How an online tutor motivates E-learning English

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ABSTRACT

The motivation to learn a foreign language is a complex process. It is the analysis of related aspects such as the role of the tutor in E-learning. However, the study of the motivation based on Self-Determination Theory -SDT- and E-learning English with the Computer Assisted Language Learning approach -CALL can provide tools to understand and improve the teaching-learning processes. This qualitative study aims to identify and analyze the aspects around motivation to learn English related to online tutor's role. The main instruments used to collect data were a focus group and a discursive analysis of the messages sent by the selected tutors. The participants in the research were a group of tutors composed of 5 women and 1 man. The analysis was carried out through semantic categorizations and with the support of NVivo 12 software. The results let assume that the role of the tutor can influence in the motivation to learn a foreign language, while optimizing communication processes.

1. Introduction

Current education implies training in English as a foreign language and the use of information technologies have been massively applied to achieve this (Bhowmik, 2015; Motteram, 2013). However, not only does the progress on foreign language learning depend on personal characteristics and skills, but also on the motivation to learn, as well as the tutor's role that could affect motivational processes (Fernández-Jiménez et al., 2017; Manzuoli and Roig, 2015; Martínez-Clares et al., 2016). Although motivation is one of the main factors that affect the learning process, the tutor's role is another determining factor, since it seems to influence not only the acquisition of knowledge, but the willingness to do it, that is, the motivation to learn (Mantiri, 2015; Martin et al., 2018; Kazantseva et al., 2016).

Motivation is a basic and complex psychological process, which can affect several aspects such as cognition, behavior, emotion, decision-making process and biological aspects (Gonzalez, 2008; Marshall, 2010; Woon et al., 2016). Nevertheless, as motivation has been extensively investigated, the relationship between this psychological process and the tutor's role in E-learning English is not clear yet. This is a concern that is present around the world (Kazantseva et al., 2016). Previous research has established the motivational profiles of the online students, but not how the role of the tutor can affect these profiles (Escobar-Fandiño et al., 2019). The answer to this question corresponds to the main objective of this research, which is to understand the aspects related to how an online tutor motivates E-learning English. This information will be derived from the tutor's position, since in this case; he or she is the core of the process. Thus, society in general and universities in specific can take advantage of this knowledge.

UNIMINUTO as a Catholic institution with National coverage is interested in optimizing the learning of English as a foreign language. This university has headquarters around Colombia and an international one, located in Ivory Coast, Africa. UNIMINUTO offers its academic programs in face-to-face and online formats. All virtual academic programs are conducted by headquarter Uniminuto Virtual y a Distancia (hereinafter UVD). As long as UVD is the largest division in Colombia, it is meaningful for the university to improve E-learning English since it is a National Educational demand that it is related to an international requirement. Furthermore, UNIMINUTO can propose changes that affect the teaching-learning processes of English through virtual methodolo-
gies. To reach this goal, a sample of 6 UVD tutors was chosen to complete this qualitative study.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Motivation as a psychological process

Motivation is a basic and complex psychological process that is present in all human beings. This process is related to the nervous system, cognitive processing, emotional regulation, stable personality traits and learning to satisfy needs. Motivation is a kind of pressure that stimulates, encourages, directs and keeps goal-oriented behaviors (González, 2008; Marshall, 2010; Mestre-Navas and Palmero-Cantero, 2004; Woon et al., 2016).

In psychology scientific literature, there is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT hereinafter) that expects to explain the motivation in human life. SDT considers that each person can differentially regulate his/her own behavior. Explicitly, this theory centers on how particular motives are integrated and regulated by individuals, to achieve more adaptive behavior. As individuals remain in continuous contact with their environment, SDT focuses on how ideas, values and goals are internalized according to the influence of several variables in the social context. Thus, each person could regulate his/her motivational behavior, in a continuous perspective, from completely external to the innermost aspects (Deci and Ryan, 2014; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

In SDT, the concept of internalization and the types of regulation are considered as continuous development. In this theory, there is a specific differentiation between the most extrinsic characteristics and the most intrinsic behaviors. External aspects are related to extrinsic motivation, while intrinsic motivation has to do with autonomous factors, which are the most valuable (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

According to SDT, motivation can be explained depending on the amount and level of control that people display. Intrinsic motivation is a model of autonomy, whereas extrinsic one interacts with variables or aspects defined by psychological and social 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 and beliefs; the latter is considered the most autonomous of all. This model could be homologated to learning patterns (Deci and Ryan, 1985, 2008; 2014; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Vermunt and Donche, 2017). In this context, learning is considered transversal to human life and this is directly related to the level and type of motivation people have (Barack et al., 2016; Kazantzева et al., 2016). Naturally, interest in researching about motivation for learning may vary, but this paper focuses on how an online tutor motivates E-learning, particularly regarding English language.

