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The Influence of Web 2.0 on EFL-Students' Motivation and Autonomous Learning Behaviour

Henriette van Rensburg and Nguyen Van Han

Introduction

This chapter contributes to the book *New Innovations in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* by discussing how a Web 2.0 learning management system (LMS) affects students' motivation and autonomous learning behaviour. Our study uses qualitative interview data from eight undergraduate students taking part in a 12-week English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course at a tertiary college in Vietnam. Since the innovation of Web 2.0, worldwide online communication has been a growing phenomenon. Through this technology, EFL students have acquired numerous opportunities to express ideas, advance their involvement in learning activities, and affirm their confidence in virtual interaction. Such advantages help create a learning environment which motivates students to learn English, leading to the advancement of autonomous learning behaviour. Because most students prefer using the Internet and computers, Web 2.0 can influence interactive communication of students and also have impact on the learning environment. According to Discovery Education (2017:1): “Web 2.0 is about revolutionary new ways of creating, collaborating, editing and sharing user-generated content online. It is also about ease of use. There is no need to download, and teachers and students can master many of these tools in minutes. Technology has never been easier or more accessible to all.”

The use of LMS can affect language learning of students through Web 2.0 technologies like instant messaging, discussion boards, and blog posts that initiate interaction. In the context of Vietnam, where broadband

there are still limitations to the application of Web 2.0 in EFL language acquisition. However, as we show in our chapter, there are some benefits. When reading this chapter, you will gain the following:

1. an insight into Vietnamese EFL students' reflection on their use of a Web 2.0 LMS;
2. the advantage of LMS for educational purposes to motivate students;
3. confirm that intrinsic motivation is an important element for the process of enhancing autonomous learning behaviour.

We have structured our chapter in four sections. In the first section, we present the background to our innovative practice. In section 2, the progress of our practice is mentioned. Section 3 discusses the outcome of this study, and section 4 outlines the advancement of our innovative practice.

Section 1: The Background

Learner Autonomy and Motivation in EFL Education

According to Brown (2001), learner autonomy is affirmed as a goal connected to motivation. Many researchers argue that this goal extends to material selection and task motivation (Balçıkanlı, 2010; Nunan, 1997). As observed by Dornyei (2001), the objective of teaching students a foreign language is to instil the legitimacy of the production of language in different social groups. That includes inside and outside learning environments, which points to the primacy of autonomy. As stated by Garcia and Pintrich (1996), autonomy is connected to the motivational elements compared to performance. As such, the primary focus of autonomy seemed to prioritise intrinsic objective assessment, role value, and self-efficacy. A strong link between motivation and autonomy can be perceived in the theory of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985) into intrinsic motivation. Self-determination theory (STD) argues for the existence of natural positive tendencies that motivate individuals to behave in specific, healthy ways. The creators of the theory, Deci and Ryan (1985), support the notion of the intrinsic nature of such tendencies. The developed

framework illustrates that conditions which support intrinsic motivation enhance and stimulate learner autonomy so that students are able to engage in creative activities and improve overall performance. Deci and Ryan (1985) further emphasise that intrinsically motivated students study for their own sake in order to gain experience and pleasure. In addition, these students do not study because of external pressure or promise of reward, which results in fostering an interest in learning and confidence in the student's own capacities and attributes. Therefore, intrinsic motivation is more desirable in language education.

As emphasised in the seminal research by Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation helps students to learn effectively, and this form of motivation is promoted when students have self-determination and control themselves. The approach advocates for the learners to promote efficient learning while focusing on the achievement of the theory that deals with the students applying intrinsic motivation, as well as depending on the performance of autonomy support or informational conditions. Through these conditions, intrinsic motivation should be promoted. The primary argument, according to the theory of Ryan and Deci (1985), leads to the consideration of the issue that self-determination attracts intrinsic motivation. Self-determination focuses on trends of causality by which the learner internalises the behaviours and can therefore be seen as related to the capacity of autonomy.

Gardner (2000) prioritises intrinsic motivation by arguing that it is more lucrative and efficient because it originates from the student's intrinsic or internal motivation to engage with language and culture. Gardner (2000) also affirms that intrinsic motivation has a stronger prediction as far as successful approach of learner autonomy in the field of foreign language learning.

