EXTENDED ABSTRACT

ASSESSMENT OF MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH VIA ONLINE AMONG UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES: AN ONLINE SURVEY

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Abstract

Online education has become the leading form of teaching in the current world with the COVID-19 pandemic, and e-learner motivation has been identified as the essential component in achieving its success. This online survey aimed to assess the motivation to learn English online among law, computing and social sciences undergraduates in Sri Lanka. The study was conducted as a descriptive cross-sectional study. Seven-dimensional, 38-item motivation to learn online questionnaire (MLOQ) was used to gather data. Descriptive statistics, Mann Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis H test were used to analyze data in SPSS 23.0. The stream 'Humanities and Social Sciences' had the highest mean scores in four dimensions out of seven. A significant mean difference was found in dimension' Control of Learning Beliefs' between the two genders ($p<0.05$). Few other dimensions had significant mean differences in academic streams ($p<0.05$). Further, experimental research is recommended to evaluate the associative factors towards motivation to learn online.

Keywords: e-Learner motivation, undergraduates, English language learning

1. Introduction

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has paved the way for the increasing significance given to online education worldwide (Fowler, 2018). Online education has become the most viable form of instruction in the current world. Although online education has begun to play a prominent role in the entire education system, the attention given to online education's cognitive and psychological effects is significantly less (Fowler, 2018.). The factors that have been well researched as influential in enhancing the quality of delivery in onsite education might function differently concerning distance education. The level of success achieved in English language learning is pervaded by many factors such as intelligence, attitudes, abilities and motivation. However, among these factors, motivation remains the most significant as it mediates the attitudes and perceptions among the students towards the target language (Escobar Fandiño et al., 2019). Further, levels of academic motivation intermingle expansively concerning learning a foreign language (Pourfeiz, 2016). When the students are exposed to the activities which enable them to boost their motivation, it promotes learner autonomy. Moreover, it will make the students very competent and confident in their process of learning (Ryan Deci, 2000). The literature has identified that when the students are placed in a collaborative learning space with creativity, that plays a vital role in enhancing their level of

motivation. Specially, when they are exposed to an environment where they feel comfortable with the technology (Escobar Fandiño et al., 2019). Studies that have been conducted previously have revealed that novices illustrate high degrees of Intrinsic Motivation in distance education than the ones involved in onsite education (Firat et al., 2018; Shroff et al., 2007) Motivation is one of the essential components in achieving success in English as a second language learning in the long run. There has been a massive expansion in this regard during recent years (Boo et al., 2015). With the increase in the prevalence of distance education in the university system of Sri Lanka, it is crucial to assess the influence of the students' motivation in achieving academic success. It will create the experience distance education a good experience for all the students. There are plenty of studies conducted worldwide concerning the influence of students' motivation to learn English in a traditional classroom setting. However, there is a dearth of studies conducted to assess how motivation operates in an online classroom. Improving English Language proficiency is a crucial component in achieving a prosperous future for university undergraduates. Hence this study was carried out to assess the e-learner motivation among the ESL learners of Sri Lanka.

2. Methodology

This study was carried out as a descriptive cross-sectional study. The data collection of the study was conducted in the outbreak of COVID-19. Therefore, an online questionnaire developed in English was shared among the law, computing and social sciences undergraduates for two weeks to receive the completed questionnaires. Thus, the data was obtained from the first, second and third academic years, those who study compulsory English Language courses via distance learning education. Further, the study's consent was taken online from the participants once the purpose and the objectives are explained through an online statement before the questionnaire.

A questionnaire consisted of two sections used in the data collection of this study. Section A composed of few questions on socio-demographic data. Section B was the 'Motivation to Learn Online Questionnaire (MLOQ)" developed by Shawn Fowler (Fowler, 2018). For each question in section B, an item prompted participants to indicate their level of agreement regarding their experience's online classes with a Likert scale. This instrument was composed of 38 items and was related to seven dimensions (D1-D7; Intrinsic Goal Orientation (Items 1-4), Extrinsic Goal Orientation (Items 5-8), Control of Learning Beliefs (Items 9-12), Self-Efficacy (Items 13-20), Task Value (Items 21-26), Social Engagement (27-31) and Instructor Support (31-38). The Likert scale ranges from one to five, with the following values: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree. For item 27, reverse coding was employed.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 to obtain descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) and Mann–Whitney, Kruskal–Wallis, and Pearson's correlation coefficient. As the distribution of the overall results and all the dimensions of the MLOQ were not normal (Shapiro Wilk test was less than 0.000), we used non-parametric tests to study the relationships between the socio-demographic variables and the MLOQ. The Mann–Whitney U test for two independent samples was used to compare gender with each dimension. In addition, the Kruskal–Wallis ANOVA test was used with pairwise comparison to determine the relationship between academic year/ academic stream and MLOQ dimensions' score. Statistical significance was established at the 0.05 level.

