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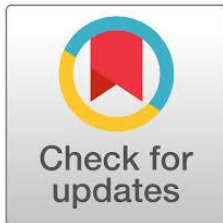
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Demotivating factors in learning second language: The case of Chinese language learners in Ghana

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Abstract

Demotivation is a negative counterpart of motivation that affects student learning process and outcome. The present study attempted to determine the demotivating factors in learning a second language in Ghana using the Chinese language as a case study. A structured survey questionnaire data were collected from two hundred students learning Chinese at the University of Ghana to achieve the stated objective. The study identified the significant demotivation factors affecting students learning a second language: Teacher competence and teaching style, learning materials, crowded classroom, high competition in acquiring scholarship to China, less chance to get Chinese Ambassador Scholarship Award, and lack of self-confidence and experience of failure. Teachers should use more appropriate textbooks to improve their teaching skills. Also, students should be motivated to learn and participate in classroom activities to form lasting reminiscences.

Keywords: University of Ghana students; Chinese language learners; Demotivating factors

Introduction

Numerous factors are affecting the second language learning process, among which motivation plays a crucial role. Motivation is a driving force that energizes humans behavior. Motivation to learn L2 is a complex construct, considering that language is always socially and culturally bound and hence, quite different from other school subjects (Kandambi, 2018). Motivation provides students with directions and aims to follow. Kandambi (2018) has shown that students with higher motivation are fruitful in their language learning. However, a situation where a student feels bullied by the lecturer or humiliated by the teacher is more likely to reduce students' motivation to learn.

Furthermore, Azar and Tanggaraju (2020) firmly believed that motivation is the neglected heart of language teaching. In line with this, Adwani and Shrivastava also stated, "it is observed that all of the learning activities are filtered through the students' motivation. Without student's motivation, there is no pulse; there is no life in the class" (as cited in Azar & Tanggaraju, 2020, p. 324).

In contrast to motivation, demotivation can be considered as the negative counterpart. Some researchers (Li & Duff, 2018; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Liu, Zheng, Ma, & Wei, 2020) go on to expand Dornyei's original definition to cover both external and internal factors (i. e., demotivators), which reduce or diminish the motivation to study the second language. Demotivation has recently attracted the attention of educationalists considering its direct educational implications (Jahedizadeh & Ghanizadeh, 2015; Liu, 2020). Besides, knowing what motivates a learner, being aware of the hazards that undermine motivation is essential for both teachers and learners. However, a demotivated learner is someone who has lost interest for some reason. The loss of interest can originate from different sources of demotivation. For instance, an unprepared teacher or an uninteresting textbook can act as a demotivation for a learner.

Li and Zhou (2017) identified several demotivating factors in second language learning: lack of interest, teachers, and experiences of failure that probably diminish learners' desire and motivation towards learning. Khan stated that "despite a sound planning, purposive curriculum, suitable textbooks, qualified teachers and effective administration, the teaching-learning process

sometimes seems to be ineffective...and unsatisfactory” (as cited in Al-Khairy, 2013, p. 366). Based on studies by Kandambi (2018) in China, Altiner (2018) in Turkey, and Zhang (2020) in Ireland the most demotivating factor in second language learning was teachers’ incompetence. On another note, Nkrumah and Darko (2020) suggested that no language acquisition or teaching could occur in a classroom. Learners might bring along with them in the learning process.

Most studies on demotivation were conducted in countries other than African or particularly not in Ghana. Liu et al. (2020) explored the demotivation among Uzbekistani students while learning Chinese in a Chinese university. Sixty-seven (67) Uzbekistani students were given questionnaires, and 30 of them were interviewed about their experiences of learning Chinese using a mixed-method. The data analysis revealed that a lack of self-confidence, insufficient learning opportunities, a lack of learning support, and teacher qualities were the most salient factors affecting Uzbekistani students’ demotivation while learning Chinese. In light of the findings, it was suggested that language educators and educational administrators enhanced language learners’ interest in and enthusiasm for learning Chinese to sustain their learning efforts, and Chinese universities could achieve sustainable multilingualism. Whiles this study focuses on demotivation factors of learning Chinese, it used mixed-method either than the quantitative method being deployed in the current study. Not only that, this study was conducted in China and not in Africa or Ghana.

