



Motivation and Amotivation of Non-language Major Students Towards Learning English Online: A Qualitative Analysis

Alprince King Biri¹(✉), Rowena Contillo², Analyn Saavedra¹, Abigail Antonio¹, Edison Estigoy³, and Ericson Alieto¹

¹ Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga, Philippines
{gt201901330,ericson.alieto}@wmsu.edu.ph

² University of Perpetual Help System Laguna, Biñan, Philippines

³ Xi'an University of Technology, Xi'an, China

Abstract. English, being the international medium for communication as well as the language of the academe and commerce, has been inculcated in the curriculum globally for decades. However, the abrupt shift to online learning modality caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has posed several challenges in the delivery of English language instruction. Learners' motivation is among the major concerns that emerged in virtual classrooms. This qualitative-descriptive study endeavored to determine the motivations and amotivations of non-language major teacher education students toward learning English online. The findings revealed that easy access to information and availability of resources, web-based opportunities for in-depth learning, intrinsic motivation, teacher influence, support from other people, entertainment media, independent learning, and interests in the English language motivate the non-language major participants in learning English online. On the other hand, their amotivations are poor internet connectivity, external distractions, teacher-specific factors, power outages, criticisms from other people, health problems, difficulties in using online learning applications, academic task overload, and procrastination. The aforementioned findings revealed that although online learning serves as the best alternative possible in the new normal in education, there are a number of issues in this form of pedagogy that require an urgent response and more investigation.

Keywords: English · motivation · amotivation · online learning · non-language learner

1 Introduction

Learning has shifted from the traditional face-to-face setting to online learning due to the sudden outbreak of COVID 19, which has brought dramatic changes in the field of education [1]. The trend of online learning has become vital in the academe. The learning process is becoming more unique due to the advantages that online learning provides. Online learning is a learner-centered approach because students are put to be in charge

of their learning, such as their pacing in learning, accomplishing their activities, and control to fit their preferences and style in learning. The teaching and learning processes were put into a virtual classroom which has provided greater learning opportunities. One of which is active learning [2]. Virtual classrooms are recognized as a place where instructors and learners are put in an online environment for meaningful teaching and learning processes. This was developed to provide significant numbers of learners in the academe [1].

Online learning has been adopted as a mode of learning in many parts of the world, including the Philippines, since the pandemic came in 2020 and has become the substitute for face-to-face learning in fear of spreading the COVID-19 disease among the learners [3]. Since online learning became a trend in the modern day, it also posed a concern among education stakeholders because it is crucial to provide quality learning instruction [4]. In other words, it is vital that online learning instruction will not decrease the quality of learning among the learners. Nonetheless, students' motivation to learn online is a concern that has attracted many researchers and educators to study because it contributes to the success of the learning of the student. In support of this claim is the contention of Selvi [5] posited that motivation is classified into two classifications, namely: intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, which are crucial in the active participation of the student in an online setup of learning.

Learning online is not something new, in fact, it has become popular since the beginning of the 21st century [6]. The pandemic has become the reason to put into the mainstream use of this mode of learning. There is a sufficient amount of research that focuses on the study of the motivations of the students to learn in a virtual classroom. The term motivation is simply regarded "as the organized pattern of a person's goals, beliefs, and emotions that the person is striving for". On a similar note, "Motivation is a force to arouse, give direction to, continue, and choose a particular behavior" [7]. Therefore, the level of motivation among the learners is a crucial aspect as this will affect the learning processes of the students. Furthermore, the active engagement of the students to learn, the way they make an effort in their activities, and their inner drive to cope with the difficulties they encounter in the learning processes reflects how motivated the student is [8]. Motivation among students plays a vital role in academic success. Hence, it is imperative that teachers must exert effort to motivate students to learn online [1]. In this light, several scholars maintained that learning in a virtual environment necessitates motivation, personal management to stay focused, learning management, and managing their schoolwork [9]. Motivation is also perceived as a construct that contributes to the overall student's acquisition of second language learning. Therefore, to be able to learn a second language effectively in a virtual setting of learning, a student must have a great level of motivation. In the case of the Philippines, English is the second language of the learners. Therefore, to learn English online, motivation among learners is necessary.

