Motivation and E-Learning English as a foreign language: A qualitative study

Fredy Geovanni Escobar Fandiño [a,b,c,d,*], Luz Dary Muñoz [d,e,f], Angela Juliette Silva Velandia [d,g]

[a] Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia
[b] Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia
[c] Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia
[d] Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios – UNIMINUTO, Academic Direction, Carrera 73a # 81b -70. Edificio C. Piso 8, Bogotá, Colombia
[e] Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, Bogotá, Colombia
[f] Universidad Externado de Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia
[g] Universidad de la Salle, Bogotá, Colombia

A B S T R A C T

The motivation to learn a foreign language is a complex process. According to the Ministry of National Education of Colombia -MEN-, speaking English is a generic competence to be developed at all educational levels. In this regard and based on the Theory of Self-Determination -SDT-, this qualitative phenomenological study aims to identify and analyse the aspects related to the motivation to learn English in undergraduate students of the Virtual and Distance modalities -E-Learning-. The main instrument used for data collection was a semi-structured individual interviews. The participants in the research were a group of 16 women and 3 men. The analysis was carried out through semantic categorizations and with the support of NVivo 11 software, which lets assume that motivation for learning English is strongly influenced by external factors.

1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language is in all educational levels (Bhowmik, 2015; Motteram, 2013). According to the Ministry of National Education of Colombia (hereinafter MEN, 2004), English is the most important foreign language. Communicating in English has become a core competence that should be developed in all academic contexts. However, although English has been incorporated into most undergraduate programs a follow up of the results of Saber Pro (a set of professional competency focused tests) during the last 5 years is not entirely satisfactory, since 1 out of every 6 students does not have a basic development on this competence and the general results are highly dispersed (Icfes, 2016). This situation is very complicated because it directly affects the quality of education and the development of the country. At present, knowing English is considered an important requirement to reach social, academic and economic progress around the world.

The success on foreign language learning is infused with many factors as intelligence, attitudes, abilities and motivation (Mantiri, 2015; Santana et al., 2016; Støen and Haugan, 2016). Among them, motivation is the main factor affecting foreign language learning since it mediates the attitudes toward the target language and the outputs in the process of learning it (Mantiri, 2015; Kazantseva et al., 2016). Motivation is a

complex psychological process that involves many aspects such as cognition, behaviour, emotion, decision-making process and biological aspects (González, 2008; Marshall, 2010; Woon et al., 2016). Although motivation is an essential part of the learning process, especially an autonomous one, researching on it is not enough. While the volume of research concerning motivation itself in psychology and education is vast, there have been very few knowing about learning English in Online modality and motivation to learn it. Even thus, this situation remains a worldwide concern (Busse and Walter, 2013; Kazantseva et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2017; Pourfeiz, 2016).

On this basis, UNIMINUTO as a Christian, Confessional and National university is not unfamiliar with the lack of success in learning English as a foreign language. This educational institution with headquarters around Colombia and an international one, located in Ivory Coast, Africa, offers its majors in face-to-face modality and online modality (hereinafter UVD). As long as UVD is the biggest headquarter in Colombia, it is important for the institution to know what motivates students to learn English since it is a National Educational requirement that it is related to an international need.

Knowing how an English learning process develops in virtual environments is very relevant since a student becomes the main actor in the learning process and the completion of the process remains primarily his/

* Corresponding author.
  E-mail address: fescobarfan@uniminuto.edu.co (F.G. Escobar Fandiño).

her responsibility, which is a key aspect when learning a foreign language (Bani Hani, 2014; Burkle, 2011; Contreras et al., 2011; Liu, 2013; Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 2014; Rosario, 2006). Therefore, the aim of this study was to understand how English as foreign language is learned using online modality, why students learn it and what kind of motivation UVD students have. Thus, UNIMINUTO could adapt the curriculum to the motivational profiles to enhance the learning experience. In order to fulfil this goal, a qualitative study of phenomenological type was conducted with 19 UVD students as a sample.

