

Exploring students' demotivation and remotivation in learning English

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ABSTRACT

This study combined collaborative tasks with qualitative research procedures in order to explore what factors students had experienced as demotivating in their English learning and their suggestions for remedying them. It was conducted with an intact class of 40 advanced learners of English (mostly future teachers) following a Masters course. In the first stage of the study, the motivational change graph of Song and Kim (2017) was used to stimulate learners to chart the development of their motivation over successive stages of their learning career and to reflect on reasons for significant fluctuations (downwards or upwards). The results served as the subject of peer interviews and brief class reports on individual participants' experiences. In the second stage, prepared with these reflections, participants were asked to focus on their past classroom experience, as well as that of other students they had known. Using the collaborative learning technique of forward snowball, participants were first asked to brainstorm and list all factors they could think of which might lead to demotivation in English learning. This was followed by a reverse snowball stage which required deeper reflection and critical thinking. In groups of 4 or 5, participants were asked to analyze and decide (a) what they regarded as the five most important demotivational factors in language learning and (b) what pedagogical strategies might be effective in remedying them. Results were combined into a class profile. This stage also served to bridge the transition in the course from a series of classes that had focused mainly on learning to one which would focus mainly on pedagogy. The experience (with others) was also intended to contribute to the students' 'experiential knowledge' of task-based learning in preparation for their future work as teachers.

1. Introduction

Motivation is a crucial factor in any learning-teaching process. It is the force that influences whether a learner sets about a task at all; how much energy he or she invests in learning the specific language; and how long he or she persists (Littlewood, 2000).

It must also be noted here that students' behaviour is affected not only by positive forces, but also by negative ones (Dörnyei, 2005). Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) note that without enough motivation, even students with the most outstanding capabilities cannot reach long-term objectives; neither are suitable curricula and good teaching sufficient to guarantee students' achievement. Research confirms that less motivated students are less likely to become successful during their language learning process (Dörnyei, 1994, 2005,

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2009a; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Gardner, 2007; Lasagabaster et al., 2014). So not only researchers but also teachers have increasingly attached great importance to demotivation, which refers to “specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p.143), as well as to remotivation, which can be defined as “the process of recovering motivation after losing it” (Falout, 2012, p.3). Dörnyei (2005) further stresses that it is of great significance for learners to overcome demotivation and to remotivate themselves by employing effective strategies.

There are a growing number of studies in the field of demotivation in the EFL context, such as in Japan (Kikuchi, 2009, 2015), Iran (Alavinia & Sehat, 2012; Moivaziri & Razmjoo, 2013), Vietnam (Trang & Baldauf, 2007; Tuan, 2011) and Korea (Kim, 2015; Song & Kim, 2017). However, most of the research has adopted quantitative methods, using questionnaires to collect data. Furthermore, some research has focused only on analyzing students' demotivation factors in a specific period, like high school or college, instead of analyzing the dynamic development of their motivation over successive stages of their learning career. Given this, the present study employs collaborative techniques and qualitative research procedures with the aim of exploring what factors students had experienced as demotivating over successive stages of their learning career and their suggestions for remedying them. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How has the students' motivation for learning English changed?
2. What are the major demotivating factors among Chinese EFL students?
3. What are effective strategies for remedying demotivation?

2. Review of literature

2.1. Research on language learning motivational change

There are numerous studies analyzing motivation, which has been considered the most salient factor in a learner's success in second or foreign language learning (e.g., Dörnyei, 2000, 2001; Williams, 1994). Currently, with the introduction of complex dynamic system theory, the trend of research on motivation has been altered from what causes it to how it changes over time. Accordingly, scholars tried to examine the dynamics of foreign/second language motivational change, because the fluctuation of an individual's motivation is an important phenomenon in the language learning process (Jung, 2011). According to this theory, L2 motivation is no longer perceived as a relatively stable state; rather, it is seen as a long, complex, continuous, changing and dynamic process that shows a lot of fluctuations (Dörnyei, 2009b). Ellis and Larsen-Freeman (2006, p. 563) also mentioned that “motivation is less a trait than fluid play, an ever-changing one emerging from the processes of interaction of many agents, internal and external, in the ever-changing complex world of the learner”.

