Demotivating Factors for Saudi EFL Learners: A Comparative Study between Arts and Science Tracks Preparatory Year Programme Students

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Abstract

While several studies in L2 deal with motivation in English language learning, demotivation has recently become the focus of much research. Following Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) theoretical framework, this study aims to investigate the demotivation factors that affect Saudi students learning English in the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) at a Saudi university. The data were collected from a random sample of 221 university students from the Arts Track (103) and the Science Track (118). Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a questionnaire with two open-ended questions and analysed using SPSS and content analysis. The results revealed that the main demotivating factor that affects both tracks is 'experience of failure and test score'. In addition, there was no significant difference between the students on the Arts Track and the Science Track pertinent to factors such as: 'experiences of failure and test scores', 'class environment', and 'learning content and materials.' However, there was a significant difference between the two tracks related to 'teachers' competence and teaching styles', 'characteristics of the classroom' and students' 'lack of interest' factors. The study's findings may have broader implications because they suggest that teachers can significantly impact students' intrinsic motivation as they can motivate low-performing students and those who have failed. It also suggests that teachers should dissuade students from comparing themselves to their classmates, avoid making comparisons among students, and use more communicative language teaching methods. Saudi pre-service and in-service EFL instructors should be better prepared to identify the primary sources of their students' demotivation and provide solutions to improve the learning environment.

Keywords: external motivation, internal motivation, self-determination theory, Saudi Arabia

1. Introduction

Motivation is one of the most critical factors that affect language learners. Second or foreign language learning motivation can be interpreted as to why learners want to learn the target language and what keeps them interested in learning it. The vital role of motivation appears to affect language learners' attitudes and their interest in the language in being successful language learners. As a result of its significance, several studies explored motivation in language learning (Altsasan, 2016; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei, 1998; Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013; Fuentes Hernandez & Florez, 2020; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Noels et al., 2000; Noels, 2001; Oxford, 1994; Seven, 2020; Tuan, 2011; Vallerand, 1997). While these studies investigated the positive side of motivation, there is a negative side of motivation: demotivation. A demotivated learner is "someone who was motivated but has lost his/ her commitment/ interest for some reason" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013, p.138). It is essential to understand the positive side of motivation and what increases learners' interest; however, it is also vital to investigate the reasons behind the loss of learners' interest as it affects learners' achievement and, ultimately, their language acquisition.

In the context of this study, all newly enrolled full-time students at KAU must spend the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) studying English on several tracks as part of the programme. The two tracks investigated in this study are the Arts and Science Tracks. The Arts Track is for students who want to go to faculties where English is not the primary language of instruction and must successfully complete the curriculum over the course of one academic year. During this year, the complexity and scope of the content steadily rise until they reach B1 level (CEFR). The Science Track is for students who want to enrol in faculties where English is the primary
language of instruction and must successfully complete the curriculum over one academic year. Their program ends at the B2 level (English Language Institute, 2022). Demotivation in the Saudi EFL context - specifically the PYP - has yet to be explored extensively, and since students in the Arts Track and Science Track have distinct curricula, textbooks, and learning experiences, studying the demotivating factors of both populations is of significance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Motivation

Motivation is a phrase that is widely used in a variety of areas. ‘Interest’, ‘eagerness’, ‘will’, and ‘wish’ are all terms that can be used to describe motivation. Dörnyei (1998) debates the precise concept of motivation and states that although 'motivation' is an expression regularly used in educational and research contexts, it is surprising how little agreement there is in the literature about the specific definition of the notion. For example, some researchers consider it as little more than an absolute umbrella that hosts an extensive range of concepts that have little in common (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013), while different interpretations of the idea of motivation and the structures that connect to it can often cause discrepancies in the outcomes of conducted investigations. According to Dejnozka, Kapel, Gifford, and Kapel (1991), motivation is a psychological concept related to human behaviour that examines the readiness to receive a reward for performing specific behaviours. Gardner (2006) defines motivation as a complex notion encompassing various psychological perspectives, while Keller (1983) defines motivation as the choices learners make about what efforts they make toward or avoid achieving their learning objectives. Despite their differing perspectives on motivation, various researchers agree that student motivation may determine their success in learning a foreign language (Brown, 2000).

Examining the development of L2 motivation over time in higher education in Saudi Arabia, Al-Hoorie (2019) gave a motivational-intensity questionnaire to 145 first-year male students enrolled in the PYP at Jubail Industrial College, where the results revealed: (1) second-semester students had significantly lower levels of motivation for daily study and exam preparation and (2) a concerning trend of Saudi L2 students showing little desire to practice their reading ability, thus recommending that teachers notice patterns of declining interest in students and change methods of instruction and motivational techniques accordingly. Abaunza, Abad Rodriguez-Conde, and Avalos-Obregon (2020) believe that motivation in L2 is a dynamic process, not a static one, which fluctuates in relation to other factors. Indeed, there are different approaches toward various types of motivation, but Gardner's (2006) approach to motivation and self-determination theory are two of the most influential approaches.

