



## What Makes Difficult to Keep Learning Japanese? *Demotivational Factors Affecting on Indonesian University Students*

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### ABSTRACT

Demotivation can negatively influence the learner's attitudes and behaviors, and result in negative learning outcomes. This paper investigates factors contributing to demotivation in learning Japanese as a foreign language in Indonesia, and the relationship between demotivating factors and present proficiencies. A seventeen-item questionnaire was completed by 157 Indonesian university students. As the result of exploratory factor analysis, questionnaire items consequently grouped to four categories: Course difficulty, Speaking anxiety, Devalued learning, and Boredom. The validity of the four-factor structure was verified by the confirmatory factor analysis method. In addition, two-way ANOVA was performed to investigate the relationship between demotivational factors and proficiency level. As a result, statistically significant differences were found between Low and High groups in all the factors, and between Middle and High groups in the factors expect for Devalued learning. In addition, the scores of Speaking anxiety and Boredom consistently scored the highest among the four factors. However, the degree of demotivation was decreased as the learners' Japanese proficiency improved. Findings from this study indicated that teachers should strive to make classes not only less anxious but also more interesting. Moreover, teachers should scaffold learners, especially low proficient beginners to prevent or minimize their demotivation.

### KEYWORDS

Demotivation; Japanese language learning; Learning difficulties; Motivation; Second language learning

### ARTICLE INFO

*First received: 15 May 2020*

*Final proof accepted: 16 June 2020*

*Available online: 20 June 2020*

## INTRODUCTION

Interest in learning Japanese language grew dramatically in 1980s and it has still kept its popularity over four decades all over the world. According to the result of binary survey conducted by The Japan Foundation (2019), Indonesia ranked the second highest country in number of students who study Japanese in 2018, with more than 700 thousand learners.

Despite the great numbers of Japanese learners, little attention has been given to the factors regarding individual difference in the context of Indonesia. Moreover, in terms of learner's motivation, most of ID researchers only investigate positive aspects and pay little attention to negative ones.

However, Falout, Elwood, and Hood (2009, p.403) believe that language teachers realize "how one highly motivated learner can positively influence the classroom experience and how one

demotivated learner can have an opposite effect". Demotivation often causes a longer term of negative effect such as low proficiency, less confidence, dissatisfaction, and in the worst cases, a termination of learning (e.g. Gorham & Christophel, 1992; Kikuchi, 2014; Rose & Harbon, 2013; Yang, 2011). Thus, it is necessary to clarify the negative effects in order to prevent learners from suffering demotivation when learning a language. Therefore, in this paper, the author attempts to characterise the factors of learning difficulties within Japanese learning and validate a questionnaire item by means of factor analysis, especially focused on the Indonesian context.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the field of second language (L2) learning, research on individual differences has had a rich history, starting with Gardner's pioneer work of motivation (e.g. Gardner, 1985). However, only fairly recently researchers begin focusing on negative impacts on language learning such as demotivation. In early study on L2 demotivation, Dörnyei (2001, p.143) defined it as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action". According to Dörnyei (2001), he developed 9 demotivational factors: 1) Teachers' personalities, commitments, competence, and teaching methods. 2) Inadequate school facilities such as large class sizes, unsuitable level of classes or frequent change of teachers. 3) Reduced self-confidence due to their experience of failure or lack of success. 4) Negative attitude toward the foreign language studied. 5) Compulsory nature of the foreign language study. 6) Interference of another foreign language that pupils are studying. 7) Negative attitude toward the community of the foreign language spoken. 8) Attitudes of group members. 9) Course books used in class. However, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) claimed a necessity to redefine Dörnyei's original definition as Dörnyei included internal factors such as reducing one's self-confidence or a negative attitude toward the foreign language, which are derived from learners themselves. Later on, most researches include both internal and external forces as a demotivating factor.

Historically, demotivational research has been mainly focused on English learners. For example, Falout, Elwood, and Hood (2009) and Kikuchi (2014) investigated the demotivation of English

learning that Japanese university students face, categorizing factors by means of factor analysis. Their results showed that a variety of demotivational factors may affect students' language learning, providing an evidence for reinforcement of Dörnyei's taxonomy.

