

Factors Causing Demotivation in EFL Learning Process and the Strategies Used by Turkish EFL Learners to Overcome their Demotivation

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study is to determine main demotivating factors affecting Turkish EFL university students' English language learning process and to identify the ways they apply to cope with these negative experiences from their own perspectives. The participants were 469 first and second year Turkish EFL university students. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect data in the study. First, a demotivation questionnaire (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009) was administered to the participants, and then interviews were conducted, face-to-face, with some of the students. Descriptive and inferential statistics were performed on the quantitative data, while coding and classifying approach was used to analyze the qualitative data. Quantitative results revealed that there are significant differences between female and male students in terms of the factors related to characteristics of classes and experiences of failure. Qualitative findings indicated that major factors that demotivate students are negative attitudes of the classmates, teacher-related factors, personal issues, class characteristics, test anxiety, failure experiences, and education system. Also, strategies for overcoming demotivation were determined as self-studying, asking for assistance, changing perspective, thinking positively, ignoring what others think, and being goal oriented. It is implied that the results obtained from this study might be helpful for both language learners and teachers in developing effective coping strategies to overcome demotivation.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation determines the goals that we try to achieve and the level of effort that we extend to reach them (Brown, 2001, p. 72). According to Brown (2001), motivation is an intrinsic impulse, driving force, emotion or desire leading someone to perform a particular action. Further, on the one hand, without sufficient motivation level, even individuals with the superior skills and capabilities experience difficulties in achieving their long-term objectives. On the other hand, high level of motivation helps learners overcome shortcomings of learning conditions and it can lead them to succeed in spite of all possible problems they encounter in the learning process (Dörnyei, 2001). Several studies have indicated that motivation is an essential element in foreign language learning and it plays a crucial role in learners' target language achievement (e.g. Ghadirzadeh, Hashtnoudi & Shokri, 2013, Hu, 2011; Zhang, 2007). For instance, Hu (2011) described that while motivational factors have a positive impact on language learning achievement, demotivating factors hinder the learning process. Therefore, students who lose their motivation at an early phase of second language learning might suffer from long-term harmful impacts, such as failure, losing self-confidence, self-blaming and struggling too much

to gain motivation during the learning process (Falout & Falout, 2005; Ushioda, 2001).

What are the reasons that cause second language learners to become demotivated while learning the target language? This issue does not concern only the linguists but it also concerns language teachers that observe their students losing their motivation in their daily classes (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). Dörnyei (2001) defines demotivating factors as external forces having negative effects on language learning motivation of learners and might eventually exterminate eagerness to participate in language learning activities. Kaivanpanah and Ghasemi (2011) claim that "any failure to learn a second language may be largely due to the existence of demotivating factors on the part of learners" (p.90). Numerous studies have been carried out on demotivation in the field of instructional communication, such as demotivating factors affecting communication at North American universities (Cristophel & Gorham, 1995, Gorham & Millette, 1997) and in different countries such as China, Germany, Japan, Vietnam, Hungary, Ireland, and the USA (e.g. Arai, 2004; Dörnyei, 1998; Falout & Falout, 2005; Trang & Baldauf, 2007; Zhang, 2007). Previous research conducted on motivation has revealed the following six major demotivating factors: a) teacher-based factors, such as attitude of the

teacher, teaching competence, style of teaching, proficiency level of the teacher (Bekleyen, 2011; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009; Kojima, 2004; Soureshjani & Riahipour 2012; Zhang, 2007), b) class characteristics like vocabulary and grammar based instruction, monotonous lessons, exam-centered instruction (Arai, 2004, Cristophel & Gorham, 1995; Soureshjani & Riahipour 2012; Tsuchiya, 2006), c) situations of failure like disappointing test results and feeling unable to comprehend (Gorham & Millette, 1997; Tsuchiya, 2006), d) class atmosphere, for instance, inactive classes, attitudes of the classmates, insufficient use of audio-visual materials (Arai, 2004; Bekleyen, 2011; Falout & Maruyama, 2004), e) class materials (Bekleyen, 2011; Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009) and f) lack of interest (Cristophel & Gorham, 1995; Meshkat & Hassani 2012; Tsuchiya, 2006).

