

# A Study on Demotivating Factors in English Speaking Class

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.04279>

Published April 10, 2025

**Citation:** Hiep M.T. and Phuong W.T.N. (2025) A Study on Demotivating Factors in English Speaking Class, *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*: 6(2), 89-100

**Abstract:** *In the process of learning English speaking skill, learners should have motivation and positive attitude to learn effectively. However, learners have to deal with many difficulties such as some factors that can demotivate them from participating in speaking classes. Thus, this research focused on investigating some demotivating factors in English speaking class of English-majored freshmen. Sixty English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University were chosen to participate in the study. The instruments of this research were a questionnaire and the semi-structured interview. The results showed that there were four demotivating factors in speaking class of English-majored freshmen including classroom environment, boring lectures, teacher's behavior and lack of confidence in the students. From the findings of this research, some suggestions were given to help teachers and students in teaching and learning English speaking skill.*

**Keywords:** demotivating factors, English-majored freshmen, motivation, speaking class, university students

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English language plays a vital role in the world. In fact, English is a wonderful and important language that can help people make relationships with other countries more easily than ever before. Therefore, using English fluently is an important goal to achieve in the learning process. Speaking is a vital aspect in learning English. Speaking skill is one of the most important skills students learn, as it allows them to communicate with others and express their thoughts and feelings. As an ESL (English as a Second Language) student, speaking skill is considered

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Published by the European Centre for Research Training and Development UK as the most important part of learning a language. In fact, many language learners measure their performance by how well they can speak it. As the most effective foreign language learning takes place through interaction, it's a skill that can be honed to really build an understanding of the language and culture of English-speaking countries. Yet it can be so easy to find speaking daunting or challenging. It isn't as straightforward as we may like.

There are various factors affecting the process of teaching and learning English speaking skills. Among these different factors, motivation plays an important role in the learning process. Moreover, motivation has been widely acknowledged by both teachers and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of the second/foreign language learning. However, different experimental evidences have shown that some English language learners lose their interest and motivation during the English language learning process. This is also the big problem that many students at Tay Do University, especially English majored students, face in the process of learning English speaking skills. The question raised here is that “What are demotivating factors in English speaking class?”

Many students share that sometimes they feel bored in learning to speak English in class due to many factors such as classroom environment, lectures, teachers, or students themselves. Sometimes students feel too tired and have no interest in learning. This makes the learning process ineffective. Therefore, the aim of this research is to focus on some demotivating factors in English speaking class of English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### ***Research question***

This study examined some demotivating factors that students often face in English speaking class. The thesis is conducted in order to answer a following question:

*What are demotivating factors in English speaking class of English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University?*

### ***Research design***

The research was carried out to find out some demotivating factors in English speaking class of English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University. The subjects in this research were sixty English majored freshmen at Tay Do University. In order to collect information about demotivating factors in English speaking class, a questionnaire was used. Besides, to make the research more specific and more objective, ten students were selected to answer the interview questions. The research was a descriptive study. This study was the combination of quantitative research and qualitative one because its instruments were a questionnaire and an interview.

### ***Participants***

In this study, the participants were sixty English majored freshmen from English 15A and English 15B in Tay Do University. There were 14 males and 46 females participated in the research. Their ages ranged from 18 to 20. Besides, they all spoke Vietnamese as their first language and English as their foreign language. All of them were freshmen, so they were considered as at equal level. Especially, they had learnt English speaking for two semesters, so it was confirmed that they encountered many problems with learning English speaking in class. Specifically, they learnt English speaking with the “Speak Now 1” in the first semester. When the research was carried out, they were studying English speaking with the course book “Speak Now 2”. In addition, students were taught by both Vietnamese and foreign teachers and listened to audio dialogues of native speakers.

### ***Instruments***

In this research, questionnaire and interview were used as two important instruments. The reason why the research used questionnaire as a vital instrument was that questionnaire provided a relatively cheap, quick and efficient way of obtaining large amounts of information from a large sample of people. However, the researcher could not investigate the study deeply through just a questionnaire. Therefore, the researcher needed one more instrument. The other instrument was an interview. It was used as a supplemental tool in order to get some more detail information without obtaining in the questionnaire. As McNamara (1999) said, interview was particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant’s experiences. The interview could pursue in the detail information. Interview might be useful as a follow up strategy to certain responses to the questionnaire.

