



A Construct Validation of Attitude and Self-Efficacy as Factors in ESL Learning Demotivation

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ABSTRACT

Recent interest in the field of second language (L2) learning and teaching has increasingly elucidated the issue of demotivation. Nevertheless, researchers have noted the lack of comprehensive measurement criteria to assess the factors of demotivation. In particular, Attitude and Self-Efficacy are salient yet overlooked factors important for assessing students' L2 learning demotivation. Hence, the present study tested the validity and reliability of a survey instrument designed to assess these two factors. A survey instrument containing students' Attitude and Self-Efficacy measurement items was distributed to 422 undergraduate students to gather data. The average variance extracted from students' Attitude and Self-Efficacy indicated convergent validity values of 0.779 and 0.713, respectively. Furthermore, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio was computed to justify the discriminant validity of both factors (0.473). Composite reliability was also computed to justify the internal consistency of the scale items for each factor (0.961; 0.957). Overall, all constructs being tested achieved their designated assessments. Thus, the present study supports that students' Attitude and Self-Efficacy are salient factors impacting English language learning demotivation.

Keywords: attitude; demotivating; self-efficacy; undergraduates

INTRODUCTION

Second language (L2) demotivation refers to a decreased L2 learning motivation level, but without total motivation loss (Dörnyei, 2001). Dörnyei (2001) is credited with extensive and pioneering investigation on demotivation. He has noted that demotivation encompasses a range of external factors that potentially undermine an individual's behavioural intention and underlying motivation for a task in question. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) expanded upon the conceptualization of demotivation by positing that it encompasses a negative process whereby an individual's behavioral motivation and behavioural intention decline. Kikuchi (2015), by contrast, argued that demotivation encompasses a negative process that hinders learners and diminishes their motivation, encompassing both internal and external causes. Based on prior research, Kikuchi (2015) identified six categories of external and internal L2 demotivators: These categories include demotivating teacher behaviours, classroom characteristics, classroom environment, classroom materials, failure experience, and loss of interest.

Nevertheless, within the context of language learning, the attitude and self-efficacy of students plays a crucial role in either fostering or attenuating motivation. The absence of a positive attitude factor, which is marked by a lack of enthusiasm and a readiness to confront language problems, frequently hinders learners from achieving good results (Talpur et al., 2021). Additionally, self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their own talents, is crucial in enabling them to persist in the face of obstacles and challenges (Chen et al., 2022). Indeed, participants who score high on the self-efficacy scale have a heightened level of academic drive and a perception of mastery over their learning processes (Omar et al., 2021). In a demotivated mindstate, by contrast, diminished self-efficacy results in low effort and inadequate skills ultimately leading to poor academic performance. The acknowledgement of these factors is crucial in optimizing the L2 learning environment.



Despite the significance of demotivating factors, few insightful, in-depth studies on this topic have been conducted in Malaysia, especially at the secondary school, pre-university and tertiary levels (e.g., UiTM). Given the importance of studying language learning demotivation, it is necessary to have an instrument to investigate the relevant factors impacting students' English language demotivation model, especially at the Malaysian tertiary education level. To fill this research knowledge gap, the present study analyzed two novel demotivating factors among UiTM Diploma students; to wit, student Attitude and Self-Efficacy in order to validate the instrument's construct validity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dörnyei (2001) has noted that the demotivation concept has become a growing theme in motivation studies, a point that was highlighted at the Annual Review of Applied Linguistics. The author of the article described the term Demotivation as motivational influences that negatively impact motivation; rather than energising action, it 'de-energises' it. This term has further been described including the following nine demotivating factors: the teacher, inadequate school facilities, reduced self-confidence, negative attitude towards L2, compulsory nature of L2 study, foreign language interfering with another language being studied, negative attitude towards the L2 community, group members' attitude, and the coursebook (Dörnyei, 1998, as cited in Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Interestingly, the research found that only demotivated L2 learners were able to articulate the specific reasons for their reduced motivation.

As a result of this research, a significant amount of study on demotivating elements has been carried out worldwide, most notably in East Asia. This interest is reflected in a number of studies conducted by researchers such as Falout and Maruyama (2004), Gao et al. (2022), Hassaskhah et al. (2014), Kikuchi (2009), Kim and Seo (2012), Kim et al. (2019), Thorner and Kikuchi (2019) and Xaypanya et al. (2017). Several factors that contribute to students' demotivation have been identified in previous research. These factors are often associated with psychological changes experienced by students, including heightened levels of learning anxiety (Xaypanya et al., 2017), and negative attitudes towards the language in question (Kaivanpanah & Ghasemi, 2011). Alternatively, students may experience negative emotions in relation to the learning environment, such as feelings of boredom due to unstimulating learning material (Husniyah, 2019).