The following recent studies have investigated demotivating factors on language learning efficiency. In 2011, Bekleyen carried out a study on the factors that demotivate Turkish university students when learning English as a foreign language. The researcher determined that insufficient use of technological types of equipment, coursebooks, teaching methods and teachers themselves are major factors that demotivate students who are learning English as a foreign language. Similarly, Soureshjani and Riahipour (2012) examined negative factors affecting language learners' speaking abilities from both students' and teachers' perspectives. Student questionnaire results suggested three affective factors that hinder speaking proficiency: 1) teachers, 2) teaching equipment, and 3) classroom utility. Likewise, focusing on the reason why students feel demotivated in language classrooms, Meshkat and Hassani (2012) conducted a study with the participation of 421 Iranian high school students. As a result of the study, learning context and materials, teachers' competence and teaching styles, insufficient school facilities, lack of intrinsic motivation and test scores were found as basic sources of language learning demotivation.

In an exploratory study, Kim and Kim (2015) determined five factors associated with learners' motivation: self-actualization, ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, face-saving and instrumentality. Also, they detected three demotivational factors: negative perceptions toward affordance, difficulties in English learning, and pressure from Graduation Equivalency Examination. In the same vein, Ghadirzadeh et al., (2013) investigated factors affecting Iranian university students' underachievement in language learning. Gathered data suggested affective demotivational factors on language learning as lack of individual competence, inadequate intrinsic motivation, teaching methods of teachers and course contents. In another study, Tabatabaei and Molavi (2012) found a negative correlation between students' achievement and demotivational level. Main demotivating factors perceived by the students were identified as inappropriate teaching methods, the frequency of classes in a week, difficulties in comprehending listening materials and inadequate use of English in real life. Conducting a mixed method study, Kim (2012) investigated negative factors affecting Korean elementary school students' motivational trends and it was found out that learning contents and materials and test scores are main

demotivating factors perceived by Japanese students. On the other hand, in contrast to the results of previous research, teachers' competence and teaching styles were not considered as a major factor decreasing language learning motivation by the students. Here it can be seen that studies conducted in different contexts yielded different results regarding factors that affect students' language learning motivation.

As learners encounter hindrances while learning the target language, they start feeling demotivated to learn. That's why, remotivating learners is a complex process (Al Kaboody, 2013). Not only sources of demotivation, but also how students cope with it might yield distinctive overall impacts on both motivation and outcomes of learning (Falout, 2012). According to Al Kaboody (2013), it is the responsibility of the teachers to help learners remotivate and develop positive attitudes toward learning the target language. Language teachers can help their students enhance their self-motivation by attracting their attention to practical strategies like "favorable expectations, incentives, dealing with procrastination and boredom, and eliminating distractions" (Al Kaboody, 2013, p. 52). Previous research conducted on this issue revealed a number of strategies to overcome demotivation, such as changing attitude, facilitating from social environment actively, asking for assistance, using learner-centered teaching methods and self-talking (Çelik & Kocaman, 2016; Falout, Elwood & Hood 2009; Falout, 2012; Ushioda, 2011). For instance, concentrating on negative factors causing demotivation, Falout et al., (2009) investigated the correlation between learners' proficiency level and their capacity to cope with demotivating experiences. For this purpose, the researchers administered a demotivational questionnaire to 900 volunteer Japanese EFL university students from different majors. The study revealed three affective factors leading demotivation: external conditions related to the learning environment, internal conditions of the learners and reactive attitudes towards demotivating experiences. Another study (Falout, 2012) searched for the developmental stages of overcoming to retrieve and sustain motivation during English language learning. The findings suggested that students with positive self-concepts were able to adopt long-term coping processes and they facilitated from their social environment more actively to regain their motivation, on the other hand, students with negative self-concepts adapted short-term coping processes and they mostly fell into self-blame and helplessness.

In another study, focusing on the difficulties that Turkish middle school students encounter with during their English learning process, Çelik and Kocaman (2016) collected data from 164 students through an open-ended survey and semi-structured interviews. Research findings presented a variety of barriers that students face while learning English: linguistic, instructional, affective factors and lack of assistance and resource. The researchers suggested that enabling students to adapt effective learning strategies and designing individual-based and learner-centered teaching methods can help students overcome barriers and affective factors.

Regarding gender differences in terms of demotivating factors, researchers obtained different results from each

other. For example, Meshkat and Hassani (2012) found that male students were significantly more demotivated than female students and there were significant differences between them regarding the factors of 'learning contents and materials' and 'teachers' competence and teaching styles'. Similarly, in a study carried out by Acat and Demiral (2002) in a Turkish context, it was found that female students were significantly more motivated to learn English than male students. However, searching for differences between male and female students regarding demotivating factors, Kaivanpanah and Ghasemi (2011) determined that female students were significantly more demotivated than the male ones in two specific factors 'the teacher' and 'experience of failure'. Likewise, examining demotivating factors impacting secondary high school and university students, Aliakbari and Hemmatizad (2015) found that in general female students were significantly more demotivated than male students in terms of four demotivational factors: inadequate school and university facilities, test scores, lack of intrinsic motivation and learning contents and material.