2.2 Gardner's Approach to Motivation

Motivation research was grounded in a social-psychological framework by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert, which pioneered and inspired most of the study of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, 1994). They were the first in 1959 to distinguish between 'integrative motivation' and 'instrumental motivation' – a distinction that has fundamentally influenced all research on motivation and Second Language Learning (Crookes & Schmidt, 1989). Gardner and Lambert (1972) stated that "Integrative motivation occurs when the learner's goals for learning a second language are derived from positive attitudes towards the target language group" (p.98), while Crookes and Schmidt (1989) explain that "instrumental motivation refers to more functional reasons for learning a language: to get a better job or a promotion, to pass a required examination, or just to be a well-educated person" (p.219).

2.3 Self-determination Theory

Deci and Ryan were the first to develop self-determination theory in 1985, and it has since become one of the most important theories in motivational psychology (Dörnyei, 2005). Several studies investigated the links between intrinsic and extrinsic components discovered in motivational psychology and orientations created in second language (L2) research. They found that Gardner's (2006) integrative orientation was most strongly associated with self-determined and intrinsic motivation, while instrumental orientation was closely associated with extrinsic external regulation (Noels 1999, as cited by Noels 2001, pp.52-53). Al-Hoorie, Oga-Baldwin, Hiver, and Vitta (2022) reviewed second language empirical research into self-determination theory conducted over 30 years, and their results revealed that self-determination theory had inspired many mini theories, such as cognitive evaluation theory, goal contents theory, and relational motivation. Understanding and defining motivation is a difficult task, and numerous motivational theories have been developed to complete this job; however, although definitions and approaches provide insights into understanding how and why a second language is taught, demotivation needs to be investigated because failure to learn is common in L2, and there continues to be a rising need to pay attention to it.
2.4 Demotivation

Previous studies on motivation in learning a second or foreign language have emphasised the positive aspects of motivation for learners; however, sometimes they may be negatively influenced during the language acquisition process. These negative variables are referred to as 'demotivating factors,' and they have received little attention until recently (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013). According to Dörnyei (1998), demotivation is defined by external circumstances that 'reduce or minimise' the motivational base of a behavioural intention or current action. However, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) disagree with Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2013) definition of demotivation, claiming that it “may need to be widened to include both internal (i.e., resulted from the learners themselves, such as low self-confidence and attitude,) and external (i.e., resulted from outside factors, such as teachers' attitude, and textbooks, factors” (p.58). According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013), the elements that cause people to lose interest in learning are known as 'demotives', which are the negative equivalents of motives, and whereas motives increase behavioural intention, demotives decrease it. Therefore, it is crucial to remember that demotivation does not necessarily mean that all the positive influences that made up the motivating foundation have vanished, as demotivation is the consequent force that de-energises activity, while other motivators may still be working and need to be reactivated (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013). Not every negative feeling could be considered as demotivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013) or classified as 'amotivation' which, according to Deci and Ryan (1985), refers to the loss of motivation caused by feelings of incompetence and helplessness when faced with the task, and not necessarily by a loss of initial interest. According to Vallerand (1997), people can be 'amotivated' for four fundamental causes: when they believe they lack the ability to accomplish the task; when they do not believe the techniques being used are effective enough; when they believe the effort necessary is excessive; and finally, when they believe their efforts are insignificant in comparison to the task. L2 demotivation, as mentioned previously, has been a relatively understudied topic until lately; however, because L2 learning is the area of education most usually marked by failure to learn (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013), there has been an increasing interest in the subject of demotivation in the field.

2.5 Fundamental Studies on Demotivation Factors

Oxford (1998 as cited in Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013) planned a study of 250 students, focusing on teacher influence on high school and university student demotivation, and the content analysis of students' essays identified four main themes regarding demotivation, where the teacher's interaction with the students was the first theme, teacher's attitude toward the course or the subject was the second theme, stylistic conflicts between teachers and students in the form of disagreements over the amount of structure or information was third, while the nature of classroom activities was the fourth. Oxford (2001) went on to expand her research to include narratives written by 473 students from various languages and cultural backgrounds, where the findings showed that many students were demotivated by teachers' attitudes and behaviours with both too much and too little instructor control and considered demotivating and negatively affecting students' feelings, self-efficacy, and sense of control. Dörnyei (1998) conducted a study to determine the factors behind the loss of interest of 50 demotivated high school students in Budapest classified as not motivated by their teacher or classmates, and findings showed that nine themes functioned as primary factors for student demotivation. However, the most common factor; involved the teacher directly, including personality, commitment to teaching, attention provided to students, competency, teaching approach, style, and rapport with students accounting for 40% of all incidents, which is consistent with earlier research. However, the second most regularly stated demotivating factor was the learners' low self-confidence accounting for 15% of the occurrences, which was partly caused by a classroom event that was under the teacher's control; hence it was indirectly related to the teacher; thus, more than half of the demotivating factors indicated in the interviews were due to these two major factors (Dörnyei, 1998). More recently, a qualitative study in Iran found that the most significant factor of demotivation was the teacher, followed by learning materials in the form of the textbook and workbook, characteristics within the learners themselves, and the institute environment, including policies and attitudes (Juybar & Rahimi, 2021).

