THE MOTIVATION
OF EFL STUDENTS IN E-LEARNING:
CASE STUDY OF HOA SEN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT:

Motivation is one of the most influential aspects of an individual's overall performance in general and learning outcomes in particular. In fact, motivation in learning is a basic educational problem, especially in e-learning activities. This study presents an overview on the motivation of EFL students in Hoa Sen University's e-learning. The study's data is collected from 177 EFL students, who finished the first semester of 2021-2022 academic year through online learning, via electronic questionnaires. The study's results show that most of the participants are motivated in online learning. However, it is necessary to pay attention to some factors to sustain the optimal motivation for students in e-learning.

Keywords: motivation, EFL students, E-learning.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has partly changed the way of teaching and learning in many countries and it has promoted the popularity of online classes in universities. Although online education was once seen as a novel experiment in the 1990s, there have been a dramatic increase in the number of students enrolling in online classes in recent years, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. It is becoming more common for universities to provide degree programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels entirely online. Therefore, teachers now have the unprecedented task of adapting their practices to ensure that their online courses are just as effective, if not more so, than those taught in the conventional classroom as a result of the explosion in popularity of distance learning. However, there is debate over the quality of the instructions in online education. In fact,

learning outcomes may be affected by a wide variety of variables and there is a correlation between motivation and a number of other critical learning elements. Self-control, meta-cognition, the deployment of appropriate strategies, and perseverance are all examples of such elements (Pintrich & Van De Groot, 1990). Although educational psychologists may disagree on the specifics of how motivation works, they are almost unanimous in their recognition of the central role that motivation plays in the learning process (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pans, 1992). In fact, e-learning have existed for a long time and is becoming more popular after the pandemic; however, the impact of e-learning on students' motivation has not been studied extensively enough in the field of education. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore students' motivation in

e-learning so that administrators and educators may get an understanding of motivation's impact on e-learning and identify the optimal approach for ensuring high-quality online education.

2. Literature review
2.1. Theoretical background

Lumsden (1994) defines motivation as the desire of language learners to participate in the process of language acquisition. Hartnett et al. (2011) consider online learning motivation a complicated phenomenon influenced by individual attributes and settings. According to Dornyei (2020), the notion of motivation is strongly related to engagement, and motivation must be provided in order to establish student involvement. According to him, the objective of any instructional design, whether conventional or e-learning, should be to maintain student interest. An individual's action might be motivated by inner motivations, his own wants, or an external force.

Abraham Harold Maslow proposes a hierarchy of needs, which is often represented as a pyramid. On the first and most important level, physiological demands such as eating, drinking, breathing, and defecating exist. On the second level, safety requirements need a sense of protection against various threats. On the third level of this fictitious pyramid are certain social requirements, such as a person's desire to integrate into society, his or her need for friendship, and his or her need to love and be loved. The demand for social recognition and esteem corresponds to the fourth level of the pyramid. The apex of the pyramid represents the urge for self-actualization and satisfaction. The fulfillment of this need occurs when an individual is able to develop himself or herself in the manner he or she desires.

According to Ryan & Deci (2000), the pursuit of goals is a crucial component of motivation. To be motivated is to be motivated in the direction of something. It's important to note that there are two distinct kinds of learning motivation or two general types of goals that motivate students. The first one is extrinsic motivation, which refers to all external variables that have a role in reaching learning objectives such as classroom amenities, instructors, and the structure of the learning itself. Interest,

enjoyment, and desire are all examples of intrinsic motivation that come from the students themselves.

2.2. Previous studies on students' motivation in e-learning

The extent to which students engages in ongoing learning may be used to evaluate their motivation to pursue online learning. There are three necessary aspects related to participation in online learning: cognitive, behavioral emotional, and participation (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). According to Jung & Jeongmin (2018), these three aspects are described by following: (1) Cognitive participation refers to a student's cognitive effort to gain skills during the e-learning process. (2) Emotional participation is considered as the positive emotion of students toward teachers, classmates, and online learning (3) Behavioral participation is defined as engagement exhibited by actions that prioritize learning when studying online. Simonson et al. (2015) and Barber et al. (2016) states that effective learning generates motivation and excellent online learning necessitates effective instructional design and good educational processes. While developing learning plan, it is better to consider teaching method, time flexibility, student engagement in activities, and information presentation so that it will have a good influence on the instructions. In addition, variations in teachers' teaching styles and competence in utilizing technology to communicate with students also have a substantial impact on the motivation and outcomes of e-learning (Ozkan & Koseler, 2009).