Language teachers should understand the sources of students' demotivation in order not to be the primary cause of demotivation (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). By underlying processes involved in demotivation, this study is assumed to be practical for guiding administrators, policy makers, curriculum developers and language instructors toward avoiding and diminishing its negative impacts on language learning. Moreover, in order to further explore both internal and external factors promoting learner demotivation, it is necessary to obtain data from various learners of English in different contexts. According to Dörnyei (2001), rather than having a static condition, motivation has a dynamic and cycling nature which impacts and is impacted by language achievement. That's why identifying the main negative factors that impact learners' language proficiency is highly important.

The Research Gap

In Turkey, English is a foreign language that is widely taught at every stage of the education system. However, although English classes are given intensively at preschool, primary and high schools, it is observed that students do not achieve the desired level of language skills (Karahana, 2007). Since motivation plays a fundamental role in language learning, it is important for foreign language teachers to identify the factors that negatively affect students' motivation and to develop techniques that can affect them positively. In the Turkish context, few studies have been conducted on this issue (Acat & Demiral, 2002; Aydın, 2012; Bekleyen, 2011; Çelik & Kocaman, 2016). In this sense, there seems a scarcity of research on effective demotivating factors and their roles in learning English as a foreign language in the Turkish context. The results obtained from this study might be helpful for both language learners and teachers in developing effective coping strategies to overcome demotivation.

In this regard, the present study attempts to determine main demotivating factors affecting Turkish EFL university students' English language learning process and to identify the ways they apply to cope with these negative experiences from their own perspectives. The following research questions guide this study:

- 1) What are the main affective factors that demotivate Turkish EFL university students?
- 2) Are there any significant differences between male and female students in terms of demotivating factors?
- 3) What are the coping strategies that these students frequently use to minimize their demotivation?

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

Four-hundred sixty-nine first and second grade EFL university students from 4 state universities of Turkey participated in the study. These first and second-grade students were selected according to the purposive sampling method. They were assumed to have approximately the same level of language proficiency as they either took foundation courses or passed a language proficiency exam. Table 1 shows the profile of the participants.

As Table 1 shows, the total number of female participants is nearly three times more than male participants. Totally 469 first and second year EFL students from four state universities agreed to participate in the study.

Design of the Study

This study had a mixed methods design in order to respond to the research questions. Mixed methods design has importance as it incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research techniques (Creswell, 2005). In the convergent mixed-methods design adopted for this study, data were collected from a number of 469 EFL students studying at 4 different state universities in Turkey. In doing so, the participants' level of demotivation and the factors causing their demotivations were examined quantitatively while their demotivation-overcoming strategies were under investigation qualitatively. First, a demotivation questionnaire was administered to the 469 volunteer participants, and then face-to-face interviews were held with a sub-sample of 30 students.

Research Instruments

The data of the study were collected from two sources; these are Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) demotivation questionnaire and face-to-face interviews.

Demotivation Questionnaire

The demotivation questionnaire (developed by Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009) is composed of 35 5-point Likert type questions

Table 1. Profile of the participants

University	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
#A	145	35	180
#B	70	36	104
#C	76	26	102
#D	58	23	81
Total	349	120	469

about demotivation measuring six constructs derived from previously held studies; items 10-15 are related to teachers; items 1-6 and 26 are related to characteristics of classes; items 7-9, 27 and 30 are related to experiences of failure; items 21-25, 28 and 29 are on class environment; items 16-20 and 35 are about class materials; and items 31-34 are related to lack of interest. The instructions for this part are: "How much is the following statement true for you as a demotivating factor?". The participants in the study were asked to select one of the following alternatives: 1: Not true; 2: Mostly not true; 3: Not either true or untrue; 4: To some extent true; and 5: True. Students' scores can range from 35 to 175, with a higher score indicating a stronger demotivating factor. Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), in determining the internal-consistency reliability of the questionnaire by Cronbach's Alpha, found that the six factors extracted from de-motivation questionnaire had above average reliability, in the range of .73-.83.

The questionnaire included one question about motivation to learn English. The students were asked to choose between 1: I have almost no motivation; 2: I have a little motivation; 3: I have moderate motivation; 4: I have high motivation. In light of the participants' response, they were categorized as less motivated learners or more motivated learners. Those participants whose answer indicated that they had no or little motivation were categorized as less motivated, while those who answered that they had moderate or high motivation were categorized as motivated students. Two open-ended questions were added to the questionnaire so as to gain further insight into the subject.

