

EFFECTS OF BLENDED LEARNING ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION

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Abstract. This study investigates factors in blended learning that influence students' motivation, focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions such as autonomy, goal setting, confidence, teaching quality, and recognition. A descriptive research design was employed, involving 124 second-year non-English majors from Hanoi National University of Education with basic technology knowledge and level 1 English proficiency according to the Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP). A structured questionnaire is employed to collect data, followed by a detailed analysis of motivational factors. The results show that autonomy, clear goals, and recognition are key factors that help promote students' motivation, whereas criteria such as feedback practices and creating comfortable learning environments need further enhancement. A key finding of this study highlights the importance of fostering self-learning abilities and adapting teaching methods to align with modern educational trends. This study's findings provide actionable insights for teachers seeking to optimize blended learning environments to boost student motivation, providing practical suggestions for teachers in optimizing the blended learning environment to improve students' motivation to learn, and at the same time adding to the current research gap regarding the effect of blended learning on non-English students with low English proficiency – a group of little interest in previous studies.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Student Motivation, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation.

1. Introduction

Along with the rapid growth of the digital age, blended learning has developed strongly, bringing many changes in education, especially in teaching and learning languages. The combination of online and offline learning activities creates a flexible and attractive learning environment for learners [1]. In the context of post-secondary education, blended learning has become a popular approach, not only improving academic achievement but also fostering learning autonomy and promoting students' learning motivation [2].

Learning motivation is a key factor in students' active participation in academic activities, thus helping them achieve their academic goals. Motivation plays an important role in enhancing students' self-study, perseverance, and participation in courses, especially for English [3]. Within the framework of blended learning, learning motivation can be enhanced by flexibility, technical support, and appropriate curriculum design. These factors contribute to personalizing the learning process, thereby promoting students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation [4].

Many studies have focused on the role of motivation in promoting learning engagement in blended learning, emphasizing the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in helping students achieve learning goals [3], [4]. However, most of these studies are limited to the context of students with higher language proficiency (i.e., learners with intermediate to advanced qualifications, such as B1-C1 according to CEFR frame, and those with ability to use academic English independently) [5], [6], leading to a lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of this approach for students with lower levels of language proficiency. This study aims to fill that gap, providing useful information for lecturers and program developers in designing blended learning programs to improve motivation and effectiveness of foreign language learning for this particular target group. Specifically, it aims to address the following research question: What factors in blended learning influence the learning motivation of non-English majors?

2. Content

2.1. Literature review

2.1.1. Blended learning in ELT classroom

Definition

Blended learning has emerged as a significant pedagogical approach that integrates technology with traditional classrooms in order to offer a flexible learning environment. This approach has been defined differently by various scholars, each emphasizing different aspects.

Banados (2006) [8] defines blended learning as a flexible learning approach that integrates technology with traditional classroom instruction to improve academic performance. Similarly, Neumeier (2005) [9] describes blended learning as a hybrid method of face-to-face interaction and computer-assisted learning within a unified teaching and learning environment. This definition places emphasis on the systematic blending of online and offline instructional elements.

This approach is further described by Dudeney and Hockly (2007) [10] as an integration of online and in-person course delivery, reflecting a shift from traditional computer-assisted learning methods to more interactive, digital-driven experience, which can meet the demand of a variety of learners and foster a flexible environment that can adapt to diverse educational needs. Sharma and Barrett (2007) [11] expand on this, defining blended learning as a course model that merges face-to-face classroom interactions with various technological tools, such as the Internet, CD-ROMs, and interactive whiteboards, to support and deepen learning.

Neumeier's (2005) definition is employed in this study, as it best fits with the research focus on how the integration of face-to-face instruction and technology-assisted learning affects students' motivation. This definition captures the nature of blended learning in terms of structure, which is crucial in assessing its effectiveness in fostering autonomy, goal setting, engagement, and recognition, key motivational factors explored in this study.

The Benefits and Role of Blended Learning in ELT

As suggested by Gramham (2004) [11], blended learning has gained its popularity in higher education thanks to its pedagogical benefits, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness. Recent studies continue to confirm the trend of expanding blended-learning especially in post-COVID-19 pandemic educational reform, when institutions adopt it in order to improve learners' interaction and accessibility in a variety of contexts [12], [13].

