

# Assessment of Students' Motivation in Learning English as a Common Course: Focusing on Debre Markos' University Students

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this research was to determine factors that affect students' motivation in learning English as a common course at Debre Markos University focusing on first year students majoring in different fields. To achieve the above purpose, qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. For this study, ten lecturers were assigned to collect data and 150 students were assigned to fill the questionnaire and ten students were selected to be interviewed. The obtained data from the questionnaire was analyzed by using percentages. On the other hand, the data obtained from interview was analyzed qualitatively under the heading of similar themes. The findings of this study revealed that many of the students liked to learn English but they didn't give enough time to it as other courses; therefore, their motivation is not intrinsic and students who are intrinsically motivated perform much better academically than students who are extrinsically motivated. Extrinsically motivated students might do a good job or perform well to achieve a certain goal, but it does not keep them motivated for long-term and overall performance does not change or is consistent. They might perform very well in one quiz to achieve a certain goal and then next quiz might show poor performance because their motivation is external.*

**Keywords:** Motivation, Demotivation, Common Course, Superior Performance

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English language has been increasingly important in education, international trade and cooperation. It is used as a medium of instruction in Ethiopian higher institutions; therefore, students should be motivated to improve their competence in English language. Motivation plays a great role to learn a language, especially foreign language. Different scholars define motivation concerned with goals to do something. Williams and Burden (1997) define it as a state of cognitive arousal (internal drive) pushing learners to do things.

As it is stated by Genesee and Upshur, (1996) that instructional practices include the actual strategies, materials, activities and tasks used by teachers and students in the classroom. It is necessary to consider classroom practices separate from plans because what is planned may not always occur in the classroom. Teachers may not implement instructional plans as prescribed for a variety of reasons—they do not

understand well; the plans are poorly described and, therefore, cannot be implemented unambiguously; teachers do not agree with the pedagogical, linguistic or psychological principles underlying them; or they interpret them in ways that were not foreseen by the course curriculum designers. Moreover, classroom practice may not be preceded according to plan because the students themselves may not react as expected. It is important that classroom-based evaluation to be take into account what actually happens in the class rather than simply what is supposed to happen. It is unfair to assess student achievement with reference to instructional plans, including objectives, if these do not adequately represent what actually takes place in class. It is also important to compare instructional practices with instructional plans in order to determine where things are going as planned in class and to decide what changes are needed if they are not. From the above ideas, it may possible to say that motivation should be

taken in to account to accomplish any teaching learning activity effectively and successfully, and the teacher should design immediate plan according to the current situation to create motivation.

Research results; for example, (Dörnyei and Otto, 1998) indicate that motivation is one of the main factors in an individual's success in developing a second or foreign language.

Recently, researchers have shifted their attention to demotivation which is "another side of motivation." Demotivation strongly affects students' foreign language learning motivation. Recognizing and removing barriers can have a marked effect on motivation and attention to learning in general and ESL/EFL learning in particular. Demotivating factors are essential factors which negatively influence the learner's attitudes and behaviors and hence lead to undesired learning outcomes. As Trang and Baldauf (2007) stated: "demotivation has a negative impact on students, preventing them from gaining expected learning outcomes".

According to Dörnyei (1998), nine demotivating factors were identified among learners of a foreign language. These are listed below in order of frequency (i)-teachers' personalities, commitments, competence, teaching methods (ii)- inadequate school facilities (e.g. very large classes, not the right level) (iii)- reduced self-confidence due to their experience of failure or success (iv)- negative attitude toward the foreign language studied (v)-compulsory nature of the foreign language study (vi)-interference of another foreign language that pupils are studying (vii)-negative attitude toward the community of the foreign language spoken (viii)-attitudes of group members (ix)- coursebooks. From my own experience, I agree that the above factors can contribute a lion's share of students' achievement in academic aspects.

As it is mentioned by Yinger (2003) that English teachers should make sure that students who usually work in pairs or in groups to carry out language tasks are not only composed of low English proficiency level. This shows that the teacher is expected to create a group or pairs of students by mixing students with different performances. This may encourage students to help one another and create communicative situation in the classroom. Most studies report a high correlation between motivation and achievement, and this correlation is taken as evidence that a highly motivated student will do well in school. Of course the relationship may be in the opposite direction from that which is commonly assumed. In other words, it may be superior achievement that enhances motivation rather than high motivation leading to superior performance (Nunan and Lamb, 1996).

Since it is important to conduct a research on students' motivation to learn English language common courses at Debre Markos University focusing on first year students in order to find out the deep-rooted problems

of motivation to enhance and apply their of English language competence. Therefore, in this study an attempt was made to answer the following *Research Questions*.

