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FACTORS INFLUENCING L2 (ENGLISH) READING DEMOTIVATION AMONG INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines the primary factors influencing reading de-motivation among 7 intermediate-level students of govt. MAO Graduate College, Lahore. This study looks at why intermediate students lose interest in reading. Reading is significant for learning, but many students in Pakistan struggle to enjoy it. To understand why this happens, this qualitative study collected data using face-to-face interviews with 6 intermediate students and class observations during English lessons. The results show that students become demotivated mainly because classes focus too much on passing exams rather than understanding the text. In addition, students find textbook topics boring, teachers mostly talk without inspiring discussion, and school libraries lack interesting books. Because of these issues, students view reading as a stressful routine instead of a helpful activity. To fix this, colleges need to update their textbooks, improve teaching methods, and provide better reading materials.

Keywords: *Intermediate Students, Public Education in Pakistan, Qualitative Case Study, Reading De-Motivation, Second-Language Reading.*

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1. Introduction

Reading is a dynamic skill (Doepker & Ortlieb, 2011)for college students, especially in Pakistan where English plays an imperative role in higher education and future career success. However, many students in Pakistani intermediate colleges struggle to maintain their interest in reading English texts. Instead of finding reading helpful or enjoyable, a large number of students feel disconnected and demotivated during their studies.

Reading in English is considered to be a part of a larger problem in language education. Many students in schools slowly lose their determination to learn English as time goes on, making demotivation a common challenge in classrooms. To address this increasing concern, researchers need to identify what Dörnyei (2001) calls the primary "motivational pitfalls and danger zones" that cause students to avert from learning. While general motivation has been studied widely, reading demotivation among intermediate students in local public colleges need more attention.

Intermediate students at Government MAO Graduate College Lahore face explicit academic demands. At this level, students must prepare for board examinations that profoundly focus on rote learning and exam performance. This high-pressure atmosphere can change how students view reading— rotating it from an appealing activity into a stressful task. Understanding why students become demotivated is crucial for teachers, curriculum designers, and college administrators who want to advance learning outcomes.

1.1. Background of the Study

English holds a crucial position in the education system (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). It is taught as an obligatory subject at the intermediate level and helps as a gateway to higher education and future career success. For intermediate students (Grade 11 and 12), attaining strong reading skills in English is essential for understanding academic textbooks, passing board examinations, and preparing for upcoming studies.

Despite its importance, reading education in public colleges often faces serious challenges. Classroom practices are commonly restricted to prescribed textbooks, paraphrase methods, and rote memorization focused only on passing high-stakes examinations. Consequently, reading is hardly ever presented as an enjoyable or meaningful activity. Over time, these inflexible practices cause many students at public institutions like Govt. MAO Graduate College Lahore to lose their concentration and enthusiasm for reading.

1.2. Problem Statement

Reading is one of the most useful things to do in a foreign language, especially for learning vocabulary such as common collocation, and for getting a feel for correct grammar. However, reading is often something that is difficult, and even more difficult to do consistently and to make sure you learn from (Kirchhoff, 2013). It is a reason that

reading in English is one of the major issues (Fawson & Moore, 1999). This matter is part of a broader challenge in language education. Many students in schools gradually drop their drive to learn English as time passes by, making demotivation a mutual problem in classrooms. To address this rising concern, researchers need to recognize what Dörnyei (2001) calls the primary "motivational pitfalls and danger zones" that cause students to turn away from learning. While general motivation has been studied widely, reading demotivation among intermediate students in local public colleges needs more focused attention. Intermediate students of Govt. MAO Graduate College Lahore face specific academic pressures, large class sizes, and inadequate library resources. When reading is treated only as a stressful exam obligation, student engagement drops significantly. Identifying why students become demotivated is essential for teachers and administrators who want to shape better learning environments.

1.3. Aims of the study

The main purpose of this qualitative study is to discover the factors that influence reading demotivation among intermediate students at Govt. MAO Graduate College Lahore. By focusing on student perceptions and actual classroom environments, this study pursues to understand what depresses students from reading in English.

1.4. Research Objectives

To accomplish this main goal, the study sets out the following specific objectives:

1. To classify the primary exterior factors that contribute to reading demotivation among intermediate English students.
2. To examine how outdated teaching practices and prescribed board textbooks impact student interest in reading.
3. To explore how intermediate students, define their personal experiences and daily fights with reading in public college classrooms.

1.5. Research Questions

To fulfill these objectives, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the chief external factors that lead to reading demotivation among intermediate students at Govt. MAO College Lahore?
2. How do existing teaching methods and textbook materials contribute to students' absence of interest in English reading?
3. How do intermediate students view and define their personal experiences with reading demotivation in their English classes?

