

A Comparative Analysis of Preparatory School Learners' Demotivating Factors Towards Learning Languages

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ABSTRACT

In language classes, demotivation has been a significant and frequently discussed topic since demotivation can harm learners' attitudes, behaviours and classroom dynamics. By examining similarities and differences from a comparative standpoint, this paper investigates the elements that demotivate students' learning of English and Arabic. 154 university students studying Arabic and English were given a demotivating factor questionnaire. Sixteen students were also interviewed as complementary data. Content analysis was used to examine the data from the recorded and transcribed interviews. The findings also revealed that the construct of demotivation among preparatory school students is multifaceted. While English learners seem more influenced by pedagogical practices and learning environments, language-specific difficulties and inadequate instructional support primarily pose challenges for Arabic learners. Finally, some suggestions were made to deepen the understanding of the problem and raise the standard of language education in a foreign-language context.

Keywords: Demotivation, Demotivating factors, Language learning, Higher education.

Hazırlık Okulu Öğrencilerinin Dil Öğrenmeye Yönelik Motivasyonlarını Düşüren Faktörlerin Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analizi

ÖZET

Dil derslerinde motivasyon eksikliği önemli ve sıkça tartışılan bir konudur çünkü motivasyon eksikliği öğrencilerin tutumlarına, davranışlarına ve sınıf dinamiklerine zarar verebilir. Bu makale, benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları karşılaştırmalı bir bakış açısıyla inceleyerek, öğrencilerin İngilizce ve Arapça öğrenmelerini motivasyonsuzlaştıran unsurları araştırmaktadır. Arapça ve İngilizce öğrenen 154 üniversite hazırlık okulu öğrencisine motivasyonsuzlaştırmacı faktör ölçeği verildi. Tamamlayıcı veri olarak, on altı öğrenciyle de görüşmeler yapıldı. Kaydedilen ve yazıya dökülen görüşmelerden elde edilen verileri incelemek için içerik analizi kullanıldı. Bulgular ayrıca hazırlık okulu öğrencileri arasındaki motivasyon eksikliğinin yapısının çok yönlü olduğunu ortaya

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koydu. Sonuçlar, İngilizce ve Arapça öğrenen öğrencilerin belirttiği motivasyonsuzlaştırıcı faktörlerde benzerlikler ve farklılıklar olduğunu göstermiştir. İngilizce öğrencileri pedagojik uygulamalardan ve öğrenme ortamlarından daha fazla etkilenirken, dile has zorluklar ve yetersiz öğretim desteği öncelikle Arapça öğrencileri için zorluk oluşturmaktadır. Son olarak, sorunun daha derin bir şekilde anlaşılması ve yabancı dil bağlamında dil eğitiminin standardının yükseltilmesi için bazı önerilerde bulunuldu.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Motivasyonsuzluk, Motivasyonu düşüren faktörler, Dil öğrenimi, Yükseköğrenim.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Motivation, which can be identified as a force that influences students' behaviour (Dörnyei, 2005), is the key component of any learning-teaching context. It is so powerful that it determines how much effort a learner will put into learning the language and how long they will stick with it (Littlewood, 2000). Dörnyei and Csizer (1998) claim that even the most talented students cannot accomplish goals without motivation. Studies show that less-motivated or unmotivated students struggle to reach their learning goals (Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Gardner, 2007; Lasagabaster et al., 2014; Wang & Littlewood, 2021). The term "motivation" stems from the Latin verb "move", which means a mental force pushing the learner to complete a task (Okon, 2014, p. 3). Motivation is key in teaching a language context as it can ignite learning. Thus, teachers should understand how much motivation can influence learning (Nicholson, 2013). Oppositely, demotivation is an external force that "reduces or diminishes the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 143). Similarly, amotivation refers to motivational apathy, in which students lack the drive to invest the time and effort required to learn (Cheon & Reeve, 2015). The literature is robust in terms of the number of international studies examining demotivators, such as the studies in Iran (Alavinia & Sehat, 2012; Moiiinvaziri & Razmjoo, 2013), in Japan (Kikuchi, 2009, 2015), in Korea (Kim, 2015; Song & Kim, 2017) and in Vietnam (Trang & Baldauf, 2007; Tuan, 2011). Research shows that many studies have explored motivation in various EFL contexts (such as Iran, Pakistan, Japan, Taiwan, France, Ireland, and South Korea), but there are relatively few studies on demotivation in Türkiye that examine the factors that demotivate learners and offer suggestions for re-motivating them (Acat & Demiral, 2002; Aydın, 2012; Bekleyen, 2011; Birinci, 2015; Çelik & Kocaman, 2016). The lack of research on demotivating factors in the Turkish context is notable. The study's findings could be beneficial for both teachers and language learners in developing practical strategies to address demotivation by employing qualitative and quantitative research methods from a comparative standpoint.

1.1. Factors Causing Demotivation

Motivation is a hot term and has thus attracted considerable attention from language specialists (Dörnyei, 2000, 2001; Song & Kim, 2017; Williams, 1994). Several researchers

blamed external factors as the source of demotivation. For instance, Gorham and Christophel (1992) examined the factors causing demotivation in 308 college ESL students. They found that, even though students strongly desired to learn English, external factors (e.g., unfavourable teacher behaviours) were the primary causes of demotivation. Similarly, Ushioda (2001) interviewed university students to investigate what motivated them and found out that internal factors (e.g., personal ability, interests) motivate them, and external factors (e.g., boring teaching methods and materials) make them lose their motivation. Kaivanpanah and Ghasemi (2011) also argue that demotivation has a detrimental effect on language learning and classroom atmosphere. Falout and his colleagues (2009) also note negative changes in learner attitudes and their impact on the classroom atmosphere, and Jiang (2025) claims that demotivated students will harm the positive classroom climate, with a long-lasting effect on learning outcomes.