Language learning demotivation studies by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), as well as Kikuchi (2011; 2015) have been modified in more recent studies by Zhang et al. (2020) and Jahedizadeh et al. (2016). A 35-question survey was used to determine the factors that lead to demotivation among upper secondary Japanese students. According to Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), this questionnaire contributed to the development of the following five demotivating elements: learning topics and materials, teachers' competence and teaching styles, restricted school facilities, low intrinsic motivation levels and low test results. Taking this paradigm as a starting point, Krishnan and Pathan's (2013) study using Pakistani undergraduate respondents showed similar demotivating elements. Additionally, Albalawi and Al-Hoorie (2021) investigated demotivating factors in order to gain a deeper understanding of how individual learners perceive

and respond to factors that diminish motivation. It sought to explore the reasons behind the varying reactions of learners to demotivating input.

Most past studies used well-known demotivation instruments (e.g. Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; 2013; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Kikuchi, 2011) in order to cater to the contextual gap in their studies. The present study, however, expanded Kikuchi’s (2011) oft-used Demotivation Model by adding two additional factors, to wit, *student Attitude* and *Self-Efficacy* to Kikuchi’s six demotivating factors (i.e., *Teacher Behaviour; Class Material; Characteristic of Classes; Loss of Interest; Experience of Difficulty; Class Environment*). This study exclusively measured these two additional factors. These two factors have been prominent in previous motivation studies and are expected to produce similar results in the context of language learning demotivation research. Table 1 shows the proposed two factors and items.

Table 1
 Demotivating factors

Constructs	Item Code	Statements
Student Attitude	SA01	It is demotivating when I think I dislike the sound of spoken English.
	SA02	It is demotivating when I think learning English is not an exciting task.
	SA03	It is demotivating when I think learning English is a burdensome task.
	SA04	It is demotivating when I think learning English is not what I am interested in.
	SA05	It is demotivating when I think I would not want to see how well I could speak English even if given the opportunity to do so.
	SA06	It is demotivating when I think there are so many complicated things to learn in English.
	SA07	It is demotivating when I think the things I have to learn in English do intimidate me.
Self-Efficacy	SE01	It is demotivating when compared to other students in this class I did not expect to do well in the English class.
	SE02	It is demotivating when I was not certain I could understand the ideas taught in the English class.
	SE03	It is demotivating when I did not expect to do well in the English class.
	SE04	It is demotivating when compared with others in this class, I think I am not a good student in English class.
	SE05	It is demotivating when I was not sure I could do an excellent job in tackling problems and tasks assigned for the English class.
	SE06	It is demotivating when I did not think I would receive good grade for the English class.
	SE07	It is demotivating when my study skills were not excellent compared to others in the English class.



- SE08 It is demotivating when compared to other students in the English class I think I do not know a great deal about the English language.
- SE09 It is demotivating when compared to other students in the English class I think I do not know a great deal about the English language.
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METHODOLOGY

Using a non-probability purposive sampling method, the present study administered Google survey form questionnaires to Semester 3 Diploma students at the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Lecturers teaching English Language Skills III (ELC231) that semester were identified and recruited to distribute the Google survey form questionnaire to their students. This study required responses from UiTM students who had completed three levels of English Language Skills courses and the lecturers were asked to distribute the questionnaire link after the semester ended. Ultimately, 428 total responses were collected and analysed using Smart PLS 3 (Hair et al., 2017) to assess the PLS-SEM results of the reflective measurement model.

PLS-SEM is generally used when the research goal is predicting key target constructs. Identifying these key 'driver' constructs is exploratory research and an extension of an existing structural theory PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2017). Hence, PLS-SEM is the best option, as the current study is extending Kikuchi's (2011) Demotivation Model by adding the two additional factors, to wit, student attitude and self-efficacy. A seven-point Likert scale representing a range of perception from "very not true (1) to very true (7)" was utilised. In general, a 5- or 7-point scale is the typically suggested format, especially in measuring opinions, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs (Bishop & Herron, 2015; Willits et al., 2016). The present study employed a 7-point Likert scale to ensure that respondents did not have the option to abstain from any item. Out of 428 responses, 422 were retained for further analysis after the data was screened to ensure an error-free data set.

The present study was conducted to confirm the construct validity of Student Attitude (7 items) instrument developed by Falout and Maruyama (2004) and Self-Efficacy (9 items) instrument developed by Pintrich and De Groot (1990). The objective was to test the validity and reliability of each construct/factor in the context of second language learning. Construct validation encompasses convergent validity and discriminant validity. When achieved, a research instrument provides evidence based on the theory under investigation (Cooper & Schindler, 2014) or constructs that researchers intend to measure (Saunders et al., 2009).

The analysis of reflective measurement models includes assessing composite reliability (pc), which serves as an indicator of the internal consistency dependability of a construct. This assessment assumes that the indicator loadings are equal (Hair et al., 2017). Outer loadings are to specify individual indicator reliability, whereas convergent validity is the degree to which a measure correlates positively with alternative measures of the same construct (Hair et al., 2017). Discriminant validity represents the degree of uniqueness of one construct in relation to another

and is critical in ensuring that different constructs capture different concepts; this can be assessed with the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations (HTMT) (Hair et al., 2017).