In the context of Japanese learning, Xu (2018) and Yang (2011) investigated demotivational factors that Japanese learners face by using a quantitative method. They conducted a questionnaire survey with Taiwanese university students (Yang, 2011) and Chinese university student (Xu, 2018). Their results also support Dörnyei's categories, extracting commonly found factors such as inadequate school facilities and reduced self-confidence.

However, these studies were subjected to learners whose native language has a similar writing system to *Kanji* (Japanese written characters). For example, the factor "unexpected difficulties in Japanese learning" was extracted from the result of Xu (2018), and it consisted of items such as "I could not expect that Japanese was such a difficult language to learn." This came from the assumption of Chinese learners that Japanese learning is not difficult because Japan also uses Chinese characters. As mentioned in Rose and Harbon (2013), it is widely known that Japanese foreign language learners struggle to master *kanji*, particularly if their first language uses alphabetical writing system. Thus, it is necessary to increase research of demotivation for countries that use non-Chinese characters.

Moreover, the degree of demotivation is affected by other factors. For instance, Xu (2018) divided learners into two groups by whether they were willing to make Japanese learning their main major before entering to the university, assuming that the degree of willingness to study Japanese affects the perception of demotivation. Although Xu failed to examine its effect in her research, Sakai & Kikuchi (2009) uncovered that less-motivated learners easily feel demotivated, especially in the factor "lack of intrinsic motivation" than more-motivated learners.

At another level, the study from Falout, Elwood, and Hood (2009) revealed that learners' proficiency also affects their perception of demotivation, concluding that those at lower level feel more demotivated regarding English learning compared to middle or high proficiency learners. In this respect, we have to consider the effect of learners' proficiency when examining L2 learning demotivation.

To sum up, demotivational research on Japanese learning has mainly investigated in countries that use Chinese characters. In order to further explore factors contributing to student demotivation, it is important to elicit data from various learners of Japanese. Thus, this study focuses on Indonesia, which has the highest number of students among countries using non-Chinese characters. In addition, as proficiency level also has an effect on demotivation, this study also attempts to specify the difference between high, middle, and low proficiency learners.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Participants

Participants for this study were 157 Indonesian learners from six universities in Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Malang in Java Island, Indonesia. The students' average age was 20 years and 8 months; 142 were undergraduate students and 15 are graduate students. Among them, more than 90 percent of students took Japanese language or cultural studies as their major subject. According to their response of Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) acquirement, their proficiency ranged from beginning to advanced levels, as listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of students with JLPT acquirement.

N1	5
N2	28
N3	60
N4	32
N5	21
N/A	11
Total	157

### Research Instruments

Based on the previous studies on demotivation in second language learning (Falout, Elwood, & Hood, 2009; Kikuchi, 2014; Xu, 2018; Yang, 2011), 30 items were selected to characterize learning demotivation. As mentioned in the previous section, items asking about external factors (e.g. teacher, class size or classroom facility) are excluded from the survey.

The final version of the questionnaire used in the research consisted of 35 items, of which 30 were 7-point Likert-scale items that aimed to measure the factors in learning difficulties, and the rest were questions asking students' background concerning the languages they use on a daily basis, their age, their academic major, their proficiency of Japanese (JLPT), and the length of studying Japanese.

Since the questionnaire items in previous studies were written in Japanese expect for Falout, Elwood, and Hood (2009), they were translated into Bahasa Indonesia. Two Indonesian graduate students (N1 acquired) helped for the translation.

### Research Procedures

The questionnaire survey was administered online. Teachers of the class distributed a URL to the students via social media, mentioning that the participation for the survey was anonymous and voluntary. The online website was set as free access from August to the end of September, 2019. The data from 157 learners was collected during this period.

### Data Analysis

Before analysing the collected data, descriptive statistics were carried out to describe the main features of each item. During this process, 7 items were excluded from the scale because they did not show any distinguishing features among participants in terms of the measured behavior.

The data was analysed in the following steps. At first, in order to explore the characteristic of demotivational factors, an exploratory factor analysis was performed. In addition, internal consistencies of the instruments were examined with the value of Cronbach's alpha.

