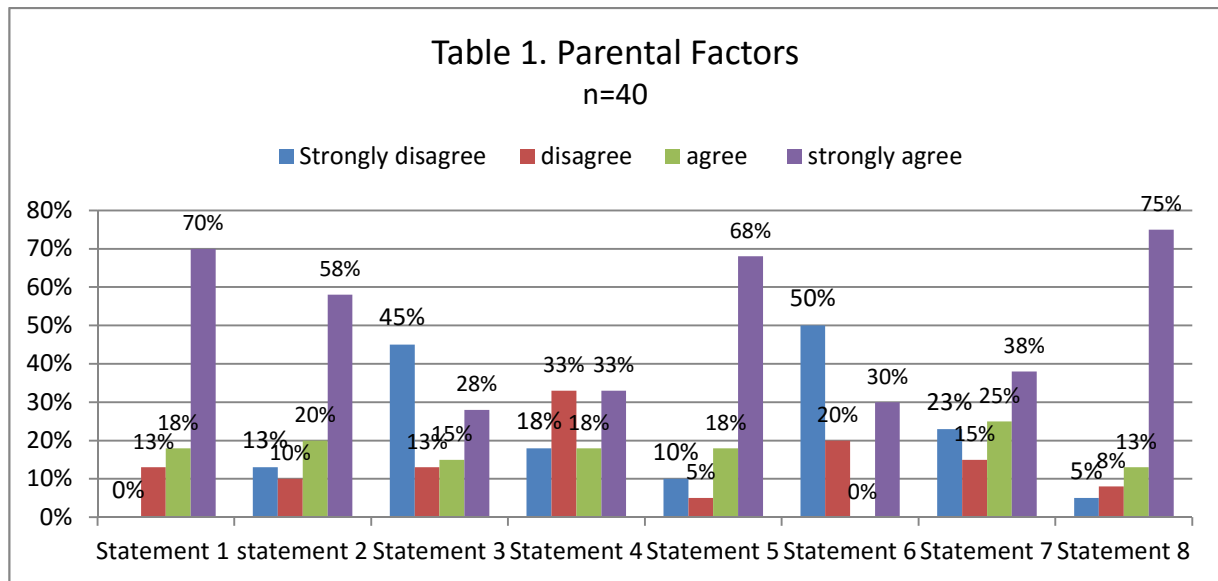
Limitations

Although the research has reached its aims, there were some unavoidable limitations. First, the students whom we managed to reach to ask to take our questionnaire were not truly a random sample. Second, the research was conducted only on a small size of students in one university in Turkey. Therefore, the study should have involved more participants in different universities or countries to generalize the results for larger groups.

Results

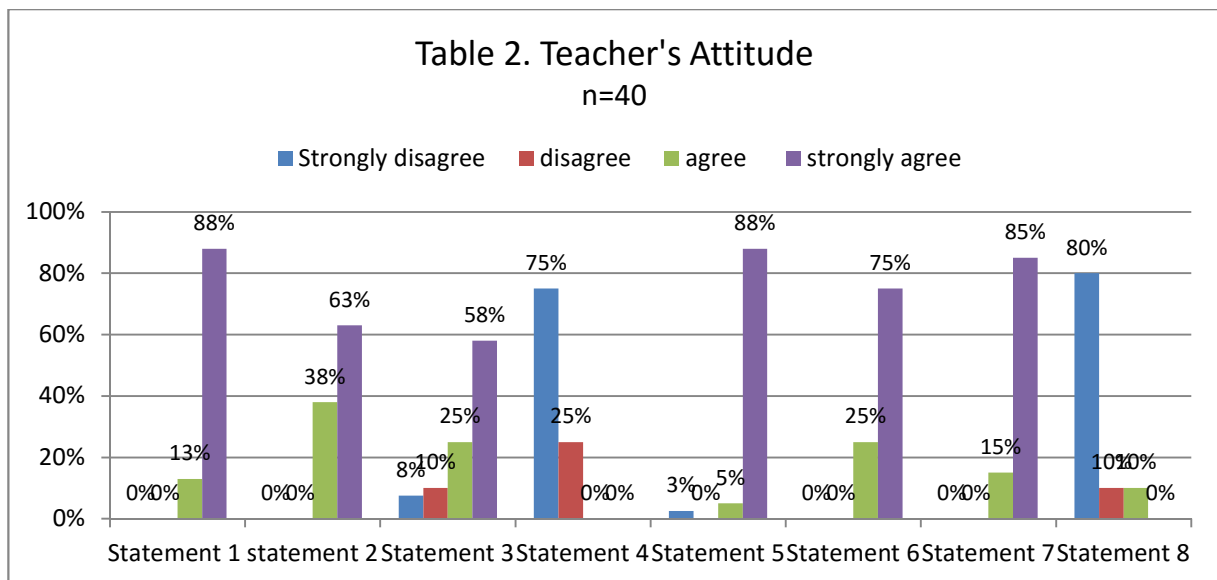
The results derived from this study are represented in the tables below. All numbers are indicated in percentages and frequencies. The statements of questionnaire are given with their percentages such as statement 1, statement 2, etc. Statements are written in the questionnaire in numerical order. There are 3 tables below. Table 1 shows parental factors' data percentages. Table 2 presents the attitudes of teacher data with their percentages. Table 3 shows percentages of statements about classroom factors.

