

## The Impact of the School Grade on the Significance of the Motivating and Demotivating Factors in Foreign Language Learning

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### Abstract

Promoting autonomous learning has been of much concern in the field of second/foreign language acquisition for decades. Corroborating evidence from theoretical and empirical research in this field has asserted the import of several factors in attaining this goal. Motivation has been one of the critical factors that enable language learners to become self-directed and to successfully learn a second/foreign language. Yet, it has been demonstrated that the level of motivation may vary from one learner to another due to the influence of some internal and external factors. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate the impact of the school grade on the significance of the factors that affect the motivation of students learning English in Moroccan high schools. To this end, 178 students took part in filling in a questionnaire. The data collected was analysed statistically using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software, version 20. The results of the study revealed that Moroccan learners were interested in learning English, but their levels of motivation varied significantly. This variation was ascribed to the effect of several motivating and demotivating factors which were, in turn, substantially affected by the school grade of students. Hence, it is crucial to consider the impact of this variable on such factors in order to control their influence on learners' motivation.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The field of language teaching and learning has noticed a tremendous change in the new era of education. The current trend highlights the significance of the learner-centred approach, thereby rejecting the traditional view that the teacher and the teaching process are of the utmost importance. Much emphasis, in lieu, has been put on understanding how language learners approach learning and the qualities of successful learners. This shift has led to a new approach to the roles of students and teachers. Nowadays, it is regarded that learners should gain more autonomy in their learning. According

to Little (2007), “the essence of learner autonomy is the ability to take charge of one’s learning” (p.15). Thus, language teachers should train their learners to rely less on them and depend more on themselves to become autonomous.

Recently, promoting autonomy in learning has been one of the primaries in second/foreign language acquisition (SLA/FLA). Autonomous learners can be responsible for their own learning and become successful language learners. Furthermore, they can evaluate their learning and make necessary adjustments when required. Nonetheless, several studies in the field of SLA/FLA have demonstrated that students approach learning differently. This means that they do not share the same characteristics. Consequently, this dissimilarity can affect the learning process and outcomes.

Manifold studies have asserted that motivation to learn a second/foreign language is a critical factor that can help to boost independent learning. Further, this factor has been paramount in promoting quality education (Bakar, 2014; Filgona, Sakiyo, Gwany & Okoronka, 2020). Having the motivation to learn, however, is not sufficient for language learners to be successful. Their level of motivation is central to their achievement in learning the target language. In other words, the higher the level of learners’ motivation is, the more successful they can become; the reverse is also true. In this respect, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) argued that the insufficiency of motivation could negatively affect the accomplishment of long-term objectives, even for a student with exceptional abilities.

On the other hand, a highly motivated student will be actively engaged in the learning process, invest much time and effort and, thus, be likely to obtain better learning outcomes. Gardner (2007) and Schunk, Meece and Pintrich (2014) argued that highly motivated learners have unique qualities that aid them in being successful. These include, for instance, displaying interest in learning and being self-confident, goal-directed and persistent. Bakar (2014), moreover, suggested other essential qualities of this category of learners. According to him, a learner who has high motivation relies less on the teacher, works on tasks diligently without feeling bored and faces up to learning challenges.

Because not all students are highly motivated to learn a second/foreign language, it is paramount to determine the factors that affect their motivation. Therefore, this study attempts to scrutinize the main factors that impact the motivation of students to learn English in high schools in Morocco, either positively or negatively. In addition, it aims to measure the extent to which the school grade of this category of learners influences the significance of those factors.

### **1.1. Research Questions And Hypotheses**

The following research questions and hypotheses are addressed to orient the study towards achieving its objectives.

#### **1.1.1. Research questions**

- 1- Does the level of motivation of Moroccan high school students learning English vary substantially according to their school grades?
- 2- To what extent does the school grade of learners lead to the fluctuation in the significance of the motivating and demotivating factors?

#### **1.1.2. Research hypotheses**

- 1- The level of motivation of Moroccan high school students learning English varies substantially according to their school grades.
- 2- The school grade of learners largely affects the significance of the motivating and demotivating factors.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

A massive amount of research on SLA revealed that learners possess some individual traits that help to show how distinguished they are from others. These are referred to as

individual differences (IDs). The study of IDs has been deemed paramount by researchers in SLA because it has, by and large, helped to explain the variation among students in terms of their mastery of the language. Yet, language motivation, which is the main concern of this study, and language aptitude have been of more significance in SLA research. The foundations of research on motivation in SLA date back to the late 1950s, especially with the work of the social psychologists Robert Gardner, Wallace Lambert, and their associates (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). From that date onwards, motivation has been considered a vital factor that can either facilitate or hamper the learning process (Ushioda, 2012; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). This section, thus, aims at presenting some common definitions of the concepts of motivation and demotivation suggested by various scholars. Also, it attempts to review the main orientations to motivation and the factors that affect it.

## 2.1. Definitions

### 2.1.1. Motivation

The issue of motivation in SLA has received a good deal of attention during the last decades. Scholars have provided numerous definitions of this concept. In its broadest sense, motivation can be defined as the desire to do something (VanPatten & Benati, 2010). Harmer (1991) used the term to refer to the inner drive that leads to achieving a goal. More specifically, Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) described motivation as the source that stimulates the basic impetus that initiates learning and the driving force that helps sustain this process. According to Oxford and Shearin (1994), motivation is an amalgam of the desire and energy to achieve a specific aim. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) also argued that motivation requires going through three steps: “the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it [and] the effort expended on it” (p. 4).

