

A Study of Teacher Factors on the Demotivation of High School Low Level English Learners

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Abstract

Using a questionnaire-based research method supplemented by interviews, this study conducted an empirical research on teacher factors on the demotivation of high school low level English learners in the region of Pearl River Delta. The results of the study showed that: 1) The phenomenon of demotivation is more common among high school low-level learners of English; 2) The four teacher factors affecting students' demotivation, in descending order, are: teachers' professional competence, teachers' teaching methods and attitudes, teacher-student relationship, and teachers' quality and stability; 3) The students of Senior Two have the greatest number of cases of demotivation, followed by Senior Three, and Senior One has the fewest such cases; 4) Female students show cases of demotivation more often than male students. In order to reduce the Possibilities of teacher factors in students' demotivation, this study makes recommendations from the perspectives of teachers, students, and school administrators.

Keywords

Learning Motivation, Demotivation, High School, Low-Level English Learners, Teacher Factors

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Education is an important social endeavor, and teachers, as the main conductor of education, have a crucial role to play in guiding students' learning. Good teacher's guidance can not only improve the learning effect of students, but also promote the overall development of students. And learning is the duty of students, especially in high school. However, the following phenomena have appeared in high school English classrooms nowadays: being late for class, not

paying attention in class, engaging in activities unrelated to the class during class time, submitting homework late or not submitting it at all after class, and unwilling to communicate with English teachers. These phenomena reflect that students' enthusiasm for English learning and their desire for English knowledge are gradually decreasing (Bai, 2018). And as a compulsory course, the knowledge system of high school English is the cornerstone of subsequent learning and professional development, which is of inescapable importance and should be deeply valued. Based on the above background, this paper focuses on understanding the influence of teachers on the learning demotivation of low-level high school English learners.

1.2. Significance of Research

This paper analyses the teacher factors on the demotivation of low-level high school English learners in terms of practice, firstly, it helps students to clearly understand the factors of personal demotivation, thus promoting effective learning of English. It can enhance the interest in English learning and stimulate independent learning while improving English performance. Secondly, it can help teachers to deeply understand the key reasons for students' English learning demotivation, so as to adjust teaching methods, create a learning atmosphere, and enhance the effectiveness of classroom teaching. In terms of theory, it provides reference for subsequent related research and promotes the development of second language learning.

1.3. Aims of Research

The aim of this study is to investigate teacher factors that lead to demotivation in learning English among low-level high school English learners and its relationship with gender and grade level. It focuses on what teacher factors negatively affect students' motivation, whether these factors are consistent across grade levels and across genders. The study will provide insights into teachers' "teaching" and students' "learning". Specifically, the first aim is to describe the current situation of demotivation among low-level high school English learners; the second aim is to analyze the teacher factors of demotivation; the third aim is to examine the degree of influence of the identified teacher factors on different grades and genders; and the fourth aim is to provide pedagogical implications for teachers to adjust their teaching in order to improve the current situation of student demotivation and to enhance their motivation for learning English.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Key Concepts

2.1.1. Definition of Learning Motivation of Second Language

The term "motivation" is widely used in foreign language studies, and there are numerous studies and theories on motivation in the field of second language acquisition. The word motivation is derived from the Latin word "movere",

which means “to move” (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). A definition and a unified account of motivation has yet to be developed, and scholars are still exploring different understandings of motivation from a number of perspectives. Among them, Gardner’s (1985) definition based on social psychology has been the most influential. He defined motivation as “an individual’s work or effort to learn a language is enriched by the desire and satisfying experience of doing so”. In this definition, motivation is considered as a force from both internal and external sources that helps students to set goals and work towards achieving them. According to Brown (2001), motivation is defined as an internal drive, impulse, feeling, or desire that can lead a person to perform specific actions. In other words, motivation is when an individual sets a goal and begins to strive for it, and also creates a desire or drive in the mind. In China, there are also many scholars elaborating their academic views. In the book *Educational Psychology*, Chen and Liu (2011), from the functional perspective of motivation, pointed out that motivation is a force that stimulates, directs and maintains behaviour to achieve a specific purpose. According to Yuan and Lin (2018), motivation in foreign language learning is desire and drive, which is the power of foreign language learners. It is a conscious and active state of mind as well as the foreign language learner’s enthusiasm for foreign language learning activities.