In addition to motivation studies in EFL contexts, demotivation studies have also increased in number. Many studies link demotivation with traditional teacher-centred teaching methods (Çankaya, 2018; Huwari et al., 2023; Kikuchi, 2009; Kim & Kim, 2015; Song & Kim, 2017; Trang & Baldauf, 2007; Wang et al., 2024; Wang & Littlewood, 2021). In another study conducted in the Japanese EFL context, traditional grammar-translation teaching methods were blamed for demotivating high school students. Similarly, Trang and Baldauf's (2007) study found that Vietnamese EFL learners were unhappy with teacher-centred teaching strategies, which severely demotivated them. Other studies highlighted external factors as sources of demotivation, such as exams and course materials (e.g., Huwari et al., 2023; Kikuchi, 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). For example, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) and Huwari et al. (2023) found that students' demotivation stemmed from course materials and exam grades rather than teaching methods and styles. Demotivation among students was primarily related not to teaching style but to learners' lack of interest in the language.

1.3. Research Gap and Research Questions

English has become an international language; thus, many students take English classes, either optionally or as part of their university education (Mirza et al., 2016; Trang & Baldauf, 2007). English is taught extensively at all educational levels in Türkiye as a foreign language. In Arabic, language courses start as early as the primary school years, mostly as electives. The courses for Islamic schools (Imam Hatip) are only compulsory. However, these programs have brought some problems besides their applicability (Polat, 2019). Another issue is that Arabic is a foreign language, just like English. Thus, its curricula should comply with CEFR descriptors, like those for other foreign languages, unlike the social science curricula offered by the General Directorate of Religious Education (Yılmaz, 2020). From this vantage point, it should encompass the same category as other foreign languages, along with additional applications and activities. Nevertheless, in both Arabic and English, it has been noted that students fail to attain the required level of language proficiency despite receiving intensive courses in preschool, elementary, and high school (Karahan, 2007).

Given the critical role motivation plays in language acquisition, foreign language instructors must pinpoint the factors that undermine students' motivation and develop strategies to boost it. The literature review reveals that while a pile of studies was carried out for motivation in several EFL contexts (e.g., Iran, Pakistan, Japan, Taiwan, France, Ireland, South Korea), only a few studies have been conducted in Türkiye that focus on demotivation, identifying the factors that demotivate them, and creating remotivation suggestions (Acat & Demiral, 2002; Aydın, 2012; Bekleyen, 2011; Birinci, 2015; Çelik & Kocaman, 2016). Research on demotivating factors and their roles in learning a foreign language in the Turkish context appears to be lacking. Both teachers and language learners may find the study's findings helpful in creating practical coping mechanisms to combat demotivation.

The literature review shows that as students move from high school to tertiary-level compulsory language education, they begin to lose motivation. Studies have shown that high school students' motivation for L2 learning declines as learners get older (Kim & Kim, 2015). However, demotivation among preparatory students has not received much attention (Song & Kim, 2017). Considering the hindrance of demotivation for language learners, there is a clarion call to identify the primary demotivating factors influencing the language learning process of Turkish students and the coping mechanisms they employ from their own perspectives to deal with these unpleasant experiences. This study is guided by the following research questions:

- a. What are the major demotivating factors among Turkish EFL students?
- b. What are the major demotivating factors among Turkish AFL students?
- c. What are the similarities and differences between the demotivating factors of Turkish EFL and AFL students?
- d. What are effective strategies for tackling demotivation?

2. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-methods approach based on an explanatory sequential design, which aims to investigate a problem by first collecting and analyzing quantitative data, followed by qualitative research to explain the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2015). The following criteria must be met in order to use the mixed method: acquire two distinct viewpoints, one derived from qualitative data (e.g., the location, time, and context of individual experiences) and one from quantitative data (descriptive), in order to obtain a more thorough understanding.

2.1. Participants

The current study was conducted during the spring semester of the 2024-2025 academic year. The study's quantitative data, included in the table below, were collected from 154 preparatory school language learners at a state university in Türkiye.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Interviewees

Learner Group	Gender				Level of Proficiency								Total		
	Female		Male		A1		A2		B1		B1+			B2	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		n	%
<i>EFL</i>	52	75.4	17	24.6	0	0	14	20.3	33	48.8	9	13.0	13	18.8	69
<i>AFL</i>	72	84.7	13	15.3	1	1.2	19	22.4	58	68.2	7	8.2	0	0	85

The purposeful sampling method used in the questionnaire results served as the foundation for the qualitative data collection tool. Fifteen students provided qualitative data.

