

## **English Learning Demotivation Studies in the EFL Contexts: State of the Art**

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This paper reviews the studies conducted on English learning demotivation in the EFL contexts. Demotivation research in the EFL contexts is significant given the learners' less opportunities to use the target language outside school and consequent difficulties in maintaining their interest in learning it. In order to look into how this issue of demotivation has been addressed, the previous EFL demotivation studies are analyzed based on (a) their research methods and (b) perspectives on the definition of demotivation. The research methods adopted by the previous research include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. In terms of different underlying assumptions on what English learning demotivation refers to, on the one hand, some studies were conducted by adopting cross-sectional research design considering demotivation to be a novel and distinctive construct. On the other hand, other studies focused on decrease in motivational constructs as the process of demotivation, which took a form of quasi-longitudinal analysis. By delving into similar and unique findings from respective research methods and the two different perspectives on demotivation, this paper suggests an alternative approach to demotivation of looking into the process of how learners' idiosyncratic experience relates to English learning motivation and how their demotivation changes and interacts with their environments. For this purpose, it would be worthwhile to conduct longitudinal research to better trace and capture the process of the changes.

**[English Learning Demotivation/Research Methods/Cross-Sectional Research/  
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## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper critically analyzes previous studies on English learning demotivation in English as a foreign language (EFL) context. The concept of demotivation is a relatively new one that has recently started to be investigated in the field of second language (L2) learning motivation. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), demotivated learners are those who were once motivated but have lost their commitment and interest in L2 learning for some external reasons, and therefore demotivation “concerns various negative influences that cancel out existing motivation” (p. 138). Since the late 90s, L2 researchers have begun to conduct studies on demotivation, seeking to find negative factors affecting motivation of L2 learners. From an in-depth search for previous studies on L2 learning demotivation in databases such as Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Google Scholar, the majority of studies were found to have recently been undertaken in the EFL contexts. As a matter of fact, all of the studies found focused on English learners in the EFL countries except for a study by Ushioda (1998) on Irish learners of French. This shows that the phenomenon of demotivation as well as English learning is increasingly significant for EFL learners. Considering learning environments of EFL learning, English is taught as a major school subject and the learners rarely have chances to communicate in the target language outside of school. Even though English is considered as an international language, in this circumstance they are likely to lose interest in, or purpose for learning English.

Falout, Elwood and Hood (2009) stated that regarding the learning of EFL, demotivated learners are a recurring topic in academic conferences and teachers’ rooms across Japan. In the Korean context, it has also been pointed out that students’ demotivation exhibits a steadily increasing pattern (T. Y. Kim, 2012a). Given this, this review paper aims to examine EFL demotivation studies in order to better understand how the issue of demotivation has been dealt with in the contexts of EFL learning. By analyzing findings, insights, and even contradictions from the previous studies, we expect to find out what exactly English learning demotivation is and how we should approach it. That is, we will suggest definition and research focus and method for demotivation. This would ultimately help practitioners in English education in Korea develop ways to prevent and deal with the factors negatively affecting students’ successful English learning.

The reviewing criteria are on two foci: one is research methods and the other is perspectives regarding the definition of English learning demotivation. The first focus was established in order to discover how different research methods (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods) have allowed researchers to find different insights in terms of English learning demotivation. However, it was also the case that the studies with different research methods have revealed similar patterns of findings. This aspect seemed

to have been derived from the two types of different assumptions as to what is considered to be demotivation. For some researchers, demotivation has been regarded as a distinctive construct which is clearly different from motivational constructs (e.g., Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009; Tuan, 2011). Other researchers have treated decrease in motivation as demotivation (e.g., Hamada, 2008; T. Y. Kim, 2011, 2012a). Reflecting on these different perspectives would provide opportunities to consider appropriate approaches to English learning demotivation.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODS IN DEMOTIVATION STUDIES**

As the first step to explore how English learning demotivation has been dealt with in the EFL contexts, this section reviews the previous studies by classifying them into those using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. This classification would provide in what way similar findings regarding English learning demotivation were drawn from the studies with different research methods as well as what distinctive aspects of demotivation emerged from each of the research methods. Among the three research methods, quantitative research methods such as questionnaire surveys have been more dominant to investigate English learning demotivation than qualitative or mixed methods. Because the issue of demotivation is relatively new, it seems that researchers have intended to include a wider number of participants and acquire as many responses as possible to look into general characteristics of demotivation. This intention may contribute to why a questionnaire survey method has mostly been used in demotivation studies thus far.

### **1. The Use of Quantitative Research Methods in Demotivation Studies**

The questionnaire survey which comprises Likert-type questions is a typical instrument of quantitative research method (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012), and has been employed in the majority of English learning demotivation research. A representative example is Falout et al.'s (2009) study. They utilized a closed-item questionnaire in order to examine demotivating factors for secondary school students, requesting 900 Japanese university students to reflect on their past demotivation experiences. From the 52 questionnaire items, nine factors on demotivation were extracted and classified into three external demotivating factors (i.e., teacher immediacy, grammar-translation, and course level), three internal demotivating factors (i.e., self-denigration, value, self-confidence), and three reactive factors to demotivation (i.e., help-seeking, enjoyment-seeking, and avoidance). Moreover, as for the relationship of demotivational items with English proficiency, the researchers

found that among the internal demotivating factors, self-confidence positively affected learning outcomes, while self-denigration had a negative influence. Among the reactive factors to demotivation, enjoyment-seeking contributed positively to learning outcomes, and help-seeking contributed negatively. The external demotivating factors did not exhibit a significant influence on English proficiency. Also, it was determined that beginning level, less-proficient, non-English-majoring learners were least likely to engage in enjoyment-seeking and thus more likely to fall into demotivation.

Similar to Falout et al.'s (2009) study, several studies regarding EFL demotivation have adopted a questionnaire method consisting of Likert type questions, with the aim of determining demotivating factors and comparing the factors between different groups of students (Ghadirzadeh, Hashtroudi & Shokri, 2012; K. J. Kim, 2009a, 2009b; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). All of these studies extracted factors commonly related to teachers' competence and teaching styles, difficult learning contents, lack of (intrinsic) motivation and interest, inadequate school facilities, and English tests.

