
WHAT DEMOTIVATES HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO LEARN ENGLISH?

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Abstract

This study investigated what aspects demotivate students to learn English in an Indonesian high school context. The participants were four teachers and four groups of their students. The data were collected from teachers by conducting semi structure interviews and from the students through focus group interviews. The findings of the research indicated that each teacher had unique strategies to motivate their students and the students reported that the strategies influencing their motivation, the students mentioned several points that demotivate them. These could be categorized into five main groups: teachers' classroom behaviors, classroom atmosphere, learning resources and activities, and the way feedback was given. These findings suggest that teachers of English in an Indonesian high school context should pay attention and minimize factors that demotivate their students.

Keywords: *Students' Motivation, EFL*

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies of motivation in second/foreign language learning reveal that students' motivation is influenced by several factors such as teachers, classroom climate and assessment (Ghenghesh, 2010; Kikuchi, 2009; Matsumoto, 2009; Yeung, Lau, & Nie, 2011). In other words, the role and the influence of the teacher in motivating high school students to learn a second/foreign language are significant.

Ushioda and Dornyei (2012) have identified several research phases in relation to the research conducted on second/foreign language motivation. These phases have been described as: the socio-educational period; the cognitive-situated period; the process-oriented period; and the socio-dynamic period. The result of the analysis also reveals that second language motivation is related to other disciplines outside language learning.

The socio-educational period can be traced back to an early leading theory in language learning motivation. It arises from the seminal work of Wallace Lambert and Robert Gardner (Gardner & Lambert, 1959) who studied motivation in second language learning in a Canadian context. They classified motivation into two basic types: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation relates to the learner's positive attitude toward the target language community and the desire to integrate into that community. Instrumental motivation refers to students' goal of learning a target language because of the usefulness of the learning, such as, getting good mark in a test, winning a prize, or getting a good job. The limitation of the socio-educational perspective of motivation encouraged researchers to search for other factors that may influence second language learning motivation. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, research began to focus on "cognitive-situated" influences (Ushioda & Dornyei, 2012). The starting point for this research is the work of Crookes and Schmidt (1991).

Crookes and Schmidt (1991) suggested that motivation in learning a second language dealt with the students' choice, engagement, and persistence. They argued that research on motivation in learning a second language should be not only general, but also consider strategies that can be applied in a certain context. Oxford and Shearin (1994) supported Crookes and Schmidt's (1991) findings that students' motivation to learn a second/foreign language is broader than the distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation.

As research in motivation developed, the source of students' motivation to learn a second or foreign language was expanded. Researchers interested in how students are motivated to learn a second language have utilized different theories, such as, reinforcement theory, self-determination theory, self-efficacy theory, expectancy value theory, and goal theory (Dornyei, 2010).

Self-determination theory divided motivation into two categories based on reasons or goals that lead to action. These are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the excitement or enjoyment of doing an activity while extrinsic motivation refers to the outcome or reward of doing the action such as good grades (Dornyei, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The third phase of research on motivation is based on Dornyei and Otto's (1998) research on second language learning motivation, which is referred to as the process-oriented period. This research groups motivation into three temporal segments (Dornyei & Otto, 1998); they are: (1) Pre-actional stage, in which motivation needs to be generated (also called "choice" motivation); (2) Actional stage, the stage where motivation needs to be maintained and protected by providing pleasant and interesting activities or tasks so learners experience a supportive learning atmosphere (sometimes called "executive" motivation); (3) Post-actional stage, where learners need to undertake retrospective evaluation of how the learning has been conducted; they should be able to select learning activities that motivate them to learn in order to pursue their future goals. The third segment is also known as the "motivational retrospection" stage.

In support of the process oriented model, Dornyei and Csizer (1998) conducted a survey involving 200 Hungarian teachers of English from various language teaching institutions. The teachers were asked to complete questionnaires in which they were supposed to indicate how frequently they used 51 motivational strategies listed in the questionnaires. From the result of the questionnaires, Dornyei and Csizer (1998) concluded that ten major strategies or "Ten Commandments" underpinned motivation for second language learners.

Based on his research on second/foreign language motivation, Dornyei (2001) developed a total of 102 motivational strategies, called motivational teaching practice (MTP). Motivational teaching practice systematizes the application of motivation into a circular system comprising four phases: creating motivational conditions; generating student motivation; maintaining motivation and protecting motivation; and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. This cycle implies that student motivation should be built, generated, maintained and encouraged (Dornyei, 2001).

