Tertiary Student's Motivation and Learning Strategies in English Language Online Learning

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Abstract

Many institutions are currently providing online education to offer an accessible learning environment during the COVID 19 pandemic. Among all subjects, foreign languages are especially challenging to learn online. This research is set 1) to investigate the participants' motivation and learning strategies for online English language learning and 2) to investigate the participants' perception on motivation and learning strategies in an online English language learning class comparing to a traditional classroom. The Modified Motivation strategies for learning questionnaire (Modified MSLQ) was used as a research tool. A total of 162 students with 75 females and 87 males participated in this research. The study shows that task anxiety is the highest score on Motivation (5.89) and Critical thinking is the highest score on learning strategies (5.99). The lowest score for Motivation is on Self-efficacy (4.25). The lowest score for learning strategies covers three sub-categories: elaboration, time-management, and critical thinking (4.15). Online learning environment does not have

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a significant impact on the students' motivation and learning strategies as 76.5% of the participants revealed in the open ended part of the questionnaire that there is no difference between learning English online or in the classroom regarding their motivation and learning strategies.

Key words: motivation, Self-regulated Learning (SRL) Strategies, online learning

Introduction

Since the event of the COVID 19 pandemics, many institutions are forced to provide online education to offer an accessible learning environment. Many types of online learning platforms and online communication tools are being used to create a virtual learning environment during the time of social distancing. However, the implementation of online learning may provide different results in students learning progress and success in different subjects. Among all subjects, foreign languages are especially challenging to learn online as they required interaction between students and teachers and students and students. With these challenges in learning a foreign language online, it is interesting to investigate whether an online learning environment affect student's motivation and learning strategies.

Self-Regulation in Language Learning

The definition of Self-Regulation in Language Learning (SRL) is defined by Pintrich (2000) as an active procedure where learners create goals in their learning, and the process. They monitor, regulate,

and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior required by the context or the environment of their learning. Therefore, SRL is considered to be one of the most significant parts of learning. Hattie (2008) indicated that motivation and cognitive and metacognitive strategies have an impact on learners learning outcomes. According to Hattie's meta-analysis, motivation has effect sizes of 0.48 and cognitive strategies at 0.60 and metacognitive strategies at 0.53 on learners learning outcomes.

Recently, several studies showed that SRL does not only play a crucial role in students' learning outcomes in a traditional classroom, but it is also a crucial factor for learners' success in an online learning environment both in university and school settings. There might be an argument indicating that SRL is only for a specific domain as a person being self-regulated in one subject might not be the same in another (Boekaerts, 1997). The following sections will provide two major elements of self-regulation in language learning research. The first part discusses the motivational process and the second part discussed learning strategies.

Learning Strategies in Language Learning and Online Learning

Many studies indicated the positive effects of learning strategies in language learning classrooms. Self-regulated language learning has a positive impact on success in second language learning. More competent L2 learners are found to be more conscious of their learning process and can control their own learning better than lower

competent L2 learners (Khatib, 2010; Meizi, G. 2008).

Apart from the traditional classroom context, many studies revealed that SRL yields a positive impact in a technology-enhanced environment including online learning (Kuo, Chu, & Huang, 2015). However, research into online learning tends to focus on domain-general strategies and many of them are reported to be related to student's success in L2 learning.

The use of SRL strategies had also been investigated. Students' self-regulatory skills in online learning were examined by King, Harner, & Brown (2000), who summarized that the two factors related to their usage of strategies are study skills and goal-setting.

Students' satisfaction together with their academic progress is considered very important for the evaluation of their success in online learning (Delon & McLean, 1992; Kuo, Walker, Schroder, & Belland, 2014). According to Palmer & Holt (2009), a high level of online-learning satisfaction reflects the students' achievement performance and persistence. Therefore, students' satisfaction is one of the crucial factors in evaluating the effectiveness and success of online program implementation. Previous research showed that satisfaction in online learning has a positive correlation with students' use of SRL strategies (Kuo et al., 2014).

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) Strategies

Learners with self-regulation abilities are those that actively participate in the learning process, put out a cognitive effort, and are eager to learn (Broadbent, 2017; Zimmerman, 1986). These learners,

who are capable of directing their own learning processes, use a variety of tactics to help them learn. These strategies essentially have an impact on their learning outcomes. Broadbent (2017) indicated that, in a blended and online learning environment, different types of self-regulation strategies are being employed. Moreover, in an online learning environment, learners who employ different types of SLR strategies display different learning behavior (Littlejohn, Hood, Milligan & Mustain, 2016). As a result, it becomes critical to comprehend SLR techniques and evaluate the relationship between these techniques and learning environment preferences.

