



## **STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF DEMOTIVATING FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CONSISTENCY OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN KRG OF IRAQ**

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### **Abstract**

The paper explores demotivating factors that influence the consistency of learning the English language of undergraduate students. A lot of research has been done to examine the demotivation of students; however, very little research has focused on exploring the demotivating components affecting the consistency of learning a language in the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. This work

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comprises students from diverse backgrounds, ages, and faculties at Tishk International University in Erbil, Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. A quantitative approach was chosen as a means of research design the results of which were analyzed with SPSS (version 27). The findings of the study revealed three major and three minor factors that affect the learners' consistency in English language development. This research provides significant insights and understanding of the obstacles the students face during their English language learning journey.

### **Introduction**

Nowadays, the English language has become one of the most widely learned languages by university students worldwide. However, learning requires consistency and effort for the effective acquisition of it; thus, it can create some demotivational aspects for learners. This article explores some demotivational factors that affect the students' learning consistency from the viewpoints of students at Tishk International University in Erbil city, KRG. Data for this study was collected from 99 students from different faculties and various grades of Tishk International University via Google Forms. A questionnaire with 25 Likert-scale questions was developed by adopting "The Motivation Scale (AMS)" by Vallerand et al. [18]. The survey was conducted online and was shared with students via the official communication means of the Tishk International University - SIS system. The results of data were analyzed using the SPSS (version 27) application. The findings suggested three major demotivational factors that affect the consistency of students in learning the English language, in particular, lack of time, pressure from the family members, and insufficient speaking practice during the lectures. The results of the study also showed that the participants were eager to learn the English language if the above-mentioned factors had been significantly taken into consideration by the university administration as well as by the teachers. This work provides significant insights that can be used by educators in different contexts when teaching a foreign language. Since this research was conducted in one university only, the results should not be considered as final for the particular topic.

### **Literature Review**

People often attribute a lack of determination in their efforts to learn a language to two factors: personal reasons and the system or environment in which they are learning. By uncovering the tapestry of ideas and insights that scholars have contributed over time, the difficulties of language acquisition occur within many cases due to common reasons yet challenging to solve.

According to Getie [6, p. 4], “the absence of willingness or what seemed to be attitude problem in the learning of English amongst the learners in Debre Markos Comprehensive High School could be the result of the lack of crucial English language proficiency and achievement (p. 4)”. To start with, descriptive statistics was employed to investigate demotivation factors by Pinar Koçer in her study in 2018. She illustrated that the highest frequency of demotivation factor was class characteristics which was followed by class environment, experiences of failure, and lack of interest. The least frequently mentioned factor was teacher competence. Adding a similar perspective from Han et al. [7], qualitative findings showed that major factors that demotivate students are negative attitudes toward their classmates, teacher-related factors, personal issues, class characteristics, test anxiety, failure experiences, and the education system. Also, regarding the education system, the best illustration was from Abaunza et al. [1] explaining that the factors focus on three fractions: in first place comes memorizing words and phrases, then related to concern and frustration for exams, and third the outdated textbooks.

Even during the secondary learning stages, some people lose control of the skills or balance between the skills, and some tend to have control over skills like reading but lose other skills like speaking as a reason for the imbalance of the educational system. Ren and Abhakorn [13, p. 8] pointed out that students’ relatively low actual positioning of English listening and speaking may be the result of the popularity of grammar-translation teaching in China’s middle schools and universities. However, students in diverse types of universities have different attitudes toward their similar required

positioning of grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills. Students often mentioned these were relatively easy for them, which was one of the cognitive origins of their demotivation.

To support our first analysis as it tends to be either of one reason, Nevisi and Farhani [2, p. 8] declared that advanced learners were reported to resort to intrinsic factors as the driving forces for learning English. The authors stated that personal motivation and challenges were seen as the motives behind the English language learning objectives of students. Beginners and intermediate language learners expressed the extrinsically oriented factors as their source of motivation toward English learning and pointed to reasons such as getting a job, pursuing education, earning more money, traveling to foreign countries, fulfilling academic purposes, etc.

