# WHY WERE ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS DEMOTIVATED IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING?

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**Abstract -** This is a survey research to investigate the factors that demotivate English major students to learn English language. The participants were 158 undergraduate students studying in English major. The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from five-point Likert scale demotivation questionnaire. The results of exploratory factor analysis showed that there were primarily six factors which demotivate English language learning among English major students: 1) Teachers and Teaching styles, 2) Failure to succeed, 3) Inadequate Technologies, 4) Non-communicative approach, 5) Materials and Classroom size, and 6) Classmates and classroom atmosphere. The results of this study help English teachers to reduce demotivating factors which are important in EFL/ESL context.

**Index Terms** - Demotivating factors, English language learning, English major students

## I. INTRODUCTION

Motivation is an important key factor in second and foreign language learning [11]. Students who are highly motivated to learn are possibly more successful in their learning [3]. However, there are some factors which reduce motivation while the students are in learning process. In other words, these factors can cause demotivation. [13] states that a "demotivated learner" is someone who was once motivated but his or her interest has been lost because of some reasons. The studies of demotivation are significant for both teachers and researchers who can observe their students and see them become demotivated in language classrooms in different educational levels. To help their demotivated students, the teachers and researchers should attempt to understand the causes of their demotivation and find the way to fix it. If motivation is important in language learning, demotivation is also important as well. Demotivation can happen with respect to the learning of English major students. From researcher's teaching experiences, although English major students prefer learning English at the beginning, there may be some factors that make them unsuccessful in their learning. In addition, there are some obvious evidences show that some English language learners lose their interest and motivation during their English language learning process [7]. Therefore, conducting the study about demotivating factors among English major students who are supposed to be motivated to learn English is possibly useful for English language learning and teaching.

### A. Significance of the study

Although, English major students felt more intrinsically motivated and less obligated to learn English since they choose to study in English major by themselves. Yet, according to teaching experiences, it has seen that English major students do not advocate themselves and were less motivated to learn English during their learning path. There may be salient factors affect or diminish the motivation of those students. If the demotivating factors are found, English teachers may find the way to reduce those factors and help their students to success in their learning. Moreover, previous research studies on demotivating factors of English major students were scarcely explored.

### B. Terms Definition

Demotivating factors are specific factors that reduce the motivation of Englishlearning among English major students. English major students refer to the second-year and third-year English major students in a university in Bangkok, Thailand.

### C. Research question

What are demotivating factors of English language learning among English major students?

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### A. Participants

The researcher gathered data by using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling techniques are basically used to select units based on specific purposes which associated with answering a research study's questions (Maxwell, 1997, as cited in [4]). The participants of this study were 158 English major students including the second-year and the third-year students studying in a university in Bangkok, Thailand. The participant consisted of 88 second-year students and 70 third-year students.

### B. Instrumentation

The questionnaire was adapted from Kikuchi and Sakai (2009) 35-item demotivation questionnaire with five-point Likert scale. Although the students were studying in English major, and they were assumed that they had proficiency of English, some might be confused with English questions. In order to reduce

confusion, the researcher decided to construct the questionnaire in Thai and English. The original Japanese version of the questionnaire was translated into Thai by a professional translator. The Thai version was then back-translated by a professional translator, resulting in the modification of several times. In addition, the English version of the questionnaire was adapted from [5] and [1]. Since the questionnaire of Kikuchi and Sakai (2009) were used to measure demotivating factors among high school students, questionnaire items which were not appropriate for English major students in the university were eliminated. The total items included 31 questions. The participants were required to choose among five alternatives:(1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. In addition, the questionnaire items were piloted among 30 English major students to find the reliability by using Cronbach's alpha and the 30 students were not included in the study. It has indicated that 0.7 is an acceptable reliability coefficient [6]. The reliability of this questionnaire was 0.917 as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Reliability statistics**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|---|---|
| .917 | 31 |

Moreover, the items were sent to five raters in order to evaluate validity by using Index of Consistency values (IOC). The IOC values of all question items were more than 0.6, except item 28. In other words, the all items were accepted, while item 28 should be revised.

Item 28: "My friends did not like English", need to be revised. According to comments, this question seems general, not be specific for English language learning classroom. Therefore, it should be revised to "My close friends in English major did not like English". Then, the revised item was sent to the raters to get the confirmation again.

### C. Data Analysis

The participants' responses to all 31 questionnaire items were computer coded using SPSS version 23. To answer research question: What are demotivating factors in English language learning among English major students?, results were analyzed by means of an exploratory factor analysis.

