

Demotivational Factors Affecting Iranian EFL Learners' Oral Performance: the Case of High Schools

Hassan Bashirnezhad¹  Zahra Vafaeeinezhad

1. Assistant Professor, Farhangian University, Amol, Iran.
h.bashirnezhad@cfu.ac.ir (corresponding author)

2. Master of English Language Teaching, Islamic Azad University, Sari Branch, Sari, Iran.
zahravafaeeinejad@gmail.com

Abstract

The study of motivation is concerned with what makes people interested in learning a second language and what keeps them motivated to do so. In addition to factors which increase students' motivation, there are factors which reduce their motivation, that is, demotivation factors. The present study aimed at identifying the ideas of Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and learners about demotivating factors affecting the learners' oral performance. 60 EFL teachers and 100 EFL learners from high schools in Sari, Iran were selected by convenience sampling. A demotivation questionnaire was used including 20 items in a Likert-scale format ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The results indicate that according to the language teachers' and learners' opinions, 'teachers' not being equipped with the required skills for teaching', "students' lack of mental health and good memory", "students' not receiving sufficient timely incentives", "teachers' lack of sufficient knowledge about the subject", and "students' lack of enough self-confidence" are the most important demotivating factors among the others.

Keywords: Attitudes, Demotivation factors, Oral performance, Iranian EFL learners, Iranian EFL teachers

Citation: Bashirnezhad, H., & Vafaeeinezhad, Z. (2024). *Applications of Language Studies*, 2(2), 144-168.

1. Introduction

There are diverse factors that play an important role in the process of language learning and teaching. Motivation is a major one and is usually defined as an internal state that arouses, directs, and maintains behavior. We all know how it feels to be motivated, and to move energetically toward a goal. We also know that it is something like working hard, even if we are not fascinated by the task (Woolfolk et al., 2003).

The study of motivation is concerned with what makes someone interested in learning a second language and what keeps him/her motivated. However, motivation to learn a second language (L2) is a complex construct, considering that language is always socially and culturally bound and hence quite different from other school subjects. Students who have higher levels of motivation are more successful and efficient in their learning process (Ely, 1986). Many researchers have investigated how students can be motivated (e.g., Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dornyei, 2001a; Oxford, 1996). Among these researchers, Dornyei, in particular, has done extensive research on practical aspects of motivation such as the question of how teachers can help to improve the learners' motivation in classroom (e.g., Dornyei, 2001b).

In addition to factors which increase the students' motivation, there are factors which more likely reduce motivation rather than reinforcing it, that is, demotivation factors. Dornyei (2001a) has defined demotivation as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivation basis of a behavior intention or an ongoing action" (p. 143). Therefore, a demotivated learner is someone who was once motivated, but has lost his or her interest for some reasons. In the same vein, we can speak of demotives, which are negative counterparts of motives.

Sometimes it is said that demotivation is the same as amotivation, while some scholars like Dornyei et al. (1985) believe that amotivation is "the relative absence of motivation that is not caused by a lack of initial interest but rather by individual feelings of incompetence and helplessness when faced with the activity". Accordingly, "amotivation" events are those that occur within the person and signify his or her inability to master some situation or events" (Dornyei, et al., 1985, p. 110).

One of the skills that learners might feel unable to develop is speaking, especially in contexts like Iran, where speaking practice does not happen much. With regard to the importance of speaking, there are three major factors encouraging learners to speak in classrooms. First, speaking activities prepare practice opportunities-chances to practice real life speaking in the classroom. Secondly, speaking tasks in which students tend to use any or all of the language they know provide feedback for both teacher and students. Finally, the more students have opportunities to activate the diverse elements of language they have kept in their brains, the more automatic their use of these elements become. As a result, students gradually become independent language users. This means that they will afford to use words and phrases fluently without very much conscious thought (Harmer, 2008). However, some factors may affect the speaking practice negatively and they may decrease the learners' motivation to speak in the classroom. This is a major concern in English Language Teaching (ELT) because motivation plays an important role in learning process and the related literature shows that those students who have higher levels of motivation are more successful and efficient in their learning process (e.g., Ely, 1986). It is obvious that motivation and demotivation as well as speaking are very important matters in the process of language learning. In this way, language teachers can become aware of factors which may encourage language learners to speak and also factors which may impede their speaking progress.

