

THE RELATIONSHIP OF LEARNING MOTIVATION AND ACHIEVEMENT IN EFL: GENDER AS AN INTERMEDIATED VARIABLE

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ABSTRACT

Many studies in EFL have emphasized the importance of students' motivation or teaching methods; but they ignore the subsequent impact of learning achievement, and even gender learning differences. This paper is to understand learning motivation and achievement in EFL study, especially gender differences. Questionnaire was used in data collection. Statistical method included regression analysis was utilized to examine this research hypothesis and to clarify the relative contribution of these variables. The results show that learning motivation is a key factor in learning English as a foreign language and there are some differences on gender for students' learning motivations. However, learning achievements of EFL are affected by learning motivations and previous learning experiences, and have gender differences on them.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Learning Motivation, Learning Achievement, Vocational Education

INTRODUCTION

To promote the internationalization in higher education, the importance of English cannot be overemphasized. Most teachers and staffs in university would assume that the motivation for students to learn English would be stronger than before. EFL (English as a Foreign Language) is more importance for students but also for researchers. Many studies in EFL have emphasized the importance of students' motivation or teaching methods (Wu, 2004; Li, Lin & Lin, 2007; Wu, 2009; Wu, Chang & Lo, 2009; Wu & Lin, 2009; Tsau & Hao, 2010); but they ignore the subsequent impact of learning achievement, and even gender learning differences. Past research about gender in education concerned learning no gender differences. It means that every single individual person should get equal opportunities to develop his/her personal abilities and to make choices without any limitations or being blocked by traditional stereotypes. Nevertheless, for language learning, would they be similar as other knowledge learning especially in EFL teaching and learning?

In Taiwan, there are many vocational colleges for vocational high school graduates to attend. These colleges also provide students with two-year and four-year programs. In this paper the writer will take students at National Ping Tung Institute of Commerce as subjects. Around 109 students will be involved in this study. The students basically received about six-year English instruction at junior high and senior vocational high schools. The hours of English course they have now are three hours each week. Vocational education or vocational education and training (VET) is an education that prepares trainees for jobs that are based on manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic, and totally related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation. In Taiwan, this education system was known as the "technical and vocational education". Early to coincide with Taiwan set up economic development, with the goal of fostering practical technical talents and skills as a guide for the course content to, this is the "narrow" technical and vocational education. After the accession to the WTO, the

impact of industrialization, and to face the challenges of the knowledge economy, to General technical and vocational education shall be set to: "career preparation education", prepared to engage in some kind of professional learning, which provides professional competence, attitudes and ideals of education, which belongs to technical and vocational education.

Obviously foreign language learning and teaching were not the importance course in Taiwan Vocational Education past years, as the gender studies neglected in the past. Department of Technological & Vocational Education in Taiwan Ministry of Education set up Information Centre for International Cooperation and Exchange to promote students foreign language ability from 2008. According to the National Foreign Language Communities Standards (1999), students are expected to use the target language within and outside of the school setting for personal enjoyment and enrichment. There are five main goals set up in the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (1996) which are "communication," "cultures," "connection," "comparisons," and "communities" for EFL students to reach and succeed in. Thus, "meeting the standards of the communication goal is essential to the accomplishment of the other four goals. Through communication, learners develop an understanding of the cultures for which the target language is the common code. They make connections to other knowledge and engage in analytic comparisons which can help to develop the insight and perspective into their own and others' languages and cultures (Liu, 2008). The purpose of this study is to explore the English learning motivation and achievement among vocational college students of different gender.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning Motivation

Learning motivation "refers to a student's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process". It is what gets students to engage in academic activities, keeps them trying when things get difficult, and determines how much they learn (Bomia et al. 1997).

Among theories and approaches to student motivation, some tackle the problem from a psychological perspective. Fan and Feng (2012) have discussed learning motivation theory perspectives, and provide behavioral theory a powerful support. Fan and Feng's study has pointed out that learning experiences would affect learning motivations. However, Wu and Lin's study have showed that English learning motivation is the mediator of English learning environment and English learning strategies (Wu & Lin, 2009). Wu explores the relationship among English learning motivation, action control, meta-cognition, and learning performance of college students, and found that college students' learning performance is significantly influenced by action control and meta-cognition (Wu, 2009). Wu's research found out that after the teaching activity, students in the experiment group and the control group were significantly different in their motivation of learning English. Besides, there are also significant differences in other aspects such as their volitional control, metacognition, and learning achievement (Wu, 2004).