2.1.2. Definition of Demotivation of Second Language

The concept of “Demotivation” has several translations in China, such as “Negative Motivation”, “Lack of Motivation”, “Reduced Motivation”, etc. However, the basic meaning is the same, which refers to the negative impact of motivation on English learning. Foreign researchers’ understanding of demotivation is also different, and scholars generally recognize Dornyei (2001), in his book *Teaching and Researching Motivation*, for a more comprehensive introduction to “demotivation”. He defines “demotivation” as “specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action. Through the definition, it can be seen that demotivation refers to a gradual decrease in motivation to learn, which is a process rather than a result. The role of external factors can be understood as the state of demotivation, which can be regained through certain measures and methods. In this paper, the definition of “demotivation” is adopted from Dornyei (2001), which means that demotivation is the gradual decrease of motivation, which is a process rather than a result, and can be regained through measures and methods.

2.1.3. Definition of High School and Low-Level English Learners

Secondary schools in China are divided into junior high schools and senior high schools, both of which fall under the secondary education. Secondary schools are educational institutions that come at the end of nine years of compulsory education, and are generally three years in length, i.e., Senior One, Senior Two, Senior Three, in which Senior Three students will face university entrance examinations. Low-level learners are, in general, students with poor academic perfor-

mance, low learning ability or less effort in learning. Academic performance is an important reference for reflecting the level of learning of students. The total score for the English subject in the University Entrance Examination is 150 points, which includes 120 points for the written paper and 30 points for listening and speaking. It is generally considered that students whose scores are below the pass line (60% of the written paper score) are low-level learners. Therefore, in this study, students with average scores below the pass line (72 points) were taken as low-level English learners.

2.2. The Related Theories of Demotivation

2.2.1. Linguistic Theory

The study of second language motivation originated with Gardner, whose study of motivation provided a solid foundation for subsequent related motivation research. Gardner and Lambert (1972) classified motivation into instrumental and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation is the motivation to use the language as a tool to achieve a practical purpose, while integration motivation is the motivation to learn in order to understand and integrate into the target language culture. In addition, Gardner's (1985) study showed that motivation is made up of four components: the goal of completing the task, the desire to achieve the goal, the goal of effort, and a positive attitude towards learning the language. Indeed, these four components are interrelated and interact with each other, but none of them works alone. In order to better understand the effect of different factors on L2 motivation, Dornyei proposed a three-level theory of motivation in the 1990s, which contains the language level, the learner level and the learning context level.

2.2.2. Psychological Theory

Deci and Ryan (1985) introduced the theoretical psychology of self-determination, and the field of language education has been widely influenced. They argued that factors from the social environment in which the learner is embedded can facilitate or hinder the development of the learner's behaviour and psychology, as well as the fact that the learner's behaviour is shaped in the process of satisfying his or her psychological needs. According to the theory, second language learners have three psychological needs which are autonomy, competence and relatedness and try to achieve these three goals through the environment. When the three psychological needs are fulfilled, the learner moves in a positive direction. On the contrary, when the three needs of psychology are prevented, the learner will move in a negative direction. Autonomy means that the learner is free to choose to engage in certain activities according to his inner desires and will. Competence refers to the learner's feeling that his behaviour or actions can be required at a certain level and that he needs to experience himself as being able to perform a certain activity. Relatedness implies that the learner needs to be cared for and understood as well as accept that others in the external social environment experience a sense of belonging to a group.

The study in this paper is guided by the above two theories to explore which teacher factors contribute to negative changes in English learning behaviours of low-level learners in language learning situations where students do not have their psychological needs met.