3. Theoretical Framework

Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) investigated six effective factors of demotivation after reviewing the findings of previous studies, where their study’s primary aim was to investigate demotivating factors, and the secondary aim was to check if there is a difference between more motivated and less motivated learners. Their study was the first study to bring attention to this difference. Six hundred and sixty-six students from four Japanese upper secondary schools participated in the study, where the survey consisted of thirty-five 5-point Likert scale questions based on six constructs identified in earlier L2 demotivation investigations conducted in Japan. The survey included teachers, characteristics of classes, experiences of failure, class environment, class materials and lack of interest, with a question about motivation to learn English. The findings revealed five demotivating
factors: teacher competence and teaching styles, learning content and materials, inadequate school facilities, test scores, and lack of intrinsic motivation. The results of their study showed that learning content and materials, as well as test scores, were the most demotivating factors by the students, which contrasts with previous studies, and that teachers' competence and teaching styles were cited as major demotivating factors, as was the lack of intrinsic motivation, which implies that internal demotivating forces cannot be neglected, as has been the case in prior investigations; however, interestingly, inadequate school facilities were not found to be demotivating (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009).

Their findings also revealed that there were considerable differences between less motivated and more motivated students in three factors: learning content and materials, lack of intrinsic motivation, and test scores, meaning that these factors were more demotivating to students who were less motivated compared to those who were more motivated, and that lack of intrinsic motivation was more of a demotivating factor for the less motivated students than for the more motivated ones (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009).

The present paper employs Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) theoretical framework to investigate the demotivating factors amongst Saudi EFL learners in a Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) since this framework was found to be suitable for the following research questions:

(1) What factors demotivate Arts Track and Science Track Saudi EFL learners?

(2) Are there any statistically significant differences between Arts Track and Science Track Saudi EFL learners regarding demotivating factors?

4. Method

The present study utilised a convergent parallel design, a mixed methods strategy to collect data for depth and better understand the research problem. A convergent parallel design means that the researcher obtains both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analyses the two separately, and integrates the information in interpreting the overall results (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A questionnaire was used to collect the data as they are often used to assess L2 motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013) due to being suitable for collecting "...information that learners are able to report about themselves, such as their beliefs and motivations about learning or their reactions to learning and classroom instructions and activities—information that is typically not available from production data alone" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, pp.92-93) which is suitable for this study since demotivating factors are issues that learners need to report about themselves based on what occurs during their learning experience. Another important advantage of using questionnaires is their ability to reduce the interviewer’s bias, thereby increasing the consistency and reliability of results (Bryman, 2004) and reduction of the interviewers’ influence is of paramount significance as this research deals with a negative topic and participants are likely to feel uncomfortable discussing negative topics with interviewers.
4.1 Instrument

The most suitable data collection instrument for the present study is a questionnaire, where most of the questions were adapted from Sakai and Kikuchi’s (2009) research because the present study adopts their theoretical framework. However, some questions were replaced or removed to fit the Saudi learning environment, and while learning shifted to online classes due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the classroom environment factor had to be changed to an online learning environment to suit the learning situation at the time. The questionnaire comprised three parts: (1) background questions to ensure that the sample satisfies the criteria of this study, so only PYP students on the Arts and Science Tracks were selected and to divide participants into two groups for comparison; (2) twenty-seven close-ended questions on a five-point Likert-scale adapted from Sakai & Kikuchi’s (2009) theoretical framework ranging from strongly disagree= 1, disagree= 2, neutral= 3, agree= 4, strongly agree= 5; and (3) two open-ended questions asking students to explain further the demotivating factors listed in part two of the questionnaire and to describe times at which they experienced a lack of motivation and reasons for this. The respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statements in the survey regarding the six demotivating factors for learning English, namely: class environment, teachers’ competence and teaching styles, experiences of failure, test scores, characteristics of the classroom, learning content and materials, and lack of interest, i.e., intrinsic motivation. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, it was sent to two EFL experts to check its content validity. Since it was translated into Arabic for the students, it was checked by a translation expert, after which two piloting phases were carried out. The data were analysed by SPSS for reliability, and Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each item of the demotivating factors.

