

# Indonesian University Students' Demotivation in Learning English as a Foreign Language

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**Abstract:** Investigating EFL learners' demotivation is essential since the results provide feedbacks in better helping the learners to study English. The institutions providing English teaching and learning also benefit from the results of such research as they relate to how the institutions improve learning resources available in the institutions. Despite its usefulness, however, there are still limited studies about EFL students' demotivation particularly within Indonesian contexts. The purpose of this research is to investigate factors affecting demotivation of English department students of a private university in Indonesia. A questionnaire was distributed to 124 participants from different intake years surveying their perception on factors decreasing their motivation. The results show that five factors affected the participants' demotivation: non-communicative methods, facilities, test scores, course books, and teachers' competence and teaching styles. From the five factors identified, non-communicative methods used by the lecturers, facilities, and test scores were the dominant factors lowering the students' motivation. Lecturers' competence and teaching styles provided the least influence on the students' motivation. These findings indicate that teaching methods and strategies used by the lecturers and facilities hold a significant role in maintaining the students' motivation in studying English.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Demotivation refers to "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action" (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 143). Factors such as lack of facilities and difficulty levels of the given materials could affect and reduce the students' motivation. It should be emphasized here that demotivation does not mean that students' motivation loses completely. Instead, there are factors that obstruct or hinder their motivation to function positively (Hemmatizad et al., 2015).

Researching students' demotivation is essential as the results could help English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers like in Indonesia to minimize their students' demotivation in order to get better outcomes in learning English. A demotivated student could influence other students in a classroom and therefore, would decrease the effectiveness of teaching and learning process. The results of this kind of research offer practical significance for EFL teachers in order to deal with unmotivated learners. The results are also beneficial for English teaching providers or institution particularly on how to

provide support and facilities for both teachers and students in achieving better outcomes in the teaching and learning process.

Several studies have been done investigating students' demotivation in learning. A study conducted by Falout and Maruyama (2004), for example, surveyed 164 students from science-based departments attending a non-credit supplementary English course. The students were divided into higher proficiency and lower proficiency groups. The study found that disappointment in performance, course content, and teachers were the dominant factors lowering the students' motivation in learning English especially with the lower English proficiency group.

Another study was done by Gorham and Christophel (1992). They tried to determine what factors causing demotivation for university students. The findings show that teacher-related factors accounted for seventy nine percent from all the responses. Christophel and Gorham (1995) used the same questionnaire to investigate demotivating factors among another group of college students. The results were consistent with the previous findings. Gorham and Millette (1997) administered a

further investigation based on Gorham's previous research. Their findings show that the students attributed more of their demotivation to teacher behavior, such as poor presentational skills, and lack of enthusiasm.

The results of the previous studies indicate that teacher related factors are among the main factors decreasing the students' motivation. However, in those studies the participants were from diverse major backgrounds (generally science background) and not specifically English as a foreign or second language background. The first study was conducted in Japan employing science background students and the second study was done in the USA with diverse background with the majority science related majors. Possible different findings could be found if the study conducted using English as a foreign or second language majors. For example, the results of the findings by Falout and Maruyama (2004) seem to be unsurprising because the participants were from science related background and were taking English as a non-credit supplementary course. The case could be different if the participants were from ESL or EFL teaching background.

For the reason above, the aim of the present study is to fill the gap by investigating the demotivating factors experienced by Indonesian university students who are taking EFL as their major in a private university in Malang. Although people could easily assume that the students must have good motivation as they take English as their major, it could not be the case especially with the longer year students. Various external factors could demotivate the students in learning English. The results of this study could, therefore, offer implication for lecturers and decision makers in the university on how to maintain their students' motivation and provide better facilities and management to achieve better outcome.

### 1.1 Factors Affecting Students' Demotivation

Motivation is essential as it relates to students' interest, enthusiasm and achievement in learning a foreign language. Demotivation is the opposite of motivation. According to Dörnyei (2001), Demotivation is "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action" (p. 143). Based on the definition, demotivated students do not lose their motivation completely. Rather, there are factors which obstruct or hinder the students' motivation to function optimally (Hemmatizad et al., 2015). Teacher competence, for example, could be a common demotivating factor for students in learning

English because an incompetence teacher will confuse his/her students and make the students cannot achieve learning outcome optimally.

Demotivation has direct negative implications for teaching and learning process. A demotivated student could influence other students in a negative way, for example, by spreading negative feeling, enthusiasm, and classroom efficiency during the teaching and learning process (Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003). For this reason, teachers should provide consideration on their students' demotivation by focusing on how to minimize their demotivation in order to get better outcomes in learning English.