Pretty (2019) sought to investigate the factors contributing to the demotivation of Zimbabwean students studying Chinese as a foreign language at the University of Zimbabwe. The study took the qualitative approach, and data was collected from participants through semi-structured interviews from a sample of 20 sophomore students and two native Chinese instructors from the University of Zimbabwe’s Confucius Institute. The major demotivation factors found in this study were the instructor’s inferior teaching methods, teacher’s behavior, the consistent failure of exams by students, the difficulty of the language itself, and the work overload of the students. The main recommendations given by the researchers include maintaining a good teacher-student relationship, using diverse teaching material and methods in the language classroom, utilizing role models to guide students, running awareness campaigns on the effects of culture on learning of foreign languages, considering teacher and students’ emotions and providing counseling services to

both students and teachers where necessary. This study focuses on the same varies as the topic under study. However, it did not take place in Ghana and used a qualitative research approach with only 20 respondents compared to the 200 respondents of the current study.

In a study conducted by Nkrumah and Darko (2020) on attitudes of second language learners in Ghanaian universities regarding the Chinese language, the study targeted 492 students pursuing Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) at the University of Ghana (UG) and the University of Cape Coast (UCC). The study employed a quantitative research design. The study's findings indicated that several factors affected Chinese language learning, such as feeling reluctant, gender, peer pressure, social class, age, anxiety, encouragement, and motivation. The study recommends that local Chinese teachers need more scholarships to be given to Ghanaian students who desire and are interested in learning the Chinese language. Though the analysis was done in Ghana, the focus of the study was on attitudes of the students learning the Chinese language and not the demotivating factors that affected them in their studies.

Demotivation factors are becoming more popular among researchers worldwide, especially in Asian countries (Duff, Lui, & Li, 2017; Pretty, 2019). Regardless, little is known if anything about this study in Ghana. Studying demotivation factors of learners of the Chinese language cannot be overemphasized. This condition opens new chapters who how to strategize mechanisms to help motivate students. Furthermore, demotivation has an exact intrusive on educational inference with the rising of relevant learning of Chinese language as a foreign language.

The literature as reviewed makes room for the current study to contribute to the body of knowledge in Ghana as little is known about it here. The study, therefore, aims to find out the demotivating factors in learning a foreign language at the University of Ghana.

Second Language Learning

Language is critical. Ghana as a nation is geographically but linguistically diverse. As Nkrumah and Darko (2020) have pointed out that education and language issues are very complex in Africa because of the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual situation. The English language was the official second language during the colonial era as far back as (Cheong et al., 2019). It began in the Central Region at Mfantshipim and Adisadel schools in Cape Coast, when colonial school authorities deemed

it necessary to introduce French language learning at its inception in 1950. With the inception of formal education and the subsequent use of English as the medium of instruction, the indigenous languages were seen as “inadequate” as teaching media (Nkrumah & Darko, 2020).

The world is a global village, and it will become closer if we learn other people’s languages. To enhance international understanding, learning a second language like Chinese is essential. One of the reasons why there are many conflicts worldwide is the lack of language and cultural awareness. Lack of intercultural sensitivity can lead to mistrust and misunderstandings. The inability to understand one person’s or people’s language may lead to suspicion or doubt and eventually mistrust. Globalization gains momentum with the ability to communicate in other people’s tongues. For survival and better cooperation, every person needs to understand a foreign language, significantly more extensive speakers like Chinese. A competent person in a foreign language can bridge the gap between the two people or nations.

However, English and French are not the only foreign languages studied in Ghana. Other foreign languages such as Russia, Spanish, Swahili, and Arabic are also studied. Due to the increasing number of Chinese companies in Ghana, it has become crucial to learn Chinese, especially in universities (Nkrumah & Darko, 2020). The expansion of Chinese businesses in Ghana has resorted to high-quality interpreters and translators of the Chinese language. Chinese language learning and teaching started in August 2009 at the University of Ghana. Still, the first Confucius Institute was established in 2013 to promote the teaching and learning of the Chinese language and culture in Ghana.