1. Why are students not motivated to do activities designed by the course material and given by their instructors?
2. How is the course material prepared to impress the students' interests and needs with regard to their level of understanding?
3. How do students feel on the method of presentation of English common courses?
4. What are the students' interests to learn English as a common course?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Design of the study

Descriptive method was employed on the assumption that it was more appropriate. Descriptive method involves describing and interpreting events, conditions, or situations of the present. It describes and interprets what is happening in the classroom. In other words, it is primarily concerned with the present, although it often considers past events and influences as they relate to current conditions (Best and Kahn, 1999). More specifically, descriptive research is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident, or trends that are developing. Generally, findings and conclusions were applied only to the sample or population that was studied. Descriptive research can use qualitative or quantitative methods to describe or interpret a current event, condition or situation. In some cases, qualitative and quantitative research methods are combined or blended. To solve the problems of validity (multiple methods such as questionnaire and interview) sources of data called triangulation was used.

### 2.2. Participants of the study

For this study, the sample population was lectures and first year students in Debre Markos University. Purposive sampling was applied in order to get intended information. Ten lecturers among forty staff members were chosen and they were chosen by the researcher since they were his intimate friends, and 150 students among selected ten sections from different departments were assigned to fill the questionnaire. Lectures helped me by collecting data from students' questionnaire. In addition ten students, five male and five female were interviewed by the researcher.

### 2.3. Data Collection Instruments

Data for this study was collected through questionnaire and interview. To gather data for the study questionnaire and an interview were designed and issued to the respondents to be filled in. In this study, the developments of research tools (questionnaires and interview) were undergone through the following different stages. Firstly, attempts were made to construct all the questionnaires and interview items

based on the research questions. After this, the items were given to two of my colleagues so as to get valuable comments and criticisms on the strengths and weaknesses of the items. Based on the comments obtained, necessary modifications were made.

### 2.3.1. Questionnaire

According to Best and Kahan (1989) and Sharma (2000), a questionnaire enables a researcher to collect data from large groups of individuals within a short period of time. The questionnaire was adapted from Oxford (1990), and distributed to chosen first year students to give their responses. The questionnaire has two parts. The first part of the questionnaire was intended to gather background information of the respondents. The second part of the questionnaire was consist of items that are intended to examine students' motivation with regard to their previous and present experience in teaching/ learning of English language classroom activities. The instruments were validated and developed as follows: before the actual data collection is started; the instruments were given to colleagues so as to get valuable comments and criticisms on the strengths and weaknesses of the items. Based on the comments obtained, necessary modifications were made.

Students' questionnaire had only close-ended questions with items intended to get information about the explicit explanation of students' motivation to learn English common courses and authenticity of lesson presentation, to evaluate overall factors of their motivation. The items of the questionnaire were adapted from the review of the related literature. An attempt was made to present the closed ended questionnaire items in the form of multiple choices using Likert's rating scale to enable the participants complete easily.

### 2.3.2. Interview

Interview was another research tool of this study. It is believed that the use of the interview would make the research finding more reliable. Arksey and Knight

(1999) suggest that the interview method helps to obtain more information from participants by involving each of them in a detailed conversation. In addition, Seliger and Shohamy (1989) state, the purpose of interview is to obtain data by actually talking to the respondents. Structured and Semi-structured interview was used to gather more detail, flexible and in-depth data about students' motivation in relation to learning English as a common course. To make the interview manageable, only 10 students (five males and five females) were selected using purposive sampling technique.

### 2.4. Data Analyses

Students who participated in the study had been identified from the collected questionnaire and the data were presented in tabular form. Close ended questions which were numerical data were interpreted quantitatively by frequency of responses and percentile scale, and conclusions were reached based on the data. The results of the data were explained after each table in paragraphs. On the other hand, the data collected by structured and semi structured interview questions were also interpreted qualitatively according to their nature.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents and interprets the data collected through different tools. The data which are obtained from students' responses to the questionnaire and students' interview responses are presented. As stated earlier, the purpose of the study was to assess students' motivation in learning English as a common course: focusing on Debre Markos University students. The data had been tabulated, discussed, analyzed and interpreted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. After analysis, attempts were made to give answers for each of the basic research questions raised in chapter one.

