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DIGITAL PLATFORMS TO MOTIVATE ENGLISH LEARNING AMONG YOUNG LEARNERS IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

English has become the global lingua franca. In fact, English as a Second Language (ESL) learners are exposed to the wide variety of social activities in English. This has led the informal English learning among the young learners, specially they link with the digital flat forms. This study focused on young learners 'motivation to learn English outside the classroom. Reading, writing, speaking, listening, and access of popular global culture were considered to account the motivation to use English outside the classroom. A quantitative method of questionnaire survey was conducted among 121 students of a government university. SPSS descriptive analysis was conducted to identify the motivation of the students for learning English outside the classroom. It is important to highlight that the young undergraduates do not have a tendency to improve their English reading, writing, speaking and listening skills via printed media. Further, they do not speak in English outside the class. Anyhow, it is important that these learners use English widely in their digital flat forms. More than that, it is evident that shyness, afraid of mistakes and others, and inadequacy of the vocabulary hinder the active use of English outside the classroom. This study suggests the applicability of digital platforms to motivate the outside classroom English learning among the young learners.

INTRODUCTION

Motivating second language (L2) learners to learn English is given priority in English learning and teaching. Number of studies were conducted to identify the factors influence to motivate the classroom L2 learning in Asian context (Islam, Lamb, & Chambers, 2013;Lamb, 2012; Prasangani, 2018;Prasangani & Nadarajan, 2015;You & Dornyei, 2014). Anyhow, L2 teachers face a big challenge of limited time in classroom learning and teaching. In that case outside classroom learning is very important for L2 learners to improve their skills of English. Even though, motivating students to practice English outside the classroom is not an easy task for the teachers. Outside classroom learning motivation was given much importance due to the spread of globalisation and the technological development of the world. The spread of the digital devices, and mobile applications made the foundation of the outside classroom learning around the world. Incidental or informal language learning happens unintentionally once the learners use their electronic devices and applications. English learning has become a by-product of the using of electronic

devices (Ban & Sayer, 2019). Sargsyan and Kurghinyan (2016) found that Armenian EFL students use English outside the classroom via social media, listening songs, watching movies and clips. Further, in accordance with Hulstijn (2003) second language acquisition research has used incidental learning for vocabulary learning mostly. Mobile learning, or m-learning, is becoming very famous among the young students in the world. Mobile devices of smartphones and tablets are the most famous mobile devices among the learners. Interestingly, m-learning motivates the lower proficient English learners to learn English outside the classroom (Kacetl & Klimova, 2019). Informal learning can be converted into an intentional learning by the learners purposely (Ban & Sayer, 2019). Cross-cultural communication via communication technology increase the effective collaboration in learning and cross cultural. Learners learn not only about the other cultures and countries but also increase their knowledge and understanding via sharing and exploring through the ICT (Bentsen, Ho, Gray, & Waite, 2017). Podcasting is another potential mode of motivating outside classroom English learning. Podcasting can be integrated to the curriculum by providing authentic learning environment to the English learners. Further, podcasting can improve the inside and outside classroom English learning motivation of the students (William & Mcminn, 2008). You Tube is also an effective self-regulated English language learning tool. YouTube allows to explore more learning resources, to seek the attraction of learning English, and to explore cultural knowledge. Further, You Tube is more interesting, flexible and interactive, because learners can share the videos after watching (Wang & Chen, 2019). Anyhow, self-directed learning or outside classroom learning is not a complete successful way of learning, but it

increases the L2 learners' autonomous learning (Lee, 1998). Lamb (2017) identified greater autonomy and individualization, enhanced opportunities for communication, identity development and recognising and utilizing learners' existing IT skills as the major motivating benefits of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

In this context it is important to find out the motivation of Sri Lankan learners to learn English outside the classroom, because there are more than 6 million of internet users, 25 million of mobile users, and above 4.5 of millions of Facebook users in Sri Lanka despite the lower economic level of the country (Digital Marketer, 2017). The purpose of this study is to identify the motivation of the L2 learners to use English outside the classroom. Thus, research questions were formed as follows.

1. What is the motivation of the students to improve speaking and listening skills outside the classroom?

2. What is the motivation of students to improve reading and writing skills outside the classroom?

3. What is the motivation of the students to use social media and electronic devices to improve English outside the classroom?

METHOD

Data were collected from a questionnaire. Table 1 shows the

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Gender	Male	26%
	Female	74%
Mother Tongue	Sinhala	88%
	Tamil	12%
Degree	B.A.	48%
	B.Sc.	52%

analysis for the questionnaire data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What is the motivation of the students to improve speaking and listening skills outside the classroom?

