

Impact of Teacher Factors on the Demotivation and Procrastination of Low-Level Preparatory School EFL Students in Iraq: A Multidimensional Phenomenological Study

Ashwaq Jasim Mohammed AlKarawi

Specialisation in English language

General Directorate of Education in Karbala /Al Surur

preparatory for girls

gasmashwaq@gmail.com

تأثير عوامل المعلم على تثبيط الدافعية والتسويف لدى طلاب المرحلة الإعدادية في العراق: دراسة ظاهرية

متعددة الأبعاد

م.م. أشواق جاسم محمد الكروى المديرية العامة للتربية في كربلاء / إعدادية السرور للبنات

Abstract:

This study aimed to address the research gap regarding the impact of teacher factors on the demotivation and procrastination of low-level preparatory school EFL students in Iraq. Employing a qualitative phenomenological design, the research explored the lived experiences of 58 EFL learners (28 female, 30 male, ages 15,16,17, grades 4-6) from a co-educational school in Karbala. Participants, identified via teacher referral based on low academic performance, were interviewed using a semi-structured protocol with questions focusing on teacher behaviors, procrastination triggers, gender/grade differences, and cultural influences. Data collection involved audio-recorded interviews, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed six key, interconnected themes: perceived bias and lack of individualized attention (42 students); monotonous and unengaging teaching methodologies (47 students); negative communication and lack of support from teachers (39 students); a direct link between teacher approaches and procrastination (34 students); gender-related differences in teacher perceptions (28 students); and cultural barriers to open communication (23 students). These results emphasize the critical need for teacher training that promotes inclusive, engaging, and culturally sensitive pedagogical approaches, alongside the fostering of positive teacher-student relationships to enhance EFL learning experiences. The results also revealed that poor teacher practices are a direct cause for student demotivation and increased tendencies for procrastination. **Keywords:** Demotivation, Procrastination, Multidimensional Analysis, Phenomenological Study.

الخلاصة:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى سد الفجوة البحثية المتعلقة بتأثير العوامل المرتبطة بالمعلم على انخفاض الدافعية والمماطلة لدى طلاب الصفوف المتدنية في المدارس الإعدادية ممن يتعلمون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق. وباستخدام تصميم نوعي قائم على المنهج الظواهري، استكشفت الدراسة التجارب الحياتية لـ ٥٨ طالباً وطالبة في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية (٢٨ إناث، ٣٠ ذكور، تتراوح أعمارهم بين ١٥ و ١٧ سنة، في الصفوف من الرابع إلى السادس) من مدرسة مختلطة في كربلاء. تم تحديد المشاركين من خلال إحالة المعلمين استناداً إلى أدائهم الأكاديمي، وتمت مقابلتهم باستخدام بروتوكول شبه منظم شمل أسئلة حول سلوكيات المعلمين، ومسببات المماطلة، والفروقات المتعلقة بالجنس والمرحلة الدراسية، والتأثيرات الثقافية. شملت عملية جمع البيانات تسجيل المقابلات صوتياً وتقريرها حرفياً، ثم تحليلها باستخدام التحليل الموضوعي. كشفت النتائج عن ستة محاور مترابطة رئيسية: التحيز المُدرَك وغياب الاهتمام الفردي (٤٢ طالباً)، أساليب التدريس الرتيبة وغير الجذابة (٤٧ طالباً)، التواصل السلبي وغياب الدعم من قبل المعلمين (٣٩ طالباً)، العلاقة المباشرة بين أساليب المعلمين والمماطلة (٣٤ طالباً)، الفروقات بين الجنسين في تصوراتهم تجاه المعلمين (٢٨ طالباً)، والحوجز الثقافية التي تعيق التواصل المفتوح (٢٣ طالباً). تؤكد هذه النتائج على الحاجة الملحة لتدريب

المعلمين على تبني أساليب تدريس شاملة وجذابة وحساسة ثقافياً، إلى جانب تعزيز العلاقات الإيجابية بين المعلم والطالب لتحسين تجربة تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. كما أظهرت النتائج أن الممارسات السيئة من قبل المعلمين تُعد سبباً مباشراً لانخفاض الدافعية وزيادة الميل إلى المماثلة لدى الطلاب الكلمات المفتاحية: انخفاض الدافعية ، التسويف، التحليل متعدد الأبعاد ، الدراسة الظاهرية

