



Sources of Demotivation among Gifted students in speaking classes

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ABSTRACT

Motivation plays an indispensable role in learning. Though motivation has got a lot of attention in literature of language learning, demotivation has not got much attention in general and particularly in Iranian EFL context. As Dörnyei (2001: p.5) postulates "Demotivation is a salient phenomenon in L2 learning" and "much further research is needed to do this important motivational factor justice". The aim of the present study is to find out what the main demotivating factors in speaking skills among gifted students at SAMPAD schools are. In order to achieve this goal, 571 students who are secondary students in SAMPAD schools in Tehran were selected. The sampling was convenient sampling, and both male and female students participated in this study. A questioner which was validated and reliable was distributed among participants, and 68 students were interviewed. The findings of both quantitative and qualitative data reveal that five demotivating factors hindering learners in speaking classes are, teacher, material and content, facilities, attitude and teaching learning context. The findings can be applied for teacher development courses in which mentors can shed light on the importance of motivational factors in EFL classes.

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Introduction

Addressing psychological issues in learning and second language acquisition has undergone major changes during the last two decades (Mayer, Chabot & Carlsmith, 1997); therefore, investigating motivation and individual differences have been the main focus of SLA experts (Ehrman, Leaver & Oxford, 2003). Even so, little attention has been given to the psychological traits of the learners studying English language in foreign setting. An important but underrated psychological factor is the matter of experiencing a loss of motivation. Indeed, research on L2 motivation has traditionally revolved around the positive influences that generate interest in learning and facilitate sustaining it.

Literature Review

Although demotivation itself is not regarded as a new topic of research, considerable interest has recently been generated in the issue (e.g., Addison & Brundrett, 2008; Roth, Assor, Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007). Several distinguished motivational theories have been established: Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1992), and Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1994). In response to the negative trend claiming that some learners lose interest in foreign language learning despite the best efforts by teachers, researchers have started to explore a different category of motivation and demotivation.

Many scholars (including Dörnyei, 2001a) defined a demotivated learner as someone who was once motivated but has lost his or her commitment/interest for some reasons. As defined by Dörnyei, demotivation is "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action" (p. 143). Demotivation arouses interest in not only researchers but also many teachers who see their learners becoming increasingly demotivated in learning context. Researchers may be inquisitive about this issue because

examining the causes of the demotivation lends support to understanding theories on motivation. Moreover, teachers may discover the possible reasons for their students' demotivation in order to try to avoid being the cause of demotivation.

In line with findings from students' perceptions of their success and failure (Weiner, 1992), demotivating factors are not solely attributed to external factors. Internal factors also have influential influences on students' failure and demotivation. Other important factors such as lack of self-esteem and negative self-concept on the part of the learners were examined recently (e.g., Falout and Maruyama, 2004; Kojima, 2004; Tsuchiya, 2006). For example, Dörnyei (2001a), although focusing on external factors, declared that internal factors entailing reduced self-confidence and negative attitude toward the foreign language lead to demotivation. It is obvious that the operational definition of demotivation should include not only external factors (i.e., demotivators) but also internal factors which reduce or diminish the motivation to study English.

Researchers working on instructional communication are taking close interest in demotivating factors. Zhang (2007) conducted a comparative study on demotivators among university lecturers in China, Germany, Japan, and the USA and concluded that the most demotivating factor was teachers' incompetence.

In her investigation of why demotivated learners lost their motivation to study English, Rudnai (1996) conducted interviews with 15 male and female students from two elite secondary schools and two vocational secondary students who identified themselves as unmotivated. Following Dörnyei's motivation model (1994), she prepared interview guides covering demotivation at the language level, the learner level, and the learning situation level to find out why her participants had lost interest in English.

She concluded that the most important elements her participants lacked concerned the learner levels and learning situation levels. Learner level problems (e.g., lack of self-confidence, caused mostly by negative past experiences) and learning situation level problems (e.g., being placed into an inappropriate group for their level of English proficiency, lack of free choice, lack of skilled teachers, and lack of constancy in language learning in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere) were found to be the primary cause of the participants' demotivation.