Several factors could potentially decrease students' motivation. In their study, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) surveyed potential demotivating factors of Japanese university students in learning English. The findings extracted five main demotivating factors. Those are course books, school facilities, test scores, non-communicative methods, and teachers' competence and teaching styles. Course books can be a potential source for demotivation if they were too long and topics were not interesting. Inadequate teaching and learning facilities such as the internet, audio and visual equipment can also demotivate students especially if they are not used appropriately to support teaching and learning process. Another factor is test scores. Students achieving low scores in tests provided by teachers have possibilities to experience low motivation especially it happens repeatedly. The next factor is non-communicative methods used by teachers in teaching especially with those which cannot provide ample opportunities for the students to communicate in English. Finally, teachers' competence and teaching styles also promote students' demotivation. Teachers' inability to be a good model for using English such as poor pronunciation and the teachers' higher frequencies in using one-way explanation, etc. have also potentials to decrease the students' motivation in learning English.

Other perspectives of possible students' demotivating factors in learning English are also given by Dörnyei (1998) based on his research. He studied demotivation among Hungarian secondary school students and identified eight possible demotivating factors for the students in learning English. Those factors (1) include teachers' attributes such as their personalities and commitment, (2) schools related factors such as class sizes and inappropriate level of classes, (3) low levels of learners' self-confidence, (4) learners' negative attitudes toward the learned foreign language, (5) learners' compulsion to study the foreign language, (6) interference of another foreign

language that learners' is studying, (7) learners' attitudes toward the learned language community, (8) learners' peer attitudes, and (9) the course books being used. It seems clear from the mentioned factors above that Dörnyei (1998) includes both internal and external factors which may contribute to students' demotivation in his study.

For the reasons of practicality and similarity of the characteristics of the participants between the present study (Indonesian learners of EFL and Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) study (Japanese learners of EFL), the present study focuses only on the possible external factors contributing to Indonesian EFL learners' demotivation as outlined by Sakai and Kikuchi above. However, unlike their study in which the participants have relatively diverse major backgrounds (international relation, English literature, and economics and management), the present research employs English education major participants only but from different year intakes. The study is meant to identify the main and least demotivating factors for the students in learning English.

## 2 METHODS

### 2.1 Participants

The present study was conducted in a private university in Malang Indonesia employing students of English education department from four different year intakes, i.e., 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016. The reason for employing students from different year intakes is that length of study may influence the levels of the students' demotivation. It is possible that students' in their first year will have high motivation as they have positive considerations before deciding to take English as their major. Meanwhile, the motivation of the students who have been studying in their second, third, or fourth years may have changed along the years because of both internal and external factors. The other reason is that to collect data that are supposedly able to represent all English education department students in the university. In total, 124 students participated in the study which consisted of 31 students for each intake year.

An adapted and translated version of questionnaire developed by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009, p. 202) was used to collect the data. The questionnaire consisted of 25 items, and they were classified into five categories representing the five demotivation factors based on the study by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) which include course book, learning and teaching facilities, test scores, non-

communicative methods, and teachers' competence and teaching style. To assess the participants' personal attitudes toward demotivation, the questionnaire was developed using Likert scale. The questionnaire was also piloted to other students who were not employed as participants in order to get feedback in terms of the readability of the questionnaire items. The questionnaire was distributed in classes by collaborating with the lecturers. The participants took about 15 to 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

### 2.2 Data Analysis

The participants' responses were analyzed in terms of the frequency and percentage of each questionnaire item. They were then categorized based on the five demotivation factors which were adapted from Sakai and Kikuchi (2009, p. 202). For the reason of practicality, the calculation of frequency and percentage of each questionnaire item would be more focused on two answers of Likert scales: Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). This decision was taken because these two answers were basically the ones representing the participants' demotivation.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Factors Affecting Demotivation

From the participants' responses, course books, facilities, test scores, non-communicative methods, and teachers' competence and teaching styles all affected the participants' demotivation in learning English. In terms of the orders, non-communicative method used by the lecturers is the most dominant factor lowering the participants' motivation followed by facilities and test scores respectively. Course book also contributes almost 20% to the participants' demotivation. Meanwhile, teachers' competence and teaching style provides just little negative influence on decreasing the participants' motivation which is 6%. Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of the five demotivation factors based on the participants' responses. In order to understand aspects belonging to each demotivation factor, results of specific questionnaire items within each factor will be described and discussed.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of demotivation factors.