2.2. E-learning and CALL

E-learning refers to a distance learning process which involves many aspects of the information society (Kakoty et al., 2011). E-learning is a pedagogical tool which promotes more individualized, active and cooperative learning. Knowledge is no longer transferred from an authority to the student, but constructed within an open, changing and dialogic context, enabling the development of the collective intelligence (Levy, 2000). E-Learning focuses on establishing and keeping people’s networks in personal environments by using media and technological tools and through a sustained and dialogic conversation (Vilanova, 2016).

E-learning relies on models like The Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) that focuses in English language. This model has got four items: traditional, explorative, multimedia and the World Wide Web (Davies, 2008; Levy, 1997). Several psychological schools such as behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism and connectivism conform the basis of CALL’s referential framework. CALL exercises can promote English learning and improve skills to solve contextual problems (Farooq and Javid, 2012).

CALL is a model that can improve the language acquisition process, because it uses several technological tools and a continuous organized flow of activities closely related to real life situations, facilitating students’ meaningful learning. CALL encourages students to improve skills such as listening, reading, grammar, writing and speaking, as well as the acquisition of new vocabulary and the progress of pronunciation (Al-khairy, 2013; Hani, 2014; Muthu and Eroz-Tuga, 2013). Furthermore, materials and exercises gear motivation and autonomy in students and allow monitoring and evaluating their progress of the course core topics.

CALL can take place on the internet which plays a key role in this new scenario since it has a decentralized architecture and several sources of permanent information in unique interactions, especially with the virtual tutor (Chan Lin et al., 2015; Olivera et al., 2017). Communication and interaction are basic processes in virtual education since they foster relationships that allow the collective construction of knowledge (Berardi et al., 2015). Likewise, in CALL, the tutor’s role could be very important, because he or she may guide successfully all foreign language learning process, if he or she relies on a fluid communication environment with the students and boosts motivation to learn online English (Chapelle and Jamieson, 2008; Motteram, 2013; Torres and Perera, 2015). On this hand, it is necessary to understand the concepts of online tutoring, E-tutor and their relationship with motivation.

2.3. Online tutoring, tutor and motivation

Online tutoring in CALL is a strategy that tries to boost student-oriented courses and online learning communities. This strategy relies on a communicational phenomenon to build knowledge, using technological tools for giving effective feedback. Online tutoring could affect the student’s progress. Therefore, the online tutor’s role has become more complex and has shifted to be a facilitator for students’ learning. Thus, he/she must harness all his/her abilities to create a safe and trusting virtual environment that promotes behaviors based on motivation. Online English tutors must aim to create and maintain quality relationships between themselves and their students. Likewise, tutors need training to include new techniques of teaching through online environments and achieve a high level of proficiency (Ammenwerth, 2017; Chang et al., 2014; Engeness, 2018; Fryer and Bovee, 2016; Georgiou and Kyza, 2018; Gkonou and Mercer, 2017).

Furthermore, online tutor’s role fulfills several functions like: a) academic: relating to mastery of contents, activities and student formative assessment, b) technical: mastery over available tools on the virtual environment, c) guiding: plan, structure and establish operating rules, d) social: meant to overcome feelings of isolation, loss or lack of motivation of students participating in this educational mode, and e) organizational: providing students guidance and advice on organizational matters in the course of the formative actions (Gómez-Rey et al., 2017; Gulybahar and Kaledilou, 2015; Klimova and Poulova, 2011; Krasnova and Demeshko, 2015).

Likewise, online tutor’s role is not static. It changes according to several factors. One important factor is the institutional context into which courses develop since they directly affect key areas, such as funding models, recruitment policies, strategic alliances, course production systems and digital technologies. Other factors available in the institutional context are related to the use of resources – material (recognition of workload, time and training) as well as material - mainly based on the technical aspects such as analytic tools or intelligent software to give feedback (Gil-Jaurena and Dominguez, 2018; Manzullo and Roig, 2015; Sánchez-Rosell, 2016).

