Differences in Demotivation Between Chinese and Korean English Teachers: A Mixed Methods Study

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/taeyoungkim/33/
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To appear in The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 22
The final publication is available at link.springer.com.

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Abstract

This mixed methods study investigates the differences in demotivation between Chinese and Korean English teachers. A questionnaire on demotivation was conducted on 58 Chinese and 94 Korean in-service teachers in order to find out the dominant factors in teacher demotivation. Follow-up interviews with teachers were conducted in order to explore the reasons as to why teachers found the salient factors to be demotivating. The results indicated that the number of students per English classroom was the detrimental factor for both Chinese and Korean teachers. Moreover, the only factor that Chinese teachers perceived to be more demotivating than Korean teachers was the excessive interference or expectations of school parents. For Korean teachers, large amounts of administrative tasks and students’ lack of interest in English were found to be the most detrimental factors. From the findings of this study, practical implications as well as research suggestions are provided. (146 words)

Keywords: English Teacher Demotivation, China, Korea, Number of Students per Classroom, Administrative Tasks, School Parents
Differences in Demotivation Between Chinese and Korean English Teachers:
A Mixed Methods Study

Introduction

This mixed methods study investigates the differences in demotivation between Chinese and Korean teachers who teach English as a foreign language (EFL). The importance of second language (L2) teacher motivation has recently been emphasized by motivation researchers (e.g., Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Previous studies indicated that L2 teacher motivation has considerable influence on students’ L2 learning, teachers’ professional development, and national education reforms.

L2 teacher is a significant factor that affects students’ learning motivation, achievement, and attitudes toward L2 learning (Chambers, 1999; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) stated that “if a teacher is motivated to teach, there is a good chance that his or her students will be motivated to learn” (p. 158). In particular, in a language classroom setting, the teachers’ role is crucial in that they can be a living source of the target language (Lee, 2009). Further, teacher motivation has been found to play a critical role in sustaining their level of enthusiasm and commitment and professional development (e.g., Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). It is not the case that teachers are merely required to deliver knowledge. With English taught as a global language, Yoo (2002) pointed out that L2 teachers are expected to be professionals who need to be motivated in order to develop themselves. More specifically, if teachers have a higher level of motivation for their L2 teaching, it would be beneficial in facilitating their L2 teaching activity and their professional development. Moreover, teacher motivation is also important

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1 In this paper, L2 is interchangeably used as referring to both second and foreign languages.
for national educational reforms and development of education, which are heavily
dependent on the quality and performance of teachers (Day et al., 2005; Jesus & Lens,
2005).

Despite the fundamental importance of L2 teacher motivation described
above, recent studies have demonstrated that most teachers are not highly motivated,
and there is a general decline of motivation among in-service teachers (e.g., Dinham
& Scott, 2000; Johnson, 2001; Sugino, 2010a, 2010b). In the previous studies, the
majority of in-service L2 teachers reported that they are dissatisfied with their current
teaching situation. The most common reasons for this were students’ negative
attitudes toward L2, burnout, and the heavy workload. Accordingly, it has been
suggested that it is important to understand why L2 teachers become demotivated.
However, being still in its nascent stage, L2 teacher motivation research has not fully
examined what factors contribute to EFL teachers’ demotivation and why they believe
that these factors are detrimental to their teaching. Given this, the current study
explores EFL teachers’ demotivation by employing a questionnaire on the
demotivating factors along with a follow-up through semi-structured interviews with
English teachers.

**Contexts of Research**

The People’s Republic of China (hereafter China) and Republic of Korea
(Korea) belong to the Asian EFL context; thus, they share similar cultural
backgrounds, such as a Confucian heritage and a high value on education (Biggs,
1998; Nguyen, Terlouw, & Pilot, 2006; Seth, 2002). However, when it comes to EFL
teaching and learning, educational contexts seem to work differently in China and
Korea. This section provides a brief overview of features in English education in each
country.
China

In China, the importance of English has been increasingly emphasized in the educational sector. Influenced by its cultural and historical conceptions of education, English education in China is primarily teacher-centered, and Chinese students rely heavily on their teachers and believe them to be the authoritative source of knowledge (Rao, 2006), especially for students in rural areas. Therefore, Chinese teachers receive the highest respect not only from their students but from parents as well. It is common belief to the majority of Chinese parents that their child’s academic, psychological and social performances largely depend on the teachers’ ability to supervise.

