A Study of Demotivators for High School Students in Japan

Yoshio HOSAKA

Abstract

In this study, private high school students were surveyed to examine how and when they lost motivation to learn English. Demotivation is one of the most serious problems in English education in Japan at junior and senior high schools, although motivation has been the focus of much research in the L2 acquisition for a long time (Tsumura, 2010a, p. 27).

The results of factor analyses showed that there are three reasons for demotivation: they do not know how to learn English effectively (Non-strategy), they do not trust their English teachers (Distrust), and they feel the situation of English divide (Divide).

According to the t-tests, there were no significant results as to all of the 3 factors between male and female students. According to the ANOVA tests, higher motivated students have already mastered how to learn English than lower motivated ones. Distrust and Divide are common and universal factors regardless of the students’ achievements.

Keywords: demotivation, English education, high school students, English divide
1. Introduction

This year 2020 may be the most memorable year for English Education since WWⅡ in Japan. English education now officially starts from 5th grade at public elementary schools. It is expected that English education will change drastically in a few years. In junior high schools, teachers are required, in principle, to teach English through English (TETE) from 2021. In senior high schools, teachers have to help their students prepare for GTEC, or TOEFL, or EIKEN and so on, as entrance exams in place of the Center Test.¹

2. Literature Review

Teachers are earnestly required to teach authentic English from elementary schools to universities in order to make their English classes more communicative. On the other hand, the increase in numbers of demotivated students is a very serious problem (Benesse, 2009). According to Kudoh (2017), MEXT has come to the conclusion that more than 50% of 3rd year-students at junior high schools do not like English class because their teachers focus on the skills of reading and writing.

2.1 The definition of ‘Demotivated’ Learner

According to Dörnyei (2001), a ‘demotivated’ learner is someone who was once motivated but has lost his or her commitment/interest for some reason (p. 142).

2.2 The literature on Demotivated Learners in SLA

It goes without saying that Zoltán Dörnyei is a prominent scholar in the research of motivation and demotivation. He indicates the nine main demotivating factors below (2001, pp. 152-153).
1. The teacher (personality, commitment, competence, teaching method)
2. Inadequate school facilities (group is too big or not the right level; frequent change of teachers)
3. Reduced self-confidence (experience of failure or lack of success)
4. Negative attitude towards the L2
5. Compulsory nature of L2 study
6. Interference of another foreign language being studied
7. Negative attitude towards L2 community
8. Attitudes of group members
9. Coursework

The largest category out of the nine accounts for about 40% of the total frequency of occurrences. It is concerned with the teacher. The result is fully consistent with those reported by other researchers. A further 15% of the occurrences are also concerned with the teacher, although indirectly (p. 151).

2.3 Literature Review in Japan

In Japan, there is very little empirical research on demotivators. According to Kikuchi (2014), there are four reasons why many students do not like English: I do not understand English language because of my lack of efforts, I cannot improve English regardless of my efforts, English classes are boring, and I do not like English teachers.

Similarly we can read many teaching practices in the English journals: New English Classroom and The English Teachers’ Magazine. Taki-guchi (2016) gives six reasons as demotivators.

1. They cannot understand English class.
2. They cannot listen to English.
3. They cannot understand the spellings of English words.
4. They cannot get high scores in tests.
5. They cannot understand English grammar.
6. They do not like English teachers.

However, I believe that the suggestions may be intuitive rather than empirical because they came to these conclusions, based on judgements from their teaching experiences. Also Takase and Otsuki (2011) suggest that the Grammar Translation Method and the lack of input in junior high English classes may be one of the demotivators, but their conclusions also may not be empirical. There are also some other papers regarding not only the GT metod but English grammar itself as a main cause of demotivators (Ogihara, 2013, p.133; Tamura, 2009).

2.4 Empirical Research in Japan

Tsumura (2010b) states that there is not so much research on demotivators in Japan (p.36) and there is little research to make clear how learners are becoming demotivated. He also indicates the three main factors below as demotivators.

