University Students' Demotives for Studying in General and Learning English

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Abstract

The importance of demotivation in language learning has been overshadowed in the commonplace research on language learning motivation and even in mainstream psychology (Dörnyei, 2005). The purpose behind conducting this study was to investigate the relationship between students' demotives for studying in general and English language in particular. Besides, the importance of educational context was investigated through explaining the changes in students' responses based on the type of university and gender. In Iran, university education is highly important for youngsters and the type of university with their various contexts is determining for their future. There are popular state universities among which one technical university as well as its satellite campus were selected. Besides, a distance-education and a unisexual university were represented in the present sample, overall comprising 194 bachelor students of different majors. Consequently, the factors considered as demotives are ranked, elaborated on and analyzed in order to shed light on the educational context-specific demotives and the pros and cons of current practices of EFL instruction in the universities.

Keywords: Language Learning Motivation, Demotivation, Demotive, University Context.

1. Introduction

Dörnyei defines demotivation as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action" (p. 143). He also adds that "Similar to 'demotivation', we can also speak of 'demotives', which are the negative counterparts of 'motives': a motive increases an action tendency whereas a demotive decreases it" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 138). Demotivation in EFL is a prevalent problem of paramount significance as Falout, Elwood and Hood (2009) portray learner's attitudes and behaviors as well as class dynamics and even teacher's motivation are affected with students' demotivation which all lead into extensive negative outcomes. This is while Gorham and Christophel (1992) believe that teachers can simply motivate the learners by preventing the demotives. However, demotivation isn't the result of a) gradual loss of interest after time, b) the effect of more attractive options, and c) internal causes (Dörnyei, 2001), since in those cases it would be called a motivation. A motivation is defined as the feeling of helplessness and incapability resulted in facing an activity which causes a relative absence of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This can come to an analogy with demotivation as: "'motivation' is related to general outcome expectations that are unrealistic for some reason, whereas 'demotivation' is related to specific external causes" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 140).

Ushioda (2012) asserts that among these factors, context (both micro, i.e., the instructional context; and macro, i.e., social and cultural influences) is highlighted more recently and many scholars have mentioned its incontestable impact (McInerney, 2008, Salili et al., 2001). The importance of context in the LLM is more than "paying it mere lip service" as (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 36), and has to be given a central role in the LLM research. Ushioda (2009),

thus, calls for a person-in-context relational view of motivation. In fact, motivation is borne out of a cultural system and with mediation of other people (Rueda & Moll, 1994; cited in Ushioda, 2007).

Furthermore, the disjunction found in the traditional research of language learning motivation between students' LLM and motivation for studying their other courses is called to be ceased by Ushioda (1998). She describes this endeavor as "… helping to define or modify the developing goal structure of students' language learning motivation…" (p. 83). As Chambers believes (1993) demotivation of the learners is not a language problem only and the whole pupil context should be considered. Yet another prevailing problem found in the literature of LLM is the focus on the learner variables in relative isolation mostly in form of linear relationships using correlations and structural equation modeling (Dörnyei, 2014).

2. The Related Literature

Regarding demotivation, Littlejohn asserts: "there is something about the very organization of teaching and learning that, for many learners, systematically *kills* their motivation to learn" (2008, p. 216). Researchers of motivation and demotivation studies need to take into account that any perspective is restricted in a space and cannot be unduly generalized to other contexts. Similarly, Dörnyei (2005) enumerates "context" as one of the important lines of inquiry in the future of LLM research and recognizes that traits are not absolute and are context-dependent.

Groham and Christophel (1992 & 1995) surveyed a group of college students about: "What things decrease your motivation to try hard to do your best in that class?" The three main groups of demotives found related to: (1) *context*, (2) *structure/ format of the class* and (3) *teacher behavior*. However,

one possible limitation of this study was the ignorance of the factors pertaining to the outside class demotives and those related to the time before entering the class. Later on (1995 & 1997), Gorham and Millette inquired of what teachers consider demotives of the students in a particular class in form of open-ended questions. They could demonstrate that the point of departure between these two groups of respondents was the tendency of teachers to refer to the performance-related factors of students, while students focused more on the factors associated with teacher behavior and skills.

Dörnyei (1998) also interviewed a group of learners whom he identified as demotivated or those who had experienced demotivation and found 9 major categories of demotives as: *the teacher, school facilities, students' self-confidence, attitude toward L2, compulsory L2 studying, interference of another foreign language being learnt, attitude toward L2 community, group members, the course book.* In line with the results of the past studies, most of the factors were related to the teacher and also students' low self-confidence. Subsequently, Falout and Maruyama (2004) developed a questionnaire based on these 9 categories and compared the high and low proficiency freshmen. The former group tended to attribute their demotivation to external factors while the latter referred to their affective states as demotives.

In 2007 Trang and Baldauf collected retrospective data regarding the English language learning experience of Vietnamese university students in an essay. The seriousness of EFL demotivation with student-related internal factors accounted for 36% and external factors for 64% of the total. The internal factors concerned the attitude toward English, self-esteem, as well as experience of failure; while externally influential factors were ranked as: *teacher-related factors, factors related to the learning environment,* and other external factors like *changes in courses and obligation factors.* They concluded

that demotives are more external whereas motives are more influenced by internal factors.

