SELF-PERCEIVED COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND DEMOTIVATION: A STUDY OF UiTM STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT
Scholars in language learning have recently taken an interest in self-perceived communicative competence (SPCC) and demotivation, albeit the relationship between these notions is rarely investigated. In Malaysia, many educators have encountered students who are unwilling to use their second language for communication and the reasons behind it could be determined by different demotivating factors. Thus, the association between the students' SPCC and demotivation was explored in this present study, specifically in the English language classes. A total of 250 diploma students of Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan (UiTMCK) participated in the study in which the data were collected via SPCC and a demotivation questionnaire. Notably, SPCC was negatively associated with demotivation based on the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The study's outcomes showed that as part of the effort to minimise the English as a Second Language (ESL) students' demotivation, educators are encouraged to develop the students' competency in communicating.

Keywords: Communicative competence, demotivation, engagement, self-perceived

INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 stated that at the university level, English education has dramatically shifted from producing competent graduates in English language skills for personal development into those able to sustain the challenges of globalisation. In this globalised era, the emergence of English as the international language resulted in substantial demands for graduates with sound English communication skills. Poon's (2016) analysis of data from the Australian Graduate Survey from 2010 to 2012 found that English proficiency has a statistically significant impact on employment outcomes and patterns for the 1,258 real estate and 9,206 built environment graduates. In essence, students must communicate in English efficiently to secure employment in a competitive environment across countries, especially in Malaysia (Heang *et al.,* 2019; Noor Azina, 2011). In addition, employers in the private sector prefer to hire graduates from transnational private universities because they have a better command of the English language, despite the fact that graduates from Malaysian public universities are more familiar with local conditions, are more diligent, and have lower salary expectations (Cheong *et al.*, 2016).

Language acquisition improves students' communicative ability (Ayedoun *et al*., 2019; Dörnyei, 2002), with the goal of equipping students with communication skills in the target community. In this case, they can be described as professionally skilled and possess the ability to communicate with the locals and foreigners. Hence, the Malaysian English Language Education Reform: The Roadmap 2015-2025 indicated the importance of students to develop their English communication skills. Currently, the English language implementation in students' education is primarily done to prepare them for employability. However, some studies argued that the ultimate purpose of learning a second language is to instil the student's desire to seek out and engage in communication opportunities (Öz *et al*., 2015, Shahbaz *et al.,* 2016). In other words, students should be willing to be in situations that require them to participate and speak in the language with other speakers.

Communicating will be difficult for individuals that do not recognise themselves as competent. Thus, an individual's willingness to communicate is vital to achieving communication competence (MacIntyre *et al.,* 2002; Shahbaz *et al*., 2016). This idea resonates well with Barraclough *et al.* (1988) who was among the first scholar to describe that SPCC dramatically affects a person's willingness to initiate and engage in communication despite his/her actual behavioural competence. "It is what a person thinks she or he can do, not what she or he actually could do, which impacts the individual's behavioural choice" (Barraclough *et al.,* 1988 p.188). Due to this, SPCC acts like an internal confidence booster that allows ESL students to practice language skills that they acquire without feeling self-conscious or being afraid to make mistakes.

The aim of teaching and learning the English language is to enable the learners to achieve communicative competence. As a result, graduates with excellent English communication skills can potentially fulfil the gap of future employment. However, the critical factor that impinges the students from speaking in a second language is motivation (Anjomshoa & Sadighi, 2015).

Furthermore, the inadequate motivation to learn the target language is the crucial reason university students could not attain competency in the speaking domain. Hence, the students' diminished motivation could deter them from communicating in English willingly in class and outside the classroom.