Gardner (1985) suggested another definition of this concept. According to him, motivation is “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language” (p. 10). In his definition, Gardner highlighted three key elements indispensable for a learner to be motivated: the willingness to learn the target language, making an effort to attain this goal and having a positive attitude towards the language. In fact, most definitions of motivation stress the importance of having a goal, i.e., learning a second/foreign language, and a desire and the effort put into attaining the goal.

### 2.1.2. Demotivation

Having defined motivation as what drives the individual to learn or do something, demotivation, on the contrary, can be used to refer to what negatively pushes him or her not to learn or do something. In this respect, Zhang (2007) claimed that the latter term could be defined as “the force that decreases students’ energy to learn and the absence of the force that stimulates students to learn” (pp. 213-214). Based on Zhang’s definition, it can be inferred that demotivation can stem from the factors that are by nature demotivating or the lack of motivating factors. Yet, this definition neglected the type of those factors. Dörnyei (2001), on the other hand, linked demotivation to the existence of an external force which can lead to the reduction of motivation to achieve a goal. This implies that the demotivated individual was once motivated, but his motivation decreased due to some demotivating external factors. Although Dörnyei attributed demotivation to such factors, ignoring thus the significance of those that are internal in nature, there is no empirical study that corroborates this claim (Kikuchi, 2015). Many researchers, conversely, argued that both types of factors might result in demotivation. Therefore, to compensate for the inadequacy of Dörnyei’s view, Kikuchi added the term *internal* to the definition, encompassing internal and external forces that cause the individual’s motivation to diminish.

## 2.2. Orientations to motivation

Various orientations to motivation have been proposed in the literature. Yet, it would

be in large part neglectful to discuss those orientations without referring to the contribution of great scholars like Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert. The two scholars conducted several studies about motivation in SLA and its orientations. Gardner and Lambert (1972) distinguished between two different orientations: integrative and instrumental. According to Brown (2007), the former involves the wish of learners to “integrate themselves into the culture of the second language group and become involved in social interchange in that group” (p. 170). Similarly, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) defined integrativeness as the desire to learn a second/foreign language to identify with its community and culture. A learner with an integrative orientation is thus likely to have positive attitudes towards that language, its culture and its speakers.

Instrumental orientation entails the desire to learn a language to achieve instrumental goals. For instance, a person who wants to develop his or her career professionally may wish to learn English, the world’s lingua franca. This kind of drive is instrumental in nature. It is also worth mentioning that integrativeness and instrumentality are not, in fact, deemed types of motivation. In lieu, they are considered orientations (Brown, 2007).

Moreover, based on studies conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1972), it was displayed that foreign language students with integrative orientation achieved high scores on proficiency tests. Hence, this orientation was considered paramount to successfully learning a second/foreign language. This claim, however, was rebutted by other researchers. A study by Lukmani (1972) in India showed that students with instrumental orientation scored highly on English proficiency tests.

Traditionally, motivation has been considered as either integrative or instrumental orientation. Deci and Ryan (1985), nonetheless, developed a theory referred to as self-determination theory, in which they added two other notions of motivation, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Liu, Wang, Tan, Koh, and Ee (2009) defined intrinsic motivation as a “behaviour that emanates fully from the self and is undertaken solely for its own sake or enjoyment” (p.139). In other words, intrinsic motivation is driven by an inner force to do a particular task. According to Small (1997), a learner who is intrinsically motivated regards learning fun displays intellectual curiosity and, essentially, keeps learning without the need for praise or reward. Extrinsic motivation, on the contrary, “refers to external reasons for learning the language” (Woodrow, 2012, p. 191). These may include rewards, punishment avoidance, getting a job, etc.

Despite the diverse orientations to motivation, intrinsic motivation is deemed to be more central to second/foreign language learning by some researchers (Harmer, 1991). This view was supported by Brown (2007) who argued that while a learner may depend on external rewards, his or her willingness to learn may be reduced due to the lack of external motives. Nevertheless, other scholars claimed that motivation plays a key role in SLA/FLA regardless of its orientation, and it is context- and time-dependent. In other words, an essential characteristic of motivation is that it varies considerably with the change in the context of learning or over time (Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry, 2015). For example, a learner who is intrinsically motivated to learn a language is likely to develop extrinsic motivation over time and vice versa.

### **2.3. Motivating and demotivating factors**

Numerous studies on motivation have demonstrated that several factors come into play in the process of learning a second/foreign language, thereby affecting the learners’ motivation either positively or negatively. Krishnan, Al-Lafi, and Pathan (2013), who conducted mixed-method research to find out the motivating factors among students, found that the desire to learn English, teachers’ teaching style, and parents’ encouragement are the most common sources of motivation for learners. Harmer (1991) additionally suggested some factors that impact learners’ motivation, which is vital. Like Krishnan, AL-Lafi, and Pathan, he argued that

the teacher plays an essential role in promoting students' motivation. Their community's attitudes towards the target language and culture are also key factors.

In a study by Chambers (1993), which investigated the teachers' and learners' attitudes, different factors were evidenced as the chief causes of students' demotivation. The teachers reported that being demotivated stemmed from learners' lack of self-confidence and effort, unwillingness to cooperate and poor concentration in the classroom. On the other hand, the students ascribed their lack of motivation to their teachers' old teaching materials, unclear instructions and criticism. Based on the study, thus, the teachers attributed students' demotivation to internal factors, whereas the latter attributed them to external motives.