### 3.1. Analysis of Students Questionnaire

#### 3.1.1. Importance of English at the university

		Students' response under each rating scale									
Items		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
1.	I study English because I must pass the university examination.	8	5.3%	15	10%	7	4.7%	46	30.7%	74	49.3%
2.	I study English because I need to know it very well and apply for educational purposes	0	0%	8	5.3%	7	4.7%	47	31.3%	88	55.3%
3.	I study English because it is the language of instruction at higher institutions.	5	3.3%	13	8.7%	12	8%	48	32%	72	48%
4.	I study English because it is required at universities to learn different courses.	0	0%	6	4%	5	3.3%	49	32.7%	90	60%

English language is the medium of instruction in Ethiopia starting from lower grades up to higher institutions. When students join university, English language is currently given to them as a common

course. Students' confidence and motivation is very important to achieve the goal as it is mentioned by (Atsuta 2003).

		Students' response under each rating scale									
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
1.	I study English because I must pass the university examination.	8	5.3%	15	10%	7	4.7%	46	30.7%	74	49.3%

The above request assesses that the responses of students regarding English language as a common course, and their motivation to study it. The majority of the respondents 46 (30.7%) and; 74(49.3%) confirmed that they agree and strongly agree respectively. From the above data, it could be possible to conclude that the majority of the respondents study English course to pass the expected exam. Whereas some of the students responded 8 (5.3%) strongly disagree and 15 (10%) disagree that they learn as to pass English exam and for the sake of the knowledge of the language. The rest 7 (10%) couldn't decide to say agree or disagree that

they study English for the purpose of passing the exam or getting knowledge. This has direct relation to the students' motivation to learn the language, and students have their own role for classroom authenticity and reality, Breen (1985). According to the interview, almost all of the students confirmed that they didn't give enough time and focus for English language course. They study the course to pass the exam, and they lack motivation. Williams and Burden (1997) define motivation as a state of cognitive arousal (internal drive) pushing learners to do things.

		Students' response under each rating scale									
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
2.	I study English because I need to know it very well and apply for educational purposes	0	0%	8	5.3%	7	4.7%	47	31.3%	88	55.3%

When we look at item no 2, 88 (55.3%) the subjects strongly agree and 47 (31.3%) agree that students like to know the language very well and apply for educational purposes. In fact, this idea was reflected by students during interview that they want to know English well but they didn't give more attention and

motivation. On the other hand, 8 (5.3%) disagree to the importance of learning English language and 7 (4.7%) couldn't decide on the issue. Generally the majority of the respondents assured that they need to know English well and apply for educational purposes.

		Students' response under each rating scale									
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
3.	I study English because it is the language of instruction at higher institutions.	5	3.3%	13	8.7%	12	8%	48	32%	72	48%

As it is indicated in the data above on item No 3, the majority of the subjects: 72 (48%) strongly agree and 48 (32%) of them agree that they study English because it is the language of instruction at higher institutions. On the contrary, 5 (3.3%) of the respondents strongly disagree and 13 (8.7%) of them

couldn't decide. In addition, students assured that they study English since it can help them to learn other courses easily. Therefore, it can be deduce that being the language of instruction at higher institutions is the main factor to study English language.

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
4	I study English because it is required at universities to learn different courses.	0	0%	6	4%	5	3.3%	49	32.7%	90	60%

As far as item No.4 is concerned, the majority of the students, 90 (60%) strongly agree and 49 (32.7%) agree that they study English because it is required at universities to learn different courses. From the above data, it is possible to summarize that English language

is very important at the university to study different courses and to apply for educational purposes in addition to be given as a single course. Similar ideas were suggested from the interviewees.

### 3.1.2. Importance of learning English after graduation

Table 2

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Items	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
5.	I study English because I will need it for my future work	5	3.3%	6	4%	18	12%	59	39.3%	62	41.3%
6	I study English in order to get a good job opportunity.	5	3.3%	27	18%	27	18%	49	32.7%	42	28%
7.	I study English because I plan to work at different organizations.	2	1.3%	6	4%	18	12%	67	44.7%	57	38%
8.	I like my English class so much; I look forward to studying more English in the future.	2	1.3%	16	10.7%	24	16%	51	34%	57	38%
9.	When I leave university, I will give up studying English since I am not interested in it.	69	46%	29	19.3%	20	13.3%	22	14.7%	10	6.7%

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
5	I study English because I will need it for my future work	5	3.3%	6	4%	18	12%	59	39.3%	62	41.3%

Regarding importance of learning English after graduation for future work, as it is depicted on table 2 item No 5 above, 62(41.3%) and 59(39.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively. On the other hand, 5(3.3%) and 6(4%) of the subjects strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively, and 18(12%) of them were unable to decide to say that studying English after graduation for future work is important. Generally speaking, 80.6% of the

respondents consider the idea positively. In addition, the students' responses from the interview were similar to the ideas mentioned here that almost all of them assured that they need to improve their English language in their future even if they couldn't give attention to the course currently. Dev, (1997) viewed that extrinsically motivated student engages in learning purely for attaining a reward or for avoiding some punishment.