3. Results and Discussions

The mean age of the participants was 22.35±3.474. A majority (60.4%) of the participants were females and were law students (55.0%). Further, many of them (36.9%) were from the second year (Table 1). The participants from the stream Humanities and Social Sciences scored the highest mean values in the dimensions; Intrinsic Goal Orientation (16.58 ± 0.777), Extrinsic Goal Orientation (16.74 ± 0.704), Control of Learning Beliefs (17.11 ± 0.745), Self-Efficacy (33.68 ± 1.463) and the

participants from the computing scored the highest mean values in the dimensions; Task Value (25.26 ± 0.714), Social Engagement (19.00 ± 0.521) and Instructor Support (29.29 ± 0.814) (Table 2).

Table 1. Socio Demographic data

Demographic	Characteristics	Number	Percentage%
	Male	44	39.6
	Female	67	60.4
	Law	61	55.0
	Computing	31	27.9
	Humanities and Social Sciences	19	17.1
	First	35	31.5
	Second	41	36.9
	Third	35	31.5

Table 2. Distribution of dimensions among the academic streams

Dimension	Academic stream		
	Law	Computing	Humanities & Social Sciences
Intrinsic Goal Orientation	15.07 ± 0.303	15.94 ± 0.466	16.58 ± 0.777
Extrinsic Goal Orientation	14.51 ± 0.329	15.48 ± 0.588	16.74 ± 0.704
Control of Learning Beliefs	15.38 ± 0.280	15.71 ± 0.576	17.11 ± 0.745
Self-Efficacy	29.87 ± 0.569	30.77 ± 1.028	33.68 ± 1.463
Task Value	23.77 ± 0.431	25.26 ± 0.714	25.21 ± 0.920
Social Engagement	17.64 ± 0.401	19.00 ± 0.521	18.89 ± 0.452
Instructor Support	27.74 ± 0.546	29.29 ± 0.814	29.05 ± 1.077

The Cronbach alpha values of the dimensions ranged from 0.634 to 0.915 (Table 3). In addition, the Mann Whitney U test has suggested a significant mean difference in Control of Learning Beliefs

(D3) between the two genders ($p<0.05$) (Table 4). Further, the Kruskal Wallis test has revealed that the dimensions; Intrinsic Goal Orientation (D1), Extrinsic Goal Orientation (D2), Control of Learning Beliefs (D3), Self-Efficacy (D4), Social Engagement (D6) had significant mean differences among the three academic streams ($p< 0.05$) (Table 4).

Table 3. Cronbach alpha values of the dimensions

Subscale	Cronbach alpha
Intrinsic Goal Orientation	0.740
Extrinsic Goal Orientation	0.803
Control of Learning Beliefs	0.837
Self-Efficacy	0.915
Task Value	0.903
Social Engagement	0.634
Instructor Support	0.923

Table 4. Variable and seven dimensions of the scale

Characteristic	Component	Mean	SD	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7
				p-value	*p*-value	*p*-value	*p*-value	*p*-value	*p*-value	*p* value
Gender	Male	145.11	22.604	0.546	0.793	0.045	0.379	0.961	0.701	0.976
	Female	150.45	15.186							
Academic Stream	Law	143.97	15.122	0.006	0.004	0.010	0.010	0.081	0.016	0.184
	Computing	151.45	20.704							
	Humanities and Social Sciences	157.26	21.587							
Academic Year	First	150.46	14.785	0.121	0.547	0.736	0.840	0.203	0.108	0.147
	Second	149.20	21.003							
	Third	145.20	19.049							

4. Discussion

The current online survey was conducted as a descriptive cross-sectional study to assess the motivation to learn online among undergraduates in Sri Lanka. An online questionnaire was shared on social media to receive the responses for two weeks. The data related to motivation to learn online were

collected using the Motivation to Learn Online Questionnaire (MLOQ) developed by Shawn Fowler. The participants from the stream Humanities and Social Sciences scored the highest mean values in the dimensions; intrinsic goal orientation, extrinsic goal orientation, control of learning beliefs, self-efficacy and the participants from the computing scored the highest mean values in the dimensions; Task Value, Social Engagement and Instructor Support.

The Cronbach alpha values obtained for each dimension were acceptable as in the original study (Fowler, 2018), indicating good reliability of the scale. The Mann Whitney U test has suggested a significant mean difference in Control of Learning Beliefs between the two genders. It was noted that the Extrinsic Goal Orientation subscale and Social Engagement subscale had significant mean differences in the two genders in the original stud (Fowler, 2018). Further, it was found that there were significant mean differences in the dimensions; Intrinsic Goal Orientation, Extrinsic Goal Orientation, Control of Learning Beliefs, Self-Efficacy, Social Engagement in their academic streams when considering the different academic streams. However, there were no mean differences found in the dimensions of MLOQ among different academic years.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Motivation plays a crucial role in achieving the academic success of learners of the English language. This becomes even more important concerning distance education. The motivation to learn online was high among the study population. A significant mean difference was found in the Control of Learning Beliefs between the two genders. Many dimensions of the scale had significant mean differences among the different academic streams. However, it was recommended to conduct more experimental studies to identify the factors associated with motivation to learn online.

Further, new approaches like problem-based learning can be applied to improve motivation. In addition, it is also essential to enhance the instructor support given in making distance learning an enriching experience for the students. When designing the curricula and policy-making, it is important to pay attention to the modifications that enhance students' motivation.

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