There are several studies conducted aimed at the common phenomenon of students 'English language learning demotivation in Japan. For instance, Muhonen (2004) through content analysis of students' writings found that the first priority in demotives is the teacher and the two genders showed no difference in their writings regarding this aspect. In the same year, Kikuchi had 42 university students complete an open-response questionnaire about their experiences in high school. The demotives of *teacher behavior*, *teaching method*, *tests*, *memorizing vocabulary,* and *textbooks* were found.

Also in 2009, a questionnaire was designed based on the Motivational Self System Theory to elicit data from Iranian language learners by Taguchi, Magid and Papi. The results reflected the association between socio-economic status of the learners and their knowledge of English language. Later on, Kavianpanah and Ghasemi (2011) designed another questionnaire and utilized it for finding the demotives of junior high, high school, and university students and comparing the demotives across genders and levels of education. They ranked the answers based on frequency: *teacher*, *learning materials and facilities, attitudes toward EFL learning, past failures*, and *attitudes toward the target community* as demotives through factor analysis. More recently, in Iran, and also in the university context, Hassaskhah, MahdaviZafarghandi and Fazeli (2014) classified the demotives of English major bachelor students into factors related to (1) *institution*, (2) *significant others*, and (3) *self*. They could also substantiate that most of the demotives found were institution-related (outside factors).

Moiinvaziri and Razmjoo (2014) could develop a questionnaire based on interviews undergraduate students and find setbacks in the education system,

methods and personality of the teachers, lack of intrinsic motivation, lack of the given importance in the society and finally lack of extrinsic motivation.

As one of the instances of employing the demotivation questionnaire by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) in Iran it can be referred to Aliakbari and Hemmatizad (2015). They found the factors of contents and materials, teacher's competence and method, school facilities, lack of intrinsic motivation and test score as the most important demotives among high school and university students.

Unlike the work of Muhonen (2004) in Japan, in the Iranian context, most attempts to investigate the L2 learning demotives have been through using questionnaires. This is while in order to capture the complex essence of motivational matters more qualitative methods of inquiry are in order (Campbell & Storch, 2011). Thus, for more elaboration on the negative factors influencing LLM, a bottom-up exploration of the demotives from the students' perspectives seemed essential. The main contextual parameters considered in L2 motivation researches are educational strand, university type, English vs. non-English majors, and gender (You, 2014). Therefore, in order focus on the educational context the present research explored the role of university type. The research questions were:

1. What are the most frequently stated demotives of *English language learning* by university students?

2. How do **university types** and **gender** affect what students perceive as demotives for *English language learning*?

3. What are the most frequently indicated demotive for *studying at university* as perceived by the students?

4. How do **university types** and **genders** affect what students perceive as demotives for *studying at university*?

3. Methodology

Participants: The participants were 194 male and female randomly chosen from among the students of four different types of universities located in Tehran. Their age ranged from 18 to 49 with a mean of 22.70 years. They were studying their bachelors in a variety of fields (e.g., Mechatronics, Civil Engineering, TEFL, History, and Accounting).

University No. 1: is a part-time university admitting students who usually do not rank high enough in the University Entrance Exam to be in full-time programs or cannot schedule to take classes because of their careers, self-study preferences, etc.

University No. 2: is a state university and is one of the Iran's top technical universities with programs specifically centering on engineering and fundamental sciences.

University No. 3: another major state university in Tehran. This is one of the very few universities in Iran appertaining to female students.

University No. 4: is a satellite campus of university No. 2, where students can be admitted upon the appraisal of their educational records in programs for a relatively high tuition.

Regarding the sample size, it was tried to use as large a sample as we can reach to the point where no novel category is added to the main themes found in the previous data (Marshal, 1996).

*Table 1. Gender *University Crosstabulation*

			university				Total
			No. 1	No. 2	No, 3	No. 4	
gender	female	Count	23	9	68	11	111
		% within gender	20.7%	8.1%	61.3%	9.9%	100.0%
	male	Count	27	31	0	25	83
		% within gender	32.5%	37.3%	.0%	30.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	50	40	68	36	194
		% within gender	25.8%	20.6%	35.1%	18.6%	100.0%

According to Green (1991), the assumption of sample size for logistic regression can be met using this formula: $N \geq (8/f^2) + (m-1)$, where $f^2 = .01, .15$, and $.35$ for effect sizes which are small, medium, and large, respectively. Accordingly, the least number of 71 participants was considered for the medium effect size of the calculations.

Instrument: An open-ended questionnaire with two parts was employed to inquire data on students' learning demotives. Students' demographic information like their age, gender, field of study, and the year of study was solicited in the first part (Appendix 1). As for the second part, question one asked about what students perceive as the most important factors negatively influencing their motivation for learning English, and question two inquired the factors decreasing the students' motivation for studying in general for their courses, at their particular universities. The provision of no options was aimed to avoid giving any predefined directions to the students or restricting the flux of various possible answers. These questions and the students' answers were in the students' mother tongue (Persian) in order to circumvent possible comprehension issues.

Procedure: The participants were asked to write down the three most important elements negatively affecting their motivation for studying their courses at their university and also for English language learning. Simultaneous stages of data collection and analysis allowed making modifications required in the questions based on the ambiguities the respondents faced sporadically and the comprehension checks made during data collection. Full additional explanations were provided orally during the administration of the survey.