Benefits of Online Technology in Students' Motivation

Several researchers have noted that using computer-assisted language learning (CALL) or computer-mediated communication (CMC) was advantageous to the EFL students, who claimed that their motivation in learning increased (Ortega, 2009). Various studies have been conducted to examine the benefits of using asynchronous and synchronous CMC in

asynchronous CMC, learners are permitted to delay responding to questions, which would suggest a keen construction of grammar (Hudson & Bruckman, 2002). A major objective of synchronous CMC meant for L2 learning demands communicating with native speakers who would consider the importance of oral communication as far as language interaction was concerned. Based on the personal interactions of learners, social networking, as well as text-messaging, have been embraced as an opportunity to explore behavioural learning and decision-making. According to Campbell (2004), adapting social networking patterns that are already used for the surrounding of EFL contains a natural stage that motivates learners.

A comparison of the use of LMS within EFL studies tells us that it is influenced by intrinsic motivation (Eken, 2003; Secules, Herron & Tomasello, 1992). Lee (2009) confirms that LMS would be more efficient in maintaining the focus of learners on different tasks at hand than the traditional textbook approach. In addition, Erwin (2001) emphasises that LMS is simpler to access and further admits that most of the keywords and sentence patterns have been made easier for learners to understand in an effective way, thus increasing students' motivation.

Section 2: The Practice

This chapter reflects only on preliminary findings of a larger research project aiming to explore the effects of CALL on learner autonomy and how students' learning strategies, motivation, and attitudes can change through CALL. The students were asked to complete a questionnaire as the pre-test and post-test. The first phase of the larger project was to investigate the components of learner autonomy that Vietnamese college students perceive. The questionnaire with 50 Likert scale items was developed through SurveyMonkey, and 300 students were invited to respond to this survey. As a result, the factor analysis and internal consistency tests from this sample generated three components of learner autonomy. One of these was *motivation by using technology in education*. Taking this into consideration, the study was designed to illustrate how the students' use of technology in education improved their motivation to develop their learner autonomy. A Web 2.0 LMS was designed and

during a 12-week course. On completion of the course, 15 students were invited to take part in a semi-structured interview, and 8 of them were randomly selected to join the interview. The transcribed results of the audio-recorded interviews were coded to protect the anonymity of the interviewees, with each being assigned a code (e.g., "Student 1", "Student 2", etc.).

The LMS was a collaborative and user-friendly platform that was a customised design developed by teachers at the college and approved for integration into the curriculum by the college authority in Vietnam. The LMS was based on the core content of the current textbook of the syllabus used in the institution, namely *Starter TOEIC* (Test of English for International Communication) (Taylor & Malarcher, 2013). The reason for this choice was that it aligned with the existing curriculum, and it was necessary to implement innovative teaching methods in order to motivate students to achieve better results. Therefore, the level of English competency of students could meet the requirements of corporate recruiters.

The focus of the EFL lessons was student-centered in order to enhance students' sense of responsibility and ability to set learning goals, plan, implement, and evaluate their learning. Both teachers and students were expected to use English for their classroom interactions, such as asking questions for clarification, giving explanations, and providing feedback during the lessons. They were also encouraged to access and explore information in English. It was expected that language proficiency would develop through the English lessons: improvement in vocabulary, grammar, and the four macro skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. During the lessons, the teachers played the role of facilitators to support the learning process, especially for language preparation and assessment. Content including authentic websites, videos, and pictures that were used for scaffolding and stimulating the students' learning interests.

Regarding the theoretical framework for LMS and lesson design, Schwienhorst (2003) outlined three approaches to enhance motivation to foster learner autonomy in the technology learning environment: 1) individual-cognitive approach, 2) social-interactive approach, and 3) experimental-participatory approach. In our design we adapted principles consistent with Schwienhorst's (2003) three approaches to enhance

the online learning space. These principles are:

- interactions between students and teachers in and out of classes need facilitating;
- team learning brings better outcomes than solo learning;
- structured exercises, challenging discussions, team projects, and peer critiques can enhance learning engagement;
- proper and timely feedback is important for learning development;
- time management is a critical skill for both students and professionals;
- higher expectations need to be negotiated;
- diversifying course delivery is necessary, and different talents are expected (Dang & Robertson, 2010:9).

The “Home” page of the Vietnamese college’s LMS course contained different activities for students to choose to interact with the content, instructors, and classmates, as shown in Figure 1.