Scholars defined motivations into inside and outside induced sexual motivation. Inside induced sexual motivation is means behavior of power is individual automatically spontaneous of, is a does not needs forces spur and urged of learning power, needs, and curious, and combative is within made of motivation. Outside induced motivation is means external environment of stimulus and produced of learning power, needs through forces of urged. As far as the learning, induced from outside the engine in a more motivated more sustainability, learning outcomes are better, thus induced from outside the schools leading

students motivation into the engine, the students from passive learning environment for the desired by parents, teacher supervision, into self-direction in learning situations.

Learning Achievement

It is important to know what learning achievement is. Commonly, learning achievement is about how success the learner can master the materials of the learning object. Although the definition learning achievement would be argued by different views of scholars, most scholars support the notion of Chien (1987) "learning achievement is the acquisition of knowledge or skills that are developed by subject matter, usually indicated by test scores or numerical value is assigned by teachers". In conclusion, learning achievement is target measured by competences of the learner in learning which are shown by score as a sign and score is not a final expectation. So, learning achievement is the level of student success in learning the subject matter in schools that are expressed in the form of scores obtained from the results of tests on a particular subject matter.

Studies have shown that motivation plays a key role in the process of language acquisition (Li, Lin & Lin, 2007; Wu, Chang & Lo, 2009; Wu & Lin, 2009; Tsau & Hao, 2010). The highly learning motivation and self-efficacious learners can usually come up with better solutions based on their past learning experiences. Therefore they are more confident in their abilities in dealing with problems; they will get the higher learning achievement. Almost reaches about learning achievement used supernumerary test by other experts, this study used the final score of this spring semester and last fall semester by teacher, and self-confidence and self-assessment by student.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Framework and Hypotheses

The purposes of this research are to understand learning motivation and achievement in EFL study, especially gender differences. Based on literature reviews and the objective of this study, research framework shows the relationships among learning motivation and learning achievement of EFL (Figure 1). And, three hypotheses have been developed based on the three relationships identified in the previous section:

H1: There are no gender differences on learning motivations in EFL study.

H2: There are no gender differences on learning achievements in EFL study.

H3: Learning achievements of EFL will be affected by learning motivations and previous learning experiences, but no gender differences on them.

Survey Administration and Sampling

The aim of the thesis is to understand students' learning motivation of EFL, and compare the motivation and achievement in gender different of vocational college students. In this study, the learning motivation scale of EFL taken from Wu and Cheng (1922), which translated from Motivation and Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) by Pintrich, Smith and McKeachie (1991). This scale was tested and verified by Wu and Cheng (1922) and subsequent scholars in Taiwan (Wu, 2004; Wu, 2009; Li, Lin, & Lin, 2007; Wu, & Lin, 2009; Fan, & Feng, 2012), displayed good quality and validity. The test consisted of 35 items and was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 5 (very true of me). The learning achievement was final score of EFL this spring semester. However, the previous learning experiences included score of last fall semester, self-confidence and self-assessment. These variables were also 5-point scale ranging from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good).

The research sample is author's classrooms in National Pingtung Institute of Commerce, 109 students. Parts are four years undergraduate system, and parts are four years extension system. Almost students in extension system held a full-time job; contrarily students in undergraduate system have no job or part-time job.

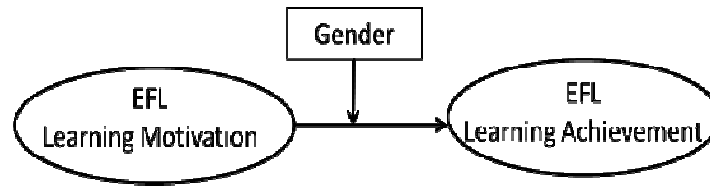


Figure 1. Research Framework

Data Analysis

Questionnaire was used in data collection. The questionnaire included 2 parts. In part 1 of the questionnaire survey, participants were required to fill-in personal information. And, the part 2 of the questionnaire was to ask student's learning motivation of EFL. The research utilized statistical analysis and SPSS software to examine this research hypothesis. The data analysis included: (1) Descriptive statistics, (2) t-test and (3) Regression analysis. In order to clarify the relative contribution of these variables, a multiple regression analysis was used. Chiou (2010) pointed that linear regression is an important concept of social science research. Correlation analysis is used to describe the intensity of linear relationship between two consecutive variables; linear regression analysis based on the relationship is forward to interpret or forecast the phenomenon between the variables statistical methods. The purpose of this study wants to interpret the cause of learning achievement by linear regression analysis.

RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Sample Descriptive

The subjects who took part in this study are 107 students after ignored 2 students' incomplete questionnaire. There are 40 males (37.4%) and 67 females (62.6%). Those students graduated from vocational high school in large part (72%). The demographic profile data of respond students shows table 1.

Table 1. Demographic variables distribution (N=107)

<i>Demographics</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender		
Male	40	37.4%
Female	67	62.6%
Background of High School		
General high school	10	9.3%
Vocational high school	77	72.0%
Comprehensive high school	20	18.7%

Learning Motivations in EFL Study

Learning motivation scale tested for homogeneity, the factor loadings less than 0.3 was deleted and leaving 25 items classified 6 factors. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α) ranged from 0.409 to 0.867, which were considered acceptable values for this reliability test.

In analyzing the data, the internal consistency of the remaining factors were quite good except extrinsic goal oriented factor, suitable for further analysis of the learning motivation.

Table 2 shows that the means of learning motivation factors are 3.346, 3.322, 3.400, 3.662, 2.940 and 2.730. The higher values are control beliefs about learning and task value, and the lower values are self-efficacy and expectations of success. The results indicate that the expectations of success and learning self-efficacy are relatively low, although students have high value of control of learning beliefs and assent task value. Further, students of different gender for EFL learning motivation are few statistical difference (see table 3 below), especially in task value and control beliefs about learning ($t=-2.617$, $p=0.010$; $t=-2.027$, $p=0.045$). They mean female students have higher learning motivation of EFL in task value ($M=3.51$) and control beliefs about learning ($M=3.73$).

Table 2. Summary of measurement scales (Continue...)

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Cronbach's α</i>
<i>Extrinsic goal oriented</i>	3.346	0.722	0.409
Get good grades, I am most satisfied	3.57	0.933	
I work hard to get a good grade even when I don't like a class	3.12	0.887	
<i>Intrinsic goal oriented</i>	3.322	0.612	0.704
I prefer class work that is challenging so I can learn new things.	3.21	0.901	
It is important for me to learn what is being taught in this class	3.74	0.757	
I expect to do very well in this class	2.97	0.829	
I was most satisfied with the English course content as possible to thoroughly clear	3.36	0.873	
<i>Task value</i>	3.400	0.602	0.786
I think I will be able to use what I learn in this class in other classes	3.36	0.840	
Even when study materials are dull and uninteresting, I keep working until I finish	3.47	0.974	
I think that what we are learning in this class is interesting	2.91	0.906	
I think that what I am learning in this class is useful for me to know	3.89	0.744	
I like what I am learning in this class	3.01	0.863	
Understanding this subject is important to me	3.77	0.853	
<i>Control beliefs about learning</i>	3.662	0.447	0.558
If I use the right way, I can learn English better	3.97	0.606	
I always try to understand what the teacher is saying even if it doesn't make sense.	3.62	0.668	
If I study hard enough, I will understand the content of the English class	3.94	0.671	
If I do not know the contents of the English class, it is because I'm not hard	3.79	0.789	
If I have learned the contents of the English class, it is so easy to learn	2.99	0.937	

Table 2. Summary of measurement scales (...Continued)

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Cronbach's α</i>
<i>Self-efficacy</i>	2.940	0.586	0.712
I'm certain I can understand the ideas taught in this course	2.42	0.869	
I know that I will be able to learn the material for this class	2.97	0.874	
I often choose paper topics I will learn something from even if they require more work	3.57	0.881	
I'm sure I can master the skills taught in English class	2.53	0.861	
Consider the degree of difficulty of the English class, the teacher, and my personal skills, I will perform well	3.21	0.810	
<i>Expectations of success</i>	2.730	0.791	0.867
I think I will receive a good grade in this class	2.70	0.892	
My study skills are excellent compared with others in this class	2.68	0.907	
I am sure I can do an excellent job on the problems and tasks assigned for this class	2.81	0.870	

