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## **Demotivating and Remotivating Factors among MA Students of TEFL: An Iranian Case**

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### **Abstract**

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The present study sought to investigate demotivating and remotivating factors among Iranian MA students of TEFL. The participants included 170 male and female (Male= 97, Female= 73) Iranian MA students of TEFL randomly chosen among the students of 10 most well-known state universities of Iran. To collect the qualitative data, interviews were conducted on 20 students, two from each university. Subsequently, a 40-item demotivating questionnaire was constructed and administered to 150 students, 15 from each university. The findings indicated that 'economic problems' was the most salient demotivating factor for the participants of this study. The second important demotivating factor was 'future pessimism'. The third and the fourth demotivating factors were 'professors' characteristics' and 'syllabus design', respectively. The order of importance of other demotivating factors was as the following: 'curriculum decisions', 'scoring system', 'administrative decisions', 'facilities' and 'classroom environment'. Furthermore, remotivating strategies were investigated based on what students proposed as ways to get rid of the existing demotivating factors.

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## 1. Introduction

Generally speaking, motivation is the driving force behind any given human activity. As Brown (2007) rightly observes, motivation is perhaps the most frequently employed catch-all term to account for the success or failure of virtually any convoluted task. In a similar vein, Chastain (1988) refers to “students’ effort to learn” as motivation. He also believes that “motivation does imply some incentive that causes the individual to participate in an activity leading toward a goal and to persevere until the goal [has] reached” (p. 172).

The significance of motivational work doubles when dealing with L2 domains. Since learning a new language is a complicated and burdensome process which involves a lot of obstacles, one is unlikely to succeed without sufficient motivation. However, as teachers, one must have noted how motivated students work toward achieving their goals in comparison to unmotivated ones disregarding their intellectual abilities. As Wlodkowski (2008) puts it motivated learners “are more psychologically open to the learning material and better able to process information” (p. 7). Motivation is such an important factor in learning that some researchers have stipulated it as a prerequisite for learning. So gaining insights into this very abstract phenomenon seems pertinent when seeking more motivated students.

Dörnyei (2001) asserts that L2 domain is mined with learning failure which is a salient phenomenon. Therefore, delving into its causes squarely has to do with motivation. Given the importance of the concept and its effectiveness in achieving a given goal, attempts to fathom our understanding of how motivational factors work and what stands against them will lead to a better situation than that of the present. Studies carried out on motivation so far have worked out a multitude of motivating factors or motives but only few of them have been concerned with the negative forces involved (Dörnyei, 2001).

To elaborate on the detrimental influences of motivation, Dörnyei (2001) proposes the notion of demotivation. He defines demotivation as “various negative influences

that cancel out existing motivation” (p. 142) or “specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action” (p. 143). Thus, demotivation could be regarded as the negative counterpart of motivation. Similarly, demotives could be regarded as the negative counterparts of motives. Furthermore, a demotivated learner is someone who has lost his or her interest for some reason. The loss of interest can derive from various sources of demotivation. For instance, a teacher who does not take into consideration students’ attitudes and needs can have the role of a demotive for the learners. However, demotivation is not solely external and many researchers (e.g., Arai, 2004; Falout & Maruyama, 2004) included internal factors such as a lack of self-confidence and negative attitude within learners themselves.

Therefore, Dörnyei’s (2001) original definition may need to be expanded to cover both internal and external demotivating factors which reduce or diminish the motivation to study English (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). As Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) maintain, examining the roots of demotivation bolsters our understanding of the theories on motivation. Besides, it can be very intriguing for not only researchers but also for teachers and professors who see their learners becoming demotivated in learning.

Remotivation refers to taking steps to bring back L2 learners’ lost or reduced motivation (Cortazzi & Jin, cited in Sahragard & Alimorad, 2013). Very few studies have so far addressed the very noteworthy concept of remotivation though demotivation reaches its ultimate purpose only when necessary steps have been taken as keys to eliminate the existing negative forces (Trang & Baldauf, 2007).

One more thing that is needed to be taken into consideration is that remotivating factors, like demotivating factors, are context-specific. As Carpenter, Falout, Fukuda, Trovela, & Murphey, (2009) obviously put “there is no one-size-fits-all motivational strategy package suitable for the students who arrive in our classrooms carrying their unique baggage, packed with various experiences, attitudes and beliefs about their language learning journeys” (p. 9).

To this aim, they propose that teachers must create a situation in the classroom in which students can openly talk about their existing demotives through dialectics and meaningful interaction.

The present study attempts to search for the underlying factors inhibiting students' motivation. These factors can be both intrinsic, i.e., those related to students' themselves, and extrinsic, i.e. those that are out of students' control. In the Iranian context, to the author's knowledge, no attempt has been made to investigate the existing factors influencing the learning process of MA students of TEFL. In this sense, students' complaints about the present conditions stimulated the impetus to start a study on the extraction of demotivating factors to which they had been exposed and to seek out these students' opinions and suggestions about how they could be remotivated. This study contributes to the current literature on motivation since it attempts to derive remotivating factors from demotivating ones.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Recently, unlike before, as more attention has been paid to students' affective requirements in EFL contexts, motivation and its darker side, i.e. demotivation, have been given more significance. As a result of this, studies have been undertaken to account for what consciously or unconsciously cancel out students' motivation. So far there have been studies in differing contexts (societies) such as Japan, Finland, Israel, Vietnam, and Iran.

In Japan, results of a study done on university students by Kikuchi (2009) revealed the following demotivating factors: (1) individual teacher behavior in classroom; (2) the grammar–translation method used in instruction; (3) tests and university entrance examinations; (4) the memorization nature of vocabulary learning; and (5) textbook/reference book-related issues. The same year, Sakaki and Kikuchi (2009) explored demotivating factors for Japanese high school students. Results showed that 'the learning contents and materials' and 'test scores' were demotivating for many Japanese high school students, especially for less motivated learners. One conclusion for the two studies here is that

for university students the most important factor is the teacher while for the high school students the materials are more important, influencing motivation.

The above results stand in sharp contrast to the results of Falout, Elwood, and Hood's (2009) study where they found the dominant pedagogy *Grammar-Translation* method as the most demotivating factor among university students in Japan. In addition, findings from this study indicated that beginning, less-proficient learners with less experience of language learning were least likely to control their affective states to cope with demotivating experiences.