This model enhances pedagogy by promoting dynamic, engaging, and learner-centered environment that increases autonomy and interactive learning. The model offers flexibility by allowing students, especially adult learners to balance between work and family responsibilities, and to study at their own pace and convenience. Moreover, blended learning is cost-effective for institutions because it can approach a large number of students including geographically dispersed

ones. This balance of accessibility, engagement, and efficiency makes blended learning a valuable approach in modern education.

Hockly (2011) [14] recognizes three reasons for implementing blended learning in English language teaching. First, Hockly notes that today's learners increasingly expect technology to play a role in language education. Second, blended learning offers flexibility, which is particularly valuable to professional adults and university students seeking to balance learning with other duties. Third, Hockly highlights that in certain educational environments, government or educational authorities encourage, or even require, the integration of blended learning into teaching practices.

Blended learning does not eliminate but strengthens traditional classroom-based education by integrating digital resources and online activities, making learning more flexible and individualized. Students are allowed to access assorted resources and study topics of their own interest. During class, duties given through digital tools and multimedia elements engage students, creating a vibrant learning environment. After class, students still interact with teachers and peers through virtual platforms such as webinars and chat tools. All students benefit from these, especially shy or hesitant students. Ultimately, blended learning promotes a supportive and interactive environment, increasing students' engagement and contact hours with the material, enhancing language practice, and fostering knowledge through collaborative exchanges [15].

Challenges in using blended learning

Although much of the research on blended learning emphasizes its advantages, several challenges associated with this teaching method have also been recognized. According to Riel et al. (2016) [16], blended learning presents several challenges for teachers during its implementation. One major difficulty is helping students collaborate effectively on curriculum activities, as communication among peers can be problematic. Also, in order to maintain students' attention and interest in a blended learning classroom, teachers have to keep tasks interactive and aligned with the subject matter. Another hurdle is outlining clear and practical aims for students, which is important for facilitating their academic progress. Curriculum adaptation is another problem because completing the required curriculum along with arranging reasonable time for integrated classroom activities is not an easy task. Furthermore, organizing extracurricular activities also poses difficulties, particularly in arranging convenient times for students to participate. Finally, technology-related problems such as technical troubles and limited access to resources frequently hinder the effectiveness of blended learning. Addressing these challenges demands careful planning and flexibility from educators to maintain the effectiveness of this approach.

As mentioned by Alebaikan and Troudi (2010) [17], the varying levels of technical skills among both students and instructors are considered the major challenge in implementing blended learning.

2.1.2. Motivation in learning

In the context of education, motivation is regarded as a central factor that affects the process of language learning. Motivation is a complex inner force that controls people's behavior, encouraging them to start, keep, and direct their efforts toward achieving particular goals. It significantly impacts students' academic journeys and success, shaping both their experiences and outcomes [18].

A person's behavior at any specific moment is influenced by motivation. People feel happy, energetic, and enthusiastic once the motivation is positive, from which things get done naturally. However, negative motivation can lead people to feelings of being discouraged, sad, sluggish, and pessimistic, which, in turn, ultimately impacts productivity and performance within an organization [19].

Motivation, according to Deci and Ryan (1985) [20], can be categorized based on the underlying reasons or objectives of the behavior. The basic distinction is between intrinsic and

extrinsic motivation. While the former refers to the engagement of an individual in an activity for its own sake because it is enjoyable or fulfilling; the latter describes the performance with the aim of achieving a specific external result or reward.

Intrinsic motivation is inherent satisfaction, enjoyment, or challenge that engages people in certain activities rather than any rewards or consequences from the outside. This kind of motivation leads to personal achievement and growth thanks because the tasks are intrinsically interesting and stimulating. Deci and Ryan (1985) [20] explain that this motivation is tied to actions that the individual finds meaningful and enjoyable, and does not require encouragement from external factors. Studies have shown that people with strong intrinsic motivation tend to have higher levels of engagement and long-term retention in activities they enjoy [20]. They also often achieve better results because they have a commitment and passion for what they do, rather than simply wanting external rewards.

Extrinsic motivation refers to a stimulus that pushes individuals to complete tasks or engage in activities in order to obtain a reward or avoid an undesirable consequence. In such cases, the engagement in actions is not for the enjoyment or satisfaction but rather to gain a desired outcome or escape an unfavorable one, such as punishment. Unlike intrinsic motivation, which arises from internal pleasure, extrinsic motivation only aims at achieving external rewards [21]. Individuals with extrinsic motivation may stop taking action when the reward or external motivation is no longer available. However, if extrinsic motivation is adjusted and combined with meaningful autonomy or participation, it can become intrinsic motivation and lead to more positive outcomes. Transforming extrinsic motivation into intrinsic motivation can have great benefits in maintaining engagement and achieving high performance at work or study.