2. Theory

2.1. Learning a foreign language

Learning a foreign language is a general expression used to refer to the appropriation of a language apart from the mother language, and this learning can be generated in different contexts, including two in particular: the first one, in which the language is socially dominant, and the second one, in which the foreign language is not widely used in the students' immediate social surrounding (Lin, 2008; Saville-Troike, 2006). Learning a foreign language requires a multidimensional, multifactorial and integrative framework consolidated under two types of variables: (a) those related to the context, and (b) those related to the subject (Krashen, 1989; Stern, 1991).

Context variables encompass the linguistic, social and educational contexts, including factors such as a widespread use of the foreign language, the time devoted to its study, common social beliefs and attitudes concerning the foreign language, cultural sensitivity, social networks, access to cultural goods, educational policy, the school environment and teaching methods (Krashen, 1989; Richards, 2014; Santana et al., 2016; Vermunt and Donche, 2017).

Variables related to the person include aptitudes and learning process, as well as, affective and motivational factors. Aptitudes involve the use of the language, the development of phonetic, grammatical and pragmatic skills, along with learning strategies (Santana et al., 2016). The affective realm embodies a range of factors such as attitudes, empathy, self-esteem, extraversion, inhibition, imitation, anxiety and especially, motivation (Richards, 2014; Santana et al., 2016; Vermunt and Donche, 2017). Therefore, this is a need to understand motivation process that underlies the entire learning process.

2.2. Motivation as a psychological process

Motivation is a highly complex psychological process, involving the nervous activity, cognition, emotional realm and the stable personality traits that allow people to interact with their environment. This psychological process aims at fulfilling the needs of individuals and, therefore, triggers their behaviour. Motivation is a force that activates, encourage, directs and keeps goal directed behaviour (González, 2008; Marshall, 2010; Woon et al., 2016).

One of the theoretical modelling that explain the motivation is the Self -Determination Theory (SDT hereinafter). SDT emphasizes on the regulation of the individual's human behaviour and how motivation can be different in each person. Specifically, this theory focuses on how personal motives are integrated and regulated in the individual (Self), empowering him/her and allowing a good functioning. As the interaction of an individual with the environment never ends, SDT highlights how ideas, values and goals are internalized according to the influence of numerous variables in the social context. Each person regulates his/her behaviour in accordance with his/her psychological needs and can do it on a continuous basis from a completely external perspective to an internalized and autonomous one (Deci and Ryan, 2014; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

In the SDT, internalization and types of regulation may be implemented progressively over the life span, allowing a sophisticated differentiation between the most extrinsic characteristics and the most intrinsic of the behaviours. External aspects cause extrinsic motivation, while intrinsic motivation has to do with autonomous aspects, which is the most valuable (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Fig. 1 presents an overview of the internalization continuum among types of motivation.

According to SDT, the different types of motivation are defined based on the amount and level of control displayed by the individuals. Intrinsic motivation is an archetype of autonomy, while extrinsic one is related to variables controlled by the context. There are four types of extrinsic motivation: (1) external regulation, which is basically controlled by environmental contingencies; (2) introjected regulation, in which the individual primarily internalizes contingencies; (3) identified regulation, in which the individual acknowledges the importance of the activity, and (4) integrated regulation, in which the individual behaves consistently with his/her needs; the latter is considered the most autonomous of all. This model could be comparable with the one about training patterns of students learning (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2008; 2014; Nuñez and León, 2015; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Vallerand et al., 1993; Vermunt and Donche, 2017). Learning is an activity of vital importance for humanity in which motivation plays a key role. Naturally, the motivation for learning may vary depending on the type of study, but this paper focuses on virtual modalities or E-Learning.

