Using E-Portfolio to Enhance Students'Motivation Towards Learning English at University College of Applied Sciences, Palestine

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Abstract: In the era of globalization and technological revolution, the widely spread usage of e-portfolio inside and outside classrooms has encouraged educators and policymakers to look for new methods of assessment that suit the new digital generation.The purpose of this study is to examine the outcome of using e-portfolio on University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS) students' motivation towards English language learning. The total number of students in English Language social work classes under the humanitarian department at UCAS is 60 (30 males and 30 females). Those are officially enrolling in English Language course (DIPL 1303) at first semester of 2014/2015 academic year. A Sequential Exploratory Design was used to collect qualitative and quantitative data for one semester. The results of this study showed that instrumental and integrative motivation levels of UCAS students improved towards learning English after utilizing e-portfolio. But the integrative motivation was found to be a bit higher than instrumental motivation. This has generated several theoretical, pedagogical and policy implications for instructors, universities and researchers. Therefore, it can be concluded that integrating e-portfolio at the tertiary level would improve the potentialities of researchers and policy makers to create a real change in the learning process.

I.   INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and technological revolution, the widely spread use of technology inside and outside classrooms has encouraged educators and policy makers to look for new methods of assessment that suit the new digital generation. Accordingly, there is an urgent need to integrate new alternative assessments in classroom environment to unleash students' potentialities and develop their cognitive skills.

In addition, there is no doubt that this new generation is fond of technology and differs completely from previous generation. This differentiation is not limited to fashion, clothes, or accent, but also touches on education and assessment. Therefore, current university students can be described as digital natives who spent most of their time using computers for videogames, digital music players, cell phones and all other instruments of digital age (Prensky, 2001). Moreover, Alquraan, Bsharah, and Albustanji (2010) also showed that teachers who use different assessment methods to assess students' learning provide their students with more oral and written feedback.

As a result of dependence on technology, it is important to find new methods of assessment to engage and motivate students to continue their learning English. To create such changes, there is a pressing need to use new alternative methods in our educational institutions. Integrating of this new alternative method in learning gives students the chance to show their real abilities in creating and designing their own work.Palestine is one of the twenty-one Arab countries, located in the south-western area of Asia, and it is 27,000 square kilometers in size. It is bordered by Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Red Sea, Sinai in Egypt, and the Mediterranean Sea, respectively, from the north, northeast, east, south, southwest, and from the West (DFLP, 2010). During the last six decades, the Palestinian community has suffered severely from the Israeli imperialism. As a result of this continued colonization, the majority of the Palestinian people, that is, 50% live in the Diaspora. Palestinians numbered themselves up to 12.4 million, of which more than 6.2 million live in the Diaspora, and around 4.8 million are residing in the West Bank and Gaza (2.9 million in The West Bank & 1.9 million in The Gaza Strip). Over 1.4 million Palestinians live inside the Green Line Area (PCBS, 2016).

According to Jalambo (2012) Gaza Strip, the study platform, located in the south-west of Palestine, as it is 360 kilometers along the Mediterranean Sea and about 8 kilometers wide. The Gaza Strip area is mainly classified into four governorates: The North, Gaza City, Middle area, and The South governorate. Even the Israeli occupation forces withdrew from inside the Gaza Strip in 2005, the Gazian boundaries, sea, and airspace are still under the control of the Israeli occupation. Speaking Arabic Language in Palestine as the mother tongue of all Palestinians. Therefore, English language is considered to be the only foreign language that is being taught to all Palestinian students either at schools or universities. It is essential to observe that after imposing the siege and closure on Gaza in 2006, the use of English language as a lingua Franca was evident between Palestinians and all delegations around the world. Furthermore, Mourtaga (2005) confirmed that English is only used to communicate with foreigners such as journalists or others who have other interests in Palestine; even if those foreigners are not native English speakers. Additionally, Amara (2003) pointed out that English nowadays is the first foreign language of the Palestinians. It is taught in all public and private educational institutions and centers throughout the West Bank and Gaza.According to Tushyeh (1990) English is taught at the Palestinian universities for several reasons. English is a required subject for all first-year university students. English is also a requirement for the Faculty of Arts at palatines' universities, where students take courses in English language and literature. Furthermore, English is the medium of instruction in the sciences and mathematics at all universities and in some disciplines, such as nursing, business, political science and cultural studies, at several Palestinian universities. In other word, students at universities in Palestine must pass English language course. Regarding the academic system, the academic year consists of two sixteen-week semesters along with an optional intensive eight-week summer semester. UCAS also uses the credit-hour system, students are allowed to add and drop courses. In brief, UCAS exerts sincere effort and do its best to be internationally renowned in scientific research, vocational and technical education within the period of ten years.In the past, portfolios were collections of work stored in binders, file folders, or boxes. Today, with the emergence of technology, computers are used as an effective tool for developing and storing portfolios given their ability to store and process large quantities of content, and because they can effectively support and guide the portfolio process. These computer-based portfolios are called digital or electronic portfolios (e-portfolios) (Wade,Abrami, &Sclater, 2005). So, the e-portfolio is considered to be electronic natural extension of the traditional paper-based portfolios. In this study e- portfolio means a systematic collection of students' work that shows their progress, effort, achievement, and all documentations of English Language subject within the frame of one semester which affects positively on the student's attitude and motivation. However, the information is collected, stored, and managed electronically via Facebook.

