

Exploring Factors Causing Demotivation to Learn English among Undergraduate University Students in Herat University, Afghanistan

*Qodsya Mastour¹

Herat University Afghanistan

Hashema Homa Shahaim²

Herat University Afghanistan.

Abstract

Demotivation is a research area which has newly been the focus of many research works in the field of second language acquisition. The present study reports external factors causing demotivation in learn English among undergraduate university students in Herat University, Afghanistan. Student lack of preparation for class and resulting poor grades appeared to be a lack of motivation Therefore, this study goals to investigating the factors affecting English as a second language. Demotivating factors are essential factors which negatively influence the learner's attitudes and behaviours and hence leads to undesired learning outcomes. Questionnaire approved from Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) was used to collect the data. The questionnaire consists of 35 close-ended items on a 5-point Likert scale on six factors of demotivation: characteristics of classes, teacher's behaviour, course contents and teaching materials, effects of low test scores, classroom environment and lack of self-confidence and interest. The Sample of this study involved 112 students from two faculties studying at Herat University, Afghanistan; these faculties are: Education and English literature and Humanities. SPSS software was used to analyse the data collected in the present study. The findings of this study would be share with the teachers and students to pay attention to the weak points and work on them to solve this problem.

Key words: demotivation, factors, EFL university students.

1. Introduction

English language has been spoken widely in the world. (Melitz, 2018). Because English is so broadly spoken, it has often been stated as a "world language", the Lingua franca of the modern age. While it is not an official language in most countries, it is presently the language most often taught as a foreign language (Gohil, 2013).

English has become the world's language of communication as it is used in different fields for example, commerce, technology, politics, and diplomacy. (Alfarhan, 2017). If globalization determines the direction of the world economy, science, and other factors, then the growth of English as the global language of science and scholarship is expected for the predictable future. (Altbach, 2015). Alamyar (2017) said that English language holds a significant position in educational institutions and other settings of Afghanistan. Learners also recognize the special role English language plays both at local and international levels. For successful English learning, developing positive attitudes and motives are necessary. In this respect, many studies were directed to study factors to improve the learning of English (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009).

Teachers and researchers have widely accepted motivation as one of the key factors that influence the rate and achievement of second/foreign language (L2) learning. Individuals with outstanding abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals without sufficient motivation; and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough on their own to confirm students' success (Dörnyei, 1998). So, many researchers have worked to find the relationship between motivation and second language achievement of students (Dörnyei, 2001a). A decade ago researchers began to draw attention to the demotivation factors in L2 learning and teaching as well decade ago. (Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009). Demotivation hinders the process of L2 learning. As BABA KHOUYA (2018) mentioned, demotivation is a condition that causes a lot of difficulties during the process of learning the language, and it may lead the learner to a complete rejection.

Dörnyei (2001a) has defined demotivation as “specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action” (p.143). This definition of demotivation focus on the external forces that hinder the learning process.

This research also emphasizes external forces that may cause Afghan university students to lack motivation. The Faculties of Education and Humanity and Literature of Herat University, Afghanistan Universities have English Departments where almost all courses are taught in English. As well the teacher training institute has the same English Department. There are 100 students who have difficulties learning English. In the first and second semesters students took interest in English classes and actively participated in classroom activities. Later Students topped participating in class, homework grades dropped and looked for some dishonest ways for passing examinations with least effort.

There is no research in this area in Afghanistan. Therefore, there is a need for more information at this point to explore the demotivating factors among L2 learners in a setting like Afghanistan.

Research questions

1. Which factors are the most affecting demotivating factors among Afghan university students at Herat University in learning English language?
2. Are there any statistically important variances among students from different faculties in terms of demotivating factors in learning English?

3. Literature Review

Motivation is generally known to stimulate learners and motivates them to work with determination for clear goal and objectives. Motivation has been regarded differently by the scholars who work in this area. As Dörnyei (2007) defined motivation “motivation is responsible for determining human behaviour by energising it and giving it direction”. According to Longman dictionary of contemporary English (2007) motivation is: “Eagerness and willingness to do something without needing to be told or force to do it.”