The questionnaires were distributed to the students' during their classes which the researcher was allowed to collect data. Instructions on how to complete each questionnaire were written at the top of the first page in Thai. In addition, the researcher explained briefly about this study and how to complete each item. Each student was given approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The participants were assured that their opinions would be kept confidential and their feedback would not affect their scores or grades.

## III. RESULTS

The results are presented according to research question.In order to investigate the demotivating factors, the 31 questionnaire items were analyzed by using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Promax Rotation to extract factors. To determine the number of factors, three criteria were used: Eigenvalues, scree plot and interpretability of the factor meaning. According to determination based on Eigenvalues, only factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were retained.

**Table 2: First 6 eigenvalues of factor analysis**

**Total Variance Explained**

| | Initial Eigenvalues | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Component | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 11.018 | 35.542 | 35.542 | 11.018 | 35.542 | 35.542 |
| 2 | 3.956 | 12.761 | 48.303 | 3.956 | 12.761 | 48.303 |
| 3 | 2.914 | 9.400 | 57.703 | 2.914 | 9.400 | 57.703 |
| 4 | 2.314 | 7.466 | 65.169 | 2.314 | 7.466 | 65.169 |
| 5 | 1.422 | 4.588 | 69.756 | 1.422 | 4.588 | 69.756 |
| 6 | 1.216 | 3.924 | 73.680 | 1.216 | 3.924 | 73.680 |
| 7 | 1.056 | 3.407 | 77.087 | 1.056 | 3.407 | 77.087 |
| 8 | .968 | 3.124 | 80.211 | | | |
| 9 | .794 | 2.561 | 82.772 | | | |
| 10 | .667 | 2.152 | 84.924 | | | |
| 11 | .619 | 1.996 | 86.920 | | | |
| 12 | .576 | 1.858 | 88.778 | | | |
| 13 | .536 | 1.728 | 90.507 | | | |
| 14 | .444 | 1.433 | 91.939 | | | |
| 15 | .400 | 1.290 | 93.229 | | | |
| 16 | .337 | 1.086 | 94.316 | | | |
| 17 | .290 | .934 | 95.250 | | | |
| 18 | .259 | .836 | 96.086 | | | |
| 19 | .242 | .782 | 96.868 | | | |
| 20 | .181 | .583 | 97.451 | | | |
| 21 | .178 | .575 | 98.026 | | | |
| 22 | .151 | .487 | 98.513 | | | |
| 23 | .125 | .403 | 98.916 | | | |
| 24 | .074 | .240 | 99.156 | | | |
| 25 | .068 | .219 | 99.375 | | | |
| 26 | .057 | .183 | 99.558 | | | |
| 27 | .053 | .172 | 99.730 | | | |
| 28 | .033 | .106 | 99.837 | | | |
| 29 | .024 | .079 | 99.916 | | | |
| 30 | .019 | .060 | 99.976 | | | |
| 31 | .008 | .024 | 100.000 | | | |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 2 shows that there are seven factors extracted from the questionnaire. These factors accounted for 77.09% of the whole variance.

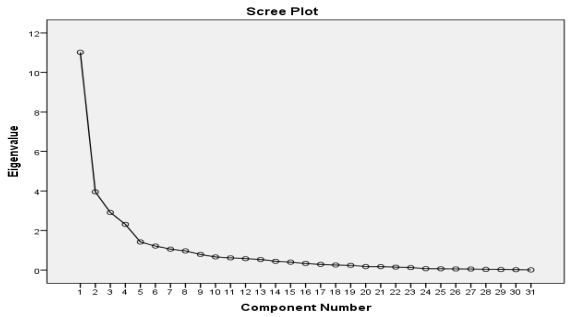


**Fig.1. Scree Plot of eigenvalues**

Then, the scree plot was used to determine the best number of factors and keep factors that occur before it was flatten.

The Table 1 and the scree plot (Fig.1) show that the first factor accounts for the largest proportion of variance. Although there are seven eigenvalues above 1, the scree plot shows a lesser break between the sixth and the seventh factors. The scree plot gradually flattens from the seventh factor.

After factor extraction, it might be difficult to interpret and label the factors from the factor loadings. In the principal component analysis, the first factor accounted for the most part of the whole variance, so most items of demotivating factors loaded on this factor. Because of this, Promax rotation was used to ensure that most variables have high loadings on the most important factors and small loadings on all other factors.

