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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Case Study of Chinese EFL Demotivation among Senior Students in Business English Major in a Chinese Private University

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| ABSTRACT
Learning motivation serves as a critical factor influencing second language acquisition (L2), functioning not only as a key driver in initiating but also in sustaining the language learning process. Adopting the perspective of "demotivation" in EFL learning, this study investigates the extent of demotivation among Chinese EFL learner. The participants included 100 senior Business English majors (BE major) students and 5 instructors from a private university in Guangzhou. Data were collected through questionnaires and audio-recorded interviews both conducted in Chinese. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version 27, while interview recordings were transcribed and examined using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that demotivation is widespread among Chinese EFL learner, with varying degrees of severity. Multiple demotivating factors were identified, including teacher-related, learner-internal, and peer-influenced factors. Among these, teacher-related factors emerged as significant contributors to motivation attenuation. However, these factors do not operate in isolation; rather, they interact intricately with learners' internal factors (e.g., self-efficacy) and peer environments (e.g., negative peer culture) to form a generative system of demotivation. Based on these findings and considering the evolving demands of the new era, we proposed several pedagogical recommendations to sustain student motivation and reduce the occurrence of demotivation in language learning.

| KEYWORDS

College English teaching, L2 acquisition, Chinese EFL demotivation, Chinese EFL learner

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1 Introduction

Language learning is fundamentally a cyclical process that demands sustained accumulation and application in both daily study and practice. As Dörnyei (1998) emphasizes, learning motivation constitutes a key variable in L2 acquisition, serving as a crucial positive factor in initiating and maintaining the language learning process. Systematic research on L2 learning motivation can be traced back to the late 1950s, with Gardner and Lambert (1985) as pioneering figures who developed the widely adopted Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), thereby advancing the scientific development of this field.

As one of the most dynamic individual difference factors affecting foreign language learning outcomes, learning motivation has long attracted significant attention in the field of L2 acquisition, making it a central yet challenging research focus. Traditionally, motivation has been conceptualized as a facilitative factor positively correlated with academic performance.

However, the practical teaching experiences have revealed a common phenomenon: many EFL learners, such as university students, begin their studies with considerable enthusiasm for English learning, yet their motivation gradually declines–or even dissipates entirely–as their studies progress. This phenomenon is identified as "demotivation." According to Skinner's (1957) reinforcement theory of motivation, students who receive positive stimuli (such as successful classroom performance or academic achievement) maintain or enhance their motivation, whereas those subjected to negative stimuli (such as criticism or punishment) experience weakened motivation. Dörnyei (2001) defines demotivation as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action." In recent years, numerous scholars have shifted

their research focus from "how to enhance motivation" to "exploring the causes of motivational decline," progressively constructing a theoretical framework for understanding demotivation in L2 learning.

2 Literature Review

2.1 The Emergence and Early Exploration of Demotivation Research Abroad

Systematic research on L2 learning demotivation can be traced back to the groundbreaking experiment conducted by Gorham and Christophel (1992). This study pivoted the research perspective from "how to motivate" to "why motivation diminishes," identifying inappropriate classroom behaviors as significant factors weakening learner motivation. By exploring demotivating triggers across three dimensions–teacher, situational, and structural–they established a preliminary analytical framework, thereby opening new vistas for motivation research.

Subsequently, the concept of demotivation was formally introduced into the field of foreign language teaching. Chambers (1993), in a questionnaire survey involving 191 British secondary school students and their teachers, uncovered a critical and persistent divergence in attribution. The study found that teachers predominantly attributed demotivation to student-internal factors such as indolence or lack of interest, whereas students tended to blame external factors, particularly teacher-related instructional behaviors–including insufficient explanations, unclear instruction, use of outdated teaching materials, and arbitrary criticism. This finding is of considerable significance, indicating that demotivation is not merely a unidirectional psychological process within the learner but is profoundly influenced by the quality of teacher-student interaction. More revealingly, Chambers noted that even demotivated students who exhibited passive learning behaviors still deeply desired teacher attention and encouragement, rather than being neglected or given up on.

The research by Oxford and Shearin (1994) further substantiated the central role of teacher-related factors. By asking participants to reflect retrospectively on their foreign language learning experiences in writing, they found that respondents had commonly experienced demotivation and primarily attributed it to teacher-related aspects, including poorly designed classroom activities, teachers' negative attitudes, teacher-student style mismatches, and dysfunctional teacher-student relationships. However, some scholars (e.g., Ushioda, 2011) pointed out that the methodology of Oxford's (1994) study, potentially due to leading prompts, might have resulted in an incomplete summary of factors, failing to fully uncover broader structural issues within the learning context.

