



Investigating Demotivation in Learning English: An Extension to Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) Framework

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to investigate the factors of demotivation in L2 learning of Pakistani undergraduates at the University of Balochistan, Quetta. A mixed-methods research design was employed in this study to explore the factors of demotivation. Quantitative data was obtained from the responses of a population of 116 first semester undergraduates in a questionnaire adopted from Sakai and Kikuchi (2009). The questionnaire comprised 35 close-ended items on a 5-point Likert scale on six factors of demotivation: *grammar-based teaching*, *teacher's behaviour*, *course contents and teaching materials*, *effects of low test scores*, *classroom environment*, and *lack of self-confidence and interest*. Qualitative data was obtained from an open-ended question on students' demotivating experiences in learning English in the same questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data while the qualitative data was analyzed by using content analysis to extract the themes or factors of demotivation and their categories based on Sakai and Kikuchi's framework. The findings reveal that all six factors were cited by students as demotivational factors with *teaching method*, *lack of facilities and course content* being the most cited factors, hence supporting Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) framework. In addition, the qualitative data suggests that a new factor emerged – *negative attitude of society towards English language* - hence a contribution to the body of literature. The findings of the study have implications on the teaching and learning of English in Pakistan.

Keywords: Demotivation, demotivational factors, demotivating sources, demotivating experiences, demotives

1. Introduction

In the past, research on second language learning has concentrated on motivation with the aim of developing a positive attitude towards English language learning (Dörnyei, 2001a; Hussin, Maroof, & D'Cruz, 2001). This is mainly due to the fact that the English language has emerged as the *lingua franca* in many countries today. Dörnyei (2005b) states that motivation is a key factor that stimulates the interest of students to learn a foreign or second language. Motivation infuses reasons and motives among second language (L2) learners to sustain their interest in L2 learning and paves a way for them to yield positive outcomes in achieving the desired results by developing reasonable skills in the target language (Dörnyei, 2001b). Hence, for these reasons, there has been a preponderance of research in motivation in L2 learning over the past fifty years.

On the contrary, demotivation, i.e. the dark side of motivation has been under-researched (Dörnyei, 2001b; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Zhang, 2007). *Demotivation* is a relatively new term in the field of second language learning and is defined as a barrier that impedes and retards second language learning (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 2001b; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Oxford, 1998). While motivation drives an individual towards achieving desired goals or outcomes, demotivation, or 'another side of motivation' (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2010; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009) reduces the motivational forces in language learning either directly or indirectly. It slows down the learning process of second language learners and brings about negative effects on the overall learning of L2 learners. As Falout, Elwood, and Hood (2009) point out, 'demotivation can negatively influence the learner's attitudes and behaviors, degrade classroom group dynamics and teacher's motivation, and result in long-term and widespread negative learning outcomes' (p. 403). The serious impact of demotivation in language learning has prompted

questions among SLA researchers on how students can be motivated or how the learning process may be triggered (Chen & Dörnyei, 2007; Oxford, 1998; Sawyer, 2007) to bring about effective language learning.

2. Importance of the research

According to Haycraft (1993), non-English speaking countries are facing many problems in both teaching and learning English as a second language due to factors such as inadequate facilities of audio-visual classes, harsh class environment, use of inappropriate course materials, overcrowded classrooms, and ineffective teaching methodologies. A study conducted in Iran by Jomairi (2011) on 189 undergraduate students found that the teacher was the most significant external demotivating factor, while lack of self-confidence, and lack of motivation were the most significant internal factors demotivating second language learners.

In Japan, Hamada (2008) surveyed 234 Japanese first-year students studying in two different public schools and 217 first-year students studying in two universities situated in Kanto region of Japan. The findings revealed that reduced self-confidence was the most significant internal factor, and nature of English tests and nature of English language were the most significant external factors demotivating junior high school learners. External factors such as teachers, textbooks, and teaching styles, and internal factors such as reduced self-confidence were found to be the most significant demotivating factors among senior high school learners.

Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) aimed to investigate demotivating factors among students studying in upper secondary school, Japan. The researchers had two prime objectives. Firstly, to determine the factors which demotivated students to learn English as a second language. Secondly, they investigated the differences in demotivating factors between less motivated and more motivated students. These five factors were: inadequate school facilities, test scores, lack of intrinsic motivation, teachers' competence and teaching styles, and learning contents and materials. To investigate external and internal demotivating factors, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) designed a model which consisted of six constructs; teachers' behavior (5 items), classroom environment (8 items), grammar based teaching (6 items), course contents and teaching materials (7 items), lack of self-confidence (4 items), and effects of low test score (5 items).

Past research has revealed that demotivation emanates from different internal and external factors. The key internal and external demotivating factors identified in past research include ineffective teaching methods, inappropriate teaching materials, aspects of the curriculum, class atmosphere, attitude of teachers, unsatisfactory test results, negative attitude of students towards the target language, experience of failure, lack of self-confidence, and lack of learning facilities (Alavinia & Sehat, 2012; Cheng, 2012; Hamada, 2008; Hu, 2011; Kaivanpanah & Ghasemi, 2011; Keblawi, 2005; Kikuchi, 2006; Kikuchi & Browne, 2009; Rastegar, Akbarzadeh & Heidari, 2012; Zhang, 2007).

However, the construct of demotivation is still an under-researched area (Chen, 2013; Dörnyei, 2005a; Kikuchi, 2011) and hence according to Dörnyei, still needs to be researched thoroughly. Therefore, it is important to investigate the factors causing demotivation among students in foreign or second language learning so that they can learn the target language effectively (Kikuchi, 2011). In similar vein, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009, p.199) suggest that in order to gain better understanding of problems of second language learners, 'research on demotivation needs to involve a variety of learners in terms of motivational states and proficiencies in English'. In addition, the solution to the problem of demotivation can be reduced significantly if this issue is explored and researched in different contexts and at different levels of education (Molavi & Biria, 2013).

In Pakistan, the situation is no different. Students face many challenges in English language learning which they attribute to factors such as inadequate learning facilities, inadequate well-trained teachers, and ineffective teaching methods (Warsi, 2004). English language being the official and compulsory language in education paves many opportunities for students in Pakistan whereby the mastery of the language secures desired positions and social status in society (Rehman, 2001). Although measures have been implemented to enhance the quality of English language learning such as providing training to English language teachers, hiring well-skilled ELT teachers, and revising textbooks (National Education Policy, 1992), the desired objectives in developing students' competence in the target language could not be achieved due to ineffective teaching methods, use of inappropriate text books and teaching materials, and lack of proper supervision (Warsi, 2004). Bahramy and Araghi (2013) state that the demotivation that students experience causes them to lose both integrative and instrumental motivation to continue their efforts in learning the English language. This is detrimental to the future of Pakistani students as English Language, being the official language, is also an international language which provides opportunities for pursuing higher education locally and abroad, and securing good jobs for those who master it. Bearing this in mind, and the fact that studies thus far have been conducted in Taiwan, Finland, Japan, and Iran (Amemori, 2012, Chen, 2013; Kikuchi, 2011; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012), the aim of the present study was to investigate demotivation among Pakistani undergraduates at the University of Balochistan.

3. Research Objective

- To determine the factors that demotivate Pakistani undergraduates in learning English as a second language at the university.

4. Research Question

- What are the factors that demotivate Pakistani undergraduates in learning English as a second language at the university?

5. Materials And Methods

The methodology comprised a mixed-methods research design. Using Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) framework as a guide,

both the quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted. The theoretical framework of Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