For interpretations of factor loadings, the researcher used the criterion of .40 or above. There was one from seven factors contained only two items with a factor loading above .40, and it was difficult to interpret this factor. Therefore, one factor was eliminated. There were six factors to label. This factor structure accounted for 73.68% of the whole variance. A summary of factor structure is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3 Factor analysis of demotivating factors**

| Factor 1: Teachers and Teaching Styles | Factor Loading |
|---|---|
| 13.Teachers' explanations were not easy to understand. | .870 |
| 11. Teachers ridiculed students' mistakes. | .841 |
| 12.Teachers made one-way explanations too often. | .830 |
| 14.Teachers shouted or got angry. | .829 |
| 31.English questions were not clear. | .816 |
| 18.A great number of English textbooks and supplementary reading were assigned. | .772 |
| 19. Topics of the English passages used in lessons were outdated. | .605 |
| Factor 2: Failure to succeed | Factor Loading |
| 30.I lost my goal to be a speaker of English. | .876 |
| 26.I could not keep up with my classmates. | .849 |
| 8. I got lost in how to be life-long and autonomous learners. | .767 |
| 29.I was often compared with my friends. | .745 |
| 17.English sentences dealt with in the lessons were difficult to interpret. | .705 |
| 1.I rarely had opportunity to communicate in English. | .640 |
| Factor 3: Inadequate Technologies | Factor Loading |
| 22.The Internet was not used. | .923 |
| 21.Visual materials (such as videos and DVDs) were not used. | .856 |
| 20.Computer equipment was not used. | .807 |
| 23.Language laboratory equipment was not used. | .707 |
| 24.Audio materials (such as CDs and tapes) were not used. | .701 |
| Factor 4: Non-communicative approach | Factor Loading |
| 4. I was expected to use (or speak and write) grammatically correct English. | .842 |
| 3. Most of the English lessons focused on grammar. | .830 |
| 5. I was forced to memorize the sentences in the textbooks too often. | .748 |
| 2. Most of the English lessons focused on translation. | .725 |
| Factor 5: Materials and Classroom size | Factor Loading |
| 15. Topics of the English passages used in lessons were not interesting. | .897 |
| 16.English passages in the textbooks were too long. | .840 |
| 25.The number of students in classes was large. | .722 |
| Factor 6: Classmates and Classroom atmosphere | Factor Loading |
| 10.Teachers' pronunciation of English was poor. | .826 |
| 9.The measuring criteria were not appropriate. | .785 |
| 27. I did not like my classmates. | .670 |
| 28. My close friends in English major did not like English. | .605 |

As we have seen from Table 3, there are primarily six factors which demotivate English language learning among English major students: 1) Teachers and Teaching styles, 2) Failure to succeed, 3) Inadequate Technologies, 4) Non-communicative approach, 5) Materials and Classroom size, and 6) Classroom atmosphere and Classmates.

**Factor 1 Teachers and Teaching styles**

There were seven important loading features in this factor. They were all positive loadings. This factor contained item from question 13 (Teachers' explanations were not easy to understand.), question 11 (Teachers ridiculed students' mistakes.), question 12 (Teachers made one-way explanations too often.), question 14 (Teachers shouted or got angry.), question 31 (English questions were not clear.), question 18 (A great number of English textbooks and supplementary reading were assigned.), and question 19 (Topics of the English passages used in lessons were outdated.). Question item 13 contained the highest loading in this factor (.870). The majority of these important loading features (4 out of 7) related to teacher, while the other related to questions, textbooks, and topics used in class. Therefore, this factor was labelled as Teachers and Teaching styles.

**Factor 2 Failure to succeed**

There were six important loading features in this factor. They were all positive loadings. This factor contained item from question 30 (I lost my goal to be a speaker of English.), question 26 (I could not keep up with my classmates.), question item 8 (I got lost in how to be life-long and autonomous learners.), question 29 (I was often compared with my friends.), question 17 (English sentences dealt with in the lessons were difficult to interpret.), and question 1 (I rarely had opportunity to communicate in English.). Question item 30 contained the highest loading in this factor (.876). The important loading features were related with the failure experiences that the students found. Therefore, this factor was named as Failure to succeed.