RESULTS

The objective of the present study was to validate two demotivating factors in the context of English language learning, to wit, Student Attitude and Self-Efficacy. Indicator loadings are shown in Table 2, as they are an essential aspect to consider when evaluating the reflective measurement model (Hair et al., 2018). A cut-off 0.7 was used, as Hair et al. (2010) requires that each measure is considered satisfactory when item loadings are greater than 0.7.

According to Hair et al. (2014), if a measure is loaded less than 0.7, consider deletion only when deletion leads to increased AVE or composite reliability. No item in these two constructs was discarded after the first PLS-SEM Path Model run because each item had achieved the minimum acceptable level of AVE (≥ 0.50 if $AVE \geq 0.50$ [Byrne, 2016]), and composite reliability (0.70 – 0.90 [satisfactory]). The AVE for student attitude and self-efficacy was 0.779 and 0.713, respectively. The composite reliability was 0.961 and 0.957, respectively. In using the HTMT criterion to assess discriminant validity, the cut-off value was < 0.90 (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019), and the value for these two constructs/factors was 0.419. If the HTMT value is below 0.90, discriminant validity is established between two reflective constructs (Husniyah et al., 2015).

The AVE composite reliability and discriminant validity values indicated that both student Attitude and Self-Efficacy factors were within the accepted range and passed the validity and reliability test. Table 2 indicates the outer loading of each item, together with the composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) and discriminant validity for both constructs/factors.

Table 2
 Items in the construct/factor of student attitude and self-efficacy

Constructs	Items	Loadings	ρ_c	AVE	HTMT
Student Attitude (SA)	SA01	.784	.961	.779	.473
	SA02	.838			
	SA03	.881			
	SA04	.916			
	SA05	.913			
	SA06	.918			
	SA07	.919			
Self-Efficacy (SE)	SE01	.713	.957	.713	
	SE02	.812			
	SE03	.856			
	SE04	.871			
	SE05	.874			

SE06	.882
SE07	.901
SE08	.885
SE09	.786

*Note. ρ_c = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted, HTMT = heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations

CONCLUSION

Scarce empirical studies have been investigated related to ESL demotivation in Malaysia such as Malaysian Student Demotivation in Learning English: The Impact of Conscientiousness (Dinius, 2013) and Demotivation in Learning English among pre-university students in ESL Classroom (Fauzi, 2014). Hopefully, the addition of Self-Efficacy and Student Attitude to Kikuchi's (2011) Demotivation Model study scale will result in an increased research in this sphere of study. The fact that this instrument was only validated in the context of UiTM institutions limits the generalizability of the developed instrument's results.

Thus, despite the results indicating good construct reliability and validity indicators, further evaluation using new samples and different contexts are necessary. Thus, the proposed constructs will make it possible to study, for instance, various student groups at other institutions. Nevertheless, although the present study's sample population was sufficient to validate the constructs, caution should be exercised when generalizing the current result. Accordingly, future research should probe its applicability in broader contexts (e.g. other public universities and private universities).

Granting the aforementioned limitations, educators in Malaysia can help to improve student attitude, increase self-efficacy levels and boost language learning results by tapping approaches that involve a comprehensive grasp of students' demotivating factors and circumstances (Latip et al., 2020). It is crucial to acknowledge that motivation (or demotivation) is a complex construct. If so, different strategies may work better for different students. So, flexibility is important. In addition, low self-efficacy is a contributing factor to limited learning skills and can have a negative impact on motivation levels in the context of language acquisition (Yan, 2022). Students possessing low self-efficacy levels may lack confidence in their ability to acquire required language skills resulting in decreased motivation and a negative attitude towards the language. Students who doubt their ability to acquire language skills may become demotivated and develop a negative attitude toward language learning (Yan, 2022). In sum, it is essential for educators to demonstrate flexibility and a willingness to modify their instructional approaches to accommodate the diverse requirements of their students.

In conclusion, the proposed objective has been achieved in the present study. Attitude and Self-Efficacy prove to be reliable and valid demotivating factors in the context of English language learning. To be sure, the present study has contributed to filling a knowledge gap, which has been recognized by previous research. Demotivating factors necessitate instruments that allow for a precise, valid, and reliable assessment of relevant factors that influence academic



performance. In this regard, these two additional factors represent a significant contribution to the field of demotivation in English language acquisition.

IMPLICATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study examined the reliability and validity of Student Attitude and Self-Efficacy factors in the context of second language acquisition. The present study's findings will enable future researchers to adopt and adapt the attitude and self-efficacy items utilised in this study for their own research. Furthermore, the present study provides extended literature on the original demotivating model (Kikuchi, 2011) in second language learning.

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Conflict of Interest

We certify that the article is the authors' original work. The article has not been submitted for publication nor it has been published in whole or in part elsewhere. We testify to the fact that all authors have contributed significantly to the work, validity and legitimacy of the data and its interpretation for submission to this journal.





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Authors' Contributions

Hanis carried out the research plan, conducted data collection and analysis, and took the lead in writing the manuscripts. Suhaida, Muhammad Saiful and Nur Hafezah provided feedback, reviewed and assisted in completing the manuscript.

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