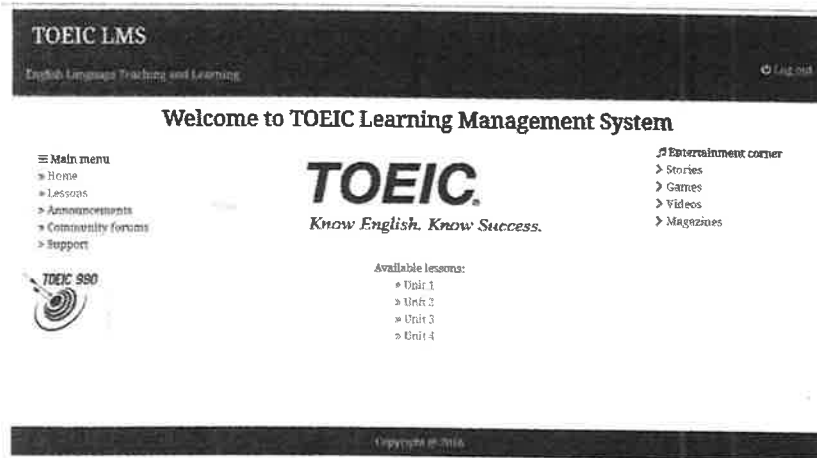


Figure 1: LMS course home page.

According to the college curriculum policy, second-year students need to study the first four units of the textbook. These four units were designed and covered different topics regarding business themes. For each unit, the students were responsible for practicing English skills such as listening, reading, speaking, and grammar. The sample activities are shown below.

Regarding the *speaking activities*, students were presented with various questions to discuss. They then needed to discuss these questions with their peers using headphones in the laboratories to express their ideas and points of view with respect to issues raised in each question. Some of questions are illustrated in Figure 2, below.

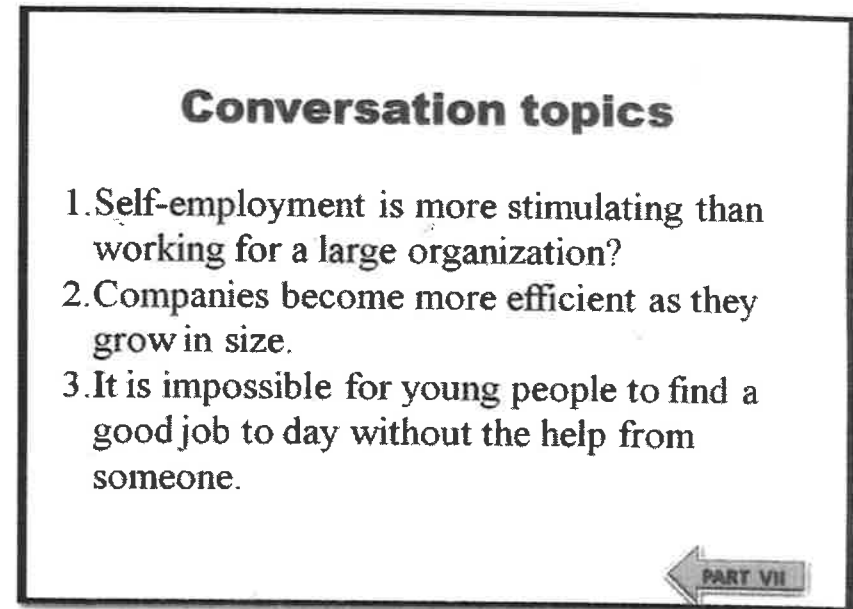


Figure 2: Conversation topics.

Aside from the speaking activities in the lessons, students were also required to work in groups of three or four to choose one topic from a list of 10 topics for which careful preparation was required in order to make a meaningful presentation. Each group took turns to give a presentation every week. Participants were required to use the Internet to search

useful to support their presentations. Computer-based materials also encouraged learners to use cognitive strategies and apply metacognitive awareness in language learning. Computer-based instructional materials and web-based materials for language learning can provide students with a variety of authentic and pedagogical materials that may have a positive influence on learner autonomy. In addition, the ability to work outside the classroom without a teacher's presence is necessary for the development of learner autonomy.

With regard to the *reading activities*, students read the text and answered the questions by clicking the answers they believed were correct. If their responses were incorrect, they received an audible indication that they needed to choose again. An explanation also appeared in order to help them understand, as depicted in Figure 3, below. Independent action, decision-making, and freedom of choice will stimulate learner autonomy development.