1. Difficulty (e.g., teachers use words beyond theirs students’ understanding)
2. Teachers and Environment (e.g., their teaching methods do not fit their students)
3. Aimless (e.g., their students do not understand why they have to learn English)

On the other hand, Hamada (2008) indicates that among neither high shool learners nor junior high school learners, the teacher issue is the main course of demotivation (p.17). She also indicates that as for junior high students English grammar is the most powerful of the several demotivators examined (pp.16-17). The demotivators for high school learners and those for junior high school learners appear to differ in some ways. Course books are considered to be the strongest demotivator for
high school students (p.17).

2.5 Measures against Demotivators

As mentioned before, there is much research on measures to deal with demotivators, based on teaching experiences. Kimura (2017) says that extensive reading may be a solution to demotivators although there are not significant results.

On the other hand, Tamura (2009) suggests that the basic English grammar may be a key to decreasing the number of demotivated students.

3. Objectives

The objectives of this present study are

1. To clarify what kind of factors have produced demotivated learners.
2. To clarify the differences between male and female students in terms of demotivation.
3. To clarify when and why demotivated students are produced.

4. Methods

4.1 Participants

I carried out this research to 1st-year students at a private high school in Saitama Prefecture because many demotivated students are generally produced at junior high schools (Kudoh, 2017; Benesse, 2009). The population of my chosen group was 74 (male students are 37 and female 37).

4.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to collect the data, which was developed
by Tsumura (2010b) (Appendix 1). It contains 34 items with a seven-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree - 7: strongly agree). Some scripted data are added: asking for interest in English, gender and when one has lost interest. I asked the students how they have become demotivated in the retrospective way.

4.3 Factor Analysis

To determine the best items for each of the subscales, exploratory factor analyses were conducted using the principal factor method followed by Varimax rotation. I took into account all loadings > .40.

4.4 t-test

To examine how the students' demotivation to learn English differed between male and female students, a t-test was conducted, with three factor scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>The average data between the genders (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1 (Non-strategy)</td>
<td>50.1 (14.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2 (Distrust)</td>
<td>12.9 ( 7.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3 (Divide)</td>
<td>14.1 ( 6.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 ANOVA

I asked the participants how much they liked English with a five-point Likert scale (1: strongly dislike - 5: strongly like). I classify the students into 3 groups in terms of motivation: upper level students who marked 4 or 5, middle level ones who chose 3, and lower level ones who marked 1 or 2. The descriptive data are below.
Table 2  The descriptive data on motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest in English</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper level</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle level</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower level</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sum</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To examine how the students’ demotivation to learn English differed among the three groups (upper level, middle level and lower level students), ANOVA was conducted, with 3 factor scores.

5. When Interest in English was Lost

I asked the 27 students with a lower interest in English when they lost their motivation to learn English.

Table 3  The descriptive data on the time of demotivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th grade</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sum</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Results

6.1 Factor analysis

After the exploratory factor analyses, I extracted 3 factors. The result of the analyses yielded three factors, accounting for 54.6% of the variance (Appendix 2).

Factor I obtained loadings from 11 variables. The 5 highest loadings related to the method of studying including learning English. Therefore, I unambiguously labeled this factor UNAWARENESS OF STUDY METHOD (Non-strategy).

Factor II obtained loadings from 4 variables. The 2 highest loadings related to teachers themselves. Therefore, I unambiguously labeled this factor DISTRUST IN TEACHERS (Distrust).

Factor III obtained loadings from 5 variables. The 2 highest loadings related to costs needed to learn English. Therefore, I unambiguously labeled this factor English divide (Divide). Factor III also includes Q12, Q17. The students think that the English classes they take are generally easy, not because they are smart but because the level of their English class is very low. They may have been moved to lower proficiency class at a high school as a result of the entrance exam. Then their English class are generally easy, compared with English classes at academic schools.

