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# **Demotivating Factors among Indonesian EFL Teachers**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Demotivation has been an issue in many EFL countries as revealed by many prior studies. However, limited studies were conducted to investigate it in Indonesian context, particularly in Indonesian higher education level. This qualitative study was done to investigate demotivators perceived by EFL teachers in Indonesia. To collect the data, three Non-English Department teachers were involved in a semi-structured interview. They were asked to share their perceptions and experiences on what demotivated them as teachers. The results showed nine factors causing demotivation among Indonesian college teachers. Teachers' poor physical fitness, students' negative attitudes, responses and behaviors, unfixed curriculum and school systems, poor salary, poor quality of school facilities, abundant administrative tasks, poor relationship among colleagues, inappropriate teaching materials, and lack of opportunity for professional development were reported as demotivators undergone by the teachers. The study was concluded by offering some implications to cope with demotivators.

*Keywords:* motivation, demotivation, demotivator

## **BACKGROUND**

Teacher motivation is an integral part in second language learning. It encompasses areas regarding career choice that teachers choose, complexities during the teaching process, and factors influencing the relations between teachers and students. Those three factors contribute to the motivation teachers have. Dörnyei (2001) highlighted that teacher motivation involves

some aspects, one of which is motivation to teach. It implies that teacher motivation can affect not only teachers but also students in the long run. Teachers who have lack of motivation - or are demotivated - in teaching will not make sufficient preparation for their teaching and might not perform well. This situation can influence students and their learning

achievement negatively (Dörnyei, 2001).

Therefore, it is noteworthy to maintain teachers' motivation in teaching. By doing so, demotivation - a condition where teachers lose their motivation - can be avoided.

The notion of demotivation is defined as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action" (Dörnyei, 2001, p.139). Second language demotivation particularly the one undergone by teachers are enacted by various factors. From teacher-related aspects, it can be caused by teachers' workloads (Dörnyei, 2001; Dinham & Scott, 2000; Spear, 2000), self-efficacy, and autonomy (Dörnyei, 2001). Other factors such as curriculum (Dinham & Scott, 2000), the image of the profession, and salary (Spear, 2000) were also reported as contributing factors to teacher demotivation. These findings echo to those of other studies conducted in EFL context (Baniasad-Azad & Ketabi, 2013; Hettiarachchi, 2013; Kim, Kim, & Zhang, 2013; Sugino, 2010). Compared to the findings in other contexts, the most salient aspects leading to teacher demotivation revealed in these studies are related to students' attitude and motivation toward English learning, students' lack of interest, and poor English proficiency. These common factors can possibly emerge in Indonesia as a country where English is a foreign language.

In Indonesian higher education, English becomes a compulsory subject as mandated in the National Standard of Education No. 19/2005, article 9, paragraph (2). It indicated that all universities should hold English classes, including Non-English Department programs. Even though it is regulated that all departments must offer English to their students, English classes in Non-English Department are conducted in limited contact hours. In the setting of this study, for instance, English for Non-English Department students is offered as a non-credit or one-credit course in which the teaching and learning process lasts from 100 to 200 minutes a week. Consequently, students do not get much exposure to English learning and teachers do not have

adequate time to teach English. Besides time, students' attitudes also become a challenge for Non-English Department teachers. When the researcher herself taught in the setting of the current study, many students showed negative attitude on English learning and tended to overlook the importance of attending English classes. These problems may cause demotivation among Non-English Department teachers. If it is not properly addressed, it can affect English teaching-learning in Indonesian higher education, especially in Non-English Department programs.

The aforementioned issues indicate that actually many factors can make Non-English Department teachers feel demotivated in teaching. Identifying those factors is mandatory in order that negative impacts of teacher demotivation can be avoided. However, only few studies were conducted to investigate the demotivators in Indonesian context, particularly in higher education. This study was conducted to investigate the demotivating factors perceived by Indonesian EFL teachers. This research is limited to identify the factors from Non-English Department teachers' perspectives in university context.

## **DEMOTIVATION**

The notion of demotivation as the opposite of motivation is defined as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action" (Dörnyei, 2001, p.139). Unlike motivation which might bring significant impacts on a foreign language learning, demotivation tends to bring detrimental impacts to those who undergo it. If teacher motivation is regarded "infectious", teacher demotivation will likely influence students' learning negatively (Dörnyei, 2001).

