Research Article
The Darker Side of Motivation: Demotivation and Its Relation with Two Variables of Anxiety among Iranian EFL Learners

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The present study is an attempt to explore any significant relationships between demotivation, test anxiety (TA), and foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and to seek any significant differences between males and females regarding demotivation, TA, and FLCA. One hundred Iranian EFL students studying at the departments of foreign languages of Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman took part in this study. In order to obtain the required data, three questionnaires were utilized: the Demotivation questionnaire (Kikuchi and Sakai, 2007) to measure demotivation, the Test Anxiety Scale ((TAS), Sarason, 1975) to measure test anxiety, and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986) to determine the level of students’ FLCA. The findings of this study revealed the following first, there was a significant positive relationship between demotivation and TA; second, there was a significant positive relationship between demotivation and FLCA; third, there was a significant positive relationship between TA and FLCA, finally, there were no significant differences between males and females regarding demotivation, TA, and FLCA.

1. Introduction

Individual differences such as beliefs, attitudes, expectations, motivation levels, and affective states have significant effects on the foreign language learning process [1]. Among affective states, demotivation, test anxiety, and foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) are salient constructs in the field of psychology [2].

Demotivation is relatively new and has not been fully adopted yet in the field of L2 (second language) research. However, Dörnyei [3] has attempted to provide a definition for it. Accordingly, demotivation “concerns specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action” ([3, page 143]). Thus, demotivation could be regarded as the negative counterpart of motivation. Similarly, demotivators could be regarded as the negative counterparts of motives.

Among affective states, test anxiety, an apprehension towards academic evaluation, a fear of failing in tests, and an unpleasant experience held either consciously or unconsciously by learners in various situations [4] have considerable effects on learning process. The term test in test anxiety indicates the anxiety-evoking situation and/or the causes of anxiety relating to the training, learning, and performance in their wide sense [5]. Suinn [6] defined test anxiety as “an inability to think or remember information, a feeling of tension, difficulty in reading and comprehending simple sentences or directions on an examination” (page 385).

Gardner and MacIntyre [7] viewed foreign language anxiety as “the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a foreign language with which the individual is not fully proficient” (page 5). When it comes to the anxiety of using a foreign language in classrooms, Horwitz et al. [8] further explained foreign language anxiety is “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (page 128).

The purpose of the present study is to investigate and identify the underlying relationship between demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA. Identification and understanding the
relationship between demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA help and guide teachers to meet the needs of individuals with different psychological states and to provide students with appropriate coping skills such as positive thinking [9] to deal with demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Demotivation. Over the past decade, demotivation has been researched mostly in the area of instructional communication, for example, demotivators in lectures on communication at North American universities [10–12] and demotivators in university lectures in four different countries, China, Germany, Japan, and the USA [13].

Oxford [14] carried out an investigation on 250 American students about their learning experiences. During the investigation, students were expected to comment on a variety of topics such as “describe a situation in which you experienced conflict with a teacher” and “talk about a classroom in which you felt uncomfortable.” Four types of demotivation factors were discovered: (a) the teacher’s personal relationship with the students, (b) the teacher’s attitude towards the course or the material, (c) style conflicts between teachers and students, and (d) the nature of the classroom activities. Many demotivators such as the teacher’s lack of caring or favoritism, the teacher’s lack of enthusiasm and sloppy management towards the course or the material, the conflicts about the degree of closure or seriousness of the class, and the amount of irrelevance and repetitiveness were found.

In the field of language teaching, Rudnai’s [15] and Dörnyei’s [16] studies were among the early attempts to investigate demotivation. In her investigation of why demotivated learners lost their motivation to study English, Rudnai [15] conducted interviews with 15 students. Following Dörnyei’s motivation model [17], she prepared interview guides covering demotivation at the language level, the learner level, and the learning situation level to find out if and why her participants had lost interest in English. Rudnai concluded that the most important elements her participants lacked concerned the learner’s proficiency levels and learning situation levels.

Dörnyei [3] utilized structured 10–30 min interviews with fifty secondary school students in Budapest, Hungary. The students were identified as being demotivated by their teachers or peers. The following nine demotivating factors were extracted and presented: (a) teachers’ personalities, commitments, competence, teaching methods, (b) inadequate school facilities, (c) reduced self-confidence due to their experience of failure or lack of success, (d) negative attitude toward the foreign language studied, (e) compulsory nature of the foreign language study, (f) interference of another foreign language that pupils are studying, (g) negative attitude toward the community in which English is spoken, (h) attitudes of group members, and (i) course books used in class. The first category, related to teachers, was observed most frequently, accounting for 40% of the reports.