Another main factor influencing teacher’s tasks is course design. Thus, if the course is oriented toward information transmission, teacher’s workload can include preparing a syllabus; scheduling its topics; record, edit and enhancing video content; organizing permissions, quizzes, uploads; monitor students and make necessary modifications to the course.
If the course is oriented towards interaction in a Community of Inquiry (CoI), which it is believed to boost deep learning a greater quantity of students to get a higher academic performance; teacher tasks include to develop a topic for a certain audience; find other facilitators to work with; determine course content; plan spaces for interaction; plan interactions (synchronous versus asynchronous); plan and motivate the continuous and effective presence and participants, among others. Thus, the more the course design promotes social interaction, the more teachers will need different skills and will perform different roles (Estevé-González et al., 2017; López de Munain et al., 2015; Wang and Baker, 2015).

All these roles foster teacher presence in an online environment. Teacher’s presence is a key factor to struggle against isolation enabling retention and success (García et al., 2018). There are three different approaches to the Community of Inquiry (CoI): teaching, cognitive and, especially, social one (Fuego and Hevia, 2017; López de la Madrid et al., 2015).

The social presence encompasses interactions that foster social relations, group cohesion, emotional expressions and students’ identity. It is not fixed. It changes from learner to learner, according to the context and student’s language skills and over time. It begins with a triggering event that promotes exploration, integration and resolution. They also change depending on the model (Satar, 2015). Social presence offers many advantages. First, it helps an online or at a distance learner to compensate for a lack of nonverbal communication, enables self-identification and a supportive interaction, promotes motivation, affects positively student’s satisfaction and learning efficacy (Horzum, 2015; Satar, 2016). Language learning tasks types (e.g. argumentation, role-play, providing personal information, multiuser virtual environments- MUVEs), desktop videoconferencing, collaborative and cooperative tasks, also seem to impact on social presence (Gonzalez-Yebra et al., 2015; Moreno-Guzmán et al., 2019; Rodríguez-Zamora and Espinosa, 2017).

Two factors determine the degree of social presence: immediacy (proximity) and intimacy (perceived familiarity). In educational research, non-verbal behaviors alongside verbal teacher immediacy behaviors (e.g. humor use; inclusive pronouns usage; encouraging participation; providing individualized and timely feedback; and sharing personal experiences, values, beliefs, emotions) are believed to reduce the physical and/or psychological distance between the teacher and the learner (Garcia-Pérez et al., 2016; Hung and Chou, 2015). Some studies even state that students appreciate their tutors to be accessible, understanding, patient and passionate about the subject (Martin et al., 2018). In this light, skills of expression and emotional regulation regarding information and communication technology (ICT) are a crucial facet (García-Pérez et al., 2016).

Empathic teachers establish positive relations with their students fostering more secure and motivating environments and causing positive effects on student’s performance. On this account, empathic stress and the fostering more secure and motivating environments and causing positive (García-Pérez et al., 2017; López de Munain et al., 2015; Wang and Baker, 2015).

To sum up, a tutor’s practice requires technological, teaching and tutorial skills such as communication skills; open-mindedness to new proposals and suggestions; ability to adapt to students conditions and characteristics and to monitor the students’ teaching and learning process and five main functions: guiding, technical, social, organizational and academic (Garbin et al., 2015). Nevertheless, some studies state that although tutor’s training is important, there is a lack of knowledge about how social presence -an important part of tutor’s role-can influence student’s motivation to learn, mainly English as a foreign language. It is not clear which aspects of the tutor’s role could have an important influence on students’ motivation in E-learning English.

3. Methodology

This research followed a qualitative approach methodology. This study 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 pursues the Helsinki Declaration of ethics. The confidentiality was guaranteed by informed consent. All participants signed the informed consent to guarantee and protect their confidentiality. A focus group was created to understand how an online tutor motivates E-learning English. This instrument was applied because it allows a discourse and content analysis by setting semantic categories to reduce inappropriate interpretations and assurance high validity (Fernández, 2006; Mella, 2000; Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2014; Naupas-Paitán et al., 2014; Rodríguez et al., 2005).

In addition, all messages sent to the students by the 6 tutors, in the virtual platform of English learning, during the last academic period of 2019 were analyzed.

3.1. Sample

The study included 6 volunteer tutors who were interviewed in a focus group (see Table 1). In order to keep tutors’ information confidential, each participant was assigned a number from 1 to 6, so that their answers could be quoted throughout the report. These tutors were selected as a convenience sample. All participants were UVD English tutors who guided one of the three levels of the English Course that UVD offered, during the last quarter of 2019. Tutors were selected because of the highest teacher performance ratings. All the students of the headquarters who studied online English during the selected period carried out these evaluations. Within the feedback received, information was found on how the students were feeling motivated to learn English by these 6 tutors.