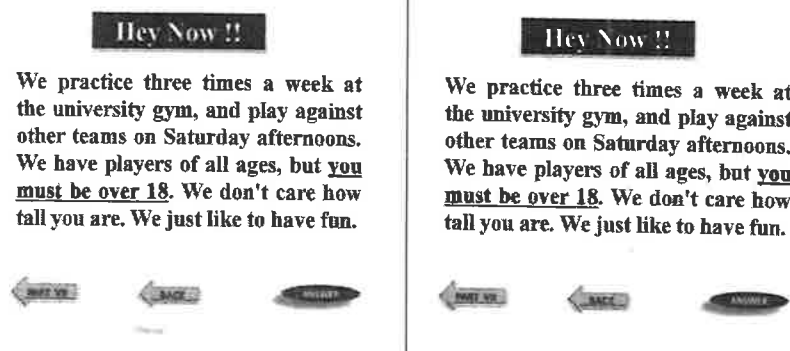


Figure 3: Reading activities.

In the *vocabulary activities*, students learned vocabulary with sounds and through the presentation of images with definitions. The LMS course also included automatic speech recognition (ASR) technology for vocabulary practice. Students' voices were recorded and scored to provide students with feedback concerning the accuracy of their pronunciation. Figure 4 below illustrates an example of a representative vocabulary activity and the ASR tool. These activities helped students to become more involved in learning, which is considered as a fundamental factor for improving

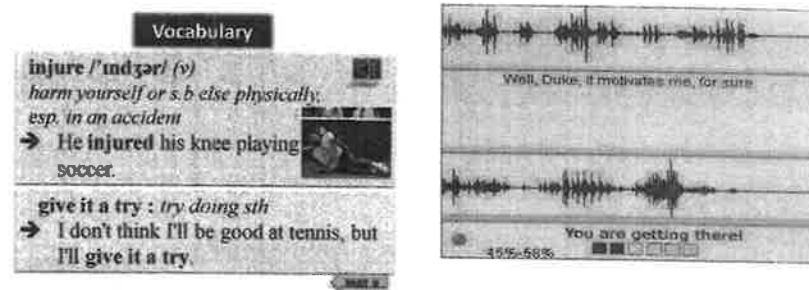


Figure 4: Vocabulary activities.

Aside from the main content in the curriculum, students had access to the other supporting materials that promoted engagement with the coursework. For example, the entertainment corner was linked with the EFL websites. Students could play games with crossword puzzles that had six levels, from level 1 (the easiest) to level 6 (the most difficult). In this part, students were asked to click on the number to see the clues or they could type directly in the crossword cells. When students did not know the answer, they could click on the "Hint" button for clues. Students could also learn about vocabulary and grammar by reviewing testing contributions from others around the world and most of quizzes were in the form of multiple-choice, flashcards and matching. In addition, videos were available that helped learners to get exposure to language used in real-world environments, and practice pronunciation by listening and repeating daily uploaded sentences to recognise not only new words, but also useful expressions as illustrated in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Extra activities.

Section 3: The Outcome

The major theme emerging from the interviews with the treatment group members was the motivational aspects of language learning. Learning English with this customised LMS has made students feel more motivated to develop their language competence. Although their specific individual motivational reasons for learning English as a foreign language differed, most of them had intrinsic motivation, and according to self-determination theory, students with this kind of motivation would maximise their learner autonomy. Three students explained that they studied English because of their interest and success in language learning. For example, Student 2 and Student 8 stated that the activities in the LMS were interesting compared to the previous class, where they had been taught with traditional teaching methods. As a result, they felt keen to learn English and made a decision to learn some sentences to improve their speaking. Student 2 said:

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"The learning activities with CALL are interesting. Each activity is designed in a unique way and I do not get bored. That is the reason why I feel motivated to get engaged in learning English. Especially, I love reading articles online for relaxation. In the past, we just looked at the text book and listened to the teacher. I could not imagine how English was used in the real life. Every day I learn some short sentences to practice with my friends."

Similarly, regarding the question about the motivation to study English, Student 3 and Student 5 both expressed a strong interest in learning. They explained that the discussion and exchange of ideas in the forums raised their desire to use English effectively so that they could communicate with everyone confidently. As Student 3 explained:

"I feel motivated to join the forum for discussing as it helps me communicate with other people. I think there is the general need to learn English in an increasingly globalised business world where it has become a de facto lingua franca."

