

## **The Interplay of Selected Demotivation Determinants and Achievement in EFL Critical Reading and Writing**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the interrelatedness the English as a foreign language demotivation factors of learning difficulties, threats to self-worth, monotonous teaching, poor student-teacher relationships, and learners' proficiency in critical reading and writing. Eighty (n =80) EFL learners participated in the study. The rationale for the study assumes that demotivation to learn (EFL) is an issue in many international contexts and that there is at present a dearth of research into the interplay of the external, internal, and contextual determinants of demotivation and learners' EFL proficiency. Data were collected through administering a five-level strongly disagree – strongly agree Likert-type scale and the critical reading and writing scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Results revealed positive correlations between perceptions of threats to self-worth and learning difficulties and proficiency in critical reading and writing. Likewise, while monotonous teaching was negatively correlated with proficiency in critical reading, it correlated positively with learning difficulties and threats to self-worth. It was also found that poor student-teacher relationships were positively related to perceptions of learning difficulties, threats to self-worth, and to perceptions of learning difficulties. Implication for teaching and research are discussed.

### **Introduction**

Perhaps more than any other topic in second language (L2) research, motivation has been the subject of study for quite some time now and is likely to continue to be in the spotlight of future research (Lamb, 2017; Saito, Dewaele, Abe, & In'nami, 2018). Since Gardner (1985) proposed his socio-educational theory of motivation, numerous revisions of this theory were made (Dweck, & Leggett, 1988). In addition, a number of other theories were devised. Chief among these theories are the Weiner Attribution Theory (1986 ), The Self-Determination Theory (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991) the Social Constructivist Theory (Williams & Burden, 1997), the Process Model (Dörnyei & Otto, 1998) and, more recently, the Motivational Self System Theory (Dörnyei, 2005), and the emerging Complex and Dynamic Systems Approach (Dörnyei, Macintyre, & Henry, 2014). These theories and approach underscore the importance of motivation in L2 acquisition and learning. They also demonstrate the evolution of the motivation theory from its social psychological origins, to alignment with cognitive and educational psychology principles, and finally to focus on the contemporary twenty first

century “contextual and dynamic aspects of learner motivation.” (Boo, Dörnyei, & Ryan, 2015, p.146).

Furthermore, motivation has been acknowledged as a key component in the affective/humanistic theories and approaches to second/foreign language teaching and learning (Schunk, Meece, & Pintrich, 2014; Schunk & Usher, 2012). In fact, many second language (L2) theorists and practitioners view motivation “as a key factor in L2 learning” (Ellis, 1994, p. 508), and “one of the most important factors influencing success or failure in learning the language.” (McDonough, 1986, p. 142). Furthermore, there has recently been an “unprecedented surge in the number of publications relating to L2 motivation from 2005-2014” (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015, cited in Boo, Dörnyei, & Ryan, 2015, p.146), and the incline is likely to continue in the future.

However, although English is currently established as a global language with unprecedented vitality in the domains of international communication, education, and technology, learners’ “demotivation” to study English as a second/foreign (ESL/EFL) is presently an issue in many countries. Defined as the learner’s “reduced or diminished motivational basis for a behavioral attention or an ongoing action” (Dörnyei, 2001, p.143) demotivation is increasingly attracting the attention L2 researchers and practitioners . Unlike the “amotivation” construct which signifies absence of motivation, demotivation entails the initial presence of a certain level of motivation within the learner which has diminished due to the interaction of external environmental and learner internal factors that cause the learner to lose interest and stop exerting effort for learning. This is particularly the case in the context of (EFL) teaching and learning in which learners’ motivation/demotivation to learn English is regulated by various contextual pedagogical practices as well as integrative and instrumental considerations driven by the increasing vitality of English worldwide.

The question that many of the studies of the EFL demotivation phenomenon seem to have focused on thus far is “what factors contribute to EFL learners’ demotivation?” (Al Shareif, 2013, p. 54). This line of research has led to the identification of a number of external factors that are mainly concerned with teachers’ behavior, school facilities, and the learning difficulties involved in the foreign language (FL) being studied (Falout, Elwood, & Hood, 2009). Likewise, internal factors related to the learners’ levels of self-confidence, intrinsic motivation, and attitudes have also been underscored (Falout & Maruyama, 2004). Yet, the results of the extant research into the determinants of demotivation among EFL learners in various national and socio-linguistic and cultural contexts are at present inconclusive. Furthermore, there is a dearth of research regarding the interplay among the demotivating factors identified in the literature and their effect on the EFL learners’ reading and writing proficiency, in particular, and language proficiency, more generally.