It is said that people do better when their motivation comes from inside rather than from outside sources and intrinsic motivation is capable of producing long-term behavioral changes and enabling better accomplishment persistence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to studies, even while extrinsic motivations are capable of influencing behavioral changes, these effects are transient. When the expectation of an extrinsic reward is withdrawn, many students who modify their behavior to attain those objectives return to their previous behavior. In addition, some studies show that even when people are intrinsically driven, the addition of extrinsic incentives might actually reduce intrinsic motivation. (Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett,

1973). According to Ryan & Deci (2000), it may seem that intrinsic goals are preferable than extrinsic goals. However, the development of intrinsic motivation is a challenging process. Therefore, the majority of classroom motivation is centered on extrinsic rather than intrinsic factors. In fact, successful instructors encourage student achievement by offering extrinsic incentive while encouraging the development of internal objectives (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

According to Lin et al. (2017), both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were low among students taking an online course. Researchers expounded on the causes of the poor motivation, suggesting that students' lack of real-time engagement with teachers and peers may have contributed to it. Results from a study by Ozhan and Kocadere (2020) suggest that participants' motivation may be considerably impacted by their level of immersion in the online gaming environment.

3. Methods

3.1. Pedagogical setting & participants

This study's data is collected at the end of the first semester of 2021-2022 academic year. 177 students of EFL classes in Hoa Sen University are selected randomly from different levels to take part in the study. The participants were non-English majors with different background, different experience as well as different majors. Among the 177 participants, 63 percent are females and 37 percent are males. The book named English File which is authored by Christina Latham Koenig and Clive Oxenden is the textbook for the courses and it is accompanied by a workbook, CDs, and an iTools CD-ROM.

The students had 105 periods throughout the course of the semester, and they also had six sessions of three periods each in which they study online with their instructors each week. There were six sessions total, with four sessions dedicated to Vietnamese instructors and two sessions dedicated to foreign lecturers.

In the first semester of 2021 – 2022 academic year, the participants studied online for the whole semester. The participants were expected to visit the Mlearning page on the university's website, where they could get course materials and complete homework assignments and exams. The instructors assigned homework, marked assignments, and assessed students' academic progress. The instructors employed Big Blue Button, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams in order to conduct lectures and communicate with students directly online.

3.2. Design of the study

The study was designed to assess the motivation of EFL students in the first semester of 2021-2022 academic year at Hoa Sen University. After the completion of the first semester of online learning, the survey questions were sent through Google form. The authors modified Cheng's (2006) questionnaire to investigate the students' online learning motivation. The research is conducted using a hybrid methodology that combines quantitative and qualitative or paradigm qualities. Quantity is reflected in the options of 12 questions in part 2 in which students were asked for a clear understanding of the students' perception on motivation in online English learning, and it is presented as numbers and percentages in tables. The qualitative data in the two last questions of the questionnaire is not numerical and unable to be graphed, but it can be descriptive to investigate the students' suggestions on how to increase motivation in online English learning.

3.3. Data collection & analysis

A pilot survey was administered to a selection of Hoa Sen University's students in order to verify the measurement and make any necessary adjustments. Participants were then provided Google forms with questionnaires to complete as part of the data collection process. At the start of the Google form, participants were informed of the goal of the research and some of the more challenging survey questions. For non-major English speakers, the questionnaires were prepared in Vietnamese using simple structures and were categorized by subject.

The purpose of the 17-question, two-part questionnaire was to obtain information on the participants' motivation for online learning. The first part consisted of three questions designed to gather background information on the students, and part two consisted of 12 Likert scale questions with values ranging from 1 to 5 (Strongly disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, and Strongly Agree) designed to assess the students' motivation in

e-learning. The following two questions were designed to be open-ended in order to obtain more detailed information on their ideas for increasing motivation in online English learning.

4. Results/Findings and discussion

4.1. Results in students' motivation in E-learning

The statistics of the research revealed that 45 percent of the participants agreed that they like to study English online while 35 percent were neutral and 20 percent disagreed. As a consequence, when the students were asked about the situation that the teachers would continue using e-learning in teaching English, 45 percent showed their agreement, 27 percent were neutral and only 29 percent disagreed.