Demotivation in language learning is a critical issue that needs to be addressed as frequently as its counterpart. Based on experimental findings on demotivation that were done by some early scholars, it was found that some learners lose interest and motivation during the English language learning process (Dörnyei, 2003; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Falout *et al.,* 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). Among the first researchers to apply this concept in L2 learning context was Dörnyei (2002, p.143), who defined demotivation as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or ongoing action". In other words, these external forces affect the learners in a way that suppresses their ability to practise knowledge or skills. Studies presented internal factors, namely, personal attitude towards the second language (L2), leading to student' demotivation. Moreover, these demotivating determinants include external factors such as teaching methods, teachers' competence, school facilities, textbooks and classroom activities (Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Kikuchi, 2009; Méndez López & Bautista Tun, 2017; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). Therefore, a demotivating factor can be regarded as any factor or element contributing to the students' declining motivational level.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The percentage of graduates with communicative ability required by potential employers is the primary concern of the second language issue. Each year, less than half of the Malaysian graduates from public universities, i.e., the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), meet the desired level of communication skills (The Malaysian English Language Education Reform: The Roadmap 2015-2025). A study by Mustapha *et al.*, as cited in Zulkurnain and Kaur (2014), investigated students from UiTM Permatang Pauh Penang campus. These students possessed average communication skills and were frequently indecisive about communicating in English. Notably, they did not fare any better during meetings since they usually kept themselves silent.

The deficit of communication skills among UiTM students was further examined by Lan *et al.* (2011). Their critical communication skills were absent due to incompetency in performing tasks, mainly speaking and writing in English. Similarly, further studies identified communication problems among UiTM students, mainly in their anxiety (Chin *et al.*, 2016; Darmi & Albion, 2013; Ridwan & Zahariah, 2017) and communication apprehension (Hasni & Ismail*,* 2019; Rafek *et al.,* 2014). Accordingly, these students experienced nervousness and difficulty speaking English, withdrawn and less engaged in classrooms (Mohd Nor *et al.,* 2019). This finding implies the scarce studies done in SPCC faced by tertiary students in English language classes despite the importance given to SPCC. Therefore, it is imperative to examine the link between students' SPCC and demotivation in their English language classes.

In the cornucopia of literature, the demotivating factors varied from different contexts (Dörnyei, 2002; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Kim, 2015). In Malaysia, studies were explicitly conducted on the types of demotivating factors among secondary and pre-university students. However, the specific demotivating factors among UiTM diploma students were not considered. These findings suggest that studies have not considered determining the students' demotivating factors in English classes, especially among tertiary level students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first construct of unwillingness to communicate was presented by Burgoon (1976) as an inclination to avoid oral communication based on several factors chronically. These factors comprised introversion, lack of communication competence, alienation, anomie, self-esteem, and communication apprehension. Meanwhile, McCroskey and Associates established the notion of willingness to communicate (WTC) based on Burgoon's (1976) work to define individual difference in the first language (L1) communication (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). Fundamentally, WTC is the probability of an individual initiating and sustain communication, provided they are given the opportunity (McCroskey & Baer, 1985). McCroskey and Baer (1985) and McCroskey (1992) stated that other factors associated with L1 WTC are anxiety and motivation, the learner's perception of their communicative competence, and apprehension toward communicating.

Various studies were conducted by researchers globally, employing distinct approaches to investigate the construct of WTC. A plethora of studies determined why some learners seek opportunities to communicate in L2 while others tried to avoid the idea. In this process, several components were encountered that directly and indirectly influence WTC (Kang, 2005). These components comprised of perceived communicative competence, anxiety, attitude, motivation, social support, personality, content, and context. These elements, or WTC antecedents, are thought to be crucial to language acquisition success (McCroskey & Richmond, 1987). Nevertheless, some researchers (Öz *et al*., 2015; Ghonsooly *et al*., 2012; Hashimoto, 2002) argued that *Self-perceived Communicative Competence* (SPCC) is the strongest factor that directly and positively influences EFL learners' WTC in English.