Data Analysis: All factors the respondents mentioned as the three first priorities among demotives were categorized and listed through thematic analysis in a comprehensive coding list. After coding the responses, it was found that 102 different factors were specified by the participants, which were subsequently boiled down to 18 different main categories. The categories were defined in a way that all of the factors could be subsumed in one of the 18 more general categories with the least frequency of 7 and only less than ten factors which were only mentioned by less than 3 participants were excluded. The participants' answers were entered into IBM SPSS version 19 in form of zero and one for each of the categories (mentioned or not mentioned). As the desired comparison was to be made between university types and the two genders each with some levels (university: 4, gender 2 and demotives 18), logistic Regression was employed in order to spot the significant associations.

4. Results

4.1. Results of Language Learning Demotives

Question 1. What are the most frequently stated demotives of English language learning by university students?

As table 2 shows, 18 major categories were found to be the English language

demotives in all four universities which in fact demonstrates the response to the first research question.

Table 2. Total Frequency of Each of the English Language Demotives Categories in All Four Universities

Rank	Perceived Demotives	Frequency	Percentage
1	Inappropriate Teaching Methods	80	15.59 %
2	Inadequacies of the Educational System	77	15.00 %
3	Impracticality and Lack of Usage of the Learnt Materials	43	8.34 %
4	Low Quality Educational Materials	37	7.21 %
5	Learning Burden	36	7.01 %
6	Negative Impacts of Teacher Characteristics and Behavior	36	7.01 %
7	Language Learning Importance Neglect	34	6.62 %
8	Lack of Time	28	5.45 %
9	Incongruent Language Proficiency Level of the Students	24	4.67 %
10	Lack of Educational Facilities	21	4.09 %
11	Fossilization	18	3.50 %
12	Unattractiveness of the Language	16	3.11 %
13	Unbalanced Focus on Language Skills and Sub-skills	15	2.92 %
14	Lack of Self-confidence	12	2.33 %
15	Unknowledgeable Teacher	12	2.33 %
16	Delayed Start of Language Learning	9	1.75 %
17	High Financial Costs	8	1.55 %
18	Improper Class Progression Pace	7	1.36 %

4.1.1. Language Learning Demotives Influenced by University and Gender

Question 2. How do university types and gender affect what students perceive as demotives for English language learning?

From among these 18 categories some are related to those university and gender factors which affect learners' demotivation significantly and some not. Table 3 demonstrates the results of the former.

Table 3. LLM Demotivating Factors Related to Gender and University Type in the Descending Order of Frequencies

Variables		B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Teacher's Behavior	Univ. No. 1		.186	
	Univ. No. 3	1.416	.056	4.122
	Gender	-1.315	.046	.268
Importance Neglect	Univ. No. 1		.011	
	Univ. No. 2	1.956	.003	7.068
Lack of Time	Univ. No. 1		.004	
	Univ. No. 3	-1.576	.004	.207
	Univ. No. 4	-2.621	.014	.073
Students' Proficiency levels	Univ. No. 1		.020	
	Univ. No. 3	2.922	.018	18.583
	Univ. No. 4	2.696	.013	14.818
Educational Equipment	Univ. No. 1		.001	
	Univ. No. 2	-1.291	.038	.275
	Univ. No. 3	-3.492	.001	.030
	Univ. No. 4	-2.672	.012	.069
Unknowledgeable Teachers	Univ. No. 1		.800	
	Gender	2.370	.039	10.702

In order to analyze the participants' answers based on the variables of gender and university, inter logistic regression was used. In this study the predictor variables are (a) gender (coded as 1 for female and 2 for male), (b) university (University No. 1, 2, 3, and 4).

• *Teacher Behavior* results showed $\chi^2(4)=8.508$, P=0.075, and the Nagelkerke's Pseudo R square measures showed that the model justified 7% of the dependent variable's variance. The significance level was near the threshold. Table 3 summarizes the analysis results and shows the Wald

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Statistics (B), the significance level, and the proportion of chance [Exp (B)]. According to the results, gender had a meaningful contribution to the prediction (P=0.046). The probability of female students indicating this factor as a demotive was 0.26 times more than the male students.

- *Language Learning Importance Neglect* with $\chi^2(4)$=12.049, P=0.017, and the model justifying 10% of the variance, only university type had a meaningful contribution to the prediction.

- *Lack of Time* results showed $\chi^2(4)$=17.030, P=0.002, and the model justified 15% of the variance. The probability of indicating the shortage of time for learning at Univ. No 1, which is specifically a distant learning institution with very few in-campus classes held, was 0.23 and .07 times more than Univ. No. 3 and 4, respectively.

- *Incongruent Proficiency Levels* showed χ^2 (4) =15.234, P=0.004, and the model justified 14% of the variance. This illustrated that the probability of indicating this factor at Univ. No. 2 was approximately 18.6 times and at Univ. No. 4, 14.8 times more than the other two universities.

- *Lack of Educational Facilities* results showed that χ^2 (4)=26.594, P=0.000, and the model justified 25% of the dependent variable's variance. This illustrated the probability of indicating lack of facilities at Univ. No. 1 was approximately 0.3 times more than Univ. No. 2, 0.03 times more than Univ. No. 3, and 0.07 times more than Univ. No. 4.

- *Unknowledgeable Instructors* showed $\chi^2(4)$=11.608, P=0.021, and the model justifying 15% of the variance illustrated that the probability of indicating this factor by male students in the sample was approximately 10.7 times more than the females.

4.1.2. Language Learning Demotives not Influenced by University and Gender

As mentioned above, from among the 18 categories revealed as the demotivation factors in language learning there were some which were not influenced significantly, neither by university, nor by gender. Table 4 demonstrates these categories.