2.2. Data Collection

The demotivation questionnaire developed by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) and face-to-face interviews were conducted for this study. Participants were informed that participation was entirely voluntary and asked to complete it. It took about 10-15 minutes to finish it. The demotivation questionnaire, a quantitative data-collection tool, was used in the study's initial phase to obtain general information on students' levels of demotivation. It measures six different concepts with thirty-five 5-point Likert-type questions about demotivation:

Table 2. Item Analysis of the Questionnaire

The Distribution of the Items	Items
Teachers	10-15
Class characteristics	1-6 & 26
Failure experiences	7-9, 27 & 30
Class atmosphere	21-25, 28 & 29
Lesson materials	16-20 & 35
Lack of interest	31-34

Participants were asked to choose between the following options: 1: Not true; 2: Mostly not true; 3: Neither true nor untrue; 4: To some extent true; and 5: True. A higher score indicates a strong demotivating factor. Students' scores can range from 35 to 175. Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) assessed the internal consistency reliability and discovered that the questionnaire had a good level of reliability, ranging from .73 to .83. Students were also asked to select one of four options: I am almost completely unmotivated, I am somewhat

motivated, I am moderately motivated, or I am highly motivated as an extra question. Participants were divided into two groups based on their responses indicating whether they were less or more motivated learners. They were classified as motivated if they responded that they were moderately or highly motivated, and as unmotivated if their response indicated that they were either somewhat motivated or unmotivated. This classification was also used to select the interviewers for the study's second phase. Finally, quantitative and qualitative data were interpreted for more thorough and reliable results.

2.3. Face-to-face Interviews

15 volunteer students who reported feeling unmotivated on the questionnaire participated in face-to-face interviews. The interviews helped us better understand their perceptions of what demotivates them while learning the language and the methods they use to counteract these effects. Each participant's interview lasted roughly 5-10 minutes. The questions were adapted from the questionnaire used at the first stage of the research. The interviewers were asked to answer two broad questions: What circumstances make you most demotivated? Which techniques do you use to get past these bad experiences? The interview was audio-recorded and transcribed by the researchers.

2.4. Data Analysis

Two methods of data analysis were used: quantitative and qualitative. The survey data were analysed using SPSS (v.26). Item mean scores and standard deviations were calculated. For the analysis of qualitative data, the coding and classification approach (Gay et al., 2009) was employed. The recurrent themes in the participants' answers were categorised to analyse the open-ended questions. Each theme, based on recurring themes, was identified and examined after sorting and categorising the responses. The data collected through in-person interviews was analysed in the same way. After transcribing the students' answers to each question, the researchers coded and categorised the responses. For the final step, the results from the two types of research were combined to interpret the study's findings.

The Miles-Huberman inter-coder reliability score was calculated to assess coder consistency and ensure external dependability in analysing qualitative data. Three experts in the field coded and categorised the interview responses to ensure the validity of the qualitative data. To ensure data consistency, inter-coder reliability among the graders was examined. The inter-coder reliability score is obtained as 92%, calculated with the formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) ($\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{agreement}}{\text{agreement} + \text{disagreement}} \times 100$). Using a voice recorder prevented data loss. The interviewees were asked to check and confirm what they had stated in the interview.

3. FINDINGS

The study's findings fall into two primary categories: quantitative results, which examine the factors influencing participants' demotivation during their language learning, and qualitative results, which investigate students' strategies for overcoming demotivators.

3.1. Quantitative Results

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of participants' demotivation levels.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Demotivation Levels

<i>Level</i>	<i>EFL</i>					<i>AFL</i>				
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
<i>Low</i>	9	2.285	0.756	1	2.914	30	2.5142	0.492	1.485	2.971
<i>Moderate</i>	37	3.511	0.261	3	3.885	47	3.4528	0.274	3	3.914
<i>High</i>	23	4.247	0.228	4	5	8	4.1535	0.130	4	4.4

Table 4 below presents the results of a detailed inferential statistical analysis examining significant differences in demotivation levels and contributing factors among EFL and AFL students.

Table 4. T-Test Results Comparing EFL and AFL Students' Demotivation Levels

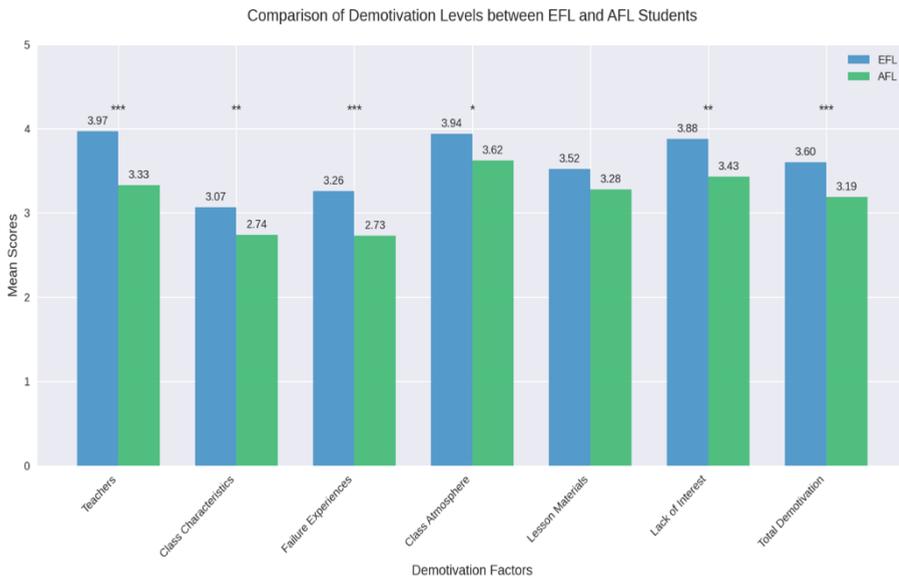
Factor	Learner	N	M	Std	T	Df	P
Teachers	EFL	69	3.97	0.78	5.01	152	0.000***
	AFL	85	3.33	0.80			
Characteristics of Classes	EFL	69	3.07	0.70	3.13	152	0.002**
	AFL	85	2.74	0.63			
Experiences of Failure	EFL	69	3.26	0.88	3.82	152	0.000***
	AFL	85	2.73	0.81			
Class Atmosphere	EFL	69	3.94	0.86	2.14	152	0.034*
	AFL	85	3.62	0.96			
Lesson Materials	EFL	69	3.52	0.84	1.83	152	0.070
	AFL	85	3.28	0.83			
Lack of Interest	EFL	69	3.88	1.02	2.66	152	0.009**
	AFL	85	3.43	1.07			