Face-to-face Interviews

Interview technique is a frequently used technique in qualitative studies. In order to better understand student perceptions of factors that demotivate them while learning English and on strategies they use to eliminate the impact of them, face-to-face interviews were held with 30 randomly chosen volunteer students among the participants. These interviewees were selected the mean scores they got from (highest and lowest) from the questionnaire and through convenience sub-sampling method. By maximizing the responses of the students as the lowest and highest, the researcher aims to detect major differences between these two groups regarding demotivating factors and coping strategy use. Each interview held with each of the participants lasted approximately 4-5 minutes. Two questions (In which situations do you feel demotivated most? Which strategies do you apply to overcome these negative experiences?) were directed at them. The interview was audio-recorded and transcribed by the author and an external researcher.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was performed using the statistical software of SPSS. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied for the quantitative data. Following this, mean scores and standard deviation of items were calculated and inferential were facilitated to identify the difference between male and female students regarding demotivational factors. Coding and classi-

fying approach (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009) was used for the analysis of qualitative data. The analysis of the open-ended questions was performed through categorization of the recurring themes in the participants' responses. After the responses were sorted and categorized, basic recurring themes presenting each category were determined and analyzed. The same manner was followed in the analysis of the data gathered from face to face interviews. After the responses of the students to each question were transcribed; they were coded and classified by the researchers. Then the classifications were shown in semantic maps. The data gathered from quantitative and qualitative research instruments were analyzed separately. The findings of the study were interpreted using a combination of the results from these two forms of data.

Reliability and Validity of the Study

Reliability of the scale was calculated using Cronbach alpha coefficient formula. For this present study, the Cronbach's Alpha was calculated as .82 Previous studies found Cronbach alpha coefficient of the instrument as .89 (Aliakbari & Hemmatizad, 2015), .76 (Krishnan & Pathan, 2013), .81 (Meshkat & Hassani, 2012), .84 (Rastegar, Akbarzadeh & Heidari, 2012) which showed that the instrument is reliable. Concerning the validity of the instrument, Turkish university professors confirmed that it was suitable for use in a Turkish context. A pilot study was performed as it is important to determine and remove probable constraints before the actual procedure starts. For the reliability of the qualitative data, two experts in the field were to perform coding and classifying of the responses obtained from the interviews. After the performance of a pilot study, inter-coder reliability between the evaluators was checked for consistency between the data. Prevention of interview data loss was enabled by using a voice recorder. The interviewees were asked to check for the accuracy of the transcriptions. The present study was carried out in the second semester of the academic year 2016-2017. The researchers distributed the scale and accompanying instructions to the participants, who were required to complete it in 35 minutes. They were informed that participation was voluntary and the information was used for research purposes. It is assumed that the findings of this study can be generalized to similar contexts in Turkey as the sample size was large enough for that. Research findings can be retested in similar contexts with similar samples.

RESULTS

The results of the study can be categorized into two main groups: quantitative data analysis to examine the factors affecting the participant's demotivation in the EFL learning process and the strategies employed by the students to overcome demotivators.

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSES RESULTS

The following Table 2 shows the inferential statistical results for examining the significant differences between the female and male students' demotivation levels and the demotivation factors. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics

for the students' self-perceptions about their motivations to learn EFL., Table 4 shows student perspectives on the major sources of demotivation and Table 5 shows major strategies used by students for dealing with demotivation.

Table 2 shows the significant differences between factors that affect the female and male participants' demotivation levels. The t-test analysis indicates that there are significant differences between female and male students in terms of the factors related to the characteristics of classes and experiences of failure. In both cases, females have a higher level of demotivation than males. Further, there is no significant difference between the females and males in terms of the demotivation factors related to teachers, class environment, class materials, and lack of interest.

Table 3 shows the male and female participants' perceptions regarding their level of self-motivation to learn English. The results indicate that nearly half of both females and males feel that they have a moderate level of motivation to learn English. Further, males feel more motivated than females. Finally, the results indicate that while half of the participants have a moderate level of motivation, the rest either have high or low-level motivation to learn English.

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSES RESULTS

The following Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the schematic representation of the responses given to the open-ended questions regarding the other demotivating factors that have not

been referred in the questionnaire and the strategies employed to overcome demotivating factors. Further, Table 4 and Table 5 show the results obtained from the analysis of interviews regarding their perceptions of most demotivating situations and the strategies they employed to overcome them.

The other demotivating factors reported by the participants

Firstly, the data obtained from the first open-ended question (What are the other demotivating factors that have not been referred to in the questionnaire?) were analyzed. The participants' responses emphasized five sources of demotivation: classmates, teachers, physical conditions of learning to set, personal factors and education system. These issues were expanded here after the schematic representation of the data in the semantic map below (Figure 1).