Research Question

The study is designed to answer the following question, which intends to provide the demotivating factors on students studying Chinese at the University of Ghana.

What are the demotivating factors discouraging learners of the Chinese language at the University of Ghana?

Research Objectives

To identify the factors affecting students studying the second language at the University of Ghana

Methodology

The population of the study was the students learning Chinese at the University of Ghana. The study adopted a quantitative research design, under which it deployed descriptive quantitative research techniques. Descriptive research was also appropriate for the study as it aimed to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends of the samples. Using non-probability sampling techniques, precisely convenience, and purposive sampling techniques, the researcher sampled two hundred (200) students from the population. Convenience sampling was merged with purposive as the students were chosen based on their availability to participate in the study. The students were selected based on their study program and knowledge of the Chinese language through the purposive sampling technique. The framework developed by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), as used in Ali, M, Ali, S. S., and Nasir (2021), was used to solicit the most impressing factors that cause demotivation. Five (5) point Likert scale (agree and disagree) where 1 is Strongly Agree, 2 is Agree, 3 is Neutral, 4 is Disagree, and 5 is Strongly Disagree also used to support the questionnaire for data collection. Structured and closed-ended questionnaires were used to gather information from these respondents based on the study's objectives, as reflected in the literature review. The data collected was analyzed using Excel. The findings were presented using descriptive statistics, including tables and charts.

Results

The study sought to answer the following research questions on demotivating factors affecting students styling Chinese language: Teacher Competence and Teaching style: Lack of learning content and Material, High competition in acquiring scholarship to China, Crowded classroom, and less chance to get Chinese Ambassador Scholarship Award and lack of self-confidence and experience of failure.

Table 1 indicates that 190 (95%) of the students state that inferior teaching methods from teachers to students cause demotivation, for example, poor classroom activities, lack of modern technology during teaching, and poor practical strategies to aid the understanding of the various topics of study. The teaching is either slow or too fast, which makes the lesson incredibly dull. 85%

of the students say that teachers ‘incompetence cause demotivation in students. For example, some teachers are less resourceful, disorganized, discourage students from asking questions, and strict. 93% of the students attest that lack of commitment on the part of the teachers causes demotivation in students learning a second language.

Table 1. Teacher Competence and Teaching Style

Item	Respondent	Percentage%
Lack of qualified teachers	170	85%
Lack of commitment	186	93%
Lack of Teaching methods	190	95%