To construct a more systematic theoretical framework, Dörnyei (2001) conducted a seminal study. Using structured interviews, he conducted in-depth investigations with 50 learners identified as demotivated, ultimately synthesizing nine categories of demotivating factors, ranked by importance: (1)Teacher (specific teaching behaviors, personality, and professionalism); (2)Reduced self-confidence (primarily stemming from learning frustrations); (3)Compulsory nature of L2 learning (resistance to required courses); (4)Negative attitudes toward L2 learning; (5)Teaching materials (content and design); (6)The learning group (negative peer influence); (7)Negative attitudes toward the L2 community/culture; (8)School administration (e.g., curriculum design and examination arrangements); (9)Interference of the mother tongue. Notably, factors directly or indirectly related to teachers accounted for 55% of these categories, highlighting the pivotal role of teachers in both the maintenance and erosion of motivation. Dörnyei's taxonomy is comprehensive and highly operational, laying a solid theoretical foundation for subsequent empirical research.

2.2 The Development and Deepening of Domestic Demotivation Research in China

Research on learning demotivation in China has flourished over the past decade (2015-2025). The focus has gradually shifted from the early static identification of factors towards exploring the dynamic evolution of demotivation, while also beginning to address new characteristics emerging in novel contexts such as blended and online learning.

Early research focused on verifying and supplementing international theories within the Chinese context. Zhou Cibo and Wang Wenbin (2012), through a large-scale questionnaire survey, identified five categories of factors leading to motivation decline among Chinese university students in foreign language learning. They demonstrated that demotivation results from the interplay of external factors ("Teacher competence and teaching style," "Curriculum design and learning materials," "Inadequate teaching facilities") and internal factors ("Lack of intrinsic interest," "Deficiency in effective learning strategies"). Their findings indicated that external factors exerted a slightly stronger influence than internal ones, with "Teacher competence and teaching style" and "Lack of effective learning strategies" being the two most influential factors. This conclusion resonates with Dörnyei's findings while also reflecting the characteristics of the Chinese educational environment. Lin Qingyu, Liu Sujun, et al. (2015) further analyzed the pedagogical implications of these influencing factors for college English teaching from a theoretical perspective, promoting the initial integration of theory and teaching practice.

With the wave of educational informatization, domestic scholars began exploring demotivation in technology-enhanced environments. Bai Qian et al. (2016), from the perspective of demotivating factors, investigated learners on domestic MOOC platforms like "Chinese University MOOC" and "XuetangX." Their analysis found that the main factors affecting the sustainability of motivation among Chinese MOOC learners included: learners' own perseverance and persistence, the authenticity and sense of presence in the learning situation, English proficiency, the production quality of MOOC videos, and time conflicts between

work/regular coursework and MOOC learning. This study revealed the particular challenges of maintaining motivation in online learning environments.

The research by Xu Lin (2018) was more constructive. Based on five major demotivating factors, she developed an ecological "SPOC + Flipped Classroom" English teaching model designed to counteract demotivation. This model, through four dynamic components–"resource reorganization and optimization," "multimodal interactive progression," "process support and feedback," and "analysis of learning characteristics and behavioral patterns"–aims to create a virtuous cycle of mutual support, advancement, and growth, providing a operable pathway for innovating informatized college English teaching.

Recent research places greater emphasis on the dynamic and complex nature of demotivation. Liu Jing (2023), through semi-structured interviews, intensively investigated the dynamic changes of learning motivation attrition among students in undergraduate English interpretation courses. Her findings revealed that motivation attrition is prevalent among English majors and tends to intensify as students progress to higher grades. Internally, learning confidence and self-efficacy were crucial for maintaining motivation, with low self-efficacy being a key cause of decline; simultaneously, learning burnout and future career anxieties also profoundly affected motivational states. Externally, teaching methods, the practicality of textbook content, and learning environment quality collectively constituted the situational factors influencing motivation. Similarly, Hu Xichun's (2023) case study interview research with English majors at a vocational college analyzed the motivational structure and reasons for its decline among this specific student group from three dimensions: cultural, instrumental, and situational motivation, reflecting the refinement and deepening of research contexts.