Muhonen [18] explored demotivational factors that discouraged pupils from learning the English language. 91 ninth-graders studying English at Finnish comprehensive school were asked to complete a task. The pupils were simply asked to tell in their own words about issues at school that they felt had had a negative influence on their motivation to learn English. The demotivating factors that emerged from the answers were as follows: the teacher, learning material, learner characteristics, school environment, and learner’s attitude towards the English language. Regarding gender, the comparison of demotivating factors among the males and the females revealed only slight differences.

Kikuchi and Sakai [19] explored possible demotivating factors in high school English classes. 112 participants were asked to complete the questionnaire on the Internet. Using a principal axis factor analysis, they extracted five factors: (a) course books, (b) inadequate school facilities, (c) test scores, (d) noncommunicative methods, and (e) teachers’ competence and teaching styles. The results showed a statistically significant difference among the five factors. They concluded that their participants considered the factor concerning inadequate school facilities to be less demotivating than the other four factors.

Rahman et al. [20] investigated motivating and demotivating factors in learners and their impact on their achievement. The subject under focus was English (English as second language). The sample of study consisted of 100 students of higher secondary school. It was found that majority of students were motivated to learn English. The results of the study revealed a significant correlation between the motivation and academic achievement of the students. The study further revealed that there are significant gender differences in the motivational factors. However, the study did not find any significant gender differences in case of demotivational factors for learning English language.

2.2. Test Anxiety. Research on test anxiety has a long and fruitful history. First studies relating to test anxiety were conducted as early as 1914 [21], and the concept began to be investigated under its own name in 1952, when Mandler and Sarason, along with developing an instrument to assess individual differences in test anxiety in adults, published a series of studies on test anxiety and how it relates to performance [22].

Sarason [23] examined the performance of groups differing (college students) were administered Sarason’s test anxiety scale [24] and his general anxiety scale prior to the experiment [23]. They were given the task of the serial learning of low-meaningfulness disyllable words. Half of the subjects were given neutral instructions, that is, the instructions necessary to perform the task. Subjects in the experimental condition were additionally told that the task was a measure of their intelligence and they should try to do as well as possible. Under the neutral condition, there was no difference in performance between high- and low-test anxious groups. However, under the experimental condition, the performance of high-test-anxious group was inferior to that of the low test anxious group.

Pekrun [25] conducted a study examining the relationship between expectancy values and test anxiety. Results indicated that poor performers with low anxiety scores tended to give up trying to pass the exams and probably had lower
hope and positive expectations toward achievement. Another group who had second-highest means for the helplessness was the poor performers who had high test anxiety. In other words, those students continually performed poorly and probably had an inability to route pathways to increase their performance, hence, had less hope and experience higher helplessness.

Working with elementary, junior high school, and high school students, Yerin [26] investigated the effect of school level and gender on the total test anxiety and worry and emotionality subscale scores of students. Regarding the gender differences, Yerin reported that female students had higher degrees of test anxiety than the boys. Furthermore, results revealed that female students experienced higher emotionality than male students but they did not worry more than males. Another interesting finding was the relationship between test anxiety and grade level of students. As the grade level increased, test anxiety level of students also increased.

Working with students of guidance school in Zahedan, Lashkaripour et al. [27] investigated the relationship between test anxiety and academic achievement. This investigation was a descriptive-analytic study. From nine schools (5 girl's and 4 boy's), 935 students were randomly selected. The results of this study showed that test anxiety occurs in girls more than boys and this difference was significant.

Mousavi et al. [28] explored the effect of gender, school performance, and school type on test anxiety among Iranian adolescents. The results revealed a significant and negative correlation between test anxiety scores and grade point average (GPA) of the students. Female students showed a higher level of anxiety in contrast to male students, and school type (private, public, and school for gifted students) affected the level of test anxiety.

Rezazadeh and Tavakoli [29] investigated the relationship between gender, academic achievement, years of study, and levels of test anxiety. This investigation was a descriptive analytic study and was done on 110 undergraduate students from the University of Isfahan. The findings revealed that female students have a higher level of test anxiety in contrast to male students. The average of test anxiety score among female students was higher. Also, a statistically significant negative correlation was observed between test anxiety and academic achievement. There was no meaningful relationship between test anxiety and years of study.

FLCA is a pervasive phenomenon, especially among the second/foreign language learning population. Instead of assuming its generic property as one type of anxiety, it is vital to approach this conceptually complex psychological emotion from diverse angles. The contradictory findings reported in the literature on FLCA are all indicative of the inherent complexity of the trait. Some of the studies carried out in this respect are reviewed below.

Horwitz [30] sought to validate the FLCAS. The results of her study showed that about 25% of the variance in final grades was accounted for by the FL anxiety. The study suggested that a strong correlation might exist between FL anxiety and language proficiency.

