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A Qualitative Exploration of Demotivating Factors in English Language Learning among Iranian EFL Learners

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Jalil Fathi

(Corresponding Author)

University of Kurdistan

Iran

Saeede Torabi

Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch

Tehran, Iran

Korosh Arashpour

Islamic Azad University of Sanandaj

Iran

ABSTRACT

Motivation and demotivation have been important and widely discussed topics in Second Language Learning (SLA). Some even believe that raising motivation in language learners should be the first teaching target in foreign language learning. The present study aimed at investigating the demotivating factors among Iranian English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners through qualitative analyses. The participants of the present study were 15 male EFL learners studying at English language institutes in Kermanshah, Iran, and data were collected through a series of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Data were analyzed through content analysis and grounded theory procedure. Based on the analyses demotivating factors were identified as quality of instruction, teacher's personality, anxiety, peers' behavior, and physical environment. The relative importance of factors based on students' attitudes was method of instruction followed by, teacher's personality, anxiety, peers' behaviors, and finally physical environment.

Keywords: *Motivation, Demotivation, Demotivating Factors, EFL Learners*

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1. Introduction

Since English language functions as the lingua franca in the world, nowadays learning English as a foreign language has received special attention. Currently, English language is widely used as the language of science, technology, and the global market (Castro, 2018). In spite of the growing practice of English as the lingua franca in different areas of the world, many learners in schools, universities, and language centers are losing their motivation to learn English and demotivation has become frequent in English language contexts (Dörnyei, 2001). As a result, one of the main factors which teachers need to take into account while dealing with learners in the language teaching enterprise is motivation. Many researchers and teachers accepted that motivation is a key concept in learners' success in language learning process. The study of motivation in language

learning has a long history. According to many researchers (e.g., Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner, 2010; Warden & Lin, 2000), motivation can be considered as one of the main influential factors in a person's success in a second or foreign language learning context. Similarly, Song and Kim (2017) declare that motivation is an essential factor for Second language (L2) learning since it has an effect to a large extent on learners' effort, their use of learning strategies, learners' interaction with native speakers, use of language outside of the classroom, the amount of received input, and the time which they dedicate to pass syllabus-based achievement tests. According to Dörnyei (2003), there are both external and internal factors which shape, decrease, increase, or evolve the motivation in language learning process as a flexible construct. There have been plenty of research studies that prove the changeability and protean nature of the



concept of motivation. As Falout, Elwood, Hood (2009) argues, unlike learning math or other subjects, language learning is a complex and intricate phenomenon. In addition to the linguistic and cognitive capacities of the learners, there are numerous factors such as social, historical, emotional, cultural, moral factors which interact in the process of language learning. Each of these factors might evolve in the course of learning and may change the learning outcomes in a learning environment. One of these factors which play a key role in learning process is motivation.

Motivation involves a collection of beliefs, perceptions, interests, and actions that are related to each other. Turner (1995) considered motivation as cognitive engagement and defines it as voluntary uses of high-level self-regulated learning strategies which manifested as paying attention, making connection, planning, and monitoring the learning process. Broussard and Garrison (2004) explain motivation as a cause of our even routine actions and stated that it is motivation that stimulates us to do or not to do something. As stated by Gilakjani, Leong, and Sabouri (2012), every teacher desires to have motivated learners who are hardworking and cooperative in classroom activities to reach the learning objectives. They further stated that such learners pay more attention to the pedagogical tasks and try to meet the learning challenges positively with much effort and even try to encourage the other classmates to do so. According to Castro (2018), motivation means having enough reason to move. Brown (2007), argues motivation is a multi-faceted variable or phenomenon which includes different aspects and dimensions. There are various kinds of motivations and learners are different both in the kind of motivation that they possess and in the amount of that particular motivation. In other words, they differ both in level of motivation (i.e., how much motivation they possess), and in the orientation of that motivation (i.e., what type of motivation they possess). Till now, many motivation theories have emerged in the language learning field. The most influential motivation theory was considered to be established by Gardner in 1985. By 1950s, different models of motivation began to develop in L2 literature. Gardner presented the Socio-Educational Model of Language Learning which contains two kinds of

motivation: integrative motivation which is a positive attitude and preference towards membership of the target language and instrumental motivation which stimulates learning L2 for the purpose of job promotion, better future and other related external reasons. After conducting many studies on motivation, Gardner claimed that interactively motivated learners are better language learners (Gardner, 2010).

