

Demotivation Factors for Learning English (Students' Perspectives)*

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Abstract—Demotivation is a topic that has lately received a lot of attention in the field of language acquisition. There is a shortage of research in Jordan that investigates demotivating variables impacting learning English among Jordanian undergraduate students. As a result, the purpose of this research is to look at the elements that influence Jordanian undergraduate students' acquisition of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The data was collected using a questionnaire adapted from Sakai and Kikuchi (2009). The survey comprised 35 questions on a five Point likert scale about six demotivation factors: class characteristics, teacher attitude, course contents and teaching materials, effects of poor grades, classroom atmosphere, and lack of self-confidence and interest. This study's sample included 110 undergraduate students from the faculty of arts at Zarqa University in Jordan. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The data showed that classroom environment is the most demotivating elements impacting Jordanian undergraduate students' EFL learning, while lack of self-confidence and interest were the least demotivating factors. As a result, further research into this topic is strongly suggested in order to acquire a better knowledge and deeper insights into this issue in order to aid ESL/EFL learners in learning English.

Index Terms—demotivation, EFL, undergraduate students, learning English

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

One of the main elements influencing L2 learners' success and performance in the language learning process is motivation, which is why instructors and academics are so concerned about it (Meşe & Sevilen, 2021). Previous study has identified motivation as a significant factor that may impact the language learning (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Bradford, 2007; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2021; Zawahreh & Al-Ali, 2020). The benefits of motivation on students' zeal for learning piqued the interest of motivation researchers. Motivation is crucial in the classroom since it is closely managed. A motivated learner may infuse the class with good vibes and enthusiasm, whereas a demotivated learner has a strong tendency to have the opposite effect on the other students (Dornyei & Murphey, 2003). English learners as a foreign language around the globe strive to develop their proficiency level in speaking English language in order to acquire a second or foreign language, motivation is essential. Previous research demonstrated that one of the important elements that might influence the process of language learning is motivation (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Bradford, 2007; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2021). However, the process of language learning may have a detrimental effect on learners (Almaagbh & Huwari, 2021). These unfavorable elements sometimes referred to as demotivating influences, have received little attention up until lately (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Demotivation has been extensively researched in the field of

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instructional communication and academic lecture presentations in many nations during the previous few decades (Al-Hoorie, 2018). The benefits of motivation that improve students' interest in learning were of particular interest to motivation researchers (Al-Hoorie & MacIntyre, 2020). However, there are unfavorable elements that can undermine motivation and impede any learning process, including language learning. Demotivating factors, as described by Dörnyei (2001), are such factors. Demotivating influences progressively reduce motivation and obstruct efficient language acquisition, in contrast to motivating elements that can increase the motivation of language learners.

Students' academic performance is hampered by a lack of motivation. It is effective at all levels, including elementary, secondary, college, and university (Talpur et al., 2021; Ashraf & Lodhi, 2022). Alruzzi et al. (2022) stated that "English learners as a foreign language around the globe strive to develop their proficiency level in speaking" (p. 2458). English language demotivation can be thought of as motivation's passive antithesis. Demotivated learners are people who, for a variety of reasons, have lost the desire to study; these causes may be linked to external or internal resources that start to lessen their enthusiasm to learn English (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). This study seeks to analyze the demotivating influences of Jordanian undergraduate students in light of the background on motivation research. The reason for doing the current study is because demotivating influences have gotten little attention in earlier studies. Previous studies concentrated on the motivational aspects of learning a second or foreign language. But when learning a language, students could experience unfavorable influences. These unfavorable elements known as demotivating influences have not given much attention until recent years (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010). More critical papers are necessary in order to investigate the topic among Jordanian setting. This approach is also expected to be helpful in providing demotivates with practical solutions to their problems.

B. Research Questions

The present research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What factors demotivate university students from studying English?
2. What are the most and the least demotivating factors for university students to study English?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Demotivation

There is not a lot of literature on demotivation because it's a relatively recent notion in L2 motivation research (Amemori, 2012; Ghadirzadeh et al. 2013; Huwari, 2021). Demotivating elements are important aspects that have a detrimental impact on the learner's attitudes and behaviors, resulting in undesirable learning outcomes (Ghadirzadeh et al., 2013). Demotivation is a circumstance that generates many issues throughout the process of learning a language and may result in the learner's full rejection. Dörnyei was a well-known psycholinguist who worked on this topic. Demotivation is defined by Dörnyei (1998) as "extrinsic circumstances that undermine or minimize the motivational base of a behavioral goal or ongoing action" (p. 5). Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) disagree with Dörnyei and Ushioda's definition of motivation, stating that it "may need to be widened to include both internal (i.e. resulted from the learners themselves such as low self-confidence and attitude,) and external (i.e. resulted from outside factors such as teachers' attitude, and textbooks,) factors" (p. 58). Furthermore, Dörnyei (2001) defined demotivation as "particular external influences that impair or lessen the motivational foundation of a behavioral intention or an ongoing activity" (p. 143). L2 demotivation may thus be described as a decrease in motivation for language acquisition caused by either external or internal factors.