Next, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to measure the validity of the factor structure that was obtained from the previous analysis. To assess whether the data fit the structured model, the following fitting indexes were used: the goodness of fit index (GFI), incremental fit index (IFI), normed fit index (NFI), the Tucker-Lewis coefficient (TLI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

Lastly, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the effect of proficiency level on four demotivational factors. The subscale scores of each factor were calculated

for the analysis. Based on their response, students were divided into three groups: Low, Middle, and High proficiencies. N4 or N5 holders and eleven students with no requirement were grouped as Low ( $n = 64$ ), N3 holders as Middle ( $n = 60$ ), and N2 or N1 holders as High ( $n = 33$ ). The “no requirement” answer that eleven participants responded with means that they have learned Japanese for less than one year and their proficiency level was adequate to beginner. Therefore, they were categorized in the Low group.

The computer programs used for each data analysis were R (version 3.5.0), SPSS AMOS (version 26), and SPSS (version 26), respectively.

## RESULTS

### Characteristics of Demotivational Factors

An exploratory factor analysis was carried out using a maximum likelihood estimation with promax rotation. A four-factor-solution was imposed, based on the scree plot and theoretical

conceptualizations. The four-factor structure explained approximately 70% of the total variance, which was quite high, to characterize demotivational factors in L2 Japanese learning. Table 2 indicates the pattern structure of the factor analysis with item loadings (See Appendix for items written in Japanese and Bahasa Indonesia).

Items loading on Factor 1 concern the inappropriate level of the learning content and pace of the courses, and was therefore named *Course difficulty*, a common factor of demotivation found in the L2 learning field (Falout, Elwood, & Hood, 2009; Kikuchi, 2014; Xu, 2018).

Factor 2 was labeled as *Speaking anxiety*, reflecting perceived anxiety and nervousness, being afraid of speaking Japanese, and being afraid of making mistakes in front of teachers or classmates. Yang’s (2011) study also described this factor as demotivator to learning Japanese.

Factor 3 was composed of items describing the negative consequence toward studying Japanese, or losing the value of studying, therefore it was named *Devalued learning*. Fatmawati (2016) stressed the importance of learners finding the

Table 2: Factor loading (17 items).

	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>F4</i>	<i>h2</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Factor 1 Course difficulty (<math>\alpha = .89</math>)</b>							
1 I often find it difficult to understand the content of the class.	.93	-.07	-.02	-.01	.41	3.51	1.49
2 The teacher's speaking speed is too fast to understand.	.92	.02	-.24	-.08	.22	2.99	1.53
3 I often find it difficult to keep up with the pace of classes.	.84	-.01	.08	.00	.21	2.96	1.51
4 I can't complete homework or assignments because I have a lot of them.	.69	-.08	.03	-.01	.56	2.82	1.43
5 I feel that my grades do not improve even if I try hard.	.55	.04	.09	.10	.51	3.41	1.56
6 When I attempt a difficult task, I soon get tired and quit trying.	.52	.04	.12	.12	.50	3.18	1.44
<b>Factor 2 Speaking anxiety (<math>\alpha = .90</math>)</b>							
7 When speaking Japanese, I get nervous and can't speak well.	-.05	.96	-.04	.00	.28	4.12	1.61
8 I get nervous when speaking Japanese in front of everybody.	-.15	.91	-.05	.09	.17	4.06	1.52
9 I am embarrassed making mistakes in my classes.	.06	.79	.04	-.20	.39	3.93	1.61
10 I am afraid of being asked questions from teachers or Japanese people.	.25	.66	.04	-.01	.30	3.67	1.60
<b>Factor 3 Devalued learning (<math>\alpha = .88</math>)</b>							
11 I often find it meaningless to study Japanese.	-.04	-.10	.96	-.05	.26	2.20	1.39
12 I lost my goals or purposes of studying Japanese.	-.08	.02	.92	-.03	.27	2.50	1.52
13 I don't think that Japanese would be useful in the future.	-.06	.09	.74	.13	.45	2.05	1.34
14 I am less interested in studying Japanese.	.19	-.04	.67	-.08	.32	3.03	1.64
<b>Factor 4 Boredom (<math>\alpha = .88</math>)</b>							
15 I got tired of every day's monotonous study.	-.04	-.04	-.05	.97	.18	3.76	1.53
16 I feel that language learning is monotonous and boring.	.00	-.04	.00	.96	.11	3.55	1.55
17 I soon get tired when I am doing Japanese homework and assignments.	.09	.16	.07	.58	.42	3.96	1.67
eigenvalues	7.82	2.04	1.55	1.26			
% of variance	21.4	16.9	16.8	13.5			
factor correlations	<i>F1</i>	-	-	-			
	<i>F2</i>	-.37	-	-			
	<i>F3</i>	.56	-.55	-			
	<i>F4</i>	.60	-.49	.63			

value of learning Japanese, described as “investment” in her research, which affect their motivations. Meanwhile, results from Xu (2018) and Yang (2011) did not contain this factor.