Table 4. *L2 Demotives not Influenced by Gender or University*

Demotives	χ^2 (4)	P	Nagelkerke R squared
Inappropriate teaching methods	3.589	0.465	2.5%
Deficiencies in the educational system	2.831	0.586	2%
Impractical contents	1.254	0.869	1%
Inefficient Educational Materials	5.862	0.210	4.8%
Learning Burden	6.634	0.157	5.4%
* Fossilization	11.016	0.026	12%
Unattractiveness	3.818	0.431	4.5%
Unbalanced Focus on Skills	7.387	0.117	8.9%
* Lack of Self-confidence	19.304	0.001	25%
Delayed Start	3.965	0.411	6.5%
* High Financial Costs	14.532	0.006	24%
Class Progression Pace	2.367	0.669	4.5%

4.2. Results of General Studying Demotives

The second part of the results deals with what is perceived as the negative motivational factors by the students for high performance at academia in their own field.

Question 3. What are the most frequently indicated demotive for studying at university as perceived by the students?

Table 5. Total Frequency of Each of the Demotives of Studying at University Categories in all Four Universities

Rank	The Perceived Demotives	Frequency	Percentage
1	Improper Educational Planning and Scheduling	77	17.62 %
2	Lack of Educational and Research Equipment	42	9.61 %
3	Negative University Environment	38	8.69 %
4	Improper Professors' Behavior	37	8.46 %
5	Teaching Method	36	8.23 %
6	Pressure	32	7.32 %
7	Deficiencies of Human Resources	28	6.40 %
8	Evaluation System	27	6.17 %
9	Lack of Constructive Competition among Peers	26	5.94 %
10 & 11	Ignorance of the Students' Voice, Unknowledgeable Instructors	22, 22	5.03 %
12	Gender Segregation	17	3.89 %
13	Aim and Practicality of Education	16	3.66 %
14	Concerns about Future Stability	9	2.05 %
15	Peer Relations	8	1.83 %

4.2.1. General Learning Demotives Influenced by University Type and Gender

Question 4. How do university types and genders affect what students perceive as demotives for studying at university?

The results –Table 6– showed that the model encompassing the two predictors of university type and gender, in comparison with the model entailing only the constant value, was statistically significant in ten out of the fifteen factors found (table 5), the factors in which either university type or gender or both were effective:

• As for *University Educational Scheduling*, ($\chi^2(4)=76.952$, P=0.00, the model justified 44% of the dependent variable's variance) results illustrated that the probability of indicating this factor at Univ. No. 1, was approximately 0.03 and 0.13 times more than University No. 2 and Univ. No. 3, respectively. This might be related to the fact that despite Univ. No. 2 and 3 being normal educational institutes, Univ. No 1 and 4 were a distance education and a small satellite campus of a famous university, respectively.

• The results for universities' lack of *Educational and Research Equipment* showed that ($\chi^2(4)=28.442$, P=0.000, with the model justifying 21% of the variance) the probability of the response at Univ. No.1 was approximately 0.13 and 0.26 times more than universities No. 2 and 3, respectively. This is similar to what the students in Univ. No. 1 expressed for the L2 demotives.

• For issues related to the undesirable *Environment* of the university in terms of lack of strong friendships, competitiveness among peers, ($\chi^2(4)=10.945$, P=0.027, with a model that justifies 8.7% of the variance) the probability of finding the factor in responses of students in Univ. No. 3 and 4 were respectively 8.2 and 4.1 times more than the other universities.

• As for the *Teaching Methods* ($\chi^2(4)=6.431$, P=0.169, and the model justified 5.3 % of the variance), this factor at Univ. No. 1 was mentioned approximately 0.3 times more than the other three universities.

• Similarly, for *Pressure* or learning burden caused by high expectations and other reasons, $\chi^2(4)=41.846$, P=0.00, and the model justified 32.8% of the variance. Hence pressure in Univ. No. 1 and No. 2 was perceived as higher and in University No. 2 it was eight times more than the other three universities.

• Additionally, as for the lack of sufficient commitment to work and responsiveness to the students' needs and suggestions, the factor labeled as

Human Resources Deficiencies showed $\chi^2(4)=12.077$, P=0.017, and the model justified 10.7% of the variance. Thus, the probability of indicating this factor in Univ. No. 1 was respectively about 0.13 and 0.27 times more than Univ. No. 2 and Univ. No. 3.

• As for the *Evaluation System* practiced in the Iranian universities and high schools, entailing grades of zero to twenty, $\chi^2 (4)=26.981$, P=0.00, the model justified 23.1% of the variance.

• *Lack of Constructive Competition among Peers,* which both referred to stagnant situation with no sense of competition among students and envying and lack of cooperation caused by high negative competition led to $\chi^2(4)= 22.026$, P=0.00, and the model justified 19.7% of the variance. This is to mean that the probability of indicating the lack of competition at Univ. No. 3 was 14.3 times more than the other three universities.

• For *Unknowledgeable Instructors,* $\chi^2(4)=19.70$, P=0.001, and the model justified 19% of the variance. This means that the probability of indicating this factor at Univ. No. 1 was approximately 0.11 times more than Univ. No. 4.

• Concerning the last item among the differentially functioning factors, *Lack of Purposeful and Practical Education,* that could not properly qualify students for their future career responsibilities, $\chi^2(4)=22.923$, P=0.00 and the model justified 25% of the variance, and gender was an influential variable (P= 0.014).