II. STUDY PROBLEM

The study aims at examining the role of e-Portfolio in improving the UCAS students' motivation towards English Language.Therefore, the problem was formulated in the following main questions:

1.   What are the learners motivational outcome to learn English language before and after utilizing e-portfolio?

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

The overall aim of this study is examining the role of e-Portfolio in improving the UCAS students' motivation towards English Language,Therefore, there are 2 main objectives in carrying out this study as follows:
*   To improving motivation towards learning English among the students through using E-portfolio.
*   detect the Integrative motivations towards learning English before and after utilizing e-portfolio

IV. STUDY HYPOTHESES:

The need for this study arises from four main factors: the literature review on e-portfolio and its importance in facilitating English language learning; the preliminary study about the assessment methods used in the University College of Applied Sciences that revealed the urgent need in changing the traditional assessment methods at UCAS; discovering the impact of e-portfolio on students' motivation and attitude; and the personal experience of the researchers in this regard.

V. STUDY IMPORTANCE:

This study paves the way for a future vision of e-portfolio. It can contribute in providing policy makers at UCAS with the effectiveness of e-portfolios for further implementation in Palestinian universities. Particularly, as the government looks for a sustainable future in higher education (MOEHE, 2016). Results of the current study can help to reform the assessment process universities can apply and integrate a new alternative assessment such as e-portfolios in the learning process.

VI. THE LIMITS OF THE STUDY

1. This study is limited only to English language students who enrolled in the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015 at UCAS who participated in the current study.
2. The questionnaire of the study was limited to attitude and motivation to English language learning in UCAS Palestine.

VII.   STUDY TERMS:

The researchers define the study terms operationally as:

Portfolio:

Barrett (1998) defined Portfolios as a purposeful collection of student's work that shows their efforts, progress and achievement. In a similar note, Norton and Wiburg (1998, p. 237) defined a portfolio as "a systematic and selective collection of student work that has been assembled to demonstrate the student's motivation, academic growth, and level of achievement". Simon and Forgette-Giroux (2000, p. 87)also defined a portfolio as "a cumulative and ongoing collection of entries that are selected and commented on by the student, the teacher and/or peers, to assess the student's progress in the development of a competency".

Electronic Portfolio:

Carmean and Christie (2006)mentioned that electronic portfolios (also known as e-portfolios) contain the same type of information as the traditional, paper-based portfolios; but the information is collected, stored, and managed electronically. This enables the student to capture artifacts of different media types such as electronic documents, multimedia presentations, graphics, or videos. Pimentel (2010)also defined e-portfolio as a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student's participation in selecting contents, the criteria of selection for the judging merit, and evidence of the student's self-reflection. In line with the previous definition, Balaban, Mu, and Divjak (2012) defined e-portfolio as a personal digital record that supports formal, informal and non-formal learning and contains the evidence about one's accomplishments in the form of artifacts and reflection on learning which can be provided to whomever the owner has chosen to grant permission to.

Motivation

Motivation is defined by Gardner (1985) as "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity." (p. 10). Motivation is what moves us to do something, it involves the energy and drive to learn, work effectively, and achieve potential. Motivation also plays a large part in the interest and enjoyment of study (Martin, 2003).

VIII.   METHODOLOGY

8.1 Sampling techniques and Sample Size

As indicated earlier, both Qualitative and Quantitative research method was employed to carrying out this study. According to Best and Kahn (1993, p. 13), population is any group of individuals with common characteristics of interest to the researcher. Similarly, Sekaran (2003, p. 265) defined population as "the entire group of people or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate". The population of this study was 60 social work student who enrolled in the course 'English Language' (DIPL1303) at the second semester of the 2014/2015 academic year. According to the head of the Admission and Registration Department at UCAS (2014), the total number of the EL social work students under the humanitarian department was 60 (30 males and 30 females).

All the enrolled students were considered the population for the study. Those students were officially enrolled in the English Language (DIPL 1303) course during the first semester of the 2014/2015 academic year. The whole 60 students' respondent to the questionnaires for the quantitative data collection. Whereas, 10 students were interviewed for the qualitative data collection. The 10 students were selected by a simple random sampling technique.