Table 1. Cronbach’s alpha for demotivation factors in the questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors of Demotivation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
<th>Factors of Demotivation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Environment</td>
<td>0.668</td>
<td>Experiences of failure and test scores</td>
<td>0.811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Competence and Teaching Styles</td>
<td>0.880</td>
<td>Classroom Characteristics</td>
<td>0.890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Content and Materials</td>
<td>0.809</td>
<td>Lack of interest (Intrinsic Motivation)</td>
<td>0.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of 27 items</td>
<td>0.949</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Participants

The study sample consisted of 221 Saudi EFL students randomly selected from the Arts Track (n= 103; 47%) and Science Track (n= 118; 53%). All the participants were female students aged 18-24 with different language proficiency levels and were enrolled in the Preparatory Year Programme at the university. The study took around two months to complete, and students were given the questionnaire using Google Forms with the aims and significance of the study briefly explained to them. They were told there were no right or wrong responses to the questions. They were informed that their answers would be treated ethically with confidentiality and utilised exclusively for research purposes.

5. Data Analysis and Results

Quantitative and qualitative analyses were utilised in the present study, where SPSS (v16) was employed to analyse the collected data quantitatively, and descriptive statistics were used to determine the demotivating factors for the participants. The means and standard deviations were computed for each item in the questionnaire,
and the Likert-type questions had items combined to describe a personality trait or attitude; thus, the means and standard deviations were used to describe the scale. An independent-sample t-test was conducted to determine if there are statistically significant differences in terms of demotivating factors between learners on the Arts Track and the Science Track. After the quantitative analysis, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to assess the qualitative data collected from the two open-ended questions.

5.1 Quantitative Data

The first research question attempted to determine the demotivating factors that EFL Arts and Science Track students had in the Preparatory Year Programme; thus, the quantitative results were organised from the most effective to the least effective demotivating factors, as reported by the respondents in Table 2.

Table 2. The most effective demotivating factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Experiences of failure &amp; test scores</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Classroom characteristics</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Learning content and materials</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Class environment</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Teachers’ competence and teaching styles</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Lack of interest (Intrinsic Motivation)</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As demonstrated in Table 2, ‘Experiences of failure and test scores’ was the first demotivating factor for the Arts Track and Science Track students. ‘Characteristics of the classroom’ was ranked as the second effective demotivating factor, while 'Learning content and materials' was the third. 'Class environment' was the fourth demotivating factor, while 'Teachers' competence and teaching styles' was the fifth. Finally, 'Lack of interest' (intrinsic motivation) was the last demotivating factor for Arts Track and Science Track EFL students.

The study’s second research question attempted to determine whether the differences in the demotivating factors between Arts and Science Track students were significant at the alpha level of p=.05. Thus, an independent-sample t-test was conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences.

Table 3. Independent sample t-test results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Track</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Std.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Competence &amp; Teaching Styles</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>2.421</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of failure &amp; test scores</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.637</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Environment</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>-.546</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>.586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of classroom</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>2.262</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Content and Materials</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>1.202</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>.230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of interest (Intrinsic Motivation)</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.311</td>
<td>199.678</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 presents the t-test results of the differences in the demotivating factors between the Arts and Science Track students, where the data revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between the Arts and Science Track students in the following three factors: ‘Experiences of failure and test scores’, ‘Class Environment’, and ‘Learning Content and Materials’. However, the results indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the students on both tracks at the alpha level of 0.05 in three factors: ‘Teachers’ competence and teaching styles’ (p= 0.01), ‘Characteristics of the classroom’ (p= 0.02), and students 'Lack of interest' (p= 0.02). As the means indicate, these three factors affect the students’ demotivation in the Arts Track more than in the Science Track.

Finally, after the quantitative analysis of the data, using the six demotivating factors from the study’s theoretical framework, content analysis was used to assess the qualitative data from the open-ended questions, while five other demotivating factors emerged: ‘lack of confidence’, ‘language learning difficulties’, ‘peer pressure’, ‘family pressure’, and ‘pre-knowledge’.

5.2 Qualitative Data

5.2.1 Main Demotivating Factors

Students lent their opinions to the ‘experiences of failure and test scores’ factor by restating the items from the questionnaire; for instance, one Arts Track student commented, "I got disappointed by the low scores I got on my English tests", while a Science Track student stated that "English tests are very difficult for a student with a low level in English." Moreover, the results showed that some students were affected by past failing experiences; where one Arts Track student stated that "I have a past failed experience in English, where my school used to call my parents", while a Science Track student added, "I was shocked when I failed one of the levels of English with a low score when I have studied hard, and I was a good student." Therefore, failing to pass a level is a strong reason for demotivation.