2.3. E-learning and CALL

The concept of E-Learning is very broad. It was conceived at the end of the 1990s as a huge technological advance that has enhanced learning mechanisms through the Internet. Currently, it is considered that E-Learning involves a wide range of multimedia tools such as internet, interactive television and all forms of electronic support, among others, all of which favours learning and makes it more flexible and friendly (Kakoty et al., 2011). Additionally, it helps students to get knowledge, practice and experience (Burkle, 2011; Contreras et al., 2011; Liu, 2013; Tavangarian et al., 2004).

In the E-learning field, the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL hereinafter) stands out. This model encompasses four approaches: traditional, explorative, multimedia and the World Wide Web. Psychological schools such as behaviourism, cognitivism, constructivism and connectivism contribute to the construction of CALL's referential framework (Davies, 2008; Levy, 1997).

CALL is an approach that can play a key role in the language acquisition process. It is not just a repetition of exercises controlled by a program since it has the potential for modifying the learners' cognitive schemes, as long as they are actively involved (Farooq and Javid, 2012). CALL relies on the use of several technological tools and a continuous organized flow of activities closely connected to real life situations, which makes students' learning more meaningful. CALL allows students to develop different skills such as listening, reading, grammar, writing and speaking, as well as the apprehension of new vocabulary and the improvement of pronunciation (Hani, 2014). Additionally, CALL fosters motivation and autonomy in students, since it lets them to monitor and evaluate their development and understanding of the course core topics (Chapelle and Jamieson, 2008; Motteram, 2013). Through the use of CALL, technology standardization is promoted, but tutors need to incorporate skills to effectively manage technology in teaching processes (Thomas and Motteram, 2019).

2.4. Motivation and CALL

Motivation and CALL are intrinsically interconnected. Attitudes and academic motivation interact extensively with learning a foreign language without a doubt (Pourfeiz, 2016). Motivation is probably the most studied factor and it is the main requirement for positive results (Kazantseva et al., 2016; Zenots, 2012). Apparently, integrating in the curriculum activities that promote motivation and allow students to experience the sociocultural environment of the foreign language (as they do on online environments), could improve the learning process

Amotivation	Extrinsic Motivation				Intrinsic Motivation
Non-Regulation	External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Identified Regulation	Integrated Regulation	Intrinsic Regulation
Less Self-determination	←————————————————→ More Self-determination				
Amotivation = No Motivation	Controlled Motives = Low-quality Motivation				Autonomous Motives = High-quality Motivation

Fig. 1. Motivation types and regulation in SDT. Adapted from "Facilitating optimal motivation and psychological well-being across life's domains". In E. L. Deci, & R. M. Ryan, (2008), Canadian Psychology/Psychologie canadienne, 49(1), 14–23.

(Galishnikova, 2014; Liu, 2014).

Intrinsic motivation is enhanced by the need to interact, to be competent and to achieve autonomy. When a student consciously identifies himself/herself with the ongoing action or with its value, there is a high degree of perceived autonomy (Ryan and Deci, 2000). When students have high levels of perceived autonomy, they can participate in the definition of their learning goals, thus tests' results are improved (Ali et al., 2016; Butz and Stupnisky, 2017; Lin et al., 2017; Shyan, 2016; Van Loon et al., 2012). In addition, students tend to show a better disposition to learn when they use effectively and purposely the computer. A productive and interactive learning environment increases learner's motivation, especially, if the students feel comfortable with the technology (Al-kahiry, 2013; Barack et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2019; Kazantseva et al., 2016; Lee, 2016; Majid et al., 2012; Shyan, 2016). Some studies even point out that online apprentices show greater intrinsic motivation than those who follow a face-to-face methodology (Shroff et al., 2008; Firat et al., 2018). However, as long as intrinsic motivation declines, autonomy levels will also do it as well as general efforts to learn a foreign language and students will have a hard time transferring knowledge to other areas of knowledge (Busse and Walter, 2013; James, 2012). Similarly, the effort to get involved in learning a foreign language is not always correlated with the desire to be competent (Kazantseva et al., 2016).