In his later research, Dornyei (2005, 2009) broadened and elaborated the framework (MTP) by introducing the L2 motivational self-system. This current phase of motivation research is called the "socio-dynamic" phase because it emphasizes that the context of teaching and learning consisted of a multiplicity of internal, social and contextual factors (Ushioda & Dornyei, 2012). In this model Dornyei proposed three main dimensions of students' language learning motivation: the ideal L2 self; the ought to L2 self; and the L2 learning experience. Since this research focuses on how teachers motivate their students, the MTP framework is a more appropriate model for gathering research data in the present study.

A limited amount of research has been conducted to find out factors demotivate students. It appears that there have been few published studies of what demotivate students conducted in an Indonesian high school context. It is important therefore to research factors that demotivate students to learn English in Indonesian high schools, particularly to understand what the students need to increase their English competence. The findings are expected to help English teachers understand the source of students' motivation and minimize things that possibly demotivate students.

To reach its objectives, this research is designed as a qualitative study. The collection of rich data allows the context in which teachers implement their teaching strategies, and the effect of these strategies on their students' motivation. Qualitative research produces both exploratory and descriptive explanation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

The method used in this qualitative research is case study in order to contextualize the research within the real life environment of an Indonesian secondary classroom (Yin, 2003). Additionally, this approach allows different data collection techniques (Yin, 2009). These include semi-structured interviews, and focus group interviews. The participants in this study involved 4 (four) teachers along with their groups of students. Those teachers are Moza, Harry, Yuke and Arfan. The researcher contacted the principals of four senior high schools in the research site asking them to suggest a teacher who, based on their personal knowledge of the teachers and their recorded assessments over recent years, they knew to be successful in motivating their students to learn English.

The data were collected from both the teachers and their students; the data from the teachers were gathered using semi-structured interviews with teachers, while focus group interviews were used to

collect the data from the students. Then, the data were transcribed in which its result was coded and its themes were identified.

2. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that most of the students involved in the study held a similar perception that learning should involve enjoyable learning activities such as jokes, games, or funny stories. They also like learning materials from the internet. They enjoyed doing activities involving body movement such as drama or role play. Additionally, they said that they enjoyed learning in a relaxed classroom atmosphere. In the following section, factors demotivating students' are presented and the findings are discussed in relation to Dornyei's (2001) framework and other relevant motivation studies and theories in ESL/EFL context.

Unfriendly Teachers

Most of the students in the focus group interview said that a key factor in motivating their classroom learning is the teacher. The students reported that a teacher is the one that determines whether or not the learning is interesting. The way a teacher explains lessons and how the teacher creates the learning atmosphere is very important as signaled by one of the participants during focus group interviews.

I think the most important thing is the teacher. If the teacher is interesting, the learning will be interesting, too. But if the teacher is boring, the learning will be boring, too. (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

This indicates teachers' classroom behaviors can demotivate students when teachers do not show their warm expressions. Moza's students indicated that they appreciated the teachers' attempt to build a warm and friendly relationship with them. They reported that they enjoyed learning because the teacher was not irritable and listened to their opinions carefully.

Monotonous Classroom Atmosphere

In the focus group, Harry's students reported that they liked the teacher's informal style in teaching. It created relaxed learning atmosphere in which the students felt free to express their ideas and opinions. It made the learning condition become more lively and encouraging. The students enjoyed learning with Harry because they did not feel any pressure within the classroom environment. The students reported that Harry is a great teacher who is easy to get along with.

However, in the focus group interview one student said that she did not like too much fun in the classroom. She complained that if there was too much joke and laughter, there would be little in the lesson that she could learn. This implies that teacher should be able to determine the appropriate time and amount of humour they should apply in the classroom.

Harry's students commented in the focus group that they wanted to learn in a different setting.

I have a dream to learn outside the classroom, in the school park, maybe. I think learning outside the classroom will be nice and we will have a different learning atmosphere (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Similarly, Arfan's students in the focus group said that they liked Arfan's way of creating a relaxed classroom atmosphere. They said that Arfan was easy going and approachable. The students could talk and discuss with him inside or outside the classroom. He even offered many opportunities to his students to ask questions. He allowed his students to discuss their problems in learning English (Classroom observation, 7/3/2012).

In summary, regarding the classroom atmosphere, the students wanted a variety of learning environments. They expected to experience learning in open area such as the school playground. They were also eager to know how to learn listening in a language laboratory, and they would like to practise their English with English native speakers. The four teachers were warm and friendly to their

students. The classroom atmosphere is relaxed, the students feel free to ask their teachers some questions, and they enjoyed learning with them. The teachers seemed to have a good sense of humor. The students could approach and talk to them inside and outside the classroom. This point emphasizes that social and contextual factors influence students' motivation (Ushioda & Dornyei, 2012). This means monotonous learning with strict rules demotivate students.