Table 4. Content analysis for the main demotivating factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demotivating factor</th>
<th>Frequency of occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Experiences of failure, test scores</td>
<td>Arts: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Teachers’ competence and teaching style</td>
<td>Arts: 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science: 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Learning content and materials</td>
<td>Arts: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Characteristics of the classroom</td>
<td>Arts: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science: 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Class environment</td>
<td>Arts: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Lack of interest</td>
<td>Arts: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science: 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students also expressed their opinions on the second demotivating factor of 'Teachers' competence and teaching styles', where a student on the Arts Track stated, "The teacher's teaching method is very important, and it affects us as language learners. Our teacher's teaching method is really complicated and not easy to understand". In contrast, a Science Track student explained, "Teaching methods should focus on developing students' level as well as the curriculum. The teacher should be kind to students". A comment on online teaching came from a Science Track student who said, "I think the teaching method during the online class should be improved and students should participate by speaking not just typing in the chat box." In addition, within the same factor, teachers' favouritism among students seemed to affect their motivation negatively as two students from the Arts Track students commented, "The teacher discriminates between students" and "Teacher differentiation between high, medium, and low-level students made us hate the subject." Moreover, not being able to use L1 in the English class was another issue students commented upon, with two Arts Track students saying "I [would] prefer the teacher uses some Arabic to explain the lesson because it will help us learn better" and "The teacher explains without using a word in Arabic which makes it hard for me to understand the language and that lowers my performance." Also, some students seemed to have a current or past experience with teachers’ negative attitude...
that caused their demotivation, such as using ridicule in class when students make mistakes; for example, one Arts Track student said, "A teacher in Level 1 used to demotivate, ridicule and embarrass students, which made us hate the subject."

When commenting on 'learning content and materials' as a demotivating factor, an Arts Track student noted: "We should not have too many topics in the textbook because it makes learning difficult for a beginner learner." Students also mentioned that topics in the textbooks were not interesting or were complicated, as some of them explained, "The textbook discusses English literature. I don't understand Arabic literature; how can I understand English literature?" (Arts Track student) while a Science Track student added, "The English curriculum is very complicated, so I can't understand it." Within this factor, some students also commented on different language skills, where one Arts Track student stated, "The focus is only on grammar, and I think the class should focus more on practising speaking in order to apply the grammar." Two other students commented upon the lack of speaking practice, "I wish we had a full hour for speaking and discussions" (Arts Track student), and "I don’t have anyone to communicate with in English [outside the classroom]" (Science Track student). Issues regarding the amount of vocabulary taught and washback were brought up when a Science Track student explained, "Most of the lesson focuses on the exam more than what could be useful for us in real life."

When discussing 'characteristics of the classroom' as a demotivating factor, students mentioned different issues; for instance, a student from the Science Track stated, "I wish class time would be reduced and [only] important information is emphasised."

'Class environment' was another demotivating factor, and online learning was the main issue discussed. For instance, a student in the Arts Track stated, "Online learning causes distraction and we can't focus on every word the teacher says, which leads us to not understand some sentences", while another Arts student stated, "The number of students in the online classroom should be reduced so that the teacher could focus on all the students." A Science Track student complained, "We don't have enough interaction in online learning to learn and practice the language, and we spend most of the lesson only typing answers in the chat." Problems relating to the Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Internet connection were mentioned in several student responses, such as "Internet problems and weak internet connection demotivate me a lot", one Arts Track student complained. Similarly, a Science Track student added, "Learning online is not good because of Blackboard and faulty electronic devices, and we cannot buy new ones."

Finally, commenting on the final demotivating factor 'lack of interest' a student from the Arts Track stated, "Actually I consider myself good at English, but I have no interest in studying it nor do I love it", while another Arts Track student stated, "My major is in Arabic, so I don't need English in my studies."

5.2.2 Emergent Demotivating Factors

While students commented on the six demotivating factors adapted from Sakai and Kikuchi’s (2009) theoretical framework; however, five other factors emerged from their responses to the second open-ended question: ‘lack of confidence’, ‘various language learning difficulties’, ‘peer pressure’, ‘family pressure’, and ‘pre-knowledge’.

Table 5. Content analysis for the emergent demotivating factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergent Theme</th>
<th>Frequency of occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
<td>Arts: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language learning difficulties</td>
<td>Arts: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer pressure</td>
<td>Arts: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family pressure</td>
<td>Arts: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-knowledge</td>
<td>Arts: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science: 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Lack of confidence’ as a demotivating factor was raised by several students, where words such as 'embarrassment', 'hesitation', and 'fear' were mentioned. For instance, one Arts Track student stated, "I have low confidence in my answers because the teacher might make fun of me." Likewise, a Science Track student
commented, "I feel embarrassed to speak even though I know some sentences in English, but I have a problem with creating one."