In summary, research on L2 learning demotivation, both internationally and domestically, has evolved from initial phenomenological description to multi-dimensional and multi-contextual systematic inquiry. International research has established a solid theoretical foundation and constructed core conceptual frameworks, while domestic research, building on this inheritance and closely integrating with local educational practices and technological developments, continuously expands in breadth and depth, demonstrating a clear evolutionary path from static attribution to dynamic process intervention, and from single classrooms to diverse learning environments.

3 Methodology

3.1 Methodological Structure

(1) Dörnyei’s three-level motivation model（1994a, 1994b）

Situational-specific motives are closely related to classroom reality and play an important role in second/foreign language motivation complex. Dörnyei (1994) adopts Crookes and Schmidt’s method (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991) of investigating motivation at various conceptual levels and integrates an extensive list of motivational components identified in different studies into a three-level categorization comprising the language level, the learner level and the learning situation level. Among the three levels, the language level represents the broadest level and is mainly termed by the concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation. It is focused on various motives and orientations related to aspects of the L2, such as the community where the language is spoken, the culture it conveys as well as the usefulness of the language. The learner level describes individual differences that learners bring to the learning process using familiar motivational concepts such as self-confidence and need for achievement. The learning situation level, which is the most elaborate and complex in the framework, concerns the situation-specific motives derived from various aspects of language learning in the practical classroom context. The learning situational level can be divided into three classes of components: course-specific motivational components; teacher-specific motivational components and group-specific motivational components

Dörnyei lays great emphasis on the general motivational components in the foreign language classroom contexts. It is more education-friendly and pragmatic as he devotes considerable attention to the learning situation level, which has not been given adequate consideration in the socio-educational model, and states that this level is especially pertinent to classroom teachers. However, limitations exist as well. On one hand, his list only identifies the motivational components while it doesn’t clarify the relationships between the components. On the other hand, the components listed in the framework are rather diverse in nature and for this reason cannot be easily measured and tested in the empirical research.

(2) Gardner’s socio-educational model (1985)

Gardner’s socio-educational model (1985) comprises four major elements: the social milieu, individual difference variables, language acquisition contexts and language learning outcomes. We can understand the relationship between the four elements according to the model: L2 acquisition takes place within the social milieu. The individual’s social and cultural background could affect the two types of attitudinal variables: one is identified as integrativeness, referring to an individual’s tendency to interact or identify with the target language community; and the other is identified as attitudes toward the learning situation, reflecting an individual’s evaluation toward the L2 course and the language teacher. The former two types of variables are regarded to influence the level of the learning situation, and motivation) form integrative motivation. Motivation as well as language aptitude has an impact on language attainment. One of the messages that Gardner’s socio-educational model conveys is that integrative motivation is an absolutely essential requirement for successful L2 learning.

3.2 Research questions

(1) Is there evidence of demotivation among Chinese EFL learners? If so, what demotivating factors have been identified?
(2) What are the primary determinants of demotivation for Chinese EFL learners, are they internal or external factors?

3.3 Participants

The study participants comprised two groups−student participants and teacher participants−corresponding to the two primary research methodologies employed: questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews.

3.1 Student Participants (Questionnaire)

This study utilized a convenience sampling method, recruiting 100 senior-year undergraduate students majoring in Business English from Guangzhou College of Technology and Business. A total of 90 valid questionnaires were ultimately collected. The sample selection was primarily based on the following considerations: first, the researcher's affiliation with the institution facilitated the implementation of the survey and helped ensure the quality and efficiency of data collection; second, according to the conventional classification standards of Chinese higher education, Guangzhou College of Technology and Business is categorized as a second level university. Its student body typically exhibits a diverse distribution in terms of Gaokao scores (Nationwide Unified Examination for Admissions to General Universities and Colleges in China) and English proficiency foundations. This diversity aids in examining the motivational evolution of students from different starting points, thereby enhancing the sample's representativeness and the generalizability of the research findings. All participants had completed three years of systematic English specialized education, possessing profound experience in the specialized learning process. Consequently, they were deemed capable of effectively identifying and reporting potential fluctuations in their learning motivation and the underlying causes.

3.4 Teacher Participants (Interviews)

To gain deeper insights into the phenomenon of demotivation from the teaching perspective, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five instructors who teach senior-level courses in the Business English major at the School of Foreign Languages, Guangzhou College of Technology and Business. The interviewed teacher sample demonstrated a balanced distribution in terms of age (28-45 years), academic rank (ranging from unranked positions to full professor), and gender, ensuring diversity of perspectives. All teachers possessed at least three years of experience teaching upper-level students and were familiar with student dynamics and learning trajectories. Leveraging their extensive teaching practice, they were able to provide authentic, in-depth, and reflective qualitative data for this study.

4. Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through two primary channels.

4.1 Questionnaire Survey

The main objective of the questionnaire was to identify and assess the perceived intensity of various factors leading to students' demotivation in English learning. The questionnaire design drew primarily on the research frameworks of Dörnyei (2001,2005,2009), specifically targeting learners who self-identified as experiencing motivation attenuation. It aimed to uncover the genuine reasons behind their motivational decline. The questionnaire consisted of four dimensions: teacher-related factors, learner-internal factors, course-related factors, and learning environment factors. Each dimension contained five specific items, resulting in a total of 20 questions. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). To eliminate language barriers and ensure natural and accurate responses, the questionnaire was administered in Chinese and distributed uniformly during class sessions. The estimated completion time was approximately five minutes. The relatively short duration aimed to reduce respondent burden, thereby enhancing the authenticity and validity of the collected data.

Prior to the formal survey, a pilot study was conducted in October 2025 to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The pilot involved 30 final-year Business English majors demographically similar to the formal sample. Thirty valid questionnaires were collected, yielding a 100% valid return rate. After excluding three questionnaires from respondents who reported no tendency toward demotivation, data from 27 participants were used for the reliability and validity analysis. The analysis results are presented in the table 1 as below:

Table 1 KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.879
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1428.469
	Degrees of Freedom	190
	Significance	<.001

The analysis indicates that the overall questionnaire achieved a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.938, demonstrating excellent internal consistency. Furthermore, the KMO measure reached 0.879 (exceeding the 0.8 threshold), and Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded significant results ($p<0.001$), confirming the questionnaire's robust construct validity and its suitability for subsequent factor analysis.

4.2 Teacher Interviews:

To gain an in-depth understanding of the concrete manifestations and underlying causes of demotivation in teaching practice, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five teachers. The interview protocol (see Appendix B) focused on shifts in students' motivation throughout their English learning journey, typical behavioral indicators, and potential influencing factors. To ensure fluid and profound communication, all interviews were conducted in Chinese, with each session lasting approximately 25 minutes on average. The interviews took place in quiet environments and were audio-recorded, after which they were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The interview data were analyzed primarily using the thematic analysis approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process involved repeated reading and systematic coding of the transcribed texts, leading to the extraction of key themes such as "students' weak English foundation," "disconnect between teaching content and practical application," and "low classroom participation." These themes were subsequently categorized into analytical dimensions including "Teacher Factors," "Learner Factors," "Curriculum Design," and "Learning Environment." This method enabled the systematic identification of critical factors constraining students' English learning motivation, thereby providing rich qualitative evidence to address the research questions.

5 Findings

5.1 Prevalence and Contributing Factors of Demotivation Among Chinese EFL Learners

We first calculated the number and percentage of students reporting no, moderate, or severe demotivation. The distribution of participants' motivational changes is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Percentages of different demotivation changes types (N=90)

		Frequency	*Percentage*	*Valid Percentage*	*Cumulative Percentage*
Valid	*No decline*	*7*	*7.8*	*7.8*	*7.8*
	Some decline	*76*	*84.4*	*84.4*	*92.2*

Table 2 (Continued) Percentages of different demotivation changes types (N=90)

	Frequency	*Percentage*	*Valid Percentage*	*Cumulative Percentage*
Severe decline	*7*	*7.8*	*7.8*	*100*
Total	*90*	*100*	*100*	

As shown in Table 2, among the 90 participants, 7 (7.8%) reported experiencing no motivational decline, 76 (84.4%) exhibited signs of demotivation, and 7 (7.8%) reported severe loss of learning motivation. Regardless of severity level, the total number of students experiencing demotivation reached 83, accounting for 92.2% of valid participants. This indicates that motivational decline is both prevalent and substantial among Chinese EFL Learners. This finding aligns with Dörnyei's (2005) observation that "demotivation is not uncommon in language classrooms, and the number of demotivated second language learners is relatively large." In response to the first two research questions, we conclude that demotivation is indeed widespread among Chinese EFL learners.

