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STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TOWARDS COMPUTER USE IN EFL LEARNING

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Abstract
It has been widely recognized that language instruction that integrates technology has become popular, and has had a tremendous impact on language learning process whereas learners are expected to be more motivated in a web-based Computer assisted language learning program, and improve their comprehensive language ability. Thus, the present paper examines English as a foreign language students' motivation level in using web-based Computer-Assisted Language Learning. The sample group of the study consisted of 126 learners of English as foreign language at preparatory school of Inonu University. The data were used to provide a descriptive and correlational analysis to address the research questions. The results indicate that there is a significant correlation between motivation level and the degree of importance of learning English for the participant while the relationship between motivation level and some other variables such as age, gender, grade, compulsory and voluntary states, types of their high school, parents' educational background, the time period of the participant's language learning process and the experience towards computer use was not significant. Finally, some practical recommendations were noted.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, motivation, computer assisted language learning

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has increasingly become an important part of the language learning process. In the early seventies, computers came to the forefront of language learning and teaching. After being linked to a local network or the worldwide web in the nineties, computers became the vehicle for a growing number of multimedia tools specifically designed for use in the foreign language learning process. Later on, in the nineties, the efficacy of computer use for enhancing language learning constituted an issue of major importance (Garrett, 2009). Today, computers and the internet allow the combination of different online resources through multiple hyperlinks, a feature common to most online searches and many other online utility. CALL and web-based environments are appropriate to the alternative methodologies of modern foreign language instruction. Also, CALL helps students improve their language skills rapidly, makes them study at their own pace, and gets immediate feedback, corrections and even error analysis (Hanson-Smith, 1997). As suggested by Oxford (1993) and Oxford, Rivera-Castillo, Feyten and Nutta (1998), technology will only be effective if some conditions are met: (a) if it deals with students' needs and interests and finds ways to increase learners' motivation; (b) if the appropriate technology is used for each aspect of foreign / second language learning and acquisition, and the educational goals and the kind of learners are considered; (c) if it provides a meaning-focused learning environment and abundant authentic language input, and uses relevant themes and meaningful tasks; (d) if the technology is effectively exploited in the particular instructional situation; and (e) if it deals effectively with the difficulties that students may encounter.

With the expansion of CALL, more questions have been raised. Issues of learning style, motivation, personality and some other factors have come to the fore with the use of computers. That is, it has been questioned whether computers can find even more effective solutions for individualized instruction and motivational support. For instance, in a study conducted by Ayres (2002), it was concluded that learners appreciate and value the learning that they do using computers, resulting in high face validity for CALL. Students who see CALL as an important part of the course also have a high level of motivation, and perceive CALL work as relevant to their needs. In addition, motivation, the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002), is one of the keys that influence the rate and success of language learning (Dörnyei, 1998). To add, Gardner described motivation as "complex of factors" including the desire to achieve a goal, effort expended on that direction, and reinforcement or satisfaction associated with the act of learning. According to Gardner (1985), a highly motivated individual will want to learn the language, enjoy learning the language, and strive to learn the language (Gardner 1985). Gardner (1985) also identifies motivation as the single and most influential factor in learning a new language. According to him, a motivated learner is one who is eager to learn the language, willing to expend effort on the learning activity, and willing to sustain the learning activity. In this respect, motivation has been emphasized to play a significant and direct role in the informal learning context, showing the voluntary nature of the motivated learners' participation in informal language learning contexts. However, there appears to be little research directly associated with the motivation towards web based CALL in English as foreign language (EFL) context in Turkey. Thus, the present study was designed to identify a combination of motivation and computer use among EFL students. With this concern in mind, the present paper examines two research questions:
1. What is the level of motivation of EFL learners towards computer use in EFL learning?
2. Do age, gender, grades, compulsory and voluntary states, types of their high school, parents' educational background, the time period of the participant's language learning process, the experience towards computer use and the degree of importance of learning English affect their level of motivation?