Another emerging factor of demotivation is ‘Language learning difficulties.’ For example, a student from the Arts Track stated, "I have been trying to learn English for years. I attended different types of English courses, but I could not understand or master the language." A Science Track student pointed out, "Some words in English are hard to pronounce, and every time I try, I mispronounce it, and I face difficulties trying to understand some of the words."

Another demotivating factor that appeared from the students' responses was 'peer pressure' as an Arts Track student explained, "My classmates made fun of me for giving a wrong answer," while a Science Track student commented, "In my opinion, when the student’s level is low, comparing her to her classmates who are very good at English causes disappointment and causes [negative] competition among students."

‘Family pressure’ was mentioned twice as a demotivating factor, where one Arts Track student pointed out, "Some of our families demotivate us". At the same time, a Science Track added, "Disappointing our families is a huge cause for demotivation."

Finally, a few students mentioned not having 'pre-knowledge' of English as a demotivation factor and seemed to conveniently shift the blame on their schools and pre-university learning days. For example, a Science Track student commented, "We didn't have a good foundation in English from the beginning." An Arts Track student explained, "It is difficult to learn English [now] because we started learning it late, from middle and high school, and a lot of students didn't consider it an important subject [at the time]." A Science Track pointed out, "The weakness in our language skills is mostly a result of weak education during primary, intermediate, and high school."

6. Discussion

The current research aimed to identify the demotivating factors for Saudi female PYP students when learning English. Specifically, it attempted to investigate the factors that demotivate Arts and Science Track learners when learning English at university and whether there were any statistically significant differences between Arts and Science Track students in terms of these demotivating factors. A total of eleven internal and external demotivating factors were found in this study, six of which fall under Saki and Kikuchi's (2009) theoretical framework, and the remaining five emerged from the qualitative data analysis.

6.1 Order of Importance of the Six Demotivating Factors

The main demotivating factors by order of importance based on their frequency were: (1) experiences of failure and test scores, (2) classroom characteristics, (3) learning content and materials, (4) class environment, (5) teachers’ competence and teaching styles, and finally, (6) lack of interest (intrinsic motivation).

The results of the current study indicated that 'experiences of failure and test scores' was the most significant cause of demotivation among Saudi EFL university students from both tracks, and it was the most frequently demotivating factor cited. This aligns with Daif-Allah (2010), where 'experience of failure and test score' was the most influential factor affecting Saudi EFL students' demotivation. However, this differs from Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), where 'test scores' was the second most significant demotivating influence after 'learning content and materials.' Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) stated that poor test scores could lead to demotivation and argued that it would be crucial for teachers to encourage students when they receive poor exam results, not to compare students and to discourage them from comparing themselves with their classmates. Farjami, Assadi & Asl (2020) found that learners who were motivated at the start of their courses became demotivated by the end of them; so, in essence, they were "demotivated by the system" (p.37).

‘Characteristics of the classroom’ was identified as the second demotivating factor in this study, although it was the main demotivating factor in Çankaya (2018), Al-Khasawneh (2017), as well as in Holbah and Sharma (2021). The grammar-focused teaching and emphasis on passing the final exam are the main features of this factor for both tracks, where students felt they were expected to produce error-free sentences and to focus on translation. Therefore, it can be argued that learner demotivation could be decreased by adopting communicative language teaching methods, using games, and engaging students in authentic language activities.

Despite being the main demotivating factor in Sakai & Kikuchi (2009), ‘Learning content and materials’ was the third effective demotivating factor mentioned by students from both tracks in this study and included the length of reading passages in English textbooks, sentence difficulty, and the complexity of textbooks. According to Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), most participants felt discouraged by their grammar-focused textbooks or classes because they contain long or complicated sections. It was also the main demotivating factor in Ali and Pathan's
Unlike Adara (2018) and Juybar and Rahimi (2021), where teachers were the primary source of demotivation, being able to meet class objectives are main reasons why students lost motivation during the pandemic. and Flórez (2020), being socially isolated, with a weak internet connection, having distractions at home, and not learning environment itself may not be the cause of this lack of motivation, as according to Fuentes Hernández, the classroom environment was a cause of students' demotivation. This disparity could be because the class environment was different in this study as teaching shifted online during the Covid-19 pandemic; thus, it is essential to discuss the results of this study with studies in this type of learning environment. For example, the findings of the present study revealed that students encountered difficulties regarding online classes learning environment, such as internet problems, Blackboard technical issues, faulty electronic devices, and lack of visual material used. Rahman (2020) surveyed fifty English language teachers throughout Saudi Arabia about their opinions of online education during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that 68% of participants thought online learners were less motivated. The online learning environment itself may not be the cause of this lack of motivation, as according to Fuentes Hernández and Florez (2020), being socially isolated, with a weak internet connection, having distractions at home, and not being able to meet class objectives are main reasons why students lost motivation during the pandemic.