Subsequently, Online learning may be undeniably beneficial in these trying times, but it has presented concerns among learners based on their experiences learning online [10]. Studies focusing on the concerns posed by virtual learning reported that online learning causes stress and distress among learners globally [10]. Relative to this claim, Tsai [2] inferred that although online learning presents benefits during the teaching and learning processes, it projects challenges those students may encounter that they

have never experienced in the face-to-face setup. These challenges negatively influence the participation and engagement of the student in learning online. It could be inferred that these challenges will trigger negative feelings among the students like amotivation. Hence, when learning is done through online, amotivation among learners is not something to deny [1].

On account of this, the researcher found limited studies concerning the motivation and amotivations of non-language major students in learning English online. Also, most studies in the area of interest were conducted during the pre-pandemic, which suggests that studies were focused on traditional learning setup. This study will mainly focus on investigating what are the motivations, specifically what makes the respondents motivated to learn English online, and what are the amotivations, specifically, what makes respondents unmotivated to learn English online. The study will also endeavor to find out how the advantages and disadvantages of online learning stimulate the motivation of non-language major students to learn English online.

1.1 Research Questions

The ultimate goal of the present study is to find out the answer to the following questions:

1. What are the motivations of non-language major students in learning English online?
2. What are the amotivations of non-language major students in learning English online?

2 Methodology

2.1 Participants

This investigation includes a total of ten (10) non-language learners from Western Mindanao State University (WMSU). Moreover, the inclusion criteria were established in order to ensure that the respondents will objectively give the information needed for this study, and the following criteria are as follows; (1) currently enrolled as a first-year student taking up Bachelor in Elementary Education Major in General Education, (2) the respondent must be attending English classes in an online-based instruction. Otherwise, they cannot be part of the investigation.

2.2 Design of the Study

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews. “This is a method-based inquiry that comprises interpretation of phenomena to comprehend how people make implications from their experiences” [12] suggesting that this will allow the researcher to obtain an understanding of a specific phenomenon comprehensively.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

In order to attain the goal of this current study, the present study followed a semi-structured interview which according to Harding [12] semi-structured interview main goal “is that it allows new questions and ideas during the interview.” Experts validated the development of the interview questions to ensure that the interview questions coincided with the study’s research questions. Moreover, the data collection was done through one-on-one interviews and was conducted online via Google meet to ensure the safety of the researcher and the respondent since the pandemic is still ongoing. Upon the collection of the data, the researcher seeks consent from the respondents for ethical approval before the conduct of the interview. Since the data was recorded, the data were analyzed using Thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a customary practice used in qualitative studies where the collected data with the same meanings are clustered using themes [13].

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Motivations in Learning English Online of the Respondents

3.1.1 Easy Access to Information and Resource Availability

Easy access to information and resource availability is the first theme wherein 7 out of 10 or 70% are motivated due to ease of access to information and availability of resources in learning English classes online. It can be inferred that the aid of internet resources and ease of access help boost the interest of the student to learn English online.

“Easier access to learning. You don’t have to look for books, like actual books or hard copies, because even online you can search, you can Google it, you can just read it by using online learning, and I think this also helps us, I mean online learning has an advantage and it helps me more to easily understand and get further information.”

3.1.2 Web-Based Opportunities for In-Depth Learning

6 out of 10 or 60% of the respondents implied that web-based opportunities for in-depth learning influence their motivation in learning English online. This suggests that the opportunities that can be found on the web help them learn things even more especially the things that are not taught in their online English classes. Hence, their motivations and learning increase due to opportunities provided on the web.

“...this online learning provides a wide opportunity for us to learn other things that are not being taught inside our class as there are times that the lessons are just limited, but when we study online, if we do our research, we could explore more, we could widen our knowledge on that particular topic.”

3.1.3 Intrinsic Motivation to Learn

6 out of 10 or 60% manifest intrinsic motivation in learning English online. According to their responses, one respondent aspires to work abroad and that there is a need to master

the basics of English to communicate well, one participant is interested in improving speaking skills, and another participant desires to improve his English proficiency skills.

“Myself, because yeah, I love to speak English and I really want to enhance my English vocabulary and the way I speak and how communicate with other people.”