Despite the importance of demotivating factors and severity of the problem of speaking instruction, few insightful studies have been carried out on this issue in the context of Iran. Hence, this study makes a deliberate effort to partly fill the existing gap. It is trying to explore the ideas of Iranian EFL language teachers and learners about the demotivating factors affecting the oral performance of Iranian EFL learners.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Motivation and Demotivation

Motivation is an important factor in learning a second/foreign language (Gardner, 1985b; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Research shows that motivation has a positive effect on language learning. However, there is another side to motivation that probably every learner has encountered at some point: temporary loss of motivation. In contrast with factors that have a

positive effect on motivation, there are also some factors with a negative effect. These factors are called demotivating factors since they may negatively influence the learner's interest in language learning and development of the four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Several definitions and theories have been presented with regard to motivation so far. These theories try to explain human thought and behavior. There are unlimited reasons why one can be motivated towards an aim, which vary from one individual to another, and there are also different factors which can reduce or increase motivation. Therefore, it is unsurprising that developing a decisive definition of motivation has been problematic. This, in itself, is a daring task and so we should not expect a complete and full explanation of this complicated concept (Dörnyei, 1999, 2005; MacIntyre, 2002). Pennington (1995) believes that this problem is due to the fact that motivation cannot be directly observed and that the properties of each individual's motivational behavior are different and vary under different circumstances.

Whilst acknowledging that scholars differ in what they believe constitutes motivation, Pintrich and Schunk (2002) state that, motivation, in its complexity, "has been conceptualized in varied ways including inner forces, enduring traits, behavioral responses to stimuli, and sets of beliefs and affects" (p. 5). This definition presents us with a category of variables. An added difficulty is that diverse motives, at times, positively interact, whilst at other times they are in conflict. Moreover, in many studies, according to Schmidt et al. (1996), it is not clear whether successful learning is the result or the cause of motivation. Dodick (1996) believes that a more adequate explanation of motivation has yet to be discovered and, indeed, no single definition of motivation has been agreed upon at present (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

2.2. Studies on Motivation and Demotivation

In 1985, Gardner defined motivation as a multi-faceted construct which combines effort, desire, and positive attitudes toward language learning if the goal of learning L2 is to be achieved. This definition of motivation generated several problems because its main concern was integrative orientation which implied a situation where the language learners were in contact with the target language community. This is not often the case and learners have

almost no contact with speakers of the target language (Dörnyei, 1990; Ryan, 2005). Also, Gardner's definition does not take into consideration the fact that motivational levels fluctuate over time. The idea of time was included in Crookes and Schmidt's (1991) expanded definition of motivation. For them, language learning motivation features both internal and external aspects. The internal aspects include an interest in L2, relevance of learning the L2 to personal needs, expectancy of success or failure, and rewards. The external aspects consist of the decision to engage in language learning process, persistence over time, and maintaining the activity at high levels.

Dörnyei (1998) presents a more dynamic definition of motivation to learn, emphasizing the fact that motivation needs to be supported over time. For Dörnyei, "L2 motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate the learning behavior and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process; that is, all the other factors involved in L2 acquisition presuppose motivation to some extent" (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 1).

Both Chambers (2001) and Dörnyei (2001) emphasize the multifaceted nature of motivation. They see motivation as changing over time and being influenced by the surrounding context. They recognize various factors which affect human behavior and which are, therefore, related to motivation. Both authors draw up Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) definition of motivation which takes all of these factors into consideration: "the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out" (p. 64).

According to MacIntyre (2002), any explanation of language learning motivation requires one to answer three questions:

- (a) Why is the performance directed toward a specific goal?
- (b) What establishes the amount of intensity or effort devoted to achieving the goal?
- (c) Why do people who have the same learning situations differ in their motivational levels?

Regarding the last question, MacIntyre (2002) focuses on the fact that individual differences are of extreme importance when it comes to studying motivation, and he acknowledges several authors, such as Crookes, Schmidt, Dörnyei, Oxford and Sherain, who actually promote this in their definition of motivation. This same attention to individual differences is also given by Masgoret and Gardner (2003). Recent approaches to L2 motivation have revolved around the notions of possible self-motivation conceptualized at the group level, motivational self-regulation, teacher-controlled motivational strategies, task motivation, Ushioda's model and the role of motivational thinking.

As English becomes more global, the impact of the culture or culture associated with the English language diminishes. Rather than identifying with any particular culture, one identifies with a 'future' self which will be proficient in English (Ryan, 2005). This resulted in the notion of 'possible' self, first introduced by Markus and Nurius (1986). "Possible selves' represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, and what they are afraid of becoming, thus providing a conceptual link between cognition and motivation" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954).

Dörnyei (2005) specifies that if a learner's ideal self is proficient in L2, then that learner is integratively motivated. Dörnyei goes on to explain that the integrativeness concept here is parallel to its original meaning, that of favorable attitudes towards members of the L2 community, since our ideal self is seen to resemble members of the L2 community, as much as possible. However, according to Oyserman and Markus (1990), the best type of L2 students would be the ones who project themselves as 'balanced possible selves', which is a combination of the ideal self and the 'unideal self' or 'feared self'. Individuals who aim at a balanced possible self are better learners than those who possess only a positive or a negative possible self (Oyserman & Markus, 1990).