This study, based on the framework of Deci & Ryan's (1985) [20], classifies motivation into two main types: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with several subcategories. Factors included in intrinsic motivation are autonomy, goal setting, confidence and self-efficacy, as well as relevance and engagement, which are essential for fostering students' self-directed learning and long-term academic persistence [3], [20]. Besides, extrinsic motivation consists of teaching quality, student-teacher interaction, learning environment, and recognition and achievement. These external factors provide necessary support and incentives that help sustain students' motivation, particularly in structured learning environments like blended learning [3]. These factors are specially focused in this study for being widely recognized as main elements of student motivation in learning environments [3] [5]. Other potential motivational influences, such as peer competition or parental influence, are not included due to the study's scope and emphasis on blended learning.

2.2. Research methodology

The current study employs a descriptive research design to examine how factors of blended learning affect students' motivation. This method is chosen because it is in line with the research objectives, which helps to collect quantitative data systematically through the Likert questionnaire. Besides, it ensures the feasibility in quickly collecting and analyzing from 124 students and provides an overview in the trends of learning motivation in blended learning.

2.2.1. Participants

The participants in this study include 124 second-year non-English majors from a university in Vietnam aged from 18 to 22. The students have a basic knowledge of the use of technology in learning. Their English proficiency is level 1 according to the Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP). These students were selected using a non-random convenience sampling method due to their accessibility. The selection of this group of subjects helps minimize variations in skill levels and ensures the feasibility in the data collection process.

2.2.2. Data collection tools

The data collection tool for this research is a structured questionnaire designed to assess factors affecting students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in a blended learning environment. The questionnaire was designed based on Deci & Ryan's (1985) Theory of Self-Determination and Neumeier's (2005) blended learning framework. It consists of 32 Likert-scale items (1 – completely disagree to 5 – completely agree), measuring both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that have been identified in previous research as crucial for student engagement in blended learning. The questionnaire was reviewed by three English lecturers expertising in English language teaching and educational methodology from the same university where the study was conducted. The author discussed the feedback with three lecturers to ensure the clarity and content validity of the questionnaire before it was finalized and used in the formal survey. The questionnaire was then piloted with 20 students before being finalized and administered to 124 participants.

2.2.3. Research procedure

Data from the survey questionnaire (124 responses) are analyzed using quantitative statistical method to assess students' learning motivation in a blended learning environment. The analysis process includes: (1) Cleaning and organizing the data and removing invalid feedback. (2) Using descriptive statistical analysis with mean and standard deviation to determine the general trends. (3) Comparing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation items to identify influencing factors. (4) Interpreting data to assess the impacts of blended learning on learning motivation. This analysis method ensures an objective and comprehensive evaluation of students' motivational experiences in a blended learning environment.

2.3 Findings and discussion

2.3.1. Students' duration in the blended learning approach

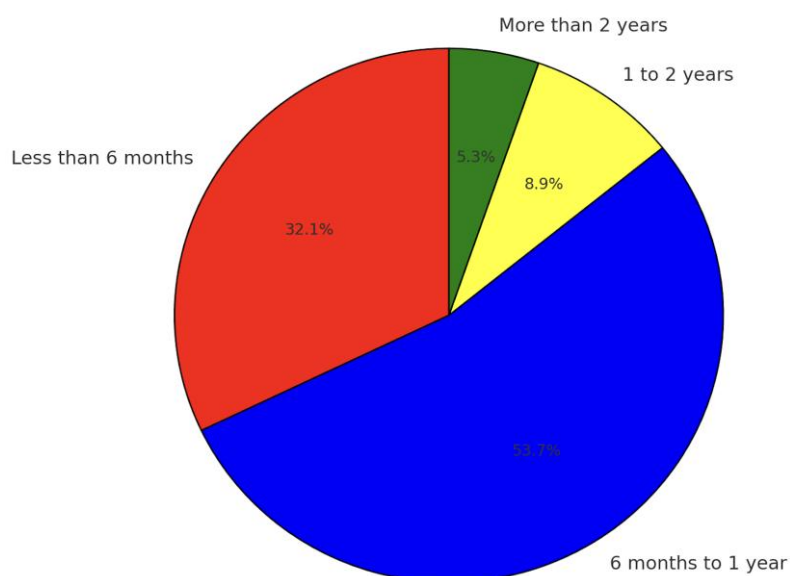


Figure 1. Students' duration in the blended learning model

From the chart, it can be concluded that the blended learning model is relatively new for most participants. The majority (53.7%) have experienced it for 6 months to 1 year. 32.1% of students investigated have less experience, indicating its recent implementation. Only a small percentage (8.9%) have experienced this model since the beginning of their university studies, and long-term usage beyond 2 years is rare (5.3%).