Factor and Questionnaire Item Number	Agree	Strongly Agree	F	%
	F	F		
<b>Factor 1. Course Book</b>				
1	59	5	64	17
6	22	2	24	
11	32	10	42	
16	23	1	24	
21	19	2	21	
Total	155	20	175	
<b>Factor 2. Facilities</b>				
2	28	2	30	26
7	26	31	57	
12	55	13	68	
17	48	5	53	
22	42	7	49	
Total	199	58	257	
<b>Factor 3. Test Score</b>				
3	31	8	39	24
8	39	2	41	
13	47	5	52	
18	37	10	47	
23	52	5	57	
Total	206	30	236	
<b>Factor 4. Non-communicative Methods</b>				
4	24	6	30	27
9	77	16	93	
14	35	11	46	
19	21	7	28	
24	55	14	69	
Total	212	54	266	
<b>Factor 5. Teacher's Competence and Teaching Style</b>				
5	12	5	17	6
10	10	1	11	
15	13	2	15	
20	5	0	5	
25	10	1	11	
Total	50	9	59	
TOTAL			993	100

### 3.2 Non-communicative Methods

As a whole, non-communicative methods used by the lecturers accounted for 27% of the demotivation experienced by the participants. Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage of the participants' responses to the questionnaire items belong to non-communicative method factor. In this factor, item number 9 'A great number of textbooks and supplementary material were assigned for self-study' is the greatest contributor for the participants' demotivation in learning English in the department which accounted about 75%. More than half of the participants reported that they were afraid of making mistake when speaking English. Grammar-focused

instruction, limited chance to communicate in English, and lecturers' frequent one-way explanation in teaching and learning process also contributed to the participants' demotivation, but each affected less than 40%

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of the participants' responses to the questionnaire items belong to non-communicative method factor (N=124).

Q. Item No	Agree		Strongly Agree		F	%
	F	%	F	%		
4	24	20	6	5	30	24
9	77	62	16	13	93	75
14	35	28	11	9	46	37
19	21	17	7	6	28	22
24	55	45	14	11	69	56
TOTAL	212	34	54	9	266	27

### 3.3 Facilities

Lack of teaching and learning facility is the second highest factor decreasing the participants' motivation in learning English which accounted more than 25%. As presented in Table 3, among the five aspects within this factor, limited use of visual materials, the internet, and audio materials each contributed more than 40% of the participants' demotivation in learning English. Limited use of language laboratory is also another aspect which affected negatively the students' motivation and contributed about 40% for their demotivation. Limited use of LCD equipment was also reported by the participants to be another aspect which decreased their motivation, but it just accounted for less than 25%.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of the participants' responses to the questionnaire items belong to facility factor (N=124).

Q. Item No	Agree		Strongly Agree		F	%
	F	%	F	%		
2	28	22	2	2	30	24
7	26	21	31	25	57	46
12	55	44	13	10	68	55
17	48	39	5	4	53	43
22	42	34	7	6	49	39
TOTAL	199	32	58	9	257	26

### 3.4 Test Score

The frequency and percentage of the questionnaire items belong to test score factor is presented in Table 4. Within this factor, participants' confusion

with grammar is the highest contributor to the participants' demotivation with 45%. It is then followed by their difficulty in memorizing words and phrases and poor listening comprehension about 40% respectively. The rests (items number 8 and 3) provided about 30%, a relatively high negative influence on the participants' demotivation.

Table 4: Frequency and percentage of the participants' responses to the questionnaire items belong to test scores (N=124).

Q. Item No	Agree		Strongly Agree		F	%
	F	%	F	%		
3	31	25	8	7	39	31
8	39	31	2	2	41	33
13	47	38	5	4	52	42
18	37	30	10	8	47	38
23	52	42	5	4	57	46
TOTAL	206	33	30	5	236	24

### 3.5 Course Book

In general, course book factor affected 17% to the participants' demotivation in the English department. Long passages in the text books and the participants' difficulty to understand English sentences are the most frequent aspects lowering their motivation within this factor which accounted about 50% and 34% respectively. The other three aspects (i.e., uninteresting topics, old topics, and mismatch culture topics) also provide negative influence on the participants' motivation at around 20%. Detailed frequency and percentage of the aspects included within course book factor is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Frequency and percentage of the participants' responses to the questionnaire items belong to course book (N=124).

Q. Item No	Agree		Strongly Agree		F	%
	F	%	F	%		
1	59	48	5	4	64	52
6	22	18	2	1	24	19
11	32	26	10	8	42	34
16	23	19	1	1	24	19
21	19	15	2	2	21	17
TOTAL	155	25	20	3	175	17

### 3.6 Teachers' Competence and Teaching Styles

As shown in Table 6, students' difficulty in understanding their lecturers' explanation and the inappropriateness of pace lessons are two major contributing to the participants' demotivation which

accounted about 10%. The other aspects such as lecturers' negative attitudes during teaching and learning process affected less than 10% on the participants' demotivation. Finally, punishment surprisingly gave just little influence on the students' demotivation which is less than 5%.