The results of Carpenter et al. (2009) on Japanese university students confirm that of Falout et al. (2009), however. For Carpenter et al. (2009), the most influential factors in the order of their importance were, 'the difficulty of classes/low comprehension', 'dissatisfaction with teaching method', 'dissatisfaction with teacher', 'boredom with lessons', 'entrance exam focus', 'negative feelings regarding ability to learn/competence', and 'lack of relevance or lack of interest in topic'.

In Finland, Hirvonen (2010) investigated external and internal demotives. Among the external factors 'the teacher' was reported to be the most influential factor. Also, as for the internal forces, 'experience of failure' was the most demotivating. Results of Muhonen (2004), again in Finland, were in concordance with the previous study. The findings of the study indicated that 'the teacher' with its components (teaching methods, lack of competency, and personality) was the primary source of demotivation.

One slightly different study in terms of objectives is that of Keblawi (2006) who conducted a study aiming at factors that cared for both context and subject. Those regarding context included teachers' statements while those regarding subject included students' propositions. Teachers reported such factors as students' poor knowledge of their native language, lack of perceived qualifications and skills to cope with real teaching situations, physical conditions, and dissatisfaction with textbooks. Regarding *subject* demotivational factors, the most frequent one was the difficulties students had with grammar and

vocabulary. Apart from other factors the element of 'teacher' stands out in this study as well.

Trang and Baldauf (2007) cared for both demotivation and remotivation in their study. In Vietnam, Trang and Baldauf (2007) made an attempt to look at demotives among 100 second-year EFL students from a University of Economics. The findings showed that external factors accounted for 64% of students' demotivation among which teacher-related factors were the most responsible factor. Among internal factors, the most significant one was 'students' experiences of failure' or 'lack of success'.

A quick conclusion for the above foreign studies is that in majority of cases the most important demoting factor is the teacher.

In the context of Iran, Sahragard and Alimorad (2013) investigated demotivating factors in public schools of Shiraz, Iran. Demotives were: (a) lack of self-confidence, (b) teachers' competence and teaching styles, (c) lack of interest in English, (d) lack of school facilities, (e) learning contents and context, (f) focus on English usage, and (g) the focus of teaching. For this study, then, the most significant factor is a learner feature, while for Meshkat and Hassani (2012) a non-human element is more at play.

Meshkat and Hassani (2012) investigated the demotivating factors for 421 girls and boys in second and third grade of four high schools in Qom, Iran. They reported the following factors as strong sources of demotivation for the participants: 'Lack of school facilities', 'overemphasis on grammar', 'long passages', and 'expectancy to use grammatically correct English in the classroom'.

In a succinct investigation in Iran, Heidari and Riahipour (2012) observed learners' demotivating factors with a brief look at their affective states. 'Teachers' behavior and reaction' was the most demotivating factor for the learners. The next strong demotivating factor was 'teachers' discrimination between poor and strong students'.

As can be seen from the Iranian studies at least two point to the importance of the 'teacher' as the most or the next most contributing factor

to demotivation. This is, clearly, in line with the results of other studies.

Reviewing the literature on demotivational studies, the author has found no study regarding demotivating factors of MA university students. Furthermore, most demotivational studies, except few, have ignored addressing remotivation strategies clearly so as to provide students and teachers with applicable techniques and measures to be applied in the actual classroom context. So, in the present work, participants' opinions regarding necessary solutions are welcomed as key issues to remotivation. Demotivation and remotivation in this study will thus be different from the previous ones in the sense that both factors are planned to be derived from and proposed by the students themselves. In addition to these, most participants of this study are at the same time students and teachers and this adds to its novelty. Therefore, to compensate for the pitfalls of studies so far done, the present study considers student- and teacher-driven thoughts and suggestions to explore what best remotivates them.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants

The participants of this study are 170 male and female (92 males and 78) Iranian MA students of TEFL. All the participants' mother tongue was Persian and their ages ranged from 23 to 34. They were selected from 10 most large or almost large Iranian state universities: Shiraz University, University of Tehran, University of Isfahan, Shahid Beheshti University, Allame Tabataba'ee University, Tarbiat Modarress University, Tarbiat Moallem University, Kashan University, Shahid Chamran University, and Ferdowsi University. These universities were chosen because they are among the ones which most talented students are admitted to except perhaps for Kashan University where the reason was having access to the students and premises.

In the first phase of the study, 20 MA students of TEFL from the targeted universities (two from each) were selected based on availability and were interviewed to share their ideas about the existing negative factors which have influenced their learning in Iranian educational



context. In the second phase, a questionnaire was administered to 150 students. To this aim, lists of students in classes along with their emails were taken from a friend, if any, or a pen pal. Interviewees were excluded from the lists. In order to obtain a random sample without bias, the authors assigned a set of numbers (e.g. 1 to 30) to the students' emails. Then, using the web-based random number generator *Research Randomizer* ([www.randomizer.org](http://www.randomizer.org)), 15 numbers were generated and the questionnaire was sent to the corresponding emails.

### 3.2. Instruments

The present study adopts an eclectic qualitative/quantitative approach in gathering the data. Twenty students of the selected universities were interviewed in order to extract general ideas on what might be demotivating/remotivating them. The interview was a qualitative semi-structured one. A semi-structured interview format was employed since in comparison to the structured and unstructured interview alternatives, the semi-structured format offers a compromise between the two extremes (Dörnyei, 2007). Also, all the interviews were transcribed.

The interview included 5 general questions of which 2 questions concerned remotivation strategies (Appendix A). In case interviewees had difficulty in understanding questions, they were explained in Persian. There was no time limitation for the interviews and no pressure on the students.

After studying the qualitative interview, the major common themes were worked out and analyzed to formulate items of the 40-item questionnaire (Appendix B). Items were students' statements about what they supposed to be unsatisfactory in the interviews. In this way, they were asked to answer the question of "to what extent do you agree with the following statements as the ones that have demotivated you?" Each item was of a 5-point Likert type and participants were required to choose one of the following alternatives: *Strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *no idea*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*. The questionnaire also embodies a demographic section that recorded participants' universities, age, and sex. The rationale behind this was that equal number of

participants with regards to their sex and university would be at hand.

The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated in SPSS 16. The obtained Cronbach alpha coefficient was .82 which showed reasonable reliability. Next, forty items of the questionnaire were subjected to Principal Component Analysis (PCA) using SPSS 16 in order to work out the underlying factors. As for the suitability of the items, the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Okin) value was .62 and this showed that data were suitable enough since the score exceeded .60. Also, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance and this showed the factorability of the correlation matrix. PCA revealed the presence of 14 variables with eigenvalues more than 1, explaining 75% of the variance. Comparing these values with those presented by the statistical program Monte Carlo PCA, developed by Watkins (2000), we noted that only the first nine values in SPSS were larger than the corresponding ones extracted by this program. Hence, only nine values were larger and were retained while the rest were less and thus were rejected.