Learning Achievements in EFL Study

The learning achievement of this study is based on the final score by instructor. Although many scholars argued the method of assessment, it was an objective approach. In this study, a measure of learning achievement includes the final scores of this semester and last semester, and self-assessment. The former two ratings is evaluated by instructor, the latter is evaluated by student selves. Table 4 shows that gender in EFL learning achievement, does have significant differences; and female students get higher scores than male students not only final scores but also self-assessment. However, the data shows that self-confidence and assessment of student is much lower than assessment of teacher. It means that vocational school students, both men and women on EFL learning confidence are low even below average.

Table 3. Gender factor on learning motivations

<i>Learning motivation (factors)</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Extrinsic goal oriented	3.26	0.840	3.40	0.643	-0.922	0.359
Intrinsic goal oriented	3.24	0.705	3.37	0.549	-1.110	0.270
Task value	3.21	0.712	3.51	0.497	-2.617	0.010**
Control beliefs about learning	3.55	0.508	3.73	0.395	-2.027	0.045**
Self-efficacy	2.85	0.694	2.99	0.508	-1.234	0.220
Expectations of success	2.63	0.936	2.79	0.691	-0.998	0.321

*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Table 4. Gender factor on learning achievements

<i>Learning achievement</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>t-value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Final score	3.53	1.132	4.21	0.826	-3.598	0.000***
Score of last semester	3.18	0.813	3.48	0.927	-1.709	0.090*
Self-confidence and assessment	1.93	0.764	2.30	0.718	-2.541	0.013**

*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Regression Analysis

Linear regression analysis is used in this study to interpret the cause of learning achievement and learning motivation. The equation of liner regression could be written as below: R (Learning Achievement) = Constant + X_1 (Learning Motivations) + X_2 (Learning Experiences). R_T , R_M and R_F are the regression results of total sample, male and female students. Table 5 shows that learning motivation and learning experience are indeed important factors in the interpretation of the term force of 47.3%, also reached the level of significance. In addition gender analysis; both male and female also have the goodness of fit of the model, R^2 , respectively, 55.6% and 43.7%, also reach significance level.

Table 5. Regression Analysis

<i>Model</i>	β	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	R^2	<i>Adj R²</i>
R_T	1.206	0.791	12.881	0.000***	0.513	0.473
R_M	0.610	1.262	7.098	0.000***	0.647	0.556
R_F	2.634	1.001	7.415	0.000***	0.506	0.437

*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Learning motivation is a key factor in learning English as a foreign language. The study focuses on gender differences in learning motivations and achievements of vocational school students of in Taiwan. The results show that there are some differences on gender for students' learning motivations. These differences are task value and control beliefs about learning. It means that the hypotheses H1 is partly true. However, the learning achievements of students are difference on gender. The female students have higher achievements of EFL than the male ones. It means that the hypotheses H2 is not true. Moreover, the hypotheses H3 is not true. Learning achievements of EFL are affected by learning motivations and previous learning experiences, and have gender differences on them.

From the viewpoint of behavioural theory, learning motivation is a result of reinforcement. Enabling students to obtain achievement is the key to improving students' learning motivation in learning process. Both learning motivations and learning achievements are influenced by each other. Teachers giving students high grades is a good way to enhance students' learning motivation? And Maslow's perspective, learning motivation is a satisfaction of needs and an attempt to fulfill one's total potential as a human being. Students who feel they need English

as a foreign language had stronger motivations to study. From expectancy-value theory, students will be more involved in learning if they value either the outcome or the process of learning. This study found that vocational school students had the low achievements and the lack of strong motivation of EFL although strong learning needs.

Facing the impact of globalization, many countries make the international language of learning in education in order to promote the student's capability of foreign language. In Taiwan, the foreign language learning almost is English learning. After several years to learn English in class, students know the importance of EFL and have strong learning needs, but the learning achievements are still lower grade. By this study, the research results could provide the way to ameliorate the study of EFL. It is the important work of foreign language education to promote students' motivations and make the learning environment better.

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