About two decades ago, demotivation began to draw attention from researchers in L2 learning and teaching as well. Christophel and Gorham (1995, 1992) originated two different investigations of demotivation with both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The results indicate that most subjects attribute demotivation to what the teacher had done or had been responsible for. Gorham and Christophel (1992) also summarized an arrange of order of the

frequency of diverse demotives, with the first five categories as dissatisfaction with grading and assignments; the teacher being boring, bored, unorganized and unprepared; the dislike of the subject area; the inferior organization of the teaching material, and the teacher being unapproachable, self-centered, biased, condescending and insulting. This rank presents an initial insight into the true nature of the teacher's role in demotivation.

Some other studies have been carried out on demotivation factors affecting language learning in foreign contexts by different researchers. Chambers (1993) designed a questionnaire to examine 191 students of 4 schools in Leeds in Britain on their explanations about demotivation and a questionnaire to 7 teachers about the main characteristics of the demotivated students. The teachers' interpretations were quite coherent. They identified that demotivated students do not attempt to learn, lack belief in their own abilities, and demonstrate laziness and unwillingness to learn. The students' understandings, however, is different from person to person. Some students blame their teachers for criticizing frequently and explaining things insufficiently. The students also believed that teachers use old-fashioned teaching materials and outdated equipment, thus students lose their motivation. Others accuse the number of students in the class and language room facilities. In sum, Chambers finds that students believe that demotivation originates from different sources: home, previous language learning experience, the perception of the teacher and students' low self-esteem, and so on. It is obvious that teachers' understandings are very different from students' perceptions. Therefore, Chambers concludes that "seeking the help of pupils might be a good place to start" (1999, p. 16), thereby stating the importance of communication and cooperation between teachers and students.

Dornyei (1998) conducted a qualitative study by doing structured long interviews with 50 secondary school students who were studying either English or German as a foreign language. In his study, the participants were those who had been distinguished by their teachers or peers as being particularly demotivated. He recognized 9 types of demotivating factors: the teacher (personality, commitment, competence, method), inadequate school facilities (group is too big or not at the right level, frequent change of teachers), reduced self-confidence (experience of failure or lack of success), negative attitudes towards L2,

compulsory nature of L2 study, interference of another foreign language being studied, negative attitude towards L2 community, and attitudes of group members and course book used in the language class. Such results were consistent with previous studies. Therefore, it is of vital importance to analyze the teacher factor in order to find possible solutions to demotivation.

Oxford (1998) did a study on 250 American students (both in high schools and universities) about their learning experiences over a period of five years. During this investigation, students were asked to describe a situation in which they experienced conflict with a teacher and a classroom in which they felt uncomfortable. Four types of demotivating factors were found: the teacher's personal relationship with the students, the teacher's attitude towards the course or the material, style conflicts between teachers and students, and the nature of the classroom activities. Many demotives were found such as the teacher's lack of appropriate behavior toward students or patronage/favoritism, the teacher's lack of eagerness and sloppy management towards the course or the material, their conflicts about the degree of closure or seriousness of the class, and the amount of irrelevance and repetitiveness. This research is of vital importance because it reveals the fact that most teachers easily attribute the students' demotivation to various reasons including psychological, attitudinal, social, historical, and even geographical reasons without realizing the potential demotivating roles of themselves. Lantolf and Genung (2002) conducted a case study of a graduate student learning Chinese as a foreign language during a summer intensive course. They found that the learner became demotivated because of the teacher's authoritative use of power.

Later, Muhonen (2004) conducted a study on 91 ninth-grade students in a comprehensive school in Jyväskylä to identify the demotivating factors that cause students to lose their motivation for learning English. The students were asked to write about issues that had a negative influence on their motivation to learn English. Based on the qualitative content analysis, several demotivating factors including 1) The teacher, 2) Learning materials, 3) Learner characteristics, 4) school environment, 5) Learners' attitudes toward the English language emerged from the data.

In order to identify the demotivating factors for Japanese high school students, Kikuchi (2009) asked 5 university students from public and private universities to share their experiences in high school English classroom. 42 university students from the public university completed an open-response questionnaire. Through the qualitative analysis, the following demotivating factors were recognized: 1) The teacher behavior, 2) The grammar-translation method, 3) Test and entrance examination, 4) Vocabulary memorization, and 5) Textbook and reference book. It was concluded that the teachers-fronted approach was the most demotivating factor that influenced Japanese high school students.

Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) administered a 35-item questionnaire to 656 Japanese high school students and recognized the following sources of demotivation: 1) Learning contents and materials, 2) Teachers' competence and teaching styles, 3) Inadequate school facilities, 4) Lack of intrinsic motivation, and 5) Test scores. They found that the learning contents and materials and test scores were the most salient demotivating factors for many students. In contrast to the previous studies, teacher-related factors were not among the most demotivating factors. It was concluded that significant differences were found between less motivated and more motivated students, learning contents and materials, lack of intrinsic motivation, and test scores were more demotivating for the less motivated students.

Falouta et al. (2009) carried out a study on 900 university EFL learners to investigate the demotivating factors in learning EFL in Japan, and the relationship between past demotivating experiences and present proficiencies. In their study, the demotivating factors were grouped into three categories of external conditions of the learning environment, internal conditions of the learner, and reactive behaviors to demotivating experiences.

Tabatabaei and Molavi (2012) did a study on demotivation among Iranian EFL seminary students. Their study aimed at finding the common factors that are perceived demotivating by the students. The results of the study indicates that as with other few studies in the field, factors like high frequency of classes during a week, high number of subjects being taught, insufficient chance of English use in real life, their low self-confidence, and the difficulties encountered in English learning could demotivate learners.

Also, Heidari and SadeghOghli (2015) investigated the de-motivational factors of speaking English. A questionnaire consisting of teacher-related, student-related and classroom-related de-motivating factors was administered to 100 first grade high school students in one of the institutions of Iran. The data analysis revealed that although all three factors of de-motivation affected the students' performance in speaking English negatively, the classroom related factor was the most effective one among all three factors of de-motivation. The most significant reasons of students in de-motivation were (a) little or no access to the Internet (b) computer equipment shortage, (c) no real-life situation for using English outside the classroom, and (d) no sufficient time for teaching English in classroom by teachers.

3. Method

The current study is a mixed-method study in which qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used. Also, a partly descriptive approach has been adopted in this study. The design of this study was a survey type asking for the opinions of EFL teachers and learners.

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study were Iranian EFL language learners and teachers. There were totally 15 EFL language teachers (male and female) and 10 EFL language learners (male and female) from two high schools in Sari, Iran, which were selected by convenience sampling. They were asked to write down their ideas about the demotivating factors affecting their oral performance. The purpose was to codify their responses and develop a questionnaire about demotivating factors affecting the speaking ability in English. Then, in the main data collection stage of the study, 60 language teachers and 100 language learners were randomly chosen and required to respond to the prepared questionnaire items. The language teachers ranged from 30 to 48 in age, having either B.A. or M.A. degree in language teaching. With regard to language learners, their age range was from 15 to 18 years and they were studying at the intermediate levels in high schools.

3.2. Instruments

The instrument used in this study was a demotivating questionnaire which had 20 items in a Likert-scale format ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The reliability of the questionnaire was checked in a pilot study and it was calculated to be 0.87 which shows a high reliability index.

3.3. Data Analysis

The collected data underwent quantitative and qualitative analyses. In order to analyze the data, as it was already noted, first the responses of the language teachers taking part in the interview were codified. Having codified the responses, the researchers developed a questionnaire to tap the demotivating factors affecting the participants speaking ability. The final 20 items were piloted with 30 participants. The descriptive statistics of the questionnaire given to the teachers and students are presented separately in the next section.

4. Results

4.1. Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire

Before presenting the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire items, the reliability of the instrument which was checked in a pilot study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

The Result of the Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	Participants (total)	N of Items
.837	25	20

As Table 1 shows, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the demotivating factors questionnaire with 20 items and 25 participants was found to be 0.83 which shows a high reliability index. The next table shows the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire items.

4.2. Teachers' Responses on the Items of the Questionnaire

The item total statistics for each item of the questionnaire answered by the teachers along with its Cronbach's alpha reliability can be found in Table 2. Table 2 shows that all the items

(the column for Cronbach's alpha if item deleted) contributed a high reliability index (above 0.8) to the questionnaire.

Table 2

The Item Total Statistics for Each Item of the Questionnaire Answered by the Teachers

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
i1	64.30	107.366	.032	.504	.843
i2	63.22	99.088	.471	.501	.824
i3	63.40	97.329	.486	.639	.822
i4	62.93	101.216	.322	.481	.830
i5	64.23	104.589	.164	.468	.837
i6	63.90	99.312	.468	.410	.824
i7	63.37	96.270	.586	.603	.818
i8	62.68	98.152	.541	.650	.821
i9	63.38	98.274	.456	.567	.824
i10	63.78	97.766	.452	.382	.824
i11	63.28	97.223	.526	.755	.821
i12	63.32	100.017	.427	.712	.826
i13	62.92	94.790	.700	.757	.813
i14	63.43	95.504	.587	.677	.817
i15	64.45	98.862	.388	.372	.827
i16	62.50	99.881	.455	.553	.824
i17	63.65	97.113	.326	.389	.834
i18	62.98	97.373	.512	.509	.821
i19	64.93	109.351	-.058	.541	.847
i20	62.85	98.909	.516	.509	.822

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire items including mean and standard deviation. It should be mentioned that since we have 5 options, any score below 3 would be considered as a negative score and any score above 3 would be considered as a positive score.