Motivation to learn a foreign language is also related to extrinsic regulations, because contextual factors also influence learning, since aspects such as the curriculum, resources, teacher, cultural capital and socioeconomic status can influence the sense and the quality of the motivation (Al-kahiry, 2013; Barack et al., 2016; Sergis et al., 2018). A stable socioeconomic condition seems to have a direct impact on motivational aspects, as it is related to greater affordability for initiating and completing studies, as well as putting acquired knowledge into practice (Ali et al., 2016). The possibilities to access technology and the ability to solve technical aspects also seem to positively affect the motivation to learn a foreign language in online modality, because if technological tools are available on a permanent basis, the motivation tends to be greater (Hani, 2014; Hammouri and Abu-Shanab, 2018). Even then, research reviewed did not reveal that gender factor had any impact on the learning of a foreign language (Kitcharkarn, 2015). Apparently, the most external aspects or directly related to the context where the teaching-learning processes of English as a foreign language are developed affect in one way or another the motivation with which students assume their online courses.

Motivation is also related to CALL. Several studies about CALL, frequently report significant benefits when studying through this modality, however, a grounded theory has not been clearly established (Mutlu and Eröz-Tuga, 2013; Wang and Vásquez, 2012; Zarei and Hashemipour, 2015). Nevertheless, a great part of the success is grounded in an excellent strategies selection to enhance the learning process

and in an intensive instructor's guidance, so that students understand the task and feel supported (Mutlu and Eröz-Tuga, 2013; Segura and Greener, 2014).

In addition, for CALL to be beneficial, an immediate feedback must be provided, as this encourages the motivation towards learning. A sense of entertainment should be aroused, as well as a high degree of interaction and an increase in self-control (Hani, 2014; Salgado et al., 2015). Likewise, the learning environment should be flexible to solve the activities and students can take advantage of teaching materials (Segura and Greener, 2014; Kessler, 2018).

In conclusion, when there are high levels of intrinsic motivation, especially concerned with a high perceived autonomy, students tend to control more of their tasks and academic activities. Besides, if there are favourable contextual conditions, motivation to learn English as a foreign language tends to remain high. What is more, following an online methodology seems to benefit students' performance, as long as they feel entertained, receive timely feedback and experience interaction with authentic resources, classmates and the tutor.

3. Methodology

The research methodology is qualitative of phenomenological type. This research was approved by the General Committee of Research Ethics of UNIMINUTO, which is recognized by the Administrative Department of Science, Technology and Innovation of Colombia -COLCIENCIAS and follows the Helsinki Declaration of ethics. All participants signed the informed consent to guarantee and protect their confidentiality. A semi-structured individual interview was conducted to identify and understand the factors related to motivation as a psychological process that influences the learning of English as a foreign language in virtual environments since it enables a comprehensive approach to the phenomenon. This instrument was applied because it allows a discourse and content analysis by setting semantic categories to reduce inappropriate interpretations and guarantee high validity (Cáceres, 2003; Quecedo and Castaño, 2002; Sandoval, 2002).

3.1. Sample

The study included 19 volunteers who were interviewed (see Table 1). Participants were UVD undergraduate students pursuing one of the three levels of the English Course during the third quarter of 2018. In order to keep students' information confidential, each participant was assigned a number from 1 to 19, so that, their answers could be quoted throughout the report.

3.2. Research design: qualitative data collection instrument

The interview is a tool that allows to know the phenomena in depth.

Table 1

Statistical description of UVD students participating in the research.

Age: years average	33
Gender:	
• Male	3
• Female	16
Social stratum (mode)	3
Semester (mode)	5
Undergraduate programs (students number)	
• Management	1
• Business and Finance	2
• Occupational Health Administration	1
• Communication Studies	2
• Accounting	4
• Bachelor Degree in Natural Sciences	1
• Psychology	8
Cohabitation:	
• Nuclear family	19
Residence	
• Bogotá	14
• Others	5
Occupation:	
• Employee	17
• Unemployed	1
• Other (homemaker)	1

Table 2

Codebook: Study about motivation to learn English in virtual environments.