Consequently, the present study set to investigate the degree of interrelatedness among two external factors (monotonous teaching and poor student-teacher relationships), one internal factor (threat to self-worth), and one language-based demotivating factor (language learning difficulties) as identified in the most salient factors in the literature. In addition, we investigated the possible role of these factors in the reading and writing proficiency of EFL learners. Specifically, the study examined the relationship between the factors under study and learners’ proficiency in critical reading and writing proficiency. The rationale behind the selection of these factors is based on the proposition that they are the most prominent and widely-

recognized determinants of demotivation across various linguistic and socio-cultural EFL national contexts. In addition, the study investigated whether the high EFL proficient critical readers and writers differ in their perceptions of the demotivation factors under investigation. A basic premise behind the study is that there is at present a need for investigating the role of demotivation in EFL proficiency.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theories of L2 Motivation**

Gardner's socio educational model of motivation originally underscored the importance of motivation and the social milieu in the development of language acquisition along with aptitude. Specifically, Gardner maintained that social context drives people to learn a second language and thereby influence their attitude and motivation to learn another culturally distinct language. Consequently, it is important to consider the social, contextual, and pragmatic reasons that drive people to learn a second language instead of simply regarding aptitude as the only factor in L2 acquisition. Later on, Gardner, explicated the factors that affect motivation stemming from the social context and labeled them as external factors. These factors are captured and measured by the Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and include integrativeness, attitude toward the learning situation, motivation, and language anxiety (Gardner, 2004). Similarly, Clément and his associates investigated the importance of social contextual factors in L2 acquisition. Of these social contextual factors, Dörnyei (2005) argued that linguistic self-confidence is an important factor in L2 motivation.

Conversely, Deci and Ryan (1991) proposed the Self-Determination Theory of motivation which underscores how the learners' cognitive processes influence their motivation. Specifically, this theory focuses on the two types of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation or lack of motivation (amotivation) based on a continuum of self-determination. Similarly, Ushioda (1998; 2001) espoused the Attribution Theory of Motivation. This theory contends that learners' past successes or failures play a critical role in their motivation. Ushioda identified two attributional patterns associated with positive motivational outcomes in language learning. The first involves attributing one's successes in learning the language to personal factors, while the second involves attributing one's failures to temporary forces which may be overcome. This view is in harmony with the Social Constructivist Theory of Williams and Burden (1997). These theorists maintain that learners construct their own sense of the world as a result of their cognitive processing and the context in which they learn. As such, motivation is determined by the interaction of a number of internal and external factors including the learners, their teachers, the task, and the context of learning.

More recently, Dörnyei and Ottó (1998) developed a process model of L2 learning consisting of the pre-actional, actional, and post-actional stage. These stages span setting goals, sustaining motivation, and finally self-reflection on outcomes. Later on, Dörnyei (2005) proposed the motivational self-system of L2 learning. This system has the three components of the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience. It promotes motivation by inspiring the present self to become the ideal self, which promotes integrative and internalized instrumental motivation in language learning. Meanwhile, the ought-to L2 self includes the attributions a person believes they should have in order to meet expectations or avoid negative outcomes and

is associated with extrinsic motivational orientations. Finally, the L2 learning experience component includes the contextual environmental aspects as well one's learning experience.

### **Demotivation Factors**

The impetus of demotivation research seems to be attributed to the domain of instructional communication (Mahbudi & Hosseini, 2014). Numerous studies have investigated demotivation in university lectures on various subjects both in North American universities (e.g., Gorham & Christophel, 1992) as well as in China, Germany, Japan and the United States of America (e.g., Zhang, 2007). The Gorham and Christophel, (1992) study identified teacher behavior and its related factors (not knowledgeable, unenthusiastic teaching, not in control of classroom, no sense of humor, low credibility, loss of temper, etc.) to be at the top of the list of the demotivating factors, followed by classroom structure-related factors (physical classroom atmosphere and dissatisfaction with grading) as well as factors that are out of the teacher's control such as time of the day and the length of class. These findings were corroborated by those of Zhang (2007) who reported, based on empirical evidence from the four countries under study, that teachers' boring lectures, unfair testing practices, and information overload are the main factors in learners' demotivation.