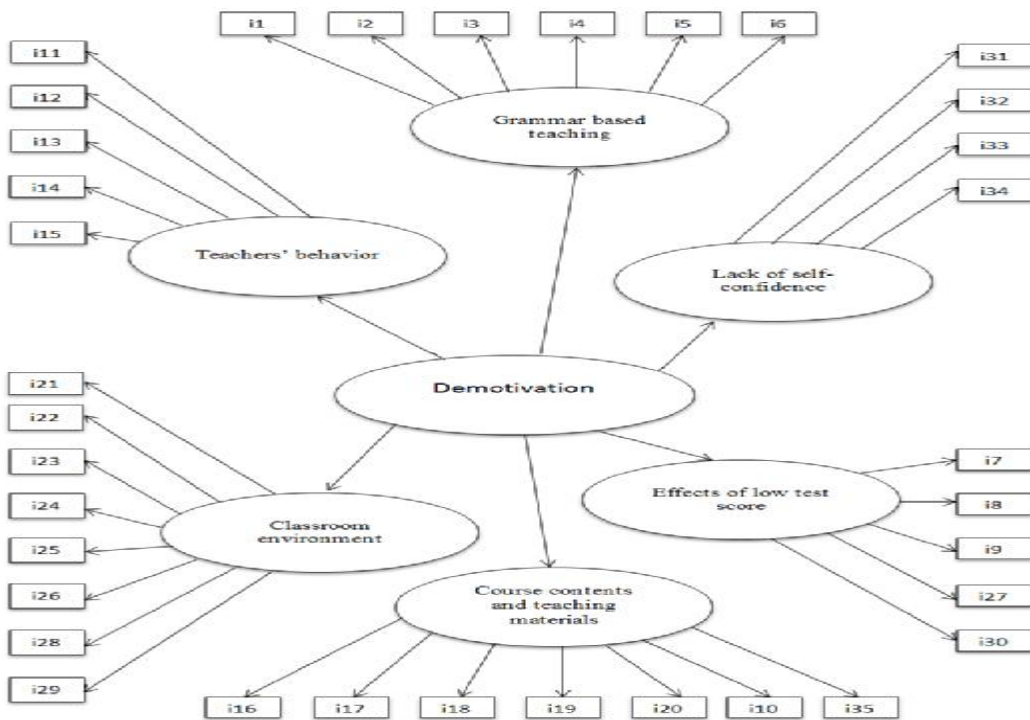


Figure 1. Theoretical model of student demotivation. Adopted from “An analysis of demotivators in the EFL classroom” by Sakai & Kikuchi (2009). *System*, 37(1), 57-69.

According to the above framework, there are five external demotivating factors consisting of grammar-based teaching, teachers’ behavior, classroom environment, course contents and teaching materials, and effects of low test scores, while the internal factor is lack of self-confidence. Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) state that all these factors play a vital role in demotivating students in learning the English language.

The conceptual framework of the present study is illustrated in Figure 2.

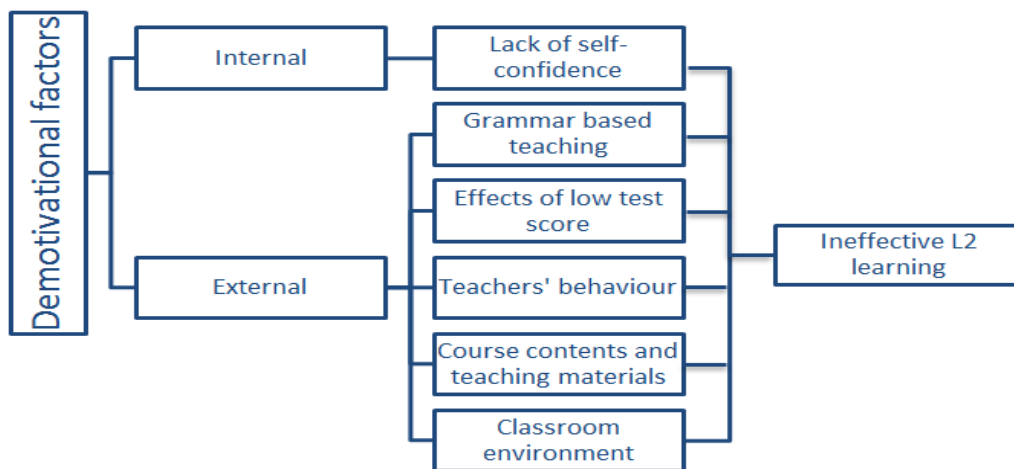


Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the present study

The conceptual framework of the present study is guided by Sakai and Kikuchi’s (2009) framework which proposes that five external factors as well as one internal factor demotivate students in learning English as the second language effectively.