The instrument used in this study was a Likert-scale item questionnaire. The demotivating questionnaire had 20 items in a Likert-scale format ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). According to Table 3, 15 items had a mean score above 3 which shows that all 75% of the participants had a positive attitude towards the mentioned items and 25% of the teachers had a negative attitude towards the questionnaire items.

Item 1 “Inadequate teaching atmosphere”, item 5 “No interest in English subject”, item 6 “Lack of real goal for learning English”, item 15 “Inappropriate teaching method used for the students”, and item 19 “Receiving negative comments from the surrounding setting” had the mean scores below 3 which showed participants’ negative views about them. This shows, in general, that teachers had positive views about the items leading to demotivating factors related to the speaking ability (average mean= 3.45). In fact, the teachers believed that all items, except 1, 5, 6, 15, and 19 could be the causes of the demotivating factors.

Table 3

The Descriptive Statistics of the Questionnaire Items Answered by the Teachers

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Status
i1	60	151	2.52	1.066	Negative
i2	60	216	3.60	.978	Positive
i3	60	205	3.46	1.109	Positive
i4	60	233	3.88	1.059	Positive
i5	60	155	2.58	1.046	Negative
i6	60	175	2.92	.962	Negative
i7	60	207	3.45	1.032	Positive
i8	60	248	4.13	.947	Positive
i9	60	206	3.43	1.079	Positive
i10	60	182	3.03	1.134	Positive
i11	60	212	3.53	1.049	Positive
i12	60	210	3.50	.966	Positive
i13	60	234	3.90	.986	Positive
i14	60	203	3.38	1.091	Positive
i15	60	142	2.37	1.164	Negative
i16	60	259	4.32	.930	Positive
i17	60	190	3.17	1.520	Positive
i18	60	230	3.83	1.060	Positive
i19	60	113	1.88	1.075	Negative
i20	60	238	3.97	.920	Positive
Valid N (listwise)	60	M = 3.45			

4.3. Students' Responses on the Items of the Questionnaire

The item total statistics for each item of the questionnaire along with its Cronbach's alpha reliability can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

The Item Total Statistics for Each Item of the Questionnaire Answered by the Students

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
i1	63.14	99.253	-.111	.437	.816
i2	62.16	89.004	.431	.426	.787
i3	62.30	88.576	.392	.419	.789
i4	61.98	89.010	.361	.351	.790
i5	63.48	95.303	.080	.279	.806
i6	62.91	89.436	.372	.301	.790
i7	62.30	87.081	.528	.531	.781
i8	61.57	88.995	.482	.529	.785
i9	62.28	89.537	.323	.314	.793
i10	62.72	88.264	.396	.263	.788
i11	62.26	86.437	.532	.653	.780
i12	62.23	88.724	.446	.683	.786
i13	61.81	85.448	.661	.638	.775
i14	62.29	86.289	.553	.612	.779
i15	63.51	91.040	.267	.256	.796
i16	61.56	87.178	.485	.440	.783
i17	62.52	87.282	.300	.362	.797
i18	62.03	85.545	.523	.451	.780
i19	63.77	98.684	-.085	.282	.815
i20	61.86	86.950	.524	.471	.781

Table 4 shows that all the items (the column for Cronbach's alpha if item deleted) contributed a high reliability index (above 0.7) to the questionnaire. Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire items including mean and standard deviation. It

should be mentioned that since we have 5 options, any score below 3 would be considered as a negative score and any score above 3 would be considered as a positive score.