Among the extracted demotivating factors, differences were found between more and less motivated students (Ghadirzadeh et al., 2012; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009), junior high and high school students (K. J. Kim, 2009a), and learners having low English proficiency and those having high proficiency (K. J. Kim, 2009b). In another type of comparative studies, demotivating factors were pre-classified based on previous research and compared between learners having lower proficiency and higher proficiency (Falout & Maruyama, 2004) and between demotivated and motivated students (Tuan, 2011). The findings indicated that less motivated learners, high school students, and students with lower proficiency perceived a wider range of demotivating factors.

Pre-classified demotivating factors have also been used for looking into which factors students find more demotivating (Alavinia & Sehat, 2012; Hamada, 2008; Warrington & Jeffrey, 2005). Based on a close-ended questionnaire survey, Warrington and Jeffrey conducted research on 188 Japanese university students' EFL demotivation by requiring the participants to choose five out of fifteen factors that are and were possibly demotivating to their EFL learning. According to frequency of each factor, the researchers divided the results into significant or insignificant factors. Similarly, Alavinia and Sehat (2012) used a questionnaire containing the items pre-arranged into nine factors. The survey was administered to 165 Iranian high school students, asking how much influence the factors had on their English learning ranging from little to great effect. The frequencies of each category (i.e., little, moderate, or great effect) of nine factors were presented, and the factors having larger percentages in the category of great effect were simultaneous learning of other languages (44.2%), learners' cumulative experience of failure (24.2%), negative learning environment (17.6%), and learners' lack of success (12.1%). Hamada's (2008) study consists of two different studies, among which the investigation of 44 high school

learners employed a 26-item close-ended questionnaire asking about the extent of demotivation by five pre-set factors. In his study, it was found that course book was the strongest demotivator, while teacher's competence and teaching style was a weaker demotivator than the others. Besides, the same questionnaire was administered to the same students in about three months. Even though it is noteworthy that the study attempted to observe how learners' state of demotivation changed over time, no significant change in learners' demotivation was confirmed.

What seems to be insufficient in the studies focusing on finding demotivating factors is that the researchers failed to address different process of demotivation for individual learners. The studies seem to demonstrate that all individual learners perceive the extracted factors to be demotivating to similar extents. However, it would be the case that the learners' experience with different demotivating factors is different in terms of degrees and qualities. Comparison of the factors between different groups has been carried out, but it still may not be the way of dealing with individual differences in demotivation.

T. Y. Kim's (2011) and S. K. Jung's (2011) studies investigated changes in English learning motivation, not in demotivation. The purpose of those studies was to address demotivation by looking at a decrease in motivation. S. K. Jung's study adopted a close-ended questionnaire to investigate 125 Korean university students' demotivating factors and remotivating factors in past English learning experience, and also included a graph upon which the participants expressed their motivational changes from elementary school to university. The average pattern of their EFL motivation indicated that students generally displayed positive motivation until Grade 2 in middle school and their motivation consistently decreased in high school before beginning to rise from the starting year of university. Concerning the major demotivating and remotivating factors, they were identified based on four categories: external, internal, learning situation (classroom or outside classroom), and learner. Also, T. Y. Kim examined 6,301 Korean elementary school students' motivational strengths from Grades 3 to 6. The study also explored the effects of the elementary school students' prior experience in private instruction on their motivation, expectation, and satisfaction. Given the participants' age, attention span, and level of cognitive development, he utilized a small number of items with a smaller range of Likert scale, that is, a 12-item questionnaire with a three-point Likert scale. The study results revealed that even though experience in private instruction allowed students to place significantly higher weight on the importance of EFL learning than those without, the participating elementary school students were increasingly dissatisfied with both public and private English education and their English learning motivation consistently decreased.

Hasegawa (2004) attempted to address motivation and demotivation together with a questionnaire including one true-false item (yes or no), one open-ended question, and two five-point Likert-scale questions followed by two open-ended questions. The true-false

item asked 125 Japanese junior high school students and 98 high school students if they sometimes lose interest in studying in their English classes. Following the question, for those who chose “Yes” an open-ended question requested a precise description of when and in what situation they lost interest in studying English. The two Likert-scale questions aimed at asking about how much the students liked English and how good their EFL achievement was. The two open-ended questions asked them to write anything they liked and disliked in their English classes. From the responses to the above questions, it was indicated that the number of students exhibiting positive attitudes toward English was much greater in junior high school than high school. As for English test scores, as expected, the more the participants did not like English, the lower the scores were. Besides, teacher-related issues were most frequently mentioned as demotivating factors.

The studies by Hu (2011) and Rastegar, Akbarzadeh and Heidari (2012) related EFL demotivation with another learning variable such as English proficiency and learning anxiety respectively. Hu employed a questionnaire with 35 items pre-classified into 11 demotivating factors to investigate the relationship between demotivation and English proficiency of 467 Taiwanese university students. The demotivating factor arising from difficulties in learning English (e.g., having difficulties in memorizing vocabulary, in learning English grammar, writing, phonetic, and pronunciation, and in listening and reading comprehension) proved to have the most detrimental impact on the learners’ English language proficiency. Also, in order to find the interrelationships between demotivation, test anxiety (TA), and foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA), Rastegar et al. conducted research with 100 Iranian university students. Based on close-ended questions, it was revealed that there were significantly positive correlations between demotivation and TA, between demotivation and FLCA, and between TA and FLCA.

To sum up, quantitative research methods, especially questionnaire surveys have been employed to determine what English learning demotivating factors are and to find out the most detrimental factors among the extracted factors or pre-arranged factors. Such research has also paid attention to differences in demotivating factors between different groups of English learners. There have been the studies focusing on negative changes in motivation to detect demotivational tendency. The relation of demotivation to another variable was examined including English proficiency and learning anxiety. As we can recognize, demotivating factors have drawn the most attention in the majority of the quantitative research.