According to the findings, the students were aware of their environment in their learning. They had enough knowledge to shape their learning environments and manage their motivation. In this questionnaire it was tried to find out their problems while concentrating on learning a foreign language, especially English.



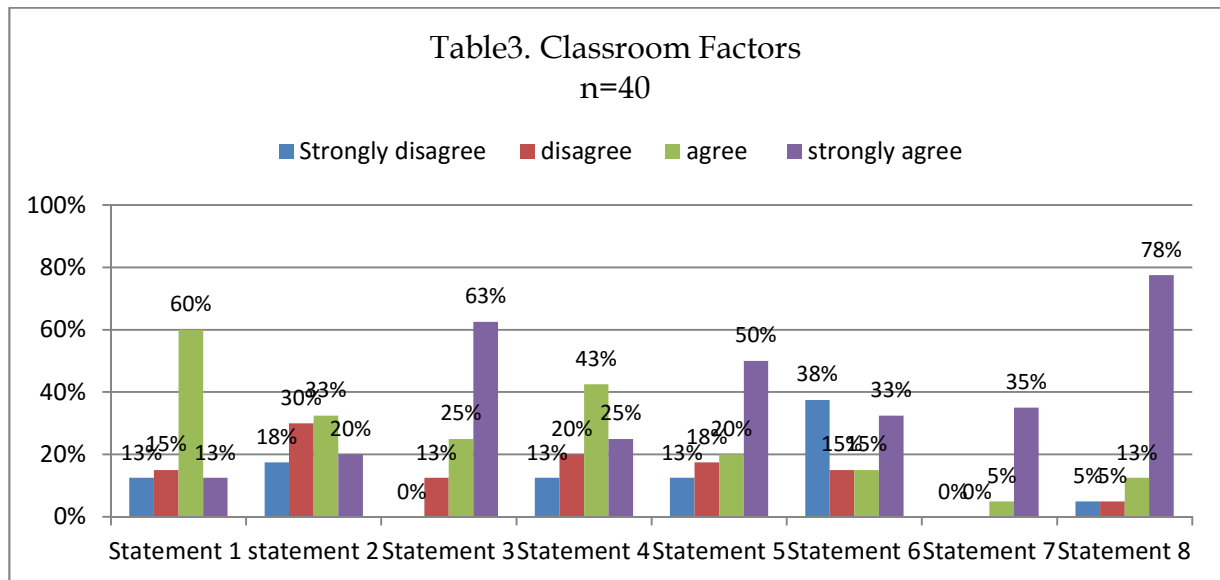
According to the questionnaire results, 70 percent of the participants (28/40) were more motivated because their parents think that they should devote more time to their English studies but thirteen percent of the participants (5/40) disagree with this statement. Also, 78 percent of the participants' motivation was affected positively when their parents encourage them to practice English as much as possible. Forty-five percent of the participants (18/40) were not more motivated when parents help

them when they have difficulty in doing homework. Parents' knowledge about English was motivating for 33 percent of the participants (13/40) but it was not motivating for 18 percent of them (7/40). More than half of the participants (68 percent, 27/40) were more motivated because their parents stressed the importance of English when they graduated from the school. Thirty-three percent of the participants (15/40) were more motivated because their parents showed considerable interest in anything to do with English class. Twenty-three percent of the participants (9/40) strongly disagreed with this statement. Seventy-five percent of the participants (30/40) strongly agreed that parents' feeling that they should continue studying English because it was motivating for them. Only five percent of participants' motivation was not affected by this parental behaviour.