To remain competitive on a global scale, non-native English speakers must develop proficiency in English as a foreign language (EFL). However, students may face challenges in maintaining their progress or proficiency as they continue to learn and practice EFL. One critical aspect of EFL acquisition that has received significant attention from researchers such as Bernaus et al. [3] is the role of motivation in the language learning process. According to Gardner's socio-educational model of motivation, a number of elements, including perspectives, competence, and motivation, play an important part in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition (Bernaus et al. [3]). The Self-Determination Theory developed in [14] asserts that success in long-term language acquisition is highly dependent on an individual's capacity for internal motivation. Students who have multiple approaches to learning may have difficulty keeping up with the class if their educators only employ one method of instruction, which can lead to a loss of motivation on the part of such learners (Tuan et al. [17]).

Sulaiman and Abdul Aziz [16] carried out research on the function of teacher support in the acquisition of a foreign language. They discovered that teacher support had a significant impact on students' motivation, engagement, and consistency in the acquisition of English. The authors

proposed that educators should offer tailored assistance in classrooms by providing individualized feedback, recognizing and correcting individuals' learning needs, and offering chances for free exchange with the viewpoints of learners.

Another issue that might make it difficult to remain consistent in one's efforts to learn English as a foreign language is the stress caused by tough tasks. Hu [10] discovered that students who assessed a task as being too challenging demonstrated less consistency compared to the ones who viewed assignments as doable and easy. Thus, assigning tasks that are appropriate to student's level of proficiency and gradually adding more challenging assignments help overcome the feeling of overwhelming students.

Nevertheless, this research study revealed three major factors that demotivate students from learning the English language consistently: time management, lack of motivation, and teacher support.

The ability to effectively manage their time is one of the most important factors contributing to English language learners' levels of motivation. Yasin and Adnan [20] found that students who had difficulty efficiently managing their time seemed to suffer from demotivation in their language learning. It happens because the students experience tension and anxiety because of the enormous number of tasks that they are required to complete. As a direct consequence of this, students could experience a loss of motivation and interest in acquiring English skills. Effective time management is significant to avoid poor performance and lack of motivation, as explained by Liu [12]. This may be particularly important for students who are striving to learn a foreign language and need to balance competing demands on their time.

In addition to time management skills, Wang and Sun [19] highlight the vital role played by educators in fostering student motivation. Specifically, their research suggests that learners who feel supported by their English teachers are more likely to be motivated and engaged in the process of learning English. This underscores the importance of providing strong guidance and mentorship to students striving to master a new language.

Students might experience a greater sense of self-assurance and be more driven to study English if their teachers give customized comments, support, and direction. On the other side, students might lose their motivation and develop unfavorable attitudes about studying English if their professors do not provide adequate assistance or are not helpful (Rudzki and Edwards [15]).

### **Research Question**

The current research aims to determine the following question that is found problematic among Tishk International University teachers and students:

- What are the major and minor significant factors that demotivate university students from engaging to continuously learning the English language?

### **Methodology**

#### **Research design**

A quantitative approach was employed to analyze the data of the current study. It included 99 student participants (61 females and 38 males) from different backgrounds, grades, and faculties of Tishk International University. English language was not their mandatory lesson back at their schools. They took a one-year preparatory course at Tishk International University before they enrolled in the faculties of Tishk International University. The tables below represent the frequency, percentage, and total number of respondents who participated in the research study.

**Gender**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Female	61	61.6	61.6	61.6
	Male	38	38.4	38.4	100.0
	Total	99	100.0	100.0	

**Faculty**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Dentistry	8	8.1	8.1	8.1
	Education	34	34.3	34.3	42.4
	Engineering	5	5.1	5.1	47.5
	FASE	10	10.1	10.1	57.6
	Nursing	5	5.1	5.1	62.6
	Pharmacy	12	12.1	12.1	74.7
	Science: IT and medical analysis	25	25.3	25.3	100.0
	Total	99	100.0	100.0	

**Grade**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	I am a freshman (grade 1)	22	22.2	22.2	22.2
	I am a junior (grade 3)	35	35.4	35.4	57.6
	I am a senior (grade 4)	12	12.1	12.1	69.7
	I am a sophomore (grade 2)	30	30.3	30.3	100.0
	Total	99	100.0	100.0	

**Procedure**

The questionnaire was conducted online through Google Forms and was shared with students via Tishk's official means of communication - SIS (Students Information System).

The names of the study participants were kept confidential. They were also informed about the withdrawal from participation in the survey any time they wanted to.