Twenty-eight percent of the participants declared two ways in which classmates lower their motivation levels: firstly, as there is competition among students, this situation leads them to feel stressed and secondly, as their classmates humiliate them when they try to speak in front of the class, they feel down and lose motivation. As some students expressed: "Whenever I try to speak and make some pronunciation errors, my friends laugh at me", "I don't want to speak in front of the class, because I am afraid of being humiliated by my friends".

Also, 23% of the participants pointed out teachers as the primary source of their demotivation. They claimed that teachers' getting away from the main subject during lessons make students lose motivation. Besides, they expressed that

Table 2. Independent pair t-test analysis for the comparison of the participants' demotivation level by gender

Factor	Gender	n	m	Std.	t	df	p
Teachers	Female	348	2,2562	71981	-1,468	466	143
	Male	120	2,3681	71983			
Characteristics of Classes	Female	348	3,3736	56856	2,328	466	020*
	Male	120	3,2107	87594			
Experiences of Failure	Female	348	2,5328	67646	2,389	466	017*
	Male	120	2,3567	75155			
Class Environment	Female	348	2,6388	93909	-1,208	466	228
	Male	120	2,7595	96072			
Class materials	Female	348	2,6331	64382	357	466	721
	Male	120	2,6097	54038			
Lack of interest	Female	348	2,2148	89950	335	466	738
	Male	120	2,1833	84809			
Total	Female	348	2,6082	49985	513	466	608
	Male	120	2,5813	47980			

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the comparison of the participants' perceptions of their self-motivation to learn English by gender

Gender	Motivation to learn English				Total
	I have almost no motivation	I have a little motivation	I have a moderate motivation	I have high motivation	
Female	14 (4%)	69 (19,8%)	192 (55%)	74 (21,2%)	349 (100%)
Male	4 (3,33%)	13 (10,83%)	64 (53,33%)	39 (32,5)	120 (100%)
Total	18 (7,8%)	82 (17,5%)	256 (54,6%)	113 (24,1%)	469 (100%)

when they make mistakes/errors, teachers sometimes react negatively towards them. That's why students suffer from both fears of negative evaluation and speaking anxiety. As some of the participants expressed: "When I make mistakes

while speaking, some of my teachers make fun of me in front of the class. That's why, I don't want to speak", "When my teacher offends me in front of the class because of some errors I have made, I feel demotivated".

Table 4. Students' perspectives on the major sources of their demotivation

Sources of Demotivation	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Overcrowded and noisy classrooms	6 (26.8%)	9 (21.95%)	15 (23.43%)
Negative attitudes of students	6 (26.8%)	9 (21.95%)	15 (23.43%)
Personal Issues	4 (17.39%)	10 (24.39%)	14 (21.87%)
Negative attitudes of teachers	2 (8.69%)	6 (14.63%)	8 (12.5%)
Test anxiety	3 (13.04%)	4 (9.75%)	7 (10.93%)
Education system	2 (8.69%)	3 (7.31%)	5 (7.81%)
Subtotal	23 (100%)	41 (100%)	64 (100%)

Another source of learner demotivation was found as physical conditions of the learning setting (22,2% of the participants). When students learn the language in crowded classrooms, they find it difficult to focus on the main topic and it becomes hard for them to listen to the teacher carefully. Also, lack of facilitative language learning equipment in classrooms affects student motivation negatively.

Eighteen-point-six percent of the participants declared that they feel demotivated because of some personal issues such as, lack of self-confidence, shyness, fear of negative evaluation, and anxiety. They do not feel secure or confident enough to use the target language freely because of these affective factors. As some of them claimed: "I am not self-confident enough to talk in front of the class or answer the questions of the teacher", "I don't want to participate in the classroom activities, just because I am shy". "I am an anxious person, whenever a teacher asks me a question, I feel anxiety and I necessarily make mistakes".

Table 5. Students' responses on the major strategies for dealing with demotivation

Strategies for coping with Demotivation	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Self-studying	7 (36.84%)	14 (45.16%)	21 (42%)
Being goal-oriented	7 (36.84%)	6 (19.35%)	13 (26%)
Ignoring what others think or say	3 (15.78%)	9 (29.03%)	12 (24%)
Thinking positively	2 (10.52%)	2 (6.45%)	4 (8%)
Subtotal	19 (100%)	31 (100%)	50 (100%)

Lastly, 8,2% of the participants indicated the education system as a source of demotivation. They mentioned that they do not take pleasure while learning English as the courses are boring and mostly teacher-centered. Also, they emphasized that the teaching methods that are used by the language teachers are based on memorization. Thus, they are unable to use language creatively. Besides, some of them identified the syllabi as unpractical.