Dörnyei's (2001a) study results revealed that materials and attitudes toward learning the L2 are likely to play the most important roles in motivating L2 learners. In particular, providing a lot of easy speaking tasks are needed for the less motivated students.

Gutherie (2000) worked on the contexts for engagement and motivation in learning and suggested that characteristics of the classroom influence students' engagement and motivation, teachers who intent to increase engaged learning in classroom can do so by building a context for it. Moreover, he suggested that there is no single way for enhancing long-term motivation. Though there are bunches of studies which have investigated the demotivating factors in English language learning, it seems that there is scarce of study in language skills in which demotivating factors have been studied. A lot of students participate in different language schools to acquire and speak foreign language fluently, however, after a period of time they lose their interest and motivation in language learning in general and speaking skill in particular. In the meantime, conversation serves as the major skill and main purpose of studying English. Likewise, the centrality of this skill in comparison with other skills and sub skills is because of the fact that this vital skill is the major and direct way of communication. The English instructional context of Iran presents several challenges to the development of interpersonal skills. A careful review of relevant literature reveals that a lot of books and articles are written on the conversational skills and the importance of improving them in language classes. Still we are witness to this bitter fact; the learners are not satisfied with their speaking and communication skills. However, it seems that the learners are not well satisfied with the result. Since it is a foreign context for language learning in general and speaking skills in particular, it may cause two main issues for language learners in Iran, first they have dearth of authentic material or input paucity in EFL context in which the learners themselves have to expose themselves to movies, soap operas and other sources as well rather than exposing to native speakers and any foreigners. The second point, since they acquire the language proficiency, they have not leisure to use their language3 ability specifically their speaking skills which finally either cause them forget the skills or lose their motivation to use that skill. Therefore, the researcher in this study eagers to see which factors hinder learning speaking skills in gifted students setting.

Overall, the present study sets out to explore some common barriers that hinder speaking skills of exceptionally talented Iranian EFL students and to bring into picture those elements demotivating Iranian gifted EFL learners .

Statement of the Problem

Research into foreign language learners' demotivation for their weaknesses in conversational skills has not been touched by professionals in ELT. To the best knowledge of the researcher, the current study, as an initial step in the context of Iran, tries to tackle this important but underrated issue. The major problem is that the external and internal factors that demotivate students in learning English in general and learning

speaking skills in particular are determining factors in language learners' future success and progress. Such factors would derive from multi-faceted reasons including both linguistic and extra-linguistic elements.

Research question

The current study combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches to yield more in-depth results, and in so doing, the following research questions are posed by the researcher Iranian gifted students in speaking skills.

1. What are the most demotivating factors among Iranian gifted students in their speaking class?

Method

The major focus of the present study is to explore the demotivational factors in speaking skills, among gifted students at SAMPAD schools. And also to check whether there are any differences between teachers' and learners' prospections towards demotivating factors in speaking classes and finally examining possible differences among male and female learners. The investigation has to be qualitatively and quantitatively testified. Therefore, the scrutiny enjoys a hybrid design, which combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches in data collection and data analysis phases of the study. In the first step of the study, using Descriptive Statistics and the association between students' demotivation and their performance on speaking skills is examined. In the second step of the study is to use Cronbach Lapha to check the reliability of the questionnaire, and in the third step to use multivariate analysis of variance to answer research questions. Finally, in the last step of the study, using semi-structured interview, the students' dem demotivating factors are identified and their frequency is tabulated.

A pool of 600 students at SAMPAD high schools in Tehran, Iran participates in the study, SAMPAD is the school for gifted students. Only 571 of the questionnaires were returned by participants. The students are junior and senior high schools and their ages are between 13 and 16 years old. Their first language is Persian language and all of them are native speakers of Persian language. Based on the educational system in Iran, all of them had studied English as a compulsory subject in the previous five years. Moreover, they have complementary course of English during which they receive four hours of English instruction per week. They work on Top Notch series written by Ascher and Saslow (2006). Since the randomization of all participants is nearly impossible, the sampling will be opportunistic or convenient sampling; i.e., the learners who are willing to participate in this study.

