Students’ Motivation and Satisfaction in Learning English and Culture in the BBS-Based Intercultural Exchange Project

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The aim of this research is to identify motivational enhancements in the Bulletin Board System (BBS)-based intercultural exchange project. The exchange project was carried out by the 386 students of 14 universities in 9 countries, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, Indonesia, UAE, Burkina Faso, Mexico, and Namibia in 2005. This research deals with Japanese student’s motivation for English and culture learning systematically in terms of Keller’s ARCS Model of Motivational Design. Based on analyses of questionnaires and English tests, it is indicated that the exchange project sustained students’ motivation for learning and enhanced students’ English writing and intercultural communicative competence.

1. Introduction

Motivating students to learn English is one of educational challenges in Japan. Most Japanese students do not have many opportunities to communicate in English, and many students regard English as a subject for examination rather than as an international language. In order to improve this situation, students in a Japanese university joined an intercultural exchange project in 2005. The result of post questionnaires showed that students’ satisfaction for the class was high, and the study effect was enhanced more compared to the previous year in which the exchange project had not been conducted (Kasami, 2006). In this research, the project is examined in the light of ARCS Model of Motivational Design, and it is shown that students’ motivation to learn was enhanced in the project.

2. Internet English Class and Exchange Project

2.1 Problems before the exchange project

‘Internet English’ class was offered for college students. Homepage publishing project was conducted in 2004, and students published their own homepages and the goal was that students put out the information on their own opinions and Japanese culture to people in other cultures. However, since homepage-based communication was one-way basically, there were four limitations. First, students focused on writing English grammatically correctly rather than writing English paragraphs to attract readers’ concerns. Second, since students did not communicate with people in other cultures, they did not have opportunities to notice the importance to consider other cultures. Third, since students had few chances of interactive communication in English, they were not confident of their English ability. Fourth, since there was no reaction from other people, it was difficult to keep students’ motivation and satisfaction for the class.

In order to solve these problems, the class joined a BBS-based intercultural exchange project in the class of 2005. The purpose of this research is analyzing the effectiveness of BBS-based exchange project in terms of enhancing students’ motivation to study, English writing ability, and intercultural communicative competence.

2.2 The overview of the targeted class and project

This research focuses on the class of ‘Internet English’ of fall term of 2005. This was one of elective courses for second-year students (n=19) of Junior College of English Literature focusing on developing skills in English writing and using the Internet as a communication tool. In fall of 2005, the class joined Project ‘Ibunka’ coordinated by Professor Masahito Watanabe of Yokohama National University. The aim of this project is exchanging ideas with students in many countries. ‘Ibunka’ means ‘different cultures’ in Japanese. Participants of this project can learn much about both cultural differences and similarities between many countries of participants. In 2005, 386 students participated from 14 universities in 9 countries (Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, Indonesia, UAE, Burkina Faso, Mexico, and Namibia). Each teacher of participated universities was in charge of his or her own students’ administration and study. In Project Ibunka, all students were required to write and post three essays as new messages on the BBS. Topics were school life, cultures and world peace according to the schedule. Students were also encouraged to reply to other students.
3. ARCS Model of Motivational Model

Keller (1983)’s ARCS Model of Motivational Design is well-known as a model for instructional design. According to this model, in designing class, there are four essential elements to be considered for motivating students to learn; attention (A), relevance (R), confidence (C) and satisfaction (S). Students are motivated to learn when they feel that the instruction is interesting and relevant to their concerns, and when they are confident in the learning process and satisfied with learning. There are four motivational factors and three sub-components of each motivational factor.

Recently researchers have investigated the relationship between motivation and learning experiences. Kijima and Suzuki (2003) state that it is available to apply Keller’s ARCS Model in order to evaluate motivation, when a new strategy for autonomous learning has been implemented.

The followings are the results of analysis of the project from perspectives of each motivational factor and sub-component of ARCS Model.

3.1 Attention (A)

When something unusual happens in a class, students wonders what happens and become interested, and it is time that they learn.

A-1 Perceptual arousal

It provides surprise and uncertainty. In Project Ibunka, the teacher showed video letters from oversea partner students to gain students’ attention.

A-2 Inquiry arousal

It stimulates curiosity by asking questions and revises the preoccupation. For example, the teacher asked students whether it was essentially important to write English messages grammatically correctly.

A-3 Variability

It provides getting out of a rut. Students did many activities such as writing, chatting and making video letters through the project.

3.2 Relevance (R)

The aspect of relevance is what they are learning is relevant to their concerns or useful for their future life. Students’ opportunity to use English is limited. To compensate for this, it is important to give students opportunities to use English.

R-1. Familiarity

Students chose topics of English writing according to their concerns in the project.

R-2. Goal orientation

The teacher and students tried to write interesting messages in order to receive replies from partners.

R-3 Motive matching

Students enjoyed communicating with partners.

3.3 Confidence (C)

Building students’ confidence is very important. It builds students’ confidence to increasing the level of difficulty comfortably and gradually.

C-1 Learning requirement

Each student was required to improve their abilities based on each original level of knowledge. The minimum number of words for the assignment was firstly small (150 words), and gradually it increased (to 200, and 250 words). The learning requirement was introduced at the beginning and students had study goal images. Before writing essays, the teacher explained how to write an essay.

C-2 Success opportunities

The teacher gave an individual tutorial and positive feedbacks with advices for each assignment to show which parts were good, and students felt that they wrote better than before.

C-3 Personal control

When a student received a reply, the teacher said that it was because the student wrote an interesting message with good ideas. Other students also learned why the student received the reply.