Code 1	
Label	Motivation
Definition	Core guide about what drives a particular behaviour or thought: 1. Extrinsic: external, introjected, identified, integrated 2. Intrinsic: autonomous behaviour.
Description	Psychological process that analyses what drives individuals' particular behaviour or thought in accordance to their environment. Human motivation varies according to the individuals' regulation capacity of their own behaviour.

Code 2	
Label	CALL
Definition Description	Online language Learning Environments Computer-assisted Language Learning environments that involve a wide range of multimedia tools and activities fostering learners' active participation and interaction in natural contexts, therefore, motivation.

Code 3	
Label	Learning
Definition Description	Foreign Language Learning Phenomenon that explains foreign language learning based on a multidimensional, multifactorial and integrating perspective concerning subjects and their different strategies, competencies and mental operations.

This tool was chosen because it may easily provide the information concerning the question, the problem and the research objectives. Therefore, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 19 participants to obtain the Data and to answer the research questions (Díaz-Bravo et al., 2013; Flick, 2004). This research tool was designed taking into account the literature reviewed.

The interview was structured in two blocks: the first one was geared towards collecting socio-demographic data, and the second one, towards answering the research questions; this last group focused on obtaining information on personal and contextual factors associated with the motivation to learn English as a foreign language such as the meaning of learning (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2008; 2014; Nuñez and León, 2015; Vallerand et al., 1993), the virtual learning environments characterization (Burkle, 2011; Contreras et al., 2011; Rosario, 2006) and the awareness of their displayed learning strategies (Canning, 2004; Farooq and Javid, 2012; Kakoty et al., 2011; Levy, 1997).

3.3. Procedure: interview

To make the interviews, a mass message was emailed from the English Area Office to UVD students pursuing one of the 3 levels of the English Course. All those interested in participating received specific information regarding the objective of the research and its data collection instrument. 19 respondents were selected and then they completed the informed consent to guarantee and protect their confidentiality. The 19 interviews were conducted in Spanish language, from October 4th to November 23rd, 2018, 15 of which were applied online and 4 face-to-face. In order to minimize any biases associated with framing the answers to the questions regarding with the tutor, each researcher interviewed students who were

studying a level of English different from the one he or she was directing at that moment.

3.4. Results analysis

The interviews were transcribed to make a coding and a content and discourse analysis (Fernández, 2006; Rodríguez et al., 2005). The analysis was carried out by using NVivo software version 11 and a codebook (see Table 2), which was developed from the existing scientific literature previously presented (Al-kahiry, 2013; Barack et al., 2016; Davies, 2008; Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2008; 2014; Farooq and Javid, 2012; Hani, 2014; Kazantseva et al., 2016; Lee, 2016; Levy, 1997; Majid et al., 2012; Nuñez and León, 2015; Pourfeiz, 2016; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Sergis et al., 2018; Shyan, 2016; Vallerand et al., 1993; Vermunt and Donche, 2017).

4. Results and discussion

Results about the research questions and objectives are presented below. These include a descriptive section related to the frequency of words and an analytical-descriptive section corresponding to the interview data coding which was developed from the reviewed literature: Self-Determination Theory, E-Learning (CALL model) and learning English as a foreign language. These analytic results are divided in personal and contextual factors.

4.1. Words frequency

NVivo software version 11 was used to review and organize words, as well as, to produce a cloud (see Fig. 2), which exhibits the frequency and the 19 UVD students' responses semantic tendency. In this section, excerpts from the interviews transcriptions are included particularly the ones pertaining to the categories of the codebook: motivation, CALL and learning. Having analysed factors associated with the motivation to learn English as a foreign language in a virtual learning environments, the researchers found a high frequency of words such as "English", "activities", "learning", "exercises", "platform", "tutor" and "Benefits".