Motivation is conclusively shown to be a vital factor for determining the achievement of second/foreign language acquisition (Song & Kim, 2017; Warden & Lin, 2000). In contrast to motivation which is a leading factor, there is also demotivating factors which hinder learners' learning motivation and, consequently, lead to inability of the learner to reach English language proficiency (Chang & Cho, 2003). As Christophel and Gorham (1995) state, about 70% of the demotivating factors related to instructional communication concern the teacher. Given the significant role of motivation in learning a foreign language (Song & Kim, 2017; Warden & Lin, 2000) and considering the fact that demotivational factors affect the learning process negatively (Song, 2005), the present study investigated the demotivating factors in English language learning for Iranian EFL students. Moreover, the study attempted to discover which factors are considered to be more important from the perspectives of the students.

2. Review of Literature

In the Iranian ELT context many individuals seem to be interested in learning English. The high number of language schools nationwide is an indication of the prevalent tendency of people to learn this international language for different purposes. However, every L2 context is replete with learning failures which are very ordinary phenomenon; therefore, exploring the causes of failures are vital. Dörnyei (2001) also asserts that "demotivation" is an umbrella term under that every failure could be attributed to. He argued that since motivation is the salient factor behind learners' success then demotivation as its dark side can account for learners' failure. In a similar statement, Brown (2007) claims that motivation is probably the most comprehensive factor in any success or failure in learning environments. Therefore, if one is interested in finding out the cause of failure, he/she should begin to shed light

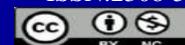
on its opposite counterpart i.e. demotivation or demotivational factors.

A review of the literature indicates that some studies have so far been conducted investigating the reasons behind the case of failure based on the demotivating factors involved in the process of language learning (e.g. Kikuchi, 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Trang & Baldauf, 2007; Sahragard & Alimorad, 2013; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012). The results of these studies have revealed a number of factors being at play in demotivating the learners and consequently their failure in learning the language. The factors revealed by Sakui and Cowie's (2011) study included (1) teacher behavior; (2) method of instruction; (3) university entrance examinations and course tests; (4) the memorization nature of vocabulary learning; and (5) textbook-related matters. The findings of Trang and Baldauf's (2007) showed that external factors were responsible for 64% of learners' demotivation among which teacher-related factors were the most significant ones. The results also revealed that among the internal factors, learners' experiences of previous failure were very important. Kikuchi (2009) researched the demotivating factors influencing Japanese high school EFL students. In this study, he came up with a list of three factors of demotivation in high school EFL learners. The first one was institutional systems, the second one was student attitudes and personalities, and the last one was teacher-student relationships. In another study, Falout and Maruyama (2004) probed the demotivating factors related to EFL learning and their relationship between the demotivating experiences that occurred previously and the present levels of proficiency. They reached the conclusion that the low proficiency level learners were less likely to have control over their affective states and could not tolerate the demotivating experiences. They identified six categories of demotivating factors: a) Teachers, b) Courses, c) Attitudes towards English speaking people, d) Attitude toward English, e) Self-confidence, and f) Attitude of group members.

Chang and Cho (2003) explored the factors involved in demotivating English language learning among high school students in Taiwan. Based on all the essays they were asked to write, eight factors were indicated as the sources of demotivation. They were (1) difficulties in learning; (2) threats to self-worth; (3) boring teaching; (4) weak teacher-student relationship; (5)

punishments; (6) student anxiety, both general and language-specific; (7) lack of self-determination; and (8) weak classroom management. A study conducted by Qashoa (2006) who investigated UAE secondary school students' motivations and demotivations towards learning English. The findings of this study proved that the students were both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. From the demotivational factors viewpoint, the findings stated that UAE secondary students felt demotivated due to many different aspects, such as textbooks; peer pressure; teachers' characteristics; teaching methods; lack of self-confidence; social and religious points of view, which were supposed to be in contrast to Western culture and language; and especially, problematic parts such as vocabulary, grammar, and spelling in language learning.

