

# *A Study on the Demotivators in English Learning of Chinese non-English Majors*

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**Abstract**—Demotivation means that the learners, once motivated to learn, lose interest and energy in English learning so that learning English would become a suffering and time-consuming task. The present study has developed a five-Likert scale demotivation questionnaire. 193 sophomores were taken as the subjects. The exploratory factor analysis indicates there are seven factors in the demotivation construct: teaching content, interpersonal relationships, ability beliefs, value placed on the task, class surroundings, teaching facilities, difficulty in learning as well as extra-curriculum activities. One-way ANOVA analysis reveals significant differences in factors like ability beliefs, teaching content, teaching facilities, and value placed on the task between the strong-motivated and the less motivated students, while no significant differences exist in other factors.

**Key words**—*demotivation, demotivators, English learning*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Studies abroad on demotivation began in the 1990s. There are roughly three schools: studies on amotivation, proposed by Abramson in 1978. The scholars in this school believe that demotivation arises from surroundings outside and results in the helplessness of the learners. Deci and Ryan followed the view and suggested that demotivation may also come from the inner factors of the learners which cause the learners to lose motives to learn English. Another school focused their studies on demotivation, represented by Dörnyei. They believe that demotivation can also result from some particular factors outside, which may dampen the learners' enthusiasm to learn English.[1] Sakai, Kikuchi (2009) believes that demotivation also come from certain inner factors of the learners. [2]Other researchers carried out studies aiming to probe into the question why learners lack motives to learn. A few studies on demotivation were carried out in China, such as Zhu Xiaohong (2011)[3], Liu Honggang (2009)[4], Tang Wenli (2012) [5]and so on. However, there is no fixed term for motivation deficiency in learning English.

The studies mentioned above adopted different terms. However, in essence, those terms refer to almost the same thing, i.e. motivation in English learning reduces gradually. The researchers have acknowledged that demotivation involves both inner and outer factors.

## II. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Studies on demotivation originates in studies on communicative teaching, represented by Gorham and Christophel (1992), and Christophel and Gorham (1995).[5]

They think that demotivation comes from the teachers. Legault et al. (2006)[6] attributed demotivation in learning among senior high school students to four factors by using factor analysis, namely, ability beliefs, effort beliefs, value placed on the task, the characteristics of the task. Dörnyei (2001)[1] found nine factors in English learning among 50 junior high school students in Budapest by carrying out a structured interview. They are teachers (personality, devotedness, ability, teaching methods), teaching facilities, lack of confidence, negative attitude towards the second language, the compulsory nature of second language learning, interference from another foreign language, negative attitude towards the second language speaking community, attitude towards the group members, and the textbook. Hasegawa (2004)[7] found the factors mentioned the most by the subjects are the teacher-related factors.

Keita Kikuchi (2009)[8] discovered eight demotivators among English learners in senior high school in Japan, including teacher-related factors, facilities and learning experiences of the students and so on. Sakai & Kikuchi (2009) [2]found there are six demotivators: teachers, course features, frustrations in the past in learning English, class surroundings, teaching content, lack of interest. Hamada (2012)[9] found the characteristics of the demotivated learners in junior and senior high school in Japan. However, there are fewer quantitative studies on demotivation in China, among which are Tang Wenli (2011) study.

The researchers have taken different subjects of different stages and in different areas, and discovered various demotivators. The present study takes 193 sophomores in one college in China as the subjects and tries to map out the characteristics of demotivation in Chinese non-English major students based on the studies done by the predecessors, hoping to draw attention to demotivation in English learning in students and takes measures to solve the problem.

## III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study focuses on the potential demotivators among non-English majors in China. There are two research questions:

- What are the demotivators in learning English for the Chinese non-English majors?
- Are there any differences in demotivators between the strong-motivated students and the less motivated?

193 sophomores aged between 19 to 22 in one Chinese college were picked at random as the subjects. Moreover, their

English scores in Chinese college Entrance Examination were above 100.

Dörnyei suggested that the subjects should be those who experienced demotivation in English studies rather than the whole group. [1] Therefore, there is one question in our questionnaire to sieve out the suitable subjects: Do you always hate English learning and doing homework related? 1. Never 2. Seldom 3. Sometimes 4. Always. Those who picked 1 or 2 as the answer would be eliminated from the study.

The demotivation questionnaire, based on Dörney (2001) and Keita Kikuchi (2009) and adapted with the causes on demotivation on English learning found in interviews done beforehand. Before the actual test, the questionnaire was tested by SPSS 17.0. Item analysis reveals that  $\alpha=.879$ , and each question is sufficient to differentiate the subjects, with  $p<0.01$ . 5-point Likert scale is adopted. 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=not sure, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree.