The words frequency seems to reveal that the motivation to learn English as a foreign language can be affected by several factors, from the most personal or concerning the learner to the most external such as virtual environments characterization and the tutor's role. Additionally,

Fig. 2. Words cloud.

when figuring out what learning English means, the interviewees showed different tendencies. Next, the 19 respondents' description and analysis is exhibited in a grouped manner.

4.2. Personal factors

In the personal factors coexist intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that are related to individual's psychological process and his/her social specific development framework. In the case of interviewed some factors are implied and overlapped in the meaning assigned to learn English such as the need to interact, to be competent, to achieve autonomy and the learning strategies used (Ali et al., 2016; Butz and Stupnisky, 2017; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Lin et al., 2017; Santana et al., 2016; Shyan, 2016; Van Loon et al., 2012).

4.2.1. Meaning of learning English

According to the information gathered through the interviews and in regards to what motivates the participants to learn English, there are three trends: (1) it may provide potential short and long-term benefits, (2) it may boost personal development and autonomy, and (3) it may supply social/contextual needs. These tendencies are usually pointed out in research on foreign language learning processes (Santana et al., 2016; Stern, 1991).

Regarding the potential benefit and the need to interact, some of the respondents indicated, "It is an opportunity to communicate, to broaden my horizons, to learn a new culture, to see the world with different eyes and to search for better things like a better job. It is a tool for empowerment. Step toward a better future for me and my family" (taken from participants 1, 2 and 7). This type of responses is consistent with an autonomous motivation, as long as there is a need to relate to others, to be competent and to achieve goals (Deci and Ryan, 2008; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

"Studying English is a gateway to many possibilities. I could make an exchange and meet many people or to access better opportunities since I've been able to travel several times, specifically to the USA and I haven't felt free, it is a universal language, it is a key tool for the future and it seems important to me" (taken from the participants 5, 6, 13, 16 and 17). These answers are also related to an external regulation; however, the participants seem to have internalized contingency relationships and see them almost as their own, consequences arising from the environment. Thus, it would be a form of introjected regulation (Al-kahiry, 2013; Barack et al., 2016; Deci and Ryan, 2008, 2014). In the next section, there is another type of motivation.

"Learning English brings benefits. I think that if you want to expand your professional profile; you should read many books, but they are in English " (taken from participants 3 and 6). In this apart, although the responses are also related to external regulation, these allow individuals to accept, to a certain extent, the importance of the activity, which is consistent with an identified regulation (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2008, 2014).

In this excerpt, the interviewees exhibited the last type of motivation. "I study English because I like that language, because it is a language which is widely spoken, I can manage myself in any country with this "(apart from participant 9). In this apart, although distinctly the discourse still refers to extrinsic motivation, it can be seen that the interviewee is driven by his/her needs, which would correspond to an integrated regulation (Deci and Ryan, 2008, 2014; Huang et al., 2019).

With reference to respondents' learning strategies, it is especially noteworthy that most of them are fully aware of having a clear defined strategy. In addition, students find the activities tricky, even though they are not clear about how their learning is being consolidated. Most of the answers reveal that the interviewees are not actively involved in the exercises, but they address the topics without bearing in mind the previous concepts (Davies, 2008; Farooq and Javid, 2012; Kakoty et al., 2011; Levy, 1997). Important examples confirming this in the following excerpt: "I do not feel very skilled. I do not know why or how to do things.

I do them (workshops) because they are on the platform" (taken from participants 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 19).

On the other hand, the interviewees' study routines are not permanent. The majority said they did not have a specific day or a specific time to cover the course demands, but they let them in stand-by depending on other overdue responsibilities. The following section is linked with the foregoing: "It's a matter of time. After 9:30 at night and I start doing my college homework. I do not work on English every week but every 15 days and I do it when possible. I studied every two or three days but now I only do it on Saturdays or Sundays for my job" (taken from participants 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 15).