Hirvonen (2010) in his study tried to investigate the demotivating issues of Middle Eastern students studying a school in Finland. It was concluded that the students' instrumental demotives fell into four classifications including the teacher, learning material and course content, learning environment, and concurrent learning of other languages. In contrast, the integrative demotivating issues were related to three themes such as experience of failure, lack of achievement, and attitudes towards English. Moreover, the results of the Hirvonen's (2010) study proved that "the positive attitudes towards English helped the learners to overcome their demotivation" (p. 107). Various studies have demonstrated that motivation is a vital requirement in language learning confirming its important role for successful ELT. In their study, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), reached the conclusion that motivation may lead into fostering the development of language learners' potential. In another study, Dornyei (2005) also emphasized the significance of motivation in ELT and stated that motivation is one of the foremost factors in determining of language achievements. He proposed that motivation involves several components that vary depending on the language, learning environment, and students' level. As motivational factors have been concluded to have positive overbearing, demotivating factors are the other side of the coin and prevent the learning process and lead into failure in English proficiency (Hu, 2011; Schiefele, 2017; Yan, 2009). Kaboody (2013) carried out a study on the role of teachers in learners' motivation. The



purpose of the study was to explore the main body of literature on motivation in second language. The study intended to discuss the main theories of motivation on the role of teachers on learners' motivation and to clarify how they can motivate learners in the process of teaching. Based on the large number of studies on motivation, his paper suggests that teachers have a vast accountability to start the learners' motivation and keep it alive in the process of the learning. Moreover, it came into conclusions that motivation was used to classify strategies and principles appropriate to be used by teachers in their classroom.

There are a lot of empirical studies about the teacher's motivation which have been done to identify the role of the teachers in learners' motivation. In the Iranian context of ELT, Mohammadian (2013) explored the effect of shyness on Iranian EFL learners, language learning motivation and willingness to communicate. The study was conducted with 60 EFL learners who were studying at one of the private English institutes in Shiraz. They were given self-report questionnaires about their shyness, motivations studying English, and their willingness to communicate. Results of the study illustrated that intrinsic motivation was the most important predictor of success among all motivation types for the participants. Contrary to expectations, the results of the study also showed that shyness and language learning motivations were positively correlated. Sahragard and Alimorad (2013) carried out a study in public schools in Shiraz. The results of this study demonstrated that factors such as learners' low level of self-confidence, teachers' teaching styles and their competence, school facilities, learning context, learning contents, focus on English usage, focus of teaching, learners' lack of interest in learning English were the most important demotivating factors in their context. In another study, Hassaskhah, Zafarghandi, and Fazeli (2014) explored the reasons behind demotivation in Iranian English major learners. They found that institution related matters, social interaction, and individual related matters are among the most salient demotivating factors.

As the literature review indicates, few studies have been carried out in the Iranian context of ELT to explore the cause of language learners' failure in Iranian English Language institutes. Given the importance of success and its negative counterpart

failure in all educational settings in general and in the context of ELT in particular, and having established that demotivation and its underlying factors may possibly account for failure in English classes (Dörnyei, 2001; Brown, 2007), the present study investigated the most important factors responsible for learners' failure in the Iranian language institutes.

2.1 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated in line with the purposes of the current study:

1. What are the demotivating factors in English language learning for Iranian EFL students?
2. Which factors are considered to be more important from the perspectives of the students?

3. Methodology

The present study investigated the demotivating factors in English language learning for Iranian EFL students. Moreover, the study attempted to discover which factors are considered to be more important from the perspectives of the students.

3.1 Participants

The participants of the present study were 15 EFL learners studying at English language institutes in Kermanshah, Iran. They were all male students whose age ranged from 14 to 18. They had learning experience of about 3 or 4 years and had already passed some courses at private language centers. Their proficiency level as reported by the placement test administered by the institute was intermediate. Their first language was Kurdish but they had a native-like command of Persian as the second language. They were selected based on purposive sampling in which the participants who were judged to be more appropriate for the purpose of the study were selected. To this end, the researcher chose only those participants who had recently failed their English courses. These participants could provide us with more details to reach thick description.