Strategies employed to overcome demotivating factors

Secondly, the data obtained from the second open-ended question (Which strategies do you use to overcome

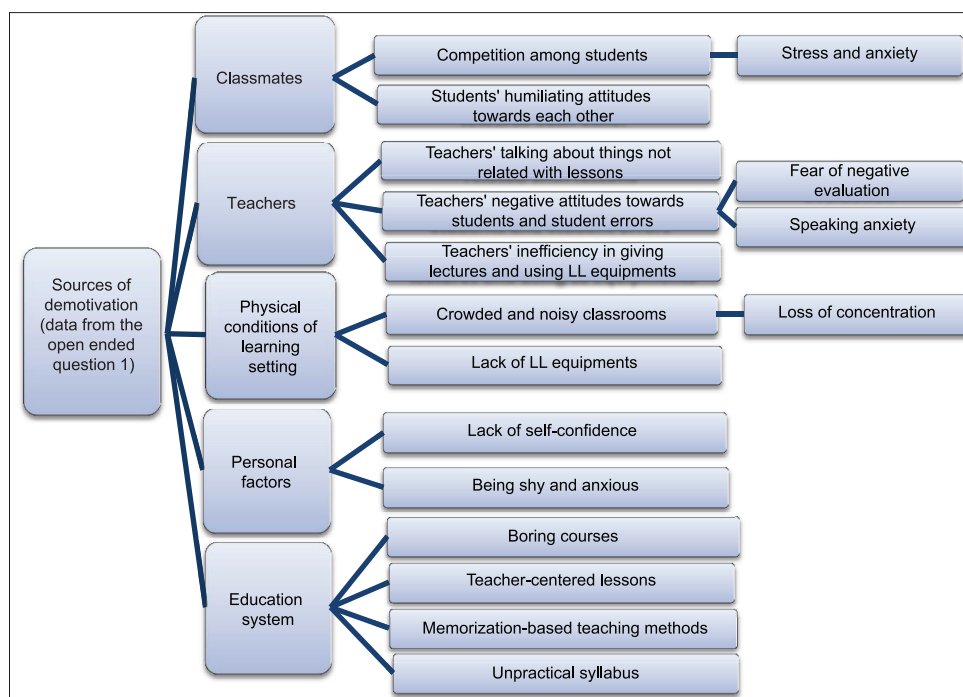


Figure 1. Semantic map of the data from the first open-ended question.

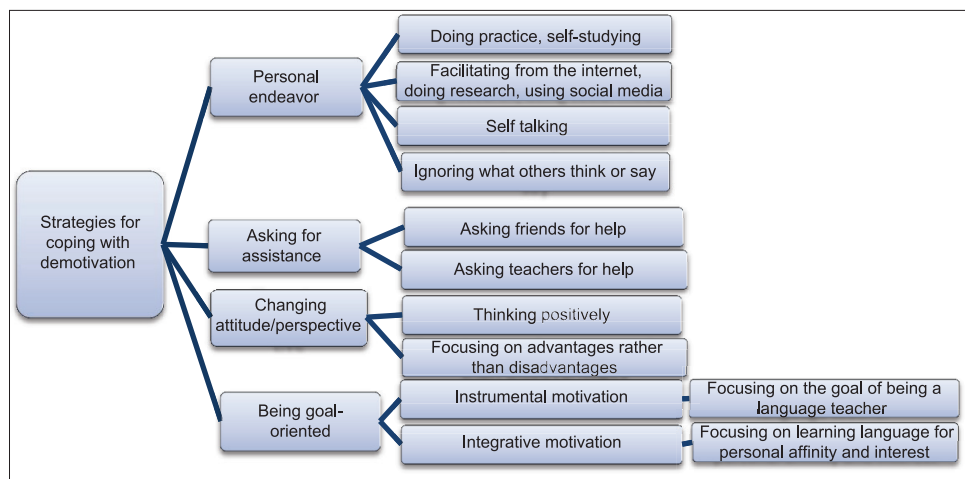


Figure 2. Semantic map of the data obtained from open-ended question 2.

these negative experiences?) were analyzed, using semantic mapping. Responses of the participants to this question revealed a number of strategies that they use to overcome their demotivation: personal endeavor, asking for assistance, changing attitude/perspective, and being goal-oriented. The details of each of these strategies used by the students were given below the semantic map (Figure 2).