8.2 Research Instrumentation

This study aimed at examining the outcome of using e-portfolio on the UCAS students' motivation towards English language learning. Two instruments were utilized to collect the required data: interviews with 10 students as the main source for the qualitative data and a 5-level Likert scale questionnaire for the quantitative data.

8.2.1   Interview

The interview in this study was conducted in two stages, the first stage started before utilizing the e-portfolio to obtain a clear understanding of the ten UCAS students' motivation towards English language. While the second stage started after utilizing the e-portfolio to discover whether e-portfolio has great influenceon the same ten students' motivation or not.

The questions are designed for an in-depth exploration of the UCAS students' motivation towards the English language. At this point, the learners were allowed to use the Arabic language to express their motivation on learning English language. Students' response during the interview was recorded for accuracy and ease of translation. Finally, Data in the Arabic language will be translated into English.

8.3 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure in this mixed method research started with the qualitative part as suggested in the Sequential Exploratory Model (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Ten participants from the Humanities Department at UCAS were interviewed. To support the qualitative data, emphasis placed on the quantitative data where a total of sixty questionnaires in Arabic language were distributed to 60 students in the Humanities Department at UCAS.

The Data collection period be limited within the frame of first semester from September to January, 2014-2015. In this period of time students were required to collect everything that had a relation to the material, then selected the relevant and important materials. After that, they reflected on the materials, project their understanding and to share it with others. The study was divided into three phases during this semester.

8.4 Data Analysis and interpretation

As this was a mixed method research, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to explain the impact of e-portfolio on students' motivation Qualitative Data Analysis.

Thematic analysis is essentially a method for identifying and analyzing the patterns in qualitative data; it can also be as valid as a phenomenological method. Initially it has been named as an approach in the 1970s and a number of different versions of thematic analysis have been proposed within psychology (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (p.6).

8.4.1   Quantitative Data Analysis

In a mix method research, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006) suggested to follow the technique of descriptive statistics when the research questions are descriptive in nature. Accordingly, the collected quantitative data of this study will be reduced by measuring the mean and the standard deviation, and afterward, presented in tables and graphs. After collecting the data, the researcher used SPSS 20 for the data coding and analysis.

8.5 Ethical Considerations

In this study, several ethical issues were considered to avoid any unethical complexity since this study deals with human subjects. In this sense, a written permission was given to the UCAS administration to the current investigation. It was made clear throughout the whole process that the students' identities and the confidentiality were treated with anonymity throughout the whole process and used only for the research purposes and their basic human rights would not be violated. As a result, their true identities were not be requested in any way in the questionnaires. In this regard, the participants of the questionnaire in this study signed a consent form to give approval on their willing participation.

On the other hand, the permission was taken from all the respondents of the interviews and they were informed that the interviews will be audio recorded and not video recorded via the SKYPE software to facilitate the transcribing the participants' responses later on. Moreover and most importantly, the mentioned research procedures were strictly maintained.

8.6 Pilot Study

It is an undeniable fact that the pilot study contributes to the validity and reliability of the study instrument. Therefore, 50 questionnaires were distributed for the UCAS students for the pilot study. The normal range of the Cronbach's coefficient alpha value is between 0.0 and + 1.0, and the higher value reflects a higher degree of internal consistency. The result of the reliability of the study scale is high. The results are in the range of 0.712 and 0.920. Accordingly, the reliability analysis indicates a high stability of the questionnaire (Sekaran & Bougie, 2011). The cases that are used in the pilot study are identified by the researcher and they were excluded from the population sample.

IX. FINDINGS

Answer the Research Question: What are the learners' motivation levels to learn English language before and after utilizing e-portfolio?

From the results of the first question, it is clear that the students' motivation have increased after the utilization of e-portfolio which indicates that they are more motivated towards English language learning.

Figure 9.1 indicated that, there are certain differences that occurred in both of the two kinds of tests; pre-test and post-test in all the items of the questionnaire used for this study. This is to say that before utilizing E-portfolio, the percentages of the responses were almost low, but after utilizing E-portfolio there is an increase level of the percentages as shown in figure **9.1**
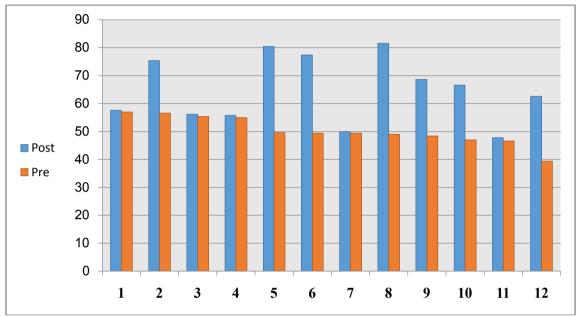

Figure 9.1 Integrative motivations towards learning English before and after utilizing e-portfolio

In response to the research question related to the learners' motivation to learn English language, the data collected from this study indicated that there are different issues motivating the UCAS students to learn English language, and the outcome of the study show that the learners' motivation level (Instrumental and Integrative) to learn English language before utilizing e-portfolio was low while after utilizing e-portfolio the level became higher than it was. This is because e-portfolio provided an alternative way to learn the English language by enhancing students' motivation in the learning process.