Table 6. General Demotivating Factors Related to Gender and University Type

Factor	Variables	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Improper Educational Scheduling	Univ. No. 1		.000	
	Univ. No. 2	-3.515	.000	.030
	Univ. No. 3	-2.006	.000	.134
Lack of Facilities	Univ. No. 1		.000	
	Univ. No. 2	-1.977	.001	.138
	Univ. No. 3	-1.333	.009	.264
	Univ. No. 4	-2.835	.000	.059
Undesirable Academic Environment	Univ. No. 1		.053	
	Univ. No. 3	2.107	.007	8.224
	Univ. No. 4	1.421	.049	4.142
Deficient Teaching Methods	Univ. No. 1		.096	
	Univ. No. 4	-1.242	.045	.289
Pressure	Univ. No. 1		.002	
	Univ. No. 2	2.084	.000	8.036
Inefficient Univ. Human Resources	Univ. No. 1		.020	
	Univ. No. 2	-2.045	.011	.129
	Univ. No. 3	-1.287	.033	.276
Problematic Evaluation System	Univ. No. 1		.000	
	Univ. No. 2	1.686	.003	5.395
Uncompetitive Peers	Univ. No. 1		.068	
	Univ. No. 3	2.661	.015	14.308
Insufficient Professors' Knowledge	Univ. No. 1		.138	
	Univ. No. 4	-2.200	.041	.111
Impractical Education	Univ. No. 1.		.008	
	Gender	1.830	.014	6.233

4.2.2. General Learning Demotives not Influenced by Gender and University Type

These ten groups of factors were not significant in relation with the independent variable of university type and gender either in the total P value of the model or, as for the factors marked with asterisks in the table, in none of the significance numbers of the independent variables.

Table 7. Demotives not Influenced by Gender or University

Demotive	χ^2 (4)	P	Nagelkerke R squared
Professors' Behavioral Aspects	5.987	0.20	4.8 %
Ignoring Students' Voice	3.479	0.481	3.5 %
*Gender Segregation	32.206	0.000	34.2 %
*Concerns about Future Stability	17.087	0.002	26.9 %
*Peer Relation	11.906	0.018	20.5 %
Lack of Purposeful and Practical Education	22.923	0.00	25%

5. Discussion

Due to the focus of the present work on EFL, the aspects related to language learning motivation are more elaborated on in this section.

5.1. Discussion of Language Learning Demotives

The demotives pertaining to language learning are briefly summarized in regarding their relationship with gender and/or university.

5.1.1. Language Learning Demotives Affected by University and Gender

• Although the first factor is teaching method based on the frequency order, regarding the factors which were proved to be differentially functioning with

regard to gender and university type, the first demotive was the *Teacher Behavior.* The behavioral features of the professors in the university classroom and their interactions with the students can have a negative effect on the students' language learning motivation. Negative sides of teacher behavior/characteristics involved issues like amotivated or demotivated instructors, over-strictness, impatience, teacher-oriented system of class management and looking down on the students, inappropriate reactions of the professors in certain situations, and discrimination among the students.

This comes as no surprise that teacher behavior is one of the first priorities of the students, as most researches of EFL demotivation have similar findings (e.g., Dörnyei, 1998; Falout & Falout, 2005; Falout and Maruyama, 2004; Kikuchi, 2009; Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009; Trang & Baldauf, 2007; Ushioda, 1998, 2001; Zhang, 2007). Besides, other studies in the Iranian context also show the higher sensitivity of female students to teacher's role as a demotive (Kavianpanah & Ghasemi, 2011). Female students are inclined to be more interdependent and rely on interpersonal factors for their motivational future pictures (Henry, 2010). However, the statement made by Kavianpanah and Ghasemi (2011) that, unlike the results of salient researches by Dörnyei (1998), Kikuchi (2004) and Muhonen (2004) introducing the teachers as the most important potential source of demotivation, "for Iranian language learners, teaching materials are more important" (p. 103); doesn't hold true at least for bachelor students of non-English majors in the present study. This contradiction may be because in their study only 136 out of 327 participants were university students and their majors were not specified. Motivation as a dynamic phenomenon is affected by the motivational status of the significant others, in particular, there is a positive and direct relationship between the teacher's and student's motivation (Atkinson, 2000).

• The second factor among those differentially functioning was *Language Learning Importance Neglect.* It was evident in the survey results that students believe their unawareness of the importance of language learning and the lack of emphasis by the significant others and the social context could be destructive for language learning motivation. The probability of indicating this factor in University No. 2 was approximately seven times more than the other three universities. Students at Univ. No. 2 were among the best students of the country who usually tend to pursue their studies in other countries. This fact makes them more sensitive about the EFL learning. The ignorance of international language learning importance and hence lack of due attention to it either by the learners' parents and/or the society, the common conception of EFL learning as a side course by others were mentioned by the students. Students believed their parents should have had more focus on their language learning especially from lower ages (Hassaskhah, et al., 2014). This is while students themselves commonly believe their future success depends on this learning (Kiany, et al., 2013). This illustrates the personal awareness of the students of the fact that "goals are socially derived constructs…" (Wentzel, 2000, p. 106).

• Similarly, *Lack of Time,* Insufficient time of learning in personal schedule, insufficiency of the time dedicated by university for language classes, and the time-consuming nature of language learning were in this category.