Moreover, 50 high school teachers who are teaching English at the high schools for gifted students participate in this study from around the country to fill out the questionnaire. Since the researcher could get access to the high school community of English teachers, he can gather the relevant data through e-mail from the teachers. The scaling provides a log continuum from inadequate, to adequate, to excellent.

The first instrument used in this study is the questionnaire of demotivating factors for students (Appendix A). It consists of three major constructs including: 1) teacher, 2) learning obstacles and 3) teaching& learning context. It contains 5-point Likert type questions about demotivation. These various items designed to measure major constructs derived from previous studies including teachers, characteristics of classes, and experiences of failure, class environment, class materials, and lack of interest. The participants are required to choose one of the alternatives: 1) Not true, 2) Mostly not true, 3) Not either true or untrue, 4) To some extent true and 5) True.

The questionnaire also includes some questions about motivation to learn English like how motivated are you to learn English? The participants require to choose one of the alternatives: 1) I have almost no motivation, 2) I have a little motivation, 3) I have moderate motivation, and 4) I have high motivation. Based on the responses to this question, the participants are divided into less motivated learners and more motivated learners.

The second questionnaire uses in this study is the questionnaire of demotivating factors in teachers' views (Appendix B). It contains three major construct entailing: 1) teacher, 2) learning obstacles and 3) teaching & learning context. It is in likert type and the maximum and minimum scoring procedure is between 5 and 1, respectively. The researcher conducts a pilot study to check for the validity and the reliability of the questionnaires. Expert opinions obtain regarding face and content validity of the questionnaire. Since the participants are intermediate level, there will be no need for the translation. The items are so designed that they can understand the questions easily and can answer all items of the questionnaire. To collect the relevant data, researcher followed a straightforward procedure. First, he met the teachers who were teaching at SAMPAD high schools in Tehran, the capital city of Iran and after prior arrangement; he distributed the questionnaire of demotivating factors to the students and explained the purpose of the study to them and also the instructions to fill out the questionnaire accurately and carefully. Data gathered both male and female students. The researcher also took two raters with himself to interview with the students. They interviewed with each of the students about 5 minutes and measured their conversational skills. The questions were from Top Notch Series and each student required to ask four questions and the three raters evaluated him or her by giving a score out of 20 and finally, the researcher summed up the three scores for each individual and divided it by three to calculate the mean and the mean score is regarded as the final score for those students.

During the next step, the researcher distributed the second questionnaire regarding students' demotivating factors to the teachers who were teaching at schools for gifted students. He gathered data from them both through e-mail and by submitting the questionnaire to them. The researcher asked his friend at Educational System to distribute the questionnaire to their friends and explained that the findings were beneficial for the students' progress and development in speaking skills. They could also get familiar with the demotivating factors.

To gather data for the last research question regarding the demotivating factors elicited from the students, the researcher, following the guidelines proposed by Dörnyei (2007), distributed an open-ended questionnaire containing four questions, asking students to write about their demotivating factors in learning and enhancing their speaking skills. Since qualitative research is in line with grounded theory and anti-positive philosophies, the kind of methodology employed in this study is that of interpretive approach to analyzing data gathered by means of a simple open-ended questionnaire. Participants allowed to write as many reasons as they knew and they asked to reflect on their previous experience.

The questions wrote in Persian Language and the students required to reply to the questions in Persian Language since using their native language, they could express themselves more easily and precisely. Their writings were translated into English, analyzed, and categorized. Using a simple writing task for data collection was most likely the best way to get the students express their thoughts about the four issues mentioned above.

The researcher permitted greater freedom of expression since the range of possible answers could not be previously anticipated. The pupils received the instructions both orally and in writing. The pupils had approximately twenty minutes to write down their answers.

Results

In order to evaluate the reliability of the student questionnaire concerning demotivating factors using Cronbach's alpha, 100 students have been randomly chosen.