Cognitive, metacognitive, and resource management methods are the three basic categories of strategies used by individuals in the learning process (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991). These strategies assist learners in their self-learning and information processing easier, as well as allowing for long-term learning. Self-regulated learners' cognitive strategies can be classified as rehearsal, elaboration, organization, and critical thinking. Rehearsal is a learning approach that involves repeating and reciting material in order to recall it when needed. Elaboration is a cognitive strategy that includes linking new information to prior knowledge when executing tasks like summarizing and interpreting. The organization includes selecting appropriate information and create a connection between different information. Critical thinking means applying previously-taught content to a new setting. Learners with self-regulation skills are expected to use these cognitive techniques, as well as to have the willingness to

learn and improvable skills. Nevertheless, the notions of motivation will be examined in the next section.

Motivation

According to Dornyei (1996) motivation in language learning has a unique challenge among general theory of motivation as it involves both personal and social aspects. Learning a language can be a reflection of a person's identity and an ethnolinguistic attitude (perspective on the target language community) and a method of gaining access to social and cultural opportunities in societies where the target language is spoken. Also, Individuals' willingness to learn a language can be influenced by social factors such as their expectations of its prestige or strength.

Motivation is crucial in the learning process. In the study of Selim (2007), it was found that motivation of learners is an essential part in accepting the online learning environment. Furthermore, many studies indicated a positive correlation between motivation and learner success and engagement in online learning (Baturay & Yukselturk, 2015; Cull, Reed & Kirk, 2010). However, different levels of motivation have an impact on behavior and interaction in an online learning environment. Pintrich et. al.(1991) categorize motivation into three different components: value, expectation, and affective components. Each of them consists of various sub-factors. This present study investigates the three sub-components of motivation which are task value, test anxiety, and self-efficacy. Task value refers to the

perception that learners have on tasks (homework or projects) during the course. Test anxiety refers to the experience of negative emotion that learners encounter during an evaluative situation. Self-efficacy refers to learners' sense of competence in completing a task.

Objectives
The objectives of the study are as followed:

1. To investigate the participants' motivation and learning strategies for online English language learning.

2. To investigate the participants' perception on motivation and learning strategies in an online English language learning class.

Methodology
Participants

In this study, the participants were first-year university students from different faculties in a science and technology university in Bangkok, Thailand. The students were enrolled in a reading and writing course in the second semester of the academic year 2020. The study employed convenience sampling as the participants are students who are studying in the researcher's sections. A total of 162 students with 75 females and 87 males participated in this research. The students aged around 19 to 20 years old. All of them were Thai and their native language was Thai. Table 1 presented the characteristics of the participants:

Table 1: Demographic background of the participants

Number of students	162
Age	19 – 20 years old
Sex	Male: 87 Female: 75
Mother tongue	Thai

Data collection tool

    A questionnaire was employed to collect quantitative data in this study. The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section is personal information. This part is formed to obtain some demographic information of the participants. The second part was the questionnaire adapted from the Modified Motivation Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (Modified MSLQ) by Artino and McCoach (2008). This version of MSLQ was modified in order to measure self-regulated learning in an online learning setting. This version of MSLQ consisted of two main subscales: motivation and learning strategies. The motivation section includes task value, self-efficacy, and task anxiety, and they are consisted of 19 items. The learning strategies section includes elaboration, critical thinking, metacognitive self-regulation, and time/ study environmental management and they consist of 28 items. In the MSLQ, the participants are asked to rate their answer MSLQ on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from not at all true to me (1) to very true to me (7). A high score suggested a

higher level of motivation and a high level of learning strategy use. The last question of the questionnaire asks the participants to answer the question "Does taking this course online affect your motivation to study? (Would you answer the above question differently if it was normal in the classroom?)" in order to answer the second research question.

The questionnaire was translated into Thai language and was generated using google form and distributed to the participants via a link.