In January 2001, English was introduced as a compulsory course from Grade 3 of elementary school (Ministry of Education of China, 2001). According to this new reform, elementary schools located in cities and county seats had to start offering English classes for Grade 3 and above from the autumn of 2001, whereas all other schools began to do so in the following year. The new reform emphasizes Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as the core teaching method, which aims to improve students’ communication skills and practical use of English. However, it is difficult to administer this approach effectively in EFL teaching in China due to the large number of students per classroom, which is usually more than 30 students. Teachers complain that it is difficult to employ CLT effectively in their classrooms because of the massive class size.

In addition, English is regarded as a core subject in GaoKao, or the National College Entrance Examination. Its importance is repeatedly emphasized from elementary school, especially for junior and senior high schools. There is an obvious difference in English learning and teaching between elementary and junior high school. According to the new English curriculum reform in China, the objectives of
the elementary school period lie in motivating and raising students’ interest in learning English; therefore, teachers need not have serious pressure based on students’ achievement test scores. Compared to elementary school teachers, teachers at junior high schools are subject to such pressure based on students’ test scores, which are the only evaluation criterion of their teaching ability. In order to meet the high expectations from students’ parents and from the society in general, teachers have to spend a lot of time and energy to improve students’ English performance.

**Korea**

English education in Korean elementary schools began in 1997. Currently, Korean students take English classes starting from Grade 3. The Revised 7th National Curriculum, which is in effect to date, specifies the importance of English as an international language in order for students to become competent intercultural speakers. Specifically, the significance of learning and teaching English has been emphasized because it enables relationships and communication with people from all over the world (Ministry of Education, Science, & Technology, 2008). The emphasis on communicative competence came to the foreground of attention in the national education reform in Korea when the 6th National Curriculum was implemented in 1992 (Kwon, 2000). Since then, by extending the communicative focus in the field of English language teaching, Korea has adopted and is preparing for several innovations in the English educational sector.

For example, the National English Ability Test, which measures four skills in English utilizing an Internet-based test, will soon be implemented. Preparation for the great changes and challenges are being requested for English teachers because the curriculum and assessment for English will go through a range of changes. Moreover, the Teaching English in English (TEE) certificate for English teachers has been
required since 2009 in all public schools located in Seoul. These circumstances are the features of current English education in Korea, which are likely to engender English teachers to bear an additional burden. That is, Korean EFL teachers are prone to suffer from lower morale rather than simply willing to accept the challenges.

Like China, English is considered one of the main school subjects, particularly in secondary schools. Also, it is one of the major areas in the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) in Korea. Consequently, English largely needs to be taught and learned for higher test scores at the secondary level. In line with this focus on exams, a large portion of Korean students attend private English institutions. According to reports, 84.6% of elementary school students and 71% of junior high school students in Korea participated in private education (Statistics Korea, 2012).

As for English learning and teaching in China and Korea, even though CLT has been emphasized as the core teaching method by the education sectors in both countries, English test scores play a significant role in evaluating students’ L2 achievement and teachers’ annual performance. The conflict between communicative focus and exam-oriented education may be a major demotivating factor for English teachers in both countries. On the other hand, there seem to be differences between the two countries, especially with regards to the initiatives in English learning and testing, teachers’ roles, school parents’ expectations, and private education. These different environments surrounding EFL teachers may contribute to different degrees and types of demotivation. However, it is still rare to find research focusing on the comparison of L2 teacher demotivation in China and Korea.

**Previous Studies on L2 Teacher Demotivation**

Although there has been increasing research activities on L2 teacher motivation in the field of teacher education, research on L2 teacher demotivation is in
its nascent stage. Nevertheless, previous studies on L2 teacher demotivation explored potentially the negative factors that affect in-service L2 teachers’ motivation or factors that demotivate teachers after entering the profession (Kassabgy, Boraie, & Schmidt, 2001; Pennington, 1995; Pennington & Riley, 1991; Sugino, 2010a, 2010b). Among these, there are significant studies that deserve academic attention.

Influential early studies of L2 teacher motivation have been conducted by Pennington and colleagues (e.g., Pennington, 1995; Pennington & Riley, 1991). By using the Job Descriptive Index (JDI), Pennington and Riley (1991) examined English as a second language (ESL) teachers’ work satisfaction and motivation. The findings addressed the negative factors of teacher motivation, such as heavy workload and burnout. Pennington (1995) also found that a lack of career structure has negative influence on British and American ESL teachers’ satisfaction. She recommended school administrators to provide full support to teachers as well as to the realistic management of the work environment.