Demotivation can be analyzed from Activity Theory perspective first proposed by Leont'ev (as cited in Kim & Kim, 2013). It was then developed by Engeström, (as cited in Kim & Kim, 2013) in which the element of community was added from the initial model proposed by

Leont'ev. Therefore, in Engeström's model, Activity Theory consists of mediational tool, subject, object, rule, division of labor, and community. Of the five elements, Kim and Kim (2013) asserted that mediational tool is mandatory as it drives someone to focus on something. Mediational tool can be in forms of people or non-living beings. In the context of instruction, it can be students, teachers, teaching materials, teaching strategies, and many others (Kim & Kim, 2013).

The occurrence of teacher demotivation can be analyzed from Engeström's Activity Theory perspective. Teacher demotivation occurs due to the gap between two elements of Activity Theory, i.e. mediational tool and community (Kim & Kim, 2013). Seeing this phenomenon from teachers' perspective, teachers are demotivated as the beliefs in their instruction serving as the mediational tool are not supported by their community. In this case, the community which can be either students, colleagues, school authorities, or others do not react as what teachers have expected, so they feel demotivated. To overcome demotivation, this gap should be filled in.

## **PREVIOUS STUDIES ON DEMOTIVATION IN EFL CONTEXT**

Studies investigating demotivating factors in EFL context have been conducted in various countries, one of which is a study by Sugino (2010) in Japanese context. Questionnaires were distributed to 97 lecturers in Japan. The study revealed some factors causing demotivation among English teachers. The teachers felt demotivated due to students' negative attitude, unclear curriculum goals, teaching materials, students' ability, and school factors.

Another study on demotivating factors was also conducted by Kim, Kim, and Zhang (2013). Kim, Kim, and Zhang compared the demotivating factors perceived by Chinese and Korean English teachers by conducting a mixed-method study. Questionnaires were distributed to 58 Chinese and 94 Korean English teachers. The findings showed that the number of students in each class became a factor demotivating both

Chinese and Korean English teachers. Chinese English teachers were also demotivated by the high expectation parents had. Korean English teacher, on the other hand, felt demotivated due to high demands of administrative tasks and students' lack of interest in English learning.

In Iranian and Japanese context, Baniasad-Azad and Ketabi (2013) did a comparative study to examine the demotivators among Iranian and Japanese English teachers. The data were obtained by using questionnaires followed by semi-structured interviews. The results showed that demotivators emerged differently in each context. Iranian English teachers were demotivated in regards with curriculum, bonus, appreciation, unstable employment system, students' lack of interest, and minimum research funds. Meanwhile, in Japanese context, students' negative attitudes, long contact hours, overabundant paperwork, and lacked variety of teaching methods became demotivators in teaching.

Hettiarachchi (2013) also investigated aspects of motivation and demotivation among English language teachers in Sri Lanka by doing surveys to 54 Sri Lankan teachers and interviewing five of them. The research has found that the major demotivating factors among Sri Lankan EFL teachers were insufficient learning facilities, inefficiency of "school administration and zonal education offices" (p.8), difficulties in obtaining teacher transfers, the gap between the English curriculum and students' English proficiency, and the poor relationship among colleagues.

The aforementioned related studies were all conducted in EFL context which is in line with the nature of English in Indonesia. As EFL teachers, Indonesian teachers can possibly undergo demotivation in teaching. They may also deal with demotivators which can hamper their teaching if it is not well-addressed in the long run. However, there have not been many studies conducted in Indonesian context aimed to identify demotivating factors perceived by Indonesian EFL teachers, particularly those teaching at tertiary educational level. Therefore,

a study to investigate demotivating factors perceived by Indonesian EFL college teachers should be conducted.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims at examining a phenomenon of demotivation undergone by non-English department teachers. Thus, qualitative method was suitably employed as it studies “phenomena that occur in natural settings” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p.133). This study involved three full time English teachers employed in a language center of a private university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, as the participants. The three female participants possessed the same characteristics as participants; they were full time teacher teaching Non-English Department students, had been teaching in the institution for more than five years, and were willing to participate in the current research. Later, in the data presentation, their names were changed into pseudonyms as Diana, Siska, and Lina to maintain their privacy. This research was conducted in October 2016.

To collect the data, semi-structured interview was conducted to the three participants. The interview was audio-recorded and done in some steps. First, the researcher checked the concept of demotivation to the participants by asking them to define what demotivation was. It

was done to ensure that both the researcher and the participants had the same concept of demotivation. The participants were also asked whether they had undergone demotivation in their teaching. Next, the participants were asked to explain factors they perceived causing demotivation. Lastly, the research restated all factors the participants mentioned to check the validity of the data. The obtained data were then analyzed qualitatively through coding to find the themes and patterns.