As a consequence, several studies have aimed to examine L2 motivation from a complex dynamic system perspective. Within this framework, in order to trace their motivational change, Jung (2011) and Song and Kim (2017) asked participants to draw and English learning motivational timeline chart showing their motivational changes in the English learning process from kindergarten to high school. The results show that most students experienced fluctuations during their English learning process and they showed demotivation in junior high school or high school.

2.2. Research on demotivation

Studies on demotivation in the context of English as a second language (ESL) first aroused researchers' wide concern several decades ago (Song & Kim, 2017). Many researchers state that students' demotivation is mainly attributed to external factors. For example, Gorham and Christophel (1992) recruited 308 college ESL students, who were asked to fill in a questionnaire to analyze factors they considered as motivators and demotivators. The findings showed that external factors, such as negative teachers' behaviours, were viewed as strongly related to students' demotivation, whereas students attribute positive motivation to their own intrinsic characteristics, such as a keen desire to learn English. Likewise, Ushioda (2001) found, through open-ended and semi-structured interviews among university-level learners, that participants attributed motivation mostly to internal factors, such as personal ability, their effort and hard work. However, their perceptions of demotivating experiences were related to external factors, such as dull teaching methods and learning grammatical rules.

Besides the abovementioned studies in ESL contexts, demotivation has also gained scholars' attention in EFL contexts. Several studies have reported that students' demotivation is closely related to traditional teacher-centered teaching methods (e.g., Kikuchi, 2009; Song & Kim, 2017; Trang & Baldauf, 2007). In the Korean EFL context, Song and Kim (2017) found that the salient factors leading to Korean high school students' demotivation were instructors' teaching methods. Likewise, in the Japanese EFL context, Kikuchi (2009) reported that Japanese high school students' demotivation was highly related to external factors, such as traditional grammar-translation teaching methods and teachers' behavior. Moreover, Trang and Baldauf (2007) reported that for Vietnamese EFL students, the salient source of demotivation was also teacher-centered teaching methods. However, other studies have showed different results. In Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) research, teachers' teaching methods and teaching styles were not found to be strong sources of demotivation among Japanese EFL learners; they reported that students' demotivation was mostly connected to learning materials and test scores. Sahragard and Alimorad's (2013) research reported similar findings, which showed that teacher-related factors were not the main source of demotivation for Iranian high school EFL learners. Students' demotivation was mainly attributed to other factors, including lack of self-confidence or a lack of interest in English.

2.3. Research on remotivation

Since motivation is a dynamic and changeable process (Waninge et al., 2014), it is also important to offer students strategies for renewing lost motivation or increasing their motivation. Ushioda (2001) proposed that demotivated students can remotivate themselves by adopting four strategies, namely paying attention to incentives, adopting goal-oriented self-regulation, finding ways to get temporary relief, and communicating with others about learning difficulties or motivation problems. Trang and Baldauf (2007) and Cho (2014) stressed that raising students' awareness of the importance of learning English and strengthening their determination to succeed can be good ways to overcome demotivation.

Song and Kim (2017) found that learners who experienced remotivation were affected by both external and internal factors. The main *external* remotivation factors involve changed learning methods and inspiration from classmates. The key *internal* factors consisted of raising awareness of the usefulness of learning English and students' desire to succeed.

Falout (2012) recruited 157 tertiary-level EFL learners from Japan to examine their remotivation process in learning English. He compared short- and long-term coping processes among learners with positive self-concepts and negative self-concepts. The results showed that learners with positive self-concepts rely more on utilizing their social networks for motivation and remotivation, when compared with learners with negative self-concepts.