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
6	I study English in order to get a good job opportunity.	5	3.3%	27	18%	27	18%	49	32.7%	42	28%

Item No 6 above indicated that 42 (28%) and 49 (32.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that learning English is important to get a good job opportunity. Totally 60.7% of the respondents agreed that studying English has its own impact to get a job; on the contrary, 5(3.3%) and 27(18%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. From this, one can understand that 20.3%

of them gave less value to English, and 27(18%) of the subjects couldn't decide whether studying English is good or not to get job. Generally, the importance of studying English to get a job was understood by many of them. Similarly, from the interviewed respondents, the researcher confirmed that the majority of the students suggested that studying English has its own contribution for their career.

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
7	I study English because I plan to work at different organizations.	2	1.3%	6	4%	18	12%	67	44.7%	57	38

As it is observed on item No 7 above, 57 (38%) and 67 (44.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, and the majority (82.7%) of the respondents agreed that they study English because they plan to work in different organizations. However, 2(1.3%) and 6(4%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. From this, one can understand that few respondents (5.5%) of them

had no plan to work in different organizations or they didn't consider English as mandatory whereas a few of them couldn't decide to study English because they plan to work at different organizations. In anyways, the majority of them seemed to be conscious that English as an international language has its own role to work in different organizations.

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
8	I like my English class so much; I look forward to studying more English in the future.	2	1.3%	16	10.7%	24	16%	51	34%	57	38%

The obtained data on item No 8 above, 57 (38%) and 51 (34%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively i.e. the majority (72%) of the respondents confirmed that they like their English class so much and they look forward to studying more English in the future. On the other hand, 2(1.3%) and 16(10.7%) of the respondents replied that they strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. From

this, it is possible to deduce that a few respondents (12%) of them had no interest to study English in their future lives. In addition, 24 (16%) of them couldn't decide to study English more or not. Generally, from the overall responses of respondents, it is obvious that English is a course which is important by many of the students.

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
9	When I leave university, I will give up studying English since I am not interested in it.	69	46%	29	19.3%	20	13.3%	22	14.7%	10	6.7%

The obtained data on 2 item No 9 above shows that out of 150 respondents, 69 (46%) responded that they strongly disagreed and, 29 (19.3%) of them assured that they disagreed to the idea to give up studying English after graduation. 20 (13.3%) of the respondents couldn't decide. Whereas 22 (14.7%) and 10 (6.7%) of the subjects responded that they will give up studying English since they are not interested in it.

In general, one can conclude from the above data that the majority 98 (65.3%) of the respondents have the interest to know English more in the future.

To sum up, according to the overall responses of respondents from item 5 up to 9, importance of learning English in the university and after graduation was positively considered, and many of them assured.

### 3.1.3. Students interest to learn English

Table 3

Students' Response Under Each Rating Scale											
No	Items	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
10.	To be honest, I really have much desire to learn English	15	10%	14	9.3%	20	13.3%	53	35.3%	42	36%
11.	I don't pay much attention to the feedback which is given by my English teacher.	48	32%	27	18%	15	10%	42	28%	18	12%
12.	I don't feel happy when I have to answer a question in my English class.	66	44%	30	20%	18	12%	24	16%	12	8%
13.	Learning English as a common course is really enjoyable	12	8%	10	6.7%	6	4%	48	32%	74	49.3%
14.	My English class is really a waste of time.	49	32.7%	53	35.3%	16	10.7%	16	10.7%	16	10.7%
15.	Studying English languages is not enjoyable.	90	60%	29	19.3%	14	9.3%	10	6.7%	7	4.7%

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
10	To be honest, I really have much desire to learn English	15	10%	14	9.3%	20	13.3%	53	35.3%	42	36%

Item No 10 shows that 42 (36%) respondents responded strongly agreed, and 53 (35.3%) of them agreed whereas 15 (10%) and 14 (9.3%) strongly disagreed and disagree respectively. The rest 20 (13.3%) out of 150 respondents couldn't decide whether they have much desire or not. Out of 150 respondents 94 (71.3%) replied that they had much desire to learn English. On the other hand, 29(19.3%)

out of 150 respondents didn't have much desire to learn English and from the interview they confirmed that they like to learn English even if they didn't have motivation like other major courses. From the above data, it could be possible to conclude that the majority of the respondents confirmed to have much desire to learn English.