Subsequently, we conducted descriptive statistical analysis of the research variables (N=90), with results presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics for questionnaire responses (N = 90)

Item	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error of Skewness	Kurtosis	Std. Error of Kurtosis
1. Teaching strategy	90	1	5	2.96	1.141	-0.004	0.254	-0.588	0.503
2. Teacher's personality	90	1	5	2.14	1.427	0.951	0.254	-0.569	0.503
3. Teacher's responsibility	90	1	5	2.04	1.34	1.063	0.254	-0.157	0.503
4. Teaching level	90	1	5	2.21	1.328	0.808	0.254	-0.632	0.503
5. Teacher's evaluation	90	1	5	2.31	1.304	0.612	0.254	-0.773	0.503
6. Personal confidence	90	1	5	3.03	1.185	-0.232	0.254	-0.854	0.503

7. Personal efforts	90	1	5	3.09	1.138	-0.271	0.254	-0.504	0.503
8. Learning goals	90	1	5	2.67	1.19	0.146	0.254	-0.973	0.503
9. Learning strategies	90	1	5	3.08	1.094	-0.157	0.254	-0.578	0.503
10. Personal personality	90	1	5	2.59	1.179	0.308	0.254	-0.723	0.503
11. Textbook content	90	1	5	2.63	1.222	0.212	0.254	-1.091	0.503
12. Textbook design	90	1	5	2.34	1.029	0.336	0.254	-0.742	0.503
13. Textbook length	90	1	5	2.96	1.141	-0.097	0.254	-0.603	0.503
14. Teaching facilities	90	1	5	2.53	1.144	0.262	0.254	-0.776	0.503
15. Language teaching skills	90	1	5	2.66	1.113	0.172	0.254	-0.587	0.503
16. Communication activities	90	1	5	2.82	1.241	0.202	0.254	-0.949	0.503
17. School policy	90	1	5	2.37	1.075	0.549	0.254	-0.161	0.503
18. Others' opinions	90	1	5	2.33	1.071	0.418	0.254	-0.621	0.503
19. Future work	90	1	4	2.13	0.81	0.139	0.254	-0.694	0.503
20. Cultural exchange	90	1	3	1.8	0.722	0.322	0.254	-1.018	0.503
Valid cases (successful)	90								

The mean values indicate that respondents showed relatively higher agreement with factors such as 'Personal Effort' (M=3.09), 'Learning Strategies' (M=3.08), and 'Self-Confidence' (M=3.03). Conversely, they tended to disagree with core teacher characteristics such as 'Teacher Responsibility' (M=2.04) and 'Teacher Personality' (M=2.14). Furthermore, the skewness (absolute value $|S|<1.06$) and kurtosis (absolute value $|K|<1.10$) coefficients for all variables fell within acceptable ranges, indicating that the data followed a normal distribution and met the basic assumptions for subsequent parametric tests.

Simultaneously, we observed variations in the standard deviations across variables, with Q2 'Teacher Personality' showing the highest standard deviation (SD=1.427). This suggests significant divergence in participants' evaluations of teacher personality factors, indicating low consensus. A plausible explanation is that students exhibit considerable individual differences in their perception and tolerance of teachers' personality traits and emotional expressions, compounded by actual variations in these traits among the teachers they encounter. This finding highlights that 'teacher personality' is a highly subjective and context-dependent variable that warrants particular attention in subsequent research and educational interventions, rather than being simplistically treated as a monolithic factor. This area, rich in tensions and individual differences, merits deeper and more nuanced investigation by researchers.

5.2 Teacher-Related Factors as Key Determinants of Demotivation Among Senior EFL Learners

To investigate the key factors underlying demotivation, we also employed Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to examine the internal structure of influences on students' English learning motivation. We employed principal component analysis for factor extraction, combined with varimax rotation. Using the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalue>1), four common factors were ultimately extracted. These four factors cumulatively accounted for 72.543% of the total variance, indicating that the factor model satisfactorily represented the original variable information. The rotated component matrix revealed a clear and interpretable structure, with all items loading significantly (loadings>0.45) on their respective factors and no notable cross-loadings observed.

Table 4 Exploratory factor analysis for questionnaire responses

Comp.	Total	Initial Eigenvalues % of Variance	Cumulative (Cum.)%	Total	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings % of Variance	Cum.%	Total	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings % of Variance	Cum. %
1	9.519	47.593	47.593	9.519	47.593	47.593	7.283	36.417	36.417
2	1.988	9.939	57.532	1.988	9.939	57.532	3.127	15.634	52.051
3	1.915	9.576	67.107	1.915	9.576	67.107	2.36	11.799	63.849
4	1.087	5.435	72.543	1.087	5.435	72.543	1.739	8.693	72.543
5	0.812	4.059	76.602						
6	0.712	3.559	80.161						