Table 2 shows the students motivation to improve their speaking and listening skills outside the classroom. The descriptive analysis found that students do not put enough effort to improve their speaking and listening skills out side the classroom. It is important to highlight that students spend very less effort to improve their speaking skill compared to the listening skill, because they do use English for counting and travelling purposes in their daily life. In contrast for listening purposes they do listen songs, watch movies. From the result it is clear that digital devices provide them the opportunity to practice more.

Table 2: Motivation to improve speaking & listening skills outside the classroom

Most Popular	%	Least Popular	%
Count in English	88	Think in English	20
Listen English songs	50	Speak at home	15
Watch movies	50	Talk to self	30
Use in travelling	60	Speak with neighbours	10
Read English sub titles	50	Listen radio	20
		Watch news	24
		Speak with relatives	20
		Phone calls	30
		Speak with friends	**20**
		Speak with lecturers	**20**
		Speak in shops	19
		Sing songs	23
		Watch education programs	23
		Listen for pronunciation	27

Anyhow, it is worth to pay attention on students less preference for improving speaking skill outside the classroom. These students do not think in English. This might be because from the childhood they used to translate from mother tongue to English, because their mother tongue experiences remain very important although there are culturally different conflicting ideas and attitudes (Kirkpatrick, 2002). In addition to that speaking in English is quite neglected outside the classroom. This may due to the lack of English-speaking experiences around them, but it is evident that they do not try out speaking with lecturers and friends at the university.

Further more Table 2 provides evidence for students' less preference for traditional English learning modes of watching English news, listening to the radio, watch educational programs, sing songs, and listening for comprehension. This might be because of the wide spread of internet and usage smart phones. Young students are very much fond of You Tube , podcasting and m-learning (Kacetl & Klimova, 2019;Wang et al., 2019;William & Mcminn, 2008).

What is the motivation of students to improve reading and writing skills outside the classroom?

Table 3 displays the students' motivation to improve their reading and writing skills outside the classroom. The findings demonstrate that for writing and reading students highly preferred to use digital platforms like emails, reading online and blogs. This may be because, through online they can exploit their imagination, and share the ideas online. More than that they do like the active learning experiences (Rahman, 2005). The traditional modes of reading newspapers, magazines, story books, and writing diary become less popular among the young students.

Table 3: Motivation to improve writing and reading skills

Most Popular	%	Least Popular	%
Read online articles & blogs	50	Read newspapers	45
Write emails	60	Read magazines	28
		Read story books	15
		Write diary	20

What is the motivation of the students to use social media and electronic devices to improve English outside the classroom?

Table 4 shows the students' motivation to use social media and electronic devices to improve their English. The most interesting finding among the students is that they highly prefer to use English in social media and electronic devices. This automatically helps to improve their English skills (Ban & Sayer, 2019).

Table 4: Motivation to use social media and electronic devices

Most Popular	%
Online game	60
Read posts	50
Write posts	52
Use Eng. as computer language	80
Online banking via English	54
Search in English	67
Search online information	77
Mobile language English	76
Use English in ATM	77

Table 5 indicates the students' difficulties of using English language. The most highlighted finding is that their shyness and afraid of mistakes in speaking in English. In addition to that they lack the confidence of speaking in English. This English language anxiety affects for their English learning motivation (Papi, 2010). With reference to the writing skill majority of learners worry about their mistakes, grammar, and vocabulary. This anxiety causes for learners' English writing motivation.

Table 5: Difficulties faced by the students

Difficulties of Improving Skills	%
Can understand meaning of an English text	85
Reading in English is boring	35
Have enough time to read	39
Have enough English books to read	47
Shy to speak in English	51
Afraid to make mistakes	67
Feel weak when speaking in English	77
Afraid of the reaction of others when speaking in English	66
Have enough opportunities to speak in English	54
Make lot of spelling mistakes when writing in English	66
Make lot of grammar mistakes when writing in English	79
Learning English is boring	29
I have no enough vocabulary write in English	70
Fast speech affect in comprehension	44
Lack of practice in listening affect comprehension	66
Have enough opportunities to listen	62

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes the Sri Lankan undergraduates' motivation to improve English outside the classroom. The present findings confirm that students pay less attention to improve their speaking and listening skills outside the classroom. Added to that they show less motivation to improve reading and writing skills. However, interestingly students show a greater motivation to use electronic devices, internet, and social media to use English. This result provides the evidence of students' greater preference for learning English via digital platforms. Anyhow, students show a greater English anxiety. This anxiety leads the failure of improving the skills. Future studies could fruitfully study the issue by focusing learner preference on learning English via digital devices.

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