After completing their educational level, Jordanian students have to speak English fluently. However, not every student is qualified or driven to study a language. According to Dörnyei (1990), students' desire to learn a language is influenced by their needs for accomplishment, attributions regarding prior failures, an integrative motivational subsystem, and an instrumental motivational subsystem. Additionally, he lists four elements of the integrative motivational subsystem, including an interest in other people, cultures, and languages, a desire to widen one's perspective and avoid provincialism, and a need for stimulation and challenges.

Focusing on demotivation, the ineffective utilization of instructional resources and language-learning activities affects students' motivation to learn languages (Takase, 2004). The given language study material may be tedious, less appealing or fascinating, challenging or too long to read. Demotivation does not always imply that a student has entirely lost motivation, according to Dörnyei (2001). This simply indicates that alternative positive motives are still available to be triggered when the current incentive is limited by a strong negative element. For instance, even if a student's professors were incompetent or malicious, they may nevertheless inspire them to study English as a global language. The present study at Zarqa University in Jordan looks at the elements that demotivate undergraduate students from studying English.

B. Demotivation Factors in Learning English

Demotivating influences are one factor that might dampen pupils' enthusiasm for learning a language. However, there are negative variables that might demotivate students and interrupt the learning process, including language learning. Demotivating factors were mentioned by Dörnyei (2001). Demotivating elements sap motivation and impede successful language acquisition.

There are two types of demotivating influences: internal and external forces. According to Erdogan and Tunaz (2012), our stimulation is determined by both intrinsic and external factors. Intrinsic motivation is defined as the internal motivation for learning. The inherent motives for language acquisition include interest, curiosity, independent mastery and judgment, and internal success criteria. Extrinsic causes, on the other hand, are external variables that influence language development. Parents, instructors, grades, friends, incentives, learning environment, and cultural context are some of these elements.

Using an exploratory factor analysis of the Demotivation Questionnaire of English Language Learning, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) identified five demotivation factors: (a) Learning Contents and Materials, (b) Teachers' Competence and Teaching Styles, (c) Inadequate School Facilities, (d) Lack of Intrinsic Motivation, and (e) Test Scores. The data indicated that many Japanese students were demotivated by the factors Learning Contents and Materials and Test Scores.

Al-Khasawneh (2017) conducted a study to investigate the factors influencing Saudi undergraduate students' English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition. The data was collected using a questionnaire adapted from Sakai and Kikuchi (2009). 101 students from King Khalid University included in this study. The data acquired in the current study was analyzed using descriptive statistics and the T-test. The data showed that class characteristics were the most demotivating elements impacting Saudi undergraduate students' EFL learning. Krishnan and Pathan (2013) explored the variables that demotivate L2 Pakistani undergraduate students. 116 students used as a sample of this study. The outcomes revealed that all 6 criteria were identified by the participants, with the most cited ones being teaching approach, lack of facilities, and course content.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design & Sampling

This study employed a quantitative research design to evaluate demotivation factors for learning English by 110 undergraduate students enrolled in the Faculty of Arts at Zarqa University (ZU) for the academic year 2021/2022. Furthermore, the directorate chosen for the current investigation was picked at random. The participants were ranged from 18 to 24 years. They had also studied English as a required subject at their prior schools for 12 years.

B. Data Collection

A survey was selected as the most appropriate data collecting strategy since it allowed for both qualitative and quantitative investigation of demotivation. Furthermore, a typical questionnaire is a highly organized data gathering tool in which the majority of items ask for extremely precise information.

C. Research Instrument

As a research tool, a questionnaire adapted from Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) was used in this study. Six categories were identified in the survey: class features, teacher conduct, and course content and teaching materials, low score effects, classroom atmosphere, and loss of interest and self-confidence. A pilot study with 30 students was undertaken to test the reliability of the research instrument. SPSS version was used to test the reliability analysis (16.0). Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was .901, indicating that the instrument used in this study is highly reliable.