Total	EFL	69	3.60	0.70	3.76	152	0.000***
	AFL	85	3.19	0.65			

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

This analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the factors that impact student motivation, highlighting how these factors differ between the two groups and offering insights into potential areas for intervention and support. Normality of data distribution for each group was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk tests. With sample sizes of 69 (EFL) and 85 (AFL), the score distributions for all demotivational factors were approximately normal ($p > .05$). Skewness and Kurtosis values also stayed within acceptable ranges ($-2 < z < +2$). As a result, the normality assumption for the independent samples t-tests was considered met. Figure 1 presents a bar chart comparing EFL and AFL students’ demotivation scores.

Figure 1. Comparison of Demotivation Levels



As shown in Table 4 and Figure 1, independent samples t-tests revealed statistically significant differences between EFL and AFL students across most demotivation categories. The Teachers factor showed the most significant contrast between the groups. EFL learners expressed notably higher levels of teacher-related demotivation ($M=3.97$, $SD=0.78$) compared to their AFL students ($M=3.33$, $SD=0.80$), $t(152)=5.01$, $p < .001$. This indicates that teacher-related factors have a particularly demotivating impact in EFL settings.

Similarly, EFL students exhibited greater demotivation related to Failure Experiences ($M=3.26$, $SD=0.88$) than their AFL counterparts ($M=2.73$, $SD=0.81$). The difference between the groups was significant, $t(152)=3.82$, $p < .001$. This suggests that EFL learners might internalise failure more adversely or experience more failure-related stressors.

The Class Characteristics dimension also revealed a significant difference, with EFL learners again scoring higher ($M=3.07$, $SD=0.70$) than AFL learners ($M=2.74$, $SD=0.63$), $t(152) = 3.13$, $p = .002$. While the mean differences are not as pronounced as those for the teacher factor, they still indicate meaningful variations in students' perceptions of class-related features.

Regarding Class Atmosphere, EFL students reported higher levels of demotivation ($M=3.94$, $SD=0.86$) than AFL students ($M=3.62$, $SD=0.96$), $t(152)=2.14$, $p=.034$. Although the difference is smaller, it remains statistically significant, indicating that the classroom environment remains a relevant demotivator.

The next factor, Lack of Interest, revealed that EFL students displayed greater demotivation ($M=3.88$, $SD=1.02$) than AFL learners ($M=3.43$, $SD=1.07$), $t(152)=2.66$, $p=.009$. This finding underscores the importance of enhancing intrinsic motivation in EFL contexts.

The sole aspect where no statistically significant difference was found between groups was Lesson Materials. While EFL students had higher mean scores ($M=3.52$, $SD=0.84$) compared to AFL students ($M=3.28$, $SD = 0.83$), this difference was not significant, $t(152)=1.83$, $p=.070$.

A notable difference in Total Demotivation scores was observed when examining all factors collectively. EFL students exhibited a greater overall level of demotivation ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.70$) than AFL students ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.65$), $t(152) = 3.76$, $p < .001$. This consistent trend across various domains underscores a broader concern about demotivation within the EFL group.

From a descriptive perspective, teachers and the classroom atmosphere were found to be the most demotivating factors for EFL students, whereas class characteristics were seen as the least discouraging. In contrast, AFL students highlighted class atmosphere and lack of interest as their primary demotivators, while class characteristics and failure experiences were rated the lowest.

3.2. Qualitative Results

The first step involved analysing the information gathered from the first open-ended question, which asked, "What are the other demotivating factors that have not been referred to in the questionnaire?" The responses from 8 EFL participants revealed seven sources of demotivation, some of which aligned with the quantitative data results: the classroom size, monotonous lessons, teachers' attitudes, failure experiences, lesson materials, lack of vocabulary, and peer pressure. Content analysis of EFL students' interviews provided 19 codes.