Data collection process

The information is gathered using google form. The question-naire link was distributed during the second semester of the academic year 2020. The participants were 162 first-year university students who enrolled in three sections of a reading and writing course. The data was divided into three parts

1. The participants' demographic background

2. The 7 points Likert Scale questionnaire on Motivation and Self-directed learning strategies 47 items.

No. 1 means   Very untrue to me

No. 2 means   Untrue to me

No. 3 means   Somewhat untrue to me

No. 4 means   Neutral

No. 5 means   Somewhat true to me

No. 6 means   True to me

No. 7 means   Very true to me

3. Short answer for the questions whether they think the answer will be different in a traditional classroom situation

Data Analysis

1. The analysis for the 7 points Likert Scale questionnaire on Motivation and Self-directed learning strategies 47 items.

Average score 6.51 – 7.00 means   Very high

Average score 5.51 – 6.50 means   High

Average score 4.51 – 5.50 means   Somewhat high

Average score 3.51 – 4.50 means   Medium

Average score 2.51 – 3.50 means   Somewhat low

Average score 1.51 – 2.50 means   Low

Average score 1.00 – 1.50 means   Very low

2. Analyzing frequency for the short answer on the participants perception of motivation and learning strategies in online and traditional language classroom.

Results

The result from the questionnaire from 162 participants during the second semester of the academic year 2020 can be summarized in accordance with the objectives as followed;

1. To answer the first objective of the study on the participants' motivation and learning strategies of the students for online English language learning. It was found that both constructs received high average scores. When classified into categories it was found that

both Motivation and Learning strategies received high average scores. The highest average score for motivation were Test anxiety (5.89), Self-efficacy (5.84), and Task value (5.74) respectively. The highest score for Learning Strategies were Critical thinking (5.99), Elaboration (5.93), Time management (5.88), and Metacognitive and self-regulation (5.86) respectively. Table 2 showed a summary of average score on motivation and learning strategies.

For the lowest score, the results showed that the participants gave the lowest score for motivation only for self-efficacy with an average score of 4.25. For learning strategies, elaboration, time management, and critical thinking average score was 4.15.

2. For the second research objective on the participants' perception on motivation and learning strategies in an online English language learning class comparing to a traditional classroom, it was found that 76.5% of the participants revealed that the motivation and learning strategies for English language learning are the same comparing to learning English in the traditional classroom. The participants indicated that they believe that there is no difference between learning English in both learning circumstances and that learning online is convenient as the resource is always available for them. However, 23.5% of the participants indicated that they perceive that there might be differences between both learning circumstances as they are more focused in the classroom environment and that they can interact with both teachers and peers.

Table 2: Results on motivation and learning strategies questionnaire

Motivation			
Self-efficacy (average score = 5.84)	$\bar{x}$	S.D	Meaning
1. I believe I will receive a good grade in this class.	5.83	0.45	High
2. I'm certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the reading for this course.	6.03	0.36	High
3. I am confident I can learn the basic concept thought in this course.	5.71	0.74	High
4. I am confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor in this course.	5.55	0.66	High
5. I am confident I can do an excellent job on the assignment in this course.	4.15	0.5	Medium
6. I expect to do well in this class.	5.95	0.48	High
7. I am certain I can master the skills being taught in this class.	4.35	0.48	Medium
8. Considering the difficulty of this course, the teacher, and my skills, I think I will do well in this class	4.80	0.56	Somewhat high
Test anxiety (average score = 5.89)			
9. When I take a test I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students.	4.70	0.45	Somewhat high
10. When I take a test I think about items on the other parts of the test I can't answer.	5.89	0.52	High
11. When I take tests I think of the consequences of failing.	5.85	0.5	High
12. I have an uneasy, upset feeling- when I take an exam.	5.82	0.45	High
13. I feel my heart beating fast when I take an exam.	6.00	0.36	High
Task Value (average score = 5.74)			
14. I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses.	5.25	0.43	Somewhat high
15. It is important for me to learn the course material in this class.	5.27	0.5	Somewhat high
16. I am very interested in the content area of this course.	5.07	0.37	Somewhat high
17. I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn.	5.17	0.44	Somewhat high
18. I like the subject matter of this course.	5.74	0.62	High
19. Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to me.	5.17	0.52	Somewhat high