Dörnyei conducted another investigation into the factors that affect learners' demotivation (as cited in Khouya, 2018). The data was collected based on the learners' responses whose teachers claimed they were demotivated. The results of the study indicated that several factors led to demotivation, including the teacher's personality and teaching style, low self-confidence, peers' attitudes, and negative attitudes to the target language and its culture. Similarly, many other studies demonstrated that the teachers' behaviour, their teaching style, the learning materials and the classroom atmosphere could decrease students' motivation in a second language classroom (Ikeno, 2003; Ayako, 2004; Tsuchiya, 2006; Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009; Lasagabaster, Doiz & Sierra, 2014).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This research has adopted the quantitative design. The purpose behind the choice of this kind of design was the nature of the study, which aimed at describing a large population. To meet the latter objective, quantitative data was of critical importance. The research instrument, the participants and the procedures followed for carrying out the study are discussed in detail in this section.

#### 3.1. Instrument

In this study, a questionnaire was employed as a research instrument to gather data. The use of this instrument can be ascribed to several reasons. Questionnaires are useful for conducting surveys targeting a large sample, collecting quantitative data and doing statistical analysis. Further, they are efficient regarding researcher effort, time and financial resources (Gillham, 2000). Moreover, questionnaires are convenient for respondents because they ensure their anonymity and allow them to take more time to reflect on the questions (Sarantakos, 1993; Gillham, 2000). The instrument used in this research comprised a nominal scale, an ordinal scale and two Likert scales. Because all the questions were in English, the participants of this study were provided with the translation of each in Standard Arabic, facilitating the task of completing the questionnaire.

Moreover, to test the reliability of the research instrument, Cronbach's Alpha was used. The test results indicated that the scales used in the study were reliable. The reliability results are summarised in Table 1.

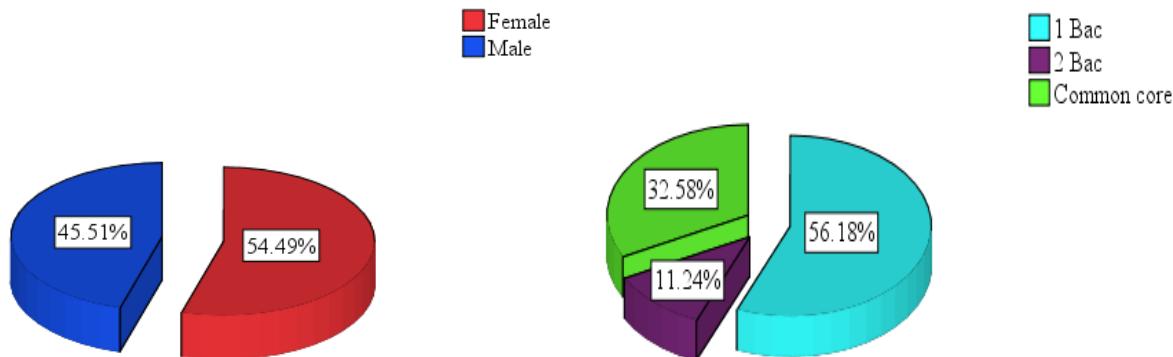
**Table 1**  
*Reliability Statistics*

Scales	No. of items	Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Teacher-related factors	8	.711
Peer-related factors	4	.814
Internal factors	5	.729

#### 3.2. Participants

To help achieve its objectives, this investigation involved 178 Moroccan students, including 81 males and 97 females (see Figure 1). All the participants were high school students in the region of Fez-Meknes, and they were selected from three different school grades (see

Figure 2), viz. common core (the first grade), first year baccalaureate (the second grade) and second year baccalaureate (the third grade). The learners who participated in this research were 15 to 20 years old and studied English as a second foreign language. Further, the sample of the study was selected non-randomly using purposive sampling. The aim of adopting this technique was to help gather responses that could result in gaining better insights into the issue under investigation.



**Figure 1. Distribution of participants by gender.**

**Figure 2. Distribution of participants by the school grade.**

*Note.* 1Bac = First year baccalaureate;  
2Bac = Second year baccalaureate.

### **3.3 Procedures**

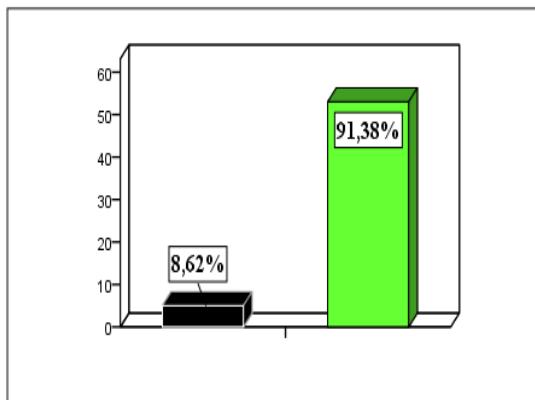
The participants of this study were asked to fill in either the paper-based or online-based questionnaire, depending on their choice. The online-based questionnaire was posted on the Google Form Platform, which is used for designing and sharing online surveys. The collected data was later coded and analysed statistically using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software, version 20. Graphs and custom tables were used to help in summarising SPSS statistics data. In addition, the main findings were discussed to confirm or refute the research hypotheses. Finally, important conclusions from the study were highlighted.