The last factor, Factor 4 included items describing learners’ perception of having lost the interests to learn Japanese or getting bored of Japanese study, therefore was labeled as *Boredom*. Although prior works also mentioned feeling of boredom with class in the field of educational psychology (e.g. Gorham & Christophel, 1992), no study categorized it as a factor in L2 learning. The values of Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were quite high.

### Validity of the Factor Structure

In order to measure the validity of the factor structure obtained from the previous analysis, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed (See Figure 1). The analysis provided a satisfactory validity for measuring Indonesian university learners’ demotivation regarding L2 Japanese learning ( $\chi^2 = 190.914$ ,  $df = 105$ ,  $GFI = .878$ ,  $IFI = .954$ ,  $NFI = .902$ ,  $TLI = .939$ ,  $CFI = .953$ ,  $RMSEA = .072$ ). Although the GFI index indicated a less adequate fit, other indexes (i.e. IFI, NFI, TLI, and CFI) indicated a good model fit. The RMSEA value was 0.072 which is larger than an adequate value at 0.05, but still meets the acceptance level of less than 1.00. Overall, these

statistical results suggest that the structured model explain the data well. In other words, L2 Japanese learners’ demotivation is composed of the four factors of Course difficulty, Speaking anxiety, Devalued learning, and Boredom.

### Comparison on Proficiency Level

Two-way ANOVA was performed to investigate the relationship between proficiency level and demotivational factors. As mentioned in the data analysis section, the participants were grouped into three categories regarding proficiency: Low ( $n = 64$ ), Middle ( $n = 60$ ), and High ( $n = 33$ ). The mean scores and standard errors of items loading on each four-factor are shown in Table 3. Overall, the mean scores of Factor 2 are relatively high (4.28, 3.94, 3.30, respectively), followed by Factor 1 and 4. The mean scores of Factor 3 were the lowest in all groups (2.73, 2.38, 2.04, respectively).

The result of ANOVA showed statistically significant differences in the main effect of groups, the main effect of demotivational factors, and the interactional effect between the groups and the factors. A post-hoc analysis with Bonferroni adjustments revealed statistically significant differences of scores among three groups in all of the factors.

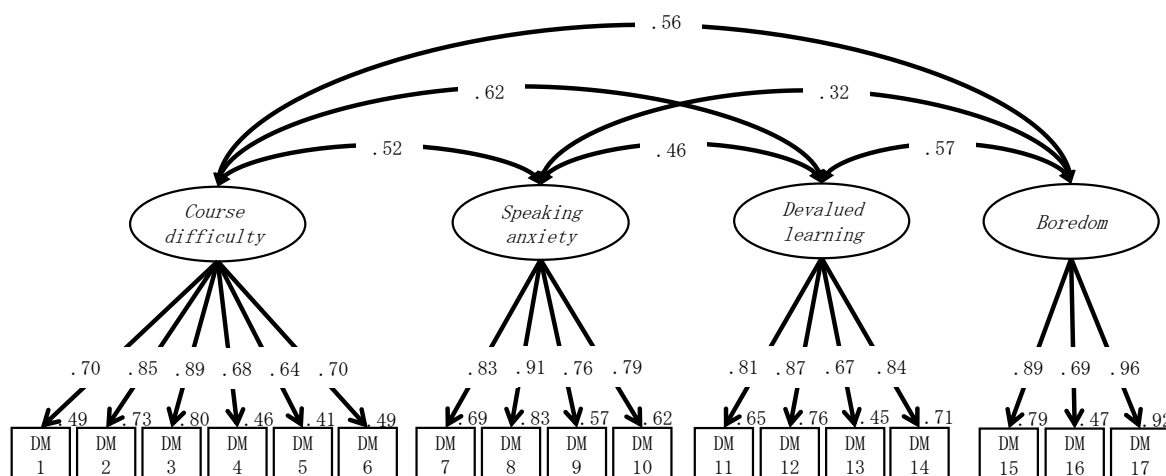


Figure 1: The final model of the demotivational structure on L2 Japanese learning.