Learning strategies				
Elaboration (average score = 5.93)		$\bar{x}$	S.D	Meaning
1.	When I become confused about something I'm reading for this class, I go back and try to figure it out.	6.03	0.45	High
2.	When I study for this class, I pull together information from difference sources, such as readings, online discussions, and my prior knowledge of the subject.	5.95	0.4	High
3.	I try to relate ideas in this subject to those in other courses whenever possible.	6.03	0.52	High
4.	When reading for this class, I try to relate the material to what I already know.	6.03	0.53	High
5.	I try to understand the material in this class by making connections between the readings and the concepts from the online activities.	4.15	0.61	Medium
6.	I log into the class website regularly.	5.71	0.45	High
7.	When studying for this course I try to determine which concepts I don't understand well.	5.85	0.43	High
8.	I try to apply ideas from course readings in other class activities such as online discussions.	5.27	0.52	Somewhat high
Time management (average score = 5.88)				
9.	I usually study in a place where I can concentrate on my course work.	4.15	0.63	Medium
10.	I make a good use of my study time for this course.	5.95	0.71	High
11.	I find it hard to stick to a study schedule.	6.03	0.52	High
12.	I have a regular place set aside for studying.	5.71	0.42	High
13.	I make sure that I keep up with the weekly readings and assignments for this course.	5.85	0.45	High
14.	I often find that I don't spend very much time on this course because of other activities.	5.27	0.35	Somewhat high
15.	I rarely find time to review my notes on readings.	4.80	0.56	Somewhat high
Metacognitive and self-regulation (average score = 5.86)				
16.	When reading for this course, I make up questions to help focus my reading.	5.95	0.52	High
17.	If course readings are difficult to understand, I change the way I read the material.	5.85	0.52	High
18.	Before I study new course material thoroughly, I often skim it to see how it is organized.	4.70	0.56	Somewhat high
19.	I ask myself questions to make sure I understand the material I have been studying in this class.	5.82	0.54	High
20.	I try to change the way I study in order to fit the course requirements and the instructional methods used in this class.	4.80	0.65	Somewhat high
21.	I try to think through a topic and decide what I am supposed to learn from it rather than just reading it over when studying for this course.	5.85	0.55	High
22.	When I study for this course, I write brief summaries of the main ideas from the readings and online discussions.	5.82	0.65	High
23.	When I study for this class, I set goals for myself in order to direct my activities in each study.	4.70	0.63	Somewhat high
Critical thinking (average score = 5.99)				
24.	I often find myself questioning things I hear or read in this course to decide if I find them convincing.	4.15	0.64	Medium
25.	When a theory, interpretation, or conclusion is presented in the online discussions or in the readings, I try to decide if there is good supporting evidence.	5.17	0.52	Somewhat high
26.	I treat the course material as a starting point and try to develop my own ideas about it.	5.95	0.45	High
27.	I try to play around with ideas of my own related to what I am learning in this course.	6.03	0.66	High
28.	Whenever I read the assertion or conclusion in this class, I think about possible alternatives.	4.80	0.36	Somewhat high

Conclusion

From the study of students' motivation and learning strategies in English language online learning, it was found that;

1. Task anxiety has the highest score on Motivation (5.89) and Critical thinking has the highest score on learning strategies (5.99). The lowest score for Motivation is on Self-efficacy (4.25). The lowest score for learning strategies covers three sub-categories elaboration, time-management, and critical thinking (4.15).

2. For the students' perception of learning English through an online course, 76.5% of the participants revealed that there is no significant difference between learning English online or in the classroom regarding their motivation and learning strategies. Only 23.5% of the participants indicated that there are differences in that matter.

Discussion

From the present study, the results revealed the information that are interesting for further discussion.

1. The results of this study show that online language learners can be aware of their progress and use active learning strategies to grasp new material. The findings of this study on students' online SRL methods are comparable with prior learning-strategy studies undertaken in offline settings (e.g., Zimmerman, 1986), which looked at high school students' use of SRL strategies such goal-setting, self-evaluation, organizing, and requesting the assistance of others.

Self-regulated learners, according to Zimmerman, (2008), plan, establish objectives for, organize, seek helpful resources for, monitor, and assess their learning at various stages during knowledge acquisition. This research broadens the scope of SRL research beyond typical language-learning situations to include online language learning.

2. The choice for learning environments is independent of learning strategies, according to this study. One possible explanation for this finding is the availability of multiple instructional materials in the e-learning environment provided to the learners, such as, video, and formative evaluation, course website, and online test where they are able to find information online. As the students had access to the instructional materials, they were able to use their own learning strategies during the e-learning settings. As a result, their cognitive strategy structures had no bearing on their judgements on learning environment preferences.

Suggestions

1. The present study is a quantitative study in nature, therefore a qualitative follow up study should be conducted in order to investigate a more insight explanation of the phenomena.

2. A study on how motivation and learning strategies in online class affects students learning outcome should also be conducted in order to provide a better understanding of nature of the students in online learning environment.

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