In so doing, it was decided to maintain 9 factors which explained 64% of the total variance. Based on the results of factor analysis all the items in the questionnaire showed strong item loading among 9 factors. Furthermore, one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to further investigate the issue. To see the frequency and the order of importance of the factors, items of each factor were computed into the same variable with the title of that factor in SPSS 16. Then, numbers indicating each participant's answer to the each factor were broken down to be included in a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree). Furthermore, in each factor items with more influence on participants were noted through one-way ANOVA.

### 3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Twenty MA students of TEFL from ten universities were interviewed. The interviews were conducted face to face and proposed ideas were asked to be more elaborated on for more detailed information. Before starting the interview, the interviewees were provided with

a short explanation of the key terms and aims of the present study. Interviewees were given assurance that the recorded files would be kept confidential and that they were recorded only for subsequent analyses. Then, all the recordings were transformed into textual forms and those in Persian were translated into English. Here, common categories were sought to be found through codifying the transcribed texts.

To codify the data, the method proposed by Crabtree and Miller (1999) was employed. The method called 'template organizing style' begins with a template of codes. So, the code template defined for the present study included demotivating factors. During the pre-code phase, the transcripts were read and re-read several times and the primary categorization of the relevant excerpts into the defined codes was done. This resulted in the development of tentative categories. To do that, each code was highlighted with a specific color.

However, since in the qualitative research, codes are emergent and there is often not pre-specified categories in mind, Dörnyei (2007) proposes that the template organizing style be made more in line with the spirit of qualitative research by allowing for revisions at some point in the analytical process. Therefore, during the main coding process, some minor revisions were made to the initial code template to account for emergent categories in the data. Additionally, in view of the impoverishment of transcriptions with regard to non-verbal aspects (Dörnyei, 2007), body language moves and also emphatic moves carrying meaning were indicated orthographically through upper case lettering.

In the other phase of the study fifteen students from each university were randomly chosen as

the receivers of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were either handed out or emailed to the selected students. Again, a short explanation of the aims of the study was embodied in the body of the sent emails. Meanwhile, if they did not reply the emails they were resent and if no answer was received, attempt was made to call the person through a classmate or friend. However, some of the questionnaires were never sent back. In that case, other students were randomly chosen from those of the same university.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Demotivating Factors

In order to explore the underlying factors contributing to demotivation, a principal axis factor analysis using a varimax rotation procedure was run on all items of the questionnaire to explore the demotivating factors claimed in establishing the questionnaire. Items of the questionnaire were claimed to measure 9 factors and this analytical procedure was run in order to confirm the existence of these factors. The results show loadings of items on each factor. As it can be seen, there are 9 factors on which all the items have loaded.

To further investigate the appropriateness of the loaded items on each factor, one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on all 40 items to determine whether there existed any significant differences among items measuring a single factor. The results of the analysis showed that, for example, within the factor of 'professors' characteristics' there is no significant difference between every item with the rest of items that constitute the factor (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Pairwise Comparison for Professors' Characteristics*

Anova1 Anova2	1 2	1 3	1 4	1 5	1 6
Sig.	.746	.785	.894	.728	.961
Anova1 Anova2	2 3	2 4	2 5	2 6	3 4
Sig.	.815	.836	.935	.798	.666

Anova1 Anova2	1 2	1 3	1 4	1 5	1 6
Sig.	.746	.785	.894	.728	.961
Anova1 Anova2	3 5	3 6	4 5	4 6	5 6
Sig.	.865	.954	.715	.937	.687

In this table, cells following the one containing “Anova1-Anova2” represent two items (e.g. item1 and item 2) for which significant differences are calculated. Under these cells the significant difference of pairs of items are presented. In case of ‘professors’ characteristics’ all the items showed to have no significant difference, thus having the appropriacy of measuring the same factor. The same was done for other items comprising the factors and it was evident that there is no significant difference between items of all factors.

#### 4.2. Frequency and Order of Importance of Demotivating Factors

As claimed in the questionnaire, the analysis of items showed that there were 9 factors proposed by the participants. Therefore, demotivating factors for Iranian MA students of TEFL are: Professors’ characteristics, Syllabus design, Administrative decisions, Facilities, Scoring system, Future pessimism, Economic problems, Classroom environment, and Curriculum decisions. In order to investigate the frequency and order of importance of each factor, we start with a

comparison of factors based on the answers students gave to items of the questionnaire. To this end, items comprising each factor were computed and recoded into a separate variable.

As it can be seen in Figure 1 which shows the distribution of factors in a scale of 1 to 5, for every factor there is a value which shows the extent to which students have agreed or disagreed. Again, factors with lower means are more significant in terms of the negative effect they have on students’ motivation. In so doing, the average mean was calculated (average mean= 2.81). Those factors with means higher than average have had less significant demotivating influence: Administrative decisions (M=3.03), facilities (3.11), classroom environment (M=3.22), scoring system (M=2.95), and curriculum decisions (M=2.89). While, professors’ characteristics (M=2.6), syllabus design (M=2.78), future pessimism (M=2.52), and economic problems (M=2.14) had means lower than the average and were thus more demotivating. Furthermore, factor of economic problem had the lowest mean (M=2.14).