• *Incongruent Proficiency Levels* was related to the fact that language classes in the university context in Iran are usually composed of students with different proficiency levels and this issue, in students' views, could result in the lower levels of motivation for language learning. Univ. No. 2 and 4 have students with higher tendency to continue their studies abroad and hence work hard to meet the L2 standards of the admitting universities. This is while for the rest

of students, the incentives might not be so high and a motivational gap will be created. These demotivated students considered themselves at higher or lower proficiency levels in relation to the other students in the class. The higher proficiency group perceived the level of teaching, group works and discussions as less rewarding. This is while the low proficiency learners felt they could not keep pace with the other learners.

• *Lack of Educational Facilities* and absence of audiovisual materials in the classes were attested to be destructive to motivation. The differences observed between universities can be due to the fact that Univ. No. 1 is designed for distance education and the campus and classrooms are naturally less equipped than the other three universities. This factor counts as a very influential factor for L2 learning to the point that educational facilities grouped with content and materials were the most prominent L2 learning demotive found by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) and school facilities was ranked the second most important demotive by Dörnyei (1998).

• Statistics for *Unknowledgeable Instructors,* show male students refer to this aspect 10.7 times more than females. The lack of mastery over the language and topics covered in the class demotivated more male language learners. This finding is in line with Muhonen (2004) that male students more tend to attribute their demotivation to the teachers.

5.1.2. Language Learning Demotives not Affected by University and Gender

Among the 18 major categories found, the following factors were not proved to be differentially functioning based on either university type or gender. These factors have not been significant in relation with the independent variables of university type and gender. This insignificance was either in the total P value of

the model or, as for the factors marked with asterisks in the table, in none of the significance numbers of the independent variables.

• *Inappropriate teaching methods* employed by the professors, was the most important source of language learning demotivation. Among the reasons the students enumerated, unattractive activities, lack of variety in the teaching methods, using the students' mother tongue (Persian) for teaching, poor management of the class, teaching the material which is unsuitably higher than the students' proficiency level, and incomprehensible input. Unlike the majority of studies on L2 demotivation (e.g., Dörnyei, 1998; Falout & Falout, 2005; Trang & Baldauf, 2007; Ushioda, 1998, 2001; Zhang, 2007), here the behavioral aspects of the teacher versus their teaching method were entered into analysis as separate features. This revealed the method is subordinated to teacher immediacy and interactions in students' idea.

• *Deficiencies in the educational system* at school and university level in terms of planning, policies and strategies as a demotive included the lack of circular orientation of the language class seats, lack of a unanimous decision of the higher education ministry or each university on a definite book for the general English courses, bad timing of the language classes (e.g., the first time of afternoon, long class times, long intervals between two sessions), and in particular the inefficiency of the language learning in high school system resulting in students' lack of a strong background knowledge of the language for entering the higher education studies. Similarly, according to Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) in the high school education system in Japan, there are major deficiencies.

• In particular, it should be said that the *evaluation system,* as an important aspect in (de)motivating students, should be in harmony with the class structure. This is while in Iran and other countries like Japan there are high

stakes performance-based exams which have a negative washback effect on the curricula (Falout et al., 2009) and distort the communicative purpose and incentive of the learning. Moreover, lack of success indicated by low grades in one-shot final examinations at university is one of the causes of reduced self-confidence which will be discussed below (Dörnyei, 1998; Huang, 2012).

The three most commonly identified class structures are: competitive, individualistic, and cooperative. While the first type can harm the low-achieving students' self-esteem and cause their dissatisfaction, and individualistic approach leads the students toward personal self-efficacy beliefs; this is the cooperative structure believed to bring about motivation and self-efficacy for all class members (Dörnyei, 2011). Appling this structure for the evaluation of the class members in form of group projects can provide an acceptable alternative for the personal scoring system of evaluation currently in practice, and refine the problems students attached to lack of constructive competition among peers and stagnant and unpleasant university environment.

• Some of the students alleged what they are taught in the university classes is *impractical* in real life and particularly for encounters with native speakers of English. Low participation of the students in class discussions, not having real life contexts to use the L2, low practicality of the learnt materials, lack of sufficient international relations in the country and media were some of the instantiations of this factor. In fact, lack of usage is related to what Eccles (2007) calls "extrinsic utility value" of a task, i.e., how a task can contribute to approximating to current and future goals, the lack of which is proved to be a demotive in this sample.

• *Low quality educational materials* entailed aspects such as boring topics, inappropriate difficulty order of the materials, lack of novelty and outdated

materials, old and unattractive appearance of a book, lack of proper complementary materials facilitating the learning, censorship, unoriginal books, difficulty level of the instructional materials, especially the main course book, as well as boring topics. The importance of materials functioning as demotives is even more highlighted in the findings of Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) which indicated this facet as the first source of demotivation expressed by students. Apart from results in Japan, in the Iranian context "learning contents, materials and facilities" were ranked first among the demotives for students of junior high, high school and university (Kavianpanah & Ghasemi, 2011). However, despite the higher inclination of female students to think of materials as demotivating found by Muhonen (2004), no gender differences were observed in the present data.

• *Learning burden* and pressure felt by the students was attributed to factors such as the distance and dissimilarity between the two languages (L1 and L2), the difficulty of pronunciation learning, the reliance of learning on memory capacity and the volatile nature of the learnt materials, as well as the difficulty of the exercises. This factor relates to the category of "attitude toward second language learning" found by Kavianpanah and Ghasemi (2011) as the third priority from five main categories of demotives.

• *Fossilization* was what many students had experienced on the way of their learning because of the poor quality learning experiences of the past. Fossilization and the state of being a false beginner was reflected as the initial impaired learning and impeded progression.