#### IV. RESULT ANALYSIS

TABLE I. ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX

Rotated Component Matrix								
	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Q11	.806							
Q10	.726							
Q8	.702							
Q12	.588		.503					
Q9	.584							
Q7	.549							
Q18		.890						
Q19		.809						
Q6	.414	.641						
Q5	.448	.573						
Q17			.846					
Q24			.676					
Q2			.658					
Q4			.508					.419
Q13			.460					
Q26				.824				
Q25				.788				
Q21				.675				
Q16					.799			
Q20					.723			
Q22					.681			
Q15						.861		
Q14	.423					.498		.405
Q3							.798	
Q1			.479				.683	
Q23								.742
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.	Co							
a. Rotation converged in 13 iterations.								

#### A. The Statistics

We use SPSS19.0 to analyze the data collected from our questionnaire.

First, let's have a bird's eye view of the data.

In the statistical data, most averages are under 3.1, except item 1(4.3538) (My English was poor before, so I wasn't eager to learn it), item 2 (3.6000) (I don't know much about English grammar, so I wasn't eager to learn English.), item 3 ( 3.2308) (It is difficult for me to memorize words and expressions), item 10 (3.0154) (The content in the textbook isn't appealing to me.), item 15 (3.3077) (Internet is not employed in English class), item 13 (I am not interested in English learning.), with the average of the less motivated group being 2.6923, item 23(3.4462) (Too many extra-curriculum activity consumes much time and energy. ), item 25 (3.6000) (There will be little chance for me to go abroad, so English is not necessary for me.), item 26 (3.3385) (There is no need to read materials in English when it comes to my major.) That is to say, in the survey, the subjects believe that these are the factors resulting in their disinterest in learning English.

#### B. Factor Analysis

We first put the data through KMO test and Bartlett's test. The KMO=.707 and the significance level=.000. So factor analysis is applicable in the present data. [10]

Table I reveals that there are eight independent factors, and accounts for 72.659% of the variance.

##### Factor 1. content and materials

- 11. The paragraphs are too long in the English text. (.806)
- 10. The content in English texts is not appealing to me.(.726)
- 8. I could not figure out teachers' explanation of the text.(.702)
- 12. The sentences are hard to comprehend.(.588)
- 9. The teacher often gets annoyed in class.(.584)
- 7. The teacher has too few teaching methods.(.549)

##### Factor 2 interpersonal affiliation relatedness

- 18. I don't like my classmates.(.890)
- 19. My friends are not keen on English learning, so am I.(.809)
- 6. The teacher often laughs at the students errors.(.641)
- 5. The teacher's pronunciation is not so good.(.573)

##### Factor 3 ability beliefs

- 17. I found it hard to achieve good results in English learning.(.846)
- 24. Foreign language learning has harmed myself-respect.(.676)
- 2. My grammar is poor, therefore I am not eager to learn English.(.658)

4. The pace of English teaching is not suitable for me. (.508)  
 13. I am not interested in English learning. (.460)

#### **Factor 4 values placed on the task**

26. There is no need to read materials in English concerning my major. (.824)

25. There will be few chance to go abroad for further study, and there is little demand for English (.788)

21. I don't know the aim of English learning (.675)

#### **Factor 5 class surroundings**

16. There are too many students in English class. (.799)

20. My classmates do well in English, and I was often cited as a contrast. (.723)

22. Class activities are boring, and I am not interested. (.681)

#### **Factor 6 teaching facilities**

15. Internet is not employed in English class. (.861)

14. There are a few listening and speaking materials in English class. (.498)

#### **Factor 7 learning difficulties**

3. I find it hard to memorize words and expressions in English. (.798)

1. My English was poor and I am less eager to learn it. (.683)

#### **Factor 8 extra-curriculum activities**

23. Extra-curriculum activities consumes much time and energy, and I am less motivated to learn English. (.742)

Factor 1, including Q11, 10, 8, 12, 9, 7, is named as content and materials. Christophel and Gorham (1995) holds that demotivation arises mainly from teachers. In our survey, the teacher's teaching style and method (Q7), the teacher's explanation of the material is difficult for me. (Q8), as well as the teacher's bad attitude (Q9), are all included in factor 1 as part of the teaching content and materials, together with Q11, Q12.

Factor 2 includes Q 18, 19, 6, 5. The author names it as interpersonal affiliation relatedness as in Legault (2006). [6] Q18 and Q19 reflect the relationship between students. Q6 and Q5 reflect the subject's cognition about himself and the instructor. The subjects believe the two types of relationships may lead to demotivation in their English learning.

Factor 3 includes 17, 24, 2, 4, 13. The author names it as ability beliefs as it is in the demotivation construct proposed in Legault (2006), referring to the student's self evaluation of their own performances in English learning. [6] In the previous studies, ability beliefs as a factor differs sharply between the strong-motivated group and the less motivated group. Meanwhile, Falout (2004)[11], Tsuchiya (2006) found that the level of confidence differs greatly between the more efficient and the less efficient groups. The present study conforms to the previous ones in this aspect.