METHOD

The sample group of the study consisted of 126 EFL learners who were enrolled in Preparatory School of English in 2009-2010 academic year. 45 (35.7%) of the participants were females whereas (64.3) were males. They were all freshmen aged from 18 to 24 as for their distribution according to their faculties; they were students at seven different classes, three of which consisted of volunteer students whereas four were compulsory from Medical Faculty, Faculty of Administration, Faculty of Science and Letters, and Faculty of Pharmacy. 28 of the students (22.2%) attended English preparatory school of their high school, and have been receiving the second preparatory school education while 97 (77.0%) of them were receiving an English preparatory school education for the first time. With regard to the high schools that they graduated from, the participants were the graduates of Anatolian High School (32.5%), General High School (42.1%), Vocational High School (0.8%), Private High School (6.3%), and lastly, Science High Schools (18.3%). Finally, the learners group had full-time English classes (25 contact hours per week) for each semester. Also, they had 2-hour CALL class per week.

The data collection instrument consisted of a questionnaire interrogating the participants about their age, gender, grades, compulsory and voluntary states, types of their high school, parents' educational background, the time period of the participant's language learning process, the experience towards computer use and the degree of importance of learning English, and a scale, was adapted from Pu (2009), aiming at measuring the motivation level of learners towards the lesson and how useful they viewed the time spent in the CALL

laboratory. The scale consisted of 12 multiple-choice items that were assessed on a scale ranging from one to five (never=1, rarely=2, sometimes=3, usually=4, always=5).

The procedure of the study included the administration of the instruments and statistical analysis. After obtaining a written permission from school authorities, the background questionnaire and motivation scale were administered to the participants at fall semester in 2009. Subsequently, the collected data were analyzed using the SPSS software. In the analysis, the reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha Model. The reliability coefficient of the scale, which was calculated to be 0.806, indicated a high level of reliability. Next, the frequencies, mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each item. Finally, t-test and ANOVA were carried out to detect the correlations between the independent variables and the level of motivation.

RESULTS

The findings of the study were categorized in two sections: The level of motivation towards computer use in EFL learning, and the correlations between the level of motivation and independent variables of age, gender, grades, compulsory and voluntary states, types of their high school, parents' educational background, the time period of the participant's language learning process, the experience towards computer use and the degree of importance of learning English. In other words, a descriptive and correlational presentation of the collected data was provided.

One of the findings is related to the motivational level of EFL learners towards computer use in EFL learning. It is revealed that 53 students (42%) have relatively low motivation towards the lesson than the rest of the students in the range of 12 and 60 whereas 73 (58%) of the participants are at a high level of motivation.

The findings indicate that gender, age, whether the education at preparatory school was compulsory or voluntary, and whether the participants had preparatory language class are not the factor that affect the level of motivation. That is, the results of t-tests demonstrate that significance levels are 0.6 for gender and 0.2 for age. Next, the significance level is 0.3 in terms of compulsory and voluntary participation in EFL learning. However, it is worth noting that voluntary students are expected to have rather high motivation level towards computer based English course since they themselves intentionally chose to receive English preparatory education for one year. Lastly, it is found that there is no statistically significant difference with respect to the students' previous preparatory school education (p=0.8).

The only variable that affects significantly the motivation level of EFL learners is their beliefs about the importance of English. To begin, in terms of the importance of English for the students, 79 (62.7%) of the students express that English is "very important" and 44 (34.9%) of the students report that it is "important but not so much" whereas English is "not important at all" for 3 (2.4%) of the students. Next, the t-test results show that there exists a significant difference between the motivation level of EFL learners and their beliefs about the importance of English, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: The relationship between motivation level towards computer use in EFL learning and their beliefs about the importance of language

Statement	N	Frequency (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	F	Sig.
English is						
very important.	79	62.7	42.9	7.6		
important but not so much.	44	34.9	37.7	7.0	6.74	0.00
not important at all.	3	2.4	35.6	20.9		

Another focus of the present study is the relationship between the level of motivation towards computer use and some other variables such as the high schools they graduated from, participants' achievement levels in English, their experience of EFL learning in years, and computer instruction, and computer familiarity in years. First of all, the types of the high school they graduated is not a significant factor that affects the level of motivation (p=0.2). Similarly, t-test results show that the relationship is not sufficient to suggest a statistically meaningful difference (p=0.16). To add, their EFL learning experiences in years (p=0.85), their achievement level in English (p=0.85), whether they had computer instruction (p=0.10), and computer familiarity (p=0.89) are not statistically significant in terms of the motivation level of EFL learners.