### ***Questionnaire***

The questionnaire included two main sections. The first section was about student’s personal information such as name, gender, age, class, years of learning English and some general questions about their English proficiency. The second one was designed on the basis of the five-degree scales including strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), neutral (N), agree (A), strongly agree (SA). This part consisted of 24 close-ended questions which were distributed in four clusters:

The items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 concentrated on the effects of the classroom environment on student learning.

The items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 focused on elements of the lecture that may distract students.

Next, items 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 referred to the feeling of students about Teacher’s behavior.

Finally, items 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 investigated the difficulties of students when they lack confidence in learning English speaking.

### ***Semi- structured interview***

The interview was designed to get the specific information from the students about some demotivating factors in English speaking class. Each question closely followed the issues that English-majored freshmen would have many problems with learning English speaking in class due to demotivating factors. These factors were classroom environment, *boring lecture content*, *teacher's* behavior and lack of confidence of students. The aim of this instrument is to understand the student's attitude towards learning English speaking and to confirm some demotivating factors in English speaking class.

After finishing questionnaires, the researcher just invited randomly 10 students out of 60 students to take part in a semi-structured interview which involved 5 questions. The two first questions were about students' general opinions of the importance of motivation in learning a foreign language. Question 3 was about factors that make students feel lack of interest in English speaking class. Next, question 4 was related to the impact of these factors on the students' English-speaking learning process while question 5 was about some suggested solutions. They were free to share their ideas.

## **RESULTS:**

The goal of this thesis was to investigate some demotivating factors in English speaking class. For this aim, the questionnaire was delivered to 60 English majored freshmen from English 15A and English 15B at Tay Do University. Then, 10 students from these 60 students were also selected for the interview. This chapter showed the results of the questionnaire and the interview collected from English majored freshmen.

### ***Results of the questionnaire***

After analyzing the information in the questionnaire, the researcher got the results about the factors that demotivate them in their English speaking class.

#### ***Classroom environment***

The results about demotivating factors related to classroom environment are presented in table 1.

**Table 1.** Demotivating factors related to classroom environment in English speaking class

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1. Crowded classroom is the reason why students lose the motivation to learn English speaking.	10%	20%	20%	33.3%	16.7%
2. The English speaking class is too crowded.	3.4%	13.3%	28.3%	28.3%	26.7%
3. There are many students in your class, so teacher pays less attention to some students.	5%	15%	35%	26.8%	18.2%
4. Dark classroom, tiny board, classroom smells or crowded classroom bothers students.	0%	23.3%	26.8%	28.3%	21.6%
5. The poor facilities in classroom distracts student's attention.	3.3%	10%	35%	25%	26.7%
6. The speaking classroom atmosphere is boring.	6.8%	18.3%	23.3%	28.3%	23.3%

The data proved that one of the main factors that demotivated the English- majored freshmen in speaking class was classroom environment including the crowded class, dark classroom, tiny board, classroom smells, the poor facilities and uninteresting classroom atmosphere.

#### *Boring lectures*

The next issue that can demotivate students in English speaking class is boring lectures.

Table 2 presents the demotivating factors related to boring lectures in speaking class of the English-majored freshmen.

**Table 2.** Demotivating factors related to boring lectures in English speaking class

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
7. The learning contents in English speaking class are uninteresting.	5%	21.7%	20%	35%	18.3%
8. The traditional lecture is the factor that makes students bored with speaking lessons.	3.4%	10.1%	31.5%	28.3%	26.7%
9. The speaking lessons focus too much on grammar, which can easily make students bored.	0%	16.6%	35%	21.7%	26.7%
10. The same old topics repeated many times and stereotypes make students lose interest in learning speaking.	0%	5%	33.2%	35%	26.8%
11. Exercises without interaction with classmates and teachers do not motivate students to learn.	1.6%	10%	26.8%	45%	16.6%
12. Too much lecture content on the PowerPoint slides distract students in speaking class.	1.7%	25%	40%	15%	18.3%

Through these statistics on lectures-related demotivating factors, we could conclude that the English- majored freshmen were demotivated because not only were the traditional lectures not interesting but it also focused too much on grammar and old topics as well as lack of interaction exercises.