Table 5

The Descriptive Statistics of the Questionnaire Items Responded by Students

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Status
i1	100	2.58	1.065	Negative
i2	100	3.56	.988	Positive
i3	100	3.42	1.112	Positive
i4	100	3.74	1.134	Positive
i5	100	2.24	1.046	Negative
i6	100	2.81	1.061	Negative
i7	100	3.42	1.007	Positive
i8	100	4.15	.903	Positive
i9	100	2.24	1.101	Negative
i10	100	3.00	1.137	Positive
i11	100	3.46	1.058	Positive
i12	100	3.49	.990	Positive
i13	100	3.91	.954	Positive
i14	100	3.43	1.037	Positive
i15	100	2.21	1.122	Negative
i16	100	4.16	1.070	Positive
i17	100	1.95	1.077	Negative
i18	100	3.69	1.152	Positive
i19	100	3.20	1.511	Positive
i20	100	3.86	1.025	Positive
Valid N (listwise)	100	M = 3.22		

According to Table 5, 14 (as opposed to 15 items by the teachers) items had a mean score above 3 which shows that all 70% of the participants had a positive attitude towards the mentioned items and 30% of the students had a negative attitude towards the questionnaire items (6 items totally).

Item 1 “Inadequate teaching atmosphere”, item 5 “No interest in English subject”, item 6 “Lack of real goal for learning English”, item 9 “Being shy and timid in classroom setting”, item 15 “Inappropriate teaching method used for the students”, and item 17 “The teachers not being equipped with the required skills for teaching” had the mean scores below 3 which showed the participants’ negative views about them.

This shows, in general, that students had positive views towards the items leading the demotivating factors related to the speaking ability (average mean = 3.22). In fact, the students believed that all items, except 1, 5, 6, 9, 15, and 17 (totally 6 items) could be the causes of the demotivating factors.

5. Discussion

The purpose of the study was identifying the ideas of Iranian EFL language learners about the demotivating factors affecting their oral performance. The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire including 20 items in a Likert-scale format ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). As the findings showed, Item 1 “Inadequate teaching atmosphere”, item 5 “No interest in English subject”, item 6 “Lack of real goal for learning English”, item 9 “Being shy and timid in classroom setting”, item 15 “Inappropriate teaching method used for the students”, and item 17 “The teachers not being equipped with the required skills for teaching” had the mean scores below 3 which showed the participants’ negative views about them. Based on the results, students had a positive view towards the items leading the demotivating factors related to the speaking ability (average mean = 3.22). They believed that all items, except 1, 5, 6, 9, 15, and 17 (totally 6 items) could be the causes of the demotivating factors.

Another purpose of the study was to identify the opinions of Iranian EFL language teachers about the demotivating factors affecting the speaking ability of language learners. The demotivating questionnaire for this group also had 20 items in a Likert-scale format ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Item 1 “Inadequate teaching atmosphere”, item 5 “No interest in English subject”, item 6 “Lack of real goal for learning English”, item 15 “Inappropriate teaching method used for the students”, and item 19 “Receiving negative comments from the surrounding setting” had the mean scores below 3

which showed the participants' negative views about them. Teachers had a positive view towards the items leading to demotivating factors related to the speaking ability (average mean = 3.45). They believed that all items, except 1, 5, 6, 15, and 19 could be the causes of the demotivating factors.

Similar results were found by Chambers (1993) who identified that demotivated students did not attempt to learn, lacked belief in their own abilities, demonstrated laziness and unwillingness to learn. The students' understandings, however, were different from person to person. Some students blamed their teachers for criticizing frequently and explaining things insufficiently. The students also believed that teachers used old-fashioned teaching materials and outdated equipment. Thus, they lost their motivation. Also, Lantolf and Genung (2002) found that the learners became demotivated because of the teacher's authoritative use of power.

The findings were also in line with Muhonen (2004), who conducted a study on 91 ninth-grade students in a comprehensive school to identify the demotivating factors that cause students to lose their motivation for learning English. according to the findings, several demotivating factors emerged from the data including the teacher, learning materials, learner characteristics, school environment, and learners' attitudes toward the English language.

In addition, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) recognized different sources of demotivation including learning contents and materials, teachers' competence and teaching styles, inadequate school facilities, lack of intrinsic motivation, and test scores. Similarly, Heidari Soureshjani and Riahipour (2012) concluded that speaking skill was strongly affected by demotivating factors such as teachers, peers, and materials. Moreover, they argued that the most demotivating factors influencing students' speaking ability were factors related to teachers, time and classroom.

The findings of another study by Heidari and Sadegh-Oghli (2015) showed that although all three factors of de-motivation negatively affected the students' performance in speaking English, the classroom related factor was the most effective one among all three factors of de-motivation. The most significant reasons of students in de- motivation were (a) little or no access to the Internet (b) computer equipment shortage, (c) no real-life situation

for using English outside the classroom, and (d) no sufficient time for teaching English in classroom by teachers.

6. Conclusion

Speaking is a valuable skill to improve the language learning process, since it provides highly motivational activities for students, and also increases opportunities for students' interaction with each other and their teachers. Speaking a language involves more than knowing the linguistic components of the message. In comparison with other language skills, speaking plays a vital role in learning to use language in order to communicate and it is the most basic means of global human communication.