## **4. RESULTS**

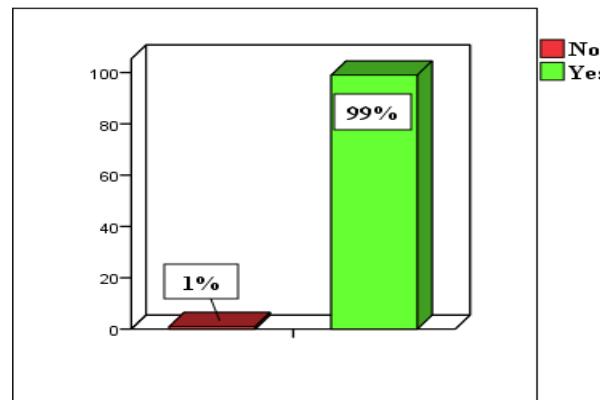
This study aimed to investigate the extent to which the significance of motivating and demotivating factors was affected by the school grade of students learning English in Moroccan high schools. To attain this goal, two main research questions were addressed. The first question aimed to examine the degree of impact of the school grade on students' motivation levels. In contrast, the second attempted to measure the extent to which the significance of factors influencing learners' motivation fluctuates according to the school grade.

### **4.1 Students' interest and level of motivation to learn English**

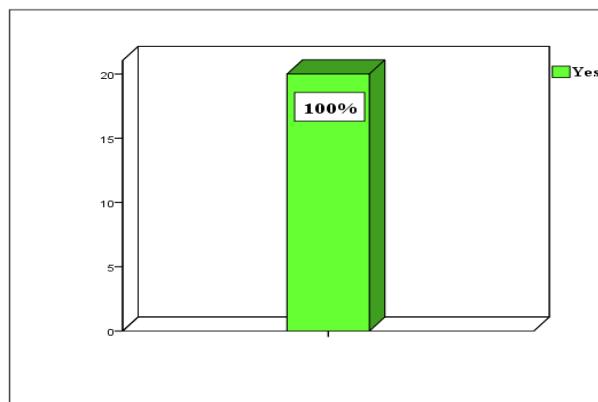
To answer the first research question, participants were asked to respond to two questions in the questionnaire. Through the first question, students had to state whether they were interested in learning English. The data obtained revealed that most respondents were interested in learning the language (see Figures 3, 4 & 5). While most common core students (91.38%) stated, they were interested in learning English, a minority (8.62%) were neutral. In addition, almost all first-year baccalaureate students (99%) indicated that they were interested in learning the language, whereas only one student showed a lack of interest. Unlike common core and first-year baccalaureate students, no single student in second-year baccalaureate expressed a lack of interest or neutrality, i.e., they were all (100%) interested in learning English. Though the results displayed that learners' interest gradually increased in higher school grades, it is apparent that most of the learners were motivated to learn English.



**Figure 3. Common core learners' interest in learning English.**

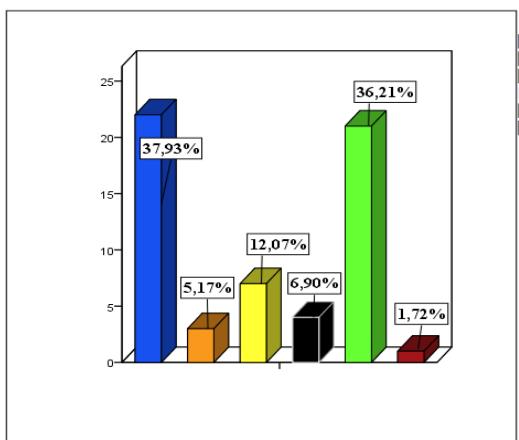


**Figure 4. First year baccalaureate learners' interest in learning English.**

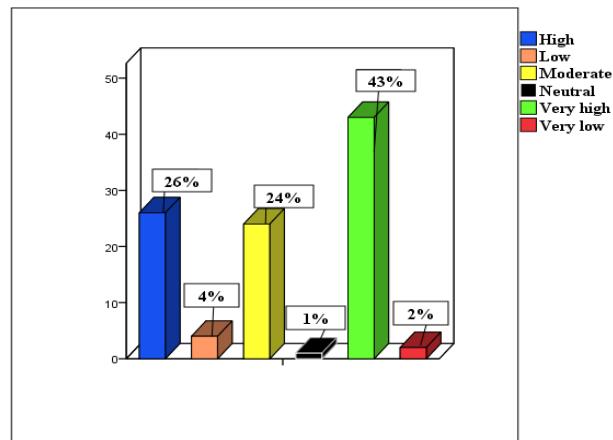


**Figure 5. Second year baccalaureate learners' interest in learning English.**

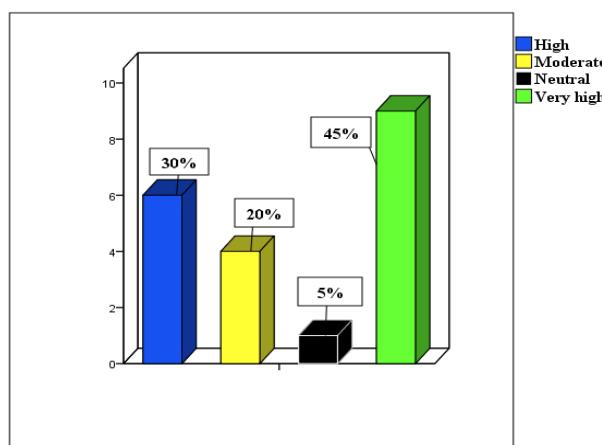
To measure their level of motivation to learn English, respondents were asked to select the appropriate response using a rating scale, ranging from very high to neutral: (1) Very high, (2) High, (3) Moderate, (4) Low, (5) Very low, (6) Zero, and (7) Neutral. The results showed that no single learner in the three school grades lacked the motivation to learn the language (see Figures 6, 7 & 8); most of them had a level of motivation that ranged from high (31.31%) to very high (41.40%). Based on the findings, most common core students (74.14%) argued that they were highly motivated to learn English. Unlike common core learners, however, only 69% of first year baccalaureate learners demonstrated that they were highly motivated to learn the language. Yet, it was indicated that the number of second year baccalaureate students who were motivated to learn English increased (75%).