Almost all of the participant students (88 percent) were more motivated when teachers give clear information why they are involved in an activity and about its goal. Also, 63 percent of students (25/40) strongly agreed that their motivation were improved when teacher created realistic learner beliefs. Findings also show that 83 percent of the participants (33/40) agreed in general that teacher's maximum eye-contact was motivating for them. Only 8 percent of the participants (5/40) strongly disagreed with this statement. Also data shows that 78 percent of participant students (30/40) were not motivated when teacher stopped at every single error

when students made a mistake. None of the students were motivated by this statement. Most of the participant students (88 percent, 35/40) strongly agreed with that they were more motivated when teacher performed in a friendly manner in the classroom. Only 1 participant strongly disagreed with that. When teacher used realias or authentic materials, 75 percent of the participants (35/40) were more motivated. Also, eighty-five percent of the participants (34/40) were more motivated when teacher gave positive feedback when students accomplished something. Only 10 percent of the participants (4/40) agreed that it was motivating when teacher punished students in order to keep discipline. The rest of the 36 participants (90%) disagreed with this statement.



Most of the learners' motivations were interrupted by their friends when they talked (table 3). Sixty percent of the participants (24/40) agreed they were interrupted by their friends. Thirty-three percent of the learners (13/40) wanted to work with their friends together. Sixty-three percent of the participants (25/40) chose strongly agree option. None of our participants chose strongly disagree choice. Those learners thought that pictures and other materials brought to classroom were helpful to learn better. Forty-two percent of students (17/40) thought that classrooms' brightness affected their learning. Fifty percent of the learners strongly agreed that they were afraid of talking in front of the others. This is one of the big problems all of the

teachers will face with in their learning environment. Thirty-eight percent of the participants (20/40) strongly agreed that they were afraid of talking in front of the others and 38 percent of the learners strongly disagreed to work individually, they would like to study with their friends. Furthermore, 78 percent of the participants (35/40) strongly agreed that they could ask questions to their friends in and also 78 percent of learners (26/40) thought they did not have much problem about heating managing their motivation.

In the open-ended part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to write which behaviours and strategies motivate or demotivate them in each factor. Related to the classroom factor, the participants stated that they were motivated when students in classroom were interested in and eager to learn English. In addition, they are motivated when their friends speak much in English during lesson. Furthermore, they are more motivated when there are many students who know English very well. On the other hand, the participants claim that they are demotivated by their friends' jokes when they speak English during lesson. Also, they are influenced negatively when the attendance at lesson is low in class. Small-size-classes, dirty scratched desks and crowded classes are other factors that demotivate participants.

In the Attitudes of Teacher section, the participants stated that they were motivated if teacher is a near-native speaker English and self-assured. Teacher's knowledge about English language and its culture were also motivating for the participants. Some of the participants stated that it is motivating if teacher is well-dressed. Conversely, the participants were demotivated when teacher behaves in aggressive manner during lesson. Another factor that made the participants demotivated is shyness and lack of confidence of teacher during lesson. Additionally, the participants were demotivated when teacher does not know something related to the topic when asked. The participants were also demotivated when teacher is boring, does not give break time, puts much pressure on students and has a lack of teaching skills.

As the parental factors, the participants expressed that they would be more motivated if they could watch English films with their parents together. Also, they would be more motivated if their parents liked speaking in English and speak with them. On the other hand, the participants were demotivated when their parents put on much pressure on them about learning English. Additionally, they were demotivated when their parents did not give moral and material support.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to identify the reasons of lack of motivation while learning a language. A lot of research has been done to find out these factors. The present study has established connections between the related studies on students' motivation and parental factors. Earlier studies suggested that students whose parents know English well are more motivated and eager to learn English than other students. When it comes to the teacher's attitude factor, we realized that there was remarkable interconnection between students' motivation and teachers' strategies.

Results of this study revealed that there are key strategies, behaviours and factors that affect learner's motivation directly. The present study shows that parental factors play an important role in learning English and almost all of the students are more motivated when their parents support and encourage them to learn English. Most of the students are more motivated when their parents stress the importance of English in entire life and give moral and material support while learning English.

For the teacher's attitude, approximately 90% of the participating students admitted that they are more motivated when teachers create realistic learner aims and give clear information related to why they are involved in an activity and its goal. Teachers' friendly behaviour during lessons is one of the best strategies to increase students' motivation. Additionally, attendance of all students in the English lessons is important to maintain students' motivation at the highest possible level.