Motivation plays a significant role in improving speaking skill. In contrast, demotivating factors may negatively affect language learners and their ability to speak. Motivation and demotivation as well as speaking are among the most important issues in the process of language learning. Therefore, considering them and conducting research studies like the present one about the relationship between them could help language teachers and students to be more efficient in the process of language learning and teaching. To put it more clearly, by taking into account these factors, language teachers can become aware of factors which may encourage language learners to speak and also the factors which may hinder their speaking activities. Moreover, motivation has been widely acknowledged by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influences the rate and success of the second/foreign language learning.

The results of this study will raise the teachers' awareness about factors decreasing EFL learners' motivation to practice speaking. By identifying de-motivating factors, EFL teachers make attempts to decrease or prevent the causes of de-motivation or at least minimize their effect on students' learning. They can use the advantage of de-motivation by identifying the real factors of them and will try to decrease or prevent the causes of de-motivation in order to stop or minimize their effect on students' learning. Therefore, teachers can choose proper methods and strategies for teaching EFL to increase students' motivation to learn English, in general, and improve their speaking skill, in particular.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) certify/certifies that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in the present research paper.



References

- Chambers, G. N. (2001). *Reflections on Motivation*. London: CILT.
- Christophel, D., & Gorham, J. (1995). A test-retest analysis of student motivation, teacher immediacy and perceived sources of motivation and demotivation in college classes. *Communication Education*, 44, 292-306.
- Crookes, G., & Schmidt, R.W. (1991). Motivation: reopening the research agenda. *Language Learning*, 4, 469-512.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Dodick, D. J. (1996). A study of the attitudes and motivation of high school foreign language students. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 52(4), 577-595.
- Dornyei, Z. (2005). *The Psychology of the Language Learner. Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Dornyei, Z. (1990). Conceptualizing motivation in foreign language learning. *Language Learning*, 40, 46-78.
- Dornyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(3), 273 -284.
- Dornyei, Z. (1998). Motivation. In J. Verschueren, J-Ostmann, J. Blommaert & C. Bulcaen (Eds.), *Handbook of Pragmatics* (pp. 1-22). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Dornyei, Z. (2001a). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Harlow, England: Longman.
- Dornyei, Z. (2001b). *Motivation strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dornyei, Z. (2006). Individual differences in second language acquisition. *AILA Review*, 19, 42-68.

- Dornyei, Z., & Csiz6r, K. (2002). Some dynamics of language attitudes and motivation: Results of a longitudinal nationwide survey. *Applied Linguistics*, 23(4), 421-462. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/23.4.421>.
- Dornyei, Z., & Otto, 1. (1998). Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation. Working Papers in *Applied Linguistics (Thames Valley University, London)* 4, 43-69.
- Dornyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and researching motivation, second ed.* Harlow: Longman.
- Ely, C. (1986). Language learning motivation: A descriptive and causal analysis. *Modern Language Journal*, 70 (1), 28-35.
- Falout, J., & Maruyama, M. (2004). A Comparative Study of Proficiency and Learner Demotivation. *The Language Teacher*, 28(8), 3-9.
- Falout, J., Elwood, J., & Hood, M. (2009). Demotivation: Affective states and learning outcomes. *System*, 37(3), 403-417. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2009.03.004>.
- Gardner, R. C. (1995). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, R. C. (2004). Attitude/Motivation/ Test Battery: International AMTB Research Project. *Canada: The University of Western Ontario*.
- Gardner, R.C., & Lambert, W.E. (1972). *Attitude and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Gorham, J., & Christophel, D. (1992). Student's perception of teacher behaviors as motivatingand demotivating factors in college classes. *Communication Quarterly*, 40, 239-52.
- Harmer, J. (2008). *How to Teach English*. (3rd Ed). Harlow England: Pearson Longman.
- Harmer, J. (2007). The practice of English language teaching. Harlow. *English: Pearson Longman*.