However, among the identified factors in previous studies, it would be questioned if the factor of lack of motivation can be seen as one of the demotivating factors (e.g., Ghadirzadeh et al., 2012; K. J. Kim, 2009a, 2009b; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). Lack of motivation seems to be the state of demotivation per se, rather than the reason leading to demotivation. The items in this factor indicated that learners lost their goals or purposes of,

and interest in learning English. It may be suggested that the factor is renamed by using another term such as uncertain goals and low interest, but still absence of interest seems to indicate the state, not the cause of demotivation. Moreover, a comparison of different groups of learners in demotivating factors indicated that demotivated, or less motivated learners (e.g., Ghadirzadeh et al., 2012; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Tuan, 2011) and students having lower proficiency (e.g., Falout & Maruyama, 2004; K. J. Kim, 2009b) found a wider range of demotivating factors. In terms of these findings, we may reconsider the causal relationship. It is possible that as a result of demotivation, learners become low-proficient, rather than only saying that those with lower proficiency are more likely to become demotivated. Also, it is unclear that demotivated, or less-motivated students become sensitive to demotivating factors more, or because of perceiving a wider range of demotivating factors they become more demotivated. Those aspects described above seem to be the limitations of the quantitative studies focusing on demotivating factors.

## 2. The Use of Qualitative Research Methods in Demotivation Studies

Qualitative research methods involving textual data elicited from interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and essays have been less frequently used than quantitative methods as illustrated earlier. Although used less than quantitative methods, qualitative research methods allowed students to express what demotivates them in their own words in spoken or written language. For example, employing both an open-ended questionnaire and interviews as qualitative data collection methods, Kikuchi (2009) encouraged Japanese university students to express their past experience in EFL learning to find out demotivating factors for secondary school students. Specifically, five Japanese university students were interviewed based on the nine demotivating factors identified in Dörnyei (1998, as cited in Dörnyei, 2001). For the purpose of asking the same questions to a wider number of participants outside of the interview setting, an open-ended questionnaire was distributed to 42 students via email. From those data, five factors were found: 1) individual teacher behavior in classroom, 2) the grammar–translation method used in instruction, 3) tests and university entrance examinations, 4) the memorization nature of vocabulary learning, and 5) textbook/reference book-related issues. Keblawi's (2005) study also investigated EFL demotivating factors for Arabian secondary school students by using an open-ended questionnaire and interviews in order to identify recurring themes and classify the themes into different factors. The questionnaire was administered to 137 junior high school students and 157 high school students, asking what made the learners frustrated or demotivated when studying English. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 25 students and ten teachers. From the collected data, it was suggested that the factors in the immediate learning context such as teacher, learning group, and textbooks could

demotivate learners when perceived negatively. In particular, teachers' negative traits and behaviors were the most frequently reported contextual demotivating factors.

Trang and Baldauf's (2007) study on demotivating factors affecting secondary school students and Hamada's (2008) study of Japanese junior high school students also utilized written text as their qualitative data. Trang and Baldauf requested 100 Vietnamese university students to write stimulated recall essays of their EFL learning experiences, thinking back across the entire English learning process. The essay was comprised of three parts with the first part concerned with the existence of demotivation and its sources. The second one asked if they had been able to overcome demotivation and how they coped with it. The final section was intended to explore student perceptions on how best to minimize demotivation. Analyzing the essays, the researchers pointed out that the largest source of demotivation was associated with teachers, particularly teaching methods. Also, students seemed to be demotivated because of inadequate background knowledge in English. When it comes to regaining motivation, students' awareness of the importance of English was the most frequently mentioned factor that helped them overcome demotivation and recover their interest in EFL learning. Likewise, Hamada asked 36 junior high school students in Japan to respond to an open-ended questionnaire containing eight items which have a possible influence on the students' demotivation. The participants were supposed to write in detail if each item had demotivated them. The items were related to confidence, the way of studying, test score, learning environment, teacher, non-communicative lesson, course book, and grammar. Among those items, grammar and confidence issues were shown to be the stronger demotivator than the others.

The previous studies described thus far have in common their focus on deciding the demotivating factors. On the other hand, the study by Wang and Malderez (2006) on Chinese university students' EFL demotivation was the only research focusing on how differently motivated and demotivated learners perceived their learning environments. Conducting cross-case analysis, the researchers divided three learners into one motivated student and two demotivated students and paid attention to the differently occurring patterns in two types of cases. From semi-structured interviews, six categories of differences emerged between the cases: 1) feelings of belongingness and being cared for, 2) motivational response to test scores, 3) attitudes towards and anxiety over CET4 (English test determining the approval of diplomas and bachelor degrees), 4) transformation between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, 5) epistemological beliefs and cognitive strategies, and 6) self-regulation.

To take a look at the new insights provided by the results in Wang and Malderez's qualitative research (2006), lack of English teachers' attention and care toward EFL learners proved to be closely related to learners' demotivation in the Chinese EFL context. The researchers suggested that even for university students who are considered to be adults



who can take care of themselves in every respect, supporting emotional needs should not be ignored. When it comes to test scores which might serve as a motivating or a demotivating factor, the motivated learners showed interest and confidence in learning English stimulated by their high score at the end of the first term in high school. This confidence extended to their positive attitudes toward a requirement to pass English tests in university. Demotivated learners obtained repeatedly low scores in English tests and perceived the university's requirement an unattainable goal for them. This eventually led to a higher state of anxiety and helplessness over the university's requirement. Given this, it would be important to enable individual learners to pursue proximal, manageable goals for themselves, rather than imposing the same criteria for every student. Also, transformation between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation was found to be crucial in making difference to the intensity of motivation. The demotivated students did not exhibit intrinsic motivation, whereas the motivated learner internalized his extrinsic motivation, shifting the goals of learning English from pleasing others and demonstrating his ability to others, to understanding western culture, enjoying films, reading newspaper, and so on. In terms of epistemological beliefs and cognitive strategies, all of the three learners possessed the belief that learning English is for communication and learning about different cultures. However, for the demotivated learners, this belief came in conflict with cognitive strategies of rote memorizing isolated words, whereas the motivated learner had flexible use of various cognitive strategies. Strategy use was also associated with self-regulation. The motivated learner tended to use metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, goal setting, environment structuring much more actively than the demotivated learners.