7	0.589	2.945	83.105
8	0.546	2.73	85.835
9	0.497	2.484	88.319
10	0.396	1.982	90.3
11	0.37	1.85	92.151
12	0.307	1.536	93.687
13	0.262	1.308	94.995
14	0.246	1.231	96.225
15	0.185	0.925	97.15
16	0.179	0.897	98.047
17	0.148	0.74	98.787
18	0.1	0.499	99.286
19	0.091	0.453	99.739
20	0.052	0.261	100

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The EFA (see Table 4) results revealed a clearly hierarchical structure of influencing factors. Factor 1 (Teacher and Teaching Resources Factors) emerged as the most influential dimension, uniquely explaining 36.417% of the total variance, underscoring the central, dominant role of the teaching environment and teacher quality in students' English learning motivation. Factor 2 (Student Internal Psychology and Strategy Factors) constituted the second most significant influence (15.634% variance explained), emphasizing the crucial role of learners' individual psychological states and strategy use. Together, these two pillars accounted for over 52% of the total variance. Factors 3 (External Environment and Cultural Identity) and 4 (Learning Goals and Social Orientation) served as relatively secondary yet still explanatory complementary dimensions. This finding clearly indicates that strategies for enhancing motivation should prioritize the holistic optimization of the teaching system and the cultivation of students' internal drive.

Table 5 Rotated Component Matrix for questionnaire responses

Item	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
4. Teaching level	0.886			
3. Responsibility	0.869			
5. Teacher evaluation	0.865			
2. Teacher's personality	0.85			
11. Textbook content	0.786			
12. Textbook design	0.777			
14. Teaching facilities	0.745			
16. Communication activities	0.681	0.462		
1. Teaching strategy	0.671			
15. Language teaching skills	0.666	0.465		
13. Textbook length	0.627			
17. School policy	0.566		0.47	
6. Personal confidence		0.842		
7. Personal effort		0.818		
9. Learning strategies		0.749		
20. Cultural exchange			0.777	
19. Future work			0.711	

18. Others' opinions	0.46	0.493	
8. Learning goals			0.759
10. Personal personality	0.451	0.485	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Overall, the data revealed a clear pattern of correlations: strong positive intercorrelations were observed among teaching-related factors (teacher, teaching materials, teaching methods). For instance (see Table 5), the correlation between teacher personality and responsibility reached a mode of 0.907, between responsibility and teaching proficiency 0.890, and between teaching strategy and evaluation criteria 0.649. This suggests that these dimensions within the teacher factor are highly interrelated.

In contrast, external social environment factors (e.g., future employment, cultural exchange) showed weak, or even negative, correlations with most other variables. This strongly suggests that the influences on motivation primarily stem from a tightly interconnected core teaching system, rather than the external environment. This implies that participants perceive these issues as a "package deal." For example, a teacher perceived as having poor "teaching strategies" is highly likely to also be criticized for their "teaching proficiency" and "sense of responsibility." Similarly, students who find "textbook content" problematic typically also express dissatisfaction with aspects like "teaching facilities" and "communicative activities."

In English language teaching, many teachers overlook students' needs and interests, relying solely on textbooks and reducing teaching and learning activities to a routine pattern. Such dull and monotonous classrooms fail to inspire enthusiastic learning. Therefore, teachers should focus on selecting instructional strategies that motivate students and actively explore various methods and approaches for fostering motivation. Another issue is that motivating students involves more than just engaging them with attractive tasks and materials; it is crucial to enable them to learn in a motivated manner and to persevere with sustained commitment. However, many teachers frequently neglect this aspect. They concentrate solely on initiating and generating student motivation, failing to recognize the importance of maintaining and protecting this hard-won drive, thereby rendering their prior efforts ineffective.

Most importantly, teachers must be qualified as proficient language users and effective learners, serving as role models for their students. Teachers who influence student behavior play the part of modeling agents. Educators with limited language proficiency and teaching skills will undoubtedly inhibit student motivation, or at the very least, fail to act as a source of encouragement.

In summary, the role and impact of teachers on student learning motivation are profoundly critical. Consequently, they should assume responsibility for addressing motivational issues in the language learning classroom and be mindful of their own classroom demeanor. They should also actively monitor student learning trends, guide students in establishing correct learning concepts and value orientations, thereby helping to reverse negative learning attitudes and fostering the development of positive learning motivation.