Less Variety of Learning Resources and Activities

The students reported that they preferred particular learning materials and activities, such as, some language examples that were related to a teenager's life. Such material was easy to understand and would remain longer in their memory. They also enjoyed a range of learning activities during lessons.

I work harder when the topic is interesting. I am so happy if I can do the exercise well or answering teacher question (Focus group a, 18/2/2012).

One student reported that he is more motivated when a teacher gives the class a challenging activity. This kind of activity makes him think and this motivates him to find out an answer.

I like games especially games with challenging activity. I like crossword puzzle or quiz games (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

Moza's students enjoyed listening to her stories. This was one of the ways used by Moza to attract her students' attention. The students said:

The teacher tells us interesting stories and sometimes the ending surprises us. She usually starts the lesson by telling a story. I think some of the stories are her real life experience (Focus group, 18/2/2012).

Another student also mentioned that he enjoyed learning with Moza because of her way of explaining the lesson. He said that Moza used simple sentences that were easy to understand.

I like the teacher because I understand her language. She does not use difficult words. I can understand what she is saying or explaining in the classroom (Focus group B, 18/2/2012). Moza also gave examples of sentences from real life situations (observation, 17/2/2012). This motivated her students because they could see a purpose for learning English as stated by one of her students.

The teacher makes sentences that are easy to follow and close to our world. She gives examples from real life activity and gives us time to make our sentences (Focus group B, 18/2/2012).

In addition, the data from Harry's students indicated that learning by using games, songs, poems, and jokes is motivating. However, in the focus group, the students suggested that the class have varied learning activities. One student, for example, reported:

I like songs and games, but in my opinion, the classroom activities should be varied. Any activity that we do too much in the classroom makes us bored. So far, I enjoy learning English in the classroom (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

One student mentioned that she liked learning English grammar followed by practice. He thought that grammar was also needed in learning a foreign language.

I really enjoy activity that makes me practice to speak English. I feel English grammar is also important but compared to practice maybe it should be balanced. I can say 40% language knowledge and 60 % practice (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

In the focus group a student stated that:

I want to get more vocabulary from the learning activities so it will make my English fluent. English is international language. I need it badly (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Yuke's students found "cycle stand" activity interesting. It was a fun activity for them. Besides practising the language, the students also moved their body by standing up each time they expressed their ideas. Besides cycle-stand, Yuke's students mentioned that they liked other activities involving body movements such as games, role play, and drama. A student commented:

I like cycle stand or other activities that make me use English. It is an interesting activity because everyone shares ideas. For me, it is a new way to practise English (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

Arfan's students reported that they enjoyed learning by watching a video as the learning media. They said it was a new learning experience for them, especially if there was an activity that allowed them to answer questions by pressing the right button to answer.

I like learning by using games or activity from video. It is a new experience for me. It is fun because I can directly know whether I give right or wrong answers (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

It reveals that Arfan tried hard to find ways to motivate his students in learning the language and he found out that using audio learning resources are interesting for his students. Another student said that Arfan uses a range of strategies in explaining lessons. He gives many examples. This helps his students understand what their teacher taught them.

I like the teacher's way of explaining the lesson. He has many different ways of explaining the topic and gives many examples. He is so patient answering my questions (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

The students enjoyed having various learning resources and activities especially activities involving body movement, materials from the internet, playing challenging games, listening to English songs, watching movies, or listening to the teacher's stories.

Working individually

The students enjoy working in groups. They said that it helped them to protect their self-esteem and increase their confidence. The smart student could act as the moderator and lead the discussion in the group. The weak students could learn from their peers. The students' self-confidence was enhanced when they worked in mixed ability groups so they could practice in their groups before presenting in the class discussion. This also helped them to be autonomous learners.

In general, they felt more confident. They could ask questions to their friends in the group. They said that it was easier to understand their friend's explanation. Harry believed that mixed-ability group composition would benefit his students more.

I enjoy working in group because if I have problems, I can ask my friend how to do it. It is easier to understand my friends' explanation (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

It seems that group work helped them to practice and be confident to talk in a class discussion. It shows that students do not like working alone most of the time.