**Factor 3 Inadequate Technologies**

There were five important loading features in Factor 3. They were all positive loadings. This factor contained item from question 22 (The Internet was not used.), question 21 (Visual materials such as videos and DVDs were not used.), question item 20 (Computer equipment was not used.), question 23 (Language laboratory equipment was not used.), and question 24 (Audio materials such as CDs and tapes were not used.). Question item 22 contained the highest loading in this factor (.923). The five important loading features were related with internet, visual materials, computer equipment, language laboratory, and audio materials which were technologies provided in class. Therefore, this factor was labelled as Inadequate Technologies.

**Factor 4 Non-communicative approach**

There were four important loading features in Factor 4. They were all positive loadings. This factor contained item from question 4 (I was expected to use (or speak and write) grammatically correct English.), question 3 (Most of the English lessons focused on grammar.), question item 5 (I was forced to memorize the sentences in the textbooks too often.), and question 2 (Most of the English lessons focused on translation.), Question item 4 contained the highest loading in this factor (.842). The four important loading features had common features that the teaching method mainly based on grammar and memorization. This can be referred to traditional teaching method. According to the responses, the students did not have opportunity to communicate in their daily classrooms. Therefore, this factor was labelled as Non-communicative approach.

**Factor 5 Materials and Classroom size**

There were three important loading features in this factor. They were all positive loadings. This factor contained item from question 15 (Topics of the English passages used in lessons were not interesting.), question 16 (English passages in the textbooks were too long.), and question item 25 (The number of students in classes was large.). Question item 15 contained the highest loading in this factor (.897). The two important loading features were related to topics and passage which were materials used in class, while there was one loading feature were related with larger number of students in the class. Therefore, this factor was labelled as Materials and Classroom size.

**Factor 6 Classroom atmosphere and Classmates**

There were four important loading features in this factor. They were all positive loadings. This factor contained item from question 10 (Teachers' pronunciation of English was poor.), question 9 (The measuring criteria were not appropriate.), question item 27 (I did not like my classmates.), and question item 28 (My close friends in English major did not like English.). Question item 10 contained the highest loading in this factor (.826). The two out of four important loading features were related to teacher's pronunciation and the pace of lesson, while other two were related with classmates and close friends. Therefore, this factor was interpreted as Classroom atmosphere and Classmates.

## IV. DISCUSSION

Based on previous studies, Teachers and Teaching styles (Factor 1), Inadequate Technologies (Factor 3), and Classroom atmosphere and Classmates (Factor 6) were important demotivating factors of EFL learners [12]; [7]. The results from these previous showed that Factor1, Factor 3 and Factor 6 were most frequently found to be the demotivating factors, especially

Factor 1 which were the most important demotivating factor the students found in their learning experiences [11]. It seemed that the students will be demotivated if the teachers and teaching styles do not match their needs and goals. The teachers are important facilitator to the students. In addition, the students emphasized on providing sufficient technologies in classroom. This can be assumed that technologies also play a pivotal role in language classroom. Classroom atmosphere and Classmates additionally affect or reduce their English language learning. If the students have problem with their classmates or close friends, their learning's motivation will be reduced.

Additionally, Failure to succeed (Factor 2) which refers to lack of success, lack of acceptance by teachers and others and unable to learn by themselves was found to be a demotivating factor for Thai English major students. Although this factor was not included in nine categories of demotivating factors, it has been shown in some studies of Japanese learners [7]. It seemed that the students feel demotivated if they met experiences of failure. For Materials and Classroom size (Factor 5), it shared a common concept in many previous studies [7]; [1]; [2]; [9]; [10]; [5]. Therefore, the numbers of the students in each class should not be bigger because the students will not probably have opportunity to ask the teachers what they did not understand. If they still do not understand, they will feel bored, demotivated, and lose their goals of learning at the end.

Comparing with other studies on demotivation, Non-communicative approach (factor 4) was not frequently found at both high school and undergraduate levels. However, it was one of demotivating factors among English major students in Thailand. This factor occurred because the communicative approach is not frequently provided in English classroom because of several difficulties confronted by the EFL teachers [8]. According to the content in English teaching curriculum, the teachers have to produce graduates who can communicate for International affairs. In other words, the content of this curriculum focused on communication. If the teachers do not assign communicative activities and provide opportunity to speak in English, the students in this major will possibly feel it do not match with the content in the curriculum. Therefore, the students may think that they do not have opportunities to use English as communicative medium. This is also an important point for English teachers to revise their syllabus, materials, assignments, and teaching styles.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. It may be interesting to investigate the demotivating factors and students' achievement.
2. The interview should be employed in the study in order to confirm the results from quantitative data.

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