On the other hand, regarding the in-classroom factors, most students seem to be more motivated when they work with their friends. Another important finding is that many of the participants are demotivated when the class is crowded, noisy and has heating problems.

The current study showed that there are strategies and behaviours that motivate students and improve positive attitudes towards English learning. The findings will help teachers and parents by showing some good behaviours and strategies that can increase students' motivation.

Conclusion

The goal of the present study was to examine which factors affected learners' motivation in ELT, and how much they affected their language learning. The study also aimed at being a guide for the teacher candidates to be able to understand their learners' personal or environmental problems and help them to create more motivating environments.

The findings of the study provided some useful and specific information about some parental, environmental and teacher-related problems that learners faced in a learning environment. These problems lowered their motivation and thus they could not understand the given instructions. The study demonstrated that the attitude of the teacher also demotivated their concentrations, because teachers are the main people who can give them clear information. That is why, teachers should be clear and consistent while speaking. Also, in the open-ended questions of the questionnaire the participants stated that if the teachers could not use the technological materials while teaching, learners would show lack of motivation. They got bored easily and lost their attention and interest in the topic or new information. It was important to use different learning strategies for their learners because there were different kinds of learners and everyone had different understanding ability. Teachers should know learners well and use the most appropriate learning methods for them. In addition to attitude of teacher, parental issues had important role in the

learner's language learning. All of the learners have had some expectations from their parents while they are learning new information; therefore enough support should be given them by their families to help them to become motivated learners. The more positive their parents' point of view to the new language learning was, the more the learners tended to learn a new language in a motivated environment. Moreover, environmental problems had an effect on students' learning, as well. The learning environment especially classrooms should be light, clean and the materials the learners will use should be intact. According to our questionnaire, learners were afraid of talking in front of the other friends in case they would make mistakes. This was the one of the most problematic situations many of the learners faced. Both the teachers and other learners should be careful their statements about their friends because even a small misunderstanding can cause vital problems in their friends learning process.

Further researches might contribute by finding more related effects on learners' motivation. This study also can be helpful for related research in this field. In addition, this study will be a guide for the new teachers to understand their learners and challenges they face during learning a language. On the other hand, this study has limitations because as it was implemented on only 40 students in the same department and college. Therefore, it cannot be postulated that all of these findings are valid for every student. Finally, if this research be replicated, it can give more detailed information and results once applied to different learners from different fields, and if more items and statements be added and given to the participants.

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Appendices

Questionnaire

Dear students,

You are required to do the questionnaire about motivation below. You should put a remark (X) to the box which describes your opinion in accordance with degree of agreement with a statement: 1 (Strongly disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Agree) 4 (Strongly agree). Thank you for your attendance.

Identification:

❖ **Gender:**

Male Female

❖ **Age:**

7-22 22-..

❖ **How long have you been studying English?**

4-5 5-6 8-10 10-

University / Department:

CLASSROOM FACTORS

Statements /Degrees	1	2	3	4
1. My motivation is interrupted by the friends when they talk.				
2. I want to work with my friends.				
3. Pictures and materials in the classroom are helpful to learn better.				
4. The classroom's brightness affects my learning.				

5. I am afraid to talk in front of the others.				
6. I want to work individually.				
7. I can easily ask questions to my friends when I need help.				
8. Heating in the classroom is good for me.				

ATTITUDES OF TEACHER
(I am more motivated when...)

1. Teacher creates realistic learner beliefs.				
2. Teacher gives clear information why students are involved in an activity and goal of it.				
3. Teacher is in maximum eye-contact with the students.				
4. Teacher stops at every single error and treat it when students make a mistake.				
5. Teacher performs in a friendly manner in the classroom.				
6. Teacher uses realia or authentic materials				
7. Teacher gives positive feedback when students accomplish something.				
8. Teacher punishes students in order to keep discipline.				

PARENTAL FACTORS

1. My parents insist I should devote more time to my English studies.				
2. My parents encourage me to practice my English as much as possible.				

3. My parents help me when I have a difficulty to do my homework.				
4. My parents know English.				
5. My parents have stressed the importance of English when I finish school.				
6. I usually go abroad to visit my relatives.				
7. My parents show considerable interest in anything to do with my English class.				
8. My parents feel that I should continue studying English.				

Open ended questions:

Is there anything else which motivates/demotivates you while you are learning a foreign language? Please write to the related factor.

CLASSROOM FACTORS

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ATTITUDES OF TEACHER

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PARENTAL FACTORS

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