2.3. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardner [31] examined the relationship between language anxiety and other types of anxiety. It was found that FL anxiety was distinct from general anxiety. In their view, this could possibly explain the poor relationship between general anxiety and L2 proficiency. Furthermore, there existed a relationship between performance and FL anxiety scales and state anxiety. No correlations were found between production measures and scales of test anxiety, audience sensitivity, trait anxiety, and other types of anxiety.

Cheng and Page [32] conducted a study to determine the relationship between anxiety and self-esteem. They found a negative correlation between students' anxiety level and their self-esteem. No significant relationship between anxiety and gender was found. However, the males in this study were found to have higher self-esteem than the females.

Zhang [33] examined the variability in language anxiety in two groups in China. The results of the study suggested that the variability in ESL students' language anxiety could be attributed to factors such as age of the language learner, learning and epistemological experiences, and other socioeconomic variables.

Abu-Rabia [34] examined the relationship between FL anxiety and language achievement. The participants of the study were 67 seventh-grade students. Anxiety was found to have a negative and significant relationship with FL achievement. The only significant predictors of FL anxiety were gender and teachers' attitudes. The researcher also offered some recommendations to ease anxiety observed in FL students.

Tomoko et al. [35] investigated the interplay of classroom anxiety, intrinsic motivation, and gender in the Japanese EFL context. First-year students enrolled in EFL classes at a large private university in Japan were asked to participate in the study. The FLCAS was used in this study as an instrument for data collection to measure the anxiety students experience in their language classes. The results of the study revealed that there were no noticeable differences in FLCA among male and female.

3. Research Questions

This study aims at seeking answers to the following major and minor questions.

3.1. Major Research Questions

(1) Is there any relationship between demotivation and test anxiety?
(2) Is there any relationship between demotivation and FLCA?
(3) Is there any relationship between FLCA and test anxiety?

3.2. Minor Research Question

(1) Are there any differences between males and females regarding demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA?
4. Methodology

4.1. Participants. One hundred Iranian EFL students studying at the Department of Foreign Languages of Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman took part in this study. These students, including both males and females, were randomly selected from junior and senior students majoring in English Translation and English literature. The age range of the participants was 20–27. Among the sample population, there were fifty-seven females (57%) and forty-four males (44%).

4.2. Instruments. In order to obtain the required data on the variables of this study, the following scales were utilized:

(1) the demotivation questionnaire [19],
(2) the Test Anxiety Scale [24],
(3) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale [8].

5. The Demotivation Questionnaire

Kikuchi and Sakai [19] demotivation questionnaire consists of 35 items in a five 5-point Likert-type questions about demotivation. These 35 items are designed to measure six constructs derived from previous studies: teachers (items 10–15), characteristics of classes (items 1–6 and 26), experiences of failure (items 7–9, 27, and 30), class environment (items 21–25, 28, and 29), class materials (items 16–20 and 35), and lack of interest (items 31–34). The instructions for this part were the following: “how much is the following statement true for you as a demotivating factor?” The participants were required to choose one of the following alternatives: (1) not true for me, (2) not true for me so much, (3) cannot say either “true” or “not true,” (4) true for me to some degree, and (5) true for me. For each item, the highest degree of demotivation receives five points and the lowest one point. Students’ scores can range from 35 to 175. Thus, the higher the score, the stronger the demotivating factor.

6. The Test Anxiety Scale (TAS)

Sarason’s [24] test anxiety scale (TAS) was used as the research tool to determine the students’ degree of test anxiety. Sarason’s [24] TAS is a Likert scale with 33 items which reflects the multicomponental aspects of test anxiety [2]. The items are based on the evidence that test anxiety is composed of test-relevant and test-irrelevant thinking. Responses range from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). For each item, the highest degree of anxiety receives five points and the lowest one point. Students’ scores can range from 37 to 185; the greater the number, the stronger the degree of test anxiety.

6.1. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Horwitz et al. [8] “Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale’ was used as the research tool to determine the students’ foreign language anxiety level. Horwitz et al.’s [8] FLCAS is a Likert scale with 33 items which ask respondents to respond to situations specific to foreign language learning anxiety and reflect the three components of foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Ganschow and Sparks, 1996). Responses range from (a) “strongly disagree” to (e) “strongly agree.” For each item, the highest degree of anxiety receives five points and the lowest one point. Students’ scores can range from 33 to 165.

6.2. Data Collection. The present study was carried out during the class time in the second semester of the academic year (2010). The questionnaire was distributed among the participants by one of the researchers. Participants were given 35-minute time to answer the questionnaire, and there were accompanying instructions. They were informed that the information would be used for research purposes and they were assured that they will be kept completely confidential.

Pearson’s product moment correlation analysis was used to seek any meaningful relations between the variables demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA, and independent sample t-test was used to find any significant differences between males and females regarding these three psychological factors, namely, demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA.

7. Results

In order to determine the descriptive statistics of the variables (demotivation, test anxiety, and demotivation), the descriptive analysis was carried out. These results are presented in Table 1.

