

# Preparing Preservice EFL Teachers to Conduct Classroom Research to Overcome Demotivation: A Conceptual Study

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**Abstract.** Demotivation has an adverse affect toward students' interests in EFL (English as foreign language) learning. In this regard, teachers can be a key factor that helps students overcome students' demotivation. Therefore, it seems important for EFL preservice teachers to be trained on how to conduct a classroom research to identify demotivation factors and overcome demotivation among their future students. The present study is a conceptual study that aims to propose the importance of training preservice teachers to perform classroom research in order to diagnose and eliminate demotivation among their future students. Thus, the present study proposes three steps to train preservice teachers. First, preservice teachers will be given a case study about students' demotivation to be analyzed to find the solutions. Second, a focus group discussion with inservice teachers will be conducted to discuss the latter' strategies to reduce demotivation. Third, preservice teachers will be trained with various motivational strategies that can be adapted according to their future students' needs. The present study aims to equip preservice teachers with adequate knowledge toward their future students as well as a better classroom management in order to reduce demotivation.

**Keywords:** Classroom Research, Conceptual Study, Demotivation, Preservice Teachers, Qualitative Study.

## 1 Introduction

In the recent decade, demotivation has been widely investigated due to its detrimental impact on learners' interests in language learning. Despite being less popular than motivation, several studies have managed to examine demotivation factors in the context of EFL language learners [3] [1] [21] [43]. Following are a few reasons which contribute to the recent interests toward demotivation. As a constant concern of teachers in L2 contexts, demotivation can directly or indirectly reduce motivation of language learners [26] [15]. In addition, demotivation can hinder the acquisition of target language[9]. Investigating demotivation equips educators with knowledge on how to diminish demotivation [4]. Thus, analyzing demotivation factors before they can severely impact the learning process as well as results seems imperative [6]. By

identifying demotivation factors among students, teachers can find solutions before students are severely demotivated and lose their interests in language learning. It can be inferred that the urgency to investigate demotivation is resulted from its detrimental impacts on language learners.

It has been argued that teachers have a pivotal role in demotivating or motivating students. Quadir argues that the strongest influence on students' demotivation comes from teachers [39]. Numerous studies have shown the effects of teacher-related factors such as teachers' competencies or teachers' teaching styles on students' demotivation [8] [27] [29]. In this sense, teachers' teaching methods and attitudes in the classroom as well as teachers' competencies can strongly impact students' motivation. By performing teaching approaches that suit learners' needs and interests, teachers can motivate learners to reach their language learning goals. However, teachers can negatively influence students if teachers are deemed as incapable or fail to use an approach that matches students' interests or needs. The weight of evidence suggests the significant impact of teachers on students' motivation or demotivation.

Related to the point mentioned in the previous paragraph, it has been argued that teachers' related factors such as teachers' competence and teaching styles may result in negative learning experiences that will lead to demotivation [29]. In order to avoid demotivation caused by teachers' related factors, it seems important for teachers to be aware of demotivation and ways to overcome it [4]. Chong et al (2019) argue that teaching experience can determine how teachers deal with students' demotivation. The latter premise may not be beneficial for novice or preservice teachers with lack of experience dealing with students' demotivation.

In regard to pre-service teachers, the provision of sufficient knowledge toward demotivation and strategies to cope with it may be crucial. One of the solutions to help overcome demotivation is classroom research. In this sense, classroom research can be defined as a set of courses to examine queries about teaching and learning conducted in a systematic way by teachers who want to improve their work [45]. Classroom research has numerous benefits such as giving more awareness on setting and goals achievements to teachers and teachers educators [14] [32] [37]. In addition, there is a link between teaching quality and teacher research [48]. Regarding the present study, providing sufficient training on classroom research to preservice teachers might be beneficial because it can help preservice teachers acquire knowledge and understandings to be demonstrated in the classrooms [28]. Hence, classroom research for preservice teachers may contribute to the increase in teaching quality as it can provide deeper information on students and factors that affect learning. Nevertheless, conducting classroom research may be a hassle for preservice teachers. It has been argued that preservice teachers tend to show unfavorable perceptions toward classroom research [38]. Such reluctance may be attributed to the demanding nature of classroom research as well as preservice teachers' tendencies to polish their teaching skills rather than conducting research [48]. Considering the importance of classroom research, it seems imperative to provide preservice teachers with adequate knowledge to conduct research on strategies to solve demotivation among their future students. The present study aims to suggest the importance of training preservice teachers with adequate knowledge