3.1.4 Influence of the Teacher

There are 5 out of 10 or 50% agreed that the influence of the teacher is one of the motivations of the respondents wherein, they conveyed that when teachers have high English proficiency skills inspire them to learn English online and to easily understand the subject matter discussed by their teacher. Another one is driven by the rules and regulations of the teacher to use English as a medium of communication in an online class, and lastly, the encouragement of the teacher to speak English.

“I think it is my teacher because they motivate me to speak – I mean to learn English online because they are good examples or role models wherein how they speak will really help me in boosting my knowledge in learning English online.”

3.1.5 Support from Other people

Support from other people is among the motivations of the respondents wherein 5 out of 10 or 50% confirmed that having a support system is important for language learning. In accordance with the data collected, stimulating their curiosity to learn and support system from family and friends help increase their motivation to learn English online.

“So, another motivation that would keep me from studying English is...my family, my friends, as well as my special someone who is supporting me as well as my friends and all of my classmates as we support each other, and we tend to not pull each other down – we help each other.”

3.1.6 Watching Entertainment Media for Learning

There are about 4 out of 10 or 40% said that watching entertainment media for learning motivates them to learn English online. According to the data, respondents learned English by watching movies and shows and employing strategies to increase their vocabulary by writing down unfamiliar words and searching for them on the web. Thus, it helps students boost their proficiency in English specifically their vocabulary skills. Also, students are motivated by the medium of communication used in the media which is English. Therefore, it motivates them to learn English even more.

“I do watch movies –I’ll jot down words that I do not know and search them in Google or a dictionary – I’ll read, and I do the same when reading books.”

3.1.7 An Avenue for Independent Learning

Online learning provides an avenue to learn independently, in this study, 3 out of 10 or 30% expressed the same remark based on the findings. Hence, self-paced learning helps improve learners’ motivation in language learning. Based on the responses of

the participants, online classes provide an opportunity to become independent in learning to discover learners' abilities and it helps students become fluent in English when communicating.

“Also, it can...it can help make your English more fluent. You can study by yourself. You can also install some English applications to make improvements to yourself.”

3.1.8 Hobbies and Interests in the English Language

The respondents of this study also asserted that hobbies and interests in the English language are one of the contributing factors that influence their motivation to learn English online. 3 out of 10 or 30%, support this perspective. Respondents believed that reading stories can help shape your English language proficiency. Also, since respondents have an interest in the English language, it adds an impact on their motivation to learn English online.

“Since I do love reading, so I do a lot of readings like for example, fictional stories or comics, so through reading, I was also able to shape my language - my English speaking as well as fixing my grammar as there are times that I also experience difficulty in constructing or fixing my grammar.”

3.2 Amotivations in Learning English Online of the Respondents

3.2.1 Signal Problems and Internet Connectivity issues

The most prominent demotivating factor of the respondents is the problems with signal and internet connectivity. As can be seen in the table, 9 out of 10, or 90% concluded the same thought. Students noted that slow internet connection, signal glitches, and mobile data connections are among the issues encountered by the respondents when learning English online. Hence, demotivates them to attend their online English classes and learn English virtually.

“I feel like every time there's a power interruption or internet connection interruption, we kind of like cut short the interest that is slowly flaming up inside of us – the desire to learn it, and then it is cut short because of those interruptions, and that demotivates me as well.”

3.2.2 Enduring External Distractions

6 out of 10 or 60% of the respondents claimed that distractions are the second contributing factor that demotivates them from learning English online. According to the respondents, environmental noises such as the sound of animals, neighborhood noises, and vehicle sounds are among the physical distractions that learners endure when learning English online. Hence, a decrease in their motivation to learn happens due to the fact that they get distracted by these external distractions.

“Also, one thing is our environment here, because there are dogs and our neighborhood, it's hard for me to listen and to learn properly because of the noises, and background noises that hinder me to understand the lessons.”

3.2.3 Teacher-Specific Factor

The respondents also concluded that teachers also affect their motivation to learn English online wherein 6 out of 10 or 60% concluded the same perspective. One respondent asserted that not getting immediate feedback and lack of communication between the students and teachers discourage them from reaching learning goals. Also, teachers who do not use effective methods and strategies make them less interested in learning. Lastly, teachers who are inconsiderate in giving requirements make learners less motivated to learn English online.