Regarding the applications that the teachers use in teaching English online, about 61 percent showed their agreement on the effectiveness of the teaching applications in improving their skills in English, nearly 30 percent were neutral and 9 percent disagreed. The students agreed with the fact that using different teaching applications in English will help them have more chances to practice and improve their capacity in English. That is the reason why 57 percent confirmed the usefulness of the applications the teachers apply during the online courses. However, 21 percent were neutral and only 21 percent claimed the ineffectiveness of the applications the teachers use in online classes.

About the assessment, more than half of the

Table 1. Students' motivation in E-learning

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I like using e-learning for English modules	6.78%	12.99%	35.03%	19.21%	25.99%
2. I hope teachers of English continue to use e-learning in their teaching	14.1%	14.7%	26.6%	18.6%	26%
3. I think the teacher's application of e-learning in teaching English modules helps me improve my skills in English	2.8%	6.8%	29.4%	31.1%	29.9%
4. I think the teacher's application of e-learning in teaching English modules is not useful	31.6%	25.4%	21.5%	10.2%	11.3%
5. I think my grades will improve by using e-learning for English modules	7.3%	11.9%	22%	22.6%	36.2%
6. I find English modules easier when the teacher uses elearning in teaching	6.8%	15.3%	28.2%	22.6%	27.1%
7. Using e-learning for English modules is more interesting than the traditional method	10.2%	19.8%	28.2%	15.3%	26.6%
8. E-learning make me more interested in learning English	11.3%	20.9%	29.4%	13%	25.4%
9. By using e-learning for English modules, the opportunity of interaction with the teacher is enhanced	14.7%	19.2%	29.9%	13.6%	22.6%
10. By using e-learning for English modules, the opportunity of interaction with my classmates is enhanced	18.6%	25.4%	22.6%	11.3%	22%
11. Using e-learning for English modules encourages me to continue learning on the Internet by myself	9%	13.6%	27.1%	23.7%	26.6%
12. I am unwilling to learn English modules through using elearning	21.5%	17.5%	27.1%	14.7%	19.2%

students with 59 percent agreed when being asked whether their grades in English improved during the time of studying online, whereas 22 percent were neutral. The percentage of the students who disagree and strongly disagree was much lower, at 12 percent and 7 percent respectively. Therefore, quite a lot of the students confirmed that studying English was easier when their teachers applied e-learning in teaching. Particularly, about 50 percent agreed, 28 percent were neutral and 22 percent disagreed with the perception that learning English online was easier than learning English in traditional way.

Another factor that the participants were asked is the interest in studying English online. The data showed that 38 percent agreed, 30 percent were neutral and 32 percent disagreed. That is the reason why the students revealed their responses with the same percentage when being asked to compare their interest in learning English online and in traditional way. Specifically, 42 percent of the participants expressed their agreement that studying English online is more interesting than in traditional classes, 28 percent were neutral and 30 percent disagreed.

In term of the interactions between teachers and students, about 36 percent of the students revealed that they had more opportunity to interact with their teachers whereas 34 percent disagreed and 30 percent were neutral. This rate is higher than the rate of interaction among students, particularly only 33 percent showed their agreement in having more chances interacting with other classmates, 23 percent were neutral and 44 percent disagreed.

Students' autonomy in studying English online is also investigated. From the statistics, more than 50 percent of the participants revealed that studying English online encouraged them to continue learning on the internet, 27 percent were neutral and only 23 percent disagreed.

The last question in the Likert scales questionnaire is about the students' readiness to study English modules online. Surprisingly, 39 percent of the students agreed, 27 percent were neutral and 34 percent showed their disagreement.

4.2. Results in students' suggestions on increasing motivation in E-learning

About the applications that the teachers applied during their online English classes, the participants mentioned that Kahoot, Quizz, Teams, Booklet, Menti, Elsa, Padlet, Duolingo etc. are the applications that most of the teachers use in online English classes to create more active and funny learning activities.