1. Introduction

Education forms the bedrock of societal advancement, with teachers acting as pivotal architects in guiding students through their learning experiences (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970). Effective teaching transcends mere knowledge transfer; it nurtures students' holistic growth and ignites a genuine passion for learning (Hattie, 2009; Bransford et al., 2000). However, a concerning trend is surfacing in contemporary English language classrooms: students are displaying reduced engagement, manifested in tardiness, inattentiveness, off-task actions, delayed or unfinished assignments, and reluctance to interact with educators (Bai, 2018; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). This disengagement can often precede more significant problems, such as demotivation and procrastination (Christenson et al., 2012). The issue is especially troubling within preparatory school English settings, where fundamental language skills are cultivated, thereby shaping future academic and professional trajectories (Bransford et al., 2000). Thus, identifying and addressing the factors that erode student motivation and engagement is critical to removing significant obstacles to effective learning. One important behavior associated with disengagement is procrastination, or the deliberate decision to defer intended actions despite expecting a poorer outcome because of the delay, (Steel, 2007). Academic procrastination entails delay in intended academic activities like reading, projects, or studying for exams (Ackerman & Gross, 2005). The issue of procrastination is relatively common, as a considerable proportion of students at varying levels of study have reported the same behavior (Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Schouwenburg, 1993; Steel, 2007). Its prevalence makes it necessary to understand what its roots are, and from there, implement techniques that allow students to avoid these self-destructive behavior patterns. A foreign language, such as English, presents unique challenges to the task of learning. Students face an increased quantity of work to be done: reading, speaking practice, listening practice, writing. This certain intensity in work can greatly heighten one's tendency toward procrastination, making the latter essential for EFL contexts too. In Iraq, it is an important issue to be studied because the lack of natural exposure to the language out of a non-English speaking country makes the case stronger. This is particularly important considering Iraq's very low rank in the Education First English Proficiency Index, ranked 106 out of 113 globally, with the bottom ranking in the Middle East region as a sub-region, while in 2024, an additional decline in its score is recorded (Education First, 2023, 2024). This clearly underlines that addressing those factors influencing EFL learning in Iraq has become imperative. In the light of these challenges, research examining the conditions that create such a negative process is significant. In particular, teacher factors merit special attention. While a few studies have recognized that teachers play the most important role in the learning process, for example, Dörnyei (2001) and Hattie (2009), very little is known about how the behaviors of particular teachers promote demotivation and procrastination, especially among Iraq's low-level preparatory school EFL students. The research evidence tends to focus either on general motivational theories, as for instance Deci & Ryan 2000 and Gardner 2010, or on the broader educational context, for example Falout et al. 2009, often at the expense of low-level language learners. Moreover, previous research tends to focus on advanced learners of the language, such as Kikuchi (2015) and Oxford (1999), with a general neglect of the beginning stages of language acquisition, where problems can be very specific and pedagogically relevant. The multidimensionality of these problems, considering grade level variability-4th, 5th, and 6th-and gender differences, is an aspect that further calls for an in-depth exploration from a seldom-adopted perspective (Tran 2023). Furthermore, the juncture of demotivation and procrastination, although likely to overlap, has seldom been elaborated on, especially with regard to Iraqi EFL, whereas studies indicate that a correlation between these factors exists (Steel, 2007; Tormo, 2022). Another critical consideration is the impact of the cultural factor on Iraqi EFL students. A critical review of the literature has identified several key gaps in the literature on student demotivation and procrastination related to English language learning. First, although the role of teacher-related factors is considered crucial in these issues, previous classifications of such factors are often redundant, and a systematic analysis of their specific impact on student demotivation has not been provided (Huang & Jiang, 2024). The second and most major reason is that, whereas procrastination may be observed in almost all language classes, the literature specifically on language learning contexts is limited (Khooei-Oskooei et al., 2021). Not only are studies sparse, but there is also an insufficient investigation of why learners engage in procrastination behavior. Third, the present research generally lacks generalizability since few studies have targeted participants at the collegiate level and few have used younger

learners as their pool of subjects (Huang & Jiang, 2024). Another profound gap can be outlined with regard to the contextual limits of the previous research. Despite the fact that the above-mentioned studies have been conducted in high schools, universities, and language institutes representative of various educational contexts, there is a lack of studies specifically focused on problems related to low-level preparatory school EFL students (Borinca & Maliqi, 2015). In the Iraqi context, the given gap is especially alarming considering unique cultural and educational features of this context. The third gap regards methodological approaches and scope. While there have been studies on teachers' role in students' motivation and demotivation, a comprehensive, multidimensional inquiry into the different teacher-related factors leading to demotivation and procrastination in this particular student population has not yet been conducted (Hornstra et al., 2018). Most of the existing research was based on quantitative methods, creating a big gap in our qualitative understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the students (Ekmekci & Serrano, 2022). On the other hand, little attention has been paid in the literature to gender issues, including in Iraq, where there is a wide variation in gender dynamics affecting educational outcomes (Tessier et al., 2010). This represents a serious omission, especially considering the huge cultural importance that gender plays within educational settings in Iraq. In this respect, there is an evident need for a multidimensional phenomenological investigation into the effect of teacher factors on demotivation and procrastination among low-level preparatory school EFL students in Iraq, grades 4, 5, and 6, both male and female. This type of research would provide useful insights and add considerably to the already acquired knowledge in this area of research. This research paper will study, through a multidimensional phenomenological approach, how far demotivation and procrastination by low-level preparatory school students in Iraq while learning EFL relate to teacher factors.

2. Literature Review

The concept of "motivation" occupies a central position in second language acquisition (SLA) research, with numerous studies and theories exploring its multifaceted nature. Deriving from the Latin "movere," meaning "to move" (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011), motivation, in essence, refers to the driving forces behind action. Despite extensive inquiry, a universally accepted definition remains elusive, as researchers continue to investigate motivation from various perspectives. Gardner's (1985) social-psychological perspective has been particularly influential, conceptualizing motivation as the effort individuals exert to learn a language, fueled by a desire for satisfaction and positive experience. This view encompasses both internal and external influences, driving students to set goals and pursue their attainment. Brown (2001) similarly defines motivation as an internal impetus, drive, or desire that propels individuals toward specific actions, emphasizing the role of goal setting and the generation of inner drive. Chinese scholars like Chen and Liu (2011), from an educational psychology perspective, posit that motivation serves to stimulate, direct, and sustain behavior towards achieving a particular goal. Yuan and Lin (2018) view motivation in foreign language learning as a potent force, encompassing desire, drive, and enthusiasm for learning activities. The term "Demotivation" has various translations in Arabic, including "Frustration, Loss of motivation, Lack of drive, Lack of enthusiasm, and Decrease in motivation. Despite these different phrases, they all convey the same core idea: the adverse effects of motivation on English learning. Understanding of demotivation varies among foreign researchers, but many acknowledge Dornyei (2001) in his book *Teaching and Researching Motivation* as providing a thorough explanation of the concept. He defines "demotivation" as specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action. This definition emphasizes that demotivation represents a gradual decline in motivation to learn, highlighting it as a process rather than a final outcome. External factors contribute to this state of demotivation, which can potentially be restored through appropriate strategies and interventions. In this paper, the researcher adopted Dornyei's (2001) definition of "demotivation," viewing it as a gradual decrease in motivation that can be remedied through certain measures. Procrastination, akin to other complex constructs in language studies, is a pervasive phenomenon that impacts various human actions, leading to numerous definitions (Ferrari, Johnson, & McCown, 1995). Researchers like Ferrari (2010) define procrastination as the voluntary delay of a planned action despite the awareness of its negative consequences. Diaz-Morales and Ferrari (2015) highlight the unnecessary nature of these delays, though this criterion may be overly broad. Despite the commonality of the "delay" component, there is a lack of uniformity in definitions of procrastination. Schouwenburg (2004) presents an alternative perspective, suggesting procrastination arises from inadequate time management and study skills rather than as an inherent behavioral choice. In this view, it becomes a task-specific avoidance behavior. Consistent with this, procrastination can also be seen as a regular deferral of responsibilities, becoming a behavioral characteristic. Within the academic domain, academic procrastination is understood as failing to fulfill assigned tasks or deferring study time (Deniz et al., 2009). The varied literature on procrastination