Table 4: Frequency and percentage of the participants' responses to the questionnaire items belong to teachers' competence and teaching style (N=124).

Q. Item No	Agree		Strongly Agree		F	%
	F	%	F	%		
5	12	10	5	4	17	14
10	10	8	1	1	11	9
15	13	10	2	2	15	12
20	5	4	0	0	5	4
25	10	8	1	1	11	9
TOTAL	50	8	9	1	59	6

The previous section has shown that non-communicative method, university facility, and test score factors are the major demotivating factors for the English department students. Course book factor just moderately affects the students' motivation, while teachers' competence and teaching style factor contributes slightly the students' demotivation.

Non-communicative methods used by lecturers become the largest contributor to the students' demotivation. It perhaps relates to the status of English as a foreign language in Indonesia. The only opportunity for the students to get exposure to English is in the English department particularly in their classrooms because they usually do not get exposure to English outside the classrooms. For this reason, they expect much that their English classrooms are able to provide them opportunities to use and maximum exposure to English. However, what they experienced in the classrooms is that the lecturers dominantly used grammar-focused instruction and one-way explanation or communication as shown by the results of the survey. Because of the grammar-focused instruction, they were afraid of making mistakes and therefore affected their motivation. Similar finding was also obtained by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009). They also found that teachers' non-communicative teaching methods are the most dominant factor contributing to the Japanese English learners' demotivation. Similar to Indonesia, English is still a foreign language in Japan.

The second largest demotivating factor is facility owned by the English department. This finding is not surprising because facilities surely have significant roles for the effectiveness of teaching and learning process. The same result was found by Jomairi (2011) in Iran. He came to a conclusion that

lack of facilities creates unfavorable L2 learning environment, and therefore, university or department should provide English classes facilities such as video projectors, etc. in order to enhance the L2 learners' teaching and learning process. When the facilities are lack, students cannot learn English properly. Thus, the lack of facilities can demotivate the students in learning English.

Test score is also another main contributor of the students' demotivation in the present study. The students' demotivation very much related to the students' unsatisfactory performance in classroom and final exams. When the students did not achieve high scores, they tended to develop the feeling of envy to their friends, particularly those who achieved high scores. This situation obviously could demotivate them in learning. This result corresponds to that found by Jomairi (2011). He also identified that low test score is one the demotivating factors for Iranian undergraduate students majoring in English in his study. By getting low test scores, students would feel more stressful and dislike English lessons. This similar finding is perhaps because the lecturers' assessment toward the students in the present study and Jomairi's (2011) study has not been holistic. It means that some lecturers in the English department where this was conducted usually assess the students only from their final exams excluding the students' daily assignments and performances. As a result, it discourages the students, and they will lose their motivation to learn English.

Although course book factor just moderately affects the students' motivation in the present study, the use of course books should be properly taken into consideration. Students' motivation can decrease because they experience boring lessons, have lengthy English lessons, and read uninteresting text books. Limited materials available are also possible reasons behind the decreasing of students' motivation. As often the case, students or even teachers or lecturers only have one compulsory course book for each course. Accordingly, students get limited knowledge, activities, and exercises that will enhance their understanding about the course.

Lecturers' competence and teaching style factor provided little influence on the students' demotivation in the present study. This means that based on the students' responses, the lecturers' competence and teaching styles have been appropriate enough so that these gave just little influence on the students' demotivation. In terms of education, data from the English department reveal that all the lecturers have already had their master degree in English language teaching and applied linguistics. Some of the lecturers have even already received their doctoral degree, and about 80% of

them have been certified by Indonesian Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

In terms of orders, results of the present study are somewhat different from the findings of some previous studies. A study by Gorham and Christophel (1992), for example, found that among different factors investigated, teachers' behaviors had the most important role in students' demotivation. Zhang (2007), who investigated demotivation among students in china, Germany, Japan, and America, identified that teacher factor is the most dominant factor affecting the lowering of students' demotivation. This dissimilarity could be because of different contexts of study, for example ESL or EFL, type and quality of university, department, or classes, participants' English proficiency, major of study, etc. For this reason, future studies should address the interconnection of these factors to students' demotivation. In addition, interview should be incorporated as instrument in future research in order to gain deeper insight into demotivating factors.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

This study found five demotivation factors for the students in their EFL learning: non-communicative methods, university facilities, test scores, course books and teachers' competence and teaching styles. From the five factors, non-communicative methods, university facilities, and test scores are factors behind their learning demotivation accounted for almost 80%. Meanwhile, the other 20% are shared between course book factor and teachers' competence and teaching style factor which provide moderate and minimal influences on the students' demotivation respectively.

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