toward solving demotivation among students. The results of the present study will be used as a milestone for similar studies as well as providing insights for overcoming students' demotivation in language learning contexts.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Demotivation**

In contrast with motivation, demotivation is investigated because it has an adverse impact toward EFL students' language learning process. In this sense, motivation can be defined as an intricate internal process that sustains learners' goal oriented behavior [11]. Motivation encourages learners to get engaged in activities that promote language learning process [12]. Motivation in EFL learning has been examined in abundant studies due to its beneficial influence on language learning process [1] [2] [18] [30]. Investigating motivation as well as aspects that improve it will be advantageous because it will provide teachers with insights on how to motivate their students. On the other hand, demotivation refers to a psychological condition in which learners becomes gradually losing their interests in language learning process as well as activities that involves it [3] [1] [4] [15]. Demotivation, labelled as the darker side of motivation, affects students detrimentally [40]. Unlike motivated learners who are eager to acquire the target language, demotivated learners are unlikely to reach their language learning goals [49]. In addition, a study of Kaivanpanah & Ghasemi argues that each failure in the language learning process can be pinned down to demotivation [24]. Learners' behaviors and attitudes toward language learning process can be influenced negatively by demotivation [17]. The latter points suggest the adverse impacts of demotivation on learners. Hence, investigating demotivation can provide teachers with information on how to reduce demotivation and more effective strategies to learn the target language [19] [25]. Besides that, motivation theories can be understood better through the investigation of demotivation [17] [42]. It can be concluded that investigating demotivation has its merits toward students' language learning process as well as aspects surrounding it.

Several factors have been chalked up as the causes of demotivation. A study of Chong divides demotivation factors into teacher-related and student-related factors. Dörnyei in his study toward demotivation in foreign language contexts in Hungary identified teacher-related factors such as teachers' teaching personality, teachers' competencies, and teaching approaches as the most demotivating factors [18]. Similarly, Kim suggest teachers' less attractive teaching styles, heavily-focused grammar teaching, and teachers' unrealistic expectations toward students as the most demotivating for students [27]. Furthermore, Lamb (2017) found that over-controlling teaching approach as well as unapproachable behavior of teachers can demotivate students [29]. In this regard, having approachable or friendly attitudes seems to reduce students' demotivation. In addition, teachers should have certain teaching competencies so that students will not be demotivated. Moreover, motivated teachers give the same energy to their students [31]. It is because motivated teachers will be more energetic and committed to provide various activities in the classrooms. Besides teacher-related factors, student-related factors can contribute to students' demotivation. Negative self-esteem, feeling failure in language classrooms, as well as negative attitudes toward language learning process are shown as student-related demotivation factors. The study of Adara & Najmudin also shows test scores as demotivation factors because

students feel disappointed and have lack of self-confidence due to their test scores [4]. Feeling inferior and failing to get into an English high school can also lead to demotivation [44]. The weight of evidence suggests numerous factors that can cause students' demotivation.

## **2.2 Classroom research for preservice teacher**

Besides implementing theories and approaches obtained from teachers training or existing studies, teachers should reflect their practices and write it in a study. Such practice is called classroom research. In this sense, classroom research can be defined as conducting research about teaching and learning in a school setting. Classroom research in the context of foreign language learning also involves studies that can increase teachers' performance and learning experience of their students [36] 45]. Conducting classroom research is important because it improves professional development of teachers as well as students' performances [10] 33] [34]. By conducting classroom research, teachers can know what their students need to improve their learning experience. In addition, it can give information to schools on things that can be developed. It can be inferred that performing classroom research is beneficial for teachers, students, and schools.

