Chapter 13
Digital Literacy and Motivation:
How Students Evaluate Digital L2 Learning

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ABSTRACT

The contribution of this chapter to the knowledge of motivation in relation to the learning of a foreign language lies in the extensive examination of student attitudes to a detailed field of involved factors. This chapter gives an account of affective factors in the digital classroom on the basis of the level of the digital literacy of the participating students. The digital learning of an L2 is correlated to the level of language learning anxiety, willingness to communicate in the L2, attitude to feedback, and preference for teaching methods. The results show that the level of digital literacy is so high that it should not in itself negatively impact attitude to other factors. The central finding of the investigation is that intrinsic motivation is the strongest motivational drive when compared to other motivational factors.

INTRODUCTION

In digital language learning research and in the application of technology in the classroom, it is conspicuous how affective factors rarely are taken into account. No doubt the potential of emerging technologies are enhancing learning possibilities which benefit a variety of, if not all, groups of learners, and perhaps for this reason focal points have been learning about and applying new tools while few resources have been allocated to investigating motivation and attitudes as they impact the learning processes. This chapter has taken the learner's perspective with the aim of getting a more insightful basis for planning and classroom management initiatives. For several decades now computer assisted language learning (CALL) in one form or another has had a place in language teaching, but great advances during the past decade of technological developments have speeded up the inclusion in the classroom due to

both increasing resources but also due to the ubiquity of ownership of mobile devices in the hands of students themselves. This has changed expectations among the student body for the inclusion of these devices as a natural merging of realities outside the classroom and inside the classroom. The current situation is thus not a transition from none-CALL to the availability of CALL; rather the process has been incremental in nature and increasing in number of options as the technological development took off provided a diversity of possibilities suitable for nearly all aspects of the diversity and complexity of language learning. The prevailing situation is no longer characterized by novelty but a steady influx of a multitude of both innovative software and hardware which makes digital learning an unavoidable and integrative necessity. This fuels the need for a sound knowledge base of the influence this has on student attitude and motivation. This chapter has as its aim to provide a contribution towards assisting teachers in making informed decisions with a view to the improvement of their students' enjoyment and benefit of outcome in learning a foreign or second language.

The language teacher has to take into account not only the nature of the language taught, the specific element of that language under consideration, the level of proficiency of the learner, but also the learning material, the level of proficiency of the learner, the age of the learner, and not least the teaching method(s) and appropriate supportive tools. The teaching professional often has to make quick choices in suddenly arisen situations, and the better the background knowledge is of the learners, the better the possibility of making the right decision is. This chapter encompasses research on motivation with social, psychological and educational perspectives while relating it to the application of digital teaching and learning in classroom instruction as embedded in actual and concrete situations.

Information on how language learners and users perceived the usefulness and the application of digital tools was collected through a detailed questionnaire available online. The questions probed into attitudes and motivation and gave learners the opportunity to point to preferred modes of learning and to voice opinions on how they perceived the goodness of fit on their own learning as well as that of the collective of the learning classroom. The subjective experience of the students form an insight into their motivation and their preferred style of learning in relation to the digitalized classroom and the complex data sets were analyzed for effect sizes of the various components. Creating an underlying general understanding of how the students view the digitalized classroom is vital for further advancement and customization of solutions that can be both technologically and pedagogically viable.

BACKGROUND

Language Learning, Technology and Motivation

The connection between language learning and technology has given occasion to coin several names of categories and attached acronyms, e.g. CALL (computer assisted language learning), TELL (technology enhanced language learning), MALL (mobile assisted language learning) and many more (Levy, 1997). Often CALL is used as a general umbrella term (Levy & Hubbard, 2005), and for the sake of indiscriminate reference to a particular mode of learning, the term CALL will be used interchangeably with 'digital' when referring to application of various devices and interfaces supporting language learning in this study. Equally, the term second language learning will be used interchangeably with foreign language learning with L2/Learning as a common mode of abbreviation.

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