Probing the Antecedents of Iranian EFL Teachers' Motivation and Demotivation

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Abstract-*Teachers play the focal roles in the lives and learning of the students in their classrooms. They indeed serve many roles including, teaching knowledge to students, mentoring and nurturing students, becoming role models, and creating a friendly and facilitative learning environment. These encompassing roles underscore teachers' motivational disposition. The present article reports on a qualitative study exploring Iranian EFL teachers' motivating and demotivating factors. To do so, semi-structured interviews with 9 high school EFL teachers were conducted. The analysis of the interview protocols yielded a number of motivating and demotivating factors. These factors were categorized under three antecedents for motivation and three for demotivation. It was concluded that: a) most of the teachers were dissatisfied with students' inattention and inapt conduct of school officials or authorities; b) some were dissatisfied with payment and time restrictions; c) on the other hand, most of them were satisfied with students' enthusiasm; and d) some of them were satisfied with parents' appreciation.*

Keywords- Teacher motivating factors; teacher demotivating factors; Iranian EFL teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this article, we are going to scrutinize EFL teachers' motivational and de-motivational factors which would influence on their functioning. Motivation and its flip side, demotivation, are crucial for both students' and teachers' performance since even the most capable members of an organization will not perform efficiently unless they are motivated to do so (Fernet, 2008)[16]. By motivation, Harmer (2001, p. 51) refers to "some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do something". On the other hand, demotivation refers to the "specific external forces that reduce the motivational basis of behavioral intention or an on-going action"(Dörnyei, 2001, p.143)[9].

As a matter of fact, not only are these motivation and demotivation factors widespread in learners but also for teachers. A host of factors, such as students' characteristics, physical environment of the class, payment, supervision qualities, teachers' attributes, can affect teacher's functioning and could be the cause of motivation or demotion in teachers. In this study, we attempted to conduct a qualitative research on EFL teachers' motivating and demotivating factors via interviewing nine junior high school and high school teachers in the context of Iran.

A number of recent studies have explored teachers' motivation and demotivation; for instance, Fernet, Senécal, Guay, Marsh, and Dowson (2008)[15], studied job related motivation among teachers through their designed questionnaire. Fattash (2013)[14] carried out such a

research among university ESL teachers. In the similar vein, another study investigated teacher de-motivational factors in the Japanese language teaching context (Toshiko Sugino, 2010)[34]. However, to the best of our knowledge, no documented study to date has examined the motivating and demotivating factors of Iranian high school EFL teachers. The purpose of this study is to find out the antecedents of teacher motivation and demotivation among a group of Iranian EL teachers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teacher motivation

Motivation has been defined as something that stimulates the initiation and perpetuation of an action (Dornyei, 2005)[10]. In educational domains, students' motivation and success are highly determined by teacher motivation (DeJesus & Lens, 2005)[7]. Moreover, this motivation satisfies teachers and is be the cause of success for them in their profession.

Generally, some students are always anxious about language learning and they don't have high enthusiasm to learn English in the first place especially in rural areas where they have the perception that English wouldn't be so helpful for their future courses (Brown, 2008[3], Miyazato, 2001[28]). However, if we switch the negative intuition of students into positive one, we will give precious assistance to increase attention, motivation, and sense of connection to English (Brown, 2008)[3].

Through the ideas of two social cognitive theories of motivation-- social learning theory of internal-external locus of control (Rotter, 1966)[31] and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997)[2] motivational disposition is usually described. Self-determination theory (SDT) assumes three broad kinds of motivation which are expressed precisely by different levels of self-determination: From high to low self-determination, they are *extrinsic motivation*, *intrinsic motivation*, and *amotivation*.

