

Book Review

Demotivation in second language acquisition: Insights from Japan

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As Csizér (2017, p. 426) so aptly points out in her state-of-the-art overview of motivation research in second language acquisition (SLA), a “. . . potentially pivotal issue in ISLA [instructed second language acquisition] concerns the empirical investigation of students’ demotivation, that is students losing their motivation during the learning process.” When discussing future directions of motivational research, she makes the point that demotivation should be one of the key areas that specialists should investigate, and, following the suggestions of Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), she argues that such research should focus on the relationship of demotivation to more general motivational dispositions as well as personality traits, the situated nature of the construct, and the impact of demotivation on the validity of instruments used to tap motivation. Obviously, empirical investigations into demotivation have immense practical value as well since, irrespective of the specific context in which they teach, practitioners have to deal with learners’ demotivation on a regular basis, often being at a loss as to how to motivate students who gradually lose interest

in learning a foreign language, a phenomenon that has been well attested to in research (see e.g., Dörnyei, 2005; Pawlak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2018, for overviews). Thus, empirical studies of demotivation can be an important source of pedagogical implications, both with respect to the factors that are responsible for a decrease in learners' motivation and the ways in which such a trend can be counteracted with the help of judiciously applied motivational strategies. In the light of this, the book *Demotivation in Second Language Acquisition: Insights From Japan* makes a valuable contribution to the field of SLA by, on the one hand, advancing research on demotivation and, on the other, by forging so-much needed links between the outcomes of such research and classroom practice.

The volume is divided into ten chapters, but it is in fact composed of three distinct parts, that is the literature review reflecting theoretical perspectives on motivation and summarizing the findings of relevant studies, the description of the research projects that the author has carried out, sometimes in collaboration with colleagues, and the recapitulation of the main findings, accompanied by a discussion of pedagogical proposals and a consideration of directions for future research. The first part comprises Chapters 1-3, which respectively focus on such key issues as the definition of *demotivation* as opposed to *amotivation*, the main foci of previous research which are divided into attempting to identify demotivators, trace the process of demotivation and pin down strategies employed to ward off or reverse this negative state, leading to remotivation, and the role of demotivation in SLA in terms of both individual and contextual factors. Chapters 4-7 report the findings of research projects that have relied on quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods paradigms and have all been conducted in Japan. More specifically, Chapter 4 describes the process of using Rasch analysis and qualitative analysis in the construction of a questionnaire tapping demotivation as well as two models of the construct proposed on the basis of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses: a six-factor (i.e., teacher behavior, characteristics of classes, class environment, class materials, experience of failure, and loss of interest) and a four-factor solution (i.e., teacher behavior, class environment, experiences of difficulty, and loss of interest). Chapter 5 reports another quantitative study which investigated learners' and teachers' perceptions of demotivators with the help of standard multiple linear regression analysis and found the lack of statistically significant correlations between the ratings of the two groups. Chapter 6 provides a description of a largely qualitative study, following "a retrospective panel design" (De Vaus, 2002), in which secondary school learners were asked to reflect on demotivators that they experienced in three years of junior high school and three years of senior high school, focusing as well on the motivational evolution of two clearly demotivated students. Finally, Chapter 7 reports the results of a mixed-methods study which applied "a person-in-context relational view" (Ushioda, 2009), in which the data were collected by means of questionnaires, group interviews and

reflective journal entries. In contrast to the previous studies, it explored out-of-class motivation of four students majoring in nursing, focusing in particular on the intersections between motivational states and context, as well as the temporal dimension of motivation. In the last part of the book, Kukuchi synthesizes the results of the four research projects, also outlining their limitations (Chapter 8), illustrates how Dörnyei's (2001) framework of motivational strategies can be employed to deal with demotivation (Chapter 9), and discusses the directions in which the research on demotivation can most profitably be taken. In particular, he emphasizes the need to address different levels of demotivation (i.e., global, contextual and situational), to adhere to rigid methodological guidelines in empirical studies and to connect demotivation with the constructs of *ambivalence* (MacIntyre, Mackinnon, & Clément, 2009) and *disengagement* (Skinner, Kindermann, Connell, & Wellborn, 2009).

As mentioned above, the obvious strength of the book is that it touches on a crucial issue that has so far been underresearched and is therefore in need of empirical investigation, one that can yield important insights for the teaching and learning of second and foreign languages. In addition, however, there are several other merits for which the author should be commended. First, Kikuchi makes a successful attempt to disentangle the admittedly overlapping and somewhat confusing concepts of *demotivation*, *amotivation* and *remotivation*, and also manages to impose some structure on the existing research in the field. Second, the meticulous descriptions of the research procedures that were involved in the quantitative and qualitative analyses offer a point of reference for scholars wishing to develop and validate their own context-sensitive instruments tapping into different aspects of demotivation, to further explore the underlying structure of the construct, to correlate it with other variables, or to better understand changes in the motivational process over time. Third, particularly valuable for researchers are the honest discussion of the limitations of the four reported studies, the link to related concepts in the field (i.e., ambivalence and disengagement), the delineation of future research directions and the presentation of sound methodological guidelines for conducting such endeavors. Fourth, of great relevance to teachers are concrete suggestions as to how motivational strategies can be used to hinder demotivation at the level of creating basic motivational conditions, generating initial motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation (cf. Dörnyei, 2001).

This said, there are some aspects of Kikuchi's book that might make readers wish for more and are likely to leave them somewhat disappointed. For one thing, one can hardly escape the impression that the volume would have gained a lot if the literature review had been extended. For example, the discussion of the construct of motivation in Chapter 3 is limited, confined to just two pages, which is surprising in light of the fact that a good grasp of what constitutes motivation in learning additional languages is indispensable for better understanding of demotivation

as such. Particularly conspicuous is the absence from this section of even a cursory discussion of the theory of L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2009), all the more so that it provides the theoretical framework for the study described in Chapter 4. Apart from language anxiety, Kikuchi fails to relate demotivation to other individual difference variables such as willingness to communicate, beliefs, learning styles or learning strategies, although it stands to reason that such factors may determine whether or not what transpires in the classroom is seen as motivating or demotivating. One would also expect the theoretical part to include a more thorough overview of studies of motivational change which are clearly pertinent to demotivation and the results of which would have helped the interpretation of students' reflections on the ups and down in their motivation in Chapter 6. The studies reported in the empirical part suffer from a number of methodological limitations, related, among other things, to the ways in which motivation is measured or doubts concerning whether learners are capable of providing a valid retrospective representation of demotivators in different school grades. What should be emphasized, however, is that the author openly admits that the research projects are not free from flaws and discusses ways in which such shortcomings could be avoided in the future.

Despite such gaps, limitations or maybe just the musings of one reader whose appetite has been whetted but not fully satisfied, there can be little doubt that the book *Demotivation in Second Language Acquisition: Insights From Japan* represents an urgently needed addition to the literature on the role of motivation in learning additional languages. In the conclusion Kikuchi writes that "it is hoped that this book will serve as a partial foundation for a better understanding of the causes of demotivation in Japanese English teaching context" (p. 130). In my view, though, Kikuchi has not only succeeded in accomplishing this goal but has also achieved much more by enhancing our awareness of the concept of demotivation, its causes and manifestations, thus laying the requisite groundwork for research projects extending far beyond the Japanese context. I am convinced that, thanks to sound categorization of available studies, exemplary description of research procedures and concrete suggestions for future empirical investigations, the book will constitute a must-read for anyone intending to further examine the role of demotivation in learning second and foreign languages.

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