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
11	I don't pay much attention to the feedback which is given by my English teacher.	48	32%	27	18%	15	10%	42	28%	18	12%

Item No 11 indicates that 48(32%) and 27(18%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively i.e. they paid much attention to the feedback which is given by their English teacher. On the other hand, 15(10%) of them couldn't decide to the idea, and 18(12%) and 42(28%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively. The majority 75(50%) of them replied that they paid much attention to the feedback which is given by their English teacher,

but 60(40%) of the respondents assured that they didn't pay much attention to the feedback which is given by their English teacher. Breen (1985) stated "The classroom creates its own authenticity in that classroom has its own legitimacy, its own authenticity and reality, to which both learners and teachers contribute. According to the obtained information, many of students gave much attention to the teachers' feedback and they could create conducive environment.

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
12	I don't feel happy when I have to answer a question in my English class.	66	44%	30	20%	18	12%	24	16%	12	8%

As it is observed on item No 12 above, 66 (44%) and 30 (20%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively, and the majority (64%) of the respondents disagreed that they didn't feel happy when they had to answer a question in their English class. On the contrary, (16%) and (8%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively. The total of

24% agreed that they didn't feel happy when they had to answer a question in their English class whereas 12% of them couldn't decide to the idea. From this, one can understand that some respondents disliked to answer questions in the class and lacked motivation to learn English.

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
13	Learning English as a common course is really enjoyable	12	8%	10	6.7%	6	4%	48	32%	74	49.3%

On item No 13, we can observe that 74 (49.3%) and 48 (32%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, and the majority (81.3%) of the respondents agreed that learning English as a common course is really enjoyable. Only 14.7% of the respondents disagreed to the idea, and 4% of them couldn't decide whether Learning English as a common course is really enjoyable or not. This idea was supported by interviewees. The teacher should

recognize his students' background knowledge, interests and dislikes to teach them effectively. This is suggested by Nunan and Lamb, (1996) that the decisions that teachers are required to make during the instructional process are all driven by the nature of the program, goals of instruction, and the needs of individual learners. Based on the above idea, one can deduce that the majority of consider learning English as a common course is really enjoyable.



Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	f	%
		14	My English class is really a waste of time.	49	32.7%	53	35.3%	16	10.7%	16	10.7%

As it is clearly seen on item No 14 above, the respondents replied variety of answers that 49 (32.7%) and 53 (35.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that their English class is really a waste of time. However, 16(10.7%) and 16(10.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and

agreed respectively that their English class is really a waste of time, and 16(10.7%) of them couldn't decide. The interviewees responded that they like to learn English. From this, one can understand that many of respondents (68%) of them assured that English class is not really a waste of time.

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	f	%
		15	Studying English languages is not enjoyable.	90	60%	29	19.3%	14	9.3%	10	6.7%

Regarding studying English languages is not enjoyable or not. As depicted on to item No 15 above, 90(60%) and 29(19.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. On the other hand, 10(6.7%) and 7(4.7%) of the subjects strongly agreed and agreed respectively, and 14 (9.3%) of them were unable to decide to say that English languages is not enjoyable or not. Generally speaking, 79.3% of the respondents consider the idea positively. In addition, the students' responses from the interview were

similar to the ideas mentioned here that almost all of them assured that they need to improve their English but they couldn't give attention. According to Johnson (1996), "There is, however, a further reason for a student getting something wrong. It may be lack of procedural knowledge, of processing ability". This is to say that mistakes can be made when the user of the grammar lacks to use his/her knowledge appropriately due to lack of confidence, interest, motivation and the like.

### 3.1.4. English versus other courses

Table 4

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
		16	The course material is more attractive to me	15	10%	24	16%	16	10.7%	54	36%
17	I enjoy the activities of our English class much more than those of my other classes.	0	0%	36	24%	52	34.7%	49	32.7%	13	8.7%
18	I would rather spend more time in my English class and less in other classes.	36	24%	69	46%	23	15.3%	16	10.7%	6	4%

  

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	f	%
		16	The course material is more attractive to me	15	10%	24	16%	16	10.7%	54	36%

As it is depicted on item N<sub>Q</sub> 16 above, 41(27.3%) and 54(36%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively. On the other hand, 15(10%) and 24(16%) of the subjects strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively, and 16 (10.7%) of them were unable to decide to say that the course material is more attractive to them. Generally speaking, 63.3% of the respondents replied that the course material is more attractive whereas 26% of them assured that course material is not more attractive to them. In addition, the

students' responses from the interview were similar to the ideas mentioned here that the almost fifty-fifty of them assured concerning the course material attractiveness. Widdowson (1979:165) notes "authenticity" which can be defined once and for all and that authenticity is a function not only of the language but also of the participants, the use to which language is put, the setting, the nature of the interaction, and the interpretation the participants bring to both the setting and the activity.