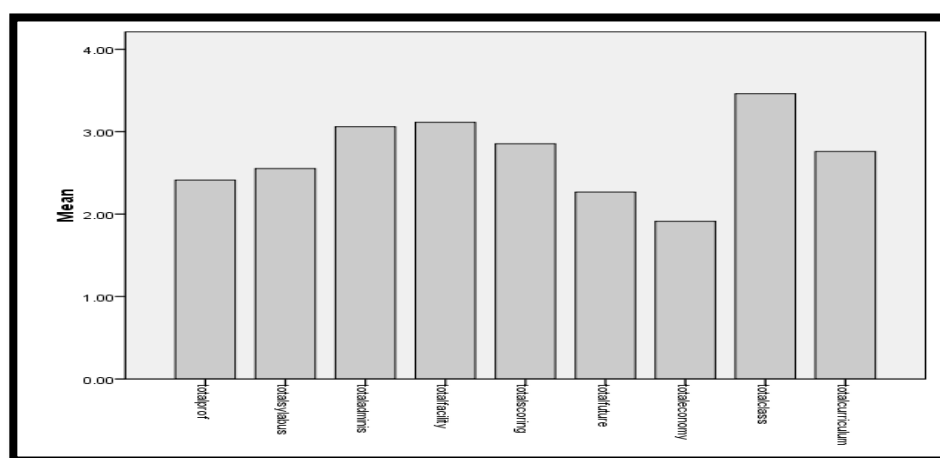
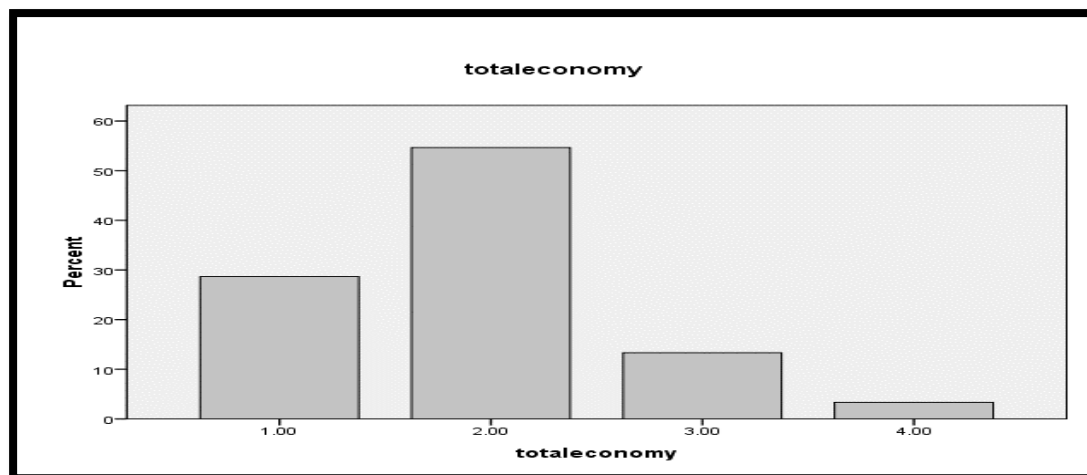


Figure 1  
Distribution of Means of All Factors

In what follows, factors are presented in the order of importance. Items in each factor will be analyzed to see which ones are more significant than others. Frequency of each factor and each item will be reported so as to see how many students have agreed with their existence.

#### 4.2.1. Economic Problems

The main source of demotivation among MA students of TEFL in Iranian context was “economic problems”. This factor had the lowest mean among the 9 factors. Figure 2 presents the frequency of answers to this factor.



**Figure 2**

*Distribution of Answers to Economic Problems*

As Figure 2 rightly shows, 83% of participants, i.e., 125 participants, have mentioned this factor as a demotivating one. Most of these students were teaching English as a foreign language in language institutes. Some of their justifications are presented below:

“... language institutes pay very little money to teachers... this is while expenses are high and becoming higher day by day...”

“...for me costs are three times more than the amount I am being paid...living is becoming very hard for me...”

“...food and dormitory prices are rising year by year in state universities...”

“...nowadays we are not offered any grant for our research projects; while, before students had grants...”

“...I had a paper accepted in a national conference outside the country and the university did not help me financially go

and present it... I could not even use my professor’s research grant”.

As proposed by the participants of this study, in this country, authorities do not take accounts of providing MA students with sufficient financial helps which can help them in their research projects. At least this matter has been overlooked recently because before students had some chance in receiving money from the university (e.g., taking advantage of their professors’ grant). Nowadays, not only students are not offered research grants, but also they cannot take advantage of the professors’ grant (except for the conferences inside the country). This has caused dissatisfaction for a large number of students with authorities in charge of universities.

Another thing that had made participants overwhelmed was the fact that expenses in the country were rising unreasonably in short periods of time due to some economic crises. While incomes were not raised proportionately at least for EFL teachers, these participants felt to be of the most vulnerable groups of the society.



This factor has not been mentioned among the demotivating factors proposed in studies conducted whether in Iran or overseas. This might be due to two reasons. Firstly, previously done studies have mostly taken accounts of junior high school, high school, or BA/BS university students. Secondly, researchers in other studies might not have mentioned this factor in the questionnaires administered to the participants whether because they had adopted other questionnaires or because they had not sought students' ideas about what demotivated them.

#### 4.2.2. Remotivating Factors of *Economic Problems*

The results of this study indicated that 'economic problems' was the most significant source of demotivation. This issue seems to be prevalent among Iranian MA students of TEFL. In the interviews students came up with a number of statements regarding how they were and would be remotivated. Some of them are presented below:

"...it would be very helpful if MA students were offered a monthly amount of money for their daily expenses..."

"Prices (paper, food, and dormitory) should be reduced for university students..."

"...for our thesis, if the money we spend is returned back to us..."

"...university must give us the permission to spend professors' grants for scientific projects like conferences, publishing papers, etc..."

Some of these issues must be taken into consideration by university administrators, while some should be taken into account by policymakers. Some students explained that they were living in a rich country though less attention in terms of financial supports was paid to them. In addition, some complained about soaring life expenses due to the economic problems raised by inflation and boycotts.

#### 4.2.3. Future Pessimism

'Future pessimism', the second important source of demotivation, had a mean of 2.52. This factor was the second significant factor in terms of demotivating students. Seventy-one percent of participants (106 participants) have answered whether *strongly agree* or *agree* to this factor. Figure 3 presented below shows means of items within this factor.

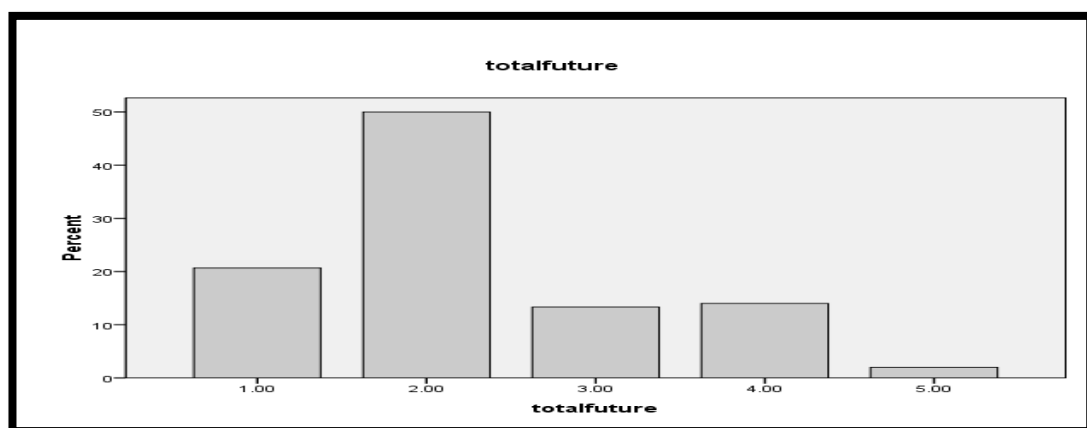


Figure 3

*Distribution of Answers to Future Pessimism*

This factor was the second significant factor in terms of demotivating students. Seventy-one per cent of participants (106 participants) have answered whether *strongly agree* or *agree* to

this factor. Some of their statements are enumerated below:

"...a dentist's income, for example, is at

least 10 times more than a university professor ...there should not be such a big difference”

“...I have no hope to get a job with my MA degree; there are very few job opportunities...”