With regard to the development and to achieve autonomy some of the participants consider that: "It is an evolution; another challenge to face in my life. It allows developing new skills, speaking in another language, using the most widely spoken language" (taken from participants 13 and 18). This kind of response is related to a tendency toward motivation that is the main requirement for positive results (Deci and Ryan, 2008; Kazantseva et al., 2016; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Some answers were found to be associated with the possibility of supplying a social/contextual need: "A second language is a must. I feel that it is necessary for my professional life. Currently it is something necessary to have better job opportunities" (taken from participants 2, 12 and 16). These considerations point out that the meaning of learning greatly relies on how much a need imposed by the individuals themselves or their environment can be met, that is, extrinsic motivation (Barack et al., 2016; Deci and Ryan, 2008; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Apparently, the meaning ascribed to learning English as a foreign language varies in accordance with the individuals' appraisals of this skill and the contingency relationships with their environment. It is noteworthy that although most of the interviewees' responses reveal an awareness of the potential long-term benefit, it is also true that these tend to be consistent with an extrinsic motivation since behaviour is driven by stimuli in the environment and not by autonomous decisions.

In summary, all the participants' responses seem to be framed in one of the levels of extrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2008). The results indicate that, although some interviewees tend to be more autonomous than others, some of them do not know why they learn English, it can be observed that the regulation of their behaviour is largely exhibited in response to the environment which reveals that the control of their behaviour relies on external variables to the individual (Deci and Ryan, 2014; Pourfeiz, 2016).

4.3. Contextual factors

Contextual factors such as online environment (curriculum, resources, and teacher) are also overlapped and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation coexist in the interviewed responses, as well. In spite of, each student considers many different benefits from learning English; these are usually related to external reinforcements. Therefore, learning English as foreign language in Online Modality can depend on external aspects (Al-kahiry, 2013; Barack et al., 2016; Hani, 2014; Hammouri and Abu-Shanab, 2018; Sergis et al., 2018).

4.3.1. Online environment characterization

Different roles from online environment also play a key role on the motivation to learn English. For example, the requirements of the curriculum. In this regard, the students said: "Why do you study English? Basically, because the subject is in the curriculum, because it is mandatory in the major, I have to study it for the major or, truthfully, I would not do it, mainly because it is in my major, for professional reasons, because it is a requirement of the faculty, or because the labour field demands it " (taken from participants 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 12, 14 and 19). The answers aforementioned imply they are directly related to an external regulation that corresponds to the first level of extrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2008). These excerpts suggest that the goal is separated from the activity itself; that is, extrinsic motivators determine the

possible profits (Deci and Ryan, 2008, 2014). Nevertheless, in the next section it can be seen another type of motivation.

A sense of self-control and a high degree of interaction are basic conditions to enhance students' learning by CALL (Hani, 2014; Salgado et al., 2015; Segura and Greener, 2014). Most students perceive as a great advantage the flexibility and self-control that the institution's platform offers them; given that they can work at its own pace from the feedback of the exercise and the learning environment has a great variety of resources and activities, as can be inferred from the following section: "Then you should not think that you fail and...; it is good because you can see what went wrong and you can correct and since you are at a distance you do not feel so much pressure" (taken from participants 4 and 9).

Most students find activities interesting and interactive since they require the learner's active participation in natural contexts (Huang et al., 2019). "It generates learning if people are dedicated. I think the platform is very interactive and the activities are very dynamic. Being assessed through videos, audios and drawings makes the activities entertaining" (taken from participants 5, 6, 10, 12, 15 and 16).