The other variables investigated in the study are their parents' educational background and their parents' proficiency in foreign language. First of all, the descriptive statistics show that 20 (15.9%) students' mothers and two (1.6%) students' fathers seem not to have gone to school at all, and that 59 (46.8%) of the students' mothers and 57 (45.2%) of the students' fathers are just graduates of primary school. Also, the participants state that 23 (21.4%) of the students' mothers and 27 (21.4%) of the students' fathers are graduates of high school whereas 14 (11.1%) of the students' mothers and 30 (23.8%) of the students' fathers have a university degree whereas four (3.2%) of the students' mothers and nine (7.1%) of the students' fathers hold an MA or PhD. Yet, the correlational analysis indicates that the educational background of the participants' parents is not a significant factor that affects EFL learners' motivation in terms of computer use in EFL learning (p=0.56 for fathers, p=0.43 for mothers). Secondly, 32 (25.4%) of the participants state that their fathers have competence in English language and 89 (70.6%) do not have competent fathers in English. Similarly, 20 participants (15.9%) report that their mothers have competency in English language while 104 (82.5%) of the participants state that they do not have English competent mothers. To conclude, the correlational analysis demonstrates that there is no significant correlation between their parents foreign language competence and participants' level of motivation towards computer use in EFL learning (p=0.25 for fathers, p=0.78 for mothers).

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate the level of motivation and the relationship between motivation level and certain variables of age, gender, grades, compulsory and voluntary states, types of their high school, parents' educational background, the time period of the participant's language learning process, the experience towards computer use and the degree of importance of learning English. The sample group of the study consisted of 126 EFL learners who were enrolled in Preparatory School of English at Inonu University, Turkey. A background questionnaire and a scale aiming at measuring the level of motivation towards EFL learning were used to provide a descriptive and correlational analysis.

Three main results were obtained from the study. Firstly, EFL learners mainly have a high level of motivation towards computer use in EFL learning process. Secondly, EFL learners' beliefs about the importance of foreign language learning constitute a significant factor that affects the level of their motivation. In other words, the more they believe English is important, the more they feel motivated towards computer use in EFL learning. Lastly, their age, gender, grades, compulsory and voluntary states, types of their high school, parents' educational background, the time period of the participant's language learning process, the experience towards computer use have no effects on their motivational levels.

Given that EFL learners have a high level of motivation towards computer use in EFL learning process, and their beliefs about the importance of English constitute a significant effect on motivation level, some practical recommendations can be noted. Firstly, it can be underlined that, as the findings of the present study suggest, computers can be integrated into EFL learning process in addition to the purchasing equipments and software, and making them available to students. Secondly, as the less students believe English is important, the less they feel motivated towards computer use in EFL learning, the factors affecting their beliefs should be investigated. To add, EFL teachers need to be aware of the negative effects of their students' beliefs about language learning on motivation towards computer use in EFL learning process. Moreover, teachers should also be instructed about how to change their students' beliefs on EFL learning. Thirdly, target groups such as teachers, software developers, and curriculum developers should be aware of that age, gender, grades, compulsory and voluntary states, types of their high school, parents' educational background, the time period of the participant's language learning process, and the experience towards computer use have no effects on learner's level of motivation towards computer use in EFL learning.

As a note on the limitations of the study, the subjects were limited to 126 EFL learners who were enrolled in Preparatory School of English at Inonu University, Turkey. Moreover, the scope of the study was confined to the data collected using the motivation scale and some selected variables. Given that the study investigates the level of motivation and the relationship between motivation and certain variables, further studies should focus on some other issues such as attitudes, beliefs, and anxiety levels.

Acknowledgements

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