In the context of second/foreign language teaching and learning, Falout, Elwood, and Hood, (2009) reported that many second language researchers have identified the attributions of demotivation specific to L2 learning across many countries. These countries include: Japan (Falout & Flout, 2005), Hungary (Dörnyei, 1998), and Vietnam (Trang & Baaldauf, 2007) as well as learning French in Ireland (Ushioda, 1998, 2001). Falout, Elwood, and Hood, (2009) concluded that the research findings across these contexts are remarkably similar where external factors most often influence the internal learner conditions and lead to demotivation.

However, "researchers do not all agree that demotivation is solely external." (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009, p. 58). Rather, the learner internal factors of lack of self-confidence and negative attitudes towards foreign language learning may also diminish motivation (e.g., Arai, 2004; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Kojima, 2004, Tsuchiya, 2006). The extant EFL demotivation research has also underscored the role of the language learning difficulties faced by EFL learners as they acquire the syntactic and semantic systems of a language other their own as the diminishing factors of motivation (e.g., Author, 2008; Ganschow & Sparks, 1986; Keblawi, 2005; Qashoa; 2006).

### **External Factors**

Monotonous teaching seems to emerge as the top-ranking external attribution of demotivation among foreign language learners across various national contexts. For instance, Arai (2004), Gorsuch (2000), O'Donnel, (2005) and Taguchi (2005) all attribute the demotivation of EFL learners in Japan to the dominance of the monotonous grammar translation pedagogy which emphasizes vocabulary memorization and limits class activities and practice. Similarly, Hasegawa (2004) maintains, based on qualitative data, that Japanese EFL learners consider their negative experiences with teachers to be the most demotivating factor, a finding that was also endorsed by Trang and Baldauf, Jr. (2007) who suggested that the teaching methods of teachers who emphasize memorization are the main source of demotivation for the Vietnamese learners of English. These findings furthermore corroborate the contentions of Dörnyei (1998) who reported that the teacher's personality, commitment, competence, and testing methods are the most important demotivating determinants among Hungarian secondary school students studying either English or German as a foreign language. The findings are also in agreement with those of Jomairi (2011), Tabatabaei and Molavi (2012), Li and Zhou (2017) who

concluded that the external factors of teaching methods, materials, and teacher's competence and attitude are the major causes of demotivation respectively among undergraduate Iranian students and Chinese university EFL learners. Along similar lines, Baba Khouya (2018) reported that the crowded classrooms and the learning environment are the main demotivating factors Moroccan English language learners.

Along similar lines, the affective qualities of the teacher – learner relationships have been proven to be an important variable associated with effective social functionality, behavior problems, achievement, and motivation for learning (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt & Oort, 2011). Based a recent meta-analysis of 99 carefully-selected studies on the teacher-student relationships (TSR's) and students' achievement and engagement, these researchers concluded that TSR's are "significantly associated with" --- "engagement in learning activities" (493).

### **Internal Factors**

Learners' self-esteem and its related corollaries of self-concept, self-confidence, and self-worth are recognized as crucial factors that affect learners' achievement and motivation. This is especially the case in the context of second/foreign language learning where the learner's self-concept is probably challenged by performance in a language other than his/her own, which may lead to heightened self-consciousness and fear as suggested by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Kope (1986). This affects the learner's evaluative attitude about himself/herself and thereby may negatively impact accomplishments and motivation for learning.

In the context of EFL teaching and learning, numerous studies have established a possible positive link between learners' feelings of self-worth and their performance (e.g., DeFraine, Van Damme, & Ongheda, 2007; Koosha, Ketabi, & Kassaian, 2011; Liu, 2008). These researchers, among others, maintain that EFL learners with higher sense of self-worth outperform their counterparts who feel less confident to communicate in the target language and are demotivated to participate in class activities (Fatemi & Vahidnia, 2013). Likewise, Rudnai (1996) reported, based on a series of interviews with unmotivated secondary and vocational school students, that the learners' lack of self-confidence is the most prominent factor in demotivation, followed by factors related to the learning situation and teachers' lack of skills, and finally learning in a stressed environment. Along similar, lines Falout and Maruyama (2004) underscored the role of the learners' lack of self-confidence as the top demotivating factor among English language learners.