Unlike Adara (2018) and Juybar and Rahimi (2021), where teachers were the primary source of demotivation, the present study showed that ‘teachers’ competence and teaching styles’ was the fifth demotivating factor addressed by students on both tracks. For example, some students faced difficulties understanding the teacher's explanation, the fast pace of the lesson, and teachers disregarded individual differences and embarrassed students by asking difficult questions and ridiculing students' mistakes in their English class. Ali and Pathan (2017) and Meshkat and Hassani (2012) emphasised how crucial it is for teachers to maintain their professional behaviour in the classroom. Moreover, teachers need to apply communicative language teaching methods because students appear more motivated when employed (Li & Zhou, 2017). Alyousif and Alsuaibani (2021) revealed that the incompetence of teachers was one of the most demotivating factors for Saudi high school students and suggested that teachers should prepare lessons using multimedia, presentations, and role-playing to increase students' opportunities to practice the language, while Alsharief (2013, p.57) argued that “Common poor pedagogical practices seem to push into the opposite direction of demotivation and non-cooperation in the classroom.”

Finally, 'lack of interest' was the least demotivating factor according to students on both tracks, which is similar to Meshkat and Hassani's (2012) study, where lack of intrinsic motivation was not listed as one of the most significant demotivating factors. However, Jahedizadeh's (2016) study showed a lack of interest as the second most crucial demotivator leading to student burnout and was related to the belief that the English used in the learning environment is neither necessary nor practical. Ali and Pathan's (2017) study demonstrated how participants were instrumentally motivated to learn English because they viewed it as helpful to achieving significant positions in society, making the lack of intrinsic motivation the least demotivating factor for them as well. To increase students' motivation, teachers need to inspire those who are not interested in becoming fluent English speakers or do not see the value of studying the language. Ali and Pathan (2017) suggest that students may be more motivated to learn English when they know the advantages of doing so (extrinsic motivation). According to Li and Ting (2017), it is vital to maintain students' interest in English so that they can continue learning the language and have a greater understanding of their goals as language users while making them interested in the English language and its culture can help motivate them (Alsharief, 2013).

6.2 Emerging Demotivating Factors

The demotivating factors that emerged from the present study were: (1) lack of confidence, (2) language learning difficulties, (3) peer pressure, (4) family pressure, and (5) poor preknowledge. Several studies on demotivation mentioned the first factor, 'Lack of confidence' (Akay, 2017; Liu, Zheng, Ma, and Wei, 2020; Ranjha, Asghar & Yasmin, 2021; and Zhang and Ding, 2018). According to these studies, language learners could get demotivated because they lack confidence, which prevents them from learning English. For example, some students begin learning a foreign language without having any defined objectives, and when there are no clear learning objectives, learners do not take their studies seriously and are then demotivated. Thus, teachers should help students increase their self-confidence and give engaging feedback to help them identify their language learning objectives.
‘Language learning difficulties’ is another demotivating factor when learning English (Ahmed, Ahmed, Bukhari & Hukhari, 2011; Yadav & BaniAta, 2013). Due to their limited language learning ability or their view of the language as being difficult, some students can struggle to learn spelling and vocabulary or understand grammar, including articles, prepositions, conjunctions, and forms of verbs; as a result, they become demotivated. Teachers could encourage students to improve their performance by giving them supplementary material.

Regarding 'peer pressure' as a demotivating factor, Al-Khairy (2013) and Haryanto, Makmur, Ismiyati, and Aisyah (2018) explained that sometimes, students become demotivated because they are either psychologically sad due to their peers' stronger learning abilities or they are terrified of their peers' jokes about their poor performance. Han, Takaç-Tulgar & Aybirdi (2019) found that classmates' negative attitudes is one of the major factors demotivating Turkish EFL students and that the best way to cope with this is for students to think positively and ignore what others think.

Moreover, the present study corroborated Khan's (2011) study that 'family pressure' is another factor where students could get demotivated because of their parents' pressure. Therefore, parents need to motivate their children and appreciate their efforts in learning English.

Finally, and in line with many studies in the literature, the present study found that learners' poor 'pre-knowledge' was a demotivation factor (Quadir, 2017; Haryanto, Makmur, Ismiyati & Aisyah, 2018; Vidak & Sindik, 2018). Students' psychological well-being is disturbed by a lack of privilege in the form of private education, extra-curricular courses, and opportunities. For example, Kim (2011) studied 6,301 elementary school students and their demotivation for learning English and found that prior attendance at private institutes significantly impacted their motivation, as those who attended them demonstrated higher levels of instrumental (extrinsic) and intrinsic motivation.