Figure 1. Lack of learning Material

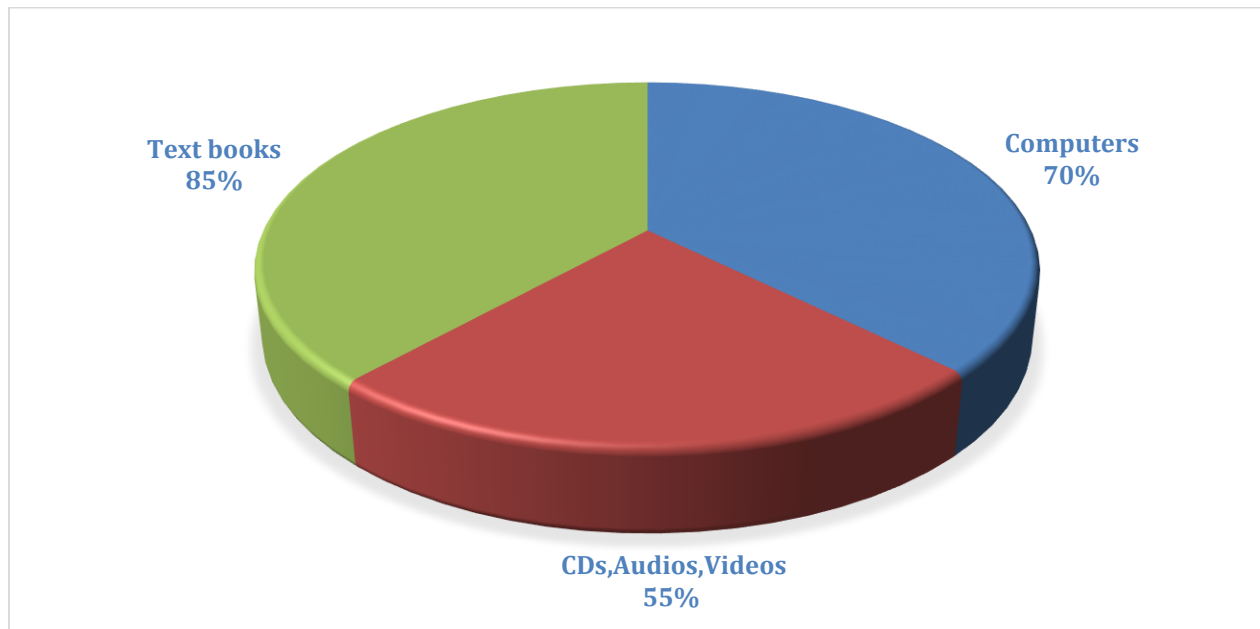
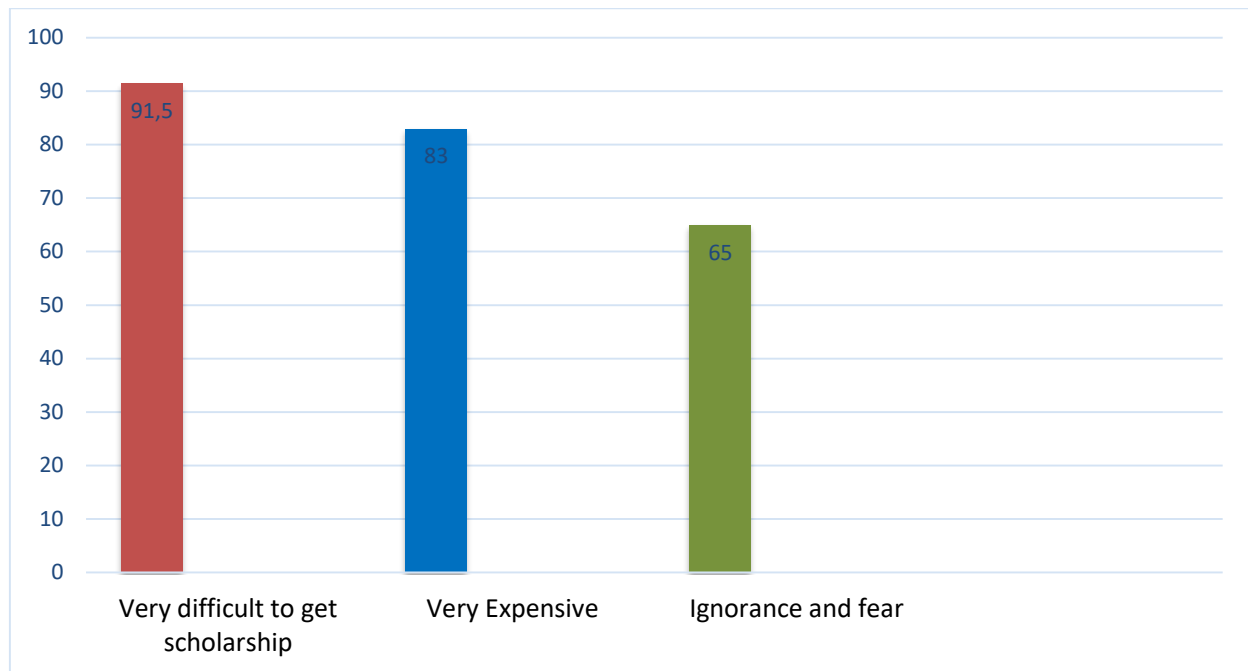


Figure 1 shows studying materials used by students. 85% of students state that they do not have access to the required textbook, which will help them improve upon their studies to enhance

their skills and effort in learning, and because of this result, it affects their academic performance. 55% of the students state that lack of CDs, videos, and audio affect their learning because when resources are used, the natural rhythm of the language is precise. 70% of the students reveal that they do not have access to computers to study.