With the data about the students' recommendations on e-learning to be really motivated during studying, students offered many contributions. Specifically, the students wanted to have more games relating to the lessons, and they wanted to practice listening through English songs. They also recommended the teachers to use different applications of websites to make the lessons more appealing and livelier. Furthermore, students wanted to have greater contact with lecturers as well as more opportunities to work with their classmates. Another suggestion they mentioned to improve motivation is that all the students in class and the teacher should turn on webcams during the online learning time. They also recommended that the university should provide video recordings of live lectures so that they have more chances to learn the instructions many times or they can watch the videos in case they have some unexpected circumstances that prevented them from attending the lectures. The students revealed that teachers should give more plus points for students to increase their participant and motivation in online learning.

4.3. Discussion

This research examined the students' motivation in online English learning. Nearly half of the participants that is 45 percent liked to study English online and expressed their preference in applying e-learning in English modules in the future. From the data it can be seen that the students like studying English online and are willing to participate in some e-learning lessons during their English courses. As for applications the teachers applied during online English course, about 60 percent confirmed the usefulness of the applications in practicing English and in improving their skills. Ozkan & Koseler (2009) confirmed that e-learning results and student motivation are significantly influenced by instructors' teaching methods and proficiency in employing technology

into classroom discourse. About assessment, more than half of the participants agreed that their grades in English improved when studying online. That is the reason why about half of the participants revealed that studying English online is easier.

Regarding about the interest of learning English online, about 40 percent thought that studying English online is interesting and it is more interesting than studying it in a traditional way. Dornyei (2020) argues that providing students with incentive is crucial to establishing student engagement. The goal of any instructional design, whether traditional or online, he argues, should be to keep students engaged. In term of interaction, only 36 percent agreed that they have more chances to interact with teachers, and only 33 percent said that they have more chances to interact with other classmates. It is clear that the percentage of agreement in the rate of peer interaction in online e-learning is much less than the rate of interaction between students and teachers. Low levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were reported by Lin et al. (2017) among students enrolled in online courses. Researchers elaborated on the root reasons of the low motivation, speculating that that students' lack of real-time interaction with lecturers and classmates may have contributed.

Only 39 percent of students agreed with the final question on their willingness to learn English courses online. In this instance, the proportion is low, but it is evident that students are increasingly accepting online education. If the quality of online learning is improved and meets the needs of both students and instructors, it is anticipated that a greater proportion of students will accept to participate. For the suggestions to improve motivation in online learning, the students gave quite a few recommendations, including the use of additional games in the classroom and an increase in interaction with others. According to Ozhan and Kocadere's (2020) study, the level of immersion in an online gaming environment may have a substantial impact on the motivation of students.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this study is to explore students' motivation in online learning. According to the study's results, most of the students have motivation in online English learning, but only more than a third of the participants agreed to study English online in the future. The reason for this result is that students' motivation in online learning is not high enough to maintain online learning process for a long period because of many reasons including a lack of communication between teachers and students or students and students.

Overall, it may be stated that online education provides several obstacles in terms of maintaining students' motivation to pursue their second language learning goals, so administrators as well as educators should consider the factors that influence learners' motivation when designing online courses and selecting professional development training sessions ∎

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ĐỘNG LỰC HỌC TẬP
CỦA SINH VIÊN EFL TRONG HỌC TRỰC TUYẾN:
NGHIÊN CỨU TẠI ĐẠI HỌC HOA SEN

● **HOÀNG TÔ THƯ DUNG**
Trường Đại học Hoa Sen

TÓM TẮT:

Động lực là một trong những nhân tố có ảnh hưởng nhất đến thành tích tổng thể của một cá nhân nói chung và kết quả học tập nói riêng. Trên thực tế, động cơ trong học tập là một vấn đề giáo dục cơ bản, đặc biệt là trong việc học trực tuyến. Nghiên cứu này nhằm đánh giá tổng quan về động lực của sinh viên EFL trong việc học trực tuyến tại Đại học Hoa Sen. Dữ liệu của nghiên cứu được thu thập từ 177 sinh viên EFL, những người đã hoàn thành học kỳ đầu tiên của năm học 2021-2022 thông qua hình thức học trực tuyến, thông qua khảo sát trực tuyến. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy hầu hết sinh viên có động lực trong việc học trực tuyến. Tuy nhiên, một số yếu tố cần được quan tâm để duy trì động lực của sinh viên ở mức tốt nhất trong việc học trực tuyến.

Từ khóa: động lực, sinh viên EFL, học trực tuyến.