The sample consisted of 116 first semester undergraduates at the University of Balochistan, Quetta, who also comprised the total population. The students come from three disciplines: Computer Science, Bio-chemistry, and Microbiology at the University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan. The students were aged between 18 and 23.

A questionnaire survey was conducted to collect the data to address the research question of the present study. The instrument used was a questionnaire adopted from Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) which contained 35 items based on a 5-point Likert scale on six factors of demotivation. Item reliability analysis was run for all the 35 items and the value obtained for *Cronbach's alpha* was 0.761. This value indicates that the items in the questionnaire was reliable and consistent.

An open-ended question on demotivating situations experienced by students was included in the same questionnaire and this formed the qualitative data. The qualitative approach served as triangulation to confirm the findings of the quantitative approach and further provided in-depth data on the reasons which demotivated them in learning English.

5.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with 35 second semester students. The items in the questionnaire were revised accordingly through focus group discussions.

5.2 Procedure

The questionnaire was administered to the sample who were given instructions in Urdu and English language by the researcher to help them answer the questionnaire. The respondents were given 45 minutes to respond to the questionnaire.

5.3 Data Analysis

To analyze the quantitative data, descriptive statistics data was used to confirm the demotivating factors against the framework proposed by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) as well as to identify the most cited factors that demotivated them. The responses to the open-ended question was analyzed using content analysis. First, the themes or factors were extracted and matched against the factors in the above framework. Reasons quoted as demotivating students were extracted and further categorized to support the findings of the quantitative data.

6. Findings And Discussion

6.1 Quantitative Findings

The findings of the quantitative method are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Rank Order of Demotivating Factors

No	Factors of Demotivation	Percentage Mean
1	Grammar-based teaching	61.7%**
2	Classroom environment	53.9%*
3	Low test scores	43.2%
4	Course contents and teaching materials	35.5%
5	Lack of self-confidence and interest	32.7%
6	Teachers' behaviour	26.9%

**Highest percentage

*Second highest percentage

Table 1 reveals that all the six factors: *grammar-based teaching*, *teacher's behaviour*, *course contents and teaching materials*, *effects of low test scores*, *classroom environment*, and *lack of self-confidence and interest* were all cited as demotivating factors in learning English. Most importantly, this implies that the findings support the framework proposed by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009).

It was also found that the most cited demotivating factor was teaching method (61.7%) which was focused on grammar, and this was followed by classroom environment (53.9%), and course content and learning materials (43.2%).

6.2 Qualitative Findings

The open-ended question included in the questionnaire is as follows:

Q. Write your experiences in your high school regarding times when your motivation to study English was decreased?

In this part, students were required to give details on what demotivated them and reasons. The factors and categories or reasons are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2. External and Internal Demotivating Factors and Their Categories

Demotivating Factors/Themes		Categories
EXTERNAL FACTORS		
1	Classroom Environment	Dislike classmates
		No Internet facility
		Grouping of students by proficiency
		Overcrowded classrooms
2	Course Contents and Teaching Materials	Boring lectures and lessons
		Lengthy English lessons
		Uninteresting text books
		Work overload
		Less emphasis on speaking skills
3	Grammar-Based Teaching	Too much emphasis on grammar
		Focus on memorization
4	Teacher's Behaviour	Teachers' misbehavior
		Teacher as a one man show
		Lack of teachers' feedback
5	Low Test Scores	Unable to achieve high marks
		My friends achieved better marks
6	New Factor*	Negative attitude of society towards English
INTERNAL FACTOR		
7	Lack of Self-Confidence	Fear of committing mistakes
		Shyness

Table 2 shows that for *grammar-based teaching* (61.7%), which was the most salient demotivating factor, most of the students attributed this to lessons which were mostly focused on grammar. Students were forced to memorize grammar and this demotivated them. In terms of grammar-based teaching, students quoted that teachers over-emphasized grammar, lessons were examination-oriented, and there were lack of opportunities to communicate in English language in the classroom. In addition, students were expected to memorize hard fast rules of grammar, and a large number of English words. They were not exposed to the communicative approach that can trigger the motivation of students for English language learning. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) who found grammar-based teaching as a demotivating factor for junior high school students in Japan. Furthermore, the study by Lehtikoinen and Leinonen (2010) also confirmed grammar-based teaching as the prime cause of demotivation among upper secondary students in Japan.