“...after finishing MA, I must complete the military service; it's 21 months...”

Some students linked their pessimism about future with the lack of respect TEFL (specifically) and teaching (in general) have gotten in the country. In this way, some participants expressed that people who have majored in other fields and with no theoretical background in TEFL are teaching English in language institutes only because there is no organization to take care of that. Another issue with which participants of this study disagreed was the payment of graduates in TEFL compared to the payment of those in some other professions; they said it was way too less than what they deserved.

Again, similar to the “economic problem”, this factor has not been proposed in any other study before. That might be due to the fact that, at the time of the study, in this country there have been fewer job prospects than there were before, and this had made the participants worried about their future lives.

#### 4.2.4. Remotivating Factors of Future Pessimism

Many participants expressed their worries about their future life as they proposed that

after graduation few opportunities existed for them. Firstly, if they wanted to volunteer in Ph.D. examination, they said there were few positions despite a large number of volunteers. Secondly, they expressed their dissatisfaction with job opportunities available for graduated students of TEFL. In line with this issue, they proposed following statements as points to be taken care of by policymakers.

“I'm thinking of applying abroad because my future is not warranted in this country ...if there were more prosperous jobs for me I would never leave my country”

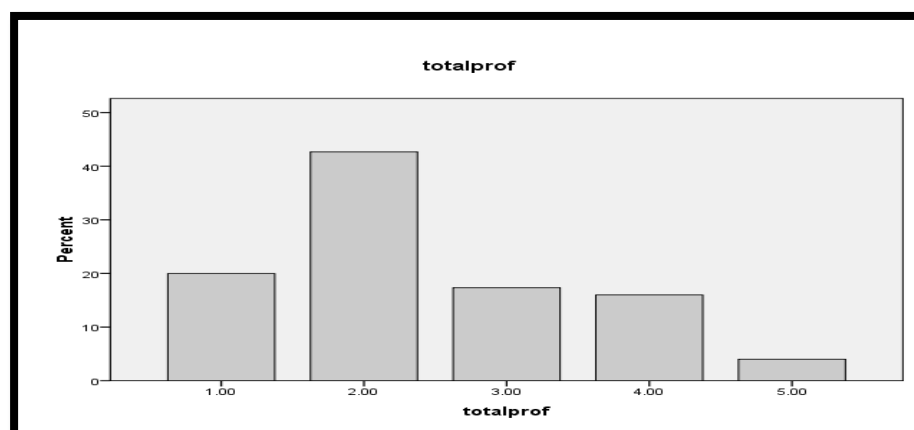
“...Ph.D. students must be given scholarships, they should not teach for \$2 per hour...”

“...more positions are better to be considered for Ph.D. course...”

These issues need to be taken into consideration by policymakers. They ought to give students voice to see what discourages them in the status quo. If these problems are ignored, the result would be the emigration of elites from the country for fulfilling their longings. In this situation, spending more of the country's financial resources for its students would be an unquestionable decision.

#### 4.2.5. Professors' Characteristics

Professors' characteristics including professors' competence, behavior, and availability was the third demotivating factor for the participants of this study. Frequency of answers to this factor is presented below.



**Figure 4**  
*Distribution of Answers to Professors' Characteristics*

As it is evident in this figure, 94 participants (62%) have answered *strongly agree* and *agree* to this factor. Furthermore, 24 of them (16%) have disagreed with and 26 have no idea about that.

As it is clearly stated, in students' opinions, professors are not satisfactory enough due to some reasons. One thing they proposed was related to professors' personality is that they did not treat students kindly and equally. Some pointed to this notion as the prevalence of injustice in Iranian universities. Another problem was with professors' availability. Participants said their professors are not available for them which might be as a result of being involved in more positions than a university professor. As they stated, some professors adopt job(s) in other organizations besides working in the university. Furthermore, some complained that courses are not given to those professors who have expert knowledge in them. Some others said their universities need to have more professors to cover all the courses they study.

The majority of previous studies on demotivation have mentioned teachers (or professors) with their subcomponents as the most salient source of demotivation (Carpenter et al., 2009; Falout et al., 2009; Heidari & Riahipour, 2012; Keblawi, 2006; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012; Sahragard & Alimorad, 2013; Trang & Baldauf, 2007).

#### 4.2.6. Remotivating Factors of Professors' Characteristics

Some of the students' demotivating hints are shown below:

"... so if professors create some kind of personal relationship with their students...not like robots..."

"I like it when he compliments me on my clothing...creates personal relationships..."

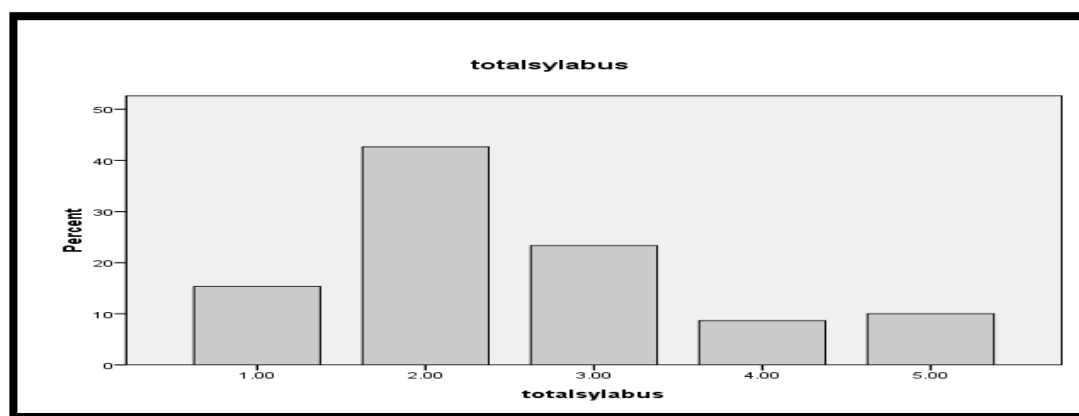
"He is a competent professor but geek, you know, with no sense of humor and this makes me not to want to attend his classes"

"...they must come to class more prepared; they should not just read from some paper..."