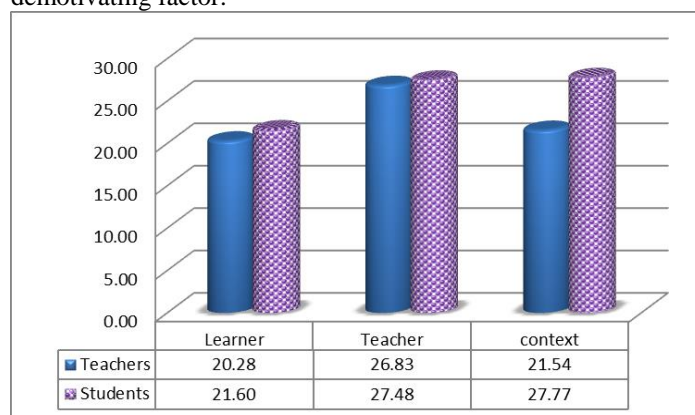
Reliability of the Student Questionnaire Concerning Demotivating Factors

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.826	49

According to the Table above, Cronbach's alpha, with 49 items, approximates to 0.83 which is greater than 0.70, confirming the reliability of the questionnaire.

What are the most demotivating factors among Iranian gifted students in their speaking class?

Based on the results displayed in Table 4.34 it can be claimed that teachers have identified the teachers as the most demotivating factors among Iranian gifted students in their speaking class ($M = 26.83$, $SD = 5.22$), while the students almost equally believed that context ($M = 27.77$, $SD = 5.06$) and teachers ($M = 37.48$, $SD = 5.57$) were the most demotivating factors. Both teachers ($M = 20.28$, $SD = 4.78$) and students ($M = 21.60$, $SD = 5.63$) considered the context as the least demotivating factor.



Discussion

The study, in fact, aimed at shedding light on investigating the attitudes of Iranian talented EFL language learners and their teachers toward the effects of demotivating factors on speaking skill. To put it another way, this study is as an attempt to get the perspectives of two groups who are basically involved in the teaching and learning processes namely, language teachers and language learners, regarding their views about the factors which may negatively affect the speaking performance of language learners. Moreover, the study serves as an attempt to investigate the similarities and differences between the students' and teachers' attitudes toward the subject of the study. Evidently, understanding these aspects of language, including dimensions of their learning, will pave the way for new ways of effective learning. All in all, the following specific research questions were addressed in the study:

1. What are the most demotivating factors among Iranian gifted students in their speaking class?

It can be claimed that teachers have identified the teachers as the most demotivating factors among Iranian gifted students in their speaking class. Regarding speaking classes it is very

crucial for policy makers, administrators and quality control experts to employ and use teachers who are not only linguistically proficient enough, but also they are well informed on psychological traits of learners and how to treat different students with diverse needs and feelings and emotions. The researcher deplors to mention teacher has been the most demotivating factors in speaking class in this specific context. In a similar vein, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) studied Japanese high school students. Their study revealed that there were 5 main demotivating factors namely, "(a) learning contents and materials (b) teachers competence and teaching styles (c) inadequate school facilities (d) lack of intrinsic motivation test scores(2009, p.57). Dörnyei (2001, p.176) mentioned that not all demotivating factors are necessarily related to teachers' behavior. His study is similar to the previous studies in which to data collections tools have been used, questionnaire which was composed of 50 questions on Likert scale. since the study was a mixed study, the findings of interview revealed that there were two main demotivating factors internal and external factors, internal factors were students' intrinsic motivation and attitudes towards language learning, and external factors were teachers, educational system, Learning environment, and Course contents and materials. The external factors were categorized on the basis of frequencies.

All in all, the findings of the present study indicated that the external demotives were more influential than the internal demotives as they were reported more frequently and their range was wider. This is supported also by the previous research findings that have made the distinction between external and internal demotivation. For instance, in the study by Ushioda (1996, as quoted by Ushioda 2001) all demotives were external except for one, that is, the pressure of setting too high standards for oneself. Moreover, the study by Hirvonen (2010) revealed that external demotives had more influence on immigrant pupils' English learning as their number was greater. However, the findings of the present study indicated that also internal factors played a significant part in the high school students. Motivation to learn English, as the theme that was identified in the data the most frequently was a source of internal demotivation. Similar conclusions of the significance of internal demotives were drawn also by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) and Hirvonen (2010). Moreover, Dörnyei (1998, p.127) listed the following nine demotivating factors which are "Teachers' personalities, competence, teaching methods, inadequate school facilities, reduced self-confidence, and negative attitude towards the foreign language studied, compulsory nature of the foreign language study, interference of another foreign language, attitudes of group members in order to investigate the sources of demotivation".