#### *Teacher's behavior*

Table 3 presents the demotivating factors related to teacher's behavior in speaking class of the English-majored freshmen.

**Table 3.** Demotivating factors related to teacher's behavior in English speaking class

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
13. Teacher's behavior is one of the most important factors influencing students in classes.	0%	5%	23.3%	35%	36.7%
14. There is teachers' discrimination between weak and strong students in speaking class.	13.4%	18.3%	26.7%	23.3%	18.3%
15. The teacher's favoritism makes students have negative feelings in speaking class.	1.7%	13.3%	28.3%	43.3%	13.4%
16. Students feel unmotivated due to less attention from their teacher.	3.4%	26.8%	31.5%	23.3%	15%
17. Students are not excited to give their opinion in English speaking class because they don't get much attention from teachers.	6.8%	23.3%	31.5%	16.7%	21.7%
18. Teacher's attitudes such as loud or angry affect students' concentration in speaking class.	1.7%	5%	23.3%	25%	45%

From these findings, we could conclude that the English-majored freshmen were demotivated due to teachers' discrimination and favoritism between weak and strong students as well as the attitude of the teacher.

*Lack of confidence in the students*

Table 4 presents the demotivating factors related to lack of confidence in students of the English-majored freshmen in speaking class.

Table 4. Demotivating factors related to lack of confidence in English speaking class of the English-majorred freshmen

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
19. Students feel unconfident when speaking English in class.	5%	13.4%	26.7%	38.2%	16.7%
20. Lack of confidence makes it difficult for students to learn English speaking skills.	0%	1.7%	6.8%	50%	41.5%
21. Students have a negative bias towards learning English speaking in class due to lack of confidence.	5%	6.8%	30%	40%	18.2%
22. Students avoid speaking English in front of others because they worry that their peers will laugh when they make a mistake.	3.4%	11.6%	16.7%	33.3%	35%
23. The fear of making mistakes also makes students lose their confidence, especially in learning speaking skill.	3.3%	11.8%	21.7%	46.7%	16.5%
24. Students think fear of failure is one of the demotivated factors in English speaking class.	1.7%	1.7%	26.8%	46.5%	23.3%

The results indicated that lack of confidence demotivates students in their trying to speak English in class.

***The dominant factors that demotivated students in speaking class***

To investigate the most demotivating factor in speaking class affecting students, a comparison of the factors was conducted. Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of students' self-ratings on their demotivating factors.



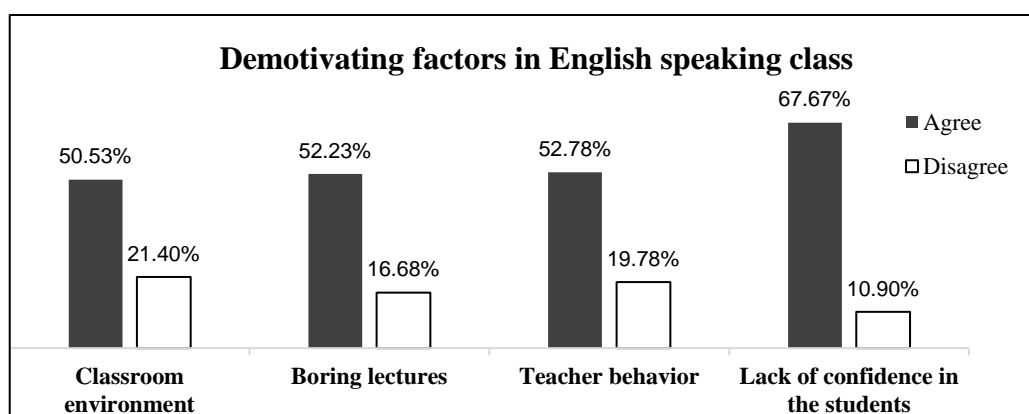


Figure 1. Student' self-ratings on their demotivating factors in speaking class

From figure 4.1, we could recognize that the most demotivating factors affecting students in English speaking class was lack of confidence in the students (67.67% agreed). Many students admitted that they felt unconfident when they spoke English in class for a variety of reasons. The most important reason was that they worried they would make mistakes. This confused them in front of their teachers and friends.