5.3 Teacher Interviews

Based on a synthesis of the interviewed teachers' responses, demotivation is prevalent among senior-year language majors, manifesting concretely as insufficient classroom participation and decreased learning engagement. The primary manifestations include: (1) scattered attention in class, exhibiting lethargy and private conversations that disrupt teaching order; (2) inadequate learning preparation, such as failing to bring necessary learning tools or textbooks; (3) low participation, avoiding classroom activities and engaging in tasks unrelated to the course; (4) failure to complete assignments or course tasks on time. These manifestations are largely consistent with the characteristics of foreign language learning demotivation described by Chambers (1993). Regarding the causes of demotivation, the interviewed teachers generally believed that multiple factors are involved, which can be summarized into three broad categories: student factors, teacher factors, and learning environment factors. A detailed analysis follows:

(1) Student Factors. Some teachers pointed out that students' weak English foundation is a key factor leading to learning frustration. One teacher mentioned: "Some students enter university with limited language ability and an unsolid foundation in vocabulary and grammar, making it difficult to adapt to the pace of specialized courses." Furthermore, the gap between student goals and their ability can easily trigger negative emotions. As one teacher noted: "The Business English major imposes high demands on language proficiency. Some students develop a tendency to give up because they struggle to bridge this gap." Lack of self-control was also identified as a significant reason: “Compared to the strict management in basic education stages, the university phase requires greater autonomous learning ability. Some students experience academic decline due to a lack of self-discipline.”

(2) Teacher Factors. Some teachers believed that heavy teaching workloads, inappropriate teaching methods, and limitations in teachers' professional competence adversely affect teaching effectiveness. For instance, one teacher reported: "The school

assigns numerous non-instructional tasks, such as teaching competitions and repeated lesson polishing, which encroach upon the time needed for designing and implementing course content." Another teacher highlighted the tension between teaching progress and classroom interaction: "The extensive content and tight schedule often force us to compress student participation and discussion segments." Additionally, a disconnect exists between the exam-oriented teaching objectives and students' actual learning needs. One teacher expressed: "Although institutions emphasize language application skills, teaching still primarily revolves around the TEM-4/8 (Test for English Major Band 4/8) and TBEM-4/8(Test for Business English Major Band 4/8) exams. Students spend significant time on vocabulary and grammar drills, with limited opportunities for oral practice." The varying proficiency levels within the student population also pose teaching challenges, making it difficult for teachers to cater to the learning needs of different levels within limited class time. Another teacher mentioned: "course assigned by the leader sometimes do not align with their own specialized expertise, leading to mal teaching effectiveness and consequently affecting student learning interest."

(3) Learning Environment Factors. Peer influence was regarded as a significant factor affecting learning motivation. Teachers observed that different small groups often form within classes, and the internal norms of these groups strongly shape members' learning attitudes and behaviors. For example, one teacher illustrated: "In a particular occasion, a negative attitude towards English learning prevailed. When one member showed engagement in learning, they faced rejection from other members, which suppressed their willingness to participate in class." Furthermore, "Students' participation in extracurricular social activities to maintain peer relationships can also encroach on study time and diminish their focus on learning."

Overall, the teacher interview results indicate that the issue of learning demotivation among senior English majors involves the interaction of multiple factors at the individual, instructional, and environmental levels. These findings provide valuable practical perspectives for understanding the formation mechanism of demotivation.

6 Discussion and Implications

Teachers assume multiple roles in the instructional process: they are not only transmitters of knowledge but also motivators of learning, guides for learning strategies, and architects of the learning environment. Consequently, they play a pivotal role in stimulating student motivation and guiding learning strategies. In response to the phenomenon of learning motivation decline identified in this study, the following recommendations are proposed from the perspective of teaching practice.

(1) Foster a Collaborative Classroom Environment: Students are the center of the classroom; building a positively interactive learning community is key to enhancing their engagement. When learners feel valued and accepted within the classroom, their level and persistence of learning involvement improve significantly. Educational research generally agrees that teachers' expectations significantly influence students' self-expectations regarding learning (Stipek, 1988). In the field of language learning, teachers are not merely knowledge transmitters but also builders of the learning environment and sustainers of learning motivation. Therefore, constructing a positive teaching atmosphere, cultivating healthy teacher-student interactions, and maintaining teachers' own instructional vitality form the core pathways to optimizing the language learning environment. This necessitates establishing a foundation of trust between teachers and students as the starting point of instructional work. Teachers should be acutely aware of students' cognitive needs and emotional states, creating a psychologically safe learning space for them, fostering a harmonious and inclusive group atmosphere, and encouraging students to venture linguistic attempts without fear of error. During instruction, challenges should be set based on students' current cognitive levels, creating predictable successful experiences. Research indicates that tense or oppressive classroom environments significantly inhibit learners' willingness to participate (MacIntyre, 1999; Young, 1999), whereas in environments where psychological safety is guaranteed, learners are more willing to express opinions, take risks, and their intrinsic motivation is more readily activated. Simultaneously, teachers should provide timely, constructive feedback, focusing on the process rather than solely the outcome. It must be emphasized that teaching evaluation should focus on language mastery and application abilities, rather than overemphasizing scores and rankings. While using low grades as a deterrent might motivate some students to work harder, it can easily lead others to develop avoidance, procrastination, or even academic misconduct (McKeachie, 1994). Excessive anxiety about grades may cause some learners to abandon effort altogether due to fear of failure. Furthermore, granting students limited choice in their learning process, such as autonomously determining project topics or presentation formats, can effectively enhance their learning autonomy. Students should also be encouraged to establish learning partnerships, forming a virtuous cycle of knowledge sharing and mutual support through regular sharing of learning resources and methods.