6.2 t-test

A series of $t$-tests was conducted using gender (male and female) as independent variables, with composite scores of 3 factor scores as dependent variables. There was no significant result as to all of the 3 factors ($p < .05$).

6.3 ANOVA

Additionally, a series of ANOVA tests was conducted using interest
in English as an independent variable, with composite scores of 3 factor scores as dependent variables. A Bonferroni test was conducted as for a multiple comparison.

As for F1 (Non-strategy), the variances of the three groups were not significantly the same and I used a Dunnet T3 test in place of a Bonferroni test. F1 (Non-strategy) showed that there was a significant difference between lower level and middle level students (F(2,71) = 17.3, p = .006). There was also a significant difference between lower level and upper level students (F(2,71) = 17.3, p = .000).

F2 (Distrust) and F3 (Divide) showed there was no significant difference among the three groups (p < .05).

6.4 When Interest in English was Lost

According to Table 3, about 40% of the surveyed students lost interest in English in the 7th grade. There is no other choice but to admit that we also have a 7th grade gap in English education in Japan. As some researchers state, many students are at a loss about how to use the verb ‘to be’ and regular verbs correctly at the beginning of the 1st year (Tagawa, p. 269; Shirai, p. 112).

7. Discussion and Conclusion

Judging from the results above, I can draw some conclusions, which will decrease the number of demotivated students and improve the quality of English Education in Japan.

(1) The most important cause of demotivation is that students feel at a loss about how to learn including in English class. Teachers should tell how to preview and review English classes in advance as early as in the 7th grade. As Inaba (2016) suggests that learning strategies may be a key to decrease demotivators. A male student said in the free comment column that he feels
confused with many English words which have almost the same meanings. Teachers should pay more attention to synonyms.

(2) Students are highly influenced by teacher’s ways of teaching and their characters regardless of student’s motivation in English. A factor concerning teachers is most common in demotivation research in the world (Dörynei, p. 146). A male student said in the free comment column that a better smart-phone will enhance the level of communication in the near future. Teachers should teach English in a more communicative way in order to help their students enjoy communication in English in class.

(3) Many students think that mastering English should take a lot of money by going to cram schools or buying some reference books. The level of English class at senior high schools is different from school to school. English class is highly influenced by the School SD of entrance exams. According to this research, many of the surveyed students think that they came to a private school as a result of English divide.

In the future, further research should be done with much more participants at greater variety of schools. As Tsumura pointed out (2010a, p. 39), research on demotivators has just started and the results including this research may be the top of the iceberg. I hope that this kind of research focusing on demotivators will be done more and more often, and will lead to decreasing the number of students who do not like English. And also, it is more important to make a smoother transition from elementary to junior high English education after the introduction of English classes in 2020.

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Note
1 On October 24th, 2019, the Minister of MEXT, Mr. Koichi HAGYUDA said that students should compete for university places in accordance with their standing. He was subsequently accused of approving of the unequaility and had to postpone the introduction of private English tests in place of the Center Test.

References
Ogiwara, H. (荻原洋) (2013).「CLTにおける文法システムのあり方について：後置修飾をどう考えるか」『富山大学人間発達科学部紀要』第 7 巻 2 号, 133-144.

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Appendix 1 英語学習に関するアンケート

このアンケートは、皆さんが英語学習に対して感じている障害・つまづきの原因、不満を調査するために行っています。このアンケートは成績に影響することはありません。研究のみに使用し、教員養成に生かしたいと考えています。ご協力よろしくお願いします。