**Figure 6. Common core learners' level of motivation.**



**Figure 7. First year baccalaureate learners' level of motivation.**



**Figure 8. Second year baccalaureate learners' level of motivation.**

#### **4.2. Factors affecting students' motivation**

While the first research question attempted to measure the extent to which the level of motivation was affected by the school grade of the learners, the second question aimed at investigating the last variable's impact on the significance of the factors that influence the rise and fall in students' motivation. To answer the second research question, the study participants were asked to respond to questions in two sections, a section for the external motivating and demotivating factors that affect students' motivation to learn English and another section for the internal factors. The first section, about teacher and peer-related factors, was rated on a five-point scale (1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly disagree). In contrast, the second section was rated on a four-point scale (1 = Positively affects, 2 = Negatively affects, 3 = Does not affect, and 4 = Neutral).

##### **4.2.1. External factors**

###### **Teacher-related factors**

This research's results displayed several teacher-related factors influencing Moroccan students' motivation to learn English. However, their responses to the significance of those factors varied, to a certain extent, according to their school grade (see Table 2). The teaching of learning strategies was considered the most crucial factor that helped enhance motivation for the first year (92%) and second-year baccalaureate students (100%). Though common core learners stated that the previous factor was paramount (82.7%), they claimed that their teachers' use of real-life tasks was the major factor that positively impacted their motivation (94.8%). Those tasks were also deemed essential by first year (90%) and second year baccalaureate learners (85%) but to a lesser degree.

Another factor that was claimed to be critical was the use of humour, but the degree of its impact fluctuated according to the school grade of the learners. This research showed a rise in the importance of this factor in the enhancement of motivation as learners reached a higher school grade. While only 74.1% of common core students believed that humour was paramount, the percentage increased considerably for first-year (89%) and second-year baccalaureate students (95%). Providing learners with positive feedback was also regarded as a significant factor. According to the gathered data, 81.1% of common core learners agreed that this factor positively affected their motivation. Although the percentage did not increase considerably for first-year baccalaureate students (84%), it, to some extent, did for those in the third high school grade (95%). Moreover, the study's findings revealed that almost 70% of common core and first year baccalaureate students concurred that being given less homework could boost their motivation to learn English. This factor, nevertheless, was deemed less important by second year baccalaureate learners (55%).

**Table 2**  
**Teacher-Related Factors (All Levels)**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree				
	CC	1B	2B	CC	1B	2B	CC	1B	2B
Using real-life tasks	34.5%	44%	30%	60.3%	46%	55%	3.4%	6%	10%
Varying the mode of work	34.5%	39%	55%	43.1%	43%	35%	17.2%	12%	0%
Using humour	37.9%	55%	60%	36.2%	34%	35%	13.8%	8%	0%
Taking learners' learning styles into consideration	48.3%	55%	55%	39.7%	32%	30%	8.6%	11%	0%
Giving less homework	32.8%	34%	25%	37.9%	34%	30%	12.1%	21%	20%
Providing positive feedback	32.8%	51%	45%	48.3%	33%	50%	15.5%	9%	0%
Teaching learning strategies	44.8%	56%	60%	37.9%	36%	40%	13.8%	4%	0%
Listening to learners' personal worries	20.7%	27%	30%	22.4%	34%	10%	32.8 %	16%	25%

Note. CC = Common core; 1B = First year baccalaureate; 2B = Second year baccalaureate.

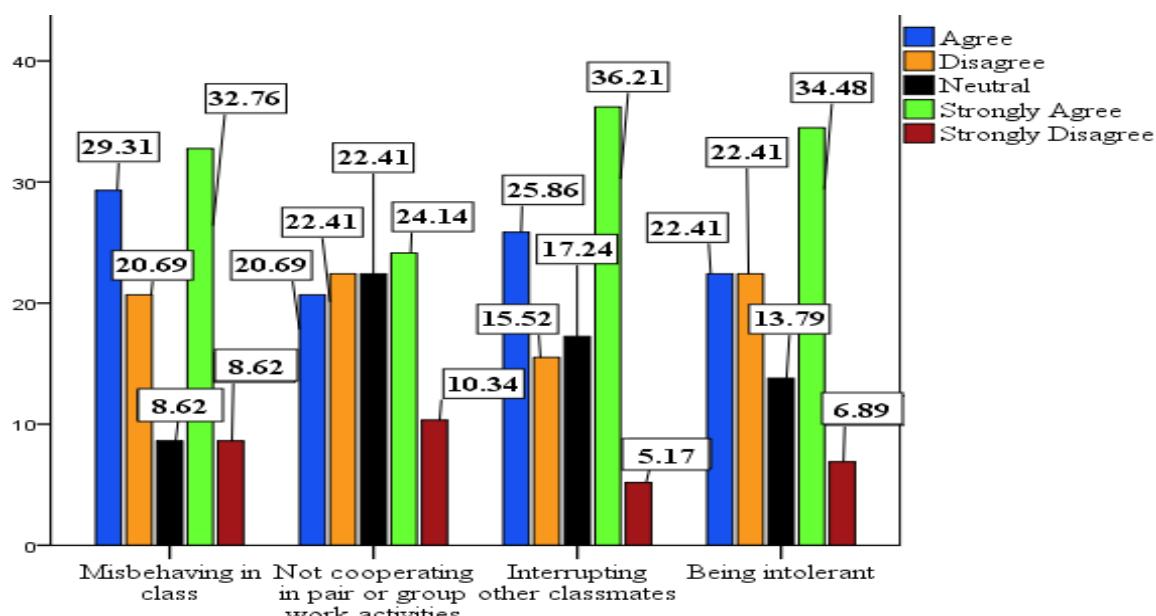
Unlike the previous motivating factors, the collected data indicated that listening to students' personal worries was less important. Almost 40% of first-grade and third-grade students argued that this factor affected their motivation positively, whereas 61% of second-grade learners had the same view, thereby displaying a substantial impact on the significance of this factor according to this grade. In comparison with the factor as mentioned earlier, the results demonstrated an increase in the number of learners who claimed the effectiveness of another external factor. 77.6% of common core learners stated that varying the mode of work in the teaching process was essential. 82 % of first year baccalaureate students, also, agreed

