

PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES

УДК 378.147.001.76

STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES FOR ENHANCING LEARNER MOTIVATION IN TIMES OF WAR: UKRAINE CASE STUDY

Fedoriv Yaroslava Romanivna,

Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor

Pirozhenko Iryna Dmytrivna,

Solomashenko Nataliya Vasylivna,

Zhukorska Liudmyla Pavlivna

Senior Lecturers

The National University of “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy”

Fedoriv Mariya Liubomyrivna

Senior Specialist

Kyiv Mohyla University Press

Kyiv, Ukraine

Abstract: The paper discusses the topic of enhancing learner motivation in times of war, with a specific focus on the case of Ukraine. This research aims to explore the learner motivation in the emergency situations and techniques of enhancing online learner motivation. The authors conduct a study of the students’ survey responses and explore applicable strategies and practices that can be used to support and motivate learners in difficult circumstances.

Key words: education, wartime, learner motivation, student, interaction, cooperation, instructional models, teaching strategies, survey.

Motivation refers to the internal or external factors that stimulate and sustain a person's behaviour or actions towards achieving a particular goal or outcome. It is the drive, energy, and enthusiasm that individuals possess to initiate and persist in activities that bring them closer to their desired outcomes. Motivation can arise from

various sources such as personal goals, values, expectations, rewards, and social influence. It plays a critical role in shaping human behaviour, emotions, and cognition.

In Ukraine, where education has been negatively affected by the pandemic and the ongoing armed conflict, it is essential to understand the role of motivation in supporting learners' academic progress. For many students, the motivation to pursue higher education may originate from their desire to build a better future for themselves and their families in difficult circumstances. However, sustaining this motivation can be difficult in online learning environments, which have become increasingly prevalent due to the pandemic and the war's disruptions. Students may face numerous obstacles that can hinder their motivation, such as the lack of social interaction and feedback, technical difficulties, and the need for self-care and self-discipline.

The conditions of pandemic and war have significantly transformed the educational process in Ukraine, leading to an increased reliance on online learning as an accessible and flexible means of obtaining educational resources and interacting with instructors and peers. However, studying in such conditions also presents specific challenges, including the initial willingness to pursue higher education and the need to maintain learner motivation and engagement during their studies, which poses a task for educators to seek for the methodologies and tools that would help the students in achieving their educational goals.

Thus the goal of the study is to explore the instructional strategies and techniques that can enhance online learners' motivation and engagement during times of war in Ukraine.

Motivation to pursue higher education is often driven by a range of factors, including personal aspirations, career goals, and societal expectations. Adéla Fajčíková and Hana Urbancova [3] conducted a survey-based study to identify the factors that motivate students to seek higher education. They found out that motivated students tend to have a clear vision of their future goals and the benefits of obtaining a degree. The study identified a set of factors that influence student motivation, with

the quality of instruction being the most significant, followed by social status, competency development, and the quality of education in relation to employment.

However, maintaining this motivation throughout their educational path can be challenging, particularly in online learning environments. Online learners face various problems that can negatively impact their motivation, including technological issues, time management, lack of interaction, and feelings of isolation. Additionally, online learning requires learners to be self-directed and motivated, which can be difficult for those who lack self-discipline and intrinsic motivation. Esra Meşe and Çiğdem Sevilen [7, pp.11-22] from Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation University, Turkey, conducted a qualitative case study to investigate the impact of online teaching on students' motivation. The data collected through semi-structured interviews and creative writing tasks revealed a negative impact of online education on learner motivation due to the lack of social interaction, a mismatch between expectations and content, organisational issues, and the learning environments.

An extensive literature review on student engagement was conducted by Betül C. Czerkowski and Eugene W. Lyman [1, p. 532-539], who focused on approaches, models and frameworks facilitating quality online learning environments. The authors observe that “[s]ome of these frameworks are concerned with student participation, some with motivation and some with student success. All these variables affect active participation and engagement of the student to some degree, but the main concern is how to design online instruction conducive to high level of engagement.” The proposed instructional design framework is claimed to provide better approaches to increasing student engagement.