### **Language Learning Difficulties**

Ganschow and Sparks (1986) identified difficulties with phonological, syntactic, and semantic coding as learning difficulties which negatively affects the motivation of second language learners. These researchers maintained that language-based difficulties, particularly phonological and syntactic aspects, lead to low motivation and anxiety among L2 learners (Sparks & Ganschow, 1991). The extant demotivation research, particularly in the context of the present to study, seems to suggest that language-based difficulties do affect learners' motivation. For instance, Qashoa (2006) concluded that difficulties with the English language aspects such as vocabulary, structure, and spelling are the most demotivating factors among Arab EFL learners. Along similar lines, Author (2008) emphasized the role of using interesting and reader-friendly material as the most important motivator for Saudi EFL college-bound learners. Similarly, Keblawi (2005) considers difficulties with English grammar and vocabulary to be the most demotivating factors for Arab EFL learners.

The preceding review of the extant demotivation research suggests that conclusions regarding whether external (teacher-related), internal (learner-related), or language-based factors determine demotivation for ESL/EFL study are presently less than perspicacious, context-situated, and are more likely to emerge in an interrelated manner.

## Research Questions

The present study addressed the following questions:

1. To what extents are the determinants of demotivation (learning difficulties, threats to self-worth, monotonous teaching, poor teacher-student relationship,) internally related?
2. To what extent are the determinants of demotivation (learning difficulties, threats to self-worth, monotonous teaching, poor teacher-student relationship) related to EFL critical reading and writing proficiency?
3. Are there statistically significant differences between high and low proficient EFL critical readers in terms of their perceptions of the demotivation factors under study?
4. Are there statistically significant differences between high and low proficient EFL writers in term of their perceptions of the demotivation factors under study?

The first question was motivated by the results of the literature review presented above and yielded inconclusive results regarding the interplay among the demotivation factors for EFL study. In addition, we wanted to investigate empirically the role of the demotivation factors in EFL critical reading and writing proficiency as well as study the effect of proficiency (high versus low) on the perception of the demotivation factors.

## Materials and Methods

**Participants** Eighty college-bound students ( $n = 80$ ) enrolled in the university preparatory program of a Middle Eastern University participated in the study. These participants have studied EFL during their primary, intermediate, and secondary schooling for about 12 years. However, they still needed remedial English in order to pursue their college education at an English medium university. The intended college major of the participants included engineering, medicine, agriculture, business administration, humanities, and social sciences to be taught in English. There were 59 females (68.6%), 21 males (24.4%) and 6 participants with missing gender data (7%). The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 23 years. The native language of the participants is Arabic, and they are all considered academically strong but needed to improve their English language and general academic literacy skills in order to function well in all-English curricula and succeed in their respective fields of specialization.

**Materials** The participants' sense of demotivation was measured by a five-level strongly disagree – strongly agree Likert-type questionnaire adapted for the purpose of the present study (See appendix A). Specifically, we selected 22 items from the original 35-item demotivation questionnaire developed by Chang & Cho (2003). These selected items constituted four subscales pertaining to language learning difficulties (8 items,  $\alpha = .75$ ), threats to self-worth (4 items,  $\alpha = .58$ ), monotonous teaching (4 items,  $\alpha = .60$ ), poor teacher-student relationship (6 items,  $\alpha = .69$ ). The internal consistency alpha reliability values of the subscales were computed based on data from the present study. The questionnaire was piloted and administered in English as there was no need to translate it into Arabic, the native language of the participants in order to facilitate comprehension.

In addition, the critical reading and writing variables under study were assessed by a retired version of the scholastic aptitude test (SAT, 2015). The critical reading section of the SAT test used in the present study lasted for 65 minutes and was comprised of a total of 52 multiple choice questions designed to assess students' comprehension of four passages of 500-750 words with graphs and tables, in addition to a set of paired passages designed to assess students' abilities to answer comparison-contrast questions. The passages presented information on various topics. The length of the test was determined based on the Princeton SAT Guidelines and students were not given extended time to complete the test. The test questions assessed the students' abilities to determine the purpose, supporting details, make inference, and guess meaning of words from context as well as determine the function of language structures, author's techniques, evidence support, and data interpretation.