First of all, it is obvious that motivation and demotivation as well as speaking are among the most important issues in the process of language learning. Therefore, considering those factors could help language teachers and students to be more efficient in the process of language learning and teaching.

Second, language teachers should do their best to create a stress-free environment in the class in which students feel relaxed, so that students feel at ease in initiating communication and taking part in the class activities.

Third, language teachers should always keep in their mind that every detail of their behavior (like the way they talk to students, the way they pronounce the words, the way they treat students' mistakes, etc.) may cause students to be motivated or discouraged to initiate speaking. Therefore, they need to always make a plan for everything they are going to do in the class even

prior to entering the class. One of the four objectives of this study was to find out what the demotivating factors were among the boys and girls and whether there would be differences between the genders. The first objective of this study was to find out what were the most demotivating factors among Iranian gifted students?

First of all, regarding teaching speaking, it is obvious that motivation and demotivation as well as speaking are amid the most important issues in the process of language learning. Therefore, considering them could help language teachers and students to be more efficient in the process of language learning and teaching. Second, language teachers should do their best to create a stress-free environment in the class in which students feel relaxed, so that students feel at ease in initiating communication and taking part in the class activities. Regarding learning speaking, language teachers should always keep in their mind that every detail of their behavior (like the way they talk to students, the way they pronounce the words, the way they treat students' mistakes, etc.) may cause students to be motivated or discouraged to initiate speaking. Therefore, they need to always make a plan for everything they are going to do in the class even prior to entering the class.

Regarding syllabus design, the findings of this study can also help curriculum designers and syllabus designers to design courses which not only motivate students but also help them Incorporate material that is less discouraging.

Regarding assessment and learning, the students should encouraged to do self-assessment to see what are their weaknesses and strengths in their speaking classes in which instead of blaming teachers, textbooks and themselves, they can find out what is demotivating for them in their classes.

Haggai and Piwuna (1997) in their study inferred that the educator in the whole training framework is and ought to be recognized as the most critical source of inspiration. This is on the grounds that he/she sits and sets all class exercises. Each activity of the educator, they say, would impact the learners, either straightforwardly or in a roundabout way. Eggen and Kaunchak (1992) likewise watched that educators plan the earth and actualize guideline, while introduction to showing and learning gives the system on which whatever remains of classroom inspiration is constructed. They then recognized numerous ways and methodologies through which the instructor warmth and sympathy, educator desire, his landing towards request and security achievement, understanding, test, focusing on center inclusion, and support. Haggai and Piwuna (1997) likewise reasoned that a standout amongst the most predominant issues with instructors is simply their own particular being non-satisfaction and demotivation which could be because of numerous reasons like absence of sufficient pay, being uninterested to their occupation, and so forth. Moreover, learners show more motivational advantages when taught by the educators they like over instructors they hate (Montalvo, 1998). Be that as it may, training is considerably more than an identity challenge. The part of instructors is by all accounts moving from prearranged information containers to rather supervisors of understudy learning and the learning environment. In this manner, educators must be enabled to practice proficient judgment in the classroom to achieve plainly communicated objectives. Proficient teachers ought to be offered scope to test individual methodologies in view of key objectives and motivator frameworks. Likewise, instructors ought to be given preparing to bolster them in this extended part including of an opportunity time for associate association to impart sees on what is compelling. Generally, educators ought to do unto the

understudies as they would need done unto themselves. Interestingly, elements relating to environment, peers, dialect nature, and convictions are the slightest demotivating variables regarding the understudies' perspectives. Course substance and materials were the fifth and last wellspring of demotivation rising up out of the information. This topic was separated into two subcategories: course substance and course materials. Demotivation is a regular and normal wonder in L2 learning. The consequences of past studies have not just found a percentage of the genuine way of demotivation additionally called attention to some compelling methods of diminishing demotivation. This Study went for discovering the most prevalent demotivating factors in SAMPAD talented students' classes. The findings uncovered that the showing and learning setting was the most demotivating components.

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