Self-perceived Communicative Competence (SPCC)
The ability to deliver or provide information by talking or writing is a standard term for communication competence. SPCC reflects how individuals perceive their competence in a specific context of spoken communication (Shahbaz *et al.,* 2016). Extending the research on WTC, McCroskey and McCroskey (1988) established the Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCCS) which comprised of twelve determinants on four communication contexts. These determinants are public speaking, large meeting, small group and dyad with three categories of receivers - acquaintances, strangers, and friends. The scale presented a robust correlation with WTC and may have an impact on the actual communication behaviour.

Notably, WTC is positively associated with SPCC, where learners' WTC is more intense given that they possess a substantial level of SPCC in one language (Shahbaz *et al.,* 2016). Furthermore, the link between SPCC and WTC is determined by the degree of acquaintance. A study by Sadeghi *et al.* (2017) found a positive link between SPCC and WTC, and the scores of SPCC were in line with the participants' actual performance. Meanwhile, Croucher (2013) found that those with significant collectivism exhibited diminished SPCC and WTC levels, in which the study utilised an individualism/collectivism scale. Hence, the findings potentially signify the cultural dimension's role in communication.

Motivation has a significant predictive value of WTC in English, albeit at a weak lesser than ten per cent variance (Yu, 2009). Nevertheless, Ghani and Azhar (2017) found a positive correlation between motivation and SPCC with English as L2 for oral communication. Contrastingly, the correlation exhibited a negative link between demotivation and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) (Badrkoohi, 2018). Additionally, the participants expressed a negative connection between demotivation and ICC based on the interview analysis.

Hence, the correlation between motivation or the decline of it with SPCC should warrant more extensive study in order to establish whether or not they have any implication in terms of communication in English language classes.

Demotivating factors
In the Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*,* Dörnyei (2002, p.50) mentioned that demotivation is one of the emerging themes in the study of motivation. The author defined the term as ".. motivational influences that have a detrimental rather than a positive effect on motivation, that is, which instead of energising action, 'de-energise it". This term is further described with nine demotivating factors which are identified as follows: the teacher, inadequate school facilities, reduced self-confidence, negative attitude towards the L2, compulsory nature of L2 study, interference of another foreign language being studied, negative attitude towards L2 community, the attitude of group members, and coursebook (Dörnyei, 1998, as cited in Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2011). Finally, the study found that only demotivated learners can describe the concrete reasons for their depleted motivation in L2 learning.

The research on demotivating factors has been extensively conducted globally following this endeavour, especially in East Asia. Studies by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009), Kikuchi (2011) and Kikuchi (2015) on demotivation of language context were adopted and adapted in recent studies (Zhang *et al*., 2020; Jahedizadeh *et al*., 2016). In a study, the demotivating factors for Japanese upper secondary school students were identified through a 35-item questionnaire. This questionnaire contributed into five demotivating factors: learning contents and materials, teachers' competence and teaching styles, limited school facilities, low intrinsic motivation, and test scores

(Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). Extending this framework, Krishnan and Pathan's (2013) similar study on Pakistani undergraduates found that their respondents exhibited similar demotivating factors.

Impersonal factors were found to be the most significant demotivating component among the participants in various studies. For instance, a study on 591 non-English major undergraduates in Southern China found that 'experience with failure' was the most demotivating factor (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). Meanwhile, compared to personal 'teacher competence', Cankaya (2018) found that 'class characteristics and class environment' was more significant as a demotivating factor. These findings provided conflicting results based on previous literature on demotivation, such as Chamber (1993). Lastly, a subsequent study by Boonchuayrod and Getkham (2018) revealed that students perceivably blame the teacher for depleting their motivational level.

The most compelling demotivating factor that causes L2 demotivation is low self-confidence derived from failure (Tabatabaei & Molavi, 2012). For many students, low self-confidence presented the most considerable statistically significant difference in means (Mayahipour *et al.,* 2014; Tsuchiya, 2006; Falout & Maruyama, 2004). By comparing their performances with others, language learners could not attain self-efficacy (Wang & Zhan, 2020), and those with low self-efficacy are frequently less motivated. Lastly, Todaka (2017) identified that low-level self-efficacy students attributed their failure to debilitated ability in ESL performance.