Table 1. Effects of Blended Learning on Students' Motivation

Category	Items	Mean Score
Individual and Psychological Factors	[1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16]	3.66
Instructional Design and Teaching Quality	[17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24]	4.0
Technological and Environmental Factors	[25, 26, 27, 28]	3.63
Achievement and Recognition	[29, 30, 31, 32]	4.02

The table shows a summary of the mean scores of four main categories influencing students' motivation in blended learning. "Achievement and Recognition" has the highest mean score (4.02), indicating its strong impact on students' dynamics. "Instructional Design and Teaching Quality" also scored high (4.00), emphasizing the importance of effective teaching strategies and supportive instructor-student interactions.

2.3.2. Intrinsic motivation

Table 2. Individual and Psychological Factors

Item	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1. I feel that I have the freedom to manage my learning process effectively in the blended learning model.	3.37	1.3
2. I can make decisions about the timing and location of my studies in the blended learning program.	3.03	1.35
3. I enjoy having the flexibility to choose learning materials and activities within the blended learning framework.	3.03	1.56
4. I feel empowered to explore additional topics independently, inspired by the content provided in blended learning.	2.67	1.35
5. I have established specific and achievable learning goals for this blended learning program.	3.63	1.22
6. Setting clear learning goals helps me stay engaged and motivated in my studies.	2.4	1.45
7. I regularly reflect on my progress toward meeting the goals I set for this blended learning course.	2.87	1.38
8. The blended learning program supports me in connecting my personal academic goals with course objectives.	2.67	1.32
9. I feel confident in my ability to succeed in this blended learning course.	2.73	1.39
10. The blended learning approach has improved my ability to manage and direct my own learning.	3.13	1.43
11. I feel capable of applying knowledge gained from blended learning to real-life situations or academic challenges.	2.67	1.45
12. I believe I can overcome obstacles and challenges in blended learning with the skills I have.	2.9	1.42
13. The content provided in the blended learning program is relevant to my personal or academic goals.	3.17	1.39

14. The learning materials are engaging and help me gain deeper insights into topics I am passionate about.	3.5	1.57
15. The online and face-to-face components of the blended learning program enhance my understanding of the subjects I find interesting.	2.87	1.36
16. I am motivated to explore additional resources beyond the course materials to gain a deeper understanding of the content.	3.23	1.43

The findings emphasize the statistical analysis of the “Individual and Psychological Factors” category, which belongs to intrinsic motivation, with a focus on mean scores and standard deviations across 16 items. With mean scores between 2.67 and 3.63, the results indicate that learners generally perceive autonomy, confidence, and relevance positively. The establishment of clear learning goals gains the highest mean score, representing its significance in motivating students. The moderate variability in standard deviations reflects that students have various learning experiences within the blended learning framework. These results emphasize the importance of fostering autonomy, setting achievable goals, and providing relevant content to enhance student motivation in blended learning environments.

2.3.3. Extrinsic motivation

Table 3. Instructional Design and Teaching Quality

Item	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
17. Instructors use innovative and effective teaching strategies that make blended learning more engaging.	3.03	1.3
18. I feel that my instructors provide timely and constructive support throughout the blended learning process.	3.0	1.62
19. The resources and materials provided by instructors help to understand the course content.	2.97	1.67
20. Instructors create opportunities for interaction and collaboration among students in the blended learning environment.	2.83	1.37
21. I feel comfortable reaching out to instructors to share ideas or seek clarification in the blended learning model.	2.9	1.37
22. Instructors are approachable and responsive to questions related to blended learning activities.	3.1	1.47
23. I feel that my contributions are acknowledged and valued by instructors during class discussions or activities.	2.83	1.37
24. Positive interactions with instructors boost my motivation to participate actively in blended learning.	2.63	1.38

The table summarizes learners' perceptions of “Instructional Design and Teaching Quality” in the blended learning environment, analyzing 8 items. Mean scores range from 2.83 to 3.03, reflecting moderate agreement regarding instructional strategies, timely support, and opportunities for collaboration. Progressive teaching methods and instructor friendliness are items that obtain relatively high scores, emphasizing their importance in stimulating student motivation. However, areas like collaboration and acknowledgment of contributions rank slightly below in scoring, pointing out potential areas for betterment. Standard deviations, varying from 1.30 to 1.67, reveal a modest degree of variability among responses. These findings highlight the importance of flexible educational techniques and dynamic interaction between students and instructors to enhance engagement.