### Data analysis

To analyze the students' responses, descriptive statistics in the SPSS (version 27) was employed to calculate the percentage of students' responses on demotivating factors that caused the inconsistency in learning English language.

### Findings and Discussions

Table 1 reveals that major significant factors that demotivate students' consistency in learning English are lack of speaking practice during classes, deficiency of time dedicated to learning the English language, and pressure from their family members to do well in their children's studies.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of major factors causing demotivation in consistency of learning English

Demotivating factors	<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. deviation
Lack of speaking practice during the classes	99	2.52	1.146
Deficiency of time dedicated to learning the English language	99	2.83*	1.196
Pressure from my family to do well in my studies	99	2.57**	1.311

\*Highest mean and SD

\*\*Second highest mean and SD

Table 1 displays that the *lack of time students could dedicate to language learning* was cited as the highest impacting factor ( $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = 1.196$ ) followed by family pressure on students' studies making it the second salient source of demotivation ( $M = 2.57$ ,  $SD = 1.311$ ). Lack of speaking practice during the language classes made it the least effective factor impacting students' inconsistency ( $M = 2.52$ ,  $SD = 1.146$ ).



**Table 2.** Major factors causing demotivation in consistency of learning English

Demotivating factors	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Frequency	Valid percent	Frequency	Valid percent	Frequency	Valid percent	Frequency	valid percent	Frequency	Valid percent
I am not able to dedicate enough time to learning English language*	22	22.2%	28	28.3%	31	31.3%	12	12.1%	6	6.1%
I am not able to practice speaking enough in English language	14	14.1%	26	26.3%	34	34.3%	13	13.1%	12	12.1%
I feel pressure from my family to do well in my studies**	28	28.3%	20	20.2%	29	29.3%	11	11.1%	11	11.1%
Total	99	100%	99	100%	99	100%	99	100%	99	100%

\*Highest percentage

\*\*Second highest percentage

In Table 2, the frequency and percentage of students' responses on major impacts on their demotivation towards learning the English language are represented. According to this analysis, 50.5% in total (22.2% - strongly agree and 28.3% - agree) make time deficiency dedicated to learning a language a leading factor for participants' demotivation. As the second highest impacting feature behind their demotivation, 28.3% and 20.2% of study subjects suggested family pressure by strongly agreeing and agreeing, respectively.

**Table 3.** Less minor factors causing demotivation in the consistency of learning English

Demotivating factors	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Frequency	Valid percent	Frequency	Valid percent	Frequency	Valid percent	Frequency	Valid percent	Frequency	Valid percent
Amount of vocabulary taught**	9	9.1%	31	31.3%	32	32.3%	16	16.2%	11	11.1%
Lack of confidence in speaking ability	5	5.1%	24	24.2%	27	27.3%	19	19.2%	24	24.2%
Amount of grammar rules taught*	25	25.3%	30	30.3%	19	19.2%	21	21.2%	4	4.0%
Total	99	100%	99	100%	99	100%	99	100%	99	100%

\*Highest percent

\*\*Second highest percent

Table 3 demonstrates secondary components behind the students' demotivation towards the consistency in learning English language according to which 25.3% of respondents strongly agreed and 30.3% agreed about overtaught grammar classes and made it the dominant component among the secondary most impacting factors. The amount of vocabulary taught made it the next demotivating aspect in this section with 9.1% of participants strongly agreeing and 31.3% agreeing on it. Lack of confidence in speaking was identified as the least demotivating feature with 5.1% and 24.2% strongly and simply agreeing, respectively.

The crosstab (crosstabulation) tables present a comprehensive analysis of responses regarding the major factors that affect students' demotivation in language learning consistency. The tables categorized data by faculties and genders displaying a detailed view of how major demotivating features vary across different departments. The following faculties were included in table analysis: dentistry, education, engineering, FASE (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences), nursing, pharmacy, IT (Information Technologies), and medical analysis.

The crosstab table includes items such as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree for each response.