### RESULTS

Based on the interview done to the three participants, all of the participants had the same concept of demotivation. Being connected to teaching, they believed that demotivation was a state where teachers lost their motivation or had no motivation to teach. It was also found that all of the participants had ever undergone demotivation in their teaching. Two of the participants, Lina and Diana, confessed that they sometimes felt demotivated. To Siska, although teaching was like “a sanctuary” to her, she did not deny that many factors impinged her motivation to teach. The interview also revealed nine factors the three participants perceived as demotivators. The summary of the emerged demotivators was summarized in table 1.

**Table 1 : Emerged demotivators**

Categories	Demotivators
Teacher-related factors	Poor physical fitness
	Abundant administrative tasks
	Poor salary
Student-related factors	Students' negative attitudes and behaviors
Other factors	Unfixed curriculum and school system
	Poor quality of the school facilities
	Inappropriate teaching materials
	Poor relationship among colleagues
	Lack of professional development programs

### **Teachers' physical fitness**

Teaching is an activity which requires good physical condition. If this physical fitness is not fulfilled, it might result in demotivation like what was revealed from one of the participants. Diana claimed that she felt demotivated in teaching when she was not feeling well. She said, "poor physical fitness makes me feel demotivated".

### **Students' attitude, responses, and behaviors**

The result of the interview indicated that all of the participants felt demotivated due to students' negative attitude and lack of responses. Diana claimed that one of the demotivators she perceived was when "students' responses to what we teach is not as what we expected, like when students feel bored, lose their interests in learning, be passive in the teaching and learning process, and lack motivation to learn". Siska has shared belief with Diana's on students' attitude and responses as demotivating factors in teaching. She added that it forced her to put extra efforts to deal with the students. Besides students' attitude and responses, students' behaviors were also reported as being a demotivator for teachers. Lina reported that "trouble makers in class who tend to demand more, dominate other students, and love showing off" made her feel reluctant to teach. This result was also supported by Siska who said that "students who are difficult to control and always make jokes" demotivated her.

### **Curriculum and school system**

In the institution where the three participants worked, students were grouped based on their proficiency level measured through an English Proficiency Test (EPT). The students were then put into classes based on those who have the same range of EPT score, for example those whose EPT score is lower than 395 went to Level 1. With the currently-applied system, many students stayed at the same level as they could not increase their EPT score significantly. As a result, they would get the same module and materials. Two of the participants, Diana and Lina put her

concern on this curriculum and system. They claimed that this system demotivated them as a teacher as well as their students. Diana said that "many students lose their interests and enthusiasm in attending English classes because they learn something similar". Consequently, she had to put more efforts to liven her class to improve her students' motivation. Diana and Lina, who had shared experience teaching students at the same level for more than two semesters, also said that within this curriculum and system, they had to "work harder to prepare teaching materials" as their students had learnt the same materials from the same module in the previous semesters. These challenges demotivated them in teaching under the current curriculum and system applied in their institution.

### **Teaching materials**

Teaching materials are one of the prominent aspects in teaching. Teachers usually have their considerations and expectations on the materials they select for their students. However, their considerations sometimes are not in line with that of their students which results in demotivation. This result was found from Lina's interview. She asserted that she felt demotivated because the materials she gave to her students did not meet students' needs and expectations. She gave an example, "my students want to learn TOEFL but they get General English here". Another demotivating factor is when the students did not show their enthusiasm with the materials she had prepared. She said, "materials I provided did not make them feel enthusiastic, it was too easy for them, not challenging". The discrepancy between teachers' and students' expectation on teaching materials leads to teacher demotivation.

### **Salary**

Financial rewards can influence teachers' motivation in teaching. If the financial rewards teachers get are not in accordance with efforts they make, demotivation can highly occur. Two of the participants perceived that salary became a demotivating factor for them though it did not

affect their professionalism when teaching. Diana, for instance, stated, "teaching honorarium I get and the efforts I have made are imbalance, and it sometimes demotivates me". In line with Diana, Lina added that "no salary raise within the past few years and the low amount of the salary" became a contributing factor leading to demotivation.

### **School facilities**

Another reported demotivator is school facilities. Siska felt demotivated when "the room is warm because the air conditioner does not work properly". Similarly, Lina stated that "the air conditioner and the projector are out of order" in some of the rooms she used. Consequently, students kept complaining to her. This facility problems also diminished students' concentration, and shortened their attention span which eventually demotivated her as the teacher.