X. DISCUSSION

In this regard, Baturay (2015) investigated an online English language course at a higher education institution in Turkey. From the study it was found that the students had very positive feelings in respect of portfolio with enthusiasm and enhanced motivation towards the online English language course.

According to Mobarhan et al. (2015), e-Portfolio motivational factors from the students' perspective is similar with this research discoveries. From their investigation, motivation that is classified in this study into intrinsic or extrinsic motivation plays an important role in enhancing students' motivation and encourage them to utilize the e-Portfolio continuously. Similarly, Alharthi and Woollard (2014) investigated Saudi students' current view of utilizing traditional standards. This is to decide whether they are suitable for new technology, especially the adoption of new assessments technique such as e-portfolio.

Concurrently, the findings of this study are in line with that of Thang et al. (2012), who investigated the role of the electronic portfolio in enhancing Information and Communication Technology and English language skills on a small user population at a public university in Malaysia. The results discovered that the e-portfolios had a positive impact on the student development of computer and writing skills.

In 2012, a study was conducted by Axton which revealed that the role of portfolio in students' motivation. The use of portfolios can foster intrinsic motivation in a group of learners with relatively low interest in learning English as a foreign language. In similar thought, the results showed that integrative motivation was the primary source of the UCAS students' motivation towards learning the English language. More recently, Gardner (2001) added that "The interactively motivated individual is the one who is motivated to

learn the second language, has a desire or willingness to identify with the other language community, and tends to evaluate the learning situation positively" (p.9).

Theoretically, Gardner's model is in line with the underline philosophical objectives of the study, which indicated that both the aims and the findings of the study are align with the theory which is the first and most influential theory of motivation in the field of language 2 motivation research (Gu, 2009). It is proved that learners who are highly motivated towards the target culture and people will learn the target language more effectively than those who do not have such positive passion.

Also, Gardner (2001) highlighted on the motivational issues where he mentioned three stages related to that which included three main components: effort, desire, and enjoyment. In response, the students firstly exert their utmost efforts by exploiting every single moment in the English language learning. They express about their eagerness to learn English. Secondly, it was clear that students have passion towards learning English and they also show and express their strong desire to learn English language. This is obvious in the responses of the participants in the post test and in their active participation in the learning process.

Ahmed et al. (2015) utilized in their study a questionnaire on the four point Likert's scale on the different levels of motivation for 199 students at undergraduate level. The results of the research showed that motivation has a great role in learning English language learning. Coosri & Intharaksa, (2011) had also conducted a study where they found that students' motivation has a positive relationship with their English learning achievement; with that of Kitjaroonchais (2012) who concluded that both integrative and instrumental motivations are positively associated with an increase in students' academic achievement; and with that of Liu (2007) whose study showed that students' motivation was positively correlated with their English learning achievement. The discoveries of this study is also align with Zanghar (2012) who conducted a study on instrumental and integrative motivations among undergraduate Libyan students of English as a foreign language (EFL). From the results of the first question, it is clear that the students' motivation have increased after the utilization of e-portfolio which indicates that they are more motivated towards English language learning.

XI. RECOMMENDATION

The first recommendation is for the educational institutions, to expose undergraduate students and faculty members by training for successful integration e-portfolios into teaching and learning. Further exploration of the use of e-portfolios as an alternative method of assessment is needed, since e-portfolio is now widely used in developed countries and it has proved its effectiveness and usefulness. Therefore, it is recommended that e-portfolio can be compulsory for them as a part of their annual report. In addition, E-portfolios should be introduced not only at tertiary level but also at school level because it will give the students an orientation about e-portfolios, which would be useful for life-long learning.

It is recommended that students' suggestions and opinions about e-portfolio and the current assessment methods should be taken into consideration by policy makers at higher education to revise the current policy in the schools and universities to improve and enhance students' motivation towards English language learning.

It is strongly recommended to utilize e-portfolio with all university subjects to compare the results and check its impact on students' motivation and attitude. It is also recommended that researches in this area should conduct more studies on e-portfolio and its effects on improving English language to promote their learning process. From the analysis of the data collected in this study, it indicated that the students were interested in business, academic achievements, political activities as well as religious propagation. Therefore, a special programs towards improving the English language of students is recommended that will place learners through e-portfolio timely and efficiently. Similarly, an ICT training courses should be introduced either at the beginning of the term or regularly on special or selected times to put in place all the necessary required equipment to enable the smooth of implementation of e-portfolio.

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