also categorizes it into several forms: academic procrastination, involving delays in completing academic work (Ziesat et al., 1978); decisional procrastination, which is related to decision-making delays (Effert & Ferrari, 1989); neurotic procrastination, that involves postponing important life choices (Ellis & Knaus, 1979); compulsive procrastination, referring to decisional and behavioral procrastination within the same person (Ferrari, 1991); and life routine procrastination, encompassing difficulties in scheduling recurring tasks (Milgram et al., 1988). Among these, academic procrastination, defined as the illogical and intentional postponement of academic tasks (Schraw et al., 2007), is a widespread issue experienced by students across educational contexts. Studies have further examined the origins of academic procrastination. Klingsieck et al. (2013), through interviews with university students, identified lack of motivation, volitional control, social relatedness, and task competence as key antecedents. Meier et al. (2016) explored the connection between social media use and academic procrastination, finding that low self-control, habitual Facebook checking, and enjoyment of the platform were significant predictors of procrastination. Similarly, He (2017), in a study with university students, reported that laziness, lack of motivation, stress, excessive internet use, and task difficulty were major reasons for academic procrastination. Finally, in educational contexts, low-level learners are typically characterized by below-average academic performance, reduced learning capabilities, or diminished engagement in the learning process. Moreover, academic performance serves as a crucial indicator for assessing students' learning proficiency (Huang & Jiang, 2024). In Iraqi preparatory schools, the assessment structure for English language learning varies by grade level. For fourth-grade students, the total possible score is 10 points, equally divided between written examination (5 points) and oral communication skills, comprising listening and speaking components (5 points). Students who achieve less than 50% of the total possible score (below 5 points) are classified as low-level learners. For fifth and sixth-grade students, the assessment framework utilizes a 100-point scale. Similarly, students scoring below the 50% threshold (less than 50 points) are categorized as low-level learners. For the purposes of this study, this standardized criterion - performance below 50% of the total possible score - was employed to identify and classify low-level English language learners across all grade levels examined. This classification system aligns with the Iraqi educational framework and provides a consistent metric for identifying students who may require additional support in their English language learning journey.

3. Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to address a significant research gap by investigating the specific behaviors and practices of teachers that low-level preparatory school EFL students perceive as contributing to their demotivation in learning English. It sought to understand how these students describe their experiences of procrastination, particularly in relation to the instructional approaches and behaviors of their English teachers. Additionally, the research explored the differences and similarities in how male and female low-level EFL students perceive the impact of teacher-related factors on their motivation and procrastination tendencies. It also examined how these factors vary across different grade levels—specifically 4th, 5th, and 6th grades—among low-level preparatory school EFL students. Furthermore, the study considered the influence of cultural factors on the relationship between teacher behaviors and student demotivation and procrastination, particularly within the Iraqi EFL context. Ultimately, the main research question of the study emerged from these objectives: How do teacher-related factors contribute to demotivation and procrastination among low-level preparatory school EFL students in Iraq?

4. Method This qualitative research work made use of a phenomenological design to explore the multifaceted relationship between teachers and factors resulting in low-level preparatory school students of EFL in Iraq facing demotivation and procrastination. According to Creswell, in 2013, phenomenological analysis is used to get insights into the subjective viewpoint, living experience of both students and instructors and what teachers do and their attitude in the classroom has actually developed from this particular phenomenon.

4.1. Participants Participants were selected by both purposeful and convenience sampling strategies (Creswell, 2012). Low-level students were identified by a teacher-referral process, which is considered a popular method appropriate in educational research studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). The EFL teachers had identified the students with these two most important criteria, including the score falling below 50% in formal assessments of academic performance and poor continuous participation in class activities, which are by Kim & Kim, 2018; Zhang, 2020. Such an identification strategy has its roots in how previous literature has identified struggling learners by teacher judgment and academic performance data (Hornstra et al., 2018; Li & Zhou, 2017). Maximum variation sampling was used to ensure a diverse participant group, accounting for differences in gender, age, possible English language proficiency, years of study, cultural backgrounds, and family contexts (Ary et al., 2014). In this study, the participants were 58 EFL learners from a co-educational school in Karbala Iraq. Of those

who participated, 28 female and 30 male students who were between the age of 15 and 17 were sampled, and all attended the grades 4, 5, or 6 at preparatory schools. Besides, 36 had never attended any language institute. The participants had all been informed about the purposes and the procedures; informed consent was obtained by guaranteeing confidentiality and freedom to withdraw at any time.