As for *classroom environment* (53.9%) being the second most demotivating factor, students reported reasons such as inadequate classroom facilities i.e. lack of computer equipment, and audio and video materials, lack of Internet access which demotivated them to learn English language effectively. Besides, other related factors include students who were grouped according to proficiency levels, students disliked their classmates and overcrowded classrooms. These findings support the study by Dornyei (1998) which revealed that lack of facilities in the classroom demotivated secondary school students in Budapest. Furthermore, Kikuchi's (2011) study also found that classroom environment also demotivated junior high school students to learn a second language in Japan. The study by Hirvonen (2010) also confirmed classroom environment as a source of demotivation among immigrant students in Finland. As lack of facilities creates unfavorable L2 learning environment, university classes should be facilitated with video-projectors and language laboratories to enhance the motivation level among second language learners (Jomairi, 2011). As English language is a skill subject in which L2 learners are required to perform various drills and activities to attain proficiency, over-crowded classrooms do not provide students with equal opportunities to get teachers' proper feedback and hence they become demotivated to sustain their interest in English language learning (Chambers, 1993). Therefore, the number of students need to be reduced so as to facilitate students to interact with teachers effectively. Small-sized classrooms pave a way for effective L2 teaching and keep L2 learners motivated and focused in performing assigned tasks (Morrisette, 2001).

Effects of low test scores was the third influential demotivating factor among undergraduates. Two key issues related to this factor as cited by students were unsatisfactory performance in classroom and final exams. The findings of the qualitative analysis suggest that when students do not obtain high marks, they develop an inferiority complex towards their friends who secure higher marks than them and this demotivated them. This findings support the study by Jomairi (2011) who also

identified low test scores as a demotivating source for Iranian undergraduate students majoring in English. The findings also support Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) study who claim that low test scores was one of the most influential demotivating factors among Japanese high school students. It was found that low test scores had an impact on students' motivation to learn English. Therefore, teachers need to ensure that students are motivated in order that they are able to score higher in examinations or tests which may help them boost their confidence (Sehat, 2012). This will also serve as washback to teaching and learning.

Course contents and teaching materials were reported as the fourth influential demotivating factor (35.5%) and students attributed the cause of demotivation to supplementary readings and assignments assigned by the teachers, and use of uninteresting topics in English lessons. Related to this, reasons which demotivated students include too many textbooks and supplementary readings, uninteresting topics, and out-dated and irrelevant teaching materials. According to the qualitative findings, students cited boring lectures and lessons, lengthy English lessons, and uninteresting text books as a source of demotivation. The findings also support a study by Hirvonen (2010) who revealed that ineffective teaching materials demotivated immigrant students in Finland. Besides, the study by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) revealed that characteristics of course contents and teaching materials discouraged Japanese secondary school students to learn English language effectively. In another study by Muhonen (2004), it was found that course contents and teaching materials were the source of demotivation for Finish ninth-graders. In the Pakistani context, uninteresting teaching materials caused boredom and decreased students' motivation in learning English. Kikuchi (2011) also concluded in his study that teaching materials were more demotivating for Japanese high school students than teachers' behaviour. Amemori (2012) stated that course contents and teaching materials were one of the key factors which demotivated undergraduate students in Finland. Additionally, according to Peacock (199), the use of appropriate teaching materials can motivate L2 learners to a great extent. Richards and Renandya (2002) also assert that well-designed teaching materials not only address the need of L2 learners, but they also keep students motivated to ameliorate their interest in L2 learning. On the contrary, ill-designed teaching materials fail to address the needs of students and discourage them to learn the second language effectively.

Lack of self-confidence and interest appeared as the fifth demotivating factor (32.7%) with students attributing the cause of their demotivation to the compulsory nature of English language, and loss of interest in English. The qualitative findings revealed reasons such as fear of making mistakes and shyness which demotivated students to learn English. The findings support the study by Dörnyei (1998) who suggests that the compulsory nature of English language pressurized students in Budapest to learn English effectively. Besides, Kikuchi's (2011) study also confirmed that lack of confidence and interest are influential sources of demotivation among high school Japanese students. Although lack of self-confidence is an internal problem, students can be motivated by being provided a more conducive environment which is stress-free where they can be encouraged to practise the English language regardless of the fear of making mistakes.

