Motivation in learning English:
A study on non-major students at Banking Academy

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Abstract :*Motivation has been definitely witnessed to be vital in learning a foreign language so far in research and practices. Concerning the teaching reality in Banking Academy (BA), the writer would take a deeper insight into the motivation of non-English major students in class, and look for potential solutions to improve the English teaching practice in Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL) at BA. In order to reach the target, the writer did a survey on 373 non-major students' in B1-level English classroom at BA investigating their motivation level and clarifying the relationships between the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation with hope to significantly push up their motivation level in English class, helping them strengthen their English skills. The data of the study was quantitatively analyzed in SPSS version 20.*

Key words: *non-major students, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation*

Introduction

With the important role of foreign language in the period of globalization, it has been considered as a compulsory subject at tertiary level in Vietnam, especially at Banking Academy (BA). However, for annual school year, a not-very-small proportion of non-English major students at BA suffer from failure in the Outcome Test for B1 level as a necessary condition for graduation. As a result, a research was carried to answer question "Are students motivated intrinsically and extrinsically in B1-level English class?"

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Motivation is a crucial factor to enable learners to be competent, ready, and autonomous. It is a must for autonomy promotion and without motivation, it is unlikely for autonomous learning to develop. Similarly, to develop autonomy in learning in general, Chan (2001) believes that it is important for learners to get the direction to strengthen their motivation and change their learning strategies correspondingly.

Motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Firstly, Ersoz (2004) sees intrinsic motivation as "something that motivates the person to engage in an activity for its own sake without any external reward" (p.68). Thus, with intrinsic motivation, learners are driven to make plans and decide strategies to carry out learning activities successfully for great satisfactory feelings, rather than high marks. To increase intrinsic motivation, teachers should foster learner autonomy by offering a number of work for students to take, lessening control and providing more freedom, encouraging different possible answers to the tasks, discovery, imagination, creativity, and curiosity, promoting their deeper cognitive process and providing the learner with essential problem-solving skills.

In the view of Ersoz (2004), "extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is something that motivates the person to engage in an activity for some external rewards like bonus points, candies, compliments, money or test scores or punishment avoidance. These rewards seem to be effective in the short run" (p.68). To make it feasible, C. Ng and P. Ng (2015) apply rewards, good marks or simple praise as great external supporters to strongly encourage low-level and demotivated learners while extra homework, punishment or other sanctions seem to be useless on learners. Besides, C. Ng and P. Ng (2015) point out the agreement of a number of researchers and theorists that "intrinsic motivation correlates more closely with language learning success than extrinsic motivation, but a learner's total motivation is most frequently a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation" (p.98). In language education, it is teachers who nurture their students' intrinsic motivation – an overwhelming factor without ignoring the supportive aid of extrinsic motivation factors to help them be successful in the long run.

Research Samples and Instrument

The study involved 373 non-English major students including 308 females and 65 males (equivalent to 82,6% and 17.4%, respectively) who all have been at B1 level to make sure their consistent level for the research reliability.

Questionnaire was used as an active tool in this research. Basing on Likert-scale format, the ten items ranging from five (strongly agree) to one (strongly disagree) which corresponds to the responses of the participants. The former questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the questionnaire were to collect information about intrinsic motivation and the latter 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were for extrinsic motivation. After student responses were gathered through questionnaire, the variables were coded to serve the purpose of statistical analysis.

Cronbach Alpha in Reliability Analysis

The variable group for intrinsic motivation coded as IM comprised five items: A1, A2, A3, A4, and A5. The alpha values of the items A1, A2, A3, and A4 were cited to be over 0.7. Notably, the alpha of A5 was slightly higher than the overall one (0.843 > 0.842), but its Corrected Item – Total Correlation (0.521) was higher than 0.3. As a result, the item would be acceptable. To sum up, the five items in this group were obviously valid.

The variable group named EM was designed to justify for extrinsic motivation level in English class. It included five items A6, A7, A8, A9 and A 10. Noticeably, for the first test of reliability, the item A7 reflected the unsatisfactory value of Corrected Item-Total Correlation (0.159), so the removal of the item was necessary. For the second time of checking the reliability of the extrinsic-motivation items, the overall alpha (0.761) together with the values of Corrected Item-Total Correlation for A6, A8, A9, and A10 confirmed the validity of the sub-scale.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was applied in the study to reveal any hidden factors for a set of variables. For the EFA procedures, the computing was carried out with Factor Loading of 0.5 (Hair et al, 2014) and Principal Component Analysis would be processed in SPSS as "you can use the results from a PCA for all of the same things that you would the results of an EFA" (DeCoster & Claypool, 2004, p.51).