Moreover, Chambers (1999) listed the difficulties faced by British ESL teachers, which included choice of the medium of instruction (e.g., using students’ first language or L2), numerous attainment targets (e.g., listening, reading, speaking and writing), content complexities and modes of instruction (e.g., communicative language teaching approach and exam-oriented educational tradition). Also, Johnson (2001) investigated the factors that increase or decrease the motivation in EFL teachers in Mexico. By using an open-ended questionnaire, 98 EFL teachers were surveyed and 747 comments within three areas were collected (i.e., curricular, class, and administrative matters). In respect to teachers’ demotivation, students’ negative and nonchalant attitudes in English classes, class size, and inadequate teaching facilities were emphasized. The findings suggested that a motivating factor can
become a demotivating one if that particular factor or need is not being adequately met in one’s teaching situation.

In more recent years, Sugino (2010a) examined the demotivating factors by administering a questionnaire to language teachers in Japan. The findings were categorized into four demotivating factors: students’ attitudes, students’ abilities and school facilities, work conditions, and human relationships. It was indicated that the most influential factor for teacher demotivation was students’ negative attitudes, such as students using cell phones or dozing off in class. The least demotivating factors were the amount and quality of teaching material and different levels of students’ proficiency.

Given this, previous studies have indicated that there is a general decline in L2 teaching motivation among in-service teachers due to job dissatisfaction, stress, and burnout (e.g., Chambers, 1999; Dinham & Scott, 2000; Kiziltepe, 2008; Praver & Oga-Baldwin, 2008; Sugino, 2010a, 2010b). Typically, extrinsic or contextual factors were found to be the dominant demotivating factors, which include the working conditions, students’ parents, school facilities, class size, and students’ learning attitudes.

As aforementioned, few studies have explored L2 teachers’ demotivation in different countries or at different school levels. It is possible that differences exist in demotivation between Chinese and Korean teachers even though they share cultural and educational similarities. Moreover, it is also possible that L2 teachers show different perceptions with regards to the demotivating factors at different school levels (i.e., elementary and junior high school). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the differences in demotivation between Chinese and Korean English teachers.

Accordingly, three research questions were formulated:
1) What are the differences in the demotivating factors between English teachers in China and Korea?
2) Are there any differences in the demotivating factors between Chinese and Korean teachers according to school levels (i.e., elementary and junior high school)?
3) What are the reasons for the salient demotivating factors perceived by Chinese and Korean teachers, respectively?

**Research Methods**

This study adopts a mixed methods approach with an explanatory design. The mixed methods research provides a comprehensive understanding and evidence on complex issues, and its value has been emphasized in the field of L2 research (e.g., Dörnyei, 2007; Kim & Seo, 2012). Further, it possesses value in that the corresponding evidence achieved from multiple methods can increase the validity of the findings (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). More specifically, the explanatory design allows quantitative data to be collected and analyzed first, and then the qualitative findings to be used “to explain, refine, clarify, or extend quantitative results” (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009, p. 139). Given this, this study first explored the differences in demotivation between Chinese and Korean English teachers using a questionnaire. Subsequently, quantitative follow-up interviews were implemented in order to elaborate on the reasons for the salient demotivating factors perceived by Chinese and Korean teachers.

**Participants**

A total of 152 English teachers from China and Korea were recruited. Among them, 58 were Chinese teachers and 94 were Korean teachers; 71 were elementary school teachers (20 Chinese teachers and 51 Korean teachers) and 81 were junior high school teachers (38 Chinese teachers and 43 Korean teachers). In addition, the
teaching experience of Chinese English teachers ranged from a month to 31 years and the average was 8 years and 9 months; Korean English teachers’ experience ranged from seven months to 36 years, and the average was 10 years and 7 months. The age of the participating teachers in China ranged from 22 to 52 with an average age of 31; that of the participating teachers in Korea ranged from 23 to 59 with an average age of 39.