Involving preservice teachers in research activities can provide them with opportunities to get engaged as end users as well as creators of studies. By undertaking classroom research, preservice teachers can relate theories with practice as a means for personal development as teachers. In addition, classroom research can be a venue for preservice teachers to improve their understandings toward issues related to their studies [34]. The latter point suggests that classroom research can help increase preservice teachers' teaching skills as well as understandings toward theories they obtain from the curriculum.

## **3 Methodology**

The present study uses a conceptual research approach to discuss the problems and provide theoretical solutions. In this regard, conceptual approach can be defined as a study which derived its data from an amalgamation of evidence in the form of previously developed concepts and theories. Thus, conceptual papers do not build their discussions from empirical insights but theories and concepts built from empirical research [22]. In regard to the subjects of present study, the present study applies a conceptual model which aims to explore the connections between designs, introduce new designs or illustrate the reasons of particular results [13]. Therefore, the present study uses existing theories in demotivation and classroom research in order to suggest the importance of preparing preservice teachers to conduct classroom research to reduce students' demotivation.

## **4 Discussions**

This section will discuss steps that can be used to provide preservice teachers with knowledge on how to conduct classroom research to reduce students' demotivation. First, preservice teachers will be given a case study about students' demotivation and analyze the case together

to find the solutions. Following is an example of a hypothetical case study about demotivation that can be analyzed by the preservice teachers. Please keep in mind that this is a hypothetical situation. Teachers can create their own situation or find a real one that is close to their classroom situation.

“Fifteen students of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) start to comment that they are not interested anymore in learning English. Classrooms are conducted in the evening around 6.30 p.m so that some students look tired. They comment that the materials are too boring and teachers do not use diverse teaching activities such as grammar games or pictograms. In addition, students seem reluctant to do the homework assigned by teachers. What should teachers do to improve the students’ motivation?”

After reading the above situation, preservice teachers can discuss possible factors that cause demotivation in the case study. The factors can be listed as follows:

- Students are tired.
- Materials are too boring.
- Teachers’ teaching styles.

Then, preservice teachers will discuss strategies to overcome students’ demotivation. These strategies will be presented in front of a mentor or lecturer. While preservice teachers present their ideas to overcome demotivation, their mentor will take a note about the ideas. The comments will be presented later in order to put inputs to the preservice teachers.

Second step is a mentoring program with inservice teachers who will share their experience in overcoming demotivation. In this step, preservice teachers will also present their ideas to overcome students’ demotivation in order to check whether their ideas can be implemented in real life classrooms.

Third step is providing preservice teachers with diverse motivational strategies that can be used for their future classrooms. This step can be conducted in the forms of seminars or workshops with researchers or inservice teachers. In this regard, motivational strategies can be defined as strategies conducted by teachers to increase students’ motivation [20]. Numerous motivational strategies can be given to improve students’ motivation. For instance, teachers can incorporate technology such as digital storytelling to the language classrooms. A study of Adara & Haqiyah suggests the benefits of using digital storytelling toward the improvements of students’ motivation [7]. In addition, a study of Adara (2021) shows promoting students’ self-confidence helps improve students’ motivation [6].

## **5 Conclusions**

Due to its negative effects on students’ learning process, demotivation needs to be overcome. Although teachers can help reduce students’ demotivation, experience and knowledge toward demotivation are needed. Thus, the present study suggests providing preservice teachers with knowledge to conduct classroom research to reduce students’ demotivation. The present study posits three steps. First, preservice teachers would be given a case study which would later be analyzed and given solutions. The latter would be discussed later with a mentor. Second, a focus

group discussion with inservice teachers would be conducted to discuss their strategies to overcome demotivation. Third, a seminar or workshop about motivational strategies would be given to prepare preservice teachers for their future students.

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