D. Procedures

The current study's procedures lasted roughly two weeks. The information was gathered during the first semester of the school year (2021-2022). A total of 199 questionnaires were distributed to students for the purpose of the study. The researchers finished the administration and collecting of the questionnaire. The students were given a brief description of the research's objective and significance. Furthermore, the researchers conveyed that no correct answer is required. The pupils notified that their responses would be kept private. The researchers explained to the pupils how they can respond to the questionnaire that asked for clarifications. The pupils will require around 20 minutes completing the questionnaire. Only 110 of the 199 distributed questionnaires were declared genuine for analytic methods.

E. Data Analysis

SPSS version (16.0) was used to analyze the data in this study. To determine the demotivating variables among Jordanian EFL students, descriptive statistics were used. Each item's means and standard deviation are included.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The current study's findings are presented.

A. Demotivating Factors

The purpose of this section is to respond on: *What factors demotivate university students from studying English?* To answer this study topic, the researchers calculated means and standard deviations (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
DEMOTIVATING FACTORS

Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Environment	110	4.2253	.57522
Low Scores	110	4.1909	.55534
Characteristics	110	3.9273	.69739
Teachers	110	3.9152	.52158
Materials	110	3.8985	.68443
Interest	110	3.8114	.56074
Valid N (listwise)	110		

Jordanian undergraduate students indicated various demotivating circumstances that prevent them from learning English, as shown in Table 1. The majority of the criteria were identical to those in Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) framework.

Previous research such as (Al-Khairi, 2013; Al-Khasawneh, 2017; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Krishnan & Pathan, 2013; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009) found that factors such as the environment, low scores, characteristics, teachers, materials, and interest influenced students' motivation to learn English. These are the same criteria addressed in this study, although in a different order or arrangement in their earlier investigations.

B. The Most Demotivating Factors

This part aims to respond on: *What are the most and the least motivating factors for university students to study English?* This question is answered in detail in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2
THE MOST AFFECTIVE DEMOTIVATING FACTOR

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I was often compared to my friends	110	4.6364	.61670
I could not keep up with my classmates	110	4.6000	.66636
I had no access to the Internet	110	4.5773	.59206
I received poor grades on tests	110	4.5636	.64292
I disliked my classmates	110	4.4300	.74693
We didn't have a language lab at school	110	4.4245	.85329
Pictures, movies, and the like were not used	110	4.4091	.83825
I had a hard time memorizing vocabulary and Idioms	110	4.3455	.99942
Tapes were not used	110	4.2909	1.02577
Grammar was the foundation of all instruction	110	4.2455	.91055
Computer software was not used	110	4.2455	.85870
English questions were not clear	110	4.2182	.99892
I was never given the chance to converse in English	110	4.2091	.91967
For self-study, a large number of textbooks and extra materials were assigned	110	4.0636	.98872
Teachers' were not able to speak English very well	110	4.0636	1.08600
I was supposed to write phrases that were devoid of errors	110	4.0273	1.02679
It was required to memorize and translate the sentences in the text book.	110	3.9636	1.04861
Teachers made fun of students' mistakes	110	3.9545	1.16040
I had lost interest in English	110	3.9455	1.03015
The speed of the lesson was insufficient	110	3.9455	1.17181
Saw no sense in studying English	110	3.9455	1.17181
The classes were too crowded	110	3.9364	1.06897
I was scolded by the teacher	110	3.9000	1.21119
Teachers used one-sided explanations far too frequently	110	3.8182	1.24283
Teachers were reluctant to teach well	110	3.8091	1.09624
I gave up on my ambition to become an English speaker	110	3.8091	1.09624
The topics of the English sections in the textbook were not culturally grounded	110	3.7727	1.03746
The English parts in the textbook were uninteresting	110	3.7091	1.13611
I was supposed to repeat sentences after the teacher	110	3.6727	1.14226
The English sentences covered in the lessons were difficult to comprehend	110	3.6545	1.07887
I was forced to study English	110	3.5455	1.41185
Almost majority of the classes were created to prepare students for the University admission test	110	3.5091	1.47608
The topics of the English excerpts utilized in the classes had become obsolete	110	3.4818	1.22461
My friends did not like English	110	3.2000	1.41292
I couldn't speak English	110	2.9636	1.41374
Valid N (listwise)	110		

The first affective demotivating factor was reported as the classroom environment (M=4.22, SD=.575); pupils thought to be due some causes for this element as *My friend did not like English* (M=3.200, SD= 1.412); *I dislike my classmates* (M=4.300, SD=.746); and *I did not have access to the Internet* (M=4.577, SD=.592). Dörnyei (1998) and Hirvonen (2010), who found that the classroom environment discourages students from effectively learning English supported this study. One of the aspects that influenced Saudi pupils, according to Al-Khasawneh (2017), was the

classroom environment. According to Jomairi (2011), a lack of facilities may result in a bad L2 learning environment; as a result, classrooms should have the right instructional technologies, including video projectors, data displays, and listening labs.