3.4 Satisfaction (S)

Satisfaction is the final component of the ARCS Model. Satisfaction from achievement is a great motivator which often affects future studies.

S-1 Natural consequences

There were many opportunities to write. If they received advices for English improvements, they made use of it for the next assignment.

S-2 Positive consequences

After writing essays, some students received replies from partners. The replies were the best presents for students. Even if some students did not receive any messages, the teacher gave feedbacks.

S-3 Equity

The teacher showed study goals and evaluation standard at first, and they were consistent.

4. Analysis

4.1 Questionnaires based on ARCS Model

At the end of the Project Ibunka, a questionnaire was conducted to check whether the project enhanced students’ internal motivation based on 4 elements of the ARCS Model (n=18). According to the result, the average was generally high and the project was effective to enhance students’ motivation to learn. However, the aspect of confidence was slightly lower than others. This is because some slow learners found it difficult to write even short English messages, and it will be necessary for a teacher to follow up them.
4.2 Learning effectiveness from pre and post tests

The results of pre-test and post-test were compared. Both tests were the same questions which were to write a self-introduction in English within 3 minutes. The study effect was scaled with the T-unit measures. The T-unit which was first used by Hunt (1965) and adapted to ESL in Japan by Hirano (1989) is an index of syntactic complexity in writing English. Hunt states T-unit is “grammatically capable of being terminated with a capital letter, and a period” For analysis using this measure, there are important valuables such as (a) average T-unit length, (b) average error-free T-unit length (EFT), (c) percentage of error-free T-units (EFT). As a result, first, while average T-unit length was 4.9 in the pre-test of BBS-based project, it increased to 5.7 in the post-test. Second, while average EFT was 2.5 in the pre-test, it increased to 5.6 in the post-test (t=3.69, df=13, p<0.01). Third, while percentage of EFT in all T-units was 63.1% in the pre-test, it increased to 87.9% in the post-test (t=2.5, df=13, p<0.05). From these results of T-units measures, the project was effective in terms of English length, complexity, and accuracy.

Table 1. Changes of T-unit measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valuable</th>
<th>Before and after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of words</td>
<td>14 -&gt; 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average T-unit length</td>
<td>4.9 -&gt; 5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average EFT</td>
<td>2.5 -&gt; 5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of T-units</td>
<td>2.7 -&gt; 5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of EFT in all T-units</td>
<td>63.1% -&gt; 87.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As an example of students’ writing, the following sentences were written by the same student.

Pre-test (17 words)
I am XXX. I’m 20 years old. I live in Yokohama with my family. I like cake.

Post-test (37 words)
I like drawing a picture and making something very much. I always draw for class in my school. So, I am not sleep while studying. I like Norman Rockwell very much. He is famous artist in America.

4.3 The results of questionnaires

As for contents of students’ writing, while contents of all students’ introduction were almost the same in the pre-test and they were only data, such as name, hometown, and age, there were many unique messages in the post-test. For example, there were messages about their own future dreams, strength, and so on. The contents of both tests are listed on Table 3. The contents which were attempted to attract readers’ concerns are put ‘*’.  

Table 2. Results of qualitative evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>2.1 - 2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>1.8 - 2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>1.8 - 2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>1.0 - 2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>1.0 - 2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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4.3 The results of questionnaires

The same questionnaire was conducted in both classes. For BBS-based exchange class (BBS
class), more positive responses were collected to the following questions. Students were required to ask by choosing one from four (1. Not at all, 2. Not so much, 3. Yes, 4. Yes, very much). The average point of the total points was counted up. Figure 2 shows the difference of growth between BBS class and Homepage-based class (HP class) by comparing pre and post-questionnaires results.

| Q1 | Do you try to write clear English to make yourself understood? |
| Q2 | Are you able to compare Japanese education, custom and religion with those of other countries? |
| Q3 | Can you explain what you want to express easily in English? |
| Q4 | Are you able to talk about Japanese history in the context of world history? |
| Q5 | Has your vocabulary been increased? |

![Fig.2. Comparison of before and after projects](image)

Only the data of students who answered both pre and post-questionnaires were analyzed. The number of students of HP class was 10 and the number of BBS class was 15. In BBS-based class, the result of question, “Are you able to compare Japanese education, custom and religion with those of other countries?” was improved by 0.6 by comparing post-questionnaire result with pre-questionnaire. The result of “Can you explain what you want to express easily in English?” was improved by 0.6, which is statistically significantly different (t=2.90, df=22, p<0.01).

5. Conclusion and Suggestions for Improvement

This research examines the effectiveness of BBS-based project, in which students can experience collaborative learning with foreign students. In conclusion, there were the following findings as the effectiveness of the project.

1. The project enhanced students to learn.
2. Students’ English writing was improved.
3. Students began to communicate with consideration for other cultures and concerns.

For further improvement, the aspect of confidence can be more enhanced according to ARCS Model as follows.

1. For a slow learner, it is important that a teacher encourages and tells the learner that to outgrow his or her former self is important, and also failure breeds success. It is also important to give feedbacks according to the level of proficiency. These enforcements are related to learning requirement (C-1), success opportunities (C-2), and personal control (C-3).

2. For all students, the learning requirement (C-1) should not be too high and not too low. It is important to set a learning requirement slightly higher when student can establish a certain confidence. For the first assignment, a teacher should not interfere or correct students’ writings very much, but gradually it becomes effective to give advices for students’ writing.

3. Regarding personal control (C-3), it is important to make students feel that they can make a success because they made efforts. When students make mistakes, it is important not to blame them, but to prepare checklists with which students can make sure which points were problematic.

Acknowledgments

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References