Forty-eight percent of the participants try to cope with demotivation personally. They expressed that when they find it hard to keep up with lessons or when they are insecure about their language skills, they feel demotivated. In order to cope with these negative experiences, they use strategies of doing practice regularly, self-studying or benefiting from the technological learning environments. Also, some of the participants declared that these aforementioned situations cause them to feel stressed out and in order to deal with this mood, they try to talk with themselves as a soothing practice. As some of them expressed: “Whenever I feel demotivated, I try to talk with myself. I tell myself that everything is going to be all right”, “I stand in front of a mirror and tell myself positive things”. Moreover, some of the participants claimed that they try to overcome demotivation personally by ignoring what others think or say. As some of them said: “Just, I ignore them”, “Whenever my friends demoralize me by their insulting remarks, I try to turn a deaf ear to them”.

Another strategy used by the participants was asking for help (21%). Some of the students stated that not being able to good at English causes them to feel demotivated and they overcome this negative experience by asking either friends or teachers for help.

Sixteen-point six percent of the students pointed out the strategy of changing attitude/perspective to deal with demotivation. The participants claimed that in cases when they feel down, they mostly try to think positively. Although they encounter difficulties while learning a language, they focus on the advantages of knowing a foreign language. As some of them claimed: “Of course, I can not overcome demotivation completely, but I always try to think positively”, “When I feel demotivated, I focus on the advantages of my department”.

Being goal-oriented is another strategy used by the participants of the study (15,4%). While some of the stu-

dents declared they have instrumental motivation to learn a language, some others claimed they have integrative motivation. The students who have instrumental motivation focus mostly on becoming a good language teacher. On the other hand, the students who have integrative motivation cope with demotivating experiences by focusing on learning a language for personal affinity and interest.

Findings from the Interviews

Results obtained from the first interview question; In which situations do you feel demotivated most?

After the responses of the participants were categorized six sources of demotivation were identified as presented in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that while personal issues (e.g. lack of self-confidence, shyness, and anxiety) are the most demotivating factors for female participants, overcrowded/noisy classrooms and negative attitudes of the students are the most demotivating factors for male participants. In general, overcrowded/noisy classroom settings and negative attitudes of the students towards each other constituted the most impacting factors leading demotivation.

Results obtained from the second interview question; Which strategies do you apply to overcome these negative experiences?

The participants’ perceptions of the things they can do in order to cope with demotivation were examined. The findings revealed the following four strategies used by the participants as presented in Table 5.

As seen in Table 5, while self-studying is the most used strategy, thinking positively is the least used strategy for both genders. The analysis indicated that the students who are aware of their insufficient language skills try to cope with demotivation by doing more practice and studying harder. They mostly suggested that being goal-oriented (having integrative or instrumental motivation) helped them overcome demotivation and be determined. They claimed that in order to deal with other students’ humiliating and negative attitudes, they mostly try to ignore them. Changing their attitude toward the language/course and thinking positively also

helped them alleviate demotivation. Particularly, thinking positively, not to care about the thoughts of others and feeling more confident were the strategies suggested by students with low motivation. On the other hand, students with high motivation claimed that they cope with demotivating experiences by doing practice, studying harder, and being goal-oriented.

DISCUSSION

In this study, major factors that demotivate Turkish EFL university students during the process of language learning were examined. Also, strategies used by the students in order to overcome these negative factors were investigated. A mixed-method research was carried out by the researchers as the nature of demotivation requires having a deeper insight into its main sources and affective ways to overcome it. Four hundred sixty-nine EFL students from four different universities in Turkey participated in the study. A demotivation questionnaire (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009) including two open-ended questions were administered to the participants. Also, interviews were held with some of the participants in order to gain a deeper understanding of the matter.

Data obtained from the demotivation questionnaire revealed six sources of demotivation; teachers, characteristics of classes, an experience of failure, class environment, class materials and lack of interest. Also, responses of the participants to the first open-ended question revealed five demotivating factors; classmates, teachers, physical conditions of learning setting, personal issues and education system. Further, interviews held with some of the participants indicated sources of demotivation as overcrowded/noisy classrooms (characteristics of classes), negative attitudes of the classmates, personal issues, teachers, test anxiety and education system. These results confirm the findings from previous studies on sources of demotivation; teacher-based factors (Bekleyen, 2011; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Kim, 2012; Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009; Kojima, 2004; Soureshjani & Riahipour, 2012; Tabatabaei & Molavi, 2012; Zhang, 2007), class characteristics (Arai, 2004; Cristophel & Gorham, 1995; Soureshjani & Riahipour, 2012; Tsuchiya, 2006), situations of failure (Gorham & Millette, 1997; Tsuchiya, 2006), attitudes of classmates (Arai, 2004; Bekleyen, 2011; Falout & Maruyama, 2004), class materials (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009), lack of interest/personal issues (Cristophel & Gorham, 1995; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012; Tsuchiya, 2006), test anxiety (Kim & Kim, 2015), and education system (Tabatabaei & Molavi, 2012). Further, while male students indicated classmates and characteristics of classrooms as major demotivational factors, female students pointed out personal issues as the most demotivating factor. Also, the results of the present study showed that male students feel significantly more motivated than female students. This result coincides with some of the previous research (Aliakbari & Hemmatizad, 2015; Kaivanpanah & Ghasemi, 2011; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012). However, it contradicts with the results of a study carried out in the Turkish context by Acat and Demiral (2012). The researchers found that Turkish female students have a significantly higher level of motivation than male students.