Table 4. Technological and Environmental Factors Statistics

Item	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
The online platform used in this blended learning program provides a supportive and user-friendly environment for learning.	2.67	1.58
My peers in the blended learning program are cooperative and willing to support each other academically.	3.4	1.33
I feel safe and comfortable expressing my thoughts and participating in discussions in both online and face-to-face settings.	3.13	1.53
The classroom atmosphere (both online and in-person) is encouraging and fosters motivation to engage in learning.	3.3	1.58

The analysis of the “Technological and Environmental Factors” category highlights students’ perspectives of the blended learning environment. The mean scores range from 2.67 to 3.40, indicating moderate agreement on the user-friendliness of online platforms and the supportive role of peers. Standard deviations show reasonable variation, particularly in comfort during discussions. These findings focus on the importance of renovating digital platforms and developing collaborative, inclusive learning atmospheres to encourage greater motivation and engagement of students in blended learning.

Table 5. Achievement and recognition

Item	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Achieving good results in the blended learning program gives me a sense of satisfaction and pride.	3.23	1.41
Feedback from instructors on my performance motivates me to continue improving.	2.8	1.47
I feel recognized and appreciated when I achieve academic milestones in this program.	3.3	1.42
Encouragement from instructors and classmates inspires me to put in more effort and succeed in the blended learning program.	2.7	1.53

The table highlights the role of achievement and recognition in influencing students’ motivation in blended learning environments. The highest mean score (3.3) reflects students’ feelings of being recognized and appreciated upon achieving academic milestones, reflecting the importance of acknowledgment in fostering motivation. Achieving good results, which connects to pride and satisfaction, is also recognized as an essential factor (mean 3.23) influencing students’ motivation. However, feedback from instructors (mean 2.8) and encouragement from peers and instructors (mean 2.7) have relatively lower means, highlighting areas that could be further developed. The standard deviations (1.41–1.53) show an average level of variation, revealing a range of students’ viewpoints of these motivational factors.

3. Conclusion

The findings of this study on factors influencing students’ motivation in blended learning highlight several key aspects. The results indicate that autonomy, clear goals, and confidence significantly enhance students’ motivation. Although the importance of these elements has been recognized in the research literature, the results of this study show that appropriate teaching methods have not yet been widely adopted by lecturers in the context of surveys. One reason is

that such approaches require flexibility and additional effort in diverse classroom settings. This study also examined the role of technology and feedback, showing that students perform better when using user-friendly platforms and receiving timely support. Moreover, the recognition of achievements through constructive feedback and encouragement positively impacted motivation.

These findings are consistent with those of Graham (2006) [4] and Dörnyei (2001) [3] which highlight the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in blended learning. In line with Hockly's (2011) [14] study, this research also confirms that the learning environment with the support of technology can help enhance the engagement and motivation of students. However, in contrast to the conclusion of Riel et al. (2016) [16] about the major challenges in cooperation and interaction between students, this research shows that the positive teacher- student interaction along with the recognition of achievement can mitigate these problems. Besides, while Ushioda (2011) [5] focused on students with higher language proficiency, this paper expands the scope of discussion to non-English majors, providing more insights into how blended learning affects the learning motivation of those students.

In conclusion, these days, with the rapid development of digital technology, autonomy is a must for students because it enhances student growth and contributes to nurturing a skilled workforce for the country [22]. By integrating technology with traditional instruction, blended learning is an effective approach to fostering students autonomy, providing flexibility, personalized learning experiences, and enhancing interaction. The findings of this study indicates that once blended learning programs are well designed, they can enhance intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, primarily through goal setting, interactive teaching methods, and achievement recognition. Further research could explore adjusting and making blended learning models suitable to each student's level to optimize learning outcomes.

However, there are still certain limitations in this study. Specifically, the survey subjects were limited to a group of second-year students at a university, with a convenient sample selection method and a small sample size, which may affect the ability to generalize the results. Further studies should expand the sample size, apply random sampling methods, and conduct surveys in various learning contexts to increase the reliability and applicability of the research results.

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