Studies concerning how learners' language learning motivation has changed, the reasons why they lose motivation to learn English, and how their motivation may be strengthened have been briefly reviewed above. However, there is still a scarcity of studies investigating EFL learners' demotivation comprehensively, especially in the Chinese EFL context, and little research has focused on addressing the demotivating factors and remotivating strategies within the same population (Song & Kim, 2017). Thus, this study, using collaborative learning tasks as a means, is an attempt to deepen our understanding of EFL learners' motivational change, by analyzing factors that demotivated EFL learners and at the same time, by proposing effective strategies that remotivate them.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

This study was carried out with an intact class of 40 advanced learners of English (mostly future teachers) following a Masters course in a public university in Hong Kong. The course was all taught in English. Most of them were full-time students who spent one academic year to complete the Masters degree. A typical academic year usually consisted of two semesters, the fall semester and the spring semester. The present study was conducted at the spring semester of their studies. All the students had achieved at least 6.5 in the IELTS test or above 100 in the TOEFL test. Most of them had majored in English both in their undergraduate and postgraduate studies. 95% of the participants were female and 5% of the participants were male. Nearly all of them were eager to become professional English teachers either in high schools or universities after graduation. The mean age of participants was 22.98 (SD = 0.66).

3.2. Data collection

The data collection was divided into two stages. In the first stage of the study, the motivational change graph of Song and Kim (2017) was used to stimulate learners to chart the development of their motivation over successive stages of their learning career from kindergarten to the present and to reflect on reasons for significant fluctuations (downwards or upwards). Following the guidelines of

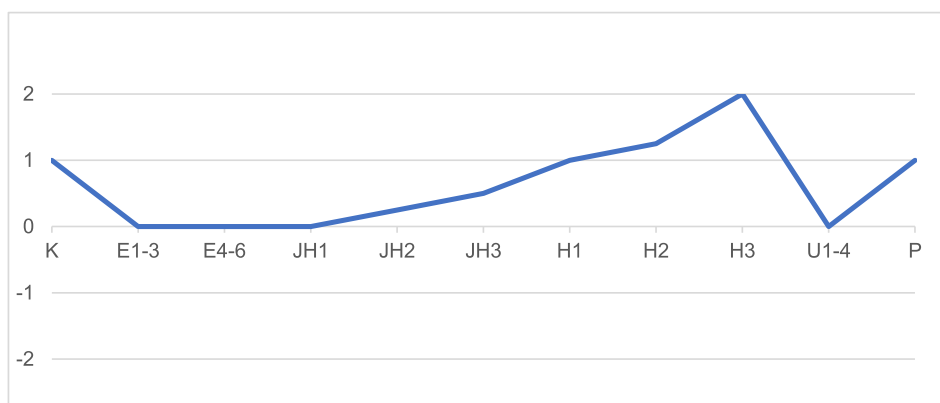


Fig. 1. Example of one participant's motivational change graph. (+2 = very interesting, +1 = interesting, 0 = neither interesting or boring, -1 = not interesting, -2 = very boring). Note. K = Kindergarten (ages of 5–6), E1-3 = grade 1 to 3 in Elementary school (ages of 6–8), E4-6 = grade 4 to 6 in Elementary school (ages of 9–11), JH1 = grade 1 in Junior High school (age of 12), JH2 = grade 2 in Junior High school (age of 13), JH3 = grade 3 in Junior High school (age of 14), H1 = grade 1 in High school (age of 15), H2 = grade 2 in High school (age of 16), H3 = grade 3 in High school (age of 17), U 1–4 = grade 1 to 4 in Undergraduate studies (age 18–21), P=Post-Graduate studies (age of around 22).

Song and Kim (2017), learners were required to show the age at which they had begun to learn English and to mark their own motivational level from very interesting (+2) to very boring (−2) across different stages of their learning career. Then they connected the motivation indices for each period in the graph in order to show their development. After each student had finished drawing their own motivational change graph, they were assigned into groups and had group discussion reflecting on their previous English learning experience and providing explanations for any points where their motivation had undergone a change, either positive or negative. Then each group chose one member's experience and wrote a report describing his/her general level of motivation across different stages of learning, showing when he/she had experienced demotivation and remotivation, and explaining the reasons why demotivation and remotivation had happened.

Fig. 1 gives an example of a graph drawn by a student, which illustrates how motivational change occurs. The graph shows that she had a relatively high level of motivation (1) when she started to learn English. Her motivation decreased during the kindergarten stage. During the elementary school years, she regarded learning English as neither interesting nor boring (0). Then her motivation increased during junior high school and high school (from 0 to 2) but decreased again when she was at university (from 2 to 0), followed by a rebound after post-graduate studies.