Early research paid attention to the positive usage of motivation in learning a second or foreign language. However, learners could negatively be influenced during the learning procedure of a language. These negative factors are called ‘demotivating factor’ which were not focused on by the researcher in the past few years. (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2010). The demotivated L2 (second language) can be found in any language class. A demotivated learner is someone who was once motivated but has lost his or her commitment/ interest for some reason. Demotivation infers there

are demotives, a negative contrast to motives simultaneously we also talk about demotives which are the opposite or negative counterpart of motives". A motive increases an action tendency whereas a demotive decreases it (Dornyei, 2001, 143). Dornyei (2005) explains demotivation as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action" (p.143)

Research has shown that some English language learners lose their attention and motivation during the English language learning process. (Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Sakai and Kikuchi, 2009).

Falout and Falout (2005) stated that motivation causes learning for live, demotivation hinder the process of learning. For this case in the field of language learning researchers paid more attention to this vital issue of language learning. (Dörnyei, 2001; Falout, 2005). Demotivation requirements specific consideration because of its direct effect on education in general and on the learners' foreign language learning process in particular. Dörnyei (2001a) revealed that the extrinsic factors of demotivation decrease the interest of learners for learning foreign language on the other hand, some researchers such as Sakai & Kikuchi (2009) and Falout & Maruyama (2004) investigated that intrinsic aspect of motivation such as low self-confidence and negative attitudes towards the foreign language may affect learners demotivation.

Researchers with different population in the second language field have focused on demotivation (Baba Khouya, 2018; Ali and Pathan 2017; Al-Khasawneh 2017; Tabatabaei and Molavi 2012) Baba Khouya (2018) investigated the demotivating factors affecting Moroccan learners. A questionnaire consisted of 23 items was provided to 201 baccalaureate students (second year) from six secondary school, 84 were males and 117 were females. The questionnaire covered four demotivating factors in ELL (English Language Learners). Section one dealt with students' perception for ELL. Section two concerned with English and demotivation. Section three referred to teacher of English and demotivation and section four was about learning environment and demotivation. The finding revealed that the main demotivating factor in English learning was the learning environment among Moroccan learners.

Various researchers have used a questionnaire designed by Sakai & Kikuchi (2009), however results have varied. In Al-Khasawneh (2017) a study was done on demotivation factors affecting Saudi undergraduate students. The sample of the study involved 101 students who were randomly selected from three different faculties: Faculty of Languages and Translation, Faculty of Sharia, and Faculty of Humanities. A demotivation questionnaire was accepted from the study by Sakai & Kikuchi (2009) to obtain the data. The questionnaire consists of 35 close-ended items on a 5-point Likert scale on six factors of demotivation: characteristics of classes, teacher's behavior, course contents and teaching materials, effects of low test scores, classroom environment, and lack of self-confidence and interest. The characteristics of the classroom was the most prominent demotivating factor in learning English in Saudi.

In Ali and Pathan (2017) research was studied demotivation of Pakistani learners of English. Participants in this study were 150 freshman college students at the Government Girls college of Quetta, Pakistan. Three different disciplines were included: Pre-medical, Pre-engineering and I.C.S A demotivation questionnaire was adopted from the study by Sakai & Kikuchi(2009) consisting of one open-ended question and 35 close-ended items on six factors of demotivation:

grammar-based teaching, teacher's behaviour, course contents and teaching materials, effects of low test score, classroom environment and lack of self-confidence and interest. The findings revealed course content and teaching material as the most perceived demotivating factor followed by teachers' behaviour, classroom environment, effects of low test scores, grammar based teaching whereas lack of self-confidence appeared to be the least demotivating factors.