Figure 2. High Competition in Acquiring Scholarships to China



High competition in acquiring scholarships to China

Figure 2 shows that 91.5% of students getting access to a scholarship to China is hard to get. When they work hard to do their best in terms of academic performance, passing the Chinese proficiency test with the hopes of getting access to the abroad language programs in China, but it turns out to be unfruitful because of high competition in gaining a scholarship. 83% of the students attest that getting a scholarship to China is not cost-effective. 65% of the students said ignorance and fear set in due to high competition to get a scholarship to China.

Figure 3. Crowded classroom

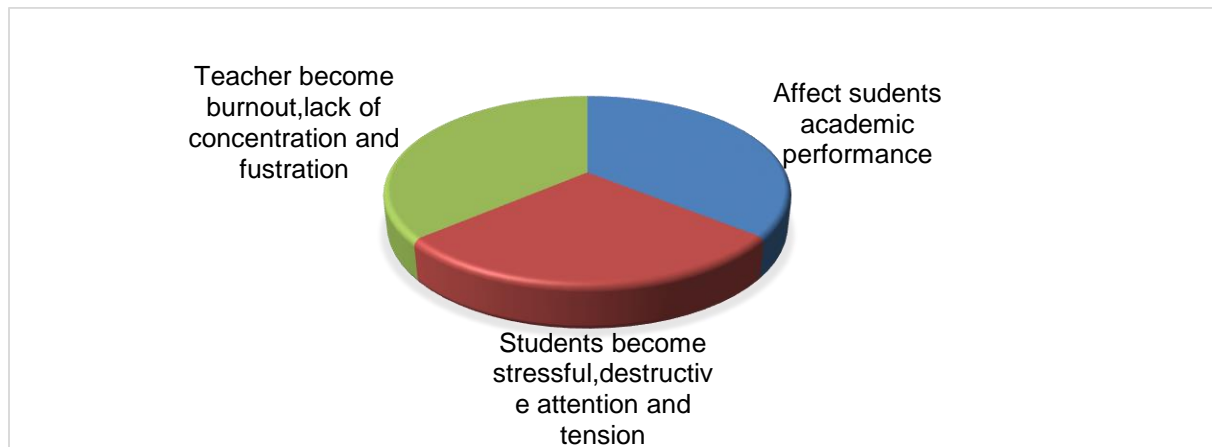
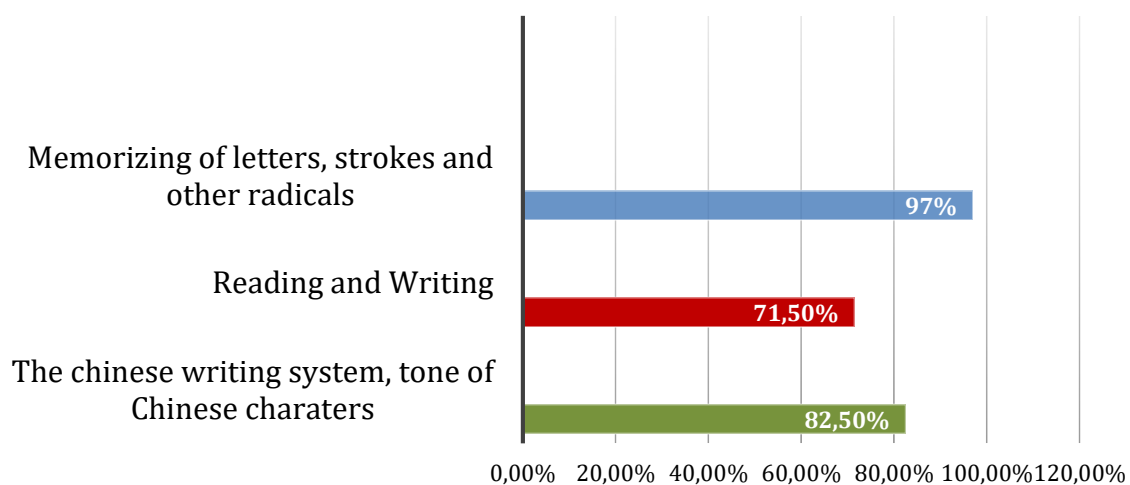