In addition, as the results showed, participants were mostly satisfied with professors' competence (items 2 and 5 of the questionnaire). However, something that students found to be the most unsatisfactory was professors' ignorance in helping them publish the papers and theses. Also, professors must encourage students more. Thus, professors' caring about students' affective state is fundamental in bringing about solutions to remotivate students.

#### 4.2.7. Syllabus Design

Problems with syllabus design in English departments of Iranian universities were the fourth main demotivating factor.



**Figure 5**  
*Distribution of Answers to Syllabus Design*

In the above figure, as it can be observed, 87 students (58%) have stated their dissatisfactions with 'syllabus design' in their departments.

Students' statements imply that more up-to-date materials are in demand by MA students. Some said more interesting books and articles must be introduced in the syllabuses. Moreover, as they had stated, they prefer focusing on a particular subject rather than "reading a lot of pages that would be forgotten after the exam", said one student. As MA students, they suggested working on more related, interesting, up-to-date, and specific topics, while in some cases they said things were like what they were in BA level.

This factor has been investigated by some scholars as a demotivating factor in their investigation of demotivation. Some have pointed to syllabus design in a number of terms: Learning content and materials, textbook/ reference book-related issues, etc. For example, in Meshkat and Hassani (2012) it was concluded that "learning content and materials" was highly demotivating for students.

In line with the results of the previous study, Sakaki and Kikuchi (2009) came to the conclusion that 'learning content and materials' was the main source of demotivation. This is in agreement with the results of Kikuchi (2009) in which old, uninteresting, difficult, unfocused, and long texts and textbook were demotivating for the students. Carpenter et al. (2009) also found 'difficulty of classes' as the main source of demotivation. Additionally, in Muhonen (2004) it was revealed that 'learning materials'

was the second salient demotivating factor for female participants of the study. In addition, "improper method of English teaching" and "problems in understanding listening materials" were discovered to be among the most demotivating factors (Tabatabaei & Molavi, 2012). Finally, in Hu (2011) it was revealed that "learning difficulty" was the most important predictor variable of demotivation.

#### 4.2.8. Remotivating Factors of Syllabus Design

Concerning 'syllabus design', following statements were proposed to be avoided for the remotivation of the students:

"Syllabuses better introduce more updated articles and books"

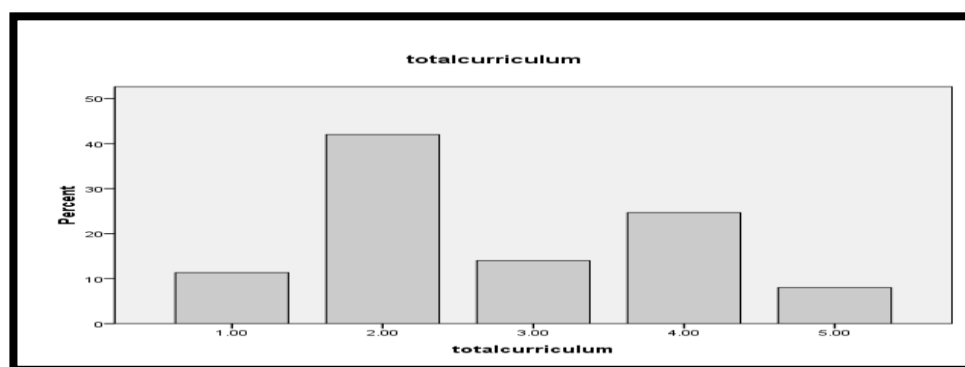
"...if we were offered discuss materials instead of memorizing them..."

"...also less amount of material must be incorporated into the syllabuses..."

This factor must be also the concerns of professors since they are the ones who design their own syllabuses in Iranian universities. A number of things they must consider when designing a syllabus are presented in what follows.

#### 4.2.9. Curriculum Decisions

This demotivating factor concerning issues related to the selection and arrangement of courses is the fifth factor with regard to the importance it has on participants. The Following figure illustrates the frequency of participants' ideas about curriculum decisions.



**Figure 6**  
*Distribution of Answers to Curriculum Design*

Thus far, few studies have taken account of “curriculum decision” as a demotivating factor but not under the same title. Only specific decisions related to this factor have been examined in few previous studies. For instance, “frequency of classes in a week” has been proposed by the participants of the study undertaken by Tabatabaei and Molavi (2012). Furthermore, “obligation factors” and “negative changes in courses” were among the factors that accounted for a number of students’ demotivation in Trang and Baldauf (2007).

#### 4.2.10. Remotivating Factors of Curriculum Design

Some of what they named as remotivating points can be seen in the following sentences:

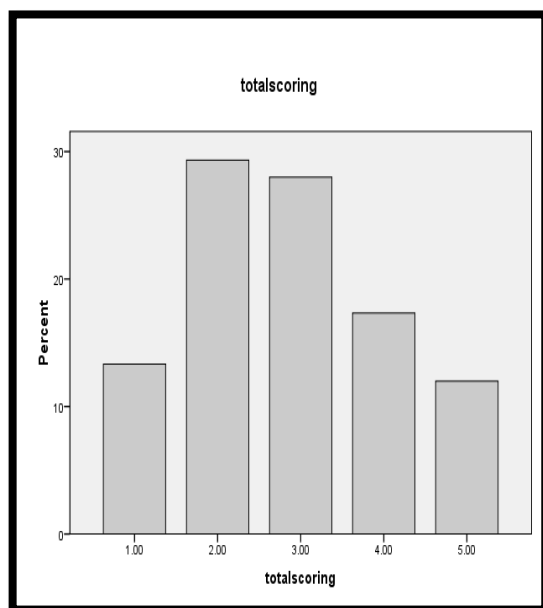
“Introductory courses need to be incorporated into the curriculum, so that we would not go through a course without any background”

“...courses which were of no use and unrelated to TEFL had better be omitted from the curriculum...more pertinent ones could replace them...”

As far as curriculum decisions are concerned, university administrators are expected to hold seminars and workshops on the appropriateness of the present curriculum in order to implement some reforms in case it is necessary. Except for the recent years, some universities had been following the same curriculum for a long period of time.