First, statistically significant differences were found between Low and High for all of the factors. As Table 3 indicates, the factors which incurred the largest difference in means, with statistical significance at the  $p < .005$  level, was Factor 1: Course difficulty. This factor showed the largest difference at 1.20 between low and high proficiency learners.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations of 4 Japanese learning demotivational factors.

	Low (n = 64)	Middle (n = 60)	High (n = 33)
<i>Course difficulty</i> (k = 6)	3.50 (1.19)	3.24 (1.01)	2.30 (1.16)
<i>Speaking anxiety</i> (k = 4)	4.28 (1.48)	3.94 (1.14)	3.30 (1.41)
<i>Devalued learning</i> (k = 4)	2.37 (1.43)	2.38 (1.22)	2.04 (0.89)
<i>Boredom</i> (k = 3)	3.80 (1.43)	4.03 (1.27)	3.18 (1.55)

In addition, there were also significant differences between Middle and High for Factor 1, Factor 2, and Factor 4. In other words, there is a huge difference in the perception of Japanese learning demotivation between low, middle proficiency learners and high proficiency learners. For Factor 3, there was no significant difference between Middle and High. In this respect, their sense of value on Japanese learning does not change depending on proficiency level compared to other factors.

Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure 2, there were no statistically significant differences between Low and Middle group. In other words, the pattern in both Low and Middle group have a similar tendency, except for Factor 4. In Factor 4, the score in Middle group was higher than Low, whereas Low groups got lower scores for the rest of factors. Therefore, intermediate level learners feel less stimulated and become bored when learning Japanese, while beginners tend to feel bored with their study less often.

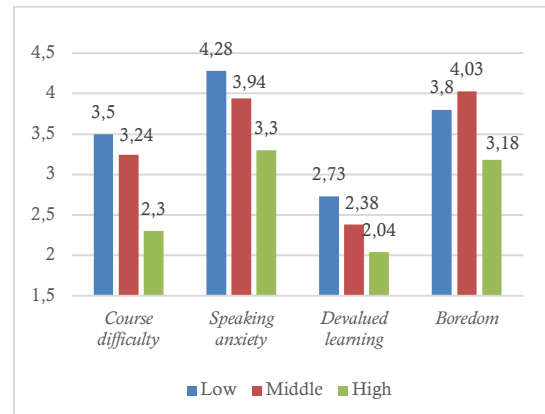


Figure 2: Means of each demotivational factor in three groups.

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to investigate demotivational factors with regarding to learning Japanese in Indonesia, and the relationship between demotivating factors and present proficiencies. As a result of exploratory factor analysis, the four-factor structure was extracted: *Course difficulty*, *Speaking anxiety*, *Devalued learning*, and *Boredom*. This structure explained approximately 70% of demotivational factors in L2 Japanese learning. From the analysis, the structure has satisfactory values of reliability and validity, which reinforces a confirmation of the results.

Comparing the previous researches (Xu, 2018; Yang, 2011) in the context of L2 Japanese learning, some new factors (*Devalued learning*, and *Boredom*) have been added. Although the former factor was extracted from the analysis, the score was the lowest among the demotivational factors. As mentioned in Fatmawati (2016), learning Japanese has a strong value on one's career, compared to English which has become a global language. Japanese learners seem to make a clear vision and ascribe high value to Japanese learning when majoring in Japanese studies in universities. However, if students find it meaningless to study Japanese, it can negatively influence their attitudes or behaviors, and sometimes it results in giving up and quitting learning. From pedagogical perspectives, teachers should provide opportunities to make students think about the reasons why they started learning Japanese or long term goals such as a

career with Japanese language skill. By making students more responsible for their own learning, students may be less likely to blame their shortcomings on teachers or other external forces (Peters, 2013). The latter factor, Boredom, has also been recognized as a demotivational factor. During the long-term process of learning, students may easily feel bored of learning as they get accustomed to it, particularly intermediate-level students. However, the degree of boredom incrementally decreased as they become to an advanced level. Although teachers need to make classes more interesting, understanding the feature of demotivation and scaffold learners enable an increase of continuity in L2 leaning.