**Table 1**

*Participating Teachers’ Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Chinese teachers=58, Korean teachers =94*

**Data Collection**

Data collection of this mixed methods study included two stages. First, a questionnaire was adapted from the previous studies of L2 teacher demotivation (i.e., Kassabgy et al., 2001; Pennington, 1995; Sugino, 2010a). The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part included 9 items in order to examine the demotivating factors of L2 teachers: Item 1 (Lack of social recognition and respect for teachers), Item 2 (An excessive amount of administrative tasks besides teaching English), Item 3 (None or few adequate rewards for what I do at school), Item 4 (Lack of support or understanding from school regarding English education), Item 5 (Students’ lack of interest in English classes), Item 6 (Uncooperative attitudes of the principle or fellow English teachers), Item 7 (A large number of students in a single English class), Item 8 (Few opportunities to teach English in autonomous and diverse ways), and Item 9 (Excessive interference or expectations of school parents). These items were measured by a five-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 =
neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The second part of the questionnaire was designed to acquire detailed background information on the participating English teachers (i.e., gender, location of school, age, English teaching experience, and the highest level of education).

This questionnaire was developed in Korean first and then was translated into Chinese by two native Chinese speakers. In order to increase the reliability of the presented data, the back-translation method was used. We first translated the original data into Chinese and then back to Korean, and then the original and back-translated versions were compared for differences. The Korean data were collected during two teacher training workshops (one in November 2011 and the other in January 2012). One to three teachers from several schools across the country attended the workshops and were asked to participate in the survey. The Chinese data were collected by using a snowball sampling method in September 2012. The data for Chinese teachers were collected from three different elementary and three junior high schools located in a provincial city and a county town.

Second, in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of teacher demotivation in the Chinese and Korean contexts, we conducted follow-up semi-structured interviews with English teachers in each country. The interview questions were developed based on the items on the questionnaire. For Chinese data, we conducted semi-structured interviews with two elementary and three junior high school English teachers. For Korean data, two elementary and five junior high school English teachers participated in the interviews. All of the interviews, approximately lasting 30

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2 Snowball sampling is identified as “a few people who meet the criteria of the particular study and then asks these participants to identify further members of the population” (Dörnyei, 2010, p. 61)
minutes for each individual teacher, were conducted in May 2013. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim in Chinese and Korean, respectively.

**Data Analysis**

For the analysis of the demotivational questionnaire, all of the data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 18.0. Two main statistical measures were used: descriptive analysis and independent samples t-test. The descriptive analysis was used to examine the general characteristics of demotivation between English teachers in China and Korea. In order to probe into the specific differences in demotivation between Chinese and Korean teachers, independent samples t-test was employed. The same was also used for the differences between English teachers in the two countries based on school levels (i.e., elementary and junior high school).

For analyzing teachers’ interview data, Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) three level of coding were adopted, which are open, axial, and selective coding. After the interactive reading of the interview transcripts, the themes of potential reasons of English teacher demotivation were identified in the process of open coding. In the next step of axial coding, the coding strips were thematically categorized, and their relationships and patterns were analyzed. The last process of selective coding was implemented in order to report the findings of this study.

**Quantitative Findings**

**General Characteristics of Demotivation Among Chinese and Korean EFL Teachers**

Table 2 presents items exhibiting the possible demotivating factors, ranked in order of higher mean scores in the Chinese and Korean samples, respectively. For Chinese teachers, the highest mean score is found in Item 7 (**A large number of**
students in a single English class). This item indicates that English teachers in China have difficulty dealing with a large number of students in a single English class and thus, it is perceived as the most demotivating factor. Item 9 (Excessive interference or expectations of parents) is identified as the second most demotivating factor.

Among Korean English teachers, Item 2 (An excessive amount of administrative tasks besides teaching English) presents the highest mean score (M=4.29). Similar to the case of Chinese teachers, Item 7 (A large number of students in a single English class) is also found to be a strong demotivating factor for Korean teachers. For the Korean English teachers, there are not any items with mean scores less than the middle point (M=3.0).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Items for Demotivation of English Teachers in China and Korea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>China M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Korea M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Min.=1.00, Max.=5.00; Chinese teachers=58, Korean teachers=94

Differences Between Chinese and Korean English Teachers

In this section, we focus on which demotivating factors are different between English teachers in China and in Korea. Table 3 shows that there are statistically significant differences in Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 9 between the two groups of English teachers. Except for Item 9 (Excessive interference or expectations of parents), Korean teachers’ responses denote higher mean scores in the other five items. Also, as
for the average level of demotivation, it is revealed that Korean English teachers tend to experience higher levels of demotivation than their Chinese counterparts.