The writing section lasted for 35 minutes and included 44 multiple choice questions based on four passages designed to test students' editorial skills. The length of the test was determined based on the Princeton SAT Guidelines and students were not given extended time to complete the test. The passages included errors in punctuation, word choice, sentence structure, and parts of speech which the students were supposed to fix by making the correct choices from a series of 4 multiple choice options. The exam questions focused on assessing students' abilities to strengthen a passage by adding a supporting detail, an introductory sentence, or a conclusion in order to make the passage more impactful. In addition, other questions focused on word replacement in context, expression of ideas, standard English conventions, and data interpretation.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The researcher obtained the consent of the participants as well as the approval of the program administrators and implementers to administer the questionnaire and to collect, analyze, and report data according to the established institutional research board (IRB) policies and guidelines. Participants agreed to participate in the study on a voluntary basis and were assured that responses should be honest, will remain anonymous, and will be used for research purposes only. The researcher read the questionnaire items aloud to the participants who then recorded their responses by indicating their level of agreement with the statements after making sure that they have understood all items.

A composite score for each of the variables of learning difficulties, threats to self-worth, monotonous teaching, and poor teacher relationships were computed by adding the responses of each respondent on the sub-scale items that measure the variables. Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficients were then computed among the variables and the critical reading and writing scores of the participants in order to determine the degree interrelatedness among the determinants of demotivation and learners' achievement in critical EFL reading and writing. In addition, we conducted two Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) tests in order to address the questions regarding whether learners' levels of achievement in critical reading and writing proficiency (high versus low) discriminate or do not discriminate among the participants in terms of their demotivation scores on the variables under study. The participants' levels of high and low critical reading and writing proficiency were determined based on the median split score of 480 in reading and 410 in writing and used as independent variables in the MANOVA analyses whereas the demotivation scores on the sub-scales were used as dependent variables.

## **Results**

The alpha level of 0.05 was set as the minimum level indicator of statistically significant difference in all the tests run to address the study questions. The subsequent sections present the results of the correlational and MANOVA analyses. The correlational analysis is intended to determine the degree of interplay among the demotivation factors and EFL proficiency in critical reading and writing. Meanwhile, the MANOVA analysis was conducted to determine if the high EFL achievers differ from their low achieving counterparts in their perception of the demotivation factors under study.

**Correlational Analysis** The results of the correlational analysis are reported in Table 1 and reveal the following aspects of interest:

**Table 1**

**Correlations of Demotivation Variables and Critical Reading and Writing (N = 80)**

| Variables                    | 1     | 2    | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6 |
|------------------------------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|---|
| 1. Critical Reading          | -     |      |       |       |       |   |
| 2. Writing                   | .30** |      |       |       |       |   |
| 3. Learning Difficulties     | -.06  | .04  |       |       |       |   |
| 4. Threats to Self-Worth     | -.20  | -.15 | .34** |       |       |   |
| 5. Monotonous teaching       | -.26* | -.15 | .27*  | .26*  |       |   |
| 6. Poor Teacher Relationship | .01   | .04  | .24*  | .51** | .33** | - |
| *P<.05 **P<.01               |       |      |       |       |       |   |

First there is high positive correlation between proficiency in critical reading and writing proficiency ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ). Second, proficiency in critical reading is negatively correlated with monotonous teaching ( $r = -.26, p < .05$ ). Third, EFL learners' perceptions of learning difficulties is positively correlated with threats to self-worth ( $r = .34, p < .01$ ), with monotonous teaching ( $r = .27, p < .05$ ) and with poor teacher relationship ( $r = .24, p < .05$ ). Fourth, perceptions of threats to self-worth positively correlated with monotonous teaching ( $r = .26, p < .05$ ) and with poor teacher relationship ( $r = .51, p < .01$ ). Finally, monotonous teaching correlated positively with poor teacher relationship ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ).

**MANOVA Analysis** Table 2 below presents descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and F values of the perceptions of the demotivation factors by the levels of critical reading proficiency (High versus Low).