Among the four factors, results showed statistically significant differences among the three proficiency groups, especially the scores in Factor 2 and Factor 4 which were higher when compared to the other two factors. This finding suggests that students find it more difficult to maintain their motivation when facing anxiety and boredom throughout their studies. Thus, in order to prevent or minimize their demotivation, it is necessary for teachers to pay more attention to students' perceptions of classes and devise each class in not only 'less-anxious' but also 'more-interesting' way.

Considering the various findings presented above, the influence of demotivation is too significant to ignore. Although Indonesian university students take Japanese as a major study, when being faced with inappropriate level of learning courses, feeling anxious in speaking in class, losing the values of learning Japanese, or feeling bored of classes, they are at risk of becoming demotivated. Teachers need to think of learner attitudes and their impact on Japanese learning, and at the same time, need to find various of ways to prevent or minimize learners' demotivation.

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## APPENDIX

### Factor 1: Course Difficulty

1. I often find it difficult to understand the content of the class.  
授業の内容が難しく理解できないことがよくある  
*Sering tidak mengerti materi perkuliahan karena sulit.*
2. The teacher's speaking speed is too fast to understand.

先生の話すスピードが速くて理解できないことが多い

*Sering tidak mengerti pelajaran karena cara bicara dosen yang cepat.*

3. I often find it difficult to keep up with the pace of classes.

授業の進むスピードが速くてついていけないことが多い

*Sering tertinggal pelajaran kerana pembelajaran di perkuliahan sangat cepat.*

4. I can't complete homework or assignments because I have a lot of them.

宿題や課題が多くて全て終わらせられないことが多い

*Sering tidak bisa menyelesaikan tugas atau PR karena terlalu banyak.*

5. I feel that my grades do not improve even if I try hard.

努力してもなかなか成績が上がらないと感じる

*Merasa nilai tidak membaik padahal sudah berusaha.*

6. When I attempt a difficult task, I soon get tired and quit trying.

宿題や課題に取り組んでも、難しかったらすぐに諦めてしまう

*Meskipun berusaha mengerjakan tugas atau PR, tetapi mudah menyerah jika menemukan kesulitan.*

#### *Factor 2: Speaking anxiety*

7. When speaking Japanese, I get nervous and can't speak well.

日本語を話すときは、緊張して思ったように上手く話せない

*Ketika berbicara Bahasa Jepang, saya gugup sehingga tidak bisa berbicara dengan lancar.*

8. I get nervous when speaking Japanese in front of everybody.

他の学生や先生の前で日本語を話さなければならぬと緊張してしまう

*Saya gugup jika harus bicara Bahasa Jepang di depan guru dan mahasiswa yang lain.*

9. I am embarrassed making mistakes in my classes.

クラスみんなの前で間違えることが恥ずかしい

*Saya malu jika salah di depan teman-teman sekelas.*

10. I am afraid of being asked questions from teachers or Japanese people.

先生や日本人に日本語で質問されると、とても不安になる

*Saya merasa khawatir jika ditanya dalam Bahasa Jepang oleh orang Jepang atau dosen.*

#### *Factor 3: Devalued learning*

11. I often find it meaningless to study Japanese.

日本語を学ぶ必要性が分からなくなった

*Saya jadi tidak paham apa pentingnya belajar Bahasa Jepang.*

12. I lost my goals or purposes of studying Japanese.

私には日本語を勉強する目標や理由が無い

*Saya tidak memiliki alasan dan target dalam belajar Bahasa Jepang.*

13. I don't think that Japanese would be useful in the future.

日本語を学んでも将来日本語を使わないと思う

*Saya merasa meskipun saya belajar Bahasa Jepang, tidak akan terpakai di masa depan.*

14. I am less interested in studying Japanese.

日本語の学習に対する興味が薄くなってきた

*Minat untuk belajar Bahasa Jepang semakin menipis.*

#### *Factor 4: Boredom*

15. I got tired of every day's monotonous study.

毎日の単調な学習に飽きてしまった

*Bosan dengan pembelajaran setiap hari yang monoton.*

16. I feel that language learning is monotonous and boring.

言語の学習は、毎日単調でつまらないと感じる

*Merasa pembelajaran bahasa sangat monoton tiap harinya sehingga membosankan.*

17. I soon get tired when I am doing Japanese homework and assignments.

日本語の課題や勉強に取り組んでも、すぐ飽きてやめてしまう

*Meskipun berusaha mengerjakan tugas atau PR, tetapi cepat merasa bosan.*