2.3. The Related Research of Demotivation

2.3.1. Foreign Studies

The research on demotivation overseas has progressed to a certain extent. [Christophel and Gorham \(1995\)](#) identified that teacher-related factors were the primary contributors to students' demotivation in learning English. Similarly, learner factors and teacher-related aspects ([Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009](#); [Unal & Yelken, 2016](#)) have also been noted in the research. [Dornyei \(2012\)](#) analyzed the main factors of demotivation by investigating the students of demotivation. The study showed that the teacher-related factors are teacher's personality, competence, dedication, and teaching methods. In Iran, [Ghonsooly \(2017\)](#) combined quantitative and qualitative methods in a study of 337 university students and pointed out that teachers' competence, teaching methods and behaviors are the main factors that lead to students' demotivation in English language learning. [Erlina et al. \(2020\)](#) conducted a case study in an Islamic junior high school on the causes of demotivation of students in the second year of junior high school study and the results showed that teacher competence and teaching style were the main negative factors among the five factors.

Related studies that have been conducted to investigate the internal and external factors that lead to demotivation to English learning have shown that teacher factors are key factors. However, there is an overlapping phenomenon in the classification of the influencing factors, and at the same time, the research on the specific manifestations and differences in the influence of teacher factors is not comprehensive and systematic enough, and the research subjects are mainly college students, which is less relevant to the study of high school students.

2.3.2. Domestic Studies

Before 21st century, Chinese academics had consistently shown a growing interest in the study of learning motivation and its associated research. After entering the 21st century, domestic scholars' research on learning motivation has gradually shifted to learning "demotivation". Relevant research results have gradually increased and begun to show diversity. [Hu & Cai \(2010\)](#) surveyed 198 non-English major students and 16 university students, revealing that the learning environment emerged as the most influential factor in predicting demotivation. [Wang \(2015\)](#) study of 141 freshman low-level English learners with diminished motivation found that the influence of teachers on students' demotivation mainly involves teachers' professional competence, teachers' personalities, teaching behaviors, teaching methods, etc. In some other researches, learning aptitude ([Tang, 2012](#); [Yu & Wei, 2019](#)), teachers' ability and teaching style ([Zhou &](#)

Wang, 2012), teachers (Sun & Lei, 2013; Li & Sun, 2013), unhappy learning experience (Gao & Liu, 2014), textbooks (Li, 2015) are mentioned as main factors for demotivation.

Li (2014) investigated the negative emotions of 259 high school students in English learning. In this study, teacher factors causing negative emotions were identified as teachers' personalities, teaching abilities, teaching styles, teaching processes, teaching contents, and so on. Liu and Liu (2016), with senior high school students as the subjects of their study, found that the factors affecting demotivation mainly include teachers' basic skills and sense of responsibility, learners' attitudes and self-confidence, learning content, etc. Chai (2022) took 209 students in the first year of high school as the research subjects to study the situation of students' demotivation of English learning. These related studies mainly focused on junior high school students or college students, and paid less attention to the teachers' factors on the demotivation of low-level senior high school English learners.

In summary, most researches are about college participants, there is a scarcity of researchers focusing on senior high school students as research participants, especially low-level learners. Secondly, the demotivating factors in English learning for students are not fully explored. Thirdly, a significant number of studies overlook the perspective of teachers. Hence, it is crucial to investigate the teacher factors influencing senior high school students' demotivation in learning English.

On the basis of previous studies and taking into account the actual situation of English teaching and learning in senior high school, the study takes low-level senior high school English learners as the research subjects and explores the teachers' factors of their demotivation, with a view to providing teachers with teaching references to help learners with different English levels to improve their English proficiency.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Questions

The research questions include the following three main areas:

- 1) What are the teacher factors on the demotivation of low-level high school English learners?
- 2) How do these teacher factors affect demotivation of low-level high school English learners?
- 3) What are the corresponding measures and suggestions for improvement?

3.2. Participants

Participants of the study are 328 Chinese high school students (the first-, second- and third-year) from ordinary high school in the region of Pearl River Delta, including 96 first-year students, 102 second-year students and 130 third-year students. All the students are learning the current courses of each

grade respectively at the time of the study, whose score of the subject of English in Zhongkao (Junior high school academic proficiency test) is lower than 60 which is usually regarded as passing mark for the test of a subject. They have been learning English as a second language. Students have ever participated in such research questionnaire before. 15 English teachers were randomly selected from ordinary high schools from Pearl River Delta, who are teaching English of the high school students (see **Table 1** for details).