In the second stage of the research, prepared with these reflections, participants were asked to focus on their past classroom experience, as well as that of other students they had known. Using the collaborative learning technique of forward snowball, which emphasizes that people can develop a greater range of ideas by interacting with each other (Jacobs & Renandya, 2019), they were first asked to brainstorm and list all factors they could think of which might lead to demotivation in English learning. This was followed by a reverse snowball stage, which required deeper reflection and critical thinking. In groups of 4 or 5, participants were asked to analyze and decide (a) what they regarded as the five most important demotivational factors in language learning and (b) what pedagogical strategies might be effective in remedying them. Results were combined into a class profile.

3.3. Data analysis

First, individual students' graphs were analyzed to reveal the general trend of motivational change. Then the brief class reports on individual participants' experiences and a class profile related to the 5 most important demotivating factors and remedying strategies were read many times (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After this process of iterative reading, the data were separated into chunks and then categorized based on the classification adopted by Song and Kim (2017). Through the process of deleting, adapting or integrating, the final complete categories of students' perceptions of demotivating and remotivating factors can be shown in Table 1, which comprises five major categories with minor subcategories. The five major categories, namely "L2 learning environment", "attribution", "L2 and its culture", "social and parental pressure" and "necessity of English", were the same as in the classification made by Song and Kim (2017). However, based on our participants' data, the minor categories in each major section were slightly different from those found by Song and Kim.

Regarding the major categories, the "L2 learning environment" is closely related to external factors, including the teacher's teaching methods, school facilities, tests or exam-oriented education, textbooks, tasks, etc. The "attribution" dimension comprises students' lack of confidence and their experiences of success or failure. When it comes to the "L2 and its culture" category, internal factors that influence students' motivation were taken into consideration, such as their interest in learning English or English culture. With regard to "social and parental pressure," the stress or pressures coming from parents or society are considered. Lastly, the category "necessity of English" is related to students' perceptions of the importance of English learning.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Participants' patterns of motivational change in learning English

Students were asked to track their own general level of L2 learning motivation across different stages of their learning career from kindergarten to tertiary level by drawing the motivational graphs and they were also encouraged to suggest explanations for any points

Table 1
The categories of students' perception by which the data was classified.

Major Category	Minor Category
L2 Learning Environment	Instructor's teaching method Instructor's personality School facilities Tests or exam-oriented education Textbooks Task-related
Attribution	Success/Failure experience Lack of confidence
L2 & Its Culture	Lack of interest in English
Necessity of English	Necessity of English
Social & Parental Pressure	Parental influence Social pressure

where their motivation had changed, either positively or negatively. From the students' graphs, it can be seen that most participants (93.4%) started to learn English in kindergarten, two students (4.4%) in elementary school, and only one student (2.2%) began to learn English in junior high school. Nearly all students experienced fluctuations in motivation both downwards and upwards over successive stages of their learning career, rather than only rises or only drops. To illustrate this, two students' motivational change graphs are presented in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3.

After analyzing the students' graphs, the general average pattern of motivational change showed that students had positive motivation when began to learn English, experienced demotivation during junior high school or high school, and regained motivation afterwards. Most students reported that they had a high level of motivation after they entered the university.

4.2. Demotivating factors for students

In a 'reverse snowball' stage, participants were required to analyze and decide, in groups of 4 or 5, what they considered to be the five most salient demotivational factors in language learning. There were 8 groups in total and the data were analyzed to find major demotivating factors. The results are shown in Table 2.

Similar to some other research (e.g., Gorham & Christophel, 1992; Ushioda, 2001), this study indicated that the learning environment was the major factor influencing students' demotivation. Among L2 learning environment dimensions, teacher-related factors, including the instructor's teaching methods and personality, were the main source of demotivation. Tests or exam-oriented education and task-related factors ranked the next. School facilities and textbooks contributed to students' demotivation as the fifth and sixth factors, respectively.

We will now look more closely at each factor in the category of the L2 learning environment.