		Students' response under each rating scale									
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
17	I enjoy the activities of our English class much more than those of my other classes.	0	0%	36	24%	52	34.7%	49	32.7%	13	8.7%

As it is observed on item N<sub>Q</sub> 17 above, 13 (8.7%) and 49 (32.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, and 41.4% of the respondents agreed that they enjoy the activities of their English class much more than those of their other classes. On

the contrary, 36(24%) of the respondents disagreed, and 52(34.7%) of them couldn't decide to the idea. From this, one can understand that students' activities in English classes were limited.

		Students' response under each rating scale									
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
18	I would rather spend more time in my English class and less in other classes.	36	24%	69	46%	23	15.3%	16	10.7%	6	4%

As it is clearly seen from item N<sub>Q</sub> 18, 6 (4%) and 16 (10.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that 14.7% of the respondents agreed that they would rather spend more time in their English class and less in other classes. On the contrary, 36(24%) of the respondents strongly disagreed, and 69(46%) of them disagreed whereas 23(15.3%) of

them couldn't decide to the idea the obtained information from the interview was that many of the students responded that they didn't give enough time like other courses. From this, one can understand that students wouldn't rather spend more time in their English class and less in other classes.

### 3.1.5. Students' confidence to learn English

Table 5

		Students' response under each rating scale									
No	Items	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
19.	I study English in order to be able to talk with people with confidence.	3	2%	7	4.7%	10	6.7%	70	46%.7	60	40%
20.	I never feel quite sure of myself when I speak English.	13	8.7%	25	16.7%	7	4.7%	60	40%	45	30%
21.	I don't bother checking my assignments when I	33	22%	16	10.7%	54	36%	33	22%	14	9.3%

22.	get them back from my English teacher. I feel confident when I am asked to speak in my English class.	10	6.7%	0	0%	20	13.3%	76	55.7%	44	29.3%
23.	I would rather spend my time on subjects other than English.	18	12%	51	34%	21	14%	35	23.3%	25	16.7%
24.	It worries me that other students in my class seem to speak English better than I do.	24	16%	37	24.7%	24	16%	45	30%	20	13.3%
25.	I feel uncomfortable when I am speaking in my English class	39	26%	54	36%	29	19.3%	19	12.7%	10	6.7%
26.	I would feel uncomfortable speaking English anywhere outside the classroom.	21	14%	26	17.3%	27	18%	45	30%	31	20.7%
27.	In class, I ask questions which are not clear to me	3	2%	3	2%	12	8%	66	44%	66	44%
28.	I always do my homework before I come to class.	10	6.7%	12	8%	14	9.3%	48	32%	66	44%
29.	I always think that the other students in class will laugh at me when I speak English.	49	32.9%	32	21.3%	16	10.7%	24	16%	29	19.3%

**Students' response under each rating scale**

No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
		f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
19.	I study English in order to be able to talk with people with confidence.	3	2%	7	4.7%	10	6.7%	70	46.7%	60	40%

According to the obtained data on item No 19 above, 60 (40%) and 70 (46.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively i.e. the majority (86.7%) of the respondents confirmed that they study English in order to be able to talk with people with confidence. On the other hand, 3(2%) and 7(4.7%) of the respondents replied that they strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. And only 10 (6.7%) of them couldn't decide to the idea. From this, it is possible to

deduce that a few respondents (6.7%) of them didn't study English in order to be able to talk with people with confidence. Generally, from the overall responses of respondents, it is obvious that they study English in order to be able to talk with people with confidence. According to Dornyei (1998), reduced self-confidence due to their experience of failure or success has contribution to talk with people.

**Students' response under each rating scale**

No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%
20.	I never feel quite sure of myself when I speak English.	13	8.7%	25	16.7%	7	4.7%	60	40%	45	30%

When we look at the data on item No 20 above, 45 (30%) and 60 (40%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that they never feel quite sure of themselves when they speak English i.e. the majority (70%) of the respondents confirmed that they lacked certainty of using English; therefore, they may not be motivated On the other hand, 13(8.7%) and

25(16.7%) of the respondents replied that they strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. And only 7 (4.7%) of them couldn't decide to the idea. From this, it is possible to deduce that a few respondents (25.4%) of them felt quite sure of themselves when they speak English.