Excessive interference or expectations of parents (Item 9) is found to be a more demotivating factor for Chinese teachers ($M=3.69$) than Korean teachers ($M=3.13$). Among the other items exhibiting significant differences, an excessive amount of administrative tasks besides teaching English (Item 2) demonstrates the highest difference ($t=-9.20; p=.000$). Also, students’ lack of interest in English classes (Item 5) had the second highest differences ($t=-4.40$), with Korean teachers perceiving this factor to be more demotivating than Chinese teachers.

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>China M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Korea M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>-2.20*</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>-9.20**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>-2.19*</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>-4.40**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>-3.94**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>-.48</td>
<td>.635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>-1.02</td>
<td>.309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>3.12**</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>-3.53**</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* *p<.01; † p<.05; Chinese teachers=58, Korean teachers=94

As listed in Table 3, a similar phenomenon that was found among EFL teachers in the two countries was that a large number of students in a single English
class (Item 7) was perceived to be considerably detrimental to EFL teaching. The comparison of English teacher demotivation between China and Korea in general showed the smallest difference in this factor; further, the difference was not statistically significant (see Table 3). More specifically, Item 7 was the most demotivating factor for Chinese teachers and the second most detrimental factor for Korean teachers (see Table 2).

**Differences Between Elementary and Junior High School English Teachers in China and Korea**

This section elaborates on the differences between elementary school English teachers and those between junior high school English teachers in the two countries.

### Table 4

**T-test for Demotivating Factors Between Elementary School English Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1 China</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>-2.60*</td>
<td>.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 1 Korea</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2 China</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>-10.80**</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2 Korea</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3 China</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3 Korea</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4 China</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4 Korea</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5 China</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>-1.81</td>
<td>.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5 Korea</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6 China</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>-.80</td>
<td>.425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6 Korea</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7 China</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>2.18*</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7 Korea</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8 China</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>-.66</td>
<td>.513</td>
</tr>
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<td>Item 8 Korea</td>
<td>3.57</td>
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<td>Item 9 China</td>
<td>3.20</td>
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<td>Item 9 Korea</td>
<td>3.08</td>
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**Note:** **p<.01; *p<.05; Chinese teachers=20, Korean teachers=51**

As shown in Table 4, there are statistically significant differences in the demotivating factors between Chinese and Korean elementary school teachers in
Items 1, 2, and 7. To be specific, Korean elementary school English teachers perceive a higher level of demotivation compared to Chinese elementary school English teachers in terms of lack of social recognition and respect for teachers (Item 1) and an excessive amount of administrative tasks besides teaching English (Item 2). In particular, Item 2 denoted the most substantial difference ($t=-10.80$) and was registered with the highest mean score from elementary school English teachers in Korea ($M=4.38$). On the other hand, Chinese elementary school English teachers report a higher level of demotivation in Item 7 (A large number of students in a single English class) ($M=4.10$).

**Table 5**

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<th>T-test for Demotivating Factors Between Junior High School English Teachers</th>
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<td>Item 1</td>
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<td>Korea</td>
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</tbody>
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Note: **$p<.01$; *$p<.05$; Chinese teachers=38, Korean teachers=43

As indicated in Table 5, there are significant differences in the demotivating factors between Chinese and Korean junior high school English teachers in Items 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9. Except for Item 9 (Excessive interference or expectations of parents),
Korean junior high school English teachers show a higher level of demotivation than those of China regarding the other five items. The largest difference is found in Item 5 (Students’ lack of interest in English classes) ($t=-4.65; p=.000$).

**Qualitative Findings**

Based on the major findings from the quantitative research stage, we focused on English teachers’ viewpoints regarding Items 2, 5, 7, and 9 in more detail.

**The Impact of Class Size on Teacher Demotivation**

As shown above, the quantitative findings revealed that both Chinese and Korean teachers perceived a large number of students in a single English class as the major demotivating factor in their teaching. In the Chinese data, all of the five English teachers thought that there were too many students in their English classes. The average number of students in a single class was approximately 60 and even more than 80 students in one of the participating teachers’ class. Chinese teachers raised their voice about their difficulty in implementing teaching activities (Excerpt 1) and classroom management (Excerpt 2).

*Excerpt 1*

Over-numbered students mean that you do not have time for everyone. Like when you ask a question, with limited time for class, your focus will be on those active ones who answer the questions. (…) There is divergence among students’ English levels, specifically for the class I’m with now. The divergence of their English levels is relatively large, which makes teaching a daunting task. (Junior high school teacher 1)

*Excerpt 2*

If there are too many students, it’s very difficult to organize activities, and perhaps you can only give your attention to some of them. Also, these kinds of activities will be difficult to control and you cannot take care all of them. Group activities can get out of control easily. (Elementary school teacher 1)
Moreover, three participating teachers pointed out the vast amount of work after class, such as checking students’ homework. As shown in Excerpt 3, teachers spend a lot of time on student homework even after classes.