《英語学習への意欲消失の原因について》
どのような時に、英語学習に対する「やる気」が低下し、思いますか。下のスケールと照らし合わせて当てはまる数字に○をつけてください。「もし下のような経験をしたら、どのように感じるだろう？」と想像して答えてください。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>全然そう思わない</th>
<th>あまりそう思う</th>
<th>どちらかというとそう思う</th>
<th>どちらでもない</th>
<th>どちらかというとそう思わない</th>
<th>少しそう思う</th>
<th>強くそう思う</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. 覚えることが多すぎると感じたとき
   ① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
2. 他の人の成績（テストの結果）が自分のものより良かったとき
   ① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
3. 使える英語を学ぶには、お金がかかると思ったとき
   ① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
4. クラスの雰囲気が悪いとき
   ① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
5. 英語以外の勉強のほうが大切だったと思ったとき
   ① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
6. 教師の態度が学生によって違うと思ったとき
   ① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
7. 教員に対する信頼を失ったとき
   ① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
8. 前で発表させられるなど緊張したとき
   ① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
9. 教室の環境が悪い（暑い・寒い・狭いなど）と思ったとき
   ① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
10. 英語を使う場面がないと感じたとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
11. 教科書がつまらないと感じたとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
12. 試験が簡単過ぎたとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
13. 教科書や教材の値段が高いと思ったとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
14. 発音がうまくできなかったとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
15. 試験が難しいとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
16. 教師の教え方が悪いと感じたとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
17. 授業が簡単過ぎたとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
18. 良い成績がもらえなかったとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
19. 授業が難しいとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
20. 英語で話そうと思っても、うまく言葉が出てこなかったとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
21. 勉強方法がわからないとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
22. 上達しているかどうかわからないとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
23. 結局、留学でもしないと英語は身につかないと思ったとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
24. 欠席や遅刻をしてしまったとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
25. 文法が難しいと感じたとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
26. 自分は日本人なので、英語は必要ないと感じたとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
27. 勉強しなくても誰からも怒られないと思ったとき ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
28. 授業の内容に疑問を持ったとき（こんなことをして本当に役に立つのかと思っ　たとき） ①---②---③---④---⑤---⑥---⑦
29. 外国人や外国の文化に興味を持てなかったとき
① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
30. 辞書を引くのが面倒だと思ったとき
① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
31. どうしてもテストで良い点が取れないとき
① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
32. 間違って恥ずかしい思いをしたとき
① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
33. 学習する目的がわからないとき
① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦
34. 英語を話している自分に違和感を覚えたとき
① --- ② --- ③ --- ④ --- ⑤ --- ⑥ --- ⑦

その他、項目に無いものがあれば、具体的に教えてください。
（  ）

dどれかに○をつけて下さい。
・性別教えてください
  ①男性    ②女性

・英語の学習は好きですか。
  ①嫌い           ②どちらかというと嫌い   ③どちらでもない
  ④どちらかというと好き   ⑤好き

・上記の質問で①嫌い、②どちらかというと嫌い、③書いた人に質問します。
いつごろから英語の学習が嫌いになりましたか？（  ）内に月も書いて下さい。

  ①小学校高学年       ②中学1年生（  ）月頃
  ③中学2年生（  ）月頃       ④中学3年生（  ）月頃
  ⑤高校1年生（  ）月頃     ⑥その他（  ）

・嫌いになった理由を、もし分かれば具体的にお願いします。
（  ）

ご協力ありがとうございました。
### Appendix 2: Varimax Rotated Factor Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F1 (Non-strategy)</th>
<th>F2 (Distrust)</th>
<th>F3 (Divide)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q21</td>
<td>.849</td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>-.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>.790</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>.775</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>.217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>.742</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q31</td>
<td>.602</td>
<td>.369</td>
<td>.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>.594</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>.585</td>
<td>.326</td>
<td>.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>.584</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>.380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>.301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>.929</td>
<td>.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td>.226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>.294</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.540</td>
<td>.331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.366</td>
<td>.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>.259</td>
<td>.246</td>
<td>.631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>.570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance (%)</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \alpha )</td>
<td>.916</td>
<td>.859</td>
<td>.746</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>