“Apart from what I have mentioned, another thing that demotivates me also is when the teacher or the instructor is not effective – because if they’re not engaging – I will not enjoy during the class – I lose my interest to listen on what they are talking about.”

3.2.4 Sudden Power Outage

4 out of 10 or 40% attest that power interruptions during their online classes make them lose their motivation to continue learning English online. As claimed by most respondents, when there is a sudden power outage, students can no longer attend their classes and continue doing their homework. Thus, losing their interest to learn English online.

“Also, we have this sudden brownout, so when we are doing our activity then a sudden brownout will happen, and I lose my motivation to continue doing it.”

3.2.5 Criticisms from Other People

3 out of 10 or 30% of the respondents complained about the criticisms from other people. According to them, when learning English online, some people underestimate their abilities to acquire learning. Also, due to what they read online comes from the thoughts of other people that are negative, gives a negative impact on their motivation to learn English online.

“Probably, sir, it would be what people think about you. They think that you’re not good – that you can’t do this. They underestimate me that I can’t do it even though I know that I can and that’s what lose my interest to learn.”

3.2.6 Encountered Health Problems

Health problems are also part of the amotivations of the respondents, wherein 3 out of 10 or 30% of the respondents concluded with this remark. Respondents reported that they experience eye problems like blurry vision due to prolonged exposure to the gadget screen and feeling drained and tired doing school activities are some of the health issues they encounter in learning English online.

“Also, this is one of the disadvantages, it makes my eyes hurt if 12 hours of using my gadget it blurs my eyes. I am having a problem last month where I need to check my eyes and there’s I have a grade now, so, I have to wear eyeglasses. It’s one of the disadvantages.”

3.2.7 Difficulties in Using Applications for Learning

3 out of 10 or 30% of the respondents reported that they encounter difficulties in using the applications they use in learning English online. There are applications that are not student-friendly, especially for those students who struggle with internet issues and signal disturbances and not data-friendly applications that make the student struggle to cope with online English classes. Thus, less motivation is manifested when learning English online.

“So, in MS Teams, it’s okay – it’s good if you have a good internet connection, but its disadvantage is it consumes a large amount of data like, it easily consumes all your MBs if you use MS Teams, and, if there is a sudden glitch in signal – it will stay reconnecting.”

3.2.8 Multiple Academic Tasks and Demands to Accomplish

2 out of 10 or 20% of the respondents complained that excessive academic tasks and demands make them demotivated to learn English online. Based on their response, teachers who give too many educational tasks and pressure the students with the deadline of submission rather than being considerate and focused on teaching them make it hard for them to be motivated to learn English virtually.

“When the prof will bombard us with requirements that we cannot finish within the day – not to mention some teachers don’t teach us like they just bombard tasks and what’s worse they rush us with the deadlines.”

3.2.9 The Urge to Procrastinate Academic Works

2 out of 10 or 20% of the respondents stressed that the sudden urge to procrastinate their studies is what makes them demotivated to learn English online. One respondent claimed that excessive reading of specific web-based literature draws her attention instead of studying, while one respondent manifested a complacent attitude in working on his schoolwork. Since online learning gives him plenty of time to finish his academic work, he tends to ignore his academic matter and later cram when deadlines are already near.

“So, what demotivates me is sometimes I become complacent because the time given to us is a lot and I cram the activities like I will do it on the day of submission or the day of the due date.”

4 Conclusion

The present study highlights the motivations and amotivations of non-language major students toward learning English online. Based on the research data, the respondents stressed dissimilar outlooks in their online English classes. Therefore, the following conclusions were made:

Based on the findings of the study, the major motivation of the students in learning English online is easy access to information and resource availability which can be

deduced that with the advent of technology, it is helpful for learners to easily use the resources found on the web to aid their academic needs. Meanwhile, the most prominent amotivation of the learners in their English web-based instruction is signal problems and internet connectivity issues, which can be inferred that when students experience these issues and problems in an online lecture delivery, it compromises their motivation and learning.