Low test results were identified as the second most effective demotivating reason for Jordanian undergraduate students to study English ($M=4.19$, $SD=.555$). Among the concerns connected to this element, the students said that *I received poor grades on tests* ($M=4.56$, $SD=.642$), and *I couldn't speak English* ($M=2.96$, $SD=1.41$). Low exam results have been identified as a demotivating issue for Iranian undergraduate students learning English, according to a research done by Jomairi (2011). Low test results, according to Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), have a significant influence on learners' willingness to study English. As a result, it is the teachers' responsibility to ensure that students are motivated to improve their test and examination scores (Krishnan & Pathan, 2013). Furthermore, low scores were one of the reasons that influenced Saudi pupils, according to Al-Khasawneh (2017).

The third demotivating factor in learning English was classroom characteristics ($M=3.92$, $SD=.697$). The students mentioned *I was never given the chance to converse in English* ($M=4.20$, $SD=.919$); they are also *Grammar was the foundation of all instruction* ($M=4.24$, $SD=.910$), and *It was required to memorize and translate the sentences in the text book* ($M=3.963$, $SD=1.048$). This conclusion is consistent with Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) findings, which found that classroom features are a demotivating factor for Japanese students. Furthermore, Leikoinen and Leinonen (2010) agreed that this factor demotivates Japanese pupils from studying English. One of the aspects that influenced Saudi pupils, according to Al-Khasawneh (2017), was classroom characteristics.

The fourth affective demotivating component appears to be teachers' conduct ($M=3.915$, $SD=.521$). Students said that *I was scolded by the teacher* ($M=3.90$, $SD=1.21$) was one of the factors. This conclusion backs with Kikuchi's (2011) findings, which revealed that the least emotionally demotivating element mentioned by Japanese high school pupils was instructors' conduct. In his study, Al-Khasawneh (2017) found that classroom characteristics were the least influenced demotivating elements among Saudi pupils.

Course content and materials were evaluated as the fifth affective demotivating factor ($M=3.89$, $SD=.684$), with students citing reasons like as *The topics of the English sections in the textbook were not culturally grounded* ($M=3.77$, $SD=1.03$), *English questions were not clear* ($M=4.21$, $SD=.99$), and *For self-study, a large number of textbooks and extra materials were assigned* ($M=4.06$, $SD=.98$). This result is in line with the findings of Afrough, Rahimi and Zarafshan (2014), who found this element to be a demotivating factor for Iranian high school pupils learning English. Additionally, this problem prevents Pakistani undergraduate students from learning English effectively, according to Krishnan and Pathan (2013). Al-Khasawneh (2017) discovered that the course materials and content were the most demotivating factors for Saudi students in his study. Richards and Renandya (2002) claim that by meeting their requirements and fostering a greater desire to learn a second language, well-designed instructional materials may motivate L2 learners. On the other hand, poorly designed educational materials would fall short of the learners' expectations and discourage them from effectively learning the second language (Krishnan & Pathan, 2013).

Finally, lack of interest ($M=3.81$, $SD=.560$) appears to be the sixth affective demotivating component with the reasons of *I had lost my interest in English* ($M=3.94$, $SD=1.03$), *Saw no sense in studying English* ($M=3.94$, $SD=1.17$), and *I gave up on my ambition to become an English speaker* ($M=3.80$, $SD=1.09$). This finding is consistent with Dörnyei's (1998) and Krishnan and Pathan's (2013) research. Teachers must establish a less stressful environment in which pupils can be encouraged and motivated to study English in this regard. Learners will be able to overcome their apprehensions about learning English in this way (Krishnan & Pathan, 2013).

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The current study looked into the elements that make studying English difficult for Jordanian students at Zarqa University. The findings identified six elements that influence students' ability to learn English (i.e. classroom environment, effects of low test scores, characteristics of classes, teacher's behavior, course contents and teaching materials, and lack of self-confidence and interest). Because of the study's findings, English language instructors in Jordan will be better equipped to pinpoint the root reasons of their students' lack of desire and offer remedies. The findings of this study would be of great interest to Jordanian academics studying motivation and demotivation. Therefore, more study on this subject is definitely advised in order to gain better understanding into this problem to support ESL/EFL students in learning English.

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