Research conducted by Jeong [4] focused on the impact of online collaborative English learning activities on EFL university students' motivation and classroom engagement. In the study, the participants were engaged in integrative English learning activities through online group collaboration and peer-tutoring, using digital technology to exchange peer responses and share learning experiences. The study relied on the ARCS model of instructional design [5] and included the analysis of the data collected from an online questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews.

The results indicate that online collaborative English learning activities positively impacted EFL university students' learning performance and had metacognitive benefits for learner motivation and classroom engagement.

Strategies used to enhance learner's motivation in e-learning environments are discussed by El-Seoud, Mohamed, and Taj-Eddin [2, pp. 944-949]. In particular, the authors address the importance of identifying motivation strategies in online learning to enhance learning outcomes and claim that the use of interactive features of e-learning increases the motivation of undergraduate students for the learning process. The researchers have investigated the effect of using interactive features of e-learning on students' motivation by means of a questionnaire, and the results show that students expressed preference towards web-based interactive activities as opposed to the traditional method of learning.

In addition, Öncü and Bichelmeyer [8, pp. 210-226] emphasise learner-centred practices that play a crucial role in promoting engagement in a blended learning environment. These practices proved to be successful in reducing passive learner involvement and promoting active participation and collaboration, which is consistent with the available literature [9, pp. 158-176]. Consequently, in order to enhance learner motivation, instructors can use various interactive techniques to further enhance learners' motivation and engagement.

Interactive instruction is a teaching approach in which students actively participate in the learning process rather than being passive learners. This active approach helps students to engage with the course content, remain attentive, and learn more by interacting with the instructor, material, and other students. As Amanda Knapp (2023) emphasises, this method contrasts with the traditional classroom style where the teacher delivers information through lectures and students passively take notes. Knapp maintains that in English classrooms, interactive education is highly valued in such areas as grammar, writing, and literature. English teachers commonly employ a variety of techniques such as brainstorming groups, peer review, and literature discussions to engage students in active learning. Brainstorming groups can be conducted in small or large groups, with or without the teacher's facilitation. Peer

review involves students providing specific feedback to their peers, which is expected to improve their writing. Literature discussions encourage students to analyze the work through online group discussions, either in small groups, with partners, or as a large group. Interactive techniques can also include group projects, gamification, simulations, and multimedia resources. Some benefits of such activities, according to Amanda Knapp [6], are that online discussions can promote interaction and collaboration among learners, while gamification can enhance learners' motivation by using game-based elements.

Thus, research in this area has identified the interactive and cooperative techniques as favourable in terms of promoting learner motivation and engagement in online learning environments. Additionally, interactive techniques, such as collaborative learning, gamification, and personalised feedback, have been shown to enhance learner motivation and engagement in online learning.

The pandemics and war in Ukraine have affected both the internal and external factors that define students' motivation and their behaviour and actions. In many ways their vision of personal goals or educational outcomes have been distorted. A lack of the drive and enthusiasm, as well as chronic stress, continuing hardships, or displacement have resulted in the increased absenteeism and dropout. Traditional sources of motivation, such as personal goals, values, expectations, rewards, and social influence, are no longer relevant because people's personal lives, relationships, emotions, cognition, and all the domains of life are negatively affected, including education. In many cases students seek part-time or permanent jobs due to the financial crisis and the necessity to secure basic survival needs.

In order to find out possible ways to increase learner motivation of students of the National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" (NaUKMA), a survey was conducted to determine the students' challenges, needs, and expectations. The specific purpose of the survey was to gather students' feedback on the study process and their views of the ways to raise learner motivation, the ultimate research goal being to develop the teaching methodologies and techniques that would help to adjust the educational process to the conditions of emergency.