Wang and Malderez's (2006) study succinctly demonstrates a possible worthwhile approach to demotivation of describing motivated and demotivated learners' different experiences. Compared to this approach, the majority of the qualitative research exhibited the similar purpose to the questionnaire survey methods of identifying and determining what factors are demotivating for the learners' English learning.

### 3. The Use of Mixed Methods in Demotivation Studies

Two types of mixed methods designs are found in the EFL demotivation studies: explanatory and exploratory designs. As the most straightforward mixed methods design, the explanatory design requires quantitative data to be collected and analyzed first and then qualitative findings to be used "to explain, refine, clarify, or extend quantitative results" (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009, p. 137). This design is well suited when research problems are quantitatively oriented and follow-up qualitative data collection are required in order to explain quantitative significant results, outlier (or non-significant) results, or surprising results (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003). On the other hand, in the

exploratory design, researchers start by qualitatively exploring a topic, based on which quantitative instruments such as a questionnaire are developed. A follow-up quantitative data collection is intended to “generalize, assess, or test qualitative explanatory results to see if they can be generalized to a sample and a population” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 87). These two types of mixed methods are a two-phase sequential design where researchers can use a strategy of connecting the results of one strand with the other type of data for deeper understating of a phenomenon.

The study by Hamada and Kito (2008) included a close-ended questionnaire and interviews, pursuing the explanatory design. To be specific, a 35-item questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was administered to 87 Japanese high school students. From the quantitative data, five factors were extracted: 1) learning environment, 2) teacher’s competence and teaching style, 3) little intrinsic motivation, 4) non-communicative methods, and 5) textbooks and lessons. A structured focus-group interview was then carried out with 26 participants selected from those who had answered the questionnaire to discover information which could not be determined by questionnaire analysis alone and explore the five factors more deeply. The qualitative data provided evidence that one of the strongest demotivating factors was teacher-related. It was also revealed that while some students had started having negative attitudes toward English as junior high school students, other students had not been interested or had any purpose in studying English from the beginning. The researchers pointed out that having no purpose or interest in the first place is a critical issue because this case cannot be considered to be demotivation, raising questions of how it should be defined and treated.

This issue has also been raised in the Korean context by T. Y. Kim (2012b). He investigated Korean elementary and middle school students’ English learning motivation with interviews focusing on the learners’ ideal L2 and ought-to L2 selves. The ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self are the components of the L2 Motivational Self System proposed by Dörnyei (2005, 2009) for understanding L2 learning motivation. The ideal L2 self is the English-speaking future self-images that learners can create as the images that they would like to become. The ought-to L2 self refers to attributes one think one ought to possess by learning an L2 and it is related to sense of obligation or avoidance of negative outcomes. The L2 learners who create and maintain more vivid L2 selves are considered to be those who are more motivated to learn the target language. However, in T. Y. Kim’s study it was noteworthy that Korean students continued English learning even if they had not created the ideal or ought-to L2 self, that is, English learning motivation. This phenomenon was regarded as an instance of amotivated but incessant L2 learning. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), amotivated learners are assumed to cease making an effort for learning. Contrary to this assumption, T. Y. Kim’s study presents the possibility of continuous English learning without having motivation in the first place. Although Hamada and Kito

(2008) did not reveal whether the tentatively amotivated learners were still involved in studying English, T. Y. Kim's and Hamada and Kito's studies imply that further investigation is necessary for amotivated learning, which may be the unique case reflecting the respective sociocultural contexts.

J. H. Lee and C. H. Lee's (2011) study with the explanatory approach to EFL demotivation has taken the similar steps to Hamada and Kito's (2008) research. As the first step, demotivating factors were investigated with a close-ended questionnaire for 170 Korean elementary school students. After the questionnaire survey, interviews were undertaken with seven students, based on the factors derived from the analysis of the quantitative data. The study results showed that reduced motivation and interest, difficulty of learning English, and characteristics of class were the most demotivating factors in sequence. Also, the researchers reported that the lower their proficiency levels were, the more the students attributed their demotivation to reduced motivation and interest<sup>1</sup>, difficulty of learning English, negative attitudes toward L2, attitude of group members, and grading and test score factors. Hamada (2011) also employed the interviews using the following five foci that the quantitative data denoted: lesson style, nature of English, teachers, self-confidence, and textbooks. The major findings indicated that the nature of English was more demotivating for Japanese junior high school learners than high school learners. Lesson style and teachers were stronger demotivating factors for high school learners than their junior high school counterparts.

Unlike the first phase of data collection in J. H. Lee and C. H. Lee's (2011) and Hamada's (2011) research focusing on demotivating factors, T. Y. Kim and H. S. Seo (2012) looked into Korean elementary school students' motivational changes with motivational constructs – instrumental, intrinsic, integrative, parental/academic extrinsic motivations and found that their motivation decreased in all of the motivational constructs from Grade 3 to 6. In order to extend this finding, the researchers included 17 English teachers as participants, conducting interviews with ten teachers and administering open-ended questionnaires for seven teachers. Teachers' perception of the student demotivation revealed that the teachers attributed the students' demotivation to three elements: 1) the negative impact of the English teachers such as incongruence with students' needs, teachers' impatience, and disinterest in teaching and in their students, 2) excessive social expectation of English proficiency, and 3) the widening English proficiency gap among the students.

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<sup>1</sup> In this result, we can also find what seems to be inappropriate viewpoints mentioned in the last paragraph of the review of quantitative research methods. First, the factor of reduced motivation and interest can be the state of demotivation per se, rather than a demotivating factor. Second, it is unclear if learners with lower English proficiency were more demotivated in learning English, or more demotivated learners obtained lower proficiency.