*Excerpt 3*
Over-numbered students mean working overtime. You get really tired, even exhausted to check students’ homework. Sometimes, I have to work overtime after school. So it really bothers me. (Junior high school teacher 2)

At schools of the Korean participating teachers, the number of students in an English class was less than that in China (approximately 27 in elementary and 35 in junior high schools). Nevertheless, the large class size was equally mentioned as one of the demotivating factors for Korean teachers. The interviews with Korean EFL teachers revealed that this factor places barriers in implementing a communicative approach on students having diverse English proficiencies. The participating Korean teachers commented on the problem of dealing with students who are highly proficient and those who are not within the same classroom (Excerpt 4). Also, the Korean teachers stated the difficulties in managing communicative English classes with the number of students in a class (Excerpt 5).

*Excerpt 4*
I think that there are few students at the intermediate level. It seems that there are those with successful achievement and those who are very poor in English. (Junior high school teacher 2)

*Excerpt 5*
There should be many opportunities for students to participate in communicative interactions in English. So, I sometimes employ group activities…but there is limited time for students to present, for example, presenting the results of a group discussion in front of the class. When encountering this situation, I become disappointed for using the communicative method. (Elementary school teacher 1)
The Influence of School Parents on Teacher Demotivation

As shown above, school parents’ excessive interference or expectation was the only more demotivating factor for Chinese teachers than for Korean teachers (see Table 3). In Chinese teachers’ interviews, all the participating teachers mentioned that school parents were one of the detrimental factors influencing their teaching. However, compared with parents’ interference, the high level of parents’ expectations has a more negative influence on their teaching, especially for junior high school English teachers. Excerpt 6 indicates that students’ parents have excessively high expectations on their children’s test scores. It seems that parents have high expectations on their children, which is then transferred to high expectations on teachers’ teaching.

Excerpt 6
I can feel that parents have very high expectations for their children. Therefore, their expectations would be high for the teachers, too. In particular, they hope that their children can get high scores. Since there is only one child in the family, parents all want their children to have a bright future. Parents have high hopes on their children, sometimes way too high. (Junior high school teacher 1)

In contrast, Korean teachers responded that they hardly have pressure related to students’ EFL achievement from school parents. All of the teachers mentioned that there could be a basic demand from students’ parents regarding schooling, but their EFL teaching are rarely influenced by the parents’ expectations or interferences. A possible reason for this was expressed by an elementary school teachers’ comment of burgeoning private education in Korea, presented in Excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7
I think parents hardly have high expectations on school teachers with regards to English learning. Rather, the parents seem to think that English skills can be learned via private tutoring or hagwon (i.e., private institute). (Elementary school teacher 2)
The Impact of Students’ Interest on Teacher Demotivation

In terms of the English-teaching context in China, teachers attributed students’ lack of interest to students’ low English proficiency. As presented in Excerpt 8, these students misbehave during class because they cannot understand English per se.

Excerpt 8
Some students do not pay attention to my teaching. Some students fall asleep and others talk to peers or read story books during classes. Most of these students cannot understand the teaching contents because their level of English proficiency is low. (Junior high school teacher 3)

The situation in which Korean English teachers become demotivated by students’ lack of interest during class was also related to diverse levels of students’ English proficiency (Excerpt 9). In addition, the participating teachers reported that students who have been exposed to private education are subject to lose their interest in English classes at school (Excerpt 10).

Excerpt 9
English textbooks are designed for intermediate students. When I try to focus on the contents in the textbook, I can see the advanced students losing their interest in participating in class, whereas the beginning level students have difficulties in understanding and therefore not pay attention in class. (Elementary school teacher 1)

Excerpt 10
I think it is important to help students maintain their interest in learning English. But some students find English classes in school to be too easy for them compared to what they learn at private institutes. (Elementary school teacher 2)