with this claim. A more noticeable rise in the import of the last factor was shown in the responses of second year baccalaureate students (90%). Nonetheless, the school grade seemed not to have a perceptible effect only on one teacher-related factor. Almost the same percentage of the learners (about 87%), in the three grades, stated that when their styles of learning were taken into account, their motivation to learn English increased.

### **Peer-related factors**

To help confirm or refute the influence of the school grade on the significance of the external factors that impact on Moroccan high school students' motivation to learn English, the participants of this research were asked to express the extent to which they agreed with four peer-related factors using a five-point scale (1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly disagree). The results of the study generally displayed the effect of the independent variable (see Figures 9, 10 & 11). The first factor was related to peers' misbehaviours in the English classroom. While the findings indicated that almost 60% of common core and second year baccalaureate students concurred that their classmates' disruptive behaviours affected their motivation to learn negatively, about half of the participants who were in the second grade of high school had the same belief.

The number of students who agreed that the interruption of their peers while participating in class was a demotivating factor is another example that showed the inconsequential effect of the school grade. About 62% of students in the first grade stated that this behaviour could be a demotivating factor, yet only 52% of those who were in the second grade and 55% in the third grade had the same viewpoint. Nevertheless, the influence of the school grade seemed more significant in the case of the third factor. Whilst almost 45% of common core learners presumed that the lack of cooperation of their classmates during pair or group work could demotivate them to learn English, the percentage increased to 53% for first year baccalaureate students and, more considerably, to 65% for those in the second year baccalaureate grade. Likewise, the results demonstrated that the learners' views on the importance of the fourth factor fluctuated substantially. The participants of this research were asked to rate the extent to which they concurred that the intolerance of their peers in the classroom could be a source of demotivation. While only 45% of first year baccalaureate learners claimed that this factor had a significant effect, about 57% of common core learners had the same opinion. The percentage rose more significantly to 70% for second year baccalaureate students.



**Figure 9. Peer-related factors (common core).**

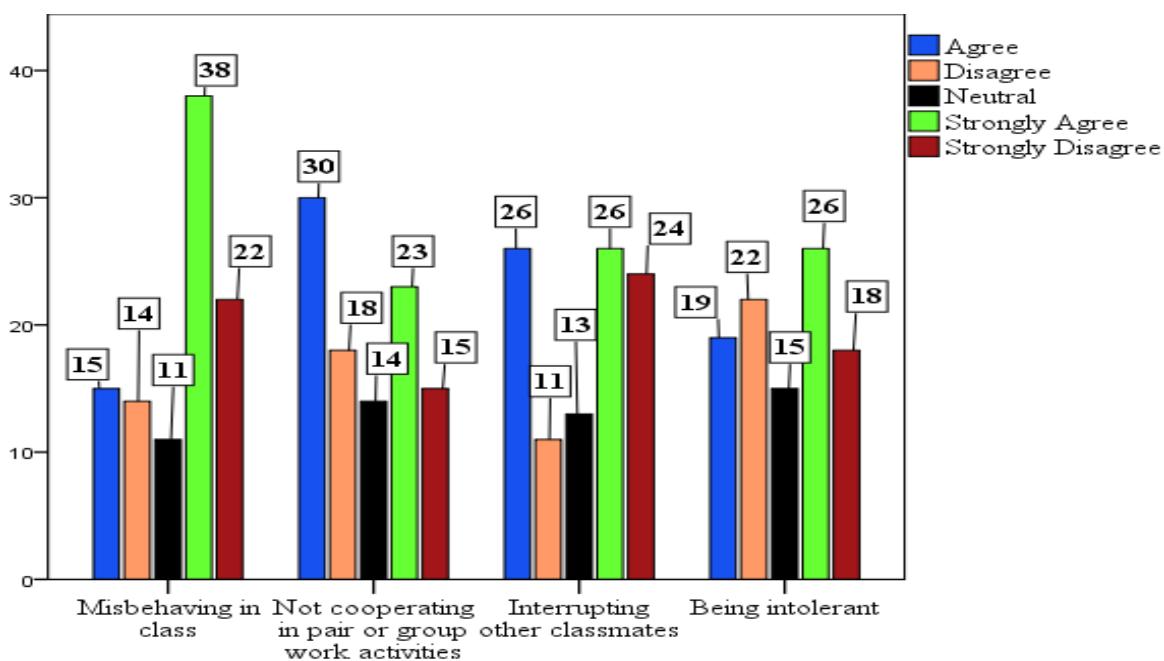


Figure 10. Peer-related factors (first year baccalaureate).