Table 1. Composition of the sample.

	Senior 1		Senior 2		Senior 3	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Male	47	48.9%	52	50.9%	58	44.6%
Female	49	51.1%	50	49.1%	72	55.4%

3.3. Instruments

The methods of the study were mainly questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The questionnaire is designed based on Qin Xiaoqing's questionnaire of "Survey on English Learning", which is composed of two parts. The questionnaire has good reliability and validity through testing. The statistical software SPSS 22.0 was used to analyze and organize the data of the recovered questionnaires.

3.3.1. Questionnaires

The questionnaire adopted in this study was composed of two parts. Part One is about the basic information of the participants. Part Two is the body of the questionnaire, including seven research dimensions, which are Teacher Factor Influence, English Learning Purpose, English Learning Goal, English Learning Interest, Learning Effort, English Learning Effectiveness and Language Anxiety. Based on the research focus of this paper, the questionnaire focuses on teacher factor influences and the other dimensions are only used as data references. In order to make the survey data more comprehensive, six questions were designed for each dimension separately, with a total of 42 questions. The questionnaire was based on Likert's five-point scale, including five choices which are "completely unsuitable", "sometimes unsuitable", "unclear", "sometimes suitable" and "completely suitable". Subjects were asked to tick only one choice on each item. The corresponding scores are as follows: 1 for "completely unsuitable", 2 for "sometimes unsuitable", 3 for "unclear", 4 for "sometimes suitable" and 5 for "completely suitable". The higher the score was, the greater the influence of the teacher factor did. In order to collect more comprehensive and valid data, a request for examples was added to the Teacher Factor Influence section, and participants were asked to provide examples based on their own real-life situations or personal experiences.

3.3.2. Interview

In order to have more authentic and reliable results of questionnaire analysis, the method of interview is also included. Six students were randomly drawn in 5 classes out of 10 involved in the study, with a total 30 students from first-, second- and third-year. And 15 English teachers were randomly selected from ordinary high school from Pearl River Delta for interviews to find out the teacher factors of demotivation of English learning. The questions of the interview with students and teachers are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Interviewee and questions of interview.

Interviewee	Questions
Student	Why have you lost interest in learning English?
	Do you think your teacher's level of English affects your motivation to learn English?
	What is your preferred method for an English teacher to use in teaching?
	Would you be more motivated to learn English if your favorite teaching styles were used?
	What kind of teacher-student relationship do you prefer?
	Would a teacher-student relationship that aligns with your preferences increase your motivation to learn English?
	Do your English teachers change frequently?
Teacher	Do you usually have a trainee teacher coming to teach you?
	Have you noticed that some students are demotivated to learn English?
	What do you think are the reasons why some students are demotivated to learn English?
	What do you think teachers can do to improve this situation?

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

This survey was conducted in September of 2023, 328 questionnaires were distributed and 328 questionnaires were returned, with a 100% response rate. Based on the fact that the aim of this survey was to investigate the phenomenon of demotivation, 52 questionnaires that did not show the demotivation were deleted, resulting in 276 valid questionnaires. The questionnaire was distributed in a centralized manner: participants were gathered in the same classroom where the researcher explained the purpose of the survey and the method of completing the questionnaire. The participants then filled in the questionnaire immediately. Additionally, they were asked to complete the questionnaire within 30 minutes and to do so carefully in order to obtain accurate results from the survey. Finally the questionnaire was collected by the researcher. In order to gain a deeper un-

derstanding of the participants' real situation, 30 students were randomly selected from five classes. At the same time, 15 teachers were randomly selected from among the English teachers to be interviewed. The interview for students and teachers was conducted on a one-to-one basis for a total of 3 hours, with an average length of 5 - 10 minutes per person. With the consent of the participants, in addition to taking notes, voice recordings were added and later converted to text for analysis. All data collected were entered into a computer and statistically analyzed through SPSS 22.0.