Al-Khasawneh (2017) found statistically significant variance in demotivating factors between the students from different universities. Students from Faculty of Languages and Translation were not proved to be demotivated such as their colleges from faculties of Sharia and Humanities. Although, there was no statistically significant difference between students form faculties of Sharia and Humanities. As well as Kaivanpanah & Ghasemi, (2011) examined demotives in relation to students' level of education. A 32-item questionnaire was distributed to 40 students (13 junior high school, 10 high school, and 17 university students). Students were asked to write about the factors that they perceived to be demotivating in L2 learning. Results showed that the university students were more demotivated than junior high school and high school students. The authors discussed the results were due to the importance of political, religious, and cultural considerations for university students in our country. It might also point to university students' lack of familiarity with English speaking communities.

Also Achmad and Yusuf (2016) investigated the motivational factors of tertiary (3rd year in university) students for learning English in Aceh, Indonesia. The study also examined the year of study and urban/rural provenance influences on their level of motivation. The participants of the research were 56 university students. A close ended, 10 items questionnaire adapted from the attitude/ motivation Test Battery (Smythe and Gardner, 1981) was used. Results showed that the year of study and the areas in which they came from did not affect their levels of motivation and there was no important differences between their levels.

4. Methodology

The present research uses a descriptive design based on Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) was used to provoke the potential factors that cause demotivation among Afghani undergraduate students at Herat University and teaching training center.

4.1 The Sample

The sample of this study involved 133 students who were randomly selected from three different faculties: Faculty of Education, Faculty of Language and Humanities and English Department of Teacher Training center (see table 1). There were male and female students aged between 18-24. They have also studied English Language in their previous schools for 8 years as a compulsory subject.

Table 1 displays that the sample of this study were students from two faculties and Teacher Training center. The students randomly selected to contribute in answering the demotivating factors questionnaire. There were students from the Faculty of Education, from the Faculty of Language and Humanities, and belong to the English Department of Teacher Training Center.

Table: 1 Distribution of the Sample of the present Study

Faculty	Frequency	Percent
Teacher Training Center	43	32.3
Literature and Humanity Faculty	44	33.1
Education Faculty	46	34.6
Total	133	100.0

4.2 Research Instrument

The study employed a questionnaire adopted from Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) as research instrument. The questionnaire was composed of 35 items. The questionnaire covered six sections which aimed at investigating students and the six demotivating factors: Class characteristics, behavior of teachers, content of the course and teaching materials, low scores effects, the environment of classroom, and lack of interest and self-confidence.

To check the reliability of research instrument, a pilot study was conducted with 25 students. The reliability analysis was checked by running SPSS software. Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was 818 which implies high reliability of the instrument of present study.

4.3 Procedures

The data were collected over a two week period during the first semester of the academic year (2019). All the participants were informed of the nature of the study and they were also given instructions in both Dari and English language to respond to the items in the questionnaires. The students were informed that their responses will remain confidential and will be used for research purpose only. They were also given 30-40 minutes to respond to the all the items in the questionnaires. We distributed 133 questionnaires, all 133 were considered usable for analysis procedures.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, descriptive statistics were performed in the SPSS (version, 21) in which percentages were calculated to determine the potential factors causing demotivation among Afghani EFL university students. One-Way-ANOVA was used to examine any statistically important difference between students from different faculties and the factors that demotivate them to learn English.

5. Finding and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the present study. The findings were arranged and presented according to the research questions of this study. The next section shows the findings related to the first research question.

5.1 Demotivating Factors

This section provides data to the first research question: Which factors are the most affecting demotivating factors among Afghan university students at Herat University in learning English language? Means and standard deviations were calculated for this research question (see Table 2).

Table 2. Demotivating Factors Affecting Learning English among the Students.

Factors	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Class Characteristics	1.00	4.00	2.7068	.71661
Course book	2.00	3.90	2.8241	.51289
Low Scores	1.00	4.00	2.4707	.73822
Environment	1.29	7.00	2.6294	.70383
Interest	1.00	3.50	2.0338	.75175
Teachers	1.00	4.33	2.2682	.69717

As demonstrated in Table 2, Afghan undergraduate students stated some demotivating factors which hinder them to learn English language. Most of those factors were similar to the ones revealed in Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) framework. These factors include characteristics of classes, teacher's behaviors, course contents and teaching materials, effects of low test scores, classroom environment, and lack of self-confidence and interest.