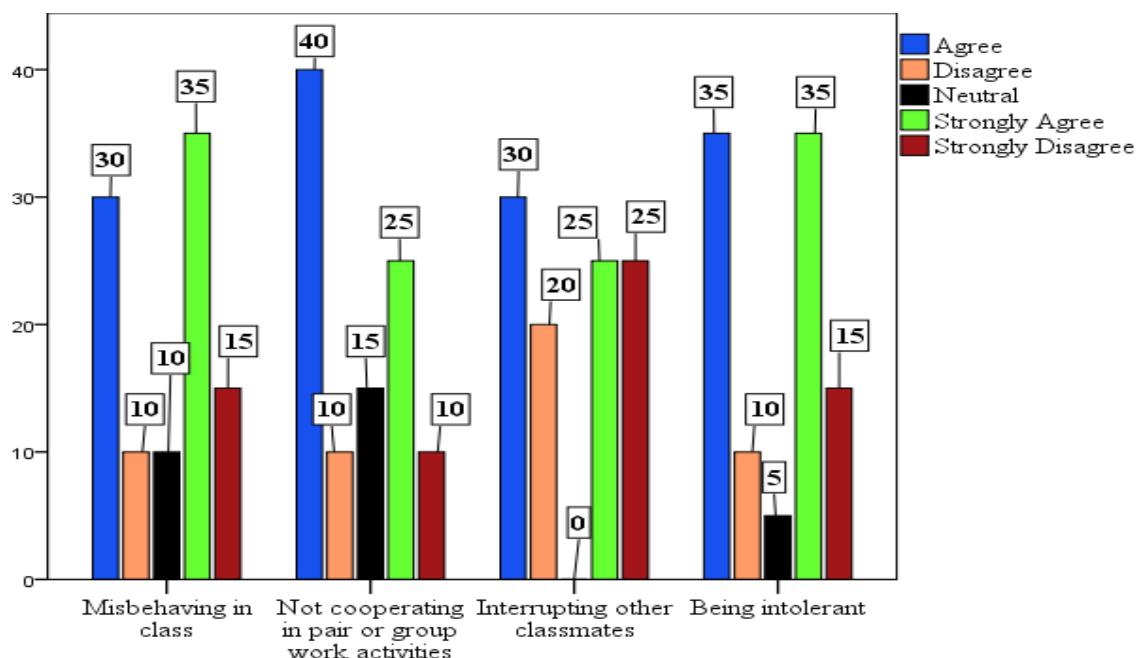


Figure 11. Peer-related factors (second year baccalaureate).

#### 4.2.2. Internal Factors

In this research, internal factors are used to refer to those factors that are directly related to the learner. To investigate whether this category of factors varies significantly according to the school grade of learners or not, respondents were asked to state the type of effect five internal factors could have on their motivation to learn English using a four-point scale (1 = Positively affects, 2 = Negatively affects, 3 = Does not affect, and 4 = Neutral). Broadly, the findings of the study revealed that internal factors were of paramount importance (see Table 3). The first factor was related to students' self-confidence. The majority of responses showed that having self-confidence was a critical motivating factor. Whilst 83% of second-year

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students argued that it affected their motivation to learn English positively, almost 90% of first-year and third-year students shared the same view. The second factor, furthermore, was about the influence of the lack of the basics of English on students' motivation. The results displayed that almost 62% of common core and first year baccalaureate learners believed that this factor had a negative effect on their motivation. The percentage, nonetheless, augmented substantially for second year baccalaureate learners (80%).

The three other internal factors were related to the learner's commitment to learning the target language. Students, for instance, were asked about the importance of preparing lessons in advance in rising their motivation. Most of the respondents claimed that this factor was crucial. 70% of first year baccalaureate learners stated that advance preparation for the English class helped in increasing their motivation. Similarly, almost 74% of learners in the first grade and 80% of those in the third grade believed in the significance of this factor. Based on these findings, it can be argued that the previous factor is not considerably influenced by the school grade of students. In addition, the regular revision of the lessons was considered an essential factor that could promote the level of motivation of the learners. 70% of Moroccan second-year students asserted that this factor had a positive impact on their motivation to learn English, whereas the percentage increased to 75% for third-year students and, more substantially, to almost 88% for first-year learners. The last internal factor that was related to the learners' commitment to learning the language was about seeking extra learning opportunities. The results of the study indicated that while all common core and second year baccalaureate learners assumed that this factor was indispensable to rising their motivation, the number of first year baccalaureate students who had the same opinion declined by 14%.