An investigation by Tabatabaei and Molavi (2012) of demotivating factors affecting Iranian EFL seminary students aged between 20 and 30 adopted two questionnaires with close-ended questions as well as interviews with both students and teachers. The first questionnaire consisted of 70 closed-ended items for motivation to divide the participants into more motivated and less motivated groups. The second questionnaire had 22 items among which the participants were asked to select five items which best represented the reasons they felt uneasy with English and did not learn it as easily as other courses. Then the students were interviewed to find out if they could present any other demotivating factor besides those included in the questionnaires and if they had any other opinion which might enhance the results obtained from the questionnaires. Also, three teachers and the head of the foreign language department of the school were interviewed to elicit their opinions about the demotivating factors affecting the English learning of Iranian seminary students. These various approaches allowed the researchers to find out that the major demotivating factors for Iranian EFL seminary students were the frequency of English classes during week, other important subjects to be studied, the shortage of time and lack of English usage in students' daily lives, and the unmet desire to be sent to other countries to propagate Islam.

By contrast, the purpose of interviews in Soureshjani and Riahipour's (2012) study was different from the studies described above as the researchers used the exploratory design. That is, the researchers collected qualitative data to explore the topic of English learning demotivation and then the qualitative results built to quantitative questionnaire surveys. More specifically, Soureshjani and Riahipour interviewed 15 teachers and 10 students from two different language institutes in Shahrekord, Iran, so that they could develop questionnaires regarding demotivating factors affecting the speaking skill of language learners. The two developed questionnaires (one pertaining to students and the other to teachers) from those interview data were administered respectively with 70 teachers and 120 students in the same two language institutes. The results from the questionnaire indicated that students believed that factors related to teachers, equipments, and class utility were the three most demotivating factors as far as speaking skill was concerned.

In most mixed methods research, especially which employed the explanatory design, a questionnaire was administered first to decide demotivating factors and then interviews were undertaken to delve into the factors more deeply. The exploratory design allowed researchers to seek possible demotivating factors expressed in the learners' own words, based on which questionnaire was developed. The follow-up questionnaire survey revealed which factors learners generally found more demotivating. Overall, mixed methods research tended to include a wide variety of groups of participants. Aside from students, several studies were conducted with English teachers and school administrators.

To summarize similarities and differences in the previous studies with quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, we can recognize that the major purpose of all three research methods tend to be on determining what factors demotivate EFL learners. Data obtained from questionnaire surveys in quantitative research and mixed methods research were usually factor-analyzed or frequency was used for this purpose. In qualitative research, students were asked to describe their experience of demotivation in order to classify recurring themes into demotivating factors. With regard to demotivation factors revealed in the previous studies, we would like to draw attention to the factors related to teachers. Teacher-related issues were found to be one of the strongest demotivating factors (Hamada & Kito, 2008; Hasegawa, 2004; Trang & Baldauf, 2007). As suggested by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), it has been supposed that teachers have a meaningful influence on students' learning. However, we can recognize that teachers could have negative impact on students' motivation to learn English. Also, T. Y. Kim and H. S. Seo (2012) indicated that teachers perceived the possible negative impact of English teachers to be one of the demotivating factors for their students. Given this, there needs to be more substantive consideration of how teachers encourage their students not to fall into demotivation, interacting with them in a positive way in English classrooms.

Another major focus of quantitative research was to find out if there were statistically significant differences in demotivating factors between different groups of students (e.g., more and less motivated students, junior high and high school students, and lower-proficient and higher-proficient learners). There was one qualitative research which compared motivated and demotivated students, but the goal was different from the comparisons made in quantitative research. It was Wang and Malderez's (2006) study on different learning experience between motivated and demotivated students, where the researchers sought to describe in detail the characteristics of demotivated students compared to motivated learners. Lastly, in mixed methods and quantitative research, there was a focus on negative change in motivation to capture demotivational tendency over time. This manner was not adopted in qualitative studies. Those similarities and differences appeared to be based on different perspectives on what demotivation refers to, and this will be further discussed in the next section.

### **III. DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON ENGLISH LEARNING DEMOTIVATION**

Because demotivation has recently drawn attention from the field of L2 learning motivation, researchers have been seeking for their own new approaches to it. Accordingly, there exist different perspectives on defining what English learning demotivation is. For

some researchers, EFL demotivation has been regarded as a distinctive construct from motivation, and therefore they have attempted to determine what demotivates EFL learners regardless of motivational constructs (e.g., Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009; Tuan, 2011). However, other researchers have been more concerned with changes in motivation as they consider a negative decrease in motivation as demotivation (e.g., Hamada, 2008; T. Y. Kim, 2011, 2012a). In this approach, demotivation may not be seen as a distinctive construct but as an opposite concept or mirror image of motivation. This section elaborates on those different directions in EFL demotivation studies.

### 1. Demotivation as a Novel/Distinctive Construct

Several EFL demotivation studies have been conducted with cross-sectional data, especially with an underlying assumption that L2 demotivation is a novel/distinctive construct that differentiates itself from L2 learning motivation. That is, the focus of the research was not on how L2 motivation changes regarding the motivational constructs of integrativeness, instrumentality, and intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, but on which factors make learners not want to learn the target language. With this focus, the majority of EFL demotivation studies have aimed to find out what demotivates EFL learners without addressing the established motivational constructs. More specifically, in an attempt to determine demotivating factors, EFL demotivation researchers carried out exploratory factor analyses with the particularly developed items regarding demotivation or elicited several factors from interviews or open-ended questions. Also, frequency or descriptive statistics were utilized with the factors extracted from factor analysis, pre-determined from the previous research, or emerged from qualitative thematic analyses. The factors exhibiting higher frequency or higher mean scores were regarded as being stronger demotivators for EFL learning.