The Most Affective Demotivating Factors

This section provides data to the second research question: Which factors are the most affective demotivating factors among Afghan undergraduate students at Education Faculty, Herat University? Table 3 below provides detailed answers data to this question.

Table 3. The Most Affective Demotivating Factor among Afghan Undergraduate Students

Descriptive Statistics			
Factors	Categories	Mean	SD
Characteristics	I was never provided with the opportunity to communicate in English.	2.70	1.101
	I was supposed to repeat sentences after the teacher.	2.75	1.025
	The classes were too crowded.	2.67	1.085
Course Book	Memorizing and translating the sentences in the text book was obligatory.	2.99	1.190
	Comprehension is difficult to me.	2.72	1.018
	Grammar formed the backbone of lessons.	3.20	1.062
	Reading text are not interesting.	2.56	1.287
	Accuracy is mainly focused on.	3.28	1.054

Low Scores	I can't manage with great number of new.	2.78	1.117
	English lessons are teacher-centered.	2.88	1.115
	Topics of the English passages used in the lessons were out dated.	2.79	.888
	Topics of the English passages in the text book were not based on culture.	2.89	1.071
	English questions were not clear.	2.15	1.026
	I had a hard time memorizing vocabulary and Idioms.	2.89	1.201
	I received poor grades on tests.	2.63	1.158
	I can't speak English.	2.01	1.145
	I am not able to study English by myself.	1.95	1.014
	I was often compared to my friends.	2.86	.998
Environment	Computer software was not used.	2.89	1.189
	My friends are not interested in learning English.	2.32	.989
	We don't have a language lab at university.	3.31	2.794
	My friends make fun of me when I speak in English.	2.54	1.184
	I had no access to the Internet.	2.48	1.352
	Pictures and movies were not used.	2.40	1.148
	Tapes were not used.	2.46	1.026
Interest	I was forced to study English.	2.11	1.119
	I am not interested in culture of English-speaking countries.	2.13	1.170
	I lost my goal to be a speaker of English.	2.02	1.069
	My academic success does not depend on knowing English.	1.87	.988
	Teaching speed is not appropriate for me.	2.59	1.169
Teachers	Teachers always use the same methods for teaching.	2.52	1.125
	Teachers made fun of students' mistakes.	1.98	1.062
	Teachers show negative feedback to students' errors.	2.28	1.061
	Teachers were not able to speak English very well.	1.95	.960
	Teachers were unwilling to teach well.	2.29	1.113

As shown in Table 3, there is no significant differences among the affecting factors but still there is a little difference. Course Materials (M=2.82, SD=.512) the most prominent demotivating factor in learning English. Students attributed this to some reasons like the need of *memorizing and translating the sentences in the textbook was obligatory* (M=2.99, SD=1.190), *English sentences dealt with in the lessons were hard to understand* (M=2.72, SD=1.01), and *Grammar formed the backbone of lessons* (M=3.20, SD=1.06). this finding is compatible by the research conducted by Ali and Pathan (2017) they found that course content and teaching material are the most prominent demotivating factors among English learners at Government Girls' college Quetta, Pakistan. In another study by Kaivanpanah, S & Ghasemi, Z (2011) it has been found that Course Materials cause a great deal of demotivation among Iranian EFL students. So they advise the instructional material developers to improve contents

of the course books in order to reduce EFL students' demotivation factors. They have stated that English course books fail to absorb EFL students' interest and reduce their motivation because of their too much emphasize only on grammar and vocabulary. They suggested that course books must contain plenty of activities that provide the opportunity for each student to actively interact in the class. And help teachers to develop students' language skills. Moreover, material developers must try to include interesting activities and topics for the text in the course books. They must try to consider students' attitude towards English community students' so, motivation can be easily enhanced by including materials that give information about the target language community and culture with the objective to enhance the students' language skills.