4.2.1. Instructor's teaching methods

Seven out of the eight groups mentioned that students attributed their demotivation to teachers' teaching methods, such as spoon-feeding and grammar-based teaching methods. Many students said in their reports that when they were in high school, the class was teacher-centered and grammar-oriented. Teachers spent a large amount of time explaining grammatical rules and did not organize interesting activities, so the class was quite boring and students could not get involved and engaged. As mentioned by Xaypanya, Mohamed and Low (2017), students, especially advanced level students, are increasingly dissatisfied with the situation that teachers are heavily dependent on textbooks and seldom organize interesting activities in class.

Teachers also urged students to learn words or grammar by rote for the sake of high test scores, without considering whether they fully understand or not (Song & Kim, 2017). Research (e.g., Kikuchi, 2009; Song & Kim, 2017; Trang & Baldauf, 2007) further indicates that such problematic teaching methods currently exist in many Asian EFL contexts, including China, Korea and Japan.

4.2.2. Instructor's personality

Six out of the eight groups listed the instructor's personality as one of the most salient demotivating factors, such as being too strict, lacking in enthusiasm, and showing favouritism or bias. Students cared about fairness and they reckoned that if teachers can treat everyone fairly, instead of exhibiting favouritism, students can be motivated to learn English (Wang & Lee, 2019). However, when faced with disagreeable teacher personalities such as showing favouritism or bias, learners tended to risk becoming demotivated (Falout et al., 2009). What's more, teachers' unenthusiastic teaching had a negative effect on learners' motivation (Gorham & Christophel, 1992).

4.2.3. Tests or exam-oriented education

As shown in Table 2, tests or exam-oriented education also ranked among the highest causes of demotivation. Participants pointed out that too many tests caused a huge burden on them, gave them pressure, and made them lose interest in learning English. Students

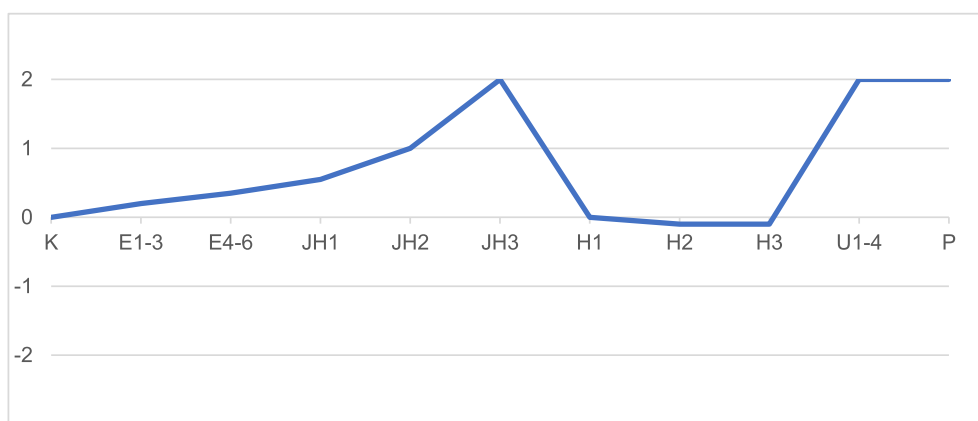


Fig. 2. Participant A's motivational change graph.