Intrinsically motivated behaviors are part of the satisfaction or the enjoyment extracted from performing them. From the other point of view, *extrinsically* motivated behaviors are useful in nature. Putting it differently, behaviors are not presented for the activity itself but rather as a means to an end. SDT also recommended a last concept, namely *amotivation*, which refers to not be motivated intrinsically or extrinsically. Amotivation is parallel to the lower level of self-determination. We can call individuals amotivated when they are not engaged purposefully in specific behavior and they really don't know why they are doing it. Indeed, several studies indicated that, typically, women involve higher levels of intrinsic and identified regulation than men for their job (Vallerand, 1997)[38]. Also, some investigation have shown that teachers at elementary level involve higher levels of self-efficacy than high school teachers (e.g., Soodak & Podell, 1996)[33]. Because there is a connection between teachers' motivation, burnout and self-efficacy, elementary teachers should present higher levels of intrinsic and identified regulation but lower levels of introjected and external regulations and amotivation toward their work, when compared to high school teachers. There are three main reasons why teachers choose to teach based on Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)[8]. The reasons are *extrinsic*, *intrinsic*, and *altruistic* factors. *Altruistic* motivation or social utility value refers to the sort of motivation that teachers want to fabricate a social contribution, for instance willing to help children and adolescents to be successful, and increasing social equity (Watt et al., 2012)[39]. *Intrinsic* motivation is referred when teachers are satisfied with teaching itself and the challenging and creative nature of teaching inspires them to teach (Wong, Tang, & Cheng, 2014)[41]. *Extrinsic* factors are related to issues which are separate from teaching activity for instance, salary, social status, and prestige (Williams & Forgasz, 2009)[40]. The reasons teachers decide to teach can bring about different results such as experiencing various emotions and burnout (Wong et al., 2014)[41]. One of the main discoveries is that you can observe more positive outcomes in intrinsic and altruistic motivations rather than extrinsic motivation (Wong et al., 2014). Studies regularly indicated that motivation prevent burnout and amotivation causes burnout (Fernet et al., 2008, 2012)[15]. In addition, it is the highly recognized that intrinsic and altruistic factors are able to decrease burnout higher than extrinsic factors.

Dornyei (2001a)[10] noted that motivation is reckoned to be responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it (as cited in Ghanizadeh & Rostami, 2015)[23]. Suslu (2006)[35] appropriately stated that demotivated people who have lost inspiration to act are not as energized and activated as motivated people to the end of the task. Johnson (1986)[24] asserted that teacher motivation is based on three theories of motivations and productivity:

- Expectancy theory: it is possible for a person to struggle for work if there is a hope for award.
- Equity theory: any individuals will be dissatisfied if there is an unfair treatment for their tries and achievements.
- Job enrichment theory: if they become more productive employees, their work will be more challenging and diverse.

Motivation has got two main sources. Latham (1998) stated that clearly seen benefits such as salary, fringe benefits and occupation security are familiar as extrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000)[32] contended that intrinsic motivation is concerned with displaying an activity to succeed in getting a devisable results which varies with extrinsic motivation. The second motivation is intrinsic which Ellis (1984)[12] interprets it as self-respect of achievement and personal growth. Intrinsic motivation is probably to be raised by a sense of relatedness. Raffini (1996)[30] clarifies relatedness as the degree of emotional safety that teachers feel. Czubaj (1996)[5] asserts that the teachers would be more successful and less stressful with an internal locus of control in teaching and take higher scores in their assessment. According to Dornyei (2001a)[10], intrinsic awards are the most eminent and satisfying feature of teaching. White (2006) concluded that teachers' motivation are mostly intrinsic. As external stimulus (e.g. money, status) are not considerable enough to attract and keep teachers in the profession, intrinsic motives must be the key to provide satisfaction to teachers and help them to find enjoyment in their job. Tziava (2003)[37] maintained that it is a natural event that if the teacher is more motivated, the more he/she would be successful in giving the students the correct guidelines which will guide them to the gaining of the target language. He keeps on to say that to supplies a more motivating learning experiences motivated teacher is required. Csikszentmihalyi (1997)[4] also had emphasis on the importance of the role of teacher's motivation.