The target population was selected out of the general university student population and included 194 respondents, the freshmen of 11 groups of the Bachelor programmes and 4 groups of the Master programmes. Due to the time and resources limitations, it was not feasible to sample from the entire university student population, which is why the sampling technique used to select participants was based on convenience sampling (a type of a non-probability, or non-random sampling) method, based on the participants' availability, willingness to participate, and the common mandatory learning subject, the English language, so as to gather consistent responses relevant to the ultimate goal of the project study. This approach was convenient and costless, as the surveys were integrated in the online class activities, thus providing immediate results.

In order to gather the students' feedback, the data collection methods included email-based interviews and an online survey on learner motivation.

The email interaction revealed the students' motivation to enter the National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy." Important reasons to choose the NaUKMA include the continuity of generations, community building, career prospects, wide opportunities for self-education and a wide range of the exchange programs. Finally, the psychological atmosphere, the instructors' empathy, personal participation and involvement attract the applicants to pursue higher education in the NaUKMA.

The online survey was conducted with the help of Google Forms that included controlled and open questions. The questions asked in the survey included the controlled questions about the study programme; a question how their motivation to study has changed if compared to their pre-war experience; the reasons to pursue higher education; the reasons of the decrease of motivation; and an open question "What do you see as a possible solution to the problem of a low student motivation?" The students were informed that the responses to all questions were confidential and would not be shared with anyone in any way that identified them as individuals without their consent.

The results of the survey showed that data were gathered from 77.7% of the respondents at the Bachelor level and 22.3% of the respondents at the Master's level,

which roughly correlates with the number of student groups in the corresponding programs. Surprisingly, the motivation to study increased, as compared to the pre-war period, in a larger number of students (37.1%), while almost the same shares of students reported unchanged high (30.9%) or decreased (29.9%) motivation. Four students (2.1 %) reported low motivation that did not improve during the first semester. The majority of students (76.3 %) marked "*Higher education diploma will help me to get a better job position*" as the main reason to pursue higher education, 21.1% of the respondents reported that they had chosen to study because they did not have any other occupation and did not want to waste time, and 5.7 % of the respondents needed a certification for a new occupation. Among the causes for the decreased learner motivation, the major reason was "*stressful circumstances of the war*" (64.2 % of the responses), power and the Internet outages (54.7 %), and employment (14.2 % of the responses). The responses to the open question "What do you see as a possible solution to the problem of a low student motivation?" were analysed by applying the content analysis which revealed the following suggestions that fall into two categories: (A) recommendations to peers and (B) requests addressed to the university staff:

(A) to develop one's own motivation; to prioritise tasks and proceed from the easiest ones to more difficult ones; to focus on the need to study; to turn one's studies into habit; to prioritise health and safety; to share goals and dreams with the groupmates; to focus on mental health; to get a qualified psychological assistance to reduce the war stress;

(B) to interact with passionate lecturers; to attend offline lessons; to make studies more interesting, less stressful; to make tasks easier; to set longer deadlines for tasks; to watch films and discuss interesting articles at the lessons; to stimulate group discussions; to create a competitive atmosphere; to praise students for their success; to practise more individual approach to the students; to be more considerate to the students who are under stress; to create a more supportive and encouraging studying community.

The analysis of the open-ended question "What do you see as a possible

solution to the problem of low student motivation?" revealed that students suggested increasing interaction and engagement in the learning process, providing more practical applications of theory, improving teaching quality and encouraging feedback, and providing more opportunities for self-development and self-care.

The survey results reveal the impact of challenging external factors on student motivation. The findings suggest that some students still exhibit high motivation despite the pandemic and ongoing war in Ukraine. Nevertheless, the survey highlights the need for educators to take into account the external factors that affect students' motivation, and to provide more opportunities for interaction and personal growth.

For instance, by setting realistic goals, establishing rules, distributing roles, prioritising through such activities as warming-up, introductory discussions, gamification and related to the topic proverbs, songs, anecdotes, jokes the instructors can "break ice" and establish a firm connection with the students.

Bridging the previous language experience and the current study goals; offering a choice of assignments and engaging activities (projects, case studies); learning by doing (active learning, real life situations); asynchronous learning activities help the students to understand the practical applicability of learning. For example, it can be a catwalk show or a hat contest with a story behind for the topic "Clothes"; a demonstration presentation and tasting for the topic "Food"; designing a residential area or an exotic house for the topic "Housing"; or arranging a city tour for "Travelling".