1.6. Significance of the study

This study is significant because it highlights the everyday challenges that intermediate students experience in public colleges in Lahore. The findings can help English teachers adjust their classroom techniques, encourage textbook boards to design more relatable reading materials, and guide college libraries to offer books that match

student interests. Ultimately, identifying these demotivating factors is the first step toward building better reading habits among college learners.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews the relevant literature and theoretical frameworks related to English reading motivation and demotivation. It begins by analyzing the current status of English reading in Pakistan, led by key theories on reading motivation, and concludes with a discussion on the concept of demotivation in second-language learning.

2.1. English Reading Status in Pakistan

In Pakistan, the current English reading status among intermediate and undergraduate students remains massively functional and exam-oriented rather than habitual or pleasure-driven. While English holds appraising academic and professional value as a second language, recent databased studies reveal that a majority of student's exhibit low to moderate engagement with English reading materials outside their required course texts (Biancarosa & Griffiths, 2012). Traditional teaching practices in public institutions—which rely heavily on grammar-translation methods, surface-level comprehension, and rote learning for board examinations—often treat reading as a stressful academic task rather than a mutual process. Consequently, limited exposure to contemporary reading materials, conjugated with insufficient college library infrastructure and exam-driven pressures, contributes to widespread reading demotivation among college learners across the country.

2.2. Motivation

In language education, motivation is a key psychological component that drives students to engage with texts and build strong reading habits. It decides not only whether a student chooses to read, but also how much effort and perseverance they put into understanding a text. Reading motivation is generally divided into two main types: intrinsic motivation (reading for personal enjoyment, curiosity, or interest) and extrinsic motivation (reading to achieve good grades, pass board examinations, or fulfill teacher expectations).

Although intrinsic motivation is an important type of motivation, it is not the only type or even the only type of self-determined motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Indeed, much of what people do is not, strictly speaking, intrinsically motivated, especially after early childhood when the fiefdom to be intrinsically motivated is increasingly curtailed by social pressures to do activities that are not interesting (Brankaert et al., 2009).

Theoretical models highlight that motivation is directly tied to active learning. According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000). According to Mori (2002) motivated readers are engaged readers who actively use comprehension strategies, seek out new information, and read more frequently both inside and outside the classroom. When students are intrinsically motivated, they view reading as a meaningful and rewarding process rather

than a stressful task. However, when classroom environments rely almost solely on extrinsic rewards like exam scores, students may struggle to build a lasting personal interest in reading.

2.3. Grabe (2009) and L2 Reading motivation

While general reading theories explain how motivation works, understanding reading in a second language expects to look closely at language-specific challenges. Second language (L2) reading implies extra cognitive effort, such as learning new vocabulary, mastering complex grammar, and overcoming reading anxiety.

A leading expert in second language reading, Grabe (2009), emphasizes that motivation is essential for students to become fluent, independent, and successful readers in English. According to Grabe (2009), learners who lack intrinsic motivation often struggle to process texts deeply because they only read when forced by assignments or tests. On the other hand, highly motivated L2 readers read more volume, build larger vocabulary faster, and develop stronger reading comprehension strategies over time. Grabe points out that while extrinsic factors like grades can encourage temporary reading effort, long-term reading success depends on helping students build a positive attitude and personal purpose toward reading in English.

2.4. Demotivation in Reading

While motivation explains what drives students to read, demotivation looks at the negative components that reduce or extinguish a student's desire to read. In language classrooms, demotivation does not mean a total absence of motivation from the start; rather, it refers to a process where external classroom obstacles cause a student's existing interest to fade over time.

A central researcher in this area, Dörnyei (2001), defines demotivation as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action" (p. 143). In the context of English reading, these external forces can include repetitive teaching methods, heavy emphasis on rote memorization for board exams, uninteresting textbook topics, and contradictory learning environments.

Dörnyei (2001) separate demotives (external factors) from internal obstacles (such as low confidence or personal anxiety), noting that demotivation is almost always triggered by environmental or social influences within the educational setting. When intermediate students face continuous exam pressure and inflexible reading tasks without engaging or relatable content, reading shifts from an active learning process into a stressful, demotivating chore. Understanding these specific external triggers is necessary for identifying why intermediate learners at public institutions like Govt. MAO College Lahore lose their interest in English reading.