Class room Characteristics, was found to be the second most demotivating factor ($M=2.70$, $SD=.716$) it was stated that students *did not get the chance to communicate in English* ($M=2.70$, $SD=1.10$); they are *also supposed to repeat sentences after teacher* ($M=2.75$, $SD=1.02$), and *the classes were too crowded* ($M=2.67$, $SD=1.08$). this finding supports Al-Khasawneh (2017) who found that class room characteristics is one of the most important demotivating factor that hinders effective language learning in Saudi Arabian students.

Classroom environment was reported as the third effective demotivating factor ($M=2.62$, $SD=.703$); the students attributed some reasons for this factor as *the lack of using computer software* ($M=2.89$, $SD=1.18$), *my friends did not like English* ($M=2.32$, $SD=.989$), and *the lack of language labs at school* ($M=2.48$, $SD=1.35$). This finding agrees with the result of the study conducted by Hosseinpour, N & Heidari Tabrizi, H (2016) they found that in adequate classroom facilities is among the most important demotivating factors in Iranian language learners. They claim that providing EFL classes with facilities such as visual, auditory and digital instruments can create a more effective learning environment. On the other hand, Kaivanpanah, S & Ghasemi, Z (2011) have found that classroom environment is the primary source of students' demotivation. There for, they asked the Mistry of Education to enrich the classroom environments with appropriate teaching materials in order to reduce this external demotivating factor. Moreover, they have advised the instructional material developers to modify learning material to meet EFL students' motivation. English course books most of the time fail to absorb the interest of EFL learners' by emphasizing on grammar and vocabulary instead of providing students with a great amount of opportunities to interact in the target language to help the students enhance their language skills specially speaking and listening. They have added that material developers have to design the material in a way that adds interesting activities and topics for classroom environment. Class activities can be in a way that provides students with information about the community and culture of the target language; but with the objective to enhance the learners' motivation to enrich their language skill.

Effect of low test scores was ranked as the fourth influential demotivating factor to learn English language among undergraduate students ($M=2.47$, $SD=.738$). The students cited that *having hard time memorizing vocabulary and idioms* ($M=2.89$, $SD=1.20$), *receiving poor grades on tests* ($M=2.63$, $SD=1.15$), and *inability to speak English* ($M=2.01$, $SD=1.14$) among the issues related to this particular factor. This finding is matches the result of the study conducted by Kikuchi, K & Sakai, H (2009) they have counted low test scores among the factors that increase demotivation in EFL students. Additionally, Krishna & Pathan (2013) have found that low test scores effect students' learning motivation greatly that is why the suggest EFL to teachers to teach in such a way that helps students to score higher in their tests.

Teachers' behavior is appeared to be the fifth affective demotivating factor ($M=2.26$, $SD=.697$) as students reported that *the pace of the lesson was not appropriate* ($M=2.59$, $SD=1.16$), *teachers made one way explanations too often* ($M=2.52$, $SD=1.12$), and *teachers made fun of students' mistakes* ($M=1.98$, $SD=1.06$) were among the reasons related to this factor. This finding is in line with findings of Gdaderzadah, R, Pourablofatathe, F & Shokri, O (2012)

who have found that teachers' behavior has a direct link with the amount of motivation in EFL students. Additionally, Ghonsooly, B, Hassanzadeh, T, Samavarchi, L and Hamed,S(2017) have stated that teachers' behavior have a great impact on EFL students' learning outcome.

Finally Lack of interest is said to be the sixth affective demotivating factor ($M=2.03$, $SD=.751$) with the reasons of being forced to study English ($M=2.11$, $SD=1.11$), losing interest in learning English ($M= 2.13$, $SD=1.17$), and losing the goals to be a speaker of English ($M=2.02$, $SD=1.06$). this what Kaivanpanah, S., & Ghasemi, Z. (2011) have found. They have concluded that lack of interest is one of the most demotivation factors among EFL students. In another study by Krishna & Pathan (2013) is has been found that lack of interest is a factor that demotivates EFL learners. This finding is also in line with finding of Ghonsooly, B, Hassanzadeh, T, Samavarchi, L and Hamed,S(2017) they have stated that among demotivating factors one is lack of learners' interest.