In various studies, demotivating factors were extended or utilised to gauge different outcomes in the learning process. For instance, a stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed that demotivating factors were significant predictor variables for EFL learner proficiency (Hu, 2011). This study was centred on 'learning difficulties' and 'language-specific anxiety' which derived from Chang and Cho's (2003) study. Furthermore, demotivating factors were used to anticipate burnout among students and significantly impact students' mastery goal orientation (Jahedizadeh *et al.,* 2016). Notably, the demotivating factors positively and significantly predict student burnout. In contrast, the two internal demotivating factors, namely 'lack of interest' and 'experience of failure', have a negative and significant impact on student's mastery goal orientation (Jahedizadeh *et al.,* 2016).

To summarise, the studies conducted have shown that although the findings seem to be contradicting and inconclusive, demotivating factors are worth taken into consideration when it comes to language learners' ability in L2 communication.
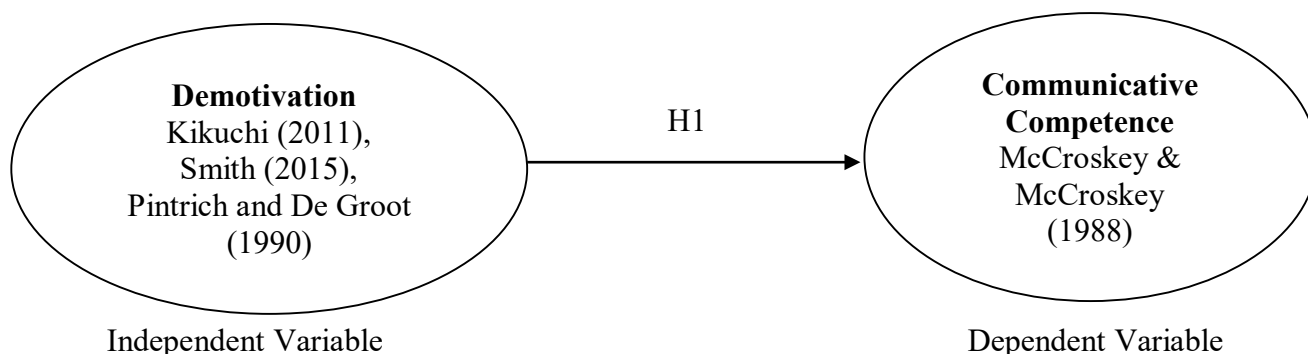
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the study

The framework for this study is based on the relationship deduced from the review of literature, by observing that different authors used varying approaches to study similar sets of variables, and vice versa. The framework proposes that demotivating factors will have an impact on the students' communicative competence.

Aim of the Current Study

Based on the literature review, previous studies explored the correlation of motivation and SPCC with WTC. However, demotivation can offer a whole new avenue for future studies. Hence, it is imperative to investigate the relation between SPCC and demotivation in English language classes. The following research objectives are postulated based on the theory and literature as discussed above:

1. To evaluate the demotivating factors of English language classes among UiTM students.
2. To examine if there is any significant relationship between SPCC and demotivation in English language classes.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a research methodology based on a quantitative approach via statistics utilisation to analyse the data set. This study was carried out in a compulsory course of Integrated English Language Skills III (ELC231) offered to part three diploma students in UiTM Cawangan Kelantan (UiTMCK). The 14-week course is offered each semester, where a population of 1412 students were present for the current semester of the study which was March to September 2020. The selection of the respondents was based on a stratified random sampling method.

The data on SPCC and demotivation were collected by requesting UiTMCK ELC231 lecturers to administer the online survey via the WhatsApp application. The questionnaire was then filled in by the respondents using Google Form, where only 255 students responded, which

was sufficient according to Krejcie and Morgan's table (1970).

Next, the statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS 25.0 for descriptive and inferential statistics. After the data were run through SPSS for cleaning data purposes, only 250 sample were used for the next analysis. Additionally, the data were analysed using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r) to detect the possible relationship between SPCC and demotivating factors among the students.