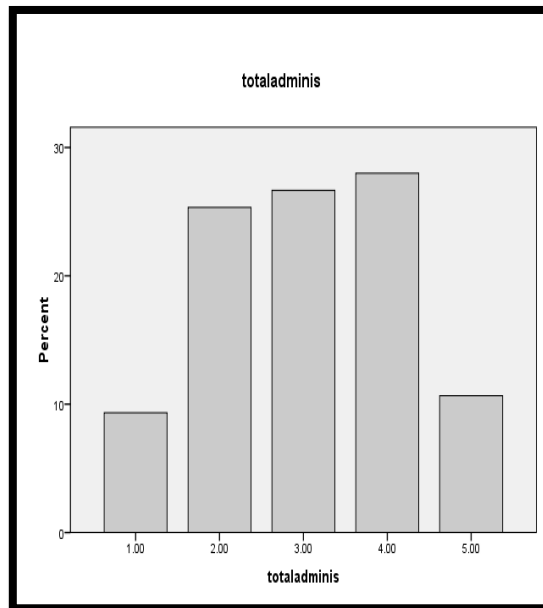
#### 4.2.11. The Rest of Demotivating Factors: Scoring System, Administrative Decisions, Facilities, and Classroom Environment

Scoring system, administrative decisions, facilities, and classroom environment were proposed to be the sixth, seventh, eighth, and the last demotivating factors for the participants of the present study, respectively. Following figures indicate the frequency of students’ answers to this factor.



**Figure 7**

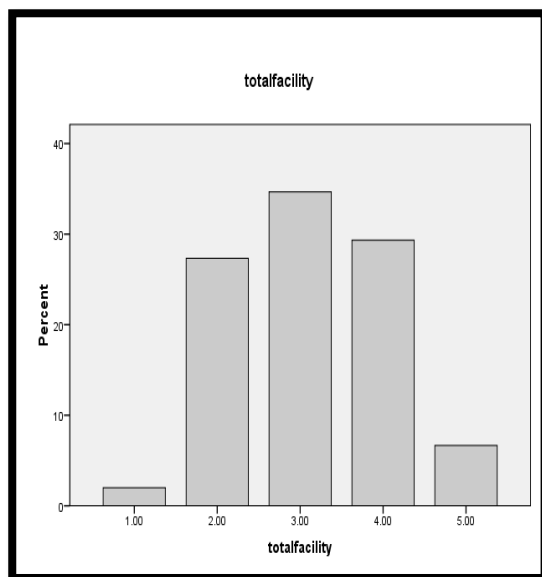
*Distribution of Answers to Scoring System*



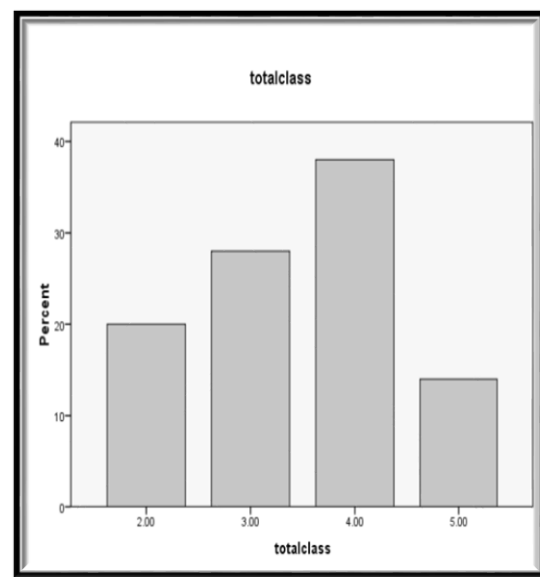
**Figure 8**

*Distribution of Answers to Administrative Decisions*



**Figure 9**

*Distribution of Answers to Facilities*

**Figure 10**

*Distribution of Answers to Classroom Environment*

Students' propositions about these four factors include a number of notions. Some of them are presented below:

"...there lacks a standard, firm, and regular scoring procedure...the criteria in each course and semester is different..."

"...there is a bias in scoring the students on the part of the professors ..."

"...in choosing my supervisor, I had to choose between two professors because others were already taken by other students..."

"...I wanted to work on a topic for my thesis, but, you know, the professor with the same area of interest could not adopt more than three students and I had to choose another topic..."

"...there are very few seminars which we can attend and share our findings with other students... some of our term papers were and will never be presented or published..."

In some universities, some students were complaining about the way they were scored. They thought that professors scored students subjectively, that they were biased toward some students. In this country, GPAs are important because they are decisive in the

Ph.D. examination. That might be why some students cared about their GPAs a lot.

As regards 'administrative decisions', to the author's knowledge, no study has ever come to the conclusion that this could be demotivating for its participants. In the present study, however, as the participants stated in the interviews, this can be demotivating.

Unlike 'administrative factors' for which there have been no mention in other studies, some studies have enumerated 'syllabus' as a demotivating factor for their participants (Heidari & Riahipour, 2012; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012; Muhonen, 2004; Sahragard & Alimorad, 2013; Sakaki & Kikuchi, 2009). Meshkat and Hassani (2012) reported 'lack of school facilities' as a strong demotivating factor. In agreement with the results of this study, is Sakaki and Kikuchi (2009) whose results indicated that 'inadequate school facilities' was a demotivating factor for its participants. Also, Heidari and Riahipour (2012) gave reports of 'not using apposite equipment and material' as an element that demotivated Iranian EFL learners.

Finally, 'classroom environment' was considered to be the least influential factor among all the factors. Actually, for MA students aged more than 22 such factors as the classroom environment or facilities have been

revealed to be less important than factors like 'economic problems' or 'future'. This shows that MA students care about issues that are decisive in their lives more than 'facilities' or 'classroom environment'. In other words, they implied that these things are trivial for them in terms of demotivation.

#### **4.2.12. Remotivating Factors of the Four Last Demotivating Factors**

The most important problem students had with 'scoring system' was the fact that, as they proposed, scores were given subjectively. Some students expressed that professors scored students subjectively and based on their personal attitudes toward the students. Since score plays a crucial role in students' future lives (either for Ph.D. or future occupation), this factor was of the main concern for a few students. So, professors need to pay a lot more attention to students' scores.

Concerning 'administrative decisions', although some of the previous remotivating factors also required administrative decisions, factors introduced in this section mostly concern decisions made in language departments. For example, it is departmental administrative responsibility to hold seminars and conferences which students can attend and share their findings. Or when students request to choose their supervisors by themselves, again, it is departmental administrative job to care for that.