5.3 Variance in Demotivating Factors among Students

This section presents the findings obtained regarding the variance in demotivating factors among the students from three faculties in learning English. To investigate such difference, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized (see Table 4).

Table 4. Variance in Demotivating Factors among Students.

Table 4

ANOVA

Total mean

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.906	2	.953	5.714	.004
Within Groups	21.679	130	.167		
Total	23.585	132			

Report

Total mean

Distribution of the sample of the present study	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Teacher Training Center	2.6559	43	.41501
Literature and Humanities Faculty	2.4481	44	.37466
Education Faculty	2.3716	46	.43230
Total	2.4888	133	.42270

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Total mean

	(I) distribution of the sample of the present study	(J) distribution of the sample of the present study	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teacher Training Center	Literature Faculty	Literature Faculty	.20783*	.08757	.050	.0002	.4154
		Education	.28432*	.08662	.004	.0790	.4897
Literature and Humanities Faculty	Teacher training center	Literature Faculty	-.20783*	.08757	.050	-.4154	-.0002
		Education	.07650	.08611	.649	-.1277	.2807
Education Faculty	Teacher training center	Literature Faculty	-.28432*	.08662	.004	-.4897	-.0790
		Literature faculty	-.07650	.08611	.649	-.2807	.1277
Teacher Training Center	Literature faculty	Literature faculty	.20783*	.08483	.043	.0054	.4102
		Education	.28432*	.08982	.006	.0701	.4985
Literature and Humanities Faculty	Teacher training center	Literature Faculty	-.20783*	.08483	.043	-.4102	-.0054
		Education	.07650	.08516	.643	-.1266	.2796
Education	Teacher training center	Literature faculty	-.28432*	.08982	.006	-.4985	-.0701
		literature faculty	-.07650	.08516	.643	-.2796	.1266

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4 displays the frequency mean in demotivating factors among students from Faculty of Literature and humanities was (M=2.44), Education (M=2.37) and Teacher Training (M=2.65). It can be concluded that there was a significant difference in demotivating factors among the students from different faculties. The results showed statistical significant difference in demotivating factors between the students from different faculty's $p < .005$). Students from Faculty of Education were less demotivated compared to the students of the Faculty of Literature and Humanities. Whereas, the comparison between Teacher Training center and Education Faculty showed that $p > 0.005$ so the students in Education Faculty have less motivation than the students of the Teacher Training center. And the results of comparison between Teacher Training and Literature Faculty showed that $p > 0.005$ so, the students of Literature and Humanities Faculty have less motivation than the ones in Teacher Training center. So the results show that the environment of the classroom, teacher characteristics, and course books have great influence on learning English language. As we can see that each of the above mentioned environments have different characteristics and the results show that the level of demotivation in students of different environments vary.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research has been conducted in Afghanistan, University of Herat. The main aim behind conducting this study was to investigate the factors that demotivate EFL students at University of Herat. The findings revealed that the followings are the most prominent factors that demotivate the above mentioned students. (A) Course material, (B) classroom characteristics, (C) classroom environment, (D) effect of low test score, (E) teachers' behavior and lack of self-confidence.

The results obtained from the study will contribute to the teachers of university of Herat in the recognition of the factors that demotivate EFL students in this university. So that they may try to improve these factors and find proper solutions. It would improve the situation of EFL students if researchers at university of Herat try to conduct more studies in this regard. At this point it is highly recommended to the university lecturers and researchers to conduct more and more researches in order to recognize demotivating factors in EFL university students and then let the teachers and lectures of English know the problems so they can improve the weak points of the system. The information will be shared with faculties of Education, Literature and Humanities and Teacher Training Center as part of an improvement process. As well as the results of this research will be shared with faculties committee to find out solution for the demotivation problems among the students.

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