2.5. Empirical studies on Reading Demotivation in Pakistan

Recent research in Pakistani public sector education highlights several continual factors that lead to student demotivation in English language learning. Studies conducted in intermediate and college-level settings show that classroom instruction is preponderantly teacher-centered, relying heavily on traditional grammar-translation methods (GTM) and real comprehension.

According to local researchers, the original cause of reading demotivation among college students is the high-stakes examination system. Because intermediate board examinations assess students mainly on memorized answers and translation of prescribed textbook passages, teachers naturally adjust their instructions to meet exam requirements. As a result, students are rarely encouraged to practice extensive reading, analyze texts critically, or read materials outside their syllabus.

Furthermore, structural limitations within public institutions—such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient library facilities, and a lack of modern reading materials—further discourage students from engaging with English texts. When students realize that reading is restricted to passive memorization without personal relevance or real-world application, their initial interest in learning the language gradually decreases, leading to academic demotivation.

While present literature discusses English language learning challenges in Pakistan predominantly, there remains a need for focused qualitative research on reading demotivation specifically among intermediate students in public colleges like Govt. MAO College Lahore. By using semi structured interviews and classroom observations, this study fills that gap by providing direct insights into how these external factors impact real students in their daily academic lives.

3. Research Methodology

This section presents the qualitative methodology used to examine the factors influencing reading demotivation among intermediate students at Govt. MAO College Lahore. It details the research approach, population, sampling procedures, data collection instruments, data analysis techniques, and findings framework based on established academic research models.

3.1. Research Approach: Qualitative Case Study

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach. A qualitative approach is ideal for exploring intricate human experiences, attitudes, and contextual behaviors in real-world educational environments. Following Yin (1994, 2009), a case study design allows for an indepth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not evident or clear. In this research, Govt. MAO Graduate College Lahore serves as the bounded case to examine student demotivation in English reading classes.

3.2. Population

The target population for this study consists of:

Primary Population: Intermediate students enrolled at Govt. MAO College Lahore.

Broader Context: Pakistani intermediate students studying English as a compulsory subject within the public college system.

3.3. Sampling and Participant Selection

In accordance with Creswell (2013), a purposeful sampling technique was used to select participants who could provide rich, detailed, and relevant information regarding reading demotivation.

Sample: A total of 6 intermediate students from Govt. MAO College Lahore.

(Note: The researcher conducting the study is a BS English Literature student).

Purposeful sampling ensured that the selected intermediate students had direct experience with the challenges, textbook limitations, and classroom dynamics that affect reading motivation. Data Collection Instruments

To collect qualitative data and ensure data navigation, two primary research instruments were used:

Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducted individually with the 6 intermediate student participants using open-ended questions to explore their personal experiences, struggles, and their understandings regarding English reading tasks.

Classroom Observations: Direct observations carried out during regular English periods to record actual classroom instruction, student participation levels, teacher-student communication, and textbook usage.

4. Data Analysis

The collected qualitative data were analyzed manually through thematic analysis and coding. Field notes from classroom observations and transcripts from semi-structured interviews were methodically reviewed line by line to generate initial codes. Related codes were then grouped into major thematic categories that reflect the core causes of student demotivation.

5. Framework for Findings

Following the structural notes for presenting the results, the Findings section directly agrees with the study's core research questions. The findings repeat and answer each research question systematically using the originated themes, interview excerpts, and observational evidence.

6. Findings

This section presents the findings derived from the qualitative data gathered through semi structured interviews with 6 intermediate students and direct classroom observations at Govt. MAO Graduate College Lahore. The data were analyzed manually using thematic analysis and coding. In accordance with the study’s design, the findings are

organized directly under each research question to provide clear, systematic answers. Pseudonyms (Student A to Student F) are used to maintain participant obscurity.

Findings Structured by Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the main external factors that lead to reading demotivation among intermediate students at Govt. MAO College Lahore?

Findings: The data exposed that reading demotivation among intermediate students is predominantly caused by external environmental factors (demotives) within the public college system rather than an inborn lack of interest. Three main external factors appeared from the manual coding process:

1. Heavy Examination Pressure: Students reported that their entire academic routine revolves around preparing for high-stakes board examinations. Because board exams reward memorization, reading comprehension or pleasure is viewed as unnecessary.

a. Student Excerpt: Student A stated, "We only read passages to memorize answers for board exams. No one reads to understand because marks are the only goal."

2. Outdated and Uninteresting Textbooks: The prescribed provincial textbook materials were consistently quoted as dry and disconnected from modern life.

a. Student Excerpt: Student B noted, "The textbook stories feel very old and boring. It is hard to stay motivated when you cannot relate to anything in the book."