**Table 4.** Crosstab analysis of responses across the faculties regarding the first major demotivating component behind a language learning consistency

			Faculty							Total
			Dentistry	Education*	Engineering	FASE	Nursing	Pharmacy	Science: IT and medical analysis	
I am not able to dedicate enough time to learning English language.	Strongly agree	Count	5	6	3	0	2	2	4	22
		% of total	5.1%	6.1%	3.0%	0.0%	2.0%	2.0%	4.0%	22.2%
	Agree	Count	0	10	1	2	0	7	8	28
		% of total	0.0%	10.1%	1.0%	2.0%	0.0%	7.1%	8.1%	28.3%
	Neutral	Count	2	10	0	4	3	3	9	31
		% of total	2.0%	10.1%	0.0%	4.0%	3.0%	3.0%	9.1%	31.3%
	Disagree	Count	0	5	1	2	0	0	4	12
		% of total	0.0%	5.1%	1.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%	12.1%
Total		Count	8	34	5	10	5	12	25	99
		% of total	8.1%	34.3%	5.1%	10.1%	5.1%	12.1%	25.3%	100.0%

\*Highest percentage of respondents

Table 4 presents the highest percentage of respondents from education faculty that strongly agreed (6.1%) and 10.1% of respondents agreed on the deficiency of time they could dedicate to learning English language. Responses from the Faculty of Science are followed by the Faculty of Education with 4.0% and 8.1% of responses agreeing on the major factor, respectively.

**Table 5.** Crosstab analysis of responses across the year/grade regarding the first major demotivating component behind a language learning consistency

			Grade				Total
			I am a freshman (grade 1)	I am a junior (grade 3)	I am a senior (grade 4)	I am a sophomore (grade 2)	
I am not able to dedicate enough time to learning English language.	Strongly agree	Count	6	8	3	5	22
		% of total	6.1%	8.1%	3.0%	5.1%	22.2%
	Agree	Count	8	8	6	6	28
		% of total	8.1%	8.1%	6.1%	6.1%	28.3%
	Neutral	Count	4	14	3	10	31
		% of total	4.0%	14.1%	3.0%	10.1%	31.3%
	Disagree	Count	3	3	0	6	12
		% of total	3.0%	3.0%	0.0%	6.1%	12.1%
Total		Count	22	35	12	30	99
		% of total	22.2%	35.4%	12.1%	30.3%	100.0%

The analysis of the respondents' grade/year indicates that the major percentage of responses came from juniors (3rd grade students) and freshmen due to the workload they usually faced, whereas the second grade and senior students had less percentage of responses with regard to the first major demotivating factor affecting the consistency of learning English language.

**Table 6.** Crosstab analysis of responses across the faculties regarding the second major demotivating component behind a language learning consistency

			Faculty							Total
			Dentistry	Education	Engineering	FASE	Nursing	Pharmacy	Science: IT and medical analysis	
I feel pressure from my family to do well in my studies.	Strongly agree	Count	3	7	0	2	2	3	11	28
		% of total	3.0%	7.1%	0.0%	2.0%	2.0%	3.0%	11.1%	28.3%
	Agree	Count	2	6	2	3	1	3	3	20
		% of total	2.0%	6.1%	2.0%	3.0%	1.0%	3.0%	3.0%	20.2%
	Neutral	Count	2	15	1	1	1	3	6	29
		% of total	2.0%	15.2%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	3.0%	6.1%	29.3%
	Disagree	Count	1	4	1	1	1	0	3	11
		% of total	1.0%	4.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0.0%	3.0%	11.1%
	Strongly disagree	Count	0	2	1	3	0	3	2	11
		% of total	0.0%	2.0%	1.0%	3.0%	0.0%	3.0%	2.0%	11.1%
Total		Count	8	34	5	10	5	12	25	99
		% of total	8.1%	34.3%	5.1%	10.1%	5.1%	12.1%	25.3%	100.0%

**Table 7.** Crosstab analysis of responses across the year/grade regarding the second major demotivating component behind a language learning consistency

			Grade				Total
			I am a freshman (grade 1)	I am a junior (grade 3)	I am a senior (grade 2)	I am a sophomore (grade 4)	
I feel pressure from my family to do well in my studies.	Strongly Agree	Count	9	9	5	5	28
		% of total	9.1%	9.1%	5.1%	5.1%	28.3%
	Agree	Count	4	6	1	9	20
		% of total	4.0%	6.1%	1.0%	9.1%	20.2%
	Neutral	Count	4	11	3	11	29
		% of total	4.0%	11.1%	3.0%	11.1%	29.3%
	Disagree	Count	1	3	3	4	11
		% of total	1.0%	3.0%	3.0%	4.0%	11.1%
	Strongly Disagree	Count	4	6	0	1	11
		% of total	4.0%	6.1%	0.0%	1.0%	11.1%
Total		Count	22	35	12	30	99
		% of total	22.2%	35.4%	12.1%	30.3%	100.0%

Tables 6 and 7 demonstrate that first- and third-year students from science and education faculties (11.1% and 3.0% vs 7.1% and 6.1%, respectively) agreed that family pressure on participants' educational progress slowed down the process of learning English.