Two variables were used to assess the respondents' L2 SPCC and demotivation, which used a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). These variables were previously validated and published in English-medium journals with slight adjustments to fit the needs of the present study. Next, the L2 students' demotivation was measured using a modified version of Kikuchi's (2011) L2 demotivation scale. Meanwhile, the student's SPCC in English language class was measured using a McCroskey and McCroskey (1988) scale. These variables are the primary sources of demotivation and communicative competence in language learning. Kikuchi's (2009, 2011 & 2015) demotivation instruments were validated in studies, which resonated with other frameworks (Boonchuayrod & Getkham, 2018; Jahedizadeh *et al.,* 2016; Zhang *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, the results of other studies on SPCC instruments provided evidence on the validity of data (Burroughs *et al.*, 2002; Dilbeck *et al.*, 2009; Rosenfeld *et al.*, 1995).

The pre-test study initialised the development of the survey questionnaire followed by the present study. The pre-test enables the researchers to examine both study variables, namely the demotivating factors (Kikuchi, 2011) and SPCC factors (McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). In the test, the adequacy of the six demotivating factors was identified. Moreover, other potential demotivating factors among the respondents were determined. The research provided 36 questionnaire items of Kikuchi (2011) on *teacher behaviour, class characteristics, the experience of difficulty, class environment, class materials, and loss of interest.* Subsequently, the respondents were provided with a list of other demotivating factors, where they must select two primary factors in learning English. Notably, two novel demotivating factors emerged which were *attitude and self-efficacy.* Therefore, these two new factors were included in the development of demotivating factors for the present study. Table 1 elicits the factors and sources from which both variables are adapted.

Table 1
Items for Demotivation and SPCC

Variables	Total Items	Sources
Demotivation (Independent Variables)		
1. Teacher*	8	Kikuchi (2011) *1-6
2. Class Environment*	6	
3. Experience of Difficulty*	6	
4. Loss of Interest*	5	
5. Class Materials*	6	
6. Characteristic of Classes*	5	
7. Attitude	4	Smith (2015)
8. Self-efficacy	8	Pintrich & de Groot (1990)
Communicative Competence (Dependent Variable)	12	McCroskey & McCroskey (1988)

RESULTS

This study investigated the relationship between SPCC and demotivating factors among part three Diploma UiTMCK students. Most of the students were 19 years old (mean = 19.37, SD = 1.007) with a minimum age of 18 and maximum age of 25. The students comprised of 16.0 per cent (n = 40) males and 84.0 per cent (n = 210) females. In the previous semester, 42.0 per cent of the students (n = 105) received an A in their English course. Meanwhile, 50 per cent of the students (n = 125) received a 3.5 and above GPA for the previous semester. Next, instrument reliability was conducted on the collected data. This study's Cronbach's alpha values presented a crucial indicator of more than 0.9 (Hair *et al.,* 2015), with a value of 0.939 for SPCC items and 0.953 for demotivation items.

The research objectives were accomplished through the findings' presentation in this part of the study. The demotivating factors of English language classes among UiTM students were evaluated to achieve objective one. Table 2 illustrates the data in the form of mean scores on SPCC and demotivating factors. Based on the mean values, the highest frequency of demotivating factor was *self-efficacy* (M=3.713), while the least mentioned factor was *attitude* with the mean value of M=2.149. The other mean values were *experience of difficulty* (M=3.544), *class material* (M=3.424), *characteristics of class* (M=3.287), *class environment* (M=3.231), *teacher* (M=2.754), and *loss of interest* (M=2.720).