The development of distinctive items measuring EFL demotivation seems to originate from Dörnyei's (1998, as cited in Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) classification on the main demotivating factors found in an unpublished study. The study was conducted with 50 secondary school students in Budapest, Hungary, studying either English or German as a foreign language. The 9 identified demotivating factors were 1) teachers' personalities, commitment, competence, teaching methods, 2) inadequate school facilities, 3) reduced self-confidence due to their experience of failure or lack of success, 4) negative attitude toward the foreign language studied, 5) compulsory nature of the foreign language study, 6) interference of another foreign language that pupils are studying, 7) negative attitude toward the community of the foreign language spoken, 8) attitudes of group members, and 9) course books used in class. These factors have been adopted and modified as novel/distinctive constructs for EFL demotivation in many of the previous demotivation

studies. For example, by using Dörnyei's taxonomy, Kikuchi and Sakai (2009) examined the demotivation of Japanese secondary school students, asking university students how demotivated they had been as secondary school students. The researchers discussed the extracted factors from the questionnaire items making a comparison with Dörnyei's 9 categories.

Another aspect showing that EFL demotivation was considered to be distinctive from motivation is that demotivating factors were compared between less and more motivated students or between motivated and demotivated students. For example, in Tuan's (2011) study on Vietnamese university EFL learners, motivated students were reported to be affected by a less number of demotivating factors than demotivated students. While motivated learners exhibited only seven factors as being demotivating such as 1) lack of chance to use English, 2) high-speed teaching pace, 3) negative classroom atmosphere, 4) lack of self-esteem, 5) test outside lessons, 6) conventional teaching method, and 7) teachers' poor skills, demotivated students perceived all of the twelve demotivating factors included in the study, with the other factors of 8) low English results, 9) negative attitude toward English itself, 10) compulsory English learning, 11) useless shared knowledge in class, and 12) teachers' apathy. This case shows that not only demotivated learners but also motivated learners are affected by specific demotivating factors. That is, demotivation was found among both motivated and demotivated students as an independent phenomenon from motivation. We agree that more motivated learners can still have demotivation in certain areas of English learning to different degree from that of more demotivated learners. However, this assumption needs to be explored more deeply and we will discuss ways to achieve this in the final section.

## 2. Demotivation as a Decrease in Motivational Intensity

Contrary to cross-sectional research on EFL demotivation, there have been attempts to address EFL demotivation by investigating motivational changes over time. This type of research was mostly reported in quasi-longitudinal research or cross-grade survey, assuming that demotivation is represented where EFL learning motivation decreases. A notable example is T. Y. Kim's (2011) investigation of 6,301 Korean elementary school students with different aspects of their English learning motivation. In order to address motivational strengths of Korean elementary school students, the items on motivation were developed based on Gardner's (1985, 2001) concepts of instrumentality and integrativeness and Ryan and Deci's (2000) intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. By looking into those motivational constructs within the participants, the study suggested that there existed a demotivational tendency, that is, decrease in motivation, from Grades 3 to 6.

In terms of motivational changes in secondary school, Hasegawa (2004) conducted research on Japanese junior high and high school students' attitudes toward, preference for, and interest in, EFL learning. A total number of 125 junior high school students and 98 high school students participated in a questionnaire survey. The results revealed that the number of junior high school students who had a positive attitude toward EFL learning was larger than that of high school students. Hasegawa stated that it was surprising that only one of the high school students responded positively to the fondness for studying English. The number of students who lost interest in EFL learning was larger in high school than in junior high school. From the perspective of cross-grade research, these findings corroborate that demotivational tendency exists from junior high school to high school.

Similarly, in a study of junior high school students' demotivation, Hamada (2008) asked students in Grade 2 how motivated they are now and how motivated they were when starting learning English in Grade 1. This question was intended to examine how much they have been demotivated for the past two years. That is, Hamada aimed to investigate demotivation by looking at whether motivation decreased even during the junior high school years, and it was confirmed that the degree of learner's motivation over a two year period had declined. Also, S. K. Jung (2011) captured demotivational pattern in past English learning experience of Korean university students, by requesting them to draw a graph delineating their motivational changes from elementary school to university. The average pattern of the graphs demonstrated that students' motivation increased until Grade 2 in junior high school and consistently decreased in high school before beginning to rise from the first year of university. The idea that demotivation is an opposite notion of, or a negative change in motivation was also reflected in Wang and Malderez (2006). They delved into differences in EFL learning between motivated and demotivated students with interviews focusing on the factors having influence on motivation. This focus arose from the researchers' assumption that dissatisfaction with factors affecting motivation would lead to demotivation.

Recently, T. Y. Kim (2012a) conducted an extensive investigation of Korean EFL learners' motivation and demotivation. By using two separate sets of motivation and demotivation questionnaires, the study took a form of quasi-longitudinal research with the study participants ranging from Grade 3 to Grade 12. The noteworthy finding in the study is that demotivation is not a mirror image of motivation. More specifically, if demotivation is a negative and opposite concept to motivation, when motivation decreases, demotivation would increase in a similar pattern. However, it was not the case in T. Y. Kim's research. The motivational intensity from elementary to high school students exhibited a curvilinear pattern, which means that students' motivation consistently decreased until they finished junior high school but increased during their high school years. When it comes to demotivation, it showed continuous increase from elementary to high school students. That



is, among high school students, higher level of motivation and demotivation were found to exist in the same period. Besides, correlations between each of motivational constructs and demotivation were not entirely negative. The ideal L2 self and motivated behavior had negative correlations with demotivation, but the ought-to L2 self, instrumentality, and family influence showed positive correlations with demotivation. In other words, even when the motivational constructs such as the ought-to L2 self, instrumentality, and family influence are stronger, demotivation can be more intense, and vice versa. Those results demonstrated that demotivation is not a mere loss or lack of motivation.

By reviewing the different notions surrounding English learning demotivation, there seem to be limitations in two different perspectives on English learning demotivation as well as restricted focus and findings from the studies with each research method. Within cross-grade research, demotivation has been investigated by looking into motivational constructs, decline of which was regarded as representing demotivation. What appears to be insufficient in this approach is that demotivation may not be a merely gradual loss and opposite image of motivation as evidenced in T. Y. Kim's (2012a) previous work. Demotivation has its own differentiating features from motivation. On the other hand, although the cross-sectional studies have sought determining demotivating factors as distinctive constructs, they seem to fail to find their way into looking at how demotivation emerges over time. Given this, we believe it is worthwhile to suggest an alternative approach arising from consideration of strengths and weakness in the previous studies, which will be presented in the next section.