Factor 4 includes Q 25, 26, and 21. The author names it as value placed on the task. The factor loadings are .824, .788 and .675 respectively. Legault (2009) names it as value placed on the task while Sakai et Kikuchi (2009) names it as lack of intrinsic motivation. The author chooses the former for the latter term is too broad, not specifying the cause leading to demotivation.

Factor 5 class surroundings. It includes 16, 20, 22. In Kikuchi and Sakai (2007), class surroundings is one of the main reasons resulting in demotivation, the others being the classmates' attitude towards English learning, the compulsory nature of English learning, and the friends' attitude towards English learning. (cited from Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009:61)

Factor 6, teaching facilities, includes Q 14, and 15. The factor is mentioned firstly by Dörney (2001), such as the big class, the different levels of the students, and the frequent change of the instructor. Sakai & Kikuchi (2009) also talks about it in the research.

Factor 7, learning difficulty, reflected in Q 3 and Q 1. It refers to the student's own cognition about their English and learning difficulties. Rou-Jui et Sophia Hu (2011) [12] mentions it in their study of the demotivation of the second language learners in Taiwan.

Factor 8 involves with extra-curriculum activities, only found previously in Tang Wenli (2012).

#### *C. ANOVA Analysis*

The subjects are divided based on their answers to Q 13 (Are you losing interest in learning English). The authors aims to find out if there is any difference in each demotivator between the strong motivated and the less motivated. An ANOVA analysis is run to observe the results.

From the Table II, we can be the difference in each demotivator between the strong motivated and the less motivated. Factor 2 interpersonal relatedness:  $F=1.462$ ,  $\alpha=.229$ . Factor 6 teaching facilities,  $F=1.677$ ,  $\alpha=.197$ . Except these two factors, the other demotivators all demonstrate significant difference. Factor 1 teaching content:  $F=7.494$ ,  $\alpha=.007$ . Factor 3 (ability beliefs),  $F=31.324$ ,  $\alpha=.000$ . Factor 4 value placed on the task:  $F=9.878$ ,  $\alpha=.002$ . Factor 5 class surroundings:  $F=5.508$ ,  $\alpha=.020$ . Factor 7 teaching facilities:  $F=10.320$ ,  $\alpha=.002$ . Factor 8 extra curriculum activities,  $F=6.653$ ,  $\alpha=.011$ . From the data above, we can see that the sharpest contrast between the strong motivated and the less motivated lies in demotivators such as ability beliefs, with teaching content, value placed on the task.

#### **V. CONCLUSIONS**

The present study has surveyed 193 subjects with a modified questionnaire to probe into the demotivators in English learning for the Chinese non-English majors, hoping to shed some light on the demotivation issue in learning English. However, the study also has some intrinsic demerits. The subjects come from only one university and the number of

subjects is relatively too small and therefore less representative. These problems need to be tackled in future studies.

TABLE II. ANOVA ANALYSIS

ANOVA						
		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
REGR factor score 1 for analysis 1	<i>Between Groups</i>	7.135	1	7.135	7.494	.007
	<i>Within Groups</i>	121.865	128	.952		
	<i>Total</i>	129.000	129			
REGR factor score 2 for analysis 1	<i>Between Groups</i>	1.457	1	1.457	1.462	.229
	<i>Within Groups</i>	127.543	128	.996		
	<i>Total</i>	129.000	129			
REGR factor score 3 for analysis 1	<i>Between Groups</i>	25.362	1	25.362	31.324	.000
	<i>Within Groups</i>	103.638	128	.810		
	<i>Total</i>	129.000	129			
REGR factor score 4 for analysis 1	<i>Between Groups</i>	9.242	1	9.242	9.878	.002
	<i>Within Groups</i>	119.758	128	.936		
	<i>Total</i>	129.000	129			
REGR factor score 5 for analysis 1	<i>Between Groups</i>	5.322	1	5.322	5.508	.020
	<i>Within Groups</i>	123.678	128	.966		
	<i>Total</i>	129.000	129			
REGR factor score 6 for analysis 1	<i>Between Groups</i>	1.677	1	1.677	1.686	.197
	<i>Within Groups</i>	127.323	128	.995		
	<i>Total</i>	129.000	129			
REGR factor score 7 for analysis 1	<i>Between Groups</i>	9.624	1	9.624	10.320	.002
	<i>Within Groups</i>	119.376	128	.933		
	<i>Total</i>	129.000	129			
REGR factor score 8 for analysis 1	<i>Between Groups</i>	6.373	1	6.373	6.653	.011
	<i>Within Groups</i>	122.627	128	.958		
	<i>Total</i>	129.000	129			

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