Figure 3 shows a crowded classroom in the Learning Environment. 90.5% of the students state that a crowded classroom affects their performance. 77.5% of the students reveal crowded environment makes them stressed. It distracts their attention and tension in the classroom, and 91% of students attest that the teacher becomes burnout, lacks concentration on the students' side, and is frustrated.

Figure 4. Difficulties with Chinese characters



Difficulties with Chinese characters

Figure 4 shows that 82.5% of students said the Chinese characters in a writing system, tone of Chinese characters demotivate them. 71.5% of the students said reading and writing more passages is a problem. With enumerated factors, intrinsic motivation is critical to encourage the students to perform well. 97% of students said memorizing letters, strokes, and others sometimes demotivates them to learn the foreign language. When one loses intrinsic motivation, it decreases satisfaction and performance in learning.

Table 2. Less chance to get Chinese Ambassador Scholarship Award and lack of self-confidence and experience of failure

Items	Respondents	Percentage%
a) Difficult to get the Chinese ambassador award	193	(96.5%)
b) Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) or Proficiency test affects student's scholarship award	185	(92.5%)
c) It affects student's enthusiasm and the effort of learning	177	(88.5%)
Lack of self-confidence and experience		
i) Expressions of anxieties, worries, and fear	180	(90%)
ii) students feel mocked by their fellow friends	166	(83%)
iii) Awkward, unlovable, loss of interest in language learning	165	(82.5%)

Table 2 shows that 96.5% of students feel difficulty getting the Chinese ambassador award. 92% of students reveal that *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi* (HSK) or proficiency test affects their scholarship award due to good grade and Grade Point Average (GPA) requirements. However, if the students do not have the requisite Chinese HSK or the proficiency test/exams, it will go against them when applying for the Chinese ambassador scholarship. 88.5% of students attest that their enthusiasm and the effort of learning becomes low. On the other hand, 90% said lack of self-confidence and

experience of failure leads to anxieties, worries, and fear. 83% feel mocked by their fellow friends. Anxiety over making mistakes in the L2 may be considered another cause of reduced self-confidence, while 82.5% said lack of confidence leads to unlovable and lost interest in language learning.

Discussions

The study examined the main demotivating factors for Chinese language learning among university students of Ghana. A descriptive research design was used to gather information through a survey. Bryman (2016) clarified that the demotivated learner is once motivated but has lost motivation for a reason.

Teacher Competence and Teaching Style

The findings revealed that 190 (95%) of the students saying inferior teaching methods from teachers to students cause demotivation, such as teachers' personality, poor management of the classroom, and poor use of practical methods to understand the various topics teachers study. 85% of the students state that teachers' incompetence cause demotivation in students. For example, some teachers are not well trained, less resourceful, disorganized, discourage students from asking questions, and strict class affects their study. 93% of the students attest that lack of commitment on the part of the teachers causes demotivation in students learning a second language. This finding is similar to Liu et al. (2020), whose data analysis revealed that teacher qualities, a lack of self-confidence, insufficient learning opportunities, a lack of learning support were the most salient factors affecting students' demotivation. Pretty (2019) found that instructor's inferior teaching methods, teacher's behavior demotivated students learning Chinese.

Learning Materials

However, when one loses motivation, it decreases satisfaction and performance in learning. The result revealed that the lack of studying materials was considered one of the demotivating factors affecting the students' learning. Pretty (2019) and Kandambi (2018) concluded that course books and learning content were prominent demotivators. 85% of students state that they feel bored to learn when the requisite learning materials are not available. Invalid aids of learning material, coherence, and disparities staged in some books cause demotivation in foreign language learners.