3.2 Instruments

The following instruments were employed in the present study:

3.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

To seek out the participants' attitudes regarding the demotivating factors of learners, they were interviewed in face-to-face individual interviews with the researchers. The method of the interview selected for this study is "qualitative interviewing." This method is based on conversation in which researchers ask

questions and learners answer. In this method of interview interviewees are considered as meaning makers. The kind of the interview conducted in this study is that of semi-structured. In this type of interview, the whole process of interviewing changes throughout the continuum of highly-structured to highly unstructured in that the predetermined questions were not necessarily asked in a fixed order but rather in a more flexible manner. Moreover, the answers were not predetermined in the form of any response category, either. During interviews, the interviewees were allowed to answer the questions and proceed in their own way in an informal situation.

3.2.2 Focus Group Discussions

Apart from the individual interview, a series of focus group discussions were run by the researcher in order to investigate the participants' attitudes regarding the demotivating factors of learners. Focus group discussion is a qualitative way of gathering data in which a few individuals in a friendly group discussion/s, discussed and focused around a specific subject or set of questions. This data collection tool in which researcher plays the role of a moderator has some merits. Focus group can help researchers have access to participants who may not feel comfortable enough in one-on-one interviews. Because of its collective nature, focus group provides a more time-effective procedure of collecting data from a rather large number of informants. In addition, it provides a naturalistic conversational situation which most probably yields authentic data from authentic interactions for analysis and exploration (Madriz, 2000).

3.3 Procedure

About 15 learners who had failed in the English language course in different language institutes in Kermanshah, Iran, were identified and contacted by the researchers. These individuals were, in fact, selected through purposive (judgmental) sampling. In order to collect the data, a series of twenty to thirty minutes focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews (see Appendix) were held to the participants of the study. The focus group discussions and interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed. Finally to analyze the collected data, content analysis was drawn upon. In content analysis which is a data coding technique, the recurring themes or patterns are extracted out of the transcripts.

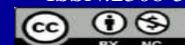
3.4 Design

The present study adopted a qualitative descriptive design in that no intervention was made in the research environment. According to Mackey and Gass (2005), the aim of a descriptive design is the provision of careful and detailed descriptions. They further maintain that researchers adopting this design aim to study events in their natural settings. Additionally, in a descriptive design no manipulation is made to the variables under scrutiny (Mackey & Gass, 2005). More specifically, in order to address the objectives of the present study an exploratory design based on grounded theory was utilized. The Grounded Theory approach was first proposed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. According to them, Grounded Theory is an approach used to develop theories which are grounded in data gathered and analyzed in a systematic manner. Put it other way, based on the tenets of grounded theory in a non-positivist approach, the researcher first conceives questions and instead of converting them into null hypotheses, gathers and analyzes data systematically to come up with a possible answers concerning the research questions. The main variable under scrutiny in the present study is the factors contributing to demotivation.

3.5 Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data in the present study, the interview contents were then thematically analyzed drawing on the tenets of content analysis (Merriam, 2009). According to them, content analysis is the most common form of analysis when dealing with qualitative data. They further enumerate six stages which the analyzer needs to go through so as to come up with established, meaningful patterns. These phases are namely: getting familiar with data, coming up with initial codes, looking for themes among codes, reviewing the themes, defining and labeling the themes, and producing the final report. The six stages proposed were taken into consideration to analyze the collected data in this study and answer the research questions.

To investigate the learners' idea and analyze the qualitative data, the researchers employed an inductive approach including three main stages which are: open coding, axial coding, and labeling (Merriam, 2009). In the first phase, the interview transcripts were scrutinized and the sections which were related to the demotivational factors of students were identified. In the course of the open coding process, care was exercised to select the extracts which were related to



student demotivation in learning English and exclude the ones that had to do broader and more general obstacles. In the axial coding stage, the designated segments were clustered into groups based on their thematic content. In other words, the segments which had a similar underlying theme were classified under the same micro category which, in turn, received a label on the basis of shared theme of its segments. These micro categories were then classified based on their similarities and conceptual proximity to form a number of macro categories which were further labeled. And axial coding and labeling stages are continued till the final main categories were taken out. Moreover, to ensure the reliability and the rigor of data analysis, coding and labelling processes were independently conducted by another two independent researchers who had experience in this type of data analysis and were familiar with the notion of language learning motivation/demotivation. Then, areas of dispute were resolved through discussion, a move to enhance the reliability of data analysis.