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%
21	I don't bother checking my assignments when I get them back from my English teacher.	33	22%	16	10.7%	54	36%	33	22%	14	9.3%

As it is depicted on item No 21 above, 14(9.3%) and 33(22%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively. On the other hand, 33(22%) and 16(10.7%) of the subjects strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively, and 54 (36%) of them were unable to decide to say that they don't bother checking their assignments when they get them back from their English teacher. Generally speaking, 31.3% of the

respondents agreed that they don't bother checking their assignments when they get them back from their English teacher whereas 32.7% of them assured that they bother checking their assignments when they get them back from their English teacher. From this it might be possible to conclude that their responses are the indicators of lack of motivation.

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
22	I feel confident when I am asked to speak in my English class.	10	6.7%	0	0%	20	13.3%	76	55.7%	44	29.3%

As it is clearly observed from item No 22, 44 (29.3%) and 76 (55.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, and the total of 85% of the respondents agreed that they feel confident when they are asked to speak in their English class. Almost a few students 10(6.7%) replied that they don't feel when they are asked to speak in their English class. On the

other hand, 20(13.3%) of them couldn't decide to the idea. From this, one can understand that almost all of the students seem to feel confident when they are asked to speak in their English class. As Tim (2006:146), stated that "A cause of mistakes is when learners think they know a rule, but in fact they do not know quite enough".

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
		f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
23	I would rather spend my time on subjects other than English.	18	12%	51	34%	21	14%	35	23.3%	25	16.7%

Item No 22 indicates that 18(12%) and 51(34%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively i.e. they would rather spend their time on subjects other than English. On the other hand, 21(14%) of them couldn't decide to the idea. On the other hand, 25 (16%) and 35(23.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively.

Many (46%) of them replied that they want to spend more time on other subjects than English. According to the obtained information, many of the students do not give much attention to English subject. This was proved from the interview that students replied that they liked English but they didn't give attention like other major courses.

Students' response under each rating scale											
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%
24	It worries me that other students in my class seem to speak English better than I do.	24	16%	37	24.7%	24	16%	45	30%	20	13.3%

According to table 5 item N<sub>o</sub> 24 above, 24 (16%) and 37 (24.7%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that they do not worry that other students in their class seem to speak English better than they do, and 24 (16%) of them couldn't decide to the idea. On the contrary, 20 (13.3%) and 45 (30%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively. The total of 43.3% of them agreed that

they worry that other students in their class seem to speak English better than they do. From this, one can understand that almost half of the students worry to speak English in the classroom. In addition from the interview, it was assured that many of the respondents expressed their worry to speak English in the class and they suggested that their high school experience didn't invite them to speak.

		Students' response under each rating scale									
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
25	I feel uncomfortable when I am speaking in my English class	39	26%	54	36%	29	19.3%	19	12.7%	10	6.7%

Regarding students to feel un-comfort when they speak in their English class, as it is depicted on item N<sub>o</sub> 25 above, 10(6.7%) and 19(12.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively. On the other hand, 39(26%) and 54(36%) of the subjects strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively whereas 29 (19.3%) of them were unable to decide whether they feel uncomfortable when they are speaking in their English class or not. Generally speaking, 62% of the respondents opposed the idea. In addition, the students' responses from the interview were similar to the ideas mentioned here that more than half of them

assured that they feel comfortable when they are speaking in their English class. Motivation in language learning plays a vital role for self-confidence. It successfully makes them continuously engage themselves in learning even after they achieve the goal. In order for English instructors to motivate them, a number of methods are needed both within and outside class. In addition, it is significant for instructors to be familiar with students intrinsic demotives so that they can prevent students from being affected by possible demotives. Hussin, et al. (2001).

		Students' response under each rating scale									
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
26	I would feel uncomfortable speaking English anywhere outside the classroom.	21	14%	26	17.3%	27	18%	45	30%	31	20.7%

On item N<sub>o</sub> 26, we can observe that 31 (20.7%) and 45 (30%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, and (50.7%) of the respondents agreed that they would feel uncomfortable speaking English anywhere outside the classroom. On the other hand, 21 (14%) and 26 (17.3%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed to the idea, and 27 (18%) 4%

of them couldn't decide whether they would feel uncomfortable speaking English anywhere outside the classroom or not. Based on the above idea, one can deduce that more than half on them would feel uncomfortable speaking English anywhere outside the classroom.