The analysis of the collected data shows that 44 (44 percent) out of 100 students were male and 56 (56 percent) were female (Table 2 and Figure 1).

The analysis of the collected data shows that Pearson’s correlation coefficients between demotivation and test anxiety is 0.84 with the P values of 0.00 which is less than the significant level of α = 0.05. Moreover, Pearson’s correlation coefficients between demotivation and FLCA is 0.81 with the P values of 0.00 which is less than the significant level of α = 0.05. Finally, Pearson’s correlation coefficients between test anxiety and FLCA is 0.86 with the P values of 0.00 which is less than the significant level of α = 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that first, there is a significant relationship between demotivation and test anxiety (Table 3 and Figure 3); second, there is a significant positive and high relationship between demotivation and FLCA (Table 4 and Figure 4), and third, there is a significant positive and high relationship between test anxiety and FLCA (Table 5 and Figure 2).

An independent sample t-test applied to compare the means of demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA in two groups of males and females. The results indicated that there were no significant differences between two groups of males and females regarding demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA. As the obtained P value for demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA were 0.77, 0.68, and 0.24, respectively, it can be concluded that there are no significant differences between two groups of males and females regarding the
Table 1: The descriptive statistics of demotivation, TA, and FLCA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demotivation</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>107.00</td>
<td>43.00</td>
<td>150.00</td>
<td>94.20</td>
<td>27.23</td>
<td>741.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test anxiety</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>116.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>156.00</td>
<td>97.74</td>
<td>28.13</td>
<td>791.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLCA</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>106.00</td>
<td>36.00</td>
<td>142.00</td>
<td>90.68</td>
<td>24.69</td>
<td>609.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Valid N (listwise) 100

Table 2: The frequency distribution of the students’ gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: The percentage of students’ gender.

Figure 2: The scatter diagram for correlation between test anxiety and FLCA.

Figure 3: The scatter diagram for correlation between demotivation and TA.

Figure 4: The scatter diagram for correlation between demotivation and FLCA.

Table 3: Pearson correlation between demotivation and TA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Demotivation</th>
<th>TA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.847**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.847**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

variables demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA (Table 6 and Figure 5).

8. Discussion

In this section, the research questions presented in this paper are dealt with one by one. Each question will be answered based on the findings of the study. The first research question asked whether there is any relationship between demotivation and test anxiety. The findings of this study revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between demotivation and test anxiety \((r = 0.84)\). In fact, the more demotivated the students, the higher their scores of test
First, regarding demotivation and gender, this finding is consistent with the results reported by Muhonen [18], and Rahman et al. [20]. They also found no significant differences in two groups of males and females regarding demotivation. Second, regarding test anxiety and gender, the result of this study is in contrast with the studies carried out by Lashkaripour et al. [27] and Mousavi et al. [28] who found that females are more test-anxious than males. Finally, regarding FLCA and gender, the finding of this study is consistent with Cheng and Page [32] and Tomoko et al. [35]. They also found that no significant relationship existed between FLCA and gender. However, it is in contrast with the studies carried out by Rezazadeh and Tavakoli [29] who found that female students experienced significantly higher level of foreign language classroom anxiety than males.

9. Conclusion

This study sets out to find out (1) relationship between demotivation and test anxiety, (2) the relationship between demotivation and FLCA, (3) the relationship between FLCA and test anxiety, and (4) the relationship among males and females regarding demotivation, FLCA, and test anxiety. The study found the following first, there was a significant positive relationship between demotivation and test anxiety; second, there was a significant positive relationship between demotivation and FLCA; third, there was a significant positive relationship between test anxiety and FLCA; finally, there were no significant differences between two groups of males and females regarding demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA. In fact, the more demotivated the students, the higher their scores of FLCA. Therefore, English language teachers need to become more aware of different affective factors such as demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA. Teachers can help their students by designing instructions that meet the needs of individuals with different psychological states and by providing students with appropriate coping strategies.
skills such as positive thinking [9] to deal with demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA. They can also teach their students to reduce their demotivation level by “developing a set of self-motivating strategies” ([36, pages 141-142]). They can involve learners in making decisions related to learning the language [36]; give students more time to think, opportunities to rehearse, or receive feedback; create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom (Dornyei and Csizer, 1998 as cited in [37]). Finally, curriculum developers and material designers should provide curriculums and materials that best suit different learners of different degree of demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA.

References


Table 6: Gender differences and the variables demotivation, test anxiety, and FLCA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Statistics T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P value (sig)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demotivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>94.95</td>
<td>26.92</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>93.60</td>
<td>27.70</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>99.15</td>
<td>28.74</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>96.62</td>
<td>27.85</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLCA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>92.97</td>
<td>27.33</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>88.87</td>
<td>22.49</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
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