4. Results

As discussed above, the grounded theory was adopted as the method of data analysis for the present study. Therefore, the steps proposed by Dornyei (2007) were followed to come up with acceptable theory of demotivation in English language learning for Iranian EFL students. The steps included coding, concepts, categorizing, and theory. Coding step included identifying the key points in the accounts of students like preferences, hate, likeness, feeling good, energizing etc. to decide on things students get motivated or demotivated. In concept step, the accounts of the students were given meaning through aggregating similar codes in terms of meaning. For instance those codes related to way teachers affected their motivation and demotivation was come together. In the next step, the concepts were related to each other, labeled and categorized. What follows is the description of the categories created to capture various forms of demotivation for Iranian EFL students alongside the example of codes related to each category or factor.

4.1 Investigating the First Research Question

The first research question was about demotivating factors in English language learning for Iranian EFL students. The investigation for identifying the motivating

factor was carried out through analyzing the students' account of the things they perceived as demotivating. The semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were digitally recorded and then transcribed. The transcripts were then carefully read and thematically analyzed for the recurring themes. Upon the analysis, five themes emerged depicting the overall structure of the factors contributing to demotivation among Iranian EFL learners. These five themes are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demotivating Factors and Their Descriptions

Factors	Description
Method of instruction	Referring to the quality of teaching in classroom and students' perception of learning
Teacher's Personality	Referring to the personality characteristic of the teachers and the way students feel comfortable, intimate, or alien to teacher
Peers' characteristics	The behaviors of other students in the classroom affecting motivation
Anxiety	Referring to the feeling of stress, insecurity, and nervousness while being in the classroom.
Physical Environment	Referring to the all the physical characteristics of the institute, school, etc. including decoration, facilities, laboratory and so forth.

4.2 Method of Instruction

In the interview sessions many students responded that they lose their hope and are discharged of energy when their teacher cannot keep them satisfied with their learning. In other words, the poor quality of instruction demotivated them in perusing their English studies. Some of the students stated:

I don't like when teacher is not knowledgeable enough.

Sometimes I feel that teacher cannot teach us in an appropriate way and we cannot learn well.

The class is mainly talking aimlessly without any useful point to learn.

Teachers' Personality

Some students stated that *teachers' personality* characteristic is a source of motivation and when teacher cannot establish a rapport, students may lose their motivation. For instance they like their teacher to be friendly, nice, and considered. Some students' statements are as follows:

I like my teacher to be intimate so that I can easily interact and ask my questions.

I like it when my teacher gives me courage and positive comments.

I love those teachers who are eager and enthusiastic. They can give me a lot of energy to study more seriously.

I like humorous teachers.

Peers' Characteristics

Classmates' behaviors including their mood, friendliness, eagerness to learn was

another factor affecting students' motivation level. For instance, when students find their classmates positive and friendly they feel more comfortable and like take more risks to learn. On other hand, when students are competitive, students are tense and may not be eager to participate in class activities. Some of the learners' answers are as follows:

I hate it when students laugh at you when you are making mistakes.

My classmates are not nice people and I don't like to take part in class activities.

Some students react strongly when you discuss something in classroom. This causes me sometime to avoid talking and expressing myself.

Anxiety

Another factor that some students were suffering from was anxiety. The feeling of anxiety gave them a feeling of insecurity and tension or an unpleasant experience in other words. Although they stated that they needed to learn English and were interested, they expressed nervousness and tension in class as a threatening factor for their motivation. Some of students' statements were as follows:

I feel nervous when entering English classroom because of my poor English proficiency.

I have fear of making mistakes and this keeps me away from speaking.

I am afraid of being evaluated in a negative way when being watched by instructor and other students.

Physical Environment

In students' account of demotivating factors some students pointed to the physical environment of the language school and classroom. They mentioned certain qualities of the language school that affect their motivation. For instance some preferred to study in language institute with luxury decoration and clean environment. Some others pointed that lack of facilities like laboratory and audio-visual equipment are important to them. Some of the students' statements are as follows:

My previous institute was terrible. It was dark inside and chairs and boards were dirty. I did not like it at all.

I care about the cleanliness of the building and classrooms. It's very important to me.

I like classrooms to have windows and enough lighting. Otherwise I get panic and feel strangled.