Table 5. EFL Students' Demotivating Factors Based On Interview Results

Factors	n =8	%
Monotonous lessons	5	62.5
Classroom size	4	50
Lack of vocabulary	3	37.5
Teachers' attitudes	2	25
Lesson materials	2	25
Peer pressure	2	25
Failure experience	1	12.5

As shown in Table 5, the most frequently cited factor was the monotony of lessons. Students expressed that repetitive instructional methods and a lack of variety in classroom activities negatively impacted their engagement and interest in language learning. EL2 states that *“Following the main course book can sometimes make the activities feel a bit repetitive, like listening, then discussing, and matching vocabulary, we do the same thing for different units. I feel really bored and get lost during the lesson”*. Similarly, classroom size was also identified, suggesting that overcrowded or physically constrained environments hinder active participation and effective communication. EL5 said that *“At the beginning of the year, our class was more crowded, and there were weeks when I didn't join any activities or answer any questions. I realized I didn't learn anything in these days”*. Lack of vocabulary emerged as another significant theme, indicating that limited lexical resources create barriers to language comprehension and expression, thereby reducing learners' confidence and motivation. EL1 reported that *“When I come across a reading text, I like to quickly scan the vocabulary. If I notice a lot of unfamiliar words, I can feel a bit frustrated and lose my motivation.”* Additionally, teachers' attitudes, lesson materials, and peer pressure were each mentioned by 11% of students. EL1 says, *“When a teacher corrects my mistakes right away and interrupts me while I'm trying to answer, I lose my motivation.”* Additionally, EL3 states that *“This happened once and demotivated me: When we don't understand a point during class, we ask the teacher to repeat or explain it further. However, one of our friends made fun of us. The teacher warned him, but for a while, we hesitated to ask for help”*. These findings imply that both interpersonal dynamics and instructional content play a crucial role in shaping learners' motivational states. Lastly, a failure experience was reported by only one participant, suggesting that past academic setbacks may contribute to ongoing feelings of discouragement. EL6 said, *“Whatever I do, I feel like it is not enough, and I'll fail again and again”*.

Table 6 presents the demotivating factors for AFL students. The responses from 8 AFL participants revealed six categories: language characteristics, teachers' backgrounds, misconceptions, lack of variety in sources, fear of failure, and peer pressure.

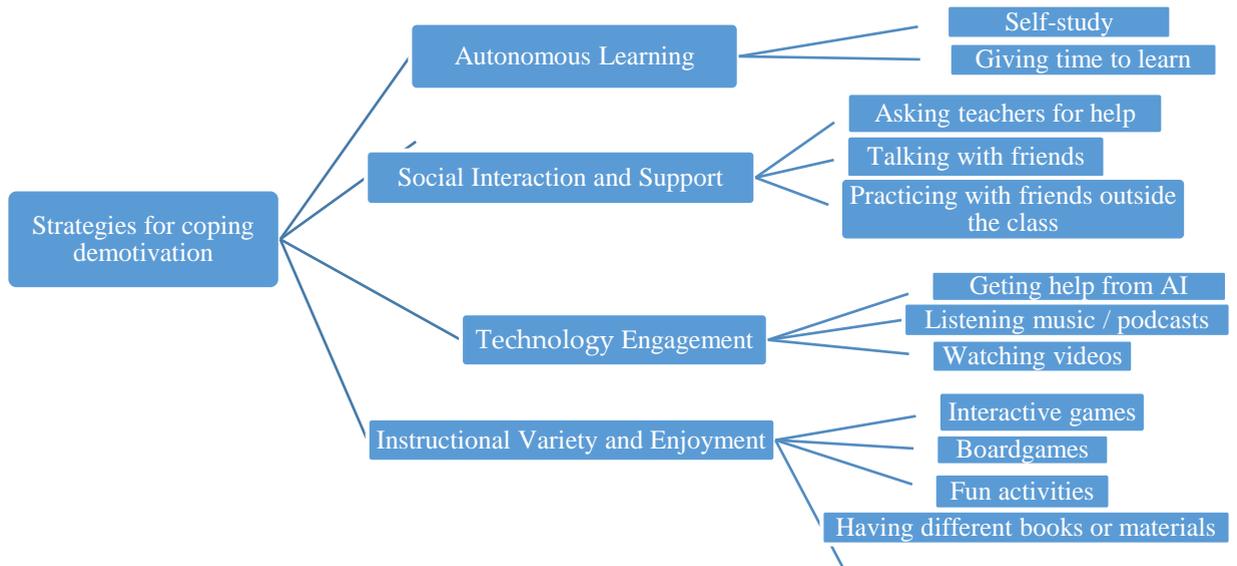
Table 6. AFL Students' Demotivating Factors Based On Interview Results

Factors	n =8	%
Language characteristics	7	87.5
Teachers' background	4	50
Misconceptions	3	37.5
Lack of sources	3	37.5
Fear of failure	3	37.5
Peer pressure	2	25

As shown in Table 6, the most frequently cited factor was related to language characteristics. Students highlighted the structural complexity of Arabic, including its unique vocabulary system, an overabundance of synonyms, and its distinct alphabet, all of which were perceived as substantial barriers to effective language acquisition. AL5 mentioned, *"You know, there are a hundred ways to say lion. Just imagine how hard it is to learn vocabulary. If you make a typo, you can end up saying totally different things. It's too tiring"*. Teachers' backgrounds, particularly their cultural and pedagogical differences, were identified as another demotivating factor. Students noted that instructors from diverse cultural contexts often exhibited teaching behaviours that negatively affected their motivation. Another salient theme was misconceptions surrounding Arabic language learners. Many reported that peers often associate Arabic learning with religious studies or make inaccurate assumptions based on institutional stereotypes, which undermines their academic identity and sense of purpose. AL3 stated, *"I'm studying interpreting and translation, while some of my classmates are from the faculty of theology. However, many believe we are all here just for religious studies or something similar"*. Students also reported a lack of variety in learning sources, indicating that limited access to diverse and engaging materials hampers motivation. AL1 states, *"I was in the English department during high school. We had a variety of sources, books, etc. However, I cannot find it in Arabic."* In addition, fear of failure and peer pressure were identified as social-emotional barriers that contribute to students' reluctance to participate actively and persist through language challenges. AL4 states that *"The articulation of Arabic is different from that of*

other languages, and mispronunciations can lead to very different meanings. I'm very shy and afraid of making those kinds of mistakes”.