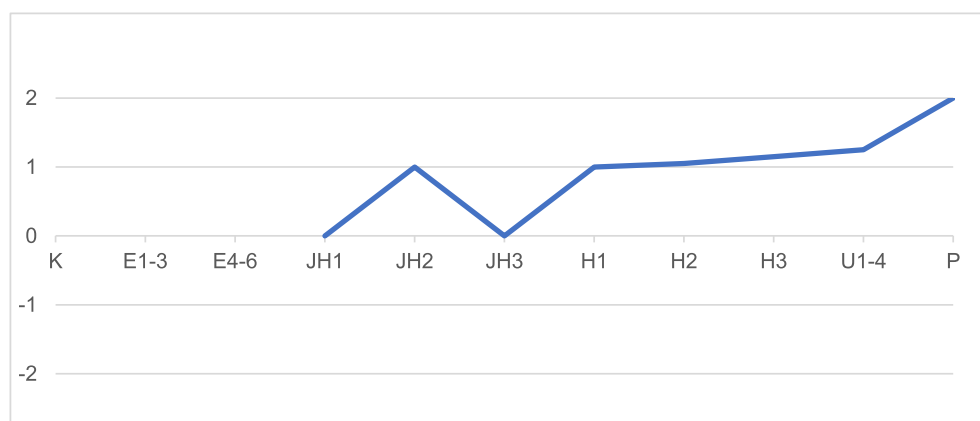


Fig. 3. Participant B's motivational change graph.

also felt demotivated when they had large amounts of homework or excessive workloads, which made them feel overwhelmed. Students also mentioned exam-oriented education, which aimed to improve their test scores instead of improving their overall English skills, especially their speaking skills. Even though students achieved high test scores, they sometimes failed to use English to communicate with foreigners, which made them feel depressed.

4.2.4. School facilities

Students also complained about bad school facilities which made them demotivated. The noisy learning environment, large class sizes and insufficient E-learning facilities were stated as problems. These results are in line with earlier research findings of Xaypanya et al. (2017), which suggest that students' motivation is influenced by the available support system and that demotivated learners are often dissatisfied with their existing learning conditions. For example, they often feel demotivated if there are too many students in the English class.

4.2.5. Textbooks

One out of the eight groups also listed demotivating factors related to textbooks. One student complained that when he was in junior high school, the textbooks included lots of grammatical points, instead of daily communicative English. So he had no opportunity to practise his spoken English and he felt demotivated to learn English. Other students expressed that the passages in English textbooks were too long and too difficult to understand, so they were beyond their proficiency level. Some students also mentioned that the textbooks were quite outdated and very boring.

However, unlike Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) findings, which indicated that learning content and materials seemed to have the strongest demotivating effects on students compared to teacher-related factors, our findings suggest that teacher-related factors were the most demotivating factors.

4.2.6. Task-related

Two out of the eight groups identified task-related factors as amongst the dominant demotivating factors. The students' motivation to learn was diminished when teachers did not give clear instructions and detailed explanation of the task, so students easily felt lost. One student commented that "I did not know what I should do when the teacher organized group work, because he did not explain to us clearly. So we just did other things instead of discussing, to kill time".

Table 2

Categories of demotivating factors from participants.

Major Category	Minor Category	Number of Groups (n = 8)
L2 Learning Environment	Instructor's teaching method	7
	Instructor's personality	6
	School facilities	3
	Tests or exam-oriented education	5
	Textbooks	1
	Task-related	2
	Success/Failure experience	3
Attribution	Lack of confidence	2
	Lack of interest in English	2
L2 & its Culture	Necessity of English	1
Social & Parental Pressure	Parental influence	1
	Social pressure	1

Note. n in each cell refers to the number of groups that mentioned each category.

Another group mentioned that both too easy and too challenging tasks exerted a negative influence on students' motivation to learn English. Too demanding tasks can make students feel depressed and overwhelmed. Too easy tasks can also make students feel demotivated. For instance, students may lose motivation if the exam could be easily passed without much serious study.

When it comes to the category "attribution", students' previous experience of success or failure and their lack of confidence were considered to be major sources of demotivation.

4.2.7. Experience of success or failure

Three out of the eight groups thought that students' previous experience of success or failure was closely related to their demotivation. When students got a high score in the test, they had a sense of achievement and pride. In contrast, if they did not perform well, they were depressed, disappointed, and their motivation decreased (Falout & Maruyama, 2004).

4.2.8. Lack of confidence

Students also considered that the lack of confidence has a negative impact on their English learning motivation. This result is in line with that of Dörnyei (2001), who considered reduced self-confidence as an internal demotivating factor. Demotivated students think that learning English is difficult for them and low proficiency students feel dissatisfied with their performance, thus leading to further decrease of motivation to learn English (Falout & Maruyama, 2004).

Besides the L2 learning environment and students' attributions, other demotivating factors identified by the participants included the lack of interest in English, social and parental pressure, and low necessity of English.