4.3. Investigating the Second Research Question

After initial analysis of students' account of demotivating factors, students were asked to comment on their priority of factors. According to students' responses,

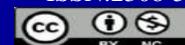
the order of importance of the factors was as follow:

Method of instruction → teacher's personality → anxiety → peers' behaviors → physical environment

In discussing on the importance of each of the above factors, students mainly pointed to the purpose of their study and the time and money they spend for their courses. They stated that ultimate purpose of their study is learning and as long as learning occurs other factors are tolerable. In discussing the importance of the teachers' personality they pointed to the fact that teachers' nice personality and having good relationship with teachers can keep them motivating for their studies. In fact, this second factors perceived to be contributing to the first factors and their learning. Anxiety was in the third place and they mainly pointed to negative evaluation by instructor and classmate that keep them away from taking part in class activities and keep them away from enjoying a pleasant experience. However, they believed that if the instruction is OK and teachers are nice and friendly they feel less anxious and can better focus on their learning targets. Peers' behavior was somehow in line with anxiety and students mainly pointed that having friendly classmates and less competitive environment add to their sense of security and reduce their anxiety. Finally, students' agreed that physical environment affect their motivation but not to the degree instruction quality and teachers' personality can keep them motivated for continuing their studies. Students stated that a clean and beautiful environment gives a good feeling and make them more willing to come to the school and spend some time there. However, they added that physical environment cannot be as effective as the instruction quality for keeping them motivated.

The Theory

Based on the analysis performed on the students' account of sources of demotivation, five factors contributing to the construct of demotivation among Iranian EFL learners were identified. The order of significance of these factors was method of instruction → teacher's personality → anxiety → peers' behaviors → physical environment. After identifying the factors, it was hypothesized that demotivation construct in Iranian EFL population included five factors of *method of instruction*, *teacher's personality*, *anxiety*, *peer's behavior*, and *physical environment*. In other words, these five factors explain how Iranian



EFL learners lose their energy and interest in following their English learning and activities. The proposed theory was once again crosschecked against the codes and students' account to further make sure about the validity of the theory.

4.4 Discussions

The purpose of the study was to identify the demotivating factors among Iranian EFL learners studying English in private language institutes in Kermanshah, Iran. In addition, it was intended to seek the priority of the factors in affecting their motivation level. Based on the qualitative analyses five themes representing the factors affecting the motivation level of Iranian EFL learners were emerged. These themes were quality of instruction, teacher's personality, anxiety, peers' behavior, and physical environment. The results of the study were quite in line with previous studies on demotivating factors done in other contexts. For instance, results showed that demotivation is multidimensional rather than unidimensional which is in line with Song (2005). He also concluded that the reasons for demotivating some students are multidimensional but teachers are shown to play a significant role in that process. From another point, similar factors have been proposed by previous researchers as demotivating factors. Generally the demotivating factors identified in the current study were in line with those identified by Chang and Cho (2003), Falout and Maruyama (2004), Christophel and Gorham (1995), Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), and Qashoa (2006).

With regard to the relative importance of the factors contributing to the demotivation of Iranian EFL learners some similar studies can be found. In the current study, quality of instruction and teachers' personality was the main factors affecting motivation. In the same vein, Schiefele (2017) showed that the most demotivating factor was the teacher personality. He specifically found that male students tended to attributed demotivation more to the teacher. The importance of the quality of instruction and teachers' personality by Iranian learners was not far from speculations. It can be argued that Iranian society is a unique community attaching particular significance to the quality of interaction and relationship. The researchers as an Iranian frequently witness how much sensations and quality of interaction matters to Iranian people. It can be claimed that it is

through feelings and interaction with others that Iranian get energy and sustain their social bond even when teachers are not as competent as desired.

However, it must be noted that previous empirical studies have not conclusively reached similar patterns of importance of demotivating factors. For instance, contrary to the results of the Christophel and Gorham (1995) the reasons provided by the teachers and their students about the students' demotivation were completely different. Although in the current study quality of instruction and teacher's characteristics were the most demotivating factors, in the study by Falout and Maruyama (2004), self-confidence, attitudes towards the L2 courses and teachers, and attitudes of group members were found as the most demotivating factors for the low-proficiency learners and self-confidence for the high- proficiency learners. The findings of the current study and the related literature demonstrated that motivation is a context-bound concept in which numerous interrelated factors are in interaction. According to the findings of the study, we can classify them in three major categories which are teachers, learners, and learning environments. The interaction of these three factors can motivate or demotivate teachers to teach from one side and motivate or demotivate learner to learn from the other side.

