

国際日本学研究科

修士学位請求論文要旨

〔論文題名〕

**Demotivation in Japanese EFL Education:  
Insights from Motivation and Disengagement Perspectives**

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学生番号	4911235001
氏 名	鈴木洋海
指導教員	廣森友人
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Motivation is widely recognized as a crucial factor that drives efforts and actions toward the attainment of desired goals. This significance is also acknowledged within the context of language learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Currently, due to the phenomena of globalization and the prevalence of global English, the interest in second language acquisition (SLA) and English as a foreign language (EFL) has been growing (Ushioda, 2013). Indeed, systematic reviews of motivation research over the past few decades (Boo et al., 2015; Hiromori et al., 2024) observed rapid growth of interest in motivation both within and outside Japan. Under the circumstances, Japan is called a “motivation research hub” (Boo et al., 2015, p. 151), in which the number of motivation-related studies have been steadily increasing (Hiromori et al., 2024).

While researchers pay attention to motivating learners, this can be difficult in educational situations. One of the difficulties in motivating learners arises from dynamically changing motivation, which depends on positive and negative influences (Ushioda, 2014). The latter seems to be particularly unavoidable for most Japanese students. Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute (2021) found that more students began to dislike English classes as they moved from elementary to high school. Supporting the current state in Japan, 40% of first-year junior high school students failed to maintain their motivation to learn English for even one year

(Yamamori, 2004), and the sudden deterioration of motivation could happen at any school stage (Hayashi, 2005).

As evidenced by the above studies, language learners frequently struggle with demotivation, which is defined as “a negative process that reduces or diminishes a person’s motivation in relation to a behavioral intention or an ongoing action” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021, p. 140). Although the serious problem such as demotivation has been discovered around the world (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021; Zhang, 2007), there might be a lack of studies in this domain (Boo et al., 2015; Hiromori et al., 2024). Accordingly, building on previous demotivation research, the present study attempts to seek a solution to cope with demotivation by focusing on demotivators, the antecedents of demotivation as a phenomenon (Kikuchi, 2015).

At the beginning of previous research on demotivation, most results highlighted a significant impact of external demotivating factors such as teacher behavior (Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Gorham & Christophel, 1992). As studies progressed, several researchers (e.g., Falout et al., 2009; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009) indicated the importance of internal factors related to the learners’ perception of interest and test grades. Even though previous studies have identified various demotivators, they have only listed the factors among college students (Kikuchi, 2013, 2015). As a result, it

remains unclear how various types of learners perceive the factors that contribute to their demotivation, often overlooking individual differences.

Furthermore, research that only compared self-reported score averages has rarely investigated how the perception of demotivators would be related to students' behaviors. Therefore, the present study aims to address these issues by investigating demotivators for Japanese high school students through the use of two theoretical frameworks. Study 1 explores the relationship between demotivators and motivation based on *Self-Determination Theory* (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2017), and Study 2 examines the relationship between demotivators and disengagement as a sign of “maladaptive motivational states” (Skinner et al., 2008, p. 767). Based on Kikuchi's (2011) scale, both studies measured four demotivators: experience of difficulty, teacher behavior, class environment, and loss of interest.

In Study 1, a total of 573 high school students completed questionnaires about demotivators and three types of motivation: intrinsic motivation (i.e., the internal desire derived from learner's curiosity and aspiration), extrinsic motivation (i.e., the instrument for achieving external incentive or outcome), and amotivation (i.e., the state of lacking motivation). The study attempted to examine the relationship between demotivators and motivation using correlation analysis, one-way analysis of variance

(ANOVA), and cluster analysis focused on motivational types. The results indicated that extrinsically motivated students tended to perceive internal demotivating factors more strongly. On the other hand, students who felt external pressure and valued English were less likely to perceive demotivators. Interestingly, unlike findings from previous studies (e.g., Gorham & Christophel, 1992), teacher behavior did not emerge as a strong demotivator for any group of motivated learners. In addition to these unique results, there is a possibility that possessing multiple types of motivation could mitigate the perception of demotivators.

Study 2 included 432 high school students to explore the relationship between demotivators and disengagement, including behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, within English classrooms. The structural equation modeling analysis demonstrated that demotivators have a causal relationship with student disengagement, which supports the argument of researchers such as Kikuchi (2015) and Oga-Baldwin (2019), who assert that these factors are interconnected. Especially, the experience of difficulty was perceived as the most significant demotivating factor in light of predicting all dimensions of disengagement. However, no significant path was found between loss of interest and cognitive disengagement, suggesting that even demotivated students could keep striving to learn English. Teacher behavior, which has not been

highlighted in domestic surveys compared to other countries (Ushioda, 2013), also has the potential to cause behavioral and emotional disengagement.

According to these findings, this study offers meaningful insights into the field of demotivation research. The findings suggest that although inappropriate teacher behavior is possible to evoke students' distractions and negative emotions during English classes, teachers may be regarded as a presence supporting their studies. In other words, teachers could be one of the demotivators, but play a more significant role in giving students guidelines for learning. Moreover, even in the self-determined groups, some students may recognize internal demotivating factors strongly. It can result in disengagement from the learning process. However, those who seem disengaged will not necessarily abandon English learning. Thus, it is important for teachers to motivate students from external and internal directions and to present challenges appropriate to their skill levels, using holistic approaches. Such commitment has the potential to address the issues faced by demotivated learners.

Since Dörnyei's (2001) initial definition, numerous researchers have explored the causes of demotivation. Initial demotivation research suggested that "lack of motivation is perceived as a teacher-owned problem" (Gorham & Christophel, 1992, p. 250). However, as Kikuchi (2011) argued, internal demotivating factors undoubtedly have a

negative impact on students. The accumulation of various findings in L2 and EFL contexts provided a catalyst for focusing on internal factors, which led to the current definition (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Likewise, the present study bridges the progression of demotivation studies, revealing that internal factors such as experience of difficulty and loss of interest have a major impact on motivation and disengagement.

Although this study cannot address all issues of demotivation research, the author believes that it makes several contributions to future investigations. It was found that the recognition of demotivators varied depending on motivational types within SDT, but what remains unclear is how the students apply learning strategies and self-regulation (e.g., Falout et al., 2009). This study also provided valuable insights into the relationship with disengagement. While the recognition of demotivators obviously causes student disengagement, there are still many unanswered questions about the frequency of experiencing demotivators and the resilience to their negative influences (e.g., Agawa & Ueda, 2013). In pedagogical settings, teachers are unable to pay attention to the demotivators of all students in classrooms. For this reason, students themselves need to learn how to overcome this situation over time (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Given these issues, it is hoped that further research will shed more light on them and support students suffering from demotivation.

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