		Students' response under each rating scale									
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
27	In class, I ask questions which are not clear to me	3	2%	3	2%	12	8%	66	44%	66	44%

The above request on item N<sub>o</sub> 27, assessed that the responses of students regarding asking questions which are not clear to them in class. The majority of the respondents 66 (44%) and 66 (44%) confirmed that they agree and strongly agree respectively. From the above data, it could be possible to conclude that the majority 88% of the respondents ask questions which

are not clear to them. Whereas 3 (2%) and 3 (2%) of the students responded strongly disagree and disagree to the idea that they ask questions which are not clear to them. The rest 12 (8%) couldn't decide to the idea. From the above data, it is possible to conclude that students ask questions in the class.

		Students' response under each rating scale									
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
28	I always do my homework before I come to class.	10	6.7%	12	8%	14	9.3%	48	32%	66	44%

According Item N<sub>o</sub> 6 above indicated that 66 (44%) and 48 (32%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that they always do their homework before they come to class. Totally 76% of the respondents agreed to the idea. On the contrary, 10(6.7%) and 12(8%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. From this, one can understand that 14.7% of them do not always do their homework before they come to class, and

14(9.3%) of the subjects couldn't decide o the idea. Generally, the majority of the students always do their homework. On the contrary, from the interviewed respondents, the researcher confirmed that the majority of the students suggested that they do not always do their homework before they come to class. This showed that face to face interview might be better than questionnaire since the ideas are very different.

		Students' response under each rating scale									
No	Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
29	I always think that the other students in class will laugh at me when I speak English.	49	32.9%	32	21.3%	16	10.7%	24	16%	29	19.3%

As far as item N<sub>o</sub> 29 is concerned, 29 (19.3%) and 24 (16%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively, and the total of 35.3% of the respondents agreed that they always think that the other students in class will laugh at them when they speak English. on other hand, 49 (32.9%) and 32 (21.3%) of them responded that they strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively whereas 16(10.7%) of them couldn't decide to the idea. Generally, the majority of the students 54.1% do not always think that the other students in class will laugh at them when they speak English, and this might have positive contribution to the motivation of students to learn English. Students should speak without fear and this is supported by Huddleston (1998) that Standard English can be formal, informal and neutral.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This section is meant to summarize the steps followed and tools used to conduct the study and to conclude the result found in brief. It also deals with what should be done to solve the problem indicated based on the findings and the conclusions.

As it has been mentioned in this paper, the general objective of this study was to examine factors that affect students' motivation in learning English as a common course at Debre Markos University focusing on first year students majoring in different fields. Students' questionnaire, and interview for students were tools used in the study. Descriptive method which includes quantitative and qualitative interpretation was used to discuss the obtained data.

Close ended questions were discussed quantitatively using percentages and frequencies whereas and interview questions were interpreted qualitatively based on the established themes. The researcher discussed the obtained data through the two tools altogether. The theme of each data was grouped under the title related to each other.

Motivation is vital in language learning. It makes language learners positive about their own learning. It also creates the drive in them to acquire the target language, enjoy the learning process, and experience real communication. By experiencing their improvement and achievement, students always gain

confidence. Course material related to background knowledge of students has a role for motivation.

And thus, the major findings of the study are the following: students' background knowledge fitted to the course material and they liked the course and they enjoyed themselves in the course. However, students gave more emphasis to pass the exam than to acquire the basic language competence. Almost all of the students didn't give enough time to English as it is a common course. In addition, students learning responsibility was not encouraging; as a result they lacked motivation to participate in the class and they didn't always do their homework.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions stated above, the following recommendations are made.

- ♣ Recognizing and removing barriers can have a marked effect on motivation and attention to learning in general and English as a common course in particular.
- ♣ It should be consider the students' interests, background knowledge, and abilities when designing course material.
- ♣ The university should create an optimal classroom environment that is conducive to learning which can be most effectively achieved through instructional behaviors and course design.
- ♣ Activities should be presented with realistic contexts both by the classroom teachers and textbook writers, and thus the textbook should be designed to help students use their feelings and interests freely.
- ♣ Large class size should be minimized.
- ♣ It would be helpful if students be aware of the gap between their theoretical and practical applications of English language as common course. Theoretically almost all of the students recognize the importance of English language but practically they didn't apply their knowledge to learn it since they didn't give enough time to study English like other major courses.
- ♣ In order for language learners to become satisfied with a lesson, it is necessary to produce a stress-free classroom and develop integrated-tasks lesson.

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