Remarkably, the item – A6 clustered together with the five original items in the intrinsic motivation group. It is understandable to see this phenomenon from the viewpoint of Hayamizu (1993) who argues that it is possible for extrinsic motivation to turn into intrinsic motivation. Brown (2000) states that "those who learn for their own self-perceived needs and goals are intrinsically motivated…" (p.171). As a result, the item "Learning English is useful in getting a good job" was meaningfully categorized into the intrinsic motivation group. At the same time, the extrinsic motivation group was made up of 3 items from the original group due to the removal of two invalid variables.

Results

To put into details, the first factor-based scale - Intrinsic Motivation consisted of six items (mean= 3.4531 to 4.4745). In terms of median, item A6 gained 5.0000 indicating that respondents all strongly agreed that "Learning English is useful in getting a good job". Ranking the next was the items A1, A2, A3 and A4 (median = 4.0000). The samples tended to show their agreement on the fact that they learnt English to be capable of "improving English skills", "being more at ease with English speakers", "participating more freely in activities of other cultural groups", and "learning new things". However, remarkably, the item A5 – "I learn English because I enjoy learning it" exposed the lowest score (median = 3.0000).

Generally, median value of IM (4.0000) was higher than that of EM (3.6667), which means that student responses clustered in 'agree' category of the scale for intrinsic motivation items while they were in between of 'neutral' and 'agree' categories of extrinsic motivation scale.

Moreover, the two sets of variables - IM and EM were recognized to have a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.570, sig < 0.05). To put into details, an increase in the student participants' intrinsic motivation level related to a moderate growth in their extrinsic motivation level, and vice versa.

Discussions on Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Descriptive analysis generally showed a high level of students' intrinsic motivation. Most notably, students put great emphasis on learning English to get a good job. The situation was similar in the study of Jefiza (2017) when the samples realized the essential role of learning English as a tool for future career achievement. They made it turn into their own target to reach in their life. They also revealed

several highly correlated reasons for their learning English such as improving English skills, being more at ease with English speakers, participating more freely in activities of other cultural groups, and learning new things. It means when students try their best to get a good job, their English skills can be developed leading to their competence to communicate with English speakers with comfort, to easily attend cultural events and to learn new things in different corners of the world with English. It was like a cause-effect cycle.

Generally, the respondents were extrinsically motivated at a moderate level. It was clearly noted that getting a good grade was seriously paid attention to by the respondents. The results indicated that the participants might not perceive getting compliments from others or showing ability to others as an important factor that would inspire them to exert themselves learning English but they were concerned more about getting a good grade that could be a tool for them to complete their long-term goals like getting a good job, and learning new things.

In brief, the intrinsic motivation level of the respondents seemed to be more outstanding than their extrinsic motivation level. Remarkably, intrinsic motivation itself leaves positive impacts on students pushing them to learn willingly and voluntarily on the basis of their own will and need (Wimolmas, 2013). Regarding a positive correlation between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, teachers can have deeper confidence in making efforts to grow one type of motivation or another, which may bring out an increase in both of them. Consequently, teachers and textbook designers are those who may tailor the course book, the teaching contents, and activities to the improvement of students' English skills. At the same time, teachers and educational authorities who seek to build up students' intrinsic motivation level may have more success if they add some online and/ or offline activities into the teaching curriculum, so students likely experience cultural exchange events, get chances to interact with English speakers, pick up new things from other countries. Wimolmas (2013) also considers it beneficial to "implement the ongoing extracurricular language programs or activities to encourage interaction and enhance the exposure and the language usage" (p.194). Involving in the activities, students can not only satisfy their intrinsic objectives but also help them accumulate knowledge and strategies to learn better and get

a good grade. It functions like a vicious cycle in developing students' motivation level. In addition, "continuous assessment was emphasized in order to encourage students to persist and set goals for improvements" (Wachob, 2006, p.102), so it may be helpful to consider how to evaluate students on continuity basis in order to encourage them make regular progress. Briefly, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation tend not to be mutual exclusive but interrelated. Therefore, successful classrooms frequently combine intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Implications and Conclusion

To promote learner motivation, teachers are likely to create a comfortable learning atmosphere in which students see much prospect to relaxingly interacting with teachers, exposing themselves to English usage without being afraid of making mistakes and being confident to be themselves. Moreover, the supplementation of group assignments/ projects in reading, writing, speaking and listening skills is necessary for each B1-level English class. English teachers should come up with a common frame for each assignment in advance and launch one every three weeks. With the view on the module assessment of BA, mid-term and final tests must have high reliability and validity in grading students correctly and fairly, so the test banks are supposed to be continuously renewed, edited and checked every year as usual by FFL's teachers. The technical performance of online testing software also needs to be updated and reported by internal IT experts to BA authorities every semester to make sure its good quality and high confidentiality.

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