Table 2
Summary of Mean Values for SPCC and Demotivating Factor

Items	N	Mean	SD
SPCC	250	4.313	1.143
Self-efficacy	250	3.713	1.420
Experience of Difficulty	250	3.544	1.235
Class Material	250	3.424	1.118
Characteristics of Class	250	3.287	1.049
Class Environment	250	3.231	0.930
Teacher	250	2.754	1.024
Loss of Interest	250	2.720	1.170
Attitude	250	2.149	1.183

Next, the normality of the data was tested before proceeding with correlation analysis. Based on Kolmogorov Smirnov's normality test ($p = 0.200 > \alpha = 0.05$), both sets of scores were normally distributed as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3
Normality Test

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistics	df	Sig.
0.046	250	0.200*
0.038	250	0.200*

By identifying the potential significant relationship between SPCC and demotivation in English language classes, the study's objective 2 can be fulfilled. This objective was achieved by performing the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. Based on Table 4, the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient results revealed that SPCC had a significant and negative relationship with demotivation ($r = -0.178$, $p < 0.05$). Case in point, the more significant the respondents' demotivation, the smaller their SPCC would be and vice versa.

Table 4
Correlation Coefficient for Demotivation and SPCC

		Demotivation
SPCC	Pearson Corr.	- 0.178
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.005
	N	250

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, the internal factors received substantial ratings such as self-efficacy and experience of difficulty. By comparison, external factors exhibited lower ratings, namely class material, class environment, class environment, and teacher characteristics. Remarkably, self-efficacy displayed the most significant rating, aligning with Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy and signifying a person's determination to spend on a given task. Case in point, failure potentially erodes the

students' self-efficacy though it can be enhanced by experience that brought them success.

This result is supported by Wang and Zhan (2020) who mentioned that students with diminished motivation possessed similar levels of self-efficacy. Notably, attitude is rated as the lowest demotivating factor in which most researchers confirmed this finding (Xaypanya *et al.*, 2017; Noels *et al.*, 2000) Their research found that the motivational factors of attitudes in ESL are currently less relevant in the contemporary age, given that English is merely a symbolic depiction of the Anglo community. Nonetheless, it is now recognised as the world's lingua franca (Xaypanya *et al.,* 2017).

In connection with this idea, the present study revealed that attitude is the most negligible demotivating factor. Moreover, SPCC exhibited a negative relationship with demotivation in English language classes for part three UiTMCK diploma students. This finding is relatively consistent with early exceptions at the study's outset, supported by the study's hypothesis that SPCC would negatively influence demotivation. However, an interview analysis revealed that ICC is negatively correlated with demotivation (Badrkoohi, 2018). The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in multiple cultural contexts is the intrinsic definition of ICC (Galante, 2015). Thus, ICC does not matter if a person is demotivated to communicate with people from different cultures.

The negative relationship can be explained via SPCC's concepts, which are closely related to motivation in L2 learning. This concept can be traced back to the WTC, in which studies implied that depleted motivation signifies the lack of WTC (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). In other words, there is a lower probability of developing SPC without possessing the desire to communicate and practice communication. The students' learning may adversely be impacted by self-competence inaccuracy which leads to low motivation. Given these points, SPCC's accuracy could play a critical role in language classes (Mercer, 2011).

All in all, for the first research objective, this study has found that out of eight demotivating factors, self-efficacy is found to be the major one while attitude is the lowest rated. As for the second research objective, it has been concluded that based on the significant negative correlation, the students who have high SPCC regard demotivating factors to have lower influence in their communicative ability.

There are several limitations that exist with regard to our research. The data collection for the study was done by using a survey and not supported by any other method. Furthermore, the study focuses on the quantitative aspect based on students' perceptions and may lack insight into their communicative competence ratings and the factors that demotivated them. Findings from the study provide some theoretical and pedagogical implications for L2 teaching and learning whereby close attention needs to be given to the underlying factors of demotivation and SPCC. Ultimately,

evaluating university students' readiness for SPCC is crucial in developing their communicative competence, especially in seeking future jobs. In future studies, it would be worthwhile to examine other variables that could influence SPCC and as for demotivating factor, qualitative studies could be done to provide in-depth understanding based on specific characteristics like gender or language performance.

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