Dornyei (2001a, p. 165)[10] strongly believed that one of the most stressful professions is teaching. Ofoegbu (2004)[29] makes conclusions that motivation could be seen as any force that could decrease tension, stress, nervousness and frustration arising from a troublesome situation in a person's life. Further, he interprets that teacher motivation referred to those factors which will perform in the school system and without any availability for teachers could hinder performance, make stress, dissatisfaction and frustration all of which afterwards decrease classroom inferentiality and student quality

output. The most effective issues on motivation, cognition, and job performance are high degrees of job dissatisfaction, stress, and burnout (Dai & Sternberg, 2004[6], as cited in Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2015a)[18].

2.2 Teacher demotivation

Dornyei (2005c, p.143) conceptualizes demotivation as a "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action". Deci and Ryan (1985, p, 102)[8] presented the meaning of a similar term (amotivation) as, "the relative absence of motivation that is not caused by a lack of initial interest but rather by the individuals experiencing feelings of incompetence and helplessness when faced with the activity". Yan (2009)[42] made a distinction between the two terms with the meaning of amotivation connected to general results and anticipation that are not based on reality for some reason, whereas demotivation related to specific external causes. He further added that when a person has lost his or her interest for some reason is demotivated.

Hence, a demotivated person can be someone who has lost motivation because of negative external or internal elements (Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2015b)[19]. Dornyei (2001b)[11] identified some factors that might hinder students' motivation containing negative experiences with former teachers, low quality of school facilities and materials, lack of self-assured, bad notions of the L2 or L2 culture, negative attitudes of group members, and the reality that language study is obligatory (as cited in Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2015b)[19]. In the study by Ushioda (1998), it was asserted that when learners were asked what would be the cause of demotivation in their learning, teaching methodology, learning tasks, and the stress of assignments were found to be de-motivational factors.

In the domain of teachers, in a study by Kiziltepe (2008)[25] with three hundred teachers aged between 33 and 65 were, demotivating factors were categorized into five headings: students, economics, structural and physical characteristics, research, and working conditions. In general, the results indicated that students are the major source of motivation and demotivation for university teachers in Turkey. Ghanizadeh and Royaei (2015)[18] contended that teachers' emotional factors are the prime motivational detriments among English teachers.

Willos (2011) believed that classrooms with plethora of students have more negative influences than any positive. They would disturb students, make some embarrassment to take part in activities and in general the students' development, confidence and understanding. In addition to that it makes teachers anxious. Geitenbeek (2011)[17] argued that this kind of crowded classroom can negatively influence both teachers and students. They can expand the teacher's anxiety, exhaustion, and burn-out rate, both physically and mentally on the teacher. Lynch (2008)[26] identified three problems in English language learning and teaching. They are absence of learner motivation, lack of time, insufficient resources and materials and finally classrooms with plethora of students.

In the Japanese context, Arai (2004)[1] surveyed 33 university English instructors and reported that the demotivating causes for them contain teachers' attitudes toward students, teachers' personalities, teaching methods, and the teacher's language proficiency as well as uncomplicated and exhausting lessons with boring teaching materials. In a similar study, Tsuchiya (2004)[36] came up with six demotivating factors: a sense of English uselessness, a sense of inadequacy, little adoration, an incompatibility way of studying, a sense of discouragement, and a lack of approval.

3. METHOD

3.1 Participants

Participants were nine junior high school and high school teachers in the context of Iran who participated in a semi-structured interview. They were comfortable with making their thoughts public. They taught General English at high schools. Table 1 below indicates the teachers' profiles.

Table 1: *Profiles of 9 EFL Teachers*

Teacher's Name	Gender	Age	Years of Teaching	Qualification
Mr. Abbasi	Male	50	30	MA in TEFL
Mr. Kazemi	Male	28	10	BA in TEFL
Mr. Akbari	Male	40	26	BA in TEFL
Mr. Alizadeh	Male	42	25	BA in TEFL
Mr. Tahmasbi	Male	50	30	BA in English Literature
Mr. Afshar	Male	35	18	MA in English Translation
Mr. Naderi	Male	31	12	BA in TEFL
Mr. Karimpoor	Male	42	24	BA in English Translation
Mr. Moradi	Male	40	15	BA in English Translation