4.2. Instruments

The primary data collection instrument was the semi-structured interview. Interviews were guided by a flexible protocol of four overarching questions:

- Can you describe specific things your English teachers do or say in class that affect your motivation negatively to learn English?
 - When you put off doing English work, what are the reasons behind it, and do you think anything your teachers do in class contributes to this procrastination?
 - Do you think boys and girls in your class, or students in different grades (4th, 5th, and 6th), experience English class or react to their teachers differently? How so?
 - Are there any cultural expectations or beliefs in Iraq, or anything about your school environment, that you think affect how you learn English or how your teachers teach it?
- Follow-up questions were used to explore participant responses in greater depth, clarifying ambiguities and eliciting further information. These questions were also iteratively modified throughout the data collection process, to ensure all relevant areas were adequately covered. All interviews were audio-recorded to capture the data accurately and allow the interviewer to focus on the conversation (Birks & Mills, 2015).

4.3. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was carried out in various stages, with all due considerations of ethical concern and data integrity. In view of this, at an initial stage, the Ethical Approval from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Iraq, was obtained for the research study because this is always needed before the study could actually begin with participants. All the participants received full information concerning the purpose of the study and the applied procedure, an opportunity for questions, the right to withdraw from participation in this study at any moment, anonymity, and refusal of use of data collected without giving informed consent. Specific informed consent has been elicited before interviewing all participating students to be aware and consent to the interview. The student interviews normally last between 20 to 30 minutes, dependent on each subject's elaborative tendency or willingness. The audio recordings were done throughout the interview process, with permission from the participants, to ensure an accurate record of the conversation. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim by the researcher or a trained assistant, which means the spoken language was written down word for word. Furthermore, in maintaining the privacy of the participants, all respondents were assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality and anonymity. The data collected were kept in a secured place and accessed only by the researchers of this study.

4.4. Data Analysis

Qualitative data collected in the present study were subjected to thematic analysis using the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Teet al. first started open coding- an initial exploratory phase- in an attempt to identify some of the basic codes about the phenomena of demotivation and procrastination. Specifically, key components of responses were identified and core concepts extracted. Core concepts were then categorized as meaningful categories. Subsequently, axial coding was conducted to explore relationships among these initial codes and allowed the identification of major overarching themes. The final step, selective coding, was done to refine the analysis so that a focus would be gained on those core themes which could be most relevant to answering the research questions. All through this process, attention had to be paid to participants' experiences and subjective points of view. The data were analyzed vigorously for emerging patterns, recurring themes, and meaningful connections across the responses. Content validity was ensured by expert review by professors, management specialists, and high-ranking education officials to make the findings valid and reliable. In addition, their input was taken on the relevance and appropriateness of the interview questions. The results have been further enhanced by an agreement coefficient calculated in order to verify the reliability of the coding process, with at least 80% anticipated agreement between coders. All these steps contributed to receiving detailed and nuanced insight into experiences relevant for students and teachers on both demotivation and procrastination. Therefore, they provided a holistic view on that multilayered phenomenon.

5. Results

Thematic analysis of interview data unfolded a complex interplay of teacher-related factors of impact that relate to demotivation and procrastination tendencies of low-level preparatory school EFL students in Iraq. Performing thematic analysis, a set of interrelated themes emerged on the intricacies through which teachers' practices and

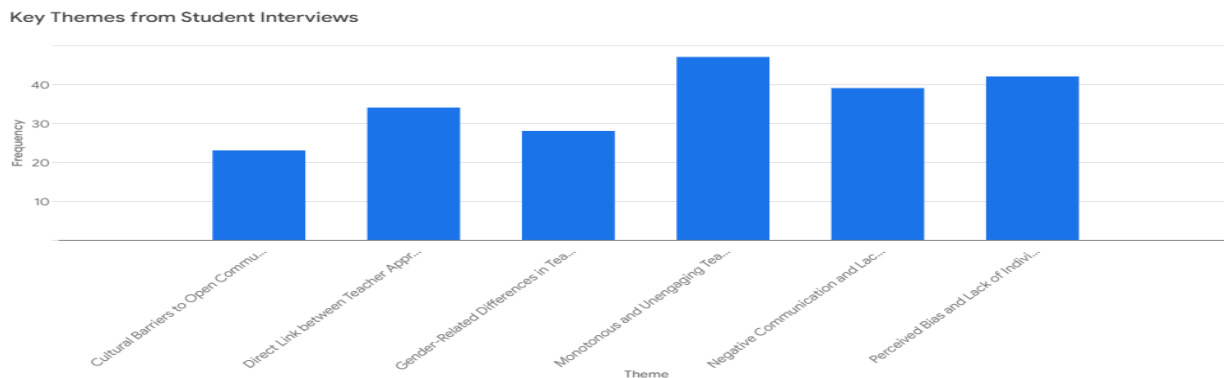
class dynamics influence students' experiences about their learning. These themes and the number of participants mentioning them are given in the table below.

Table 1Key Themes from Student Interviews

Theme	Frequency (out of 58)
Perceived Bias and Lack of Individualized Attention	42
Monotonous and Unengaging Teaching Methodologies	47
Negative Communication and Lack of Support from Teachers	39
Direct Link between Teacher Approaches and Procrastination	34
Gender-Related Differences in Teacher Perceptions	28
Cultural Barriers to Open Communication	23