Figure 2. Strategies for Coping with Demotivation



Secondly, semantic mapping was employed to examine the responses from the second open-ended question, “Which strategies do you use to overcome these negative experiences?” The participants’ replies revealed a range of tactics to combat demotivation, including self-motivation, seeking assistance, changing their mindset, and maintaining a goal-oriented approach. Detailed explanations of each tactic employed by the students are presented below in the semantic map (Figure 2).

Three of the interviewees suggested that textbook-related tactics could aid in students’ remotivation. To give students greater control over their education, it is advisable to allow them to select the subjects that interest them. Additionally, five of the participants stated that while reading passages are integrated into the syllabus, their interest and proficiency level should be taken into consideration. Half of the interviewees suggested that showing students how to use the target language in everyday situations can be useful for remotivating them.

Students expressed that their motivation to learn English may diminish if tasks are poorly designed and instructions are unclear. They proposed that motivation could be restored if the instructor offers clear, comprehensive guidance, demonstrates how to complete tasks, and confirms that all students understand the assignments. The instructor is responsible for

providing clear instructions, modeling task completion, and ensuring students' comprehension. Furthermore, students believe that selecting appropriately challenging assignments can enhance motivation, as tasks that are excessively easy or overly difficult may negatively impact their engagement.

Teachers should reduce students' workloads and remember that quality matters more than quantity, as students have expressed that having too much homework or an overwhelming workload is a significant demotivator. Students also recommend that teachers use quizzes and portfolios as alternate forms of assessment in addition to homework. According to one student, he did not show much improvement in his test results during middle school, but his teacher did not hold it against him. Instead, the teacher would reward him with chocolate or sweets, which motivated him to try harder. Remotivating students through internal factors, such as reminding them of their language goals and opportunities they might have, can ignite their interest.

Students have proposed solutions regarding teaching methods and the use of technology for remotivation, as shown in Table 7. The first sub-theme of autonomous learners includes strategies where students take personal initiative to manage their learning process and emotional state. EL4 stated, "When I feel demotivated about learning, I just study harder." Similarly, AL1 stated, "Learning takes time, and I'm aware of it. I always try to convince myself to allow time for learning." The second sub-theme reflects the role of interpersonal support in overcoming demotivation. Students reported that getting peer support or teacher supervision is helpful to remotivate themselves. AL2 states that "*Outside the classroom, we don't have much time to practice the language. We have a WhatsApp group where we chat in Arabic only so that we can practice and learn faster.*" Regarding the sub-theme of technology engagement, students primarily expressed the need for more technology use in the classroom and for showing movies and videos during class. Two students have expressed the following ideas about this sub-theme: "*I usually watch videos or short films in the language I'm learning. It makes the learning more real and interesting for me. I think we should watch them in class too*" (AL5). "*Songs, mini-series or cartoons are fun to watch and we can learn a lot, I think teachers should use them more*" (EL6). The last sub-theme of the teaching approach that the students expressed was that game-based learning should be used, speaking skills should be given more time, and lessons should be made more entertaining. Two students' opinions about this sub-theme are: "*My motivation will rise, and I will enjoy the lesson more if English lessons are more enjoyable and incorporate more games*" (AL6) "*Including various activities and games can make the course more fun and enjoyable.*" (EL1).

Table 7. The Strategies Suggested for The Remotivation (N=68)

Sub-theme	Code	F
Autonomous Learning	Self-study	8

	Giving time to learn	8
		16
	Asking teachers for assistance	7
	Asking friends	5
Social Interaction and Support	Practising with friends outside the class	4
		16
	Listening to music	6
	Listening to podcasts	4
Digital and Multimedia Engagement	Watching videos	6
	Using more technology	4
		20
	Interactive games during the lesson	6
	Games	3
Instructional Variety and Enjoyment	Fun activities	4
	Having different books or materials	3
		16

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

4.1. Discussion

This study investigated the leading causes of demotivation and the methods Turkish preparatory students use to overcome them during the language-learning process. A mixed-method approach was applied because demotivation necessitates a deeper understanding of its primary causes and effective strategies for overcoming it. Sources of demotivation were identified from data collected through the demotivation questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews.

Our study's quantitative results show notable differences between EFL and AFL students regarding demotivation factors. On the whole, EFL learners reported higher demotivation levels ($M=3.60$, $SD=0.70$) than AFL learners ($M=3.19$, $SD=0.65$), with the difference