Internal factors also influenced students' motivation and their motivation might decrease when they lacked intrinsic interest in learning English.

One group also identified social and parental pressure as a source of demotivation. Some students complained that society and their parents overemphasized the importance of learning English and their parents had great expectations of their English learning. These excessive expectations could exert pressure on students and make them lose interest in learning English. One student also reported that her parents urged her to achieve high scores in every test, leading her to drift away from English. Another student mentioned that her parents asked her to choose the English major when she went to college but the English major was not her first choice, so she resisted learning English.

One group listed a low sense of the necessity of English among the five salient demotivating factors. They mentioned that when students did not realize the importance of learning English, they would have unclear goals to pursue and have a low ideal L2 self. Those students who did not have a clear ideal L2 self could not sustain high motivation (Kikuchi, 2017).

4.3. Strategies for remedying demotivation

Unlike previous studies (e.g., Hasegawa, 2004; Trang & Baldauf, 2007), which place more weight on the role of internal factors than external factors in students' remotivation, this study concluded that both internal and external factors contribute greatly to learners' remotivation.

As shown in Table 3, seven out of the eight groups mentioned that changing teaching strategies and organizing interesting activities can be good ways to remotivate students. Teachers play a vital part in providing a motivating environment by adopting a great variety of active and effective motivating strategies, like organizing various activities in the class (Sucaromana, 2013; Khorshidi & Nimchahi, 2013). As suggested by some researchers, such as Littlewood (2001), when students have negative attitudes towards traditional teacher-based or authority-based teaching modes, adopting learner-centered activities such as group-work or role-play can keep them interested and engaged. Akay's (2017) research also shows that music and English songs can serve as great tools for remotivation, through which students can have more entertaining and enjoyable lessons.

Three groups proposed that strategies related to textbooks can help remotivate students. It is encouraged to give students the freedom to choose what they like or what topics they are interested in, so that they have more autonomy over their study. Some groups also mentioned that the texts should be updated and suitable for learners' interest and proficiency level. In addition, students can be

Table 3

Categories of remotivating strategies proposed by participants.

Major Category	Minor Category	Number of Groups (n = 8)
L2 Learning Environment	Instructor's teaching method	7
	Instructor's personality	2
	School facilities	2
	Tests or exam-oriented education	3
	Textbooks	3
	Task-related	2
	Success/Failure experience	–
Attribution	Lack of confidence	–
L2 & its Culture	Interest in English	2
Necessity of English	Necessity of English	2
Social & Parental Pressure	Parental influence Social pressure	3

Note. n in each cell refers to the number of groups that mentioned each category.

remotivated if teachers recommend a range of interesting learning materials to them, including not only printed books but also electronic materials such as audio-visual books. Some groups also proposed that providing real-life usage of English can be an effective way to remotivate students. Akay's (2017) research also suggested that it is necessary to develop content which is closely linked to the immediate lives of the students and provide students with opportunities for real-life English usage, thereby closing the gap between learning about English and actually being able to have a real conversation.

Three groups mentioned that remotivation happens if teachers and parents help create a supporting environment. Students' success cannot exist without the encouragement of their parents and teachers, who play an essential role in motivating students. Teachers are able to make a huge difference in the motivation of their students through motivational practice (Dörnyei, 2001; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Students' motivation also decreases in the absence of parents' support and encouragement. So students can also be remotivated through encouragement from parents.

Another possible means of remotivation is the effective use of technology and the provision of e-learning facilities, both within and out of the classroom. Kim (2010) concludes in his study that multimedia and Information Technology (IT) play an important part in EFL motivation and attitudes. Genciliter (2009) also suggests that students' language learning remotivation is closely related to the use of technology. Students can benefit from the use of technology in ELT classrooms because it can increase students' motivation, reduce their anxiety, and offer more opportunities for interaction and negotiation of meaning (Brinton, 2001; Syndorenko, 2010).