3.2. Research design: qualitative data collection instrument and analysis of messages in virtual classroom

The first step was to create a focus group. This is a tool that allows knowing the phenomena in depth. A focus group was selected because it may appropriately collect the information concerning the question, the problem and the research objectives. The second step was related to the analysis of the messages sent by the tutors using virtual room during the last academic period of 2019. The analysis of the messages was focused on information linked to the research question: motivation, E-learning and tutor’s role (functions, actions and behaviors) (Mella, 2000; Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2014).

3.3. Procedure: focus group and analysis of the messages

To make the focus group session, a mass message was emailed from the Coordination Office to UVD English tutors who guided 1 of the 3 levels of the Course. All those interested in participating received specific information regarding the objective of the research and its data collection
instrument. 6 respondents were selected. Then, they completed the informed consent to guarantee and protect their confidentiality. The focus group session was conducted in Spanish language on March 2nd, 2020, which was held online by Blackboard Collaborate software. The session was based on seeking information from several questions about: motivation concept, platform usage, virtual tutoring and online tutors functions and roles.

Likewise, an analysis of the messages sent, using virtual classrooms by the 6 participants during the last academic period of 2019, was completed. To access the messages sent in that period, a request was made to the Systems Advisory Office, which stores the information on the virtual classrooms. Once the information was received, the semantic analysis was carried out, taking into account the codebook, which is based on the revised literature (See Table 2). The activation messages sent by the tutors were also analyzed in order to verify the relationship that they may have on the motivation of students to learn English as a foreign language (see Table 3).

3.4. Results analysis

The focus group interview was transcribed to make a coding and content and discourse analysis. The same procedure was performed with the messages sent by the participating tutors to their online English learners, during the last academic period of 2019 (Fernández, 2006; Mella, 2006; Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2014). The analysis was carried out by using NVivo software version 12 and a codebook (see Table 2), which was developed from the existing scientific literature previously presented.

To sum up, the coding process was generated after the transcription of the focus group session and based on all the information that the online tutors sent to their students during the aforementioned academic period. This allowed extracting relevant information to answer the research question. The frequency of the codes guided the semantic trend, so that those with the highest occurrence presence determined the analysis.

4. Results and discussion

Information derived from the research question and obtained through the focus group and analysis of the messages is presented below. Results include 2 sections: 1) corresponding to a descriptive one focused on the words frequency, which includes an analysis of the messages sent by the tutors through the virtual classroom during the indicated period of time, and 2) related to analytical-descriptive information achieved from data coding which was developed from the reviewed literature: Self-Determination Theory, online tutoring and online tutor's role.

4.1. Words frequency

Qualitative software NVivo version 12 organized the transcribed information obtained from 6 UVD online English tutors. NVivo version 12 displays a semantic tendency from speech pointing out that the tutor’s role may encourage E-learning English, especially because of a high frequency of words such as “students”, “English”, “think”, “messages”, “learning”, “communication”, “activities”, “assistance” and “encouragement” (see Figure 1). Additionally, a word cloud with the theme codes (Codebook) is included. This information supports the semantic trend of the concepts of motivation, E-learning and tutor's role, which are clearly linked (see Figure 2). All these words are related to definition, components and aspects of motivation as a psychological process. Following, the 6 UVD tutors information is showed in analytical form about motivation, online tutoring and online tutor's role.

4.2. Messages information

The quantitative information of the messages sent by the tutors is shown below.

4.3. Motivation, online tutoring and tutor’s role

Most online English tutors consider that motivation is more due to a learning process, since they give sufficient relevance to aspects related to behavioral changes derived from internal aspects of the students, but also of operant conditioning behaviors that can be shaped by the environment (González, 2008; Marshall, 2010; Mestre-Navas and Palmero-Cantero, 2004). According to their answers, the tutor could modify students' motivation based on the opportunity to offer positive reinforcement understood as responding to messages kindly and making students feel like appreciated people by sending empathetic feedback. In other words, it is important to make communication the fundamental strategy to give relevant feedback that demonstrates that students complete the activities on platform successfully; therefore motivation towards the English course increases (Kebritchi et al., 2017; Martínez-Clares et al., 2016; Motteram, 2013).

Some of the questions or activation messages that were most commonly used by the tutors focused on aspects such as: time limit to solve the activities, information on virtual tools that can be used (games, videoconferences, chats or messages), messages with an empathetic nature to provide accompaniment to the E-learning process.

From the above