Of the theme, the largest numbers concerned feelings of incompetence and disengagement connected with perceived teacher bias and lack of attention to the individual, as shown in Table 1. The quotation below captures this experience, as revealed by Ahmed, a 5th-grade male participant: "When the teacher pays attention only to the good students and not the rest, I feel like I am not good enough to learn English, so I just give up trying." This feeling, in various forms, was repeated in a number of interviews and implies that a lack of attention on an equitable scale, along with perceived preference of teachers for high-achieving students, will eventually alienate those who under-achieve. Lack of self-esteem coupled with such feelings is seemingly becoming a major inhibitor in learning. This finding pinpoints the importance of making a range of student abilities the emphases of the teacher; trying to support each student individually. This was explicitly explained by 42 of the 58 children. Other most frequently stated theme refers to the using of flat and non-attractive pedagogies by the classroom teacher, and it's what 47 of the participants indicated. This bored them from school since a lesson repeatedly happens over time. They didn't have investment in anything like 4th-grade-girl Fatima shared: "Our teacher just reads from the book all the time; it's so boring. I don't want to do the homework because it's the same thing." The above example shows the clear disconnection between the modes of instruction and the students' motivation. A less interesting attitude toward learning was noted by many of the interviewed students, with some defining the lessons as "boring" and "repetitive"; such perceptions did reduce their desire to finish assignments on time and contributed to procrastination behavior. This goes to point that the method of teaching does affect motivation and acts directly toward students procrastinating. This means more interactive and engaging modes should be established; various activities that meet the different learning styles of students must be implemented to be able to rise students' investment. Students specifically linked their procrastination tendency with their teachers' instructional approach, which indicated a strong association between unengaging teaching styles and the tendency to procrastinate. The following quote is from Zaid, a 6th grade male participant: "Whenever it's boring, I always tell myself I'll get to it later, and then I never do anything." The above excerpt also signifies an effect of the classroom experience on students' working behavior whereby teachers' approaches can directly relate to procrastination. This theme came up from 34 of the 58 participants. This theme, therefore, points to the urgent need on the part of teachers for critical reevaluation of the teaching practices as potential cause of procrastination among students. Results showed that students use procrastination to manage boredom and absence of interest in classroom work. The analysis also brought out the importance of communication and interaction between teachers and students, and its relation to demotivation, as mentioned by 39 out of the 58 participants. Many students reported feeling discouraged because of the lack of support and encouragement from teachers. Ali, a 6th-grade student, stated: "When I try to ask the teacher a question, she sometimes makes me feel stupid for not knowing. So I don't ask for help anymore, and I just do nothing." The above example will explain how negative or dismissive responses from teachers can create a climate of fear and inhibit students from trying to get clarification or seeking help. This not only results in the loss of motivation, but, in some cases, makes students give up, therefore further procrastinating. Some of the students who reported they felt that they could not ask for help felt hopeless, this therefore is a further barrier to their learning. Quiet and introverted children seem to particularly face such difficulty, as one student reflected: "I am too shy to ask questions, so I would not even ask if I need help, it's better to just keep quiet or not do the work rather than feeling embarrassed." The above extract underlines the importance for teachers to create a safety and supportive classroom environment where students can raise their queries without any intimidation. Another gender-related difference that came up was in the students' perceptions, as expressed by 28 of the 58 participants. Some of the male students reported that the gender of the teacher did not matter much. Other male students preferred male teachers whom they described as more authoritative. Several female students, however, reported feeling more comfortable with female teachers and described them as understanding. Layla, a 5th-grade girl,

clarified: I feel that my female teacher understands me better; she is nicer when I ask questions.” This is in contrast to the statement of Omar, 6th-grade boy: “I don’t care if my teacher is male or female. These answers underline the different ways students’ perception of teachers may be influenced by their own gender and this might have consequences for motivation and engagement. This, again, shows that teacher training has to be conducted in which it is taken into account and prepared for that there are different needs for the students. Also, the grade level of difference showed a good indicator on reflecting the study by the students. The students from the higher grades were mostly critical against the approaches of teachers, with high understanding linked between their own demotivation and the teacher’s action. Moreover, cultural factors significantly impacted how students engaged with their teachers. Twenty three out of the 58 participants mentioned cultural barriers. Khalil shared: Our cultural norms discourage students from frequently questioning or challenging teachers’ views.” This cultural expectation created a barrier to open communication, often preventing students from articulating their difficulties or opinions. That gives the idea of how close the cultural factors in students are interwoven with their relation and impact on teachers to interact and impact the learning of students. The fear to disrespect turned out mostly as disengagement from the process. Second, traditional methodology based on rote memorandum teaching also contributes normally to being perceived by the brains as dull and monotonous - just one more factor of procrastination. The following figure illustrates key themes from student interviews; it shows the frequency of each theme mentioned by the 58 participants. **Figure 1** Key Themes from Student Interviews



The most significant implication, deriving from the findings of the study, is that demotivation and procrastination in the EFL classroom are multicausal; therefore, a multi-factor solution is needed. The research found teacher education which would promote more inclusive, supportive, engaging, and culturally sensitive practices than were usually put in place, catering for the needs of individual learners. The findings made it clear that poor teacher approaches influence the students’ motivation negatively, together with the level of procrastination, which shows that training for teachers and policy are required.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study was designed to address a critical gap in our understanding of how teacher-related factors contribute to demotivation and procrastination among low-level preparatory school EFL students in Iraq. The primary objectives were to explore the specific teacher behaviors and practices that students perceive as detrimental to their motivation, to understand students’ lived experiences of procrastination in relation to their teachers’ instructional approaches, and to investigate the influence of gender, grade level, and cultural factors on these dynamics. Ultimately, this study sought to examine how these factors interact within the Iraqi EFL context. The results, summarized in Table 1, reveal a complex and interwoven set of factors contributing to student demotivation and procrastination. A pervasive theme was the students’ experience of perceived bias and lack of individualized attention, with 42 out of 58 students expressing a sense of being overlooked in favor of higher-achieving peers. This aligns with self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which posits that feelings of competence and relatedness are crucial for motivation. When teachers primarily focus on a select few, it undermines these basic needs for a large portion of the class. Ahmed’s comment, “When the teacher only focuses on the good students and ignores the rest of us, I feel like I’m not good enough to learn English, so I just give up trying,” powerfully illustrates how a perceived lack of support can lead to disengagement and decreased motivation. Another predominant finding, emphasized by 47 out of 58 students, was the prevalence of monotonous and unengaging teaching methodologies. The students consistently described their English lessons as repetitive and uninspiring, as evidenced in Fatima’s quote, “Our teacher just reads from the book all the time, it’s so boring. I don’t want to do the homework because it’s the same thing.” This aligns with research on learner autonomy and engagement which emphasizes the need for varied and stimulating activities to keep students motivated (Little,