### **Administrative tasks**

Besides teaching, many teachers have to take care of administrative tasks. As full-time staffs, the three participants were also in charge of some tasks where they became the coordinators. Lina, who was in charge of syllabus and material development for the English classes, pointed out that sometimes she felt demotivated due to "abundant demanding non-teaching tasks". She also said, "the need to meet the deadline of these administrative tasks disrupts my preparedness in teaching and preparing materials". These non-teaching tasks may impinge teachers' motivation as teachers since they will have more workload. Relationship among colleagues. Another demotivating factor found in this research is in terms of relationship among colleagues. When the relationship between teachers and their colleagues - it can be other teachers or staff - does not work, it can possibly demotivate teachers in their teaching. This result was found from the interview conducted to Lina. She stated, "if it has something to do with job, like there is a problem with colleagues, it can affect me in my teaching in a negative way". This factor demotivated her in that she became less enthusiastic in teaching.

### **Professional development**

For teachers, the opportunity for a professional development program they get can influence their motivation to teach. One of the participants, Lina said that she felt demotivated because of limited opportunities to join professional development programs she got in her institution. She stated, "there is no training or close supervision which evaluates whether my teaching is good or bad". It demotivated her as the school authorities might not notice if she performed well as a teacher. Compared to her previous institution, she claimed that professional development programs in her current institution were very limited. Whereas, she believed professional development is important for teachers.

### **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study were discussed based on three categories, i.e. teacher-related factors, student-related factors, and other factors, as shown in Table 1. The first result in the teacher-related factors indicates that teachers' physical fitness becomes a demotivator in teaching. Similar finding was also found in Sugino's (2010) study in which the participants reported that health condition became a factor demotivating them in teaching. It is inevitable that when teaching, teachers are required to do some energy-draining activities, like standing for hours, moving around to monitor students' work, or dealing with misbehaved students which consume teachers' energy. Therefore, doing these activities can demotivate teachers if they are not physically well. Another factor demotivates teachers in teaching found in this study is the abundant administrative tasks teachers need to accomplish. These non-teaching-related tasks can interfere with teaching especially when teachers have limited time to prepare their teaching due to the overwhelming tasks. This factor varies in China and Korea (Kim et al, 2013). Korean teachers tended to deal with similar problem in which they have to deal with administrative tasks. Unlike Indonesian and Korean EFL teachers, Chinese EFL teachers tend to have more

freedom to focus on their teaching as they do not have to deal with administrative tasks.

The current study also reported that salary becomes a demotivator for teachers in teaching. Though the participants argued that the unsatisfactory salary they got did not interfere with their teaching, they admitted that it demotivated them. This finding can be analyzed with Engeström's Activity Theory in which the discrepancy between teachers' expected salary and the actual salary they earn causes teacher demotivation. However, this result contradicts what Hettiarachchi (2013) found. In these two studies, to Sri Lankan and Turkish EFL teachers, salary does not influence their motivation as teachers. Though findings differ in these three studies, the unsatisfactory salary Indonesian teachers perceived is worth taking into account, so demotivation teachers undergo due to this factor can be overcome.

Beside demotivators coming from teachers, students also play a big role in causing demotivation to teachers. This study showed that the participants were demotivated by the negative attitude their students had towards English learning. When students do not show their interests and motivation in the English teaching and learning process and give insufficient responses to teachers' instruction as what teachers have expected, teachers can feel demotivated.

This result can be explained using Engeström's Activity Theory. Teachers' expectation on students' positive attitude towards English learning - serving as an Activity Theory's mediational tool - is not met in the real practice as students show negative attitude, instead. Consequently, teachers feel demotivated. As teaching is a reciprocal activity between teachers and students, the failure of one party in fulfilling the role can demotivate the other party. Students who do not show positive attitude or make responses to teachers' instructions, for instance, can demotivate the teachers. Besides students' negative attitude and lack of responses, the way students behave in class also contributes to teacher demotivation. Students who become trouble makers or behave negatively tend to consume

teachers' attention in the teaching and learning process. Other students who behave positively, tend to be overlooked or feel intimidated by this negatively-behaved students. This finding is in agreement with what Sugino (2010) found in his study. One or two rebellious students tend to make others and teachers feel uncomfortable during the teaching and learning process.