Furthermore, some students feel bored with some topics like the characters being taught without any feasible demonstrations. 55% of the students mention that lack of CDs, videos, and audio affect their learning because when they listen to these videos and audios, it enhances their skill. 70% of the students said they do not have access to computers to study.

Crowded Classroom

The study discovered that 70.5% of students' respondents believed that crowded classroom in the learning environment was the most influential factor that discouraged students from learning because they become stressful, destructive attention, lack of concentration, and the teachers become burnout. The class environment hinders students' engagement in learning a foreign language, for instance, when the lessons are taught in the classroom. The students leave the lecture hall outside the learning environment. They do not get access to other people in the language to communicate or interact. As a result, it does not enable them to have fluency in the language, which discourages them from studying. Also, learners are frightened of being mocked and humiliated by their classmates when they make mistakes in the classroom, which demotivates or prevents them from learning the language because they think their colleagues are far better than them.

High Competition in Acquiring Scholarship to China

The findings show that 91.5% attest that access to get a scholarship to China is difficult. 83% also say that it is costly. Students' performance sometimes depends upon these aspects. For example, when the students pass the Chinese proficiency test with the hopes of getting access to the abroad language programs in China, it turns out to be unfruitful as a result of high competition in gaining a scholarship to China. They can have the edge to pursue the language nationally and internationally to uplift the school's name and career in all endeavors of life and through their academic excellence. When students have access to the abroad language programs, it will boost their morale, confidence and encourage other students to learn hard to achieve the objectives and goals in life.

Difficulties with Chinese Letter Characters

Furthermore, the results show that 82.5% said the Chinese characters in a writing system, tone of Chinese characters demotivate them. 71.5% of students mention that reading and writing more passages is a problem. With slanted factors, intrinsic motivation is essential to encourage the

students to perform well. 97% of students state that memorizing letters, strokes, and others sometimes demotivates them to learn the foreign language.

The result reveals the teacher's focus on the learner's motivation and motivational strategies to increase learners' motivation.

Limited opportunities to get Chinese Ambassador Scholarship Award, lack self-confidence, and experience of failure

The findings reveal that 96.5% attest that access to the Chinese Ambassador Scholarship Award is complicated. 92% mention that HSK or proficiency test affects student's scholarship award. For example, after passing the Chinese process test and having good grades and a required Grade Point Average (GPA), the students are turned down by the abroad language emergency program, which demotivates them from learning the foreign language amicably. In this vein, it affects the enthusiasm and interest in Chinese language learning. Disappointment due to test scores, lack of acceptance by teachers and others, and inability to memorize vocabulary and idioms (Kandambi, 2018). Kandambi (2018) stated that demotivating factors obstruct a learner's learning motivation. Finally, the findings revealed that 90% of students believed that lack of self-confidence and experience of failure demotivates students in learning the foreign language because it leads to anxieties, worries, and fear. 82.5% of students also feel mocked by their colleagues or their fellow friends because of low self-esteem and experience of failure.

Conclusion

The study analyzed the demotivating factors that affect Ghanaian students studying Chinese as a second language at the University of Ghana. The findings signified that the learning environment was the most demotivating factor that discourages students from learning, which cannot be overlooked among Ghanaian students studying Chinese as a second foreign language at the University of Ghana. Considerably, other factors including teacher competence and teaching style, learning materials, high competition to get a scholarship to China, difficulties of the Chinese characters, limited chance to get Chinese Ambassador Scholarship Award, lack of self-confidence, and failure, demotivated learners. Students would feel excellent and appreciated when being

motivated by the teachers when they academically excel in their studies, which boosts their morals in climbing to higher heights of their lives and endeavors. Suggestions were put across to avoid the demotivation factors among Ghanaian students and other similar contexts: the textbooks used by the teachers should be revised to improve their teachings skills, there should be solid and intimate cooperation among the teachers and students. The Chinese language should not only be practice in the Chinese classroom, but it should also be practice outside the academic setting. Students should be guided in the areas of weakness; opportunities should be given to students to travel abroad to learn other different obsessions that will enhance their skills and knowledge academically.

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