**Table 2**

**Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and F values of the perceptions of the demotivation factors by the level of critical reading proficiency (High versus Low)**

| Variable                  | High  |      | Low   |      | df | F    | P    |
|---------------------------|-------|------|-------|------|----|------|------|
|                           | M     | SD   | M     | SD   |    |      |      |
| Learning Difficulties     | 18.32 | 5.76 | 20.18 | 3.85 | 67 | 3.74 | .05* |
| Threats to Self-Worth     | 7.50  | 2.96 | 8.80  | 2.62 | 69 | 1.31 | .25  |
| Monotonous Teaching       | 14.33 | 2.74 | 14.44 | 2.74 | 72 | .00  | .96  |
| Poor Teacher Relationship | 21.88 | 2.66 | 21.38 | 3.48 | 72 | 2.52 | .11  |

\* P = .05

The MANOVA results showed a statistically significant difference between the high proficient and the low proficient participants in critical reading  $F(5, 67) = 3.74, p = .05$  on the demotivation variable of learning difficulties. The mean score and standard deviation of the high and low achieving participants were 18.32 (SD 5.76) and 20.18 (SD 3.85), respectively. This suggests that the high achieving critical readers felt less learning difficulties than their low achieving counterparts. However, there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups of achievers in critical reading on the remaining demotivation variables of threats to self-worth, monotonous teaching, and poor teacher relationships.

Table 3 below presents descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and F values of the perceptions of the demotivation factors by the levels of writing proficiency (High versus Low).

**Table 3**

**Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and F values of the perceptions of the demotivation factors by the level of writing proficiency (High versus Low)**

| Variable                  | High  |      | Low   |      | df | F   | P   |
|---------------------------|-------|------|-------|------|----|-----|-----|
|                           | M     | SD   | M     | SD   |    |     |     |
| Learning Difficulties     | 19.50 | 5.00 | 19.51 | 4.45 | 67 | .28 | .59 |
| Threats to Self-Worth     | 7.93  | 2.62 | 8.65  | 2.95 | 69 | .13 | .71 |
| Monotonous Teaching       | 14.26 | 2.90 | 14.52 | 2.59 | 72 | .45 | .50 |
| Poor Teacher Relationship | 21.58 | 3.26 | 21.55 | 3.17 | 72 | .03 | .84 |

The results of the MANOVA on the demotivation variables by levels of writing proficiency (high versus low) did not show significant differences between the two groups of learners on the demotivation variables under investigation.

## Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the degree of interrelatedness among a number of external, internal, and language-dependent demotivation factors in learning EFL as well as examine the role of these factors in critical reading and writing proficiency. The obtained results support a number of hypotheses and propositions regarding EFL teaching and learning,

in general, and the possible causes of demotivation among learners in particular. First, the results support a widely-accepted view in EFL teaching and learning that the learning difficulties faced by learners negatively affects their self-concepts and may have undesired effects on their perceptions of self-worth and motivation to persist and to exert efforts in learning a second language. This calls for utilizing developmentally-appropriate teaching practices to motivate learners and thereby avoid frustrating them with difficult tasks and reading texts that may be at the frustration reading level beyond their linguistic and cognitive levels or include unfamiliar concepts and culturally-distant materials. Frustration with learning due perceived task difficulties can lead to behavior problems, low self-esteem, and poor self-concepts. Consequently, it is recommended that teachers involve learners in developmentally-appropriate practices as well as remedial programs to support learning and boost achievement and motivation.

Second, monotonous teaching was found in the present study to be negatively correlated with critical reading achievement, which underscores the importance of effective teaching in boosting learner's achievement. This is especially so given that monotonous teaching also correlated positively with learning difficulties and threats to learners' self-worth. That is, the more the learners perceived that the teaching style of their teacher to be monotonous, the more they felt that learning is rather difficult and that they do not see themselves efficacious and confident in their abilities to surmount the learning difficulties that face them. Likewise, we found that the quality of the teacher's relationship with learners to be also related to learners' perceptions of learning difficulties and feelings of threats to their self-worth. In this regard, it is important for teachers to provide the requisite personal and academic support to ensure an effective EFL learning environment conducive to learning and achievement.

The findings of the present study concerning the external demotivating factor of monotonous teaching are in agreement with those of Dörnyei (1998), Hasegawa (2004), Jomairi (2011), Tabatabaei and Molavi (2012), and Trang and Baldauf, Jr. (2007) who reported, based on empirical evidence from various international contexts, that teacher's personality, commitment, competence, and improper teaching and testing methods are the most important demotivating determinants among foreign language learners. The results are also in agreement with those of Author (2008) who emphasized the role of developmentally-appropriate teaching practices and the use of interesting and reader-friendly material as the most important motivators among Saudi EFL college-bound learners. As such, the results of present study further validate and support a growing international and cross-cultural trend in EFL demotivation research that teachers' qualifications and abilities to engage learners in EFL learning play a major role across various linguistic and cultural contexts.

