The Effect of an Online Learning Group Program Learning Motivation of English as a Foreign Language Among Iranian University Students

Sayedeh Nastaran Razavi and Hadi Salehi*

English Department, Najafabad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Najafabad, Iran

*Corresponding Author (hadisalehi1358@yahoo.com)

Abstract

In recent years, the enrollment of English as a foreign language (EFL) has increased significantly in higher education. The aim of this study is investigating the impact of a group learning program which is implemented as online on learning motivation of English among Iranian university students. Forty four undergraduate university students (25 males and 19 females) with the age range of 18 to 30 participated in this study. The Dornyei theoretical framework (2005; 2009) was used to measure the three aspects of motivation (ideal L2 self, ought-to L2self, and L2 learning experience). A pre- and posttest survey and a semi-instructured interview were used as the main instruments. For identifying the differences of the scores of three aspects of motivation, a paired sample T-test was used. The findings showed that there was a significant difference in L2 learning experience prior to and after the program administration and no significant difference were observed regarding the two other aspects.

Keywords: English, Iranian University students**,** Motivation, Online Learning Group Program

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays learning English in universities is as important as learning our mother tongue and the enrollment for English as a foreign language (EFL) has increased significantly in higher education in Iran. The motivating factors for students to learn English have been always the matter of question over time (Fakulta, 2012). An important factor about the English program at universities is that even though recently the attention are mostly toward the current performance-based method rather than traditional grammar translation teaching method, it has not been observed a wide effect of implementing technology in curriculum programming. For example, the most technology-relevant component used has been a DVD that accompanies the textbook. In line with this aim, the following research questions were posed:

1. Is there any significant difference in students' motivation regarding the scores on ideal L2self, ought- to L2self and L2learning experience prior to and after the administration of online learning community program?

2. What type of motivating and demotivating features can be found in online learning group program?

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The research studies on motivation in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) , returns to about half a century ago done by Gardner and Lambert in the late 1950s. The trends on social and psychological issues specially the distinction between integrative motivation and instrumental motivation, has been changed and became more classic concerning L2 motivation research in the past few decades. The current literature review was done based on Dornyei (2003) theoretical framework on four categories: (a) cognitive psychological approach: the social psychological approaches by Gardner &Lambert,1959); (b); self-determination theory, goal theory and attribution theory (c) situated approach by Dornyei (1994) based on task motivation and (d) the process- oriented approach by Dornyei (2001). The different types of L2 motivation research together have boosted the field of SLA research and helped to our overwhelming of language learning process and individual different capabilities.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this experimental study, 44 BA students (25 males and 19 females) in the age range of 18 to 30 from Najafabad University were selected by systematic sampling. A consent form was also given and filled out by the participants.

In this experimental study a concurrent transformative mixed method design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) was used. In order to reach a comprehensive mastery over the research problem, the quantitative and qualitative data were collected at the same stage during the study and an existing theoretical framework was used in this study. The quantitative data (for RQ 1) and the qualitative data (for RQs) were collected and analyzed at the same time.For the quantitative part of the study (RQ1. the questionnaire were completed by the participants before (pre) and after (post) the online project. The questionnaire consisted of included 18 Likert scale items based on Dornyei (2005, 2009) framework.

For implementing the program, three English sessions, one hour every day from Saturday to Tuesday in a semester were administered. The instructor was a native speaker of Persian but highly fluent in English. The main task for the students was short conversation and they were expected to practice and be ready for 30 minutes before the class begging.

Independent variable (IV) was the test condition, and the dependant variable (DV) was the students' score from the motivation subscales on the questionnaire. The range of DV was from 6 to 36 for the L2 learning experience subscale, 6 to 30 for ideal L2self,and 6 to 42 for the ought-to L2self (see Table 1).

Table 1:

Number of item	Possible range of scores	Test-retest reliability(pearson)	Internal consistency relaibility (Cronbach's α)	Test	Retest
L2 learning experience	6	6to36	.74**	.75	.80
Ideal L2self	5	6to30	.73*	.76	.66
Ought-to L2self	7	6to42	.87***	.79	.83
Total motivation score	18	6to108	.79**	.77	.83

Note: * = p < .05, ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001.

4. RESULTS

Descriptive statistics for RQ1 consisted of three subsections, because there are three aspects of motivation. For each subquestion, the test condition was the independent variable, and the dependant variable was the participants' scores from the questionnaire.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Motivational Scores

		N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
IdealL2self	Pretest	43	25.93	3.91	-0.89	-0.08
(Maximum score: 30)	Posttest	44	25.91	3.61	-0.91	-0.09
Ought-to L2 self (Maximum score: 42)	Pretest	44	17.98	5.65	1.20	1.62
Ought-to L2 self (Maximum score: 42)	Posttest	44	18.25	6.28	1.25	1.51
L2 learning experience	Pretest	44	27.84	5.67	-0.28	-0.67

(Maximum score: 36)						
L2 learning experience (Maximum score: 36)	Posttest	44	29.5	5.34	-0.84	-0.98

For motivating features 64 codes were identified for motivating features among the participants' responses. There were also 55 codes identified from participants' response to open ended questions for demotivating features, the responses were categorized by the researchers. The final As it was revealed, the demotivating features were fewer than for motivating ones. Regarding the answers, the most frequently mentioned theme were:1) lack of organization of the forum, 2) technology barrier, 3) lack of time , and 4) volume of work using in program.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As it was observed through descriptive statistics of the participants' scores on the three aspects of motivation, the participants scored high in ideal L2 self and L2learning experience and low in ought-to L2self .The motivation of the participants in this study came from their view of their ideals selves and the positive learning experience that they had with English learning. Becoming fluent in speaking English and also having proficiency in English was the most important factors for the students to achieve their individual needs and goals. They also believed in the power of experience on being motivated in their English study.

As it was shown by the results for RQ2, the participants' perception of the motivating features concentrated on the learning recourses and tools which were provided for them in this program and the wide opportunity to connect and interact with other learners. This proves that online project has the influence to pave the way to meet different individuals' need and to defeat the physical barriers of a face-to-face interaction.

About the ideal L2self and ought-to L2 self no significant differences was observed. This shows the stability of ideal L2self and ought-to L2 self which will not influenced by the four-week project. L2 learning experience was observed as a more dynamic and changeable aspect of motivation and had a tendency to change within a short period of time. This demonstrated that the program affected the participants' learning experience to some extent but did not affect their idealL2self and ought-to L2self a lot.

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