


Chapter 9

English Language Learner Motivation in the Digital Technology Classroom: A Case Study of a Vocational University in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates learner motivation in an English as a foreign language writing classroom in an Indonesian university. Its originality arises from the fact that no substantive studies have explored learner motivation in the digital classroom in Indonesian higher education. A mixed methods data collection process was conducted involving 144 students from three-year groups who responded to an online questionnaire. Two classes from Year 1 (47 students) were taken as a sample to observe the learning process between an existing group that was introduced to the learning of English writing through Edmodo. The other group used traditional materials for their writing tasks. The findings are significant in that the high levels of motivation reported by the students were not reflected in the way they completed their writing tasks as the use of technology affected their motivation in complex ways. In conclusion, the study encourages future research in Indonesia that measures English students' motivation and technology-mediated writing task performance through longitudinal studies.

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INTRODUCTION

Previous research has suggested that the Indonesian education curriculum is heavily dependent on teacher-centred and deductive approaches to learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and this has led to lower levels of learner motivation (Mattarima & Hamdan, 2011, 2016). Most research studies have focused on receptive skills (Araminta & Halimi, 2015; Pammu, Amir & Maasum, 2014) and this is because Indonesian students typically prioritise reading and listening over productive skills such as writing and speaking (Sukandi & Syafar, 2018). Although in the global context of EFL and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) there have been numerous studies of learner motivation (Hannibal Jensen, 2019; Ushioda, 2013), they have not explored the issue in Indonesian higher education in any substantive way. Nevertheless, several preliminary studies (Aulia, Yulastri & Sari, 2014; Aulia, Yulastri & Handayani, 2016; Yulastri, 2015a, 2015b; Yulastri, Aulia & Saptopramono, 2016) have indicated that combining the use of online platforms such as Edmodo alongside more learner-centred approaches may significantly improve students' motivation in classroom contexts. This claim warrants further investigation in this paper.

In order to address these gaps in the research on learner motivation and learning technologies in Indonesia, this chapter investigates language learner motivation in two technology-mediated classes with students at a vocational higher education institution in western Indonesia in which task-based language teaching (TBLT) was used as the main instructional approach. Following a review of the research literature on learner motivation and TBLT usage in the Asian context, the methodology describes the research framework of the study. Findings are then discussed in relation to Gardner's model of motivation. Finally, the limitations and implications of the study are explored, prior to identifying areas for future research in this area.

BACKGROUND

Language Learner Motivation

The reason behind a student choosing to learn a new language is a key motivational factor influencing the language learning process and many second language acquisition (SLA) studies over the past 40 years have examined motivation in and outside the language classroom (Dörnyei, 2001a, 2001b; Ellis, 2015; Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Gardner (1985) identified three key components in studies on motivation: motivational effort, the desire to learn the language, and learners' attitude towards learning the language. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) stressed the importance of persistence in this respect, i.e. the continuance of an action in spite of difficulty and opposition. Nevertheless, while extensive research literature exists on motivation, it remains an abstract concept that is difficult to measure (Barba, Kennedy & Ainley, 2016; Crookes & Schmidt, 1989; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Gardner, 1985).

Motivation has been defined from a psychological perspective as (a) having purposes, intents, aims, goals and decisions (Young, 1961), (b) the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained (Schunk, Meece & Pintrich, 2008), and (c) the drive that pushes people to do activities with purpose (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Motivation can also be defined as a process (Schunk et al., 2008) that grows and changes over time. It is complex and non-deterministic because it is an abstract construct that deals with intentions rather than results.

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