Students mentioned that badly designed tasks, as well as a lack of clear instructions about how to proceed, will reduce their motivation to learn English. They proposed that they can be remotivated if the teacher demonstrates how to conduct the tasks, gives explicit and detailed instructions, and makes sure students all understand the task. Moreover, both too easy and too challenging tasks can influence students' motivation negatively, so students think that they can be remotivated when the teacher chooses tasks with an appropriate level of challenge.

Students from two groups took the view that giving students rewards is a useful means of remotivation. One student reported that when he was in middle school, he did not make substantial progress in the test. But his teacher did not blame him. Instead, the teacher gave him some candies or chocolate as rewards, which motivated him to work harder.

Since students complained that too much homework or excessive workloads serve as a major demotivator, they suggest that teachers should reduce their workloads and remember that quality beats out quantity. Teachers should ensure that every assignment is necessary and relevant. Students also suggest that besides homework, teachers can give alternative assessment, such as quizzes and portfolios.

Besides remotivating students through the external aspects that we mentioned above, it is also of great significance to remotivate students through internal factors, including arousing their interest in L2 learning and raising their awareness of the necessity of learning English.

Two groups mentioned that arousing students' interest in the L2 culture or L2 community can be an effective method. They can gain interest by watching English movies, singing English pop songs and taking part in overseas study tours.

Since some students do not realize the importance of learning English, they just consider English as important for exams and do not have clear future goals or dreams. So linking English use to their future targets can be a successful remotivating strategy. According to Dörnyei (2005), the ideal L2 self plays a key part in motivating students. Students' visualization or imagination of their ideal selves in the future serves as one of the significant factors that promote their remotivation (Song & Kim, 2017). In order to help students connect the value of English to their ideal L2 self, motivational language activities (MLAs), proposed by Kim (2015), can be used. After watching and reading typical cases, students were asked to write opinions in their diaries or have a group discussion to share their ideas with classmates, through which they can both realize the significance of English and create their own ideal L2 self. Munezane (2013) also takes the view that students can increase their motivation by visualizing or imagining their possible L2 selves in contexts such as using English to address international problems.

5. Conclusion and pedagogical implications

By combining collaborative tasks with qualitative research procedures, this research has aimed to investigate the major demotivating sources for EFL learners. The results show that both external factors and internal factors contribute to students' demotivation. To be more specific, external factors, the L2 learning environment in particular, were found to be more influential than internal factors, such as lack of confidence and lack of interest. Moreover, among all external factors, teacher-related factors were regarded as the most prominent source of demotivation. These findings are consistent with those of some previous studies (e.g., Kim, 2009; Kim & Seo, 2012; Lee & Kim, 2014), suggesting that teacher-related factors, including teaching methods and the teacher's personality, were the main source of demotivation. The study also suggests that both internal and external factors can contribute greatly to learners' remotivation and provide effective strategies for remedying demotivation.

This research has several pedagogical implications. First, it provides valuable insights for policymakers, administrators and teachers about preventing or reducing the harmful effects of demotivation and facilitating remotivation among EFL students. Policymakers and administrators are encouraged to identify key areas regarding educational policies and classroom practices. They are encouraged to provide more e-learning facilities and design more interesting and suitable curricula, as well as present students with more opportunities to practise their speaking skills. EFL teachers should realize that a disagreeable personality together with traditional ways of teaching can negatively influence students' motivation, so these should be avoided. They can organize interesting activities, including motivational language activities (MLAs), which can not only motivate students, but also help students connect the value of English to their ideal L2 self.

Furthermore, the process of this research, including the combination of collaborative techniques with qualitative methods, can

contribute to the students' 'experiential knowledge' of task-based learning in preparation for their future work as teachers. Participants can have a deeper understanding of the implementation of task-based learning and promote task-based learning in their future work.

Although the research provides meaningful results, it also has some limitations. First, this study was a small-scale research, which involved a small number of participants. Furthermore, it used convenience sampling and all participants followed the same course in the same university. Therefore, the results of our study may not be generalizable to populations in other contexts. For future studies, it is recommended to recruit a larger number of participants and invite more representative samples.

Second, most of the participants in this study were advanced level students. It is therefore suggested to investigate whether students with various proficiency levels and at different stages of learning identify a similar range of demotivating and remotivating factors.

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