#### **IV. SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS**

By reviewing the previous research on English learning demotivation in EFL contexts, we looked into what results have been elicited from quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research. Even among the studies adopting different research methods, a similar focus was identified and the same research methods demonstrated different research focus, which we assume were attributed to the researchers' perspectives regarding what demotivation is. More specifically, in quantitative or mixed methods research, some researchers factor-analyzed the questionnaire items to find demotivating factors (e.g., Falout et al., 2009; Ghadirzadeh et al., 2012; Hamada & Kito, 2008). This focus was based on their assumption that demotivation is a different construct from motivation, so they did not involve motivational constructs in their demotivation research. Other researchers have attempted to find out if motivation of English learners decreased over time, which they consider to be demotivation (e.g., S. K. Jung, 2011; T. Y. Kim, 2011). Among the qualitative research, while demotivation has been investigated as a distinctive construct

with the purpose of seeking for demotivating factors (e.g., Kikuchi, 2009; Trang & Baldauf, 2007), there have been studies which regarded demotivation as being a decrease or negative side of motivation (e.g., Wang & Malderez, 2006).

In order to construe English learning demotivation from analyzing the previous research, the cross-sectional studies have investigated demotivating factors for EFL learners at one specific point in time. This type of research has contributed to showing what leads to demotivation, but they seem to fail to provide insight on in what way demotivation proceeds. Quasi-longitudinal approaches of the previous EFL demotivation studies have paid attention to changes in motivation and shown that there is a tendency in EFL learners' motivation to decrease over time. In T. Y. Kim's (2012a) cross-grade research, there was a tendency to decline in all of the involved motivational constructs until the participants reach Grade 9, which may be a sign of demotivation. Given this, we can conceive of demotivation as a decrease of motivation, but it should be noted that T. Y. Kim's research also demonstrated that motivation may not be a mere loss of motivation. It is the case that learners' English learning motivation and demotivation are interrelated. As can be seen in T. Y. Kim's study, demotivation was correlated with motivational constructs positively or negatively. What is more significant, however, is that demotivation did not emerge as the exactly opposite pattern of motivation. Demotivation is not a mirror image of motivation and is likely to involve "a different psychological mechanism from that of motivation" (T. Y. Kim, p. 46).

The different psychological mechanism for motivation and demotivation can be described in the function of a motivational construct within English learners. In Y. K. Kim and T. Y. Kim's (2012) research, the ought-to L2 self was included as a motivational construct for understanding Korean learners' English learning motivation. In the original sense, the ought-to L2 self can be a motivator when a learner is willing to live up to others' expectations and actively tries to avoid negative outcomes. In Y. K. Kim and T. Y. Kim's study, the participating learners' ought-to L2 self possessed a positive explanatory power, albeit small, for their motivated behavior, indicating that stronger ought-to L2 self led the learners to make more efforts to learn English. In contrast, if a learner is overwhelmed by a sense of obligation or is excessively self-consciousness of others in his or her L2 learning, the ought-to L2 self may negatively affect motivation to continue L2 learning. This possible phenomenon is supported by the finding in T. Y. Kim's (2012a) research that there was a positive correlation between the ought-to L2 self and demotivation. Also, Far, Rajab and Etemadzadeh's (2012) study included the ought-to L2 self to examine Iranian university students' L2 learning motivation and found that the first-year students' ought-to L2 self was positively correlated with the learners' intended efforts toward learning English. However, in the final-year student group, the learners' ought-to L2 self exhibited negative correlation with their intended efforts. From the perspective of cross-grade analysis, it is

likely that the learners became satiated by a sense of obligation in L2 learning during their university years. The ought-to L2 self, which motivated the learners in the first-year began to serve as a demotivating factor over time. It seems that for the final-year learners, the stronger their ought-to L2 self became, the less efforts they wanted to make to learn English, and vice versa.

Likewise, the different functions of the same motivational construct imply that depending on how motivational constructs work within learners' particular learning experience, the learners' motivation and demotivation may interact with the same factor in different ways (cf. T. Y. Kim & Y. J. Lee, under review; Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2004). Therefore, demotivation can be defined as a decrease in certain domains in English learning motivation, which results from negatively functioning motivational constructs. That is, while both demotivated and motivated English learners can still possess motivation, parts of their motivational constructs are likely to function negatively, leading them to demotivation to different degrees.

In verifying if the definition of demotivation above helps understand and explain demotivation among Korean learners of English, we need to pay close attention to changes in motivational variables within the learners' English learning. The function of motivational variables can change with time positively or negatively depending on how learners interact with their learning environments. Given this, we suggest that Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory would provide insight for approaching English learning demotivation. Sociocultural theory concerns how humans think and their mental functions develop interacting with their sociocultural contexts. From this perspective, we can contemplate two important aspects in addressing demotivation. First, for Vygotsky, an essential aspect of explaining a psychological phenomenon is its position in transition (Wertsch, 1985). The concepts of changes, transition, and transformation are considered to be fundamental for attempting to analyze psychological phenomena. In order to look into how a psychological phenomenon takes place, we should pay attention to the phase of change where the phenomenon emerges or are reshaped. Second, sociocultural theory implies that English learning as a second language or a foreign language is not restricted to a solely individual process (T. Y. Kim, 2004). Different experiences, between motivated and demotivated learners, or even between demotivated learners, would be a reflection of the learners' different interactions with their sociocultural environments. Therefore, it needs to be examined how differently learners perceive their learning environments and how the perceptions mediate their English learning demotivation.

To sum up, we assume that two important aspects to consider in investigating English learning demotivation are the phase of changes where demotivation originates and learners' interaction with sociocultural environments. What needs to be addressed is not so much the product such as measuring the state of demotivational level as the process of demotivation.