• *Unattractiveness* of the language (or lack of intrinsic motivation) was mainly expressed as lack of interest in the target culture and the cultural and religious clash of the two nations. Although the trend of globalization is bridging the gap between the cultures, there is very scarce direct contact of

the people in Iran with native speakers of English and other foreigners which more highlights the cultural and religious distance of the nations. This is while according to Csizér and Dörnyei (2005), "intercultural contact is both a means and an end in L2 studies" (p. 2). One possible solution can be teaching diverse aspects of the foreign culture (Cummins, 1979; Ho, 1998). However, as another alternative, the L1 and L2 cultures can be taught comparatively (Alptekin & Alptekin, 1984). Also according to Larzen-Ostermark (2008), culture should be seen from a bidirectional perspective since looking at L1 culture through the use of L2 can have the best impact on the students' intercultural competence and motivation. For this purpose and also for the amelioration of the class practices, the use of L1 is also advisable (Campa & Nassaji, 2009).

- *Unbalanced Focus on Skills* was related to focusing on the four main skills and the sub-skills of grammar and vocabulary. In the traditional language classes unduly concentrating on the grammatical activities (GTM) is one of the aspects considered a demotive by students.

- *Lack of Self-confidence* was explained as the common unwillingness of the students to participate in the class activities, express their ideas in the class, or make practical usage of what they have learnt through group discussions and activities due to the lack of self-confidence. In the study by Dörnyei (1998) also this aspect was placed the third important demotive among the 9 categories. Kormos and Csizér (2007) also emphasized how learner's linguistic self-confidence is essential for their willingness to have contact with target language speakers as well as using the English language media products (Dörnyei et al., 2006). Moreover, in 1983, Clément and Kruidenier delineated that experiences of contact with target language speakers can improve L2 learners' linguistics self-confidence, which as a key factor for motivated

behavior, can in turn enhance language learning motivation.

• *Unknowledgeable Instructors.*

• *Delayed Start* was what related to the students' belief that they should have started to learn the language earlier. This results in being in low proficiency levels for a university student and a restricted access to mental repertoire of English vocabularies which would not lend themselves to a fluent conversation/ discussion was one of the last factors. This factor was not found in the similar works on L2 demotives.

• *High Financial Costs,* as one of the last categories in terms of frequency of occurrence in the responses, referred to the expenses imposed by the educational requirements of a foreign language. This has also been highlighted in other studies in Iran (Taguchi, et al., 2009; Hassaskhah, et al., 2014).

Class Progression Pace which is either higher or lower than the personal learning pace of the learner was the last factor frequently stated.

5.2. Discussion of General Learning Demotives

The parts below deal with the discussion of general learning demotives affected and not affected by university and gender. As mentioned before since it deals with general and not language learning demotives, it is dealt with as having the second priority in comparison with language learning demotives and hence not discussed as meticulously as that of language.

5.2.1. General Learning Demotives Affected by University and Gender

As few instances from the demotives of learning in general we can refer to the *evaluation system* where university No. 2 was approximately 5.4 times more

than the other universities. At Univ. No. 2, students asserted the professors were uncommonly strict in evaluation considering the students' hard work and the load of the materials which was chiefly due to being a very high ranking university. Besides, students commonly declared they prefer the 4-scale grade system over the score out of 20.

Besides, *Pressure* in the educational practices and the volume of to-be-learnt materials was more frequently stated in university one and two, these two universities as the latter is one of the most high-ranking universities in Iran and the former is a part-time university with very few classes held.

Moreover, considering *Lack of Constructive Competition among Peers,* it can be observed that the negative impact of uncooperative and discouraging peers was also previously indicated by Iranian university students as a demotive (Hassaskhah, et al., 2014).

As the last factor, *Lack of Purposeful and Practical Education* male participants indicated lack of a definite and clear personal target in education and not receiving a practical education approximately 6.2 times more than females. This can be related to the results of L2 demotives indicating the male students' higher sensitivity to teacher's knowledge level.

5.2.2. General Learning Demotives not Affected by University and Gender

With regard to the two more high ranking demotives, it should be noted that aside from *Teacher behavior,* the students' voice referred to demotivating impact of ignoring students' ideas about scheduling, selection of courses, teaching methodology, and so on is also perceived by other studies in the Iranian university context (Hassaskhah et al., 2014) and outside Iran (Muhonen, 2004; Ushioda, 1996).

6. Conclusions

In order to delve into what Iranian university students recognize as demotives for learning English, both male and female students of different types of universities were asked to openly enumerate what they consider as their demotives for (a) learning English and (b) learning other subjects at their university. Regarding the illuminative role of the interdependence of the motivation to learn foreign language and motivation for learning other subjects (Ushioda, 1998), the students' conception of demotives can be analyzed in more depth. This analogy can shed light on the specificity of language learning motivation as compared with the motivation for studying in general.

Overall, demotives of studying university subjects included factors such as gender segregation, the university human resources inefficiency, unpleasant university environment and lack of dynamicity as well as uncooperative peers and the need for more competition among them. So as to compare the two sets of demotives, it can be deduced that in the general aspects of education unlike language learning, the heterogeneity of the knowledge level of students did not count as an influential factor. Besides, for general demotives, students were neither complaining about their weak educational backgrounds nor the inefficiency of their high school education even in a single instance. They felt more relaxed about their personal efforts and attributed less to their own weaknesses; while confidently ascribed all the inefficiencies to the downsides of the university educational system and external aspects rather than their own limited background knowledge, their delayed start, lack of time, etc.