3.2 Data collection and analysis

Data collection lasted one week. We managed a time after their school classes to take the interview. The preferred language for acceleration in communication between the researcher and among the participants was Persian, although they were allowed to use English as an option. The second researcher translated all data with the supervising and emendating of the first researcher so as to avoid any feasible falsification in interpretations of the protocols. All interviews were audio-recorded and each interview lasted 30 minutes. This interview aimed to find out the teachers' motivating and demotivating factors. To ensure the validity or any correction by interviewees, interview transcriptions were sent to participants

4. FINDINGS

Analysis of interview extracts yielded a number of motivation and demotivation factors which affected these Iranian EFL teachers' performance and attitudes. As a laconic summary of what motivated and demotivated teachers more frequently, Table 2 below presents the results.

Table 2

Iranian EFL Teachers' Motivating and Demotivating Factors

Motivating factors	Demotivating factors
Class Environment	Students' Inattention
Teaching Facilities	Students' Attitude
Intrinsic Interest	Slow Learner
Students' Improvement	Working Conditions
Affective Teaching	Low Payment
Parents' appreciation	Officials' Conduct

As the evidence of the above finding, some of these factors are provided with the interview extracts:

4.1 Demotivating items

4.1.1. Students' inattention

It is the most powerful source of *demotivation* revealed in the present study. Findings indicated that almost all teachers mentioned students' inattention as a main source of losing motivation. For instance, Mr. Tahmasbi said that:

> When a passion is not showed to the lesson by student, or when they don't have the spirit of learning something and there is no responsibility for them to do their homework, I would absolutely get demotivated.

Another teacher, Mr. Abbasi said that:

> The most negative effect on my teaching is when I figure out that students pay the least attention to my teaching and it is infeasible to receive some positive feedbacks out of them.

Other teachers claimed that students' inattention, sleeping in class, talking together, using cell-phone, not doing class activities, are all major reasons of their motivation detriments. And influenced their teaching negatively. We classified the above-mentioned factors under students' inattention in the classroom.

4.1.2. Students' attitudes slow learning

Most of the teachers concurred that students' attitudes have highly influence on their job. For instance, when the students act as a way that the teacher feels that they don't accept their teacher can induce the feeling that they have no facilitative role in their students' performance and have no progress in attaining their teaching objectives

Mr. Afshar stated in the interview that:

> The conceptions and thoughts of my students are always effective in my teaching motivation. When some of the students do not respect me, and never pay a little attention to my class I will figure out that they do not want this class and not accept me as their teacher. It seems that somebody force them to come to the class.

4.1.3. Slow learning

Most teacher agreed that they will be demotivated by slow learners also it will affect their proficiency. For instance, Mr. Afshar stated in the interview that:

> Normally, students from different part of spectrums (different point of view) based on any level of their abilities are my students and I do try to don't be affected by slow learners (them).But most of the time when I receive no feedback out of some of them after a long attempt, it will affect my emotion and make me exhausted which get to the point that these energy that I'm spending on their learning could be useless.

On the other hand just some of them were dissatisfied with this issue. They asserted that if there are one or two slow learners in the class that would be a problem and it consumes lots of their energy but if all of them are slow learners that would be easier to manage. Also, Mr. Karimpoor stated a very widespread issue in the context of Iran which is:

> It depends on the class environment. In some classes there are students who are more proficient because of the out of school classes they attend in the institutes. On the other hand, most of them have low proficiency and it is time-consuming and laborious to adjust myself with the two groups. Indeed these issues will decrease the speed of teaching and the teacher must spent half of his energy.

4.1.3. Working conditions

The most crucial and effective ones were working conditions such as long teaching hours, much paper work, low payment, limitation of time, no appreciation to the teacher's status by parents or school authorities, and no bonuses. All of the interviewees weren't satisfied with these working conditions. They asserted that "the bad conditions such as the abovementioned issues will make us totally exhausted and despair. Although, we do our best effort to deal with this situation and never let it affect our classes it will inevitably make us demotivated." In

particular, Mr. Moradi opened up in the interview as reported in the following:

> Suitable work conditions have definite influence on teacher's job. If a teacher figure out that a lot of people are trying hard to make a better conditions for him, absolutely that teacher will have his 100 % attempt and will increase the quality of his job with studying more and using the best ways of methodology but unfortunately the current working condition has no decent account of this honorable and sensitive job which in turn would negatively influence our performance.