2007). The monotony of the lessons not only reduces student interest but also contributes to procrastination. This leads to another significant finding, with 34 out of 58 students reporting a direct link between teacher approaches and their own procrastination. This result can be explained through expectancy-value theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), which suggests that individuals are more likely to engage in tasks they perceive as valuable and achievable. When students find lessons uninteresting or the tasks unengaging, they are less likely to see value in completing them, thus leading to procrastination. The students' own words, such as "When the work is boring I just tell myself I'll do it later, but I usually never get it done" highlights this link between poor engagement and procrastination tendencies, which is an attempt to cope with boredom. Furthermore, the study highlighted that negative communication and a lack of support from teachers negatively impacted student motivation. 39 out of 58 students reported feeling discouraged by teachers who were critical or dismissive. This reflects the importance of positive teacher-student relationships, as suggested by attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), which highlights the need for a secure and supportive learning environment. Ali's comment, "When I try to ask the teacher a question, she sometimes makes me feel stupid for not knowing. So I don't ask for help anymore and just do nothing," exemplifies how a lack of positive communication and empathy can be detrimental to learning. In terms of gender-related differences, 28 out of 58 students reported varied perceptions, indicating that some female students prefer female teachers and others found the gender of the teacher unimportant. This aligns with social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) which emphasizes the need for role models and a sense of belonging in the classroom. Similarly, there were differences in the level of grade that showed students in higher grades were more aware of the association between teacher approaches and their motivational levels. Again, this would suggest a factor of maturity and experience. This means that the awareness of different needs for all pupils should be stressed among teachers themselves. Finally, cultural barriers to open communication as stated by 23 out of 58 participants showed clearly how cultural norms can be a stumbling block to learning in the EFL setting. Indeed, this supports the view propagated by sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) that learning is mediated by social and cultural contexts. Such observations, on one's own culture, are poignant, "In our culture, you cannot question the teacher even if you don't understand-it's disrespectful"; teachers, therefore, have to be sensitive to that culture and/or tradition while organizing learning. In addition, rote learning methodologies that have traditionally characterized the Iraqi education system are deemed to be dull and ultimately foster procrastination. Empirically, the findings of this study support the findings of other studies reported in the literature. For example, Chaudhuri (2023) has identified that teachers' psychological stress can be associated with more teacher-centered teaching practices, resulting in less individualized attention and support for students. On the other hand, Chaudhuri (2023) also established that less psychological stress was associated with more child-centered teaching practices and increased visual attention on students. Additionally, the work by Neokleous (2023) emphasized that accommodation should be made to individual differences with regard to linguistic and cultural backgrounds and social, emotional, and cognitive needs without compromising the quality of teaching. Indeed, according to Alat (2019), the literature reveals that the highly structured, teacher-directed teaching focused on basic skills, and whole-group instruction is found to fail in its intended early education outcomes by keeping the students passive and paying little attention to individual differences. The results revealed, "only the lack of frustration, boredom and rejection towards the subject can be avoided by a modification of the processes of teaching and learning, adjusted to students' potentials, interests and motivations" (Palomares-Ruiz and Perales 2020). Other investigations, for instance, Alyousif and Alsuhaibani, 2021; Hu (2011), showed that student demotivation factors could be taken from the teacher's behavior only regarding his unsatisfactory presentation skills, his lacking enthusiasm. On the other hand, Hutton (2022) has drawn attention to research relevant to teacher-student relationships in the development of awareness, empathy, and attention to individual students' experiences within classroom interactions. Moos and Pitton (2013) suggest that the cognitive load associated with teaching tasks, such as keeping track of students' attention, catering to diverse learners, and dealing with distractions, reduces the possibility of teachers making modifications while teaching, which might be one of the causes of students' demotivation and procrastination. Some studies, such as that by Geer et al. (2019), have shown a gender-related difference in teacher perceptions and attitudes; boys achieve better results compared to girls in some subjects, such as mathematics. On the other hand, Palomares-Ruiz and Perales (2020) underlined how teacher training is necessary in order not to enhance feelings of frustration, boredom, or rejection toward mathematics due to gender-related biases. The study conducted by Alisaari et al. (2019) noted that culturally and linguistically diverse students and the attitude or belief of the general public may shape teachers' beliefs and practices. Cultural barriers should be surmounted in support of open communications and inclusive teaching approaches to cater for diverse

learners. These findings raise an entangled relationship between teacher behavior and the socio-cultural context in causing these negative perceptions. They sharply signal the meaningful intervention of teachers' practice in triggering students' demotivation and procrastination among EFL students within Iraqi preparatory schools. These are further corroborated by theoretical and empirical windows, which underline inclusive, engaging, emotional well-being, and supportive teaching strategies. These findings underline the necessity of culturally responsive teacher development programs and policy efforts upstream to positively affect the relationships between teachers and students, since this is an essential aspect of improved learning.