The issues in terms of curriculum and school system, teaching materials, and school facilities turn out to contribute to demotivation teachers have. The results indicate that within the new curriculum and school system, both students and teachers feel demotivated as neither the curriculum nor the system support the learning progress students should have made. Many students stayed at the same level; therefore, they felt they did not learn something from the teaching and learning process. Teachers, consequently, have to deal with these disappointed students and their complaints. This situation somehow demotivated them whenever they were going to teach. This issue echoed what Baniasad-Azad and Ketabi (2013) found in their study where teachers are demotivated when they are forced to follow a particular curriculum. In addition to curriculum and school system, this study also revealed that teaching materials become a demotivator for teachers in teaching. When selecting materials, teachers usually have made adequate considerations that materials they choose meet students' needs. However, sometimes teachers' expectation is not in line with their students'. This discrepancy finally demotivates teachers. Baniasad-Azad and Ketabi (2013) also found that when teachers do not find relevancy on materials they use and students' needs, they will feel demotivated. Besides curriculum, school system, and teaching materials, school facilities were also reported as a demotivator in this study. Unlike the finding of Hettiarachchi (2013) which reported that Sri Lankan EFL teachers were demotivated due to lack of facilities they have in their school, the classes where the Indonesian EFL teachers teach are actually well-equipped with facilities like air-conditioners and projectors. However, they

claimed that those facilities sometimes did not work. This problem demotivates them as usually students complain on these technical problems and it eventually distracts the flow of the teaching and learning process.

The last demotivators perceived by Indonesian EFL teachers found in this study were related to relationship among colleagues and professional development programs. The teachers perceived that poor relationship they have with other colleagues sometimes influence their teaching. This is in line with the findings of Hettiarachchi (2013). Lack of teamwork (Hettiarachchi, 2013) can lead to teacher demotivation. In terms of professional development, many teachers are motivated when they have opportunities to develop themselves professionally by joining professional development programs. However, it was found that this kind of opportunity was not obtained by the teacher involved in this study and it demotivates her. Besides, it was also figured out that monitoring to teacher performance can also affect their motivation in teaching. They will be demotivated if the efforts they make to perform well is not noticed by other faculty members due to unavailability of a teacher monitoring program.

## **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

This study aimed at identifying demotivators perceived by Indonesian EFL college teachers in teaching. The results revealed nine demotivators categorized into teacher-related factors, student-related factors, and other factors as factors demotivating Indonesian EFL teachers in teaching. In teacher-related factors, teachers' poor physical fitness, abundant administrative tasks, and poor salary become factors demotivating the teachers. Besides teachers, students also contribute to teacher demotivation when they show negative attitudes towards English learning and give insufficient responses in the class. Other factors, i.e. unfixed curriculum and school system, poor quality of school facilities, inappropriate teaching materials, poor relationship among colleagues, and lack of professional development programs were also

reported as demotivators for Indonesian EFL college teacher in teaching.

The results of the current study lead to some implications for Indonesian EFL teachers and school authorities. Firstly, it was revealed that teachers feel demotivated due to poor physical fitness, abundant administrative tasks, and poor salary. Therefore, school authorities should consider reducing the number of administrative tasks assigned to teachers, so they can manage their time for teaching, accomplishing the administrative tasks, and taking care of themselves including their health. The result also indicates the need to evaluate the salary for teachers as it was reported that that they should have received bigger salary with the efforts they made, and there has been no raise in the past few years. Secondly, the results indicate that teachers do not get many opportunities to attend professional development programs and get supervision in their teaching. Hence, more regular professional development programs and teaching supervision should be provided to improve teachers' teaching performance. By doing so, it is expected that teachers have more knowledge and skills in selecting materials which meet students' needs and expectation as well as coping with different characteristics of students. Lastly, the study showed that there is an issue with the existing curriculum and school system applied in the setting of this study. Though it is limited to a particular institution, the results have shown that this curriculum and system demotivate not only the teachers but also the students. It was also found that students do not have opportunities to significantly proceed to a higher level. Thus, evaluation to the existing curriculum and school system should be administered, so further steps to better it can be taken.

The present study is limited to a few participants and the use of single data collection method which is interview. Also, it was conducted to an institution which applies a specific curriculum and school system which might not be implemented by other institutions. Therefore, generalization cannot be done for the

results of the study as the results might not represent the whole Indonesian EFL college teachers. To gain more representative results, it is recommended to involve more participants and multiple data collection methods in further studies on demotivating factors. Also, it is suggested that future studies can be conducted in more higher education institutions.

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