Success in learning a foreign language was what motivated students 4 and 6. These students wanted to study English to master it well and conquer the challenges in life. Student 4 stated:

"I found it a bit difficult to learn English and therefore I used to have the idea of stopping learning it. However, you know what, getting exposure to LMS helps me change my mind and I think learning a language is not that tough at all. I need to take part in the activities designed with technology so that I can become my habit to get rid of the fear of learning English that I used to have."

It can be inferred that these students were intrinsically motivated because they learned English for its inherent satisfaction. According to Ushioda (1996), this is a good condition for fostering learner autonomy because intrinsic motivation is conducive to learner autonomy.

In contrast, Students 1 and 7 said that they had not known the real purposes of learning English as they thought it was the curriculum policy; therefore, they and their classmates attended the English classes

content through watching the video clips has changed their minds. They made a decision to learn English and put effort into it, and they were motivated to be actively engaged in the learning process in order to work in a professional working environment. These students learned English for its instrumental value and this reason can be considered as extrinsic motivation. As Student 1 responded:

"When watching, the conversation taking place in the real company, I feel really motivated as the characters who speak English fluently in that video are top employers. I wish someday I could speak English like that, but now I think I have to try more to reach that goal."

Section 4: Moving Forward

The LMS employed in the study was chosen to direct students' attention to a local CMC environment for idea exchanges and negotiations. Also, the students' online behaviours increased in a holistic and quantitative manner; students did significantly better on the post-test than the pre-test in regard to motivation of learning English ($F=56.85$, $df=1,94$, $p<0.001$). In other words, LMS activities basically modified students' online habits quantitatively. From the activities, there was a clear indication that the online habits of the students were more focused, especially in terms of social and academic factors. The online processes are most likely related to social and academic purposes. From this study, it is clear that students who became intrinsically motivated took on more responsibility for their English language learning. This condition is a characteristic of learner autonomy as it is described in EFL learning.

Intrinsic motivation helps learners to identify with their learning goals and as such gives a clear indication of how learner motivation solves the issue of autonomy. Aside from this, once the learners are motivated to focus on their goals, they can easily link their ability to interpret learner autonomy and would therefore concentrate on the development of the same skills for evaluation of reflective self-management learning. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation considers self-interest to be an important factor that leads to self-determination. The results from this study suggest that when there is an increase in the use of intrinsic motivation,

From this outcome, it is clear that intrinsic motivation is used for a short-term period, but it is quite sustainable, especially to the learners, who are meant to transform from being dependent on their teachers to learning on their own as independent learners.

Conclusion

According to the findings, the students who take English as their second language in Vietnam confirm that intrinsic motivation is an important element for the process of learner autonomy. As mentioned in self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation assists students in the development of autonomous learning behaviours. Further reports collected from different regions that use English as their second language have affirmed that intrinsic motivation is self-built. For instance, studies conducted by Kim (2007) in Korea as well as He (2009) in China suggest that in most countries, including the USA, English is used as a second language. From the studies, significant roles of intrinsic motivation tend to support autonomy in learning. Therefore, the finding for EFL students in relation to the self-determination approach supports the theory.

The study has some limitations. First, the interview concerning the data collection was voluntary, meaning that only individuals who opted to express their opinions were considered. Second, the study only reports on the information that was collected from the eight interviewees, from a total of fifteen individuals who were evaluated. As such, other opinions were not represented.

This chapter began with the benefits that the application of technology in EFL education could bring to the development of learner autonomy. It went on to discuss self-determination theory in order to demonstrate the relationships of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for learner autonomy capacity development. The data collected from the interviews revealed the differences in the Vietnamese local students' motivation from the impact of activities in an online context. In addition, it discussed the influence of EFL on motivating students' intrinsic motivation, which contributed to fostering learner autonomy. These findings have suggested that EFL educators need to take advantage of customised LMSs for specific educational purposes to motivate students so that they can become engaged in

About the Authors

Henriette van Rensburg, PhD, is an associate professor (special education) in the Faculty of Business, Education, Law and Arts at the Toowoomba campus of the University of Southern Queensland, Australia. She can be contacted at this e-mail: vanrensb@usq.edu.au

Nguyen Van Han is a teacher of English at the College of Finance and Customs in Vietnam. He has completed a MED TESOL and MLAD (Research) and is currently doing his PhD in education at University of Southern Queensland. He can be contacted at this e-mail: nguyenvanhantesol@gmail.com

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