The Effect of Administrative Tasks on Teacher Demotivation

In China, teachers rarely have administrative tasks and their only duty is teaching. Excerpt 11 shows that the optimal levels of administrative tasks are primarily assigned to school administrators, such as principals, vice-principals and homeroom teachers.
Excerpt 11
As a teacher, basically teaching is all I do. In most schools I know, the main responsibility of a teacher is to teach, and only the school administrators have administrative responsibilities. One exception is homeroom teachers, which I once was. I had some administrative responsibilities then. (Elementary school teacher 1)

On the other hand, all the participating Korean English teachers stated that their EFL teaching is highly affected by an excessive amount of administrative tasks, as demonstrated in Excerpts 12 and 13. They reported that they do not have sufficient time to prepare for effective and motivating teaching materials for their students. Also, it was mentioned that their abilities as a teacher are mainly assessed by their administrative performance, rather than based on their EFL teaching practices.

Excerpt 12
Even though I try to teach English to students with enthusiasm, the evaluation on teachers at school is based on how well the teachers perform the administrative tasks. (Elementary school teacher 2)

Excerpt 13
For communicative group activities, I need more time to prepare, you know. However, whenever I want to develop additional new activities or teaching materials, I am usually interrupted by a variety of administrative tasks. So, I cannot help but put aside devising new approaches for teaching English. (Junior high school teacher 2)

Discussion
This mixed methods study allowed us to compare the demotivating factors between Chinese and Korean EFL teachers via a quantitative survey and confirm the major differences through qualitative interviews. Large class size was perceived to be considerably detrimental to EFL teaching for both Chinese and Korean teachers. According to the OECD (2012), the average class size in Chinese elementary and
junior high school has 37 and 54 students, respectively. In Korea, the average class size is 27 students in elementary school and 35 in junior high school.\(^3\)

The issue with regards to the number of students in English classes suggests that EFL teaching turns to be demotivating when teachers have difficulties teaching English to students with various English proficiency levels in communicative ways. Teaching and learning English is ultimately oriented toward the goal of communication (Wallace, 1991). English needs to be taught and learned as a language, which necessarily requires active/lively interactions between participants. Relatively, a larger class size is likely to put serious barriers on the opportunities for communication practices in the target language. Also, diverse levels of English proficiency in the same class can be an obstacle for effective teaching. These situations are equally prominent in Chinese and Korean English teachers.

It is noteworthy that although Korean teachers generally tended to perceive a wider range of demotivating factors than their Chinese counterparts, school parents’ excessive interference or expectation was the only more demotivating factor for Chinese teachers than for Korean teachers. Studies conducted in other EFL contexts have had similar findings. For example, Johnson (2001) found that school parents were the potential factor decreasing Mexican EFL teachers’ motivation. In the Chinese context, the relationships between students’ parents and teachers have attracted considerable attention in recent years. According to Shen (2012), excessive expectations and interference by students’ parents became one of the most mounting pressures for most teachers in China.

\(^3\) The class size in both countries is larger than the OECD average, which is 21 in elementary schools and 23 in junior high schools. In the average numbers of students, the numbers in decimal point were rounded up.
The reasons as to why Chinese teachers reported a higher level of demotivation in excessive interference and expectations of students’ parents than the Korean teachers could be explained by China’s one-child policy as well as by the limited access to private education. First, in China, most families currently have only one child, resulting from the national one-child policy, and most parents hope their only child to have a prosperous future. Parents have great expectations on teachers and as a consequence, the entire society has been becoming increasingly demanding to teachers (Xinhua News, 2008). The interview data indicate that because there is only one child in the family and parents want their children to be successful in the future, their expectations would be high for teachers as well; they hope their children can get high scores through their teachers. It was reported that communication problems among teachers and parents have also put pressure on teachers because many parents tend to consider students’ learning outcomes as the sole criterion in evaluating the teachers, which undoubtedly increases the psychological burden of teachers in China (Li, 2009).

Second, private education in China is not as widespread as in Korea. Teachers are an important channel of knowledge dissemination for the majority of Chinese students and their parents. This is especially true for students who live in small towns and rural areas, where teachers are the only source for their English learning (Hu, 2003). Among the five participating teachers, four stated that the majority of students in their classes do not attend private English institutes. Accordingly, students’ parents place high expectations on teachers in hopes of their child getting the best learning from their teachers, even to the point of interfering with their English teacher’s lesson delivery methods.
In addition, Shen (2012) analyzed the pressure that Chinese teachers suffered from and revealed a recent change in the teacher role. It was found that teachers of the current era are not those who only teach and transmit knowledge or help students resolve the learning difficulties, but who also need to play diverse roles in order to satisfy the demands of the Chinese society, such as classroom manager, coordinator of student relationships, and enactor of educational reforms. Shen suggested that teachers should adjust to the role changes and learn to self-regulate.