3. Institutional Constraints: Large class sizes (often exceeding 60 students per period) and limited access to appealing library books create an environment where reading engagement cannot easily develop.

Research Question 2: How do current teaching methods and textbook materials contribute to students' lack of interest in English reading?

Findings: Classroom observations and interview responses demonstrated that traditional teaching practices directly contribute to student detachment during reading lessons.

Teacher-Centered Instruction and Translation: Field notes from classroom observations showed that English periods rely heavily on teacher-led lecturing and lineby-line translation into Urdu. Students remain passive listeners while the teacher reads and explains everything.

a. Student Excerpt: Student E explained, "Our teacher reads and translates the lines himself while we just sit and copy notes. When class is so passive, reading feels like a dull chore."

Focus on Rote Memorization over Strategy: Teachers focus on solving end-of-chapter questions rather than teaching active reading comprehension strategies (such as previewing, predicting, or summarizing).

Rigid Syllabus Coverage: Because teachers are under strict timelines to cover the prescribed board syllabus, there is no space for supplementary reading materials, group reading activities, or open discussions.

Research Question 3: How do intermediate students view and describe their personal experiences with reading demotivation in their English classes?

Findings: Interviews provided a personal look into how intermediate students feel during their daily English reading periods.

1. Feelings of Frustration and Academic Stress: Students expressed that reading in class feels like a stressful, mechanical task rather than a rewarding learning experience.

a. Student Excerpt: Student D shared, "Reading English in class gives me anxiety because the vocabulary is tough and we are only tested on memorizing long answers."

2. Loss of Personal Reading Habits: Several participants mentioned that while they used to enjoy reading short stories or news articles in earlier grades, the rigid exam system at the intermediate level destroyed their desire to read independently.

a. Student Excerpt: Student C remarked, "I stopped reading anything outside my college books because if it doesn't give me board exam marks, it feels like a waste of time."

7. Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the factors causing reading demotivation among intermediate students at Govt. MAO College Lahore. By analyzing data from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, the study revealed several important insights that answer the research questions:

The Dominance of Examination Pressure: The findings show that high-stakes board examinations are the single biggest external demotive for students. As Dörnyei (2001) explains, external environmental pressures can severely crush a learner's motivation over time. Because the public education system rewards rote memorization and literal translation over actual comprehension, students view reading as a tool solely for passing exams rather than a valuable life skill.

The Mismatch in Textbook Content and Teaching Methods: The data confirmed that traditional, teacher-centered classrooms—where instructors translate paragraphs line-byline while students sit passively—fail to foster engagement. This directly opposes Guthrie and Wigfield's (2000) theory, which highlights that reading engagement requires active student participation, curiosity, and relatable content. Furthermore, Grabe's (2009) principles of L2 reading emphasize that second-language learners need wide exposure and intrinsic interest to build fluency; however, the rigid and outdated textbook content at the intermediate level actively blocks this process.

Reading motivation substances. Far too numerous students in Pakistan can read, but do not choose to do so. They are not motivated to make the time for it in their lives. Perhaps they have had negative reading experiences in the past? Perhaps they were never

read to at home? Perhaps they struggled with reading (and still do)? Or perhaps they have simply not yet found what reading is good for – what's in it for them.

These Pakistani students need well informed and reflective Reading Teachers who are determined to inspire and engage every single pupil as a reader. Such educators, who are readers in their personal lives and teachers of reading in their professional lives, constantly reflect on reading and being a reader in order to enrich their provision and more effectively nurture recreational reading.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, reading demotivation among intermediate students at Govt. MAO College Lahore is not caused by student laziness or a lack of capability. Instead, it is the result of external systemic barriers. Rigid provincial textbooks, exam-driven teaching styles, overcrowded classrooms, and an over-reliance on memorization turn English reading into a stressful, mechanical task. If public colleges want to help students build strong reading habits, the focus must shift from mere exam preparation to meaningful, engaging, and student-centered reading practices.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following practical recommendations are proposed:

Update Curriculum and Reading Materials: Textbook boards should incorporate modern, relatable, and culturally relevant reading materials alongside traditional texts to spark student interest.

Promote Interactive Teaching Practices: English instructors in public colleges should move away from purely teacher-centered translation methods and introduce interactive activities, such as group discussions, silent reading sessions, and open-ended text analysis.

Reduce High-Stakes Exam Pressure: Assessment policies at the intermediate level should place greater emphasis on critical thinking and reading comprehension rather than rote memorization of textbook answers.

Improve Library Access and Encouragement: College administrations should upgrade library resources and actively encourage students to explore English books, magazines, and articles outside the formal syllabus.

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