4. Result and Analysis

4.1. Analysis of the Questionnaires

4.1.1. Analysis of Overall Situation of Questionnaires

Table 3 shows that of the 153 valid questionnaires returned, the phenomenon of demotivation varied among the different grades. 77% of Senior One students experienced demotivation, 93% of Senior Two students experienced demotivation, and 83% of Senior Three students experienced demotivation. A comparison with the average percentage (85%) shows that demotivation was most prevalent among Senior Two students, followed by Senior Three, and was least prevalent among Senior One students. Perhaps the reason for the lower prevalence of demotivation among Senior One students is that the beginning of high school life fills them with a desire to learn and explore, leading them to devote themselves to their studies and life with higher motivation and enthusiasm. However, the situation of demotivation is most serious among Senior Two students, possibly because the novelty wears off after entering Senior Two, the pressure of learning gradually increases, and they have not yet formed clear learning goals like the Senior Three students.

Table 3. Datasheet on the overall situation of demotivation.

	Number	Senior 1	Senior 2	Senior 3	Male	Female
Number of participants	328	96	102	130	157	171
Number of participants with demotivation	276	73	94	107	113	163
Average percentage of people with demotivation				84%		
Percentage of people with demotivation		77%	93%	83%	72%	95%

At the same time, the phenomenon of demotivation is not the same in different genders. The phenomenon of demotivation is more common in female students than in male students (see **Table 3** for details). Of the 157 male students, 113 expressed demotivation in learning English, a percentage of 72 percent, which is significantly lower than the average (84%). On the other hand, 163 out of 171 female subjects expressed demotivation in English, with a percentage of

95 percent, which is much higher than the average (84%). This result may be due to the fact that female students typically have higher expectations of themselves, higher levels of motivation, and are more sensitive and perceptive to fluctuations in their learning psychology. Male students, on the other hand, tend to have inherently lower levels of motivation and are often unaware of declines in their motivation.

4.1.2. Analysis of Teacher Factors of Questionnaires

It has been seen from **Table 4**, there are a total of four major factors affecting the demotivation of low-level English learners to learn English. They are teacher's professional competence (4.77), teacher's teaching methods and attitudes (4.32), teacher-student relationship (4.26), and teacher's quality and stability (3.82). The mean value of teachers' professional competence (4.77) is very close to the maximum value, so teachers' professional competence has the greatest effect on the demotivation to learn English.

Table 4. Main teacher factors for demotivation to learn.

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Teachers' Professional Competence	4	5	4.77	1.12
Teachers' teaching methods and attitudes	3	5	4.32	1.15
Teacher-Student Relationships	3	5	4.26	1.08
Teachers' Quality and Stability	2	5	3.82	1.20

1) Teachers' professional competence

The data in **Table 4** indicate that teachers' professional competence is the most important factor. Specifically, as shown in **Table 5**, the influence of teachers' subject knowledge is primarily evident in aspects such as "Insufficient teaching topics" (88%), "Classroom information limited to textbook content" (87%), and "Inaccurate tone of voice" (85%). It is apparent that teachers' lack of expansion of knowledge beyond the classroom and the absence of rich classroom information demotivate students. The impact of teaching ability is mainly manifested in the high frequency of "Single teaching method" (88%) and "Loose teaching links" (86%). This suggests that teachers need to further improve the diversity of teaching methods and the design of teaching sessions.

2) Teachers' teaching methods and attitudes

Table 4 indicates that teachers' attitudes and methods are the second most influential factors. According to **Table 6**, students believe that teachers "pay insufficient attention to students" (78%), "fail to correct homework promptly" (76%), and display "indifferent personal attitudes" (75%). Additionally, 68% of the students feel that teachers have unjustly criticized them. This suggests that the educational concepts of being "student-centered" and "output-oriented" are not

adequately reflected in classroom teaching, and teachers pay little attention to students' learning needs, which significantly contributes to student demotivation. Regarding teaching methods, factors such as "low student participation in class" (80%), "monotonous classroom activities" (79%), "teaching in Chinese" (76%), and "limited use of multimedia" (68%) are the main contributors to students' demotivation.