On the other hand, a key to success when learning a foreign language largely relies on an efficient tutor's accompaniment and an appropriate selection of strategies that power learning (Mutlu and Eröz-Tuga, 2013; Segura and Greener, 2014). Most students said they felt the tutor's accompaniment through his or her constant mails delivery, timely and clear feedback and other communicative strategies such as video conferences implementation and an accessible attitude and guiding role providing a positive motivation. However, although most students stated they felt permanently accompanied by the tutor, some of them revealed a feeling of loneliness working virtually. That is why; they consider that English teaching should be face-to-face at UNIMINUTO because in the online environment there is no one to tell them what is wrong immediately when they fail at performing a task. Additionally, they think that a real conversation with the tutor could help them to improve the listening skill.

Although several of the interviewees suggested the face-to-face classes, they also stated that they did not go to the laboratory tutorials nor did they attend video conferences because they did not have time for it or because it was not mandatory. "The tutoring on Saturdays, well it's good, but let's just say, you do not have time to go there. Tutoring on Saturdays are good, but I've never been able to attend because of work" (taken from participants 2 and 16).

In summary, among the interviewees there is a consensus regarding the CALL flexibility and self-control sense as well as a good accompaniment that the course and the tutor provides them. However, not everyone finds the activities entertaining, as for some of them, the exercises are even boring and extensive, and this could possibly be because participants may have different learning styles. Apart from this, some students keep a sense of isolation and particular unfulfilled expectations remain. Learning strategies and study routines reported by the interviewees obey to non-regular or fluctuating behaviours, as there is no autonomous study apart from the platform. The students approach the course depending on other activities, which indicates English learning in a virtual way is not particularly high priority. Most of participants are not clear about how the English course can modify their cognitive schemes, how it relates to their career, or how new skills are developed (Farooq and Javid, 2012). Apparently, the interviewees are not actively involved in the English course since all the participants commented that they did not attend any of the virtual or face-to-face tutoring during the third academic period of 2018.

5. Conclusions

The motivation to learn English as a foreign language, using virtual methodologies (CALL) can be a complex process (Davies, 2008; Deci and Ryan, 2014; Levy, 1997; Saville-Troike, 2006). For the 19 interviewees, although it is true that respondents' motivational processes differ in many respects, it is also true that all of them show characteristics of extrinsic

motivation since their behaviour is driven by external reinforcements that are derived from the contingency relationships established with the context (Deci and Ryan, 2014; Vermunt and Donche, 2017).

Strong evidence about how external factors influence English learning has been found and for the 19 respondents would be those concerned with the virtual methodology (CALL), the course resources and the relationship with the teacher/tutor, as recognized by most participants (Al-kahiry, 2013; Barack et al., 2016). However, several factors are beyond the teacher and the institutions scope, such as the interviewee's socio-economic stability, other responsibilities a learner has to deal with or feel comfortable with course activities can affect the learner's motivation (Kazantseva et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2019).

Using CALL seems to contribute significantly to English learning; however, success greatly depends on the type of motivation each student has; on the quality of the tutor's assistance and how effective and entertaining the teaching strategies are (Mutlu and Eröz-Tuga, 2013; Firat et al., 2018). However, there are some variables that can be optimized, such as broadening the type of activities, so that they could challenge all the learning styles (Segura and Greener, 2014).

6. Future studies

Further research needs to be done to identify learning difficulties related to UVD students' motivational processes and given that UNIMINUTO is present in several regions of Colombia, each one of them with its particularities. It is fundamental to assume a critical position considering local perspectives as concomitant factors. Likewise, it is necessary to investigate how to improve the transactional distance to ensure that the student feels accompanied by a teacher and tutor's influence online learning process.

On the other hand, this study pretends to be considered a knowledge base for future research about motivation as a psychological process that is involved in learning English as a foreign language through the use of online modality. In addition, this study expects to contribute and follow up on future projects of qualitative research methodology to get Grounded Theory, thus, it lets to improve online education, as long as, psychology science.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

F. G. Escobar-Fandiño: Performed the experiments. Analyzed and interpreted the data. Wrote the paper.

L. D. Muñoz: Analyzed and interpreted the data. Wrote the paper.

A. J. Silva-Velandia: Performed the experiments. Wrote the paper.

Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.

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