7. Implications and Limitations of the Study

The implication of the present study is immense with respect to all stakeholders in EFL education, especially at this level in Iraq. The results have shown the crucial role of teacher behaviors and classroom practices in motivating students to change procrastination behavior even at basic language learning levels. This paper argues, first and foremost, for an imperative need to make teacher training programs sensitive to culturally responsive and student-centered pedagogies. Teachers should be better prepared to offer inclusive approaches to teaching and learning, individually tailor student attention, and ensure that the communication with pupils is maintained at a positive level. More specific training in methods of producing stimulating and relevant lessons using a range of learning styles would also reduce the monotony and minimize the likelihood of students to procrastinate. It further shows that the level of challenges low-level EFL learners go through was better understood, and that teacher training should aim at creating empathetic and supportive classrooms where students are able to ask for help freely without being judged. Also, considering the gender-related differences in the experiences observed from the students, teacher training should address possible needs that could be different for both male and female students. Most importantly, this study discloses how cultural expectations guide interactions between students and teachers; this demands awareness on the part of teachers concerning those cultural norms which stand in the way toward frankness in communication. Thus, this study, therefore, cites implications for policymaking and institutions of learning as means to making informed decisions to actually bring improvements into being for the EFL learning experiences of Iraq's young learners. The fact that teacher behaviors and classroom approaches have a direct influence on procrastination points to the need for awareness and training among teachers on these issues. These findings argue definitively for classroom-level interventions to help reduce student demotivation and procrastination. This study, even as it made some very valuable contributions, has certain limitations which should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. The study used a qualitative research design with a small sample size of 58 EFL learners who were all recruited from a single co-educational school located in Karbala. Although maximum variation sampling was utilized to ensure some degree of diversity within the sample, it cannot be generalized to all low-level preparatory school EFL students across Iraq due to differences in school environments, teaching styles, and cultural contexts. Although the semi-structured interview has been a good tool, serving as one of the predominant ways to gather data, it lets one attain very rich, in-depth data; its dependence might have introduced partiality in the responses given by students. Procrastination and demotivation based on self-reported experiences could also be influenced by the bias of social desirability or limitations due to recall. Moreover, the selection of low-level students through teacher-referral, consistent with previous work (Hornstra et al., 2018; Li & Zhou, 2017), might be an inherently biased practice because the perceptions teachers hold about their "low-level" students would not reflect a wide range of variation within their classrooms. The reliance on open-ended questions might also have made the analysis challenging due to the many and diverse aspects of experiences that students provided. Though efforts were made to ensure validity and reliability through expert involvement in the design and establishing coefficients of agreement, one must also be forthright about the subjectivity inherently entering qualitative analysis as a limitation. Last but not least, the research investigated only students' opinions and did not consider those of teachers, who could complement and add depth to such a view. These limitations will therefore need to be considered when contemplating practical uses of this research and in developing further studies.

References

- Ackerman, D. S., & Gross, B. L. (2005). My instructor made me do it: Task characteristics of procrastination. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 27(1), 5-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475304273842>
- Alat, I. (2019). Kuramın Uygulamayla Buluşmadığı Yer: Erken Çocuklukta Matematik Eğitimi. *Adıyaman Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 9(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.17984/adyuebd.363791>

- Alisaari, J., Heikkilä, M., & Palviainen, Å. (2019). Monolingual ideologies confronting multilingual realities. Finnish teachers' beliefs about linguistic diversity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 79, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.01.003>
- Alyousif, A., & Alsuhaibani, S. (2021). English Language Learning Demotivating Factors for Saudi High School EFL Students. *English Language Teaching*, 14(8), 29-38. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v14n8p29>
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Sorensen, C., & Walker, D. (2014). *Introduction to research in education* (9th ed.). Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Bai, J. M. (2018). *A Study on the Demotivating Factors in Junior High School Students' English Learning*. Master's Thesis, Hebei Normal University.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall.
- Birks, M., & Mills, J. (2015). *Grounded theory: A practical guide*. Sage.
- Borinca, I. and Maliqi, A. (2015). The influence of teachers on increasing student's motivation to the ismail qemali high school in the city of kamenica, kosovo. *Psychology*, 06(08), 915-921. <https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2015.68089>
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. Basic Books.
- Bransford, J., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (Eds.). (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. National Academy Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Chaudhuri, S., (2023). Teaching practices mediating the effect of teachers' psychological stress, and not physiological on their visual focus of attention. *Frontiers in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2023.1283701>
- Chen, Y., & Liu, X. (2011). The relationship between motivation and academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 23(4), 511-538.
- Christenson, S. L., Reschly, A. L., & Wylie, C. (Eds.). (2012). *Handbook of research on student engagement*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7>
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227-268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01
- Deniz, M., Tras, A., & Aydogan, O. (2009). The relationship between procrastination and academic achievement. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1(1), 1141-1145.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. Macmillan.
- Diaz-Morales, J., & Ferrari, J. R. (2015). Procrastination: A review of the literature. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 28(6), 420-425.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and researching motivation*. Routledge.
- Education First. (2023). EF English Proficiency Index. Retrieved from <https://www.ef.com/epi/>
- Education First. (2024). EF English Proficiency Index. Retrieved from <https://www.ef.com/epi/>
- Effert, R., & Ferrari, J. R. (1989). Decisional procrastination: A review of the literature. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, New Orleans, LA.
- Ekmekci, A. and Serrano, D. M. (2022). The impact of teacher quality on student motivation, achievement, and persistence in science and mathematics. *Education Sciences*, 12(10), 649. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12100649>
- Ellis, A., & Knaus, W. J. (1977). *Overcoming Procrastination* (Vol. 28, Issue 4). NY: Institute for Rational Living.
- Ellis, A., & Knaus, W. J. (1979). *Overcoming procrastination: Or, how to think and act rationally in spite of life's inevitable hassles*. New York, NY: New American Library.
- Falout, J., Elwood, J., & Hood, M. (2009). Demotivation: Affective states and learning outcomes. *System*, 37(3), 403-417. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2009.03.004>
- Ferrari, J. R. (1991). Self-handicapping by procrastinators: Protecting self-esteem, social-esteem, or both? *Journal of Research in Personality*, 25, 245-261.