being statistically significant ($p < .001$). This study shows that English learners face more obstacles in their language learning experience than their Arabic-learning counterparts. Similar to the results of several studies, teacher-related factors were the most demotivating aspect for both groups (Bekleyen, 2011; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009; Kim, 2012; Kojima, 2004; Soureshjani & Riahipour, 2012; Tabatabaei & Molavi, 2012; Zhang, 2007). This suggests that students' perceptions of their teachers' behaviour and teaching methods are crucial in determining their motivation (Arai, 2004; Cristophel & Gorham, 1995; Çankaya, 2018; Soureshjani & Riahipour, 2012; Tsuchiya, 2006; Wang & Littlewood, 2021; Wang et al., 2024). Additionally, class characteristics and atmosphere were significantly more demotivating for EFL learners, pointing to potential issues such as larger class sizes, inflexible teaching formats, or inadequate engagement strategies in English classes (Arai, 2004; Bekleyen, 2011; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Huwari et al., 2023). The experience of failure was another strong demotivating factor for EFL learners ($M=3.26$) compared to AFL learners ($M=2.73$), $p < .001$, suggesting that students studying English may face greater academic pressure or have more frequent negative performance experiences. Aligning with Çankaya (2018) and Sakai and Kikuchi's studies (2009), while lesson materials did not show a statistically significant difference ($p=.070$), lack of interest was significantly higher for EFL learners ($p=.009$), pointing to motivational fatigue or content disengagement in English instruction (Cristophel & Gorham, 1995; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012; Tsuchiya, 2006).

These findings suggest that EFL learners may face a more challenging and emotionally draining environment, possibly due to higher societal or institutional expectations for English proficiency, which heightens feelings of failure and disinterest. In contrast, AFL learners seem relatively less affected by these structural and psychological barriers, although qualitative data reveal other unique challenges in the AFL context. This disparity highlights the need for tailored instructional and motivational strategies to address the specific challenges associated with each language.

The qualitative data gathered from student interviews offer a detailed understanding of the sources of demotivation in learning English and Arabic. For EFL learners, demotivation primarily stems from internal classroom dynamics and teaching-related issues. The most frequently mentioned factors were dull lessons, large class sizes, limited vocabulary, teachers' attitudes, and uninspiring teaching materials. These responses indicate a perception of repetitive and dull teaching methods, which likely hinder student engagement and diminish enthusiasm for learning English. Interestingly, peer pressure and experiences of failure were also mentioned, showing that social comparison and fear of underperforming contribute to decreased motivation. In contrast, AFL learners identified different sources of demotivation, with the most commonly cited factor being the inherent difficulty of Arabic. The complexity of its script, grammar, and unfamiliar phonetic features seems to pose a significant cognitive challenge. Other frequently reported issues included teachers' limited background or training, misconceptions about the language, lack of accessible learning materials, and fear of failure. These factors suggest that demotivation

in AFL contexts is more deeply rooted in structural and cognitive barriers than in classroom engagement. However, similar to EFL learners, AFL students also pointed to peer pressure as a demotivating factor, although to a lesser extent.

Research into remotivation reveals that students at preparatory school use various strategies to combat demotivation in both EFL and AFL contexts. Four key themes emerged from the interviews: digital and multimedia engagement, autonomous learning, social interaction and support, and instructional variety and enjoyment. Digital tools, such as music, podcasts, videos, and online learning platforms, were the most commonly cited, showing learners' strong preference for multimedia-rich environments that make language learning more enjoyable and relatable (Genc, 2009; Kim, 2010). Students' use of autonomous learning strategies, including self-study and setting aside enough time for practice, highlights their awareness of their responsibility in maintaining motivation. Seeking help from teachers and peers was also an effective social strategy, underscoring the importance of interpersonal support networks (Aldwin, 1994; Ushioda, 2001). Furthermore, students stressed the need for varied instruction, such as incorporating games and diverse learning materials, to make lessons more engaging and reduce monotony. These findings suggest that learners are not passive recipients of language instruction but actively manage their motivation, preferring interactive, socially enriched, and technologically supported learning environments. Thus, new personal approaches to learning a language may help students overcome obstacles. To cope with the demotivation they face, students should focus on their long-term goals. They should not allow short-term demotivators, such as low marks, failure, or negative remarks, to disappoint and demotivate them.

The qualitative data highlight that demotivation arises from instructional, psychological, social, and linguistic challenges. However, the specific nature of these challenges varies between EFL and AFL learners. EFL students appear to be more affected by pedagogical practices and learning environments, whereas language-specific difficulties and insufficient instructional support primarily challenge AFL learners. These insights highlight the importance of adopting tailored interventions that address both the educational and emotional dimensions of language learning for each language group. The research findings summarise that prep school AFL and EFL students' levels of demotivation are high. The results report subfactors such as the instructor, the classroom setting, and course materials. Parallel with the previous studies, both English and Arabic language teaching in Türkiye have not reached the expected level. Thus, students still struggle to communicate independently in oral and written form (Ali & Pathan, 2017; Hojaji & Salehi, 2017; Suzuki, 2017). Understanding when students are most likely to lose motivation could be the first step in finding a solution.

4.2. Strategies for tackling demotivation

This study revealed that both internal and external factors significantly affect learners' motivation, in contrast to earlier research (Hasegawa, 2004; Trang & Baldauf, 2007), which emphasises the importance of internal factors only over external factors. The results

showed that using various teaching methods and planning engaging activities can be effective ways to motivate students again. By using a wide range of dynamic and effective motivational techniques, such as planning varied class activities, teachers can play a critical role in creating an inspiring environment (Jiang, 2025; Khorshidi & Nimchahi, 2013; Sucaromana, 2013).

According to Littlewood (2001), learner-centred activities such as role-playing or group projects can keep students interested and engaged when they hold negative views of traditional teacher-based or authority-based teaching modalities. According to Akay's (2017) research, songs and music can be excellent remotivation tools that make lessons more engaging and joyful for students. Additionally, teachers who suggest engaging learning resources to their students- including printed and electronic books, such as audiovisual books- can help them become more motivated. As suggested in Akay's research (2017), it is crucial to provide students with opportunities to use the language in authentic contexts and to develop content directly related to their daily lives.