**Table 8.** Crosstab analysis of responses across the faculties regarding the third major demotivating component behind a language learning consistency

			Faculty							Total
			Dentistry	Education	Engineering	FASE	Nursing	Pharmacy	Science: IT and medical analysis	
I am not able to practice speaking enough in the English language.	Strongly agree	Count	0	3	1	1	2	3	4	14
		% of total	0.0%	3.0%	1.0%	1.0%	2.0%	3.0%	4.0%	14.1%
	Agree	Count	0	13	3	2	0	3	5	26
		% of total	0.0%	13.1%	3.0%	2.0%	0.0%	3.0%	5.1%	26.3%
	Neutral	Count	3	12	0	4	1	5	9	34
		% of total	3.0%	12.1%	0.0%	4.0%	1.0%	5.1%	9.1%	34.3%
	Disagree	Count	1	2	1	2	1	0	6	13
		% of total	1.0%	2.0%	1.0%	2.0%	1.0%	0.0%	6.1%	13.1%
	Strongly disagree	Count	4	4	0	1	1	1	1	12
		% of total	4.0%	4.0%	0.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	12.1%
Total		Count	8	34	5	10	5	12	25	99
		% of total	8.1%	34.3%	5.1%	10.1%	5.1%	12.1%	25.3%	100.0%

**Table 9.** Crosstab analysis of responses across the year/grade regarding the third major demotivating component behind a language learning consistency

			Grade				Total
			I am a freshman (grade 1)	I am a junior (grade 3)	I am a senior (grade 2)	I am a sophomore (grade 4)	
I am not able to practice speaking enough in the English language.	Strongly agree	Count	4	4	5	1	14
		% of total	4.0%	4.0%	5.1%	1.0%	14.1%
	Agree	Count	9	8	1	8	26
		% of total	9.1%	8.1%	1.0%	8.1%	26.3%
	Neutral	Count	6	10	4	14	34
		% of total	6.1%	10.1%	4.0%	14.1%	34.3%
	Disagree	Count	2	6	2	3	13
		% of total	2.0%	6.1%	2.0%	3.0%	13.1%
	Strongly disagree	Count	1	7	0	4	12
		% of total	1.0%	7.1%	0.0%	4.0%	12.1%
Total		Count	22	35	12	30	99
		% of total	22.2%	35.4%	12.1%	30.3%	100.0%

Regarding the primary factor influencing the consistency of learning English, the data indicates that first-, second- and third-year students struggle with practicing speaking skills during the English language lessons.

### **Conclusion**

This research study sheds light on major and minor influencing factors that demotivate students' consistency in learning the English language in university settings. The findings revealed the following three major components that highly affect their language learning consistency: lack of time dedicated to learning English, pressure from family, and insufficiency of English-speaking skills during the classes. The large number of grammar rules instructed in English classes, abundance of vocabulary, and lack of confidence in expressing themselves in the English language were reported as the secondary factors affecting the students' inconsistency in learning the English language. By thorough understanding and analysis of these factors, institutions and lecturers can tailor their educational approaches and instructional methods to create a motivational and sustainable environment that fosters students to master the English language and to overcome demotivation.

### **Limitations**

The current research provides significant insights into demotivating features that influence students' English language learning consistency. However, there are limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the sample size of this study is limited to one specific educational setting in Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq, so the results of findings should not be generalized or be applicable to a broader student-population within Kurdistan or Iraq. Next, the primary focus of this study was to determine major and minor factors affecting the consistency of English language learning without a further investigation on possible interventions that could be addressed to overcome students' demotivation. Finally, the study applied a quantitative approach only to analyze data. For an in-depth and detailed response analysis, a mixed methods technique could be employed by

subtracting or generating themes from responses of participants to an open-ended questionnaire.

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