Finally, teachers' behaviour emerged as the sixth and the least demotivating factor (26.9%) as students stated that unclear explanations made by teachers, and misbehavior of teachers reduced their motivation to learn English language. Difficult explanation of topics by teachers was cited as one reason by the students. Furthermore, the qualitative findings claim that teachers carry out *one-man show* or teacher-centred teaching in class and provide no feedback to students' queries. In addition, lack of teachers' feedback was one reason for students' demotivation in learning English. Teachers who intimidate and under-estimate students have also been cited as a reason for students' demotivation. These findings also support the study by Kikuchi (2011) in which teacher was determined as the least demotivating factor among Japanese high students. Teachers can also play their important role to infuse interest and confidence among students by encouraging them to participate in language learning activities (Dörnyei, 1994). Due to these reasons, the teacher has also been identified as the prime cause of demotivation among L2 learners (Dörnyei, 1998; Hirvonen, 2010; Kearney et al, 1991; Oxford, 1998).

7. Conclusion

The findings of the qualitative analysis complemented the findings of the quantitative approach by serving as triangulation besides providing in-depth insights into the reasons which demotivated students. The findings show that classroom environment, course contents and teaching materials, grammar-based teaching, and effects of low test scores have an impact as demotivating sources for undergraduates at the university. Hence, most importantly, the findings support Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) framework. These findings are consistent with the findings of previous studies by Amemori (2012), Dörnyei (1998), Kikuchi (2011), Kojima (2004), Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), and Muhonen (2004). In these studies, demotivation was defined as the salient phenomenon which discouraged students in learning a second or foreign language. In the qualitative analysis, a new category or factor emerged, i.e. *negative attitude of society towards English language* which was not included in Sakai and Kikuchi's or framework (2009). The students complained that they were demotivated when people showed negative attitude towards the English language. This is a new finding in the Pakistani context and is a contribution to the literature of demotivation in learning the English language. In addition, this suggests that the new factor is an extension to the framework by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009).

7.1 Limitations of the Study

A number of limitations were noted in this study. First, the students had not been categorized based on demotivation levels. Therefore, this may have had an impact on the results of this study. Second, this study only surveyed the students of University of Balochistan. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all undergraduates in Pakistan. Third, only questionnaires were used to collect the data. Triangulation was not done to confirm the findings through the use of different data collection methods such as interviews which may provide in-depth insights into the problem of demotivation of students. Fourth, the questionnaire was not translated into the mother tongue of students, that is, the Urdu language. Therefore, students of low proficiency level may have found the items difficult to understand despite the

explanations provided by the researcher. Translating the items into their mother tongue may have contributed to more reliable findings.

7.2 Implications of Findings

Motivation has been the center of discussion among L2 researchers and instructors and it is considered the key source to learn a second or foreign language effectively. Similarly, to reduce and convert *demotivation* into *motivation* is also important in second or foreign language learning. The findings of the present study provides a deeper insight into the factors and corresponding reasons which demotivate students to learn the English language. This is also essential as it sheds light on important issues such as enhancing teaching and learning of English in the Pakistani context; thus, the relevant authorities such as the Ministry of Education, university instructors and students themselves can be informed of the methods that could be adopted in the classroom to reduce demotivation and further motivate students to excel in academic English.

7.3 Suggestions for Future Research

This study focused on factors of demotivation; further research could concentrate on students of public and private universities in Pakistan so that a comparison can be made in terms of students' demotivating factors in learning English. Secondly, interviews can be incorporated in future research to gain deep insights into demotivating factors and experiences encountered. Interviews may serve as triangulation or to complement the findings of the study. Thirdly, it is suggested that longitudinal studies are conducted over a longer period of time. As Ushioda (2001) asserted, demotivation changes over a period of time based on the prevailing conditions. Therefore, a longitudinal study would be a handy means to determine the demotivating factors in detail which may have an impact on learning English.

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