Among the factors for which Korean teachers perceived to be more demotivating than Chinese teachers, the most considerable gap was found in the factors of an excessively large amount of administrative tasks, followed by students’ lack of interest. Interviews with Korean EFL teachers also revealed that a heavy workload other than teaching per se is a severely detrimental factor for their teaching conditions. This problem has also been identified as one of the most powerful demotivating factors among L2 teachers (Marwan, 2009; Sugino, 2010a, 2010b). For example, Sugino’s (2010a) study on 97 EFL teachers at a university in Japan revealed that unsatisfactory work conditions had negative influences on teachers’ commitment to EFL teaching. In particular, long meeting hours and much paperwork were ranked first and second among the eight demotivating factors. In the Korean context, albeit for teachers in general, Jeong et al. (2012) investigated the amount of workload of 433 teachers in nine elementary and secondary schools. It was found that 21.7% of the total work hours were spent on non-teaching duties, such as administrative support and document processing.

In this study, Korean teachers’ overwhelming response regarding their heavy workload suggests that, among them, the psychological burden from it is excessively dreadful, apart from the physical stress. Given this, what seems to be crucial for
consideration is the sense of frustration and emotional distress that Korean teachers perceive due to the heavy workload. Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education in Korea have currently taken the initiative to normalize teacher workload (Park & Lee, 2012). The initiatives focusing on the reduction of administrative tasks need to continue in order to decrease teacher demotivation resulting from administrative tasks.

Another issue is that Korean teachers were shown to be more highly demotivated than Chinese teachers by students’ lack of interest in English classes. Students’ lack of interest in language classes has been identified as one of the most severe demotivating factors for L2 teachers (Aydin, 2012; Sugino, 2012b). There have rarely been studies revealing how students are related to teachers’ motivation or demotivation in the Chinese or Korean context. One reason for this factor’s dominance among Korean English teachers is associated with students’ over-reliance on private education, especially for English in Korea. A large percentage of Korean students attend private English institutes; according to reports, 84.6% of elementary school students and 71% of junior high school students in Korea participated in private education (Statistics Korea, 2012). Moreover, Kim and Seo (2012) found that secondary school students considered private teachers to be more highly qualified to teach English than teachers in public schools. This indicates that students are likely to make more efforts to learn English in private institutes while showing mediocre interest in English classes at school. Accordingly, it would be the case that the factor related to students’ lack of or minimal interest is more demotivating for Korean teachers compared to Chinese counterparts, whose students are less dependent on private education for learning English.
Summary and Implications

The current study explored 58 Chinese and 94 Korean in-service English teachers’ demotivation and compared the demotivating factors between the two countries. The major findings are summarized as follows. First, the factor of a large number of students per English classroom was perceived to be considerably detrimental to both Chinese and Korean teachers. The follow-up teachers’ interviews revealed that this factor was related to communicative teaching and diverse levels of English proficiency in the same class. Second, the only factor for which Chinese teachers perceived to be more demotivating than Korean teachers was the excessive interference or expectations of school parents. The participating teachers attributed the reasons for this factor to the Chinese only one child policy and limited access to private education. Third, the factors of excessive administrative tasks and lack of students’ interest during class were identified as the more demotivating factors for Korean teachers than Chinese teachers. It was found that there seems to be an urgent need in order to reduce the amount of administrative tasks in the teaching context of Korea. The lack of interest among students as a dominantly demotivating factor was associated with different proficiency levels in class as well as with private education.

This study has the following implications for L2 teacher motivation research and L2 education. First, it indicates that a large class size may lead English teachers to be demotivated in relation to teaching English in communicative ways. Schools need to make more principled efforts to implement the goal of communicative teaching and learning in English classes in their own contexts. Such efforts should proceed in line with providing help for teachers to develop teaching methods and materials for mixed-level English classes. Second, as we found students’ lack of interest in English classes can demotivate English teachers, future research is suggested to focus on the
interrelationship between the demotivation of learners and teachers. This would provide insight for preventing possible negative influences that teacher or learner demotivation could have on each other. Third, more opportunities and channels of communication between teachers and students’ parents need to be provided, such as holding regular meetings with parents. This would facilitate mutual understandings of parents and teachers in dynamics of student learning.
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