'Facilities' was shown not to be demotivating to a great extent. But in some cases, remotivating techniques can be helpful to welfare units in universities. For example, some participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the speed of the Internet, dormitory, places to hang out, etc. However, most of the participant universities were not seen to be in lack of facilities. Nonetheless, MA students need to be provided with rooms in which there live only 2 or 3 students. As one student put, "number of rooms of our dormitory must be duplicated". Another thing that is very important in remotivating students is promoting easy access to the Internet.

'Classroom environment', though not weak in terms of demotivation in other studies, was not proposed as a highly demotivating factor for the participants of the present study. Only a

small number of them had found this factor to be demotivating. Actually, in other contexts like in BA courses or high school contexts this factor might be more demotivating. However, since this was not mentioned among the highly demotivating factors, remotivational strategies lack this factor too. Only few students came up with techniques in how to negate the adverse effects of inappropriate classroom activities. They suggested that "MA classes must be less formal so that students would discuss ideas in a humane and friendly environment.

### **5. Concluding Remarks**

The results of this study showed that 'economic problems', as an external factor, contributed the most to demotivating factors among Iranian MA students of TEFL. This is in contrast to the results of other studies where in majority of cases considered the teacher as the most important factor. In fact the teacher as a factor appeared in this study as well albeit with a slighter influence. Since contexts differ for groups of students, demotivating factors differ for people studying in different contexts. Obviously, what is the most demotivating factor for EFL learners in a Japanese context might not be demotivating for EFL learners in an Iranian context. Even within a country, city or educational institute, the factors may vary as was the case for Japanese high school students and university students and the mixed results in the Iranian studies reviewed. The fact of the matter is that, a combination of factors is at play in different contexts with varying prominence.

For the participants of this study, as implied in the analysis, the prospect of a bright future receives strong significance. They believe a better economic situation would provide them the initiative to achieve reasonably well in their studies. In fact, such a situation can function as a remotivating factor as do other factors discussed in the previous section.

All the factors influencing motivation, if dealt with appropriately, may lead to remotivation. This became obvious in the responses provided by the participants. It is, thus, imperative to raise teachers', learners', and administrators' consciousness about the demotivating and remotivating factors influencing learning in different contexts. The

result of this would be taking appropriate measures which ultimately enhance learning.

This study was limited to one category of Iranian learners, that is, MA students of TEFL within the context of Iran. Similar studies using qualitative and qualitative approaches in data collection and analysis could be conducted dealing with every field of study at different levels. Moreover, other studies could be carried out to have a comparative look at different educational contexts both within and between different fields of study. The data collection phase of this study was limited to interviews and questionnaires. Other studies can compensate for this using triangulation of more robust data collection techniques.

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## Appendices

### APPENDIX A

#### *Questions of the Interview*

1. Based on your experience of language learning in Iranian universities, what has ever disappointed you?
2. With regards to what you have heard from friends around you, can you mention any other factors having some negative effects on your learning?
3. Do you think any of these factors can act as a disappointing factor? If yes, would you please provide some evidence(s) for that? (General system of education, universities, facilities, professors, curriculum, future occupation, and system of scoring, lack of a socially motivating and humane environment, disagreeable teacher personalities or pedagogies, inappropriate courses or materials, no consistency in curriculum with clear goals, coursework pressure, professors' personality and competence, number of the students in the class, etc.).
4. What do you think can be the solutions for what you have stated as demotivating?
5. Have you found anything appealing in spite of the existing negative elements?

### APPENDIX B

#### *Demotivation Questionnaire*

University:

Sex: male ☐ female ☐

Age: ..... years old

To what extent do you agree with the following statements as the ones that have demotivated you?

		Strongly agree	Agree	No Idea	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Professors are not always available for consultation; they do not dedicate their time to the students.					
2	Professors are not that much knowledgeable with regard to the courses they teach.					
3	Professors do not encourage and help students in having course papers published.					
4	Professors do not respect us; they degrade us and treat us differently.					
5	My university lacks professors with expert knowledge in all subjects in TEFL.					
6	We don't receive much encouragement from professors.					
7	We are forced to deliver our term papers by the due time; otherwise we will not get a part of the score.					
8	We are assigned so much work to do, most of which will be forgotten after the exams.					
9	Some of the courses we study are not directly related to TEFL.					
10	Materials to be taught in the classes are not updated. Materials incorporated into the syllabuses do not discuss new topics of TEFL.					
11	Introductory courses such as Sociolinguistics, Contrastive Analysis, etc. are of less use to us.					
12	We do not have easy access to the Internet in the university and in the dormitory.					

13	There are few or no places to hang out in the campus.					
14	We do not have such facilities as lockers and Wi-Fi transmitters in our department.					
15	Our dormitory is very crowded, dirty, and ramshackle.					
16	What is taught is not tested in the exams. Exams incorporate unrelated questions.					
17	Professors are biased toward some students when it comes to scoring. They rank students based on their attitudes towards them.					
18	The criterion based on which scores are given is different in every course and semester.					
19	Professors do not pursue a very standard, firm, and regular scoring procedure for our courses.					
20	Unemployment after graduation makes me lose interest in university study.					
21	For doctoral studies, there are very few positions despite a large number of competitors.					
22	For employment, there is no difference between low and high averages.					
23	Students' soaring life expenses make them struggle in their studies.					
24	Due to lack of opportunities and economical problems in this country, there are fewer job prospects than there were in the past.					
25	MA students of TEFL are not offered any part-time job outside or inside the university. No scholarship or fund is dedicated to MA students for their research projects.					
26	Graduated students of TEFL have a very low income in comparison to graduated students of certain professions (lawyers, doctors, dentists, businessmen).					
27	Teachers do not receive much respect in this country.					
28	We do not have the chance to participate in class discussions; hence we don't receive much encouragement.					
29	There are too many students in MA like in BA classes.					
30	Classes are formal so that students cannot discuss and share ideas in a friendly environment.					
31	The arrangement of the chairs is not like a circle and it contributes to a teacher-centered environment in the classes.					
32	We are not offered preliminary courses before going through obligatory courses in TEFL.					
33	For our thesis, we are assigned to some professors whose area of interest might not be in line with ours.					
34	We pass a lot of courses at MA like BA levels.					
35	We have to just memorize the materials instead of being creative to use materials.					
36	From the very beginning of the first semester, we were asked to write papers without being taught how to write in academic English.					
37	From the very beginning of the first semester, we are asked to choose a topic for our thesis without even being familiar with different areas in TEFL.					
38	There are not teachers' and students' seminars on issues in TEFL to which students can attend and discuss relevant issues.					
39	We do not choose our supervisors by ourselves.					
40	We are not taught the practical side of TEFL.					