- Ferrari, J. R. (2010). Still procrastinating: The no regrets guide to getting it done. Hoboken, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Ferrari, J. R., Johnson, J. L., & McCown, W. G. (1995). Procrastination and task avoidance: Theory, research and treatment. New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. Continuum.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation. Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, R. C. (2010). Motivation and second language acquisition: The socio-educational model. Peter Lang.
- Geer, L., Miller, K., & Mix, K. (2019). Relations between spatial skills and math performance in elementary school children: A longitudinal investigation. *Developmental psychology*, 55(8), 1747–1760. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000649>
- Hattie, J. (2009). Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. Routledge.
- He, X. (2017). The relationship between academic procrastination and academic performance. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Hong Kong.
- Hornstra, L., Stroet, K., Eijden, E. v., Goudsblom, J., & Roskamp, C. (2018). Teacher expectation effects on need-supportive teaching, student motivation, and engagement: a self-determination perspective. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 24(3-5), 324-345. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2018.1550841>
- Hornstra, L., van den Berg, R., & van der Werf, G. (2018). Teacher-student relationships and student motivation: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 30(3), 841-868.
- Hu, G. (2011). The Relationship between Demotivation and EFL Learners' English Language Proficiency. *English Language Teaching*, 4(4), 88-93. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v4n4p88>
- Huang, L. Y., & Jiang, M. F. (2024). A Study of Teacher Factors on the Demotivation of High School Low Level English Learners. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 14, 582-600. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2024.144031>
- Hutton, K. (2022). Teacher-Student Relationships: The Lived Experiences of Four K-12 Music Educators. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 31(3), 128-145. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10570837221097303>
- Jasim, R. L. (2023). English language learning demotivating factors for iraqi open educational college efl students. *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES*, 13(02), 546-561. <https://doi.org/10.37648/ijrssh.v13i02.044>
- Khooei-Oskooei, S., Ahangari, S., & Seifoori, Z. (2022). Causes of EFL learners' procrastination: A classical grounded theory. *Issues in Language Teaching (ILT)*, 11(1), 35-65.
- Kikuchi, K. (2015). Demotivation in second language acquisition: Insights from Japan. *Multilingual Matters*.
- Kim, Y., & Kim, S. (2018). The relationship between teacher-student relationships and student motivation in EFL classrooms. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 110(3), 354-368.
- Klingsieck, K., Grund, S., Schmid, S., & Fries, S. (2013). Procrastination in university students: A qualitative study on the reasons for procrastination. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(4), 1091-1105.
- Li, J., & Zhou, Y. (2017). The impact of teacher-student relationships on student motivation and academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 109(2), 256-268.
- Little, D. (2007). Language learner autonomy: Some key principles. In R. Pemberton, S. L. Walker, & E. S. L. Wong (Eds.), *Applications of learner autonomy in language education*. Hong Kong University Press.
- Meier, A., Reinecke, L., & Meltzer, A. (2016). Social media use and academic procrastination: A cross-sectional study. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 64, 1-8.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. Jossey-Bass.
- Milgram, N., Sroloff, D., & Rosenbaum, M. (1988). Procrastination and life-routine tasks. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(4), 607-613.
- Moos, M., & Pitton, A. (2013). Student teacher challenges: using the cognitive load theory as an explanatory lens. *Teaching Education*, 24(1), 88-111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2012.754869>
- Neokleous, G. (2023). Comparing pre-service teacher attitudes toward the use of students' home language(s) in linguistically diverse English as an additional language classrooms in Norway and Cyprus. *Frontiers in Education*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2023.1254025>
- Oxford, R. L. (1999). "Style wars" as a source of anxiety in language classrooms: A new dimension to consider. In D. J. Young (Ed.), *Affect in foreign language and second language learning* (pp. 216-237). McGraw-Hill.

- Palomares-Ruiz, I., & Perales, F. (2020). Math Performance and Sex: The Predictive Capacity of Self-Efficacy, Interest and Motivation for Learning Mathematics. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 1879. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01879>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Sage.
- Schouwenburg, H. C. (1993). *Procrastination and task avoidance: Theory, research, and treatment*. Springer.
- Schouwenburg, H. C. (2004). Procrastination: An overview. In J. C. Kaufman & J. Baer (Eds.), *Motivation and learning*. Springer.
- Schraw, G., Wadkins, T., & Olafson, L. (2007). The role of motivation in academic procrastination. In J. C. Kaufman & J. Baer (Eds.), *Motivation and learning*. Springer.
- Skinner, E. A., & Belmont, M. J. (1993). Motivation in the classroom: Reciprocal effects of teacher behavior and student engagement across the school year. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 85(4), 571-581. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.85.4.571>
- Steel, P. (2007). The nature of procrastination: A meta-analytic and theoretical review of quintessential self-regulatory failure. *Psychological Bulletin*, 133(1), 65-94. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.133.1.65>
- Tessier, D., Sarrazin, P., & Ntoumanis, N. (2010). The effects of an intervention to improve newly qualified teachers' interpersonal style, students' motivation and psychological need satisfaction in sport-based physical education. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 35(4), 242-253. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2010.05.005>
- Tormo, M. (2022). Procrastination and its relationship with motivation in EFL education. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 42(3), 231-244.
- Tran, H. (2023). Gender and age-related differences in EFL student motivation. *Language Awareness Journal*, 30(2), 102-118.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wigfield, A., & Eccles, J. S. (2000). Expectancy-value theory of achievement motivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 68-81.
- Yuan, F., & Lin, Y. (2018). The role of motivation in foreign language learning. In Z. Dornyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Teaching and researching motivation*. Routledge.
- Zhang, L. (2020). The impact of teacher feedback on student motivation and learning outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(2), 321-335.
- Ziesat, A., Rosenthal, R., & White, R. (1978). Academic procrastination: A review of the literature. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 70(4), 451-458.