Less Opportunity to Practice English

The students indicated that they enjoyed having much time to practise their English. They liked practising their English rather than just listening to their teacher explaining a lesson. A student commented:

I like using English especially if there is someone that I can talk to. Sometimes my friends tease me if I use English. Many of them will say that I show off if I use English. I just enjoy practising my English. It is fun (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

Her comment indicated that she enjoyed the opportunity to practise her English. She tried hard to use English as often as possible, especially outside the classroom, which required her to interact with her friends using English. Thus, the opportunity was created to make the students become familiar with English and use it for their daily communication. A student reported that:

I like speaking English. My teacher supports me to use English with her and with my classmates in the classroom or outside the classroom (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

Motivated students are keen to use and practice their English. They try hard to communicate in English with their teacher during English class. Meanwhile, outside school hours, some students enroll and join extra English courses. They realize that they need to be able to speak English, not only for their university study but also for their future careers. They reported that their classroom learning did not give them enough knowledge and skills in English (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

Some strategies of this phase did not emerge from the data; conversely, one strategy which are not included in the framework emerged from the data. The strategies from the framework which also emerged from the data promoted cooperation among the learners and increased learner self-confidence by giving them a lot of time to practice. The strategy reported as motivating but was not in the framework was the use of L1.

The Use of L1

The use of L1 appeared to influence students' motivation to a certain extent. One of Moza's students reported that Moza mostly used English in her teaching. She only used Indonesian for some sentences when she explained important points of the lesson (Focus group, 18/2/2012). One of the students, for instance, reported in the focus group:

I like it when the teacher explained the lesson in English, but not all the time, because it is hard for me to understand long sentences. I want the teacher to use Indonesian too (Focus group B, 18/2/2012).

However, in the focus group, one of the students from a regular school said that she was motivated when she listened to the teacher or someone who could speak English fluently. She needed someone to practice her English.

If I hear the teacher or anyone who can speak English fluently, it motivates me to learn harder (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

It indicates that the amount of L1 used in the classroom in this study depended on the students' needs and level of English. This is supported by Nation (2003) who stated that the first language has an important role in learning a foreign language. The strategic use of using L1 and L2 is unique to this study finding. The appropriate use of L1 not only motivates students but also helps them build positive and encouraging relationship. Using L1 to explain difficult language points was appreciated by the students. This study suggested that too much L1 or L2 could be demotivating.

Direct Learning Assessment

The four teachers said a similar thing that they did not do direct correction on their students' speaking practice. This way of correcting mistakes and the teachers' view toward mistakes made students feel free to talk. Even with their half English and half Indonesian, they talked actively in the classroom. The teachers appreciated and encouraged their students' attempt to communicate in English. The students enjoyed this opportunity too.

I like the opportunity to speak English. To be fluent in English is my learning goal. The teacher really supports me. He does not laugh at any mistake. He even reminds my classmates not to laugh at others' mistakes. The learning atmosphere is really fun and relaxed (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

A student from Harry's class did not like it when the teacher passed the question to other students to answer. She wanted the teacher to answer her question too.

I like the teacher, but I don't like the teacher when he does not answer questions. When I ask a question, the teacher asks other classmates to answer it, but he does not give his answer. It is a kind of uncertainty to me, which one is the correct answer (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Moza's students gave responses in a similar way in that they appreciated their teacher's way of evaluating their learning.

I like the way my teacher evaluates us. She does not only consider the test but also our classroom participation (Focus group B, 18-2-2012).

Yuke and Arfan did a similar thing, in a way that they did not do direct correction on their students' mistake, and they also assessed their students' learning through their classroom participation during the learning.

In regards to the implementation of strategies from the last stage of MTP, it appears that the four teachers did not use strategies to encourage students to evaluate their learning. This indicates that the teachers did not teach students to be able to identify factors that promote or hinder their learning. This is important for students to keep them motivated and being self-motivated. This point supports other study findings in Asia that developing learner's autonomy are not considered important (Cheng & Dornyei, 2007; Guilloteaux, 2013). None of the teachers in this study informed about promoting their students to be autonomous learners which should be considered to help students to be independent learners outside the classroom. For this sense, they share similar views with the Taiwanese and Korean teachers.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings indicate that the key factor to motivate students' learning in the classroom is the teacher. The students reported that the teacher was the main factor that made the classroom learning process become interesting. The teachers' ways of explaining the lessons and how the teacher created a learning atmosphere were very important factors.

Several factors that demotivate students' motivation are teacher unfriendly classroom behaviors, a monotonous classroom atmosphere, less various learning resources and activities, and discouraging feedback. There were no significant differences in factors demotivating students.

This study shows that most of the strategies from Dornyei's MTP (2001) emerged additionally teachers and students can pick up things that demotivate students. Conversely, a strategy that is not included in MTP emerged from the data, that is, the use of L1. Improper uses of L1 demotivate students and this is unique to this study. The findings also support that some strategies are transferrable but some are culturally bound.

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