The study also found other motivations of the students, such as web-based opportunities for in-depth learning, intrinsic motivation to learn, the influence of the teacher, support from other people, watching entertainment media for learning, an avenue for independent learning, and hobbies and interests in the English language. On another note, this study also revealed other amotivations of the students, such as enduring external distractions, teacher-specific factors, sudden power outages, criticisms from other people, encountered health problems, difficulties in using applications for learning, multiple academic tasks, and demands to accomplish, and the urge to procrastinate academic works.

The present study endeavored to find out the motivations and amotivations of non-language major students in learning English online. Hence, the pedagogical implications are as follows based on the results of the study:

First and foremost, teachers must give the freedom to the learners to take advantage and make use of the resources by letting them explore and discover new learning in English found on the internet. Further, teachers should make the English learning materials discussed in the lecture available online so that students can access and review them when they need them.

Furthermore, institutions and universities can make an educational modality in which there must be a combination of the online and traditional way of learning because students struggle in learning English online due to signal glitches and unstable internet connection, which compromises their motivation and learning, which is evident in this study. Finally, the yielded results of this study will help teachers create interventions, design well-planned instruction, prepare technology-based activities, and other relevant things related to pedagogy that are helpful for the students in boosting their motivation in learning English online.

References

1. J. of L. and D. Studies, "Learning English in a Virtual Setup: Motivations and Amotivations among Language Learners | Journal of Learning and Development Studies," *Journal of Learning and Development Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 18–33, Oct. 2021, doi: <https://doi.org/10.32996/jlds>.
2. S. Kuama and I. Usa, "Is Online Learning Suitable for All English Language Students?" PASAA, 2016.
3. Alzamil, "Teaching English Speaking Online versus Face-to-Face: Saudi Students' Experience during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Arab World English Journal*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 19–27, Mar. 2021, doi: <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no1.2>.
4. J. Lee and L. Martin, "Investigating Students' Perceptions of Motivating Factors of Online Class Discussions," *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, vol. 18, no. 5, Aug. 2017, doi: <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v18i5.2883>.

5. J. Aduayi-Akue, K. Lotchi, S. Parveen, T. Onatsu, and T. Pehkonen-Elmi, "Motivation of Online Learners," *Evolving Pedagogy Electronic Journal*, Jan. 2017.
6. R. Cabangcala, E. Alieto, E. Estigoy, M. Delos Santos, and J. Torres, "When Language Learning Suddenly Becomes Online: Analyzing English as Second Language Learners' (ELLs) Attitude and Technological Competence," *TESOL International Journal*, vol. 16, no. 4.3, pp. 115–131, 2021.
7. M. A. Resources Information, *Research Anthology on Adult Education and the Development of Lifelong Learners*. IGI Global, 2021.
8. R. Bakar, "The Effect of Learning Motivation On Student's Productive Competencies In Vocational High School, West Sumatra," *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, vol. 4, no. 6, pp. 722–732, 2014.
9. R. Artino and J. M. Stephens, "Academic motivation and self-regulation: A comparative analysis of undergraduate and graduate students learning online," *The Internet and Higher Education*, vol. 12, no. 3–4, pp. 146–151, Dec. 2009, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2009.02.001>.
10. M. Adarkwah, "An Outbreak of Online Learning in the COVID-19 Outbreak in Sub-Saharan Africa: Prospects and Challenges An Outbreak of Online Learning in the COVID-19 Outbreak in Sub-Saharan Africa: Prospects and Challenges," *Global Journal of Computer Science and Technology: H Information & Technology*, 2021.
11. T. Dealagdon, "Modular Learning: Struggles and Coping Mechanisms of Mothers Not Speaking Mother Tongue," *Journal of Learning and Development Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 77–93, 2021, doi: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32996/jlds.2021.1.1.8>.
12. R. Kenoh, "A Qualitative Study on Speaking Anxiety among Pre-Service Teachers," *Journal of Learning and Development Studies (JLDS)*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 40–45, Oct. 2021, doi: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32996/jlds.2021.1.1.5>.
13. K. A. Lao, M. Pulalon, H. Lao, and M. S. Y. Ramos, "When classrooms become virtual: Challenges and coping mechanisms of prospective teachers," *The Asian ESP Journal*, pp. 65–93, Oct. 2021.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