- Heidari Soureshjani, K., & Riahipour, P. (2012). Demotivating factors on English speaking skill. *World applied sciences journal*, 17(3), 327-339.
- Heidari, A., & Sadegh-Oghli, S. (2015). De-motivational factors of speaking English: A case of Iranian high school students. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World (IJLLALW)*, 9(3), 115-122.
- Kikuchi, K. (2009). Listening to our learners' voices: what demotivates Japanese high school students? *Language Teaching Research*, 13(4), 453-471. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168809341520>.
- Kikuchi, K., & Sakai, H. (2009). Japanese learners' demotivation to study English: A survey study. *JALT journal*, 31(2), 183.
- MacIntyre, P. D. (2002). Motivation, anxiety and emotion in second language acquisition. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 45-68).. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible Selves. *American Psychologist*, 41(9), 954-969.
- Masgoret, A. M., & Gardner, R. C. (2003). Attitudes, motivation and second language learning: A meta-analysis of studies conducted by Gardner and associates. *Language Learning*, 53(1), 123-163.
- Oxford, R. L. (1998). *The unraveling tapestry: Teacher and course characteristics associated with demotivation in foreign language learning*. Paper presented at the TESL'98 conference, Seattle, WA.
- Oxford, R.L. (1996). New pathways of language learning motivation. In: Oxford, R. L. (Ed.), *Language learning Motivation: Pathways to the New Century* (pp.1-8). University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu.
- Pennington, M. C. (1995). Work Satisfaction, Motivation, and Commitment in Teaching English as a Second Language. *ERIC Document no. 404 850*.

- Pintrich, P. R., & Schunk, D. H. (2002). *Motivation in Education: Theory, Research and Applications* (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Ryan, J. (2005). Improving teaching and learning practices for international students: implications for curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. In J. Carroll & J. Ryan (Eds.), *Teaching International Students: Improving Learning for All*. New York: Routledge.
- Sakai, H., & Kikuchi, K. (2009). An analysis of demotivators in the EFL classroom. *System*, 37(1), 57-69. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system>.
- Scarcella, R., & Oxford, R. L. (1992). *The Tapestry of Language learning: The in the Communicative Classroom*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Schmidt, F. (1996). Statistical significance testing and cumulative knowledge in psychology: hriplikations for training researchers. *Psychological Methods*, 2, 115-129.
- Schmidt, R., Boraie, D., & Kassabgy, O. (1996). *Foreign language motivation: Internal structure and external connections*. In R. L. Oxford (Ed.), *Language Learning Motivation: Pathways to the New Century* (pp.14-88).
- Tabatabaei, O., & Molavi, A. (2012). Demotivating Factors Affecting EFL learning of Iranian Seminary. *Canadian center of science and Education*, 5, 1.
- Tremblay, P. F., Goldberg, M. P., & Gardner, R. C. (1995). Trait and state motivation and the acquisition of Hebrew vocabulary. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*, 27, 356-370.
- Tremblay, P.F., & Gardner, R.C. (1995). Expanding the motivation construct in language learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 79(4), 505-518.
- Ushioda, E. (1996). Developing a dynamic concept of L2 motivation. In T. Hickey & Milliams (Eds.) , *Language, Education and Society in a Changing World* (pp. 239-245). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Ushioda, E. (1998). Effective motivational thinking: a cognitive theoretical approach to the study of language learning motivation. In E. Alcon Soler & V. CodinaEspurz (Eds.),

Current Issues in English Language Methodology (pp.77- 89). Castello de la Plana: Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I.

Ushioda, E. (2001). Language learning at university: Exploring the role of motivational thinking. In *Motivation and second language acquisition*, 23.

Ushioda, E. (2003). Motivation as a socially mediated process. In D. Little, J. Ridley & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Learner Autonomy in the Foreign Language Classroom: Teacher, Learner, Curriculum and Assessment* (pp. 90-102). Dublin: Authentic Language Learning Resources Ltd.

Woolfolk, A.E., Winne, P.H., & Perry, N.E. (2003). *Educational psychology (2nd Ed)*. Pearson Education Canada.



Appendix: Questionnaire

Age:Education:.....Gender:.....

The Honored Interviewee:

The present questionnaire has been prepared in order to implement a research project. The goal it pursues is to evaluate teachers' and students' attitudes toward the students' anti-motivational stimuli for learning English in the classroom. We feel obliged to sincerely appreciate your truthful answers in advance:

No.	Statements	Absolutely Agree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Absolutely Disagree
1	Inadequate teaching atmosphere					
2	Lack of sufficient and authentic communication between teachers-students					
3	Monotonous and boring teaching method presented by the teachers					
4	Lack of enough self-confidence					
5	No interest in English subject					
6	Lack of real goal for learning English					
7	Lack of appropriate facilities in the educational setting					
8	Not being mentally healthy and lack of good memory					
9	Being shy and timid in classroom setting					
10	Being poor in expressing ideas and speaking					
11	Being afraid of being mocked by others					
12	Lack of intrinsic motivation for learning English					
13	Lack of sufficient knowledge about the subject					
14	Lack of motivational activities like group activities					
15	Inappropriate teaching method used for the students					
16	Not receiving suitable and timely feedback from the teachers					
17	The teachers not being equipped with the required skills for teaching					
18	Feeling drowsy and worn-out in the classroom					
19	Receiving negative comments from the surrounding setting					
20	Nor receiving sufficient timely incentives					