(2) Enhance Teaching Enthusiasm and Refine Instructional Strategies: Teachers' level of involvement and emotional state directly transmit to classroom dynamics (Carlisle & Phillips, 1984). Demonstrating teaching enthusiasm is not easy, but it can be achieved through a series of operational teaching behaviors. First, vocal expressiveness is an important medium for conveying enthusiasm. Through organic variations in volume, tone, and pace, teachers can naturally convey their value recognition of the teaching content, thereby guiding students to focus on key points and enhancing information delivery efficiency. Second, non-verbal communication is equally crucial. Eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and body movement can effectively attract and maintain student attention. For instance, consciously leaving the podium to interact within the student space not only reduces the anonymity of back-row students but also signals the teacher's clear desire to connect with all students, which is particularly

effective for enhancing individual participation in large-class teaching. Finally, timely and appropriate humor can effectively regulate classroom rhythm, creating a relaxed yet focused learning atmosphere. Introducing subject-related puns, anecdotes, or visual materials ensures the humor is relevant to teaching objectives, concise, appropriate, and inoffensive. Effective teaching requires teachers to possess the ability to select and integrate diverse methods, flexibly adjusting teaching approaches according to specific instructional scenarios.

Simultaneously, effective teaching requires teachers to possess the ability to select and integrate diverse methods, flexibly adjusting teaching approaches according to specific instructional scenarios. Teaching practice shows that a single teaching method struggles to accommodate complex learning needs. Taking the communicative language teaching approach, which emphasizes authentic communication, as an example, it often requires supplementation and adjustment when dealing with exam requirements and differentiated learning needs. Teachers might consider adopting a blended learning path: while maintaining the original syllabus plan, timely incorporating collaborative tasks with varying content based on class situations. The core lies in establishing a dynamically adjusted teaching mechanism where method selection serves specific teaching objectives. Furthermore, establishing connections at a personal level through face-to-face individual communication has been proven key to building teacher-student mutual trust (Alison, 1993). Regular in-depth conversations not only help teachers grasp students' cognitive and emotional states but also positively contribute to students' psychological health development.

(3) Integrate Information Technology and Digital Resources: Contemporary information technology offers new possibilities for creating immersive language learning environments. Digital tools can not only enhance the sensory dimension of learning materials but also expand the temporal and spatial boundaries of learning. Teachers can use multimedia resources to construct a rich language input environment, making abstract language concepts concrete by integrating images, audio, and text materials related to the course themes. Simultaneously, learning platforms supported by information technology enable students to schedule their learning according to personal pace, engaging in self-directed inquiry or remote collaboration. Additionally, the authentic communication scenarios and vast corpus resources provided by the online environment create practical conditions for language application that are difficult to achieve in traditional classrooms.

In summary, addressing the issue of motivation decline requires teachers to possess both professional wisdom and emotional support. By demonstrating passion and belief in subject teaching and organizing learning experiences in a professional manner, teachers can provide a sustained source of motivation for student growth.

7. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has several limitations due to various constraints: First, the sample in this study was drawn from a single region and institution, which may limit the representativeness when exploring specific demotivating factors. The specific inhibiting factors identified might not be entirely identical to those in other public universities. Therefore, more reliable results could be expected from more representative samples. Furthermore,this study primarily reveals static factor structures and preliminary mechanisms, and the data are largely based on self-reports. Future research could incorporate multiple data sources such as classroom observations and learning logs for triangulation. Finally, this study focused primarily on specific demotivating factors related to on-campus students. Certainly, other inhibiting factors exist, so further research could explore and supplement these.

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