Table 5. Data table of influencing factors of teachers' professional competence.

Dimension	Influencing factor	Core points	Frequency of occurrence
Teachers' professional competence	Professional subject knowledge	Insufficient teaching topics	88%
		Classroom information limited to textbook content	87%
		Inaccurate tone of voice	85%
		Unclear classroom instructions	83%
		Unclear language	80%
	Teaching ability	Errors in knowledge	78%
		Single teaching method	88%
		Loose teaching links	86%
		Unreasonable allocation of classroom time	85%
		Teaching difficulties and key points are unclear	82%
		Failure to complete the teaching task by the end of the semester	78%

Table 6. Data sheet of factors influencing teachers' teaching attitudes and methods.

Dimension	Influencing factor	Core points	Frequency of occurrence
Teachers' teaching attitudes and methods	Teaching attitudes	Pay insufficient attention to students	78%
		Fail to correct homework promptly	76%
		Indifferent personal attitudes	75%
		Unjustly criticizing students	68%
	Teaching methods	Low student participation in class	80%
		Monotonous classroom activities	79%
		Teaching in Chinese	76%
		Limited use of multimedia	68%

3) Teacher-student relationship

Table 7 reflects that teacher-student relationship also affects students' demotivation to learn, while most teachers maintain good relationships with their students, some teachers pay insufficient attention to their students (45%), favor top students (40%), discourage low-level students (43%), treat students differently (40%), and do not listen patiently to their students' opinions (45%). These behaviors contribute to students' demotivation to learn.

Table 7. Data sheet on factors influencing teacher-student relationships.

Dimension	Influencing factor	Core points	Frequency of occurrence
Teacher-Student Relationships	Concern for students	Pay insufficient attention to students	45%
		Favour higher-performing students	40%
	Respect for students	Discourage low-level students	43%
		Being sarcastic	38%
	Treats students fairly	Treat students differently	40%
		Taking things personally	38%
	Communicating with students	Not listening to students	45%
		Not being patient	42%

4) Teacher Quality and Stability

Teacher quality and stability had a minor impact on demotivation to learn as shown in **Table 8**. Only a small percentage of students believed that the number of years of teaching experience (28%), teachers' academic qualifications (30%), teacher-student ratios (32%), and situations where a trainee teacher (35%) or a substitute teacher (38%) is leading classes affect students' demotivation.

Table 8. Data sheet on factors influencing teacher quality and stability.

Dimension	Influencing factor	Core points	Frequency of occurrence
Teacher Quality and Stability	Teacher Quality	Teacher-Student Ratios	32%
		Academic qualifications	30%
		Number of years of teaching experience	28%
	Teacher Stability	Substitute Teachers	38%
		Trainee Teachers	35%
		Changing Teachers	22%

4.2. Analysis of Interview

In order to further obtain more reliable data and results of the study, 30 students were randomly selected from the 180 subjects, while 2 English teachers were randomly selected as interview subjects. A semi-structured student interview outline (Table 9) and teacher interview outline (Table 10) were used to interview

Table 9. Student interview data sheet.

Interviewer	Interview outline	Core points	Frequency of occurrence
Student	Why have you lost interest in learning English?	Teacher	65%
		Family	25%
		Personal	10%
	Do you think your teacher's level of English affects your motivation to learn English?	Very much	95%
		Unclear	4%
		Very little	1%
	What is your preferred method for an English teacher to use in teaching?	Variety of classroom activities	85%
		Variety of topics in class	84%
		Extending knowledge beyond the classroom	82%
	Would you be more motivated to learn English if your favorite teaching styles were used?	Very much	90%
		Unclear	8%
		Very little	2%
	What kind of teacher-student relationship do you prefer?	Friendly and enthusiastic	78%
		Patient	76%
		Equal treatment	75%
	Would a teacher-student relationship that aligns with your preferences increase your motivation to learn English?	Very much	92%
		Unclear	7%
		Very little	1%
Do your English teachers change frequently?	Often	5%	
	Occasionally	82%	
	Rarely	13%	
Do you usually have a trainee teacher coming to teach you?	Often	15%	
	Occasionally	72%	
	Rarely	13%	