5. Conclusion

According to many researchers (e.g., Dornyei, 2001; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Schiefele, 2017; Warden & Lin, 2000), motivation can be considered as one of the main influential factors in a person's success in a second or foreign language learning context. Given the significant role of motivation in learning a foreign language (Castro, 2018; Song, 2005; Kikuchi, 2009) and considering the fact that demotivational factors affect the learning process negatively (Song, 2005), the present study aimed at investigating the demotivating factors among Iranian EFL learners through qualitative analyses. In a study by Chang and Cho (2003), sources of demotivation were identified as (1) difficulties in learning; (2) threats to self-worth; (3) boring teaching; (4) weak teacher-student relationship; (5) punishments; (6) student anxiety, both general and language-specific; (7) lack of self-determination; and (8) weak classroom management.

In the current study demotivating factors among Iranian EFL learners were identified through qualitative analyses. The analyses of the data revealed that the demotivating factors were: method of instruction, teacher's personality, anxiety, peers' behavior, and physical environment. The relative importance of factors based on students' attitudes was *method of instruction* followed by, *teacher's personality*, *anxiety*, *peers' behaviors*, and finally *physical environment*.

It was concluded that demotivation is a multidimensional construct in Iranian context of language learning and that quality of instruction and teachers' personality are the main factors affecting demotivation. In addition, it was concluded that multidimensionality of the demotivation construct was in line with literature on demotivation and there are both similarities and differences in terms of order of importance of the factors contributing to the demotivation.

Overall, the findings of the present study have implications for English language teachers and other practitioners and scholars involved in Iranian ELT system to explore the causes of demotivation among their students and think about the possible solutions and remedies to help EFL students cope with them. In addition, the study has implications for English language teachers and teacher trainers. It was found that motivation is context-bound concept and teacher trainers and teachers should consider the importance of their specific teaching and learning context in their teacher education programs. Preparing teachers for the actual reality of their classrooms according to their specific context may influence learners' motivation and consequently their participation and engagement in educational tasks.

Therefore, demotivation should be further researched and seriously taken into account in different ELT contexts to gain deeper insight to facilitate and motivate the students in English language learning.

More particularly, according to the findings of the present study following implications regarding can be arrived at:

- 1) By providing insights gained from the results of this study teachers can develop an awareness regarding students' perception of demotivation factors and can consequently provide learners with better learning opportunities.
- 2) Teacher educators may use the results of the current study to help teachers develop a

better understanding of how to keep their class healthy and free from demotivation for more efficient and effective learning.

3) Material developers can design materials in which the perceptions of learners and teachers in terms of demotivation are taken into account to the extent possible.

4) The findings of the study may provide some viable knowledge and insight for the policy makers and stake-holders to make more informed decisions while setting the standards and making policies in order to take actions to alleviate the demotivating factors affecting Iranian EFL students.

5.1. Future Studies

The following areas of research are proposed for future research on demotivation:

1. The subjects of this study were all male EFL learners. This study can be replicated with female EFL learners and also other people involved such as teachers, parents and administrators.
2. A comparative investigation can be carried out studying the perceptions of learners and teachers with different socio-economic backgrounds towards prevention of demotivation factors.
3. A longitudinal study could be undertaken to explore the possible changes which may occur as a result of age concerning perceptions towards demotivation factors.
4. Studies could be done to investigate whether personality factors may contribute to a difference towards perceptions of demotivation factors.
5. Some studies could be done which would investigate the possible effect of individual differences on the perceptions of students towards demotivation factors.
6. To increase the generalizability of the findings, the study can be conducted and triangulated with quantitative research designs in which a bigger representative sample of students can be surveyed using ready-made validated scales.

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Appendix

Questions for focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews

1. Do you perceive any demotivating factors in learning English?
If yes, would you please talk about your feelings about these demotivating factors?
2. What makes you become demotivated in learning English?
3. What kinds of problems/factors do you perceive in learning English?
4. Which problems are more discouraging for you as a language learner?