In addition, the students were also affected by classroom environment. 50.53% of the freshmen affirmed that when their classroom was too crowded, or the atmosphere was too quiet, as well as some elements including lighting and facilities, it would become a major factor affecting student performance.

More than a half of them agreed that they found the speaking topics in their speaking materials old and uninteresting (52.23%), it would demotivate them to get involved in speaking classes. Besides, the attitude of the teacher also significantly influenced the students. We can see that 52.78% of students agreed that teacher's attitude such as loud, angry or biased among students will affect the student's mood in the speaking class.

Through the statistic, we could conclude that there were many factors that influence student motivation in speaking classes. These factors may come from the students themselves due to lack of confidence, fear of speaking in front of many people. In addition, the demotivating factors could be caused by external factors such as the atmosphere of the classroom or the content of the lecture that is not interesting. In addition, teachers were also factors that had a

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significant impact on students. Students can be more motivated or not depends a lot on the attitudes and teaching methods of teachers in class.

***Results of the semi-structured interview***

The semi-structured interview was conducted with ten students. There were five questions for the students to answer.

In the first two questions, all of students agreed that motivation was an important factor in helping students learn more effectively. All ten students interviewed said that motivation was the factor that motivated them to pursue their academic goals. No matter how difficult it was, learners could still overcome it and succeed with great motivation. On the contrary, if students were not motivated, even if the conditions were fully favorable, students still felt tired, depressed, difficult and failed. They all emphasized that wanting to be successful academically required students to have clear motivation and goals. Without these, students would always learn with no destination and did not know where their level would be.

For the next question, “What factors make you feel lack of interest in English speaking class?”, six out of ten students admitted that lacking of vocabulary, being afraid of making mistakes and public speaking were the most demotivating factors to their speaking English in class. These factors indicated they felt a lack of confidence and this made them feel pressured in speaking class. Besides, four out of ten students also shared that the content of the lessons has not created interest for them. Old, stereotypical themes and lack of creativity made them bored. In addition, they mentioned that in their learning process in class, there was not much interaction between teacher and students. Three students also added that the teacher's teaching method has not created an interesting atmosphere for the class. Due to the reasons that the class was too crowded and the teachers taught quickly, it was difficult for them to grasp all the content of the lesson.

As for the question number 4, “How do these factors affect your English speaking learning process?”, six students said that they felt nervous about having to speak English in front of many people and at that time, they felt very confused. Confidence affected them a lot. When their classmate performed too well in class, they were afraid they would be laughed as they were not as good as other students. The other four answered when learning contents did not interest them, they would often find other things to do such as chatting with friends or using their phones to text and surf Facebook during class. As a result, they did not understand the content of the lesson, and of course, their speaking skills were difficult to improve.

Regarding to the last question “In your opinion, is there any solution to solve this problem?”, increasing personal knowledge to increase confidence was the answer of most of the students

interviewed. Listening to the lessons on foreign channel or watching foreign movies were also a good idea to increase vocabulary, reinforce grammar and be more confident when speaking in front of many people. Another participant suggested that organizing more activities in speaking classes was a great solution to motivate students to speak English more. In addition, the contents in the course book and the speaking topics should be updated regularly.

## CONCLUSION:

The English language is becoming more and more common in the world. As a result, increasingly people are dedicating time to study English as their second language. To learn English efficiently, learners need to learn speaking. In fact, this skill not only supports them much in studying process but also in everyday communication. Of course, having good speaking skills as well as achieving high results in learning a language is not easy. Successful language learning is linked to the learner's passion. It is also known as motivation. Motivation provides learners with an aim and a direction to follow. Therefore, it plays a significant role in the process of learning a language.

However, in fact, to become an expert in speaking skill is a great challenge for many students because during the studying procedure, students constantly encountered a lot of barriers and they easily demotivated them. Due to the lack of enough motivation, some difficulties may happen for learners. The study also investigated the demotivating factors in English speaking class of English-majored freshmen at Tay Do University. After going through the analysis of the questionnaires and interview, the researcher would like to draw some conclusions for the overall research. Four demotivating factors in English speaking class were found in the study including classroom environment, boring lectures, Teacher's behavior and lack of confidence in the students.

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