the subjects respectively. By analyzing the key words and word frequency statistics (**Table 9**), it is shown that teacher factors are the key factors affecting students' demotivation (65%), in which the teacher's own English proficiency has the greatest influence (95%). Additionally, students have high expectations (90%) for classrooms that diversify activities (84%) and expand extracurricular knowledge (82%). These factors are considered crucial for mobilizing the motivation to learn English and enhancing the effectiveness of English learning. In terms of teacher-student relationship, most students expected teachers to treat students equally (75%), answer students' questions patiently (76%), and display enthusiasm in class (78%). It is believed that with such a teacher-student relationship, engagement in learning can be improved and the learning effect enhanced (92%). It can also be seen that English teachers at the high school level are relatively stable (82%) and that interns are less involved in teaching English classes to high school students (15%).

The data in **Table 10** show that teachers can better understand the situation of students' English learning motivation in their classes (85%). However, most of them analyse the reasons more from the objective aspects and less from the subjective aspects, believing that learning pressure (68%) is the main reason for students' demotivation. Thus, it was suggested that changes should be made in terms of encouraging students more (85%), communicating with them more (84%), and teaching according to their aptitude (83%). However, there is a lack of targeted enhancement measures.

Table 10. Teacher interview data sheet.

Interviewer	Interview outline	Core points	Frequency of occurrence
Teacher	Have you noticed that some students are demotivated to learn English?	Often	85%
		Occasionally	15%
		Rarely	0%
	What do you think are the reasons why some students are demotivated to learn English?	Intensity of learning content	68%
		Family relationship	65%
		Personal interest and confidence	50%
		School management system	40%
	What do you think teachers can do to improve this situation?	More encouragement	85%
		Talk to students more	84%
		Teach students according to their abilities	83%

5. Discussion

5.1. Major Findings

The results of the study show that demotivation among low-level high school English learners shows differences in grade and gender: Senior Two students exhibit the highest levels of demotivation, followed by senior three, with senior one students showing the least. Additionally, female students demonstrate more cases of demotivation than male students. The four teacher factors affecting students' demotivation, in descending order, are: teachers' professional competence, teachers' teaching methods and attitudes, teacher-student relationship, and teachers' quality and stability. Students believed that teachers' English proficiency, the amount of information presented in class, the diversity of classroom activities, the attention to students' needs, and fairness in treatment are the core elements influencing their motivation. Teachers, on the other hand, believe that the most crucial factor affecting students' motivation is the intensity of the learning content, often overlooking the possibility of their own impact on students.

5.2. Suggestions on Teaching

Teachers are often regarded as the organizers of the classroom, who can greatly influence students' motivation in English learning and should adopt relevant strategies to help students gain positive motivation in learning. Students, on the other hand, are regarded as the protagonists of English language learning, and in addition to knowing how to cope with and maintain their self-motivation, who are also expected to learn to effectively utilize the teacher's influence to enhance their own motivation during the learning process. For school administrators, who are expected to ensure that teacher factors positively influence students' English learning, they need comprehensively improve teachers' quality and competence. In the following sections, relevant suggestions will be offered from the perspectives of teachers, students and school administrators.

Teachers' perspectives:

- 1) Set goals. Similar to designing a lesson, teachers are expected to start a lesson with the desired outcomes by the setting teaching goals. Take students' needs, current learning situation and learning styles into consideration, such as what goals do you want to achieve in the lesson, what are the students needs to improve their academic performance, and so on. The same to teachers' personal development. Teachers are expected to strengthen their basic skills and professional abilities, keep learning extensively and do teaching research according to the questions from daily teaching, continuously developing personal comprehensive literacy, not only absorb the latest language knowledge, but also improve the literacy of information technology, renew teaching philosophy to enrich the amount of information in the classroom teaching, multiple the forms of activities to meet the needs of students as well as improve the teaching efficiency.