Moreover, the results of this study revealed that there are differences between genders regarding the characteristics of classes and experiences of failure as demotivational factors. Regarding both of the factors, female students were determined to have a higher level of demotivation than male students. Previous research on gender differences yielded different results (Aliakbari & Hemmatizad, 2015; Dörnyei, 1998; Kaivanpanah & Ghasemi, 2011; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012). For example, Kaivanpanah and Ghasemi (2011) found that female students had a significantly higher level of demotivation than males in terms of two main factors 'teacher' and 'experience of failure'. While the first factor opposes the findings of this study, the second factor supports the results of this study. In another study, Aliakbari and Hemmatizad (2015) determined that female students were significantly more demotivated than male students regarding four demotivational factors: inadequate school and university facilities, test scores, lack of intrinsic motivation and learning contents and material. Results of another study conducted by Dörnyei (1998) revealed that female students had a higher level of demotivation than males regarding teacher-related factors. In their study, Meshkat and Hassani (2012) found that males had a higher level of demotivation than females in terms of the factors of 'learning contents and materials' and 'teachers' competence and teaching styles'. The studies carried out on determining gender differences regarding demotivational factors yielded inconclusive results. That's why; conducting more studies on this matter in various contexts might be helpful in achieving more clear results.

The data obtained from interviews and open-ended questions indicated that students try to cope with demotivating factors through mostly personal endeavor. In order to overcome demotivation or to re-motivate themselves, they primarily apply personal struggles such as self-studying, self-reliance or problem-solving. This result is similar to the findings of a study conducted by Falout (2012). Another strategy used by the participants is support-seeking from people who can help. Both teachers and peers can provide emotional support for those who feel stressed or demotivated (Aldwin, 1994). By talking about their motivational problems and by sharing their motivation strategies, peers might encourage each other (Ushioda, 2001). Likewise, by giving attributional feedback, teachers might guide learners to discover the main causes of their success and help them increase self-efficacy (Shunk, 2008). Changing attitude/perspective towards learning a language is another strategy used by the students to minimize demotivation. According to Aldwin (1994), the flexibility to alternate and adjust has a major role in adopting efficient coping strategies. That's why adopting new or different perspectives towards learning might help learners overcome barriers. Also, students use strategies of being goal oriented (either instrumental or integrative motives), ignoring humiliating or negative attitudes of teachers or classmates, and thinking positively to deal with demotivation they experience.

CONCLUSION

This study has some limitations that need to be addressed. First of all, the participants in the study were assumed to

have a similar level of proficiency. A test measuring their proficiency level could be applied prior to the study. Second, as the researchers used purposive sampling method for the selection of the participants and as the participants were chosen among first and second year EFL students, they do not represent the whole population of Turkish EFL learners. Thus, the results of this study, describing a particular set of students that present a homogeneous picture, may only be generalized to other EFL learners in similar contexts. Therefore, further research should include participants with different proficiency levels and different contexts.

Under the light of the above limitations, this study reached the following four results based on the aim of this present research. Regarding the main demotivating factors affecting Turkish EFL university students' English language learning process, first, in general, Turkish EFL students have a moderate level of motivation to learn a language. Second, male students have a higher level of motivation than female students. Third, major factors that demotivate students were determined as negative attitudes of the classmates, teacher-related factors, personal issues, class characteristics, test anxiety, failure experiences, and education system. Fourth, female students were determined to have a higher level of demotivation than male students regarding the factors of 'characteristics of classes' and 'experiences of failure'. Further, the ways they apply to cope with these negative experiences from their own perspectives are evaluated as: Students use strategies of self-studying, asking for assistance, changing perspective, thinking positively, ignoring what others think, and being goal oriented in order to cope with demotivating factors they experience.

Therefore, it is implied that language teachers might play a crucial role in identifying major sources of learner demotivation and in guiding them to search out and develop effective strategies for overcoming these negative situations. Also, understanding sources of demotivation might ensure language teachers not being the primary cause of it.

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