### 6.3 Comparing Arts and Science Tracks ‘Demotivating Factors

When comparing Arts Track and Science Track students in terms of demotivating factors, the present study found no discernible differences between students on the two tracks in the factors of 'experiences of failure, and test scores', 'classroom environment', and 'learning content and materials.' However, the findings showed that students on the Arts Track were more influenced by 'teachers' competence and teaching styles', characteristics of the classroom', and 'lack of interest (intrinsic motivation) as demotivating factors than students on the Science Track. This aligns with Al-Khasawneh (2017) and Moinvaziri and Razmjoo (2014), who found that different school types and faculty may have a demotivating impact. For example, 'teachers' competence and teaching styles' as a demotivating factor affects Arts Track students more as they encounter difficulties understanding the teacher's explanation and questions and feel the pace of the lessons is not appropriate for them. This might indicate that Arts Track students do not like traditional methods in teaching and prefer using modern teaching methods that engage students in classroom activities to simplify the language, which is argued by Al-Khairy (2013), who stated that Saudi students do not like teacher-centred classrooms in which instructors rule and do not utilise modern teaching tools to engage them in various activities. Therefore, to increase students' motivation, the foreign language teacher is advised to take on the role of a facilitator rather than an authority figure in the classroom (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Students are more engaged with the material being taught when they like their professors, and due to the special characteristics of EFL classes, teachers should pay special attention to establishing a welcoming environment where students may rehearse speaking English without worrying about making errors-- teachers must be courteous, approachable, considerate of students, and open to in order to create this environment (Alharbi & Saaty, 2022).

Another demotivating factor that was found to affect Arts Track students more than Science Track ones is 'Characteristics of the classroom', where Arts Track students offered various reasons, such as focusing on grammar, translation, memorisation, passing the final exams, being expected to produce error-free sentences, and not being able to practice speaking in class. According to Brahmi and Araghi's research (2013), the second most demotivating factor for students learning English is reading boring texts, studying topics unrelated to daily life, and using too much grammar. According to Tuan (2011), students exposed to a large amount of complex vocabulary and grammar usually show persistent anxiety. Indeed, as mentioned previously, adopting communicative language teaching techniques and games, and involving students in practical experiences might reduce demotivation.

Finally, 'lack of interest' (intrinsic motivation) is the last demotivating factor affecting Arts Track more than Science Track students. English in the Preparatory Year Programme is compulsory for all students on both tracks. Not all students on the Arts Track might be motivated internally to learn English because some do not perceive the importance of the English language for their studies at the university because their future majors, such as
Humanities and Sharia, are offered in Arabic. In contrast, most Science Track majors focus on English as a medium of instruction, and students can conceive the importance of learning English in the PYP. Thus, it is crucial to maintain students’ interest in English so that they are motivated to learn the language and better understand their objectives as language users. Ghaith (2019) argues that stakeholders, including teachers, must encourage meaningful learning, promote diverse teaching methods, and avoid monotonous teaching and rote memorisation to engage language learners and increase their motivation, thereby reducing demotivation.

7. Conclusion, Implications, and Further Studies

Demotivation is a critical topic to be investigated to provide additional guidance on how to avoid it due to its detrimental effects on students' foreign language learning. The current study examined the differences in demotivational factors between Arts and Science Track Saudi EFL students in the Preparatory Year Programme, where findings showed that ‘experiences of failure and test scores’ was the main demotivating factor for students on both tracks. In addition, there is no significant difference between students on both tracks in terms of the ‘experiences of failure and test scores’, ‘classroom environment’, and ‘learning content and materials’ as demotivating factors; however, there was a significant difference in scores in ‘teachers’ competence and teaching styles’ ‘characteristics of the classroom’ and ‘lack of interest’ (intrinsic motivation) factors showing that students on the Science Track had better intrinsic motivation to learn English than their peers on the Arts Track due to perceived usefulness of the English language to their future studies. Therefore, to assist learners in achieving their desired level of English proficiency in EFL contexts, it is critical to maintain EFL learning motivation while preventing demotivation (Kim et al., 2018).

These findings may have broader implications as they indicate that teachers play an essential role in influencing students' intrinsic motivation and significantly impact students who failed and those who obtained poor test scores in the past. Additionally, teachers must avoid comparison among students and discourage them from comparing themselves to their classmates. With the help of the present study’s findings, Saudi EFL teachers should be better equipped to identify the main factors for their student's demotivation and offer solutions. For example, teachers could design interactive classroom activities that reflect EFL learners' interests, culture, and everyday experiences to stimulate student learning (Minalla, 2022).

In terms of further research, the results of the current study could be of interest to researchers working on motivation and demotivation; however, more studies in this area are encouraged to gain a deeper understanding of demotivation and provide better insights into how to help EFL learners learn English effectively. Understanding sources of demotivation might ensure that language teachers are not its primary cause (Han et al., 2019).

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