Regarding the impact of instructors at universities on students' demotivation as the most noticeable factor, it has to be pinpointed that based on the past studies (Gorham & Christophel, 1992) at university level, students

mostly attribute their motivation to themselves and their demotivation to the teachers. In other words, students believe teacher behavior is not prominent in motivating them; while it can have a central role in causing demotivation. The present findings indicated that among general studying demotives, *teacher behavior* and interrelationships with students was quite as important for the learners as their teaching methods; while when it came to language learning, it was the *teaching method* of a teacher that was much more emphasized. This is while Oxford (1998) found that the behavioral aspects of the teacher which are the most significant L2 learning demotive among the aspects related to teachers. Additionally, the problems related to teaching methods were also ranked comparatively very low in the general studying demotives as compared with the demotives for language learning. Hence the language teacher's job to avoid demotivating the learners through using improper methods of teaching is more highlighted in foreign language teaching as compared to other disciplines.

Nevertheless, in general it can be said that the number of references made to the professors' negative behavioral and personality characteristics was higher than references to their low knowledge level in both sets of demotives as in both sets of demotives *Unknowledgeable instructors* was ranked much lower than the other teacher's aspects. This can indicate that either the students are more satisfied with the scientific expertise of the professors as compared to their way of conduct, or many of students do not necessarily consider their professors as the main source and the sole transmitter of knowledge. By and large, in factors related to L2 teachers in the order of importance, the deficiency in: *Method*, *Behavior*, and *Knowledge level* can function as demotives for L2 learners, respectively.

Generally speaking, among these four higher education institutions, the distant education university (No. 1) had the highest number of general learning

and L2 learning demotives compared to other universities. There can also be associations between the two sets of demotives like the lack of educational facilities or deficient educational planning in general demotives and lack of class times for language learning. It seems that despite the students voluntarily choosing this type of institute for their studies, they are demotivated by shouldering the burden of studying on their own and being less reliant on the university campus facilities. Nevertheless, no direct association was found between the two categories of language learning and general demotives in terms of the demotives being sensitive to gender and/ or university in the other three universities.

With regard to the role of gender in language learning demotives, students who mentioned *teacher behavior* were more females. This is while *unknowledgeable teacher* was a point significantly more expressed by the male students. This analogy may reveal the female students' focus on interpersonal relationship for their motivational resources while the male students' higher sensitivity to teacher's competence can demonstrate how sensitive the male students are to the matters of hierarchy–assuming their professors not in a higher position scientifically–as well as being more concerned with the high quality education for their future employment. Additionally, from among demotives found for studying in general, *lack of aim and practicality* of education and future stability was pointed out by the male students more than the female respondents which can lend additional support to the previous hypothesis.

On the whole, contextual influences are investigated at two levels of macro and micro; the micro level concerns the "instructional context" and the macro " social and cultural influences" (Dörnyei, 2011, p. 26). The instructional aspects such as the task and materials and the evaluation system have short-term effect

while the more long-lasting contextual impacts are induced by the teacher and peers, parents (i.e., significant others) and the society. However, there can be a certain trend observed in the results which indicates the higher importance of the micro level factors.

There are however, some issues referred to in the answers which are not considered as demotives in LLM. Issues like the realization of difficulty of learning English is categorized as an instance of *amotivation*. However, the negative attitude toward the language or the target community is a demotive which starts from an external locus destroying the initial existing motivation to some extent or totally. This is what Chambers (1993) defines as lack of motivation from the beginning of language learning by the learner and calls those pupils "unmotivated". Amotivation can also be the results of experiencing persistent demotivation. Some other factors, like reduced self-confidence as a result of failure in exams can also cause amotivation (Huang, 2012). The frequency of occurrence of the exams in the period of academic education, makes the students prone to experiencing several cases of success and failure; hence if the evaluation system is deficient it can cause many negative experiences functioning as demotives. The worst case is, if this kind of experience reoccurs it can lead the learner to the state of a motivation.

In the end, recommending the provisions of what Littlejohn (2008) describes as aspects of "conducive circumstances" for motivation is valuable (i.e., focusing students on the right locus of control, supplying a sense of value and purpose, the preserving their self-esteem and feeling of success). Additionally, Chambers (1993) offers three categories of the suggestions from teachers or demotivated learners as:

  - Offering instant rewards and encouragement
  - Improving the teacher-pupil relationship

- Utilizing high quality materials and tasks

And as the second point is related to the most salient aspect in the students' view, it should be referred to this well-established point that "decreased physical and/ or psychological distance between teachers and students is associated with enhanced learning outcomes" (Gorham & Zakahi, 1990, p. 354). Accordingly, Nussbaum, Comadena and Holladay (1987) illustrated that humor, self-disclosure, and teacher narratives can be the top three effective verbal behaviors of teachers.

This investigation was aimed to function as a practical guide for working with university students in the context of Iran. Such results are relevant for English language professors to be more sensitive towards the factors negatively affecting students' language learning motivation and to be more cautious that as motivation is a dynamic and circular phenomenon, it can be easily affected and also transferred from the students to the professors and those other individuals in the field of TEFL and lead to a general improvement of the instructional practices.

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Appendix 1

Open-ended Questionnaire for Demotives (Translated from Persian)

Demotives Questions

University: ……   Age: …… Gender: M/ F Major: …….   Level of Education: …….

1. In your personal opinion, what are demotives for learning English language?

2. What are the factors decreasing your motivation for studying in general at this university?