It is necessary to look into the process of how learners' idiosyncratic experience relates to English learning motivation and demotivation changes, interacting with their environments. For this purpose, it would be worthwhile to conduct longitudinal research to better trace and capture the process of the changes. More specifically, interviews with students and their teachers can be carried out, asking for instance, how the learners perceive the process and environments of their English learning. By conducting interviews on a regular basis, it would be possible to identify when and how demotivation emerges from the learners' idiosyncratic learning experiences. Classroom observations can also be undertaken for the purpose of data triangulation.

Furthermore, we suggest that a longitudinal approach in demotivation studies involve at least the period of one semester because learners' interest and commitment in English learning are likely to show fluctuations from the beginning to the end of the semester. In order to go further, we need to investigate the transition in demotivation from elementary to junior high school or from junior high to high school in the EFL context. English as subject matter is thought to become increasingly difficult and uninteresting for higher school levels. Previous studies have also shown that demotivation increases from elementary to junior high school, and to high school. Therefore, it seems to be the case that learners' demotivational tendency becomes more serious.

Researchers and practitioners in the field of English education need to attend to this phenomenon, and more research needs to be conducted in the near future. The in-depth understanding of English learning demotivation would provide English teachers with the features of individual learners demonstrating demotivation. This, in turn, would contribute to the development of ways to prevent and deal with the factors negatively affecting students' motivation and lead to more successful English learning.

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## APPENDIX

A brief description of the previous studies on EFL demotivation

| Author(s)<br>(Year)         | Country | Research<br>method | Participant  | Research focus  |
|-----------------------------|---------|--------------------|--|---|
| Falout & Maruyama (2004)    | Japan   | Quan               | 164 university students  | demotivating factors / comparison of the factors between lower-proficient and higher-proficient learners  |
| Hasegawa (2004)             | Japan   | Quan               | 125 junior high & 98 high school students                              | sources of motivation and demotivation  |
| Keblawi (2005)              | Arab    | Qual               | 137 junior high & 157 high school students / 25 students & 10 teachers | demotivating factors  |
| Warrington & Jeffrey (2005) | Japan   | Quan               | 188 university students  | significant or insignificant demotivating factors   |
| Wang & Malderez (2006)      | China   | Qual               | 3 university students  | differences between motivated and demotivated students in terms of motivational variables   |
| Trang & Baldauf (2007)      | Vietnam | Qual               | 100 university students  | demotivating factors / overcoming demotivation  |
| Hamada (2008)               | Japan   | Quan               | 44 high school learners  | demotivating factors / changes in demotivation  |
|                             |         | Qual               | 36 junior high school students   |   |
| Hamada & Kito (2008)        | Japan   | Mixed              | 87 high school students  | demotivating factors / source of the factors  |
| Falout et al. (2009)        | Japan   | Quan               | 900 university students  | demotivating factors / relation between past demotivating experiences and present proficiency / lower proficiency learners' capacity to self-regulate in demotivation |
| Kikuchi (2009)              | Japan   | Qual               | 5 university students & 42 students                                    | demotivating factors  |
| Kikuchi & Sakai (2009)      | Japan   | Quan               | 112 university students  | demotivating factors  |
| Kim, K.-J. (2009a, 2009b)   | Korea   | Quan               | 220 junior high & 187 high school students                             | demotivating factors / comparison of the factors between junior high and high school students or lower-proficient and higher-proficient learners                      |
| Sakai & Kikuchi (2009)      | Japan   | Quan               | 656 high school students   | demotivating factors / comparison of the factors between less and more motivated learners   |
| Hamada (2011)               | Japan   | Mixed              | 234 high school & 217 university students                              | different demotivating factors for junior high and high school students / changes in strong factors   |
| Hu (2011)                   | Taiwan  | Quan               | 467 university students  | relationship between demotivation and English proficiency   |
| Jung, S.-K. (2011)          | Korea   | Quan               | 125 university students  | changes in motivation / demotivating and remotivating factors / key motivators  |
| Kim, T.-Y. (2011)           | Korea   | Quan               | 6,301 elementary school students                                       | changes in motivation / effect of private English instruction on the students' motivational characteristics   |



|                                 |         |       |   |   |
|---------------------------------|---------|-------|---|---|
| Lee J.-H. & Lee C.-H. (2011)    | Korea   | Mixed | 170 elementary school students  | demotivating factors / gender differences / comparison of the factors between students with low, intermediate, and high English proficiencies |
| Tuan (2011)                     | Vietnam | Quan  | 147 university students   | differences in demotivating factors between motivated and demotivated students  |
| Alavinia & Sehat (2012)         | Iran    | Quan  | 165 high school students  | demotivating factors / comparison of the factors among students in different classes and majors   |
| Ghadirzadeh et al. (2012)       | Iran    | Quan  | 260 university students   | demotivating factors / comparison of the factors between more and less motivated students   |
| Kim, T.-Y. (2012)               | Korea   | Quan  | 1,012 elementary, 1,155 junior high school & 665 high school students                         | changes in motivation / the L2 motivational self system and socio-educational model   |
| Kim, T.-Y., & Seo, H.-S. (2012) | Korea   | Mixed | 6,301 elementary school students  | changes in motivation / salient demotivating factors perceived by the English teachers  |
| Rastegar et al. (2012)          | Iran    | Quan  | 100 university students   | relationships between demotivation, test anxiety, and foreign language classroom anxiety  |
| Soureshjani & Riahipour (2012)  | Iran    | Mixed | 15 teachers and 10 students (for interview) / 70 teachers & 120 students (for questionnaires) | demotivating factors affecting the speaking ability of English learners   |
| Tabatabaei & Molavi (2012)      | Iran    | Mixed | 50 seminary students, 3 teachers & the head of the school                                     | demotivating factors / comparison of EFL achievement between motivated and demotivated learners   |

**Examples in: English****Applicable Languages: English****Applicable Levels: Elementary/Secondary/Tertiary**

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