- 2) Diversified and individualized teaching. Adjust English classroom teaching methods to meet the diverse and personalized needs of different students.

Teachers should focus on cultivating innovative teaching methods and be able to organize classroom activities in a diverse and engaging manner. They should start from reality, integrate students into classroom teaching, and create a relaxed and enjoyable environment for students to feel, understand, and use language effectively.

3) Keep a good teacher-student relationship. Transform the role of a teacher, enhance emotional engagement, and become a good teacher and friend to students. Teachers should respect the differences and personalities of students, serving as guides and facilitators in teaching. Inside and outside the classroom, teachers should strengthen emotional communication with students, fostering harmonious and equal teacher-student relationships. During communication and interaction, it is important to discover students' interests in learning. Interest can spark a thirst for knowledge, boost learning enthusiasm, and when combined with teaching tailored to students' interests, enhance their learning motivation.

4) Combination of technology and teaching. Improve teaching methods to adapt to and integrate technology and information conditions for teaching. In today's era of technological and information prosperity, students are born into a digital age. Teachers should consciously incorporate multimedia into the classroom and utilize methods such as flipped classrooms combined with social media to enhance interaction between teachers and students, fostering a flexible and engaging classroom environment. The comprehensive use of various teaching methods can enhance classroom learning efficiency, and the integration of advanced teaching equipment can further stimulate students' interest in learning.

Students' perspectives:

1) Maintain internal motivation for learning and ensure that personal emotions do not affect their learning;

2) Actively communicate with teachers and seek their help.

School administrators' perspectives:

1) Encourage teachers to provide suggestions during the goal-setting process. The professional development of teachers needs to address issues relevant to all staff members. Raise the academic and professional background requirements for teachers;

2) Give teachers time to practice a strategy and make them use it effectively, Let them practice new strategies in action. Allow teachers to discuss and process new information based on their grade level or subject matter. And continuous guidance, support, and problem-solving are crucial for effective teacher professional development.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary

This study, through empirical analyses, found that motivation is not only the driving force of English learning, but also a continuous driving force throughout the learning process. The results of the study show that the phenomenon of de-

motivation is more common among low-level English learners in senior high school. Among them, Senior Two had the highest number of demotivation cases, followed by Senior Three, with Senior One having the fewest; at the same time, female students showed more cases of demotivation than male students. Among the four teacher factors affecting students' demotivation, teachers' professional competence is the most significant. In order to reduce the possibility of teachers' factors affecting students' motivation, this study suggests that teachers should continuously improve their professionalism and understand students' individual learning needs; students should maintain internal motivation to learn without being influenced by their personal feelings, and should communicate positively with their teachers. Meanwhile, school administrators should raise the academic and professional background requirements for teachers and provide regular training and assessment of their teaching abilities.

6.2. Limitations on Study

Although some important findings can be drawn from the study, it is far from perfect and there are some limitations. Firstly, the participants in the experiment, totaling only 180, were all from the same school and thus only representative of a narrow demographic. Due to the limited time and scope of the study, the results can only serve as a pilot for potentially extending the research to other high schools or even different academic years. Secondly, there may be a possibility that the data collected through the questionnaire survey and interviews may not be completely authentic, possibly affected by students' nervousness or other factors. Consequently, it is challenging to ascertain the complete accuracy and reliability of the experiment. Lastly, there may be some flaws in the content design of the questionnaires and the interviews, making these methods of investigation lack comprehensiveness.

6.3. Suggestions for Further Study

This study empirically examined demotivation among high school low-level English learners and identified four teacher factors related to it, with teachers' professional competence being the primary factor, while teachers' quality and stability had the least impact. This study involved 276 high school low-level English learners from Pearl River Delta as the research subjects, which constitutes a small sample size, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings, the results might differ from other schools, and the sample lacked representativeness. Therefore, a broader and more diverse geographical scope, including multiple schools from different regions is needed in future research to obtain more reliable and accurate information.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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