**Table 3.**  
**Internal Factors**

	Does not affect			Negatively affects			Neutral			Positively affects		
	CC	1Bac	2Bac	CC	1Bac	2Bac	CC	1Bac	2Bac	CC	1Bac	2Bac
Having self-confidence	6.9%	5%	5%	0%	7%	5%	1.7%	5%	0%	91.4%	83%	90%
Lack of the basics of the language	12.1%	5%	10%	62.1%	62%	80%	8.6%	6%	5%	17.2%	27%	5%
Preparing lessons in advance	8.6%	14%	20%	5.2%	9%	0%	12.1%	7%	0%	74.1%	70%	80%
Revising lessons regularly	1.7%	11%	20%	3.4%	9%	0%	6.9%	10%	5%	87.9%	70%	75%
Seeking extra learning opportunities	0%	4%	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%	2%	0%	100%	86%	100%

*Note.* CC = Common core; 1Bac = First year baccalaureate; 2Bac = Second year baccalaureate.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The results of this research asserted that in addition to the interest of Moroccan learners in learning English, the majority of them were motivated to learn this language. Though their level of motivation differed, most of the learners had a level that ranged from high to very high. Nonetheless, it was indicated that students' interest in learning a foreign language does not necessarily mean having a high level of motivation. This latter is affected by some variables that can result either in its rise or fall. Therefore, based on the findings displayed in the previous section, the school grade seemed to play a key role. This helps to refute the claim that the level

of motivation of learners is not influenced by this variable. For example, while the level of motivation ranging from moderate to very low did not exceed 19% for common core students, it reached 30% for first year baccalaureate students; however, only 20% of second year baccalaureate students argued having a moderate level, but no one claimed to have a low or very low level (see Figures 6, 7 & 8). Hence, the increase or decrease in the level of learners' motivation is the result of the presence of some internal and external factors.

The decrease in the students' motivation in the second grade of high school can be ascribed to several factors. The collected data stressed the importance of self-confidence in rising the motivation of those students (see Table 3). This confirms the results of the study conducted by Chambers (1993). The study indicated that the teachers attributed the students' low motivation to several factors, including self-confidence. Accordingly, the fall in the level of motivation of the second-grade learners could be due to, but not restricted to, the lack of this quality. The data also showed the significance of the psychological support given by the teacher for first year baccalaureate learners, in comparison with learners in the other grades, by listening to their personal worries. The absence of this kind of support, consequently, might lead to a decrease in their level of motivation. Further, there are other external factors that could explain this fall. These comprise mainly the dearth of training opportunities on how to learn, not considering the learners' learning styles and the use of tasks that do not match their wants (see Table 2). This conclusion supports the claims of various scholars like Kikuchi and Sakai (2009) and Lasagabaster, Doiz and Sierra (2014), to name a few.

The findings of the study highlighted the impact of the school grade on the import of some factors that affected Moroccan high school learners' motivation to learn English. This, as a result, rebuts the assumption that motivating learners to learn a second/foreign language can be approached in the same way for all grades. The variation in the degree of importance of those factors, nonetheless, can be due to some reasons. The gathered data, for instance, indicated that second year baccalaureate learners, compared to those in the other two grades, stressed the prominence of the factors that could impact on their psychology, including the use of humour by the teacher in the classroom and providing learners with positive feedback (see Table 2). This might be ascribed to the learners' need for a stress-free learning environment that would enable anxiety reduction and boost their motivation to learn, mainly because learners in this grade have to sit a national examination in English by the end of the second semester. Also, these external factors could be deemed crucial since they would allow an increase in students' self-confidence.

The results of this research demonstrated that internal factors are significant in the rise and fall in Moroccan high school students' motivation to learn English. Those factors, undoubtedly, have a direct effect on learners' intrinsic motivation. This orientation was favoured by several scholars (Harmer, 1991; Small, 1997; Brown, 2007). In a study carried out by Ramage (1990), it was shown that foreign language learners with an inner drive to continue their studies were highly motivated to meet the university entrance requirements compared to those who were driven by an external force. Nevertheless, the results of this study proved that the external factors, especially those related to the teacher's behaviour, the teaching style and the learning tasks, were also substantial, for they are the basic source of students' extrinsic motivation.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The current research aimed at examining the impact of the school grade on the significance of the factors that affect Moroccan high school learners' motivation to learn English. The results yielded several conclusions. The majority of Moroccan high school learners are proved to be interested in learning English. This implies that they are aware of the importance of not only learning this language but also learning other foreign languages. The learners' interest can have a positive effect on their motivation. Yet, it is insufficient to be

highly motivated to learn a second/foreign language. That is to say, the learner can be interested in learning a given language, but he or she may have a moderate level, or even less, of motivation to learn that language. Therefore, the rise and fall in the level of motivation of language learners are ascribed to some internal and external factors. According to this study, the significance of those factors hinges on the school grade of learners. In other words, although some factors are deemed crucial in all grades, others can eventuate in a more perceptible impact in a specific grade but not in another. Hence, it is of the utmost importance to consider the influence of this variable on the various motivating and demotivating factors, internal or external, that may have an effect on learners' motivation.

The results of this study revealed that both internal and external factors are consequential, and they are prerequisites for promoting intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Notwithstanding the multitude of evidence from theoretical and empirical research which asserts that the former orientation is of great import, the latter is also corroborated to be indispensable for second/foreign language acquisition. In addition, while most of the peer-related factors seem to have a negligible impact, the teachers' behaviour and their styles of teaching are critical external factors for promoting Moroccan high school learners' extrinsic motivation. However, because students with extrinsic orientation depend on the presence of external factors, which may have a negative influence (Brown, 2007), it is essential that educators, parents and the community, in general, contribute to promoting this orientation. The present research, nonetheless, did not take account of manifold factors, both internal and external, that may have a considerable impact on the motivation of second/foreign language learners. In addition, it disregarded other variables which can affect the significance of those factors, and thus the level of learners' motivation.

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