Collaborative and cooperative learning involve students in pair and group work and allows them to practise peer tutoring to master a subject matter. Peer-assessed assignments develop the students' social responsibility. Verbal (acknowledgement and recognition) and point-system rewards (extra scores) encourage and motivate students. It is important to set small goals that provide better chances to be achieved, especially in view of the interruptions for blackouts or air raids.

Tests and quizzes provide timely and adequate feedback. The student portfolio provides formative assessment and lets the students track their own progress.

Incorporating gamification enhances the strategy if the goal is participation rather than a prize. For example, the Earth Day doodle in Google can be used to develop note taking skills (“complete 5 levels and record at least 5 facts about bees”) and practising grammar (“transform the sentences from the Doodle so that they include a given grammar structure”) while playing and enjoying the animation and music.

Finally, by incorporating online discussions, group projects, gamification, simulations, and multimedia resources, instructors can create a collaborative and dynamic learning environment that fosters learners' intrinsic motivation and engagement.

In conclusion, learner motivation is critical in ensuring academic success in online learning environments. The interactive techniques have been identified as effective strategies for enhancing online learner motivation and engagement. Namely, instructors can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that promotes academic success and reduces the likelihood of dropout. The use of interactive techniques such as online discussions, group projects, and gamification can further enhance learners' motivation and engagement. Future research could explore the effectiveness of these strategies in different online learning contexts and among diverse learner populations.

REFERENCES

1. Czerkawski, B. C., & Lyman, E. W. (2016). An instructional design framework for fostering student engagement in online learning environments. *TechTrends: Linking Research and Practice to Improve Learning*, 60(6), 532-539. Available at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1117092> [accessed May 09 2023].
2. El-Seoud, S. A., Mohamed, M., & Taj-Eddin, I. (2015). Strategies to Enhance Learner's Motivation in E-learning Environment. (PDF). In the 18th International Conference on Interactive Collaborative Learning (ICL2015) (pp. 944-949). IEEE. doi:10.1109/ICL.2015.7318154. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286250067_Strategies_to_Enhance_Learner's_Motivation_in_E-learning_Environment [accessed May 09 2023].

3. Fajčíková, A., & Urbancova, H. (2019). Factors Influencing Students' Motivation to Seek Higher Education—A Case Study at a State University in the Czech Republic. *Sustainability*, 11(17), 4699. doi:10.3390/su11174699.
4. Jeong, K. (2019). Online Collaborative Language Learning for Enhancing Learner Motivation and Classroom Engagement. Graduate School of Education Hannam University. Available at: <https://koreascience.kr/article/JAKO201900937426560.page> [accessed May 09 2023].
5. Keller, J. M. (1983). Motivational design of instruction. In C. M. Reigeluth (Ed.), *Instructional-design theories and models: An overview of their current status*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
6. Knapp, A., Hatten, L., & Pisano, G. (2023). Interactive Instruction & Learning - Style, Benefits & Examples. *Study.com*. Available at: <https://study.com/learn/lesson/interactive-instruction-learning-style-benefits-examples.html> [accessed 09 May 2023].
7. Meşe, E. & Sevilen, Ç. (2021). Factors influencing EFL students' motivation in online learning: A qualitative case study. *Journal of Educational Technology & Online Learning*, 4(1), 11-22.
8. Öncü, S., & Bichelmeyer, B. A. (2021). Instructional practices affecting learner engagement in blended learning environments. *Participatory Educational Research (PER)*, 8(3), 210-226. doi: 10.17275/per.21.62.8.3. Available at: <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1520667> [accessed May 09 2023].
9. Shernoff, D. J., Csikszentmihalyi, M., Schneider, B., & Shernoff, E. S. (2003). Student engagement in high school classrooms from the perspective of flow theory. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 18(2), 158-176. doi:10.1007/978-94-017-9094-9_24.