Third, the results of the MANOVA results showed a significant difference between high and low critical reading achievers in their perceptions of leaning difficulties in reading materials unfamiliar or at the frustration reading level. However, the results did not show any further statistically- significant differences in the perception of the demotivation factors under study between the high and low reading and writing achievers. These findings contradict those of Tsuchiya (2006) who reported that learners' level of proficiency (high versus low) discriminates among EFL learners on a number of demotivation factors. This suggests that EFL proficiency is impacted by a range of reader-related, context-specific, and task- particular factors that warrant further research in various linguistic and cross-cultural contexts. Of particular importance in this regard would conducting mixed-methods and qualitative studies situated in the socio-cultural classroom contexts in order to describe the complexities of the emergence and development of EFL proficiency effective dispositions.

## Conclusion

The present study has shed some light on the interplay among the demotivation factors and the critical reading and writing proficiency levels of EFL college-bound learners. The study implications suggest that several external, internal, and context-specific factors may interact together to impact learners' motivation to persist and make efforts in order to acquire the target language of English. Chief among these factors is monotonous teaching given that it correlated positively with the other demotivating factors of learning difficulties, threats to self-worth, and poor student-teacher relationships. Furthermore, monotonous teaching correlated negatively with learners' proficiency in critical reading. Consequently, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders should encourage meaningful learning, promote the use of diversified teaching methods, and avoid monotonous teaching and memorizations of grammar rules and vocabulary in order to engage learners and increase their motivation. Of particular relevance in this regard would be experimenting with and employing the teaching techniques proposed in the motivation strategies (MotS) taxonomy (Dörnyei, 2001) in order to boost learners' motivation. These techniques are intended to create basic motivation conditions, generate initial motivation, maintain and protect motivation, and encourage positive retrospective self-evaluation. Examples of the techniques include taking learners seriously, caring for learners, increasing expectancy, explain the purpose and utility of tasks, making the assessment system transparent, and using grades in a motivational manner. It is also important to utilize student-centered teaching method such as the concrete and conceptual cooperative learning methods (Ghaith, 2018). These include the structural approach (Kagan, 1985), the Learning Together (Johnson & Johnson, 1999), Student Team Learning (Slavin, 1995), and Group Investigation (Sharan & Sharan, 1992).

Likewise, it is important to embrace the efforts of learners and to boost their feelings of self-worth through the provision of personal and academic support building positive teacher relationships in a stressed-reduced environment of mutual respect and appreciation.

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## Appendix A

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M F

First Foreign Language: English French Other:

Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements listed below according to the following scale:

1. Strongly Disagree (SD)
2. Disagree (D)
3. Undecided (U)
4. Agree (A)
5. Strongly Agree (SA)

|    | <b>Learning Difficulties</b>  | <b>SD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>U</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>SA</b> |
|----|---|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1  | Bad at memorizing vocabulary  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 2  | Confused by English grammar   | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 3  | English writing is hard for me  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 4  | English phonetic is hard for me   | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 5  | Confused by English pronunciation   | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 6  | Poor listening comprehension  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 7  | Having problems in comprehending sentences  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 8  | Having problems in reading comprehension  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
|    | <b>Threats to Self-worth</b>  | <b>SD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>U</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>SA</b> |
| 9  | Practicing pronunciation in front of my classmates is embarrassing because I might be made fun of by them   | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 10 | When compared with my siblings by my parent, I feel irritated   | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 11 | I feel that my teachers only like those who earn good grades in tests. If I don't, I'll be looked down upon | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 12 | I was mocked by my classmates when I fail my tests  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
|    | <b>Monotonous Teaching</b>  | <b>SD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>U</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>SA</b> |
| 13 | Boring lecturing  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 14 | Repetition of listening practice  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 15 | Cramming and reciting vocabulary and sentence patterns  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 16 | Fast lecturing, leaving no time to catch up   | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
|    | <b>Poor Teacher-student Relationship</b>  | <b>SD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>U</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>SA</b> |
| 17 | Teacher's impatience terrifies me   | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 18 | Teachers humiliation on low achievers terrifies me  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 19 | Disagree with teacher's ' attitude in teaching  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 20 | Only high achievers gain teachers' appraisal  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 21 | Teachers mocking and scolding my poor performance irritates me  | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |
| 22 | Teachers are easy to become emotional   | 1         | 2        | 3        | 4        | 5         |

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