4.2 MOTIVATING ITEMS

4.2.1. Teaching facilities

In this case, all of the teachers concurred that an equipped class environment and the existence of teaching facilities would highly motivate them. In particular, adequate class equipment give them so much energy to accelerate and facilitate teaching. Mr. Alizadeh stated in the interview stated that:

> Teaching with using special equipment and class facilities (e.g. Movie, visual or auditory aids) are in the head of this job. This is in line with the expression that teaching without facilities is "Beating a dead horse''.

About teaching facilities one of them had responded differently. Mr. Kazemi mentioned:

Teaching materials are not so much important for me but their existence of are better than the absence of them.

4.2.2. Students' enthusiasm

All of the teachers agreed on this issue that when even when some students display interest and eagerness in the lesson and the class, t this will greatly motivate them. For instance, Mr. Akbari stated with whole pleasure that:

> One of the cases that causes a successful teaching occurs when students attentively listen to you and ask questions when the materials or teaching is ambiguous.

.In the similar vein, as Mr. Tahmasbi said,

> Even if when I see some positive outcomes out of my job, for instance by visiting old students that achieved their goals or by receiving appreciation e-mails or massages on the part of my student, I feel my interest is rising.

Also in line with these statements, Mr. Naderi stated a very interesting memory:

> I had a student who was so weak even he couldn't read a line but I never got disappointed. So I allocated a time to work more with him and fortunately, I saw a perfect improvement. He received a good score; this imparted a nice feeling and enhanced my passion to my job.

4.2.3. Intrinsic Interest in Job

All of the interviewees agreed on the issue that they enjoyed most about their career because they purposefully selected the profession out of their personal interest and this asset has been always inspiring for them. It helped them suitable establish rapport in the class and win students' trust. As Mr. Afshar stated in the interview that:

> A teacher is just a teacher and in any circumstances he has to love his job. First of all, the nature of his job is delicious especially when you are teaching somebody. But any way there are conditions influence on the idea and quality of his/her job.

Beliefs concerning personal interest in the profession were also reflected in their yearning for students' learning and improvement. Mr. Alizadeh said,

> I really enjoy most about my job when you see the result of your effort such as a student who didn't know anything from the beginning of the class, but now he can speak, read and write very well.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As stated earlier, the present study sought to investigate the antecedents of teachers' motivation and demotivation factors among the EFL high teachers in the context of Iran. In this article, we conducted a qualitative research by taking an interview out of nine EFL high school and junior-high school teachers. The results indicated that one of the most important issues which has high effect on teachers' motivation is students' feedback, attitudes, and interaction. Also other factors such as class environment, parents and society treatment, teaching facilities were the most frequently words that we heard out of the interviewees. On the contrary, the factors such as lack of time, negative feedback out of students, inappropriate treatment of school officials, burnout, emotions, and low payment were the most crucial factors of teachers' demotivation. This is in line with Fernet et al (2008)[16], Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2016b)[21], Sugino (2010)[34], Fattash et al (2013)[14], and Falout (2010)[13] who all studied demotivating and motivating factors separately. There are some limitations that should be taken into account. First, this study only examined the male teachers; females who might have various perspectives. Second, this study occurred in a short period of time; more comprehensive and deeper would obtain in longitudinal studies.

Based on the findings of the current study, it can be concluded that Students' inattention, slow learner, and working conditions have high influence on demotivation and students' attitude, positive feedback, respectful treatment, and class facilities are effective in teachers' motivation. In particular, by establishing the conditions for the development of teachers' motivation, we not only improve the quality of teaching process but also enhance the students' learning and affective mood. Finally, we can overcome these demotivating factors and strengthen their motivation by displaying high respect on the part of parents, students and officials. Educational authorities

recommended to equip classes with high-tech facilities and provide financial bonuses for teachers.

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