Teacher support also serves as a source of motivation for students. Remotivation occurs when learners and teachers work together to establish a supportive environment. Without the support of their teachers, who are crucial in inspiring students, students cannot succeed. Through motivational practice, teachers can significantly impact their students' motivation (Dörnyei, 2001; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Other possible re-motivation techniques include utilising technology effectively and providing e-learning materials within and outside the classroom. In his research, Kim (2010) concludes that information technology (IT) and multimedia are significant factors in EFL motivation and attitudes. According to Genç İltar (2009), a significant correlation exists between students' motivation to learn a language and their utilisation of technology. Students may benefit from integrating technology into English Language Teaching (ELT) lessons, as it can enhance motivation, mitigate anxiety, provide additional opportunities for engagement, and provide a rationale for negotiating meaning (Brinton, 2001; Syndorenko, 2010).

For both groups of participants, getting them interested in the target culture and community can be a good strategy. Participating in study abroad programs, singing English pop songs, and viewing English-language films can all pique their interest. Some students only view learning English as necessary for exams because they are unaware of its significance and lack clear aspirations for the future. Therefore, tying their use of English to their future goals can be a useful remotivating tactic. Dörnyei (2005) asserts that a significant factor in student motivation is the ideal L2 self. One of the key elements that supports students' remotivation is their imagination or visualisation of their ideal future selves (Song & Kim, 2017). Kim (2015) recommends using motivational language activities, such as writing in diaries or engaging in group discussions, to share their language learning objectives with peers (Wang & Littlewood, 2021) to help them link the value of a foreign language with their goals. They can create their own ideal L2 selves and comprehend the values of English as a result. Munezane (2013) claims that learners can become remotivated when they lose

it by visualising themselves in scenarios where they use their foreign language to address their needs.

4.3. Conclusion

This research examined the primary causes of demotivation among EFL and AFL students. The quantitative and qualitative findings show clear differences between the factors demotivating university preparatory students learning English (EFL) and Arabic (AFL) as foreign languages. The quantitative results indicate that EFL students consistently report higher levels of demotivation across most categories – including teacher-related factors, class characteristics, failure experiences, class atmosphere, and lack of interest – compared to their AFL counterparts. Statistically significant differences were particularly notable in teacher influence, class dynamics, and previous failure experiences. These findings suggest that English learners perceive their learning environment and experiences as discouraging, possibly due to higher expectations, greater pressure, or prior exposure that sharpens their critical stance towards language instruction.

Qualitative interviews offer a deeper understanding of what demotivates each group. EFL students cited internal classroom issues, such as dull lessons, large class sizes, limited vocabulary, and uninspiring materials. On the other hand, AFL students were more concerned with structural and cognitive challenges, including the difficulty of Arabic's linguistic features, inadequate teaching resources, and teacher qualifications. Interestingly, while fear of failure and peer pressure were present in both groups, their impact and expression varied. These findings show that demotivation is influenced not only by general educational challenges but also by language-specific factors and learners' sociocultural views. As a result, tailored teaching strategies are needed to address the unique demotivators in each language context, such as employing a range of teaching methods in EFL and enhancing access to resources and teacher training in AFL.

To remotivate themselves, both EFL and AFL learners use various strategies to boost their motivation in language learning. Notably, digital and multimedia engagement techniques, such as listening to music or podcasts, watching videos, and using technology, were popular, showing learners prefer dynamic and accessible content. Other important strategies included encouraging independent learning through self-study and time management, as well as seeking support from teachers and peers. Varying instruction and enjoyment- particularly through interactive games and diverse materials- also played a key role in maintaining learners' interest. These findings highlight the importance of learner-centred, socially supportive, and multimedia-rich environments in overcoming demotivation and increasing language engagement in both EFL and AFL contexts.

This study presents some important pedagogical implications. First, it offers insightful information to all stakeholders in the field (e.g., educators, administrators, and legislators) and encourages re-motivation in language learners. Educators and policymakers must reevaluate educational policies, curricula, and classroom procedures to design engaging curricula that encourage students to practise speaking and writing more, supported by e-

learning facilities. Language teachers should be aware that traditional teaching methods and an unfriendly personality can harm students' motivation; therefore, these approaches should be avoided. They can plan engaging and meaningful exercises that help students appreciate the value of the target language. However, the current study has certain limitations, and there are suggestions for further research. First, because convenience sampling was employed (every participant enrolled in the same course at the same university), this study's findings may not generalize to populations in other settings. More representative samples with larger participant numbers are suggested for future research. Second, the learners' level was not taken into consideration. Whether students at different proficiency levels have distinct demotivating and remotivating factors warrants further study. Finally, longitudinal studies should be conducted with a consistent group of students, from prep school through graduation, to explore the evolution of language-learning demotivation.

Statement of Research and Publication Ethics

In all processes of the article, the principles of research and publication ethics of Manisa Celal Bayar University Journal of Social Sciences Institute were followed. The ethics committee approval was received from Gaziantep Islam Science and Technology University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee as Document Date and Number: 05.03.2025 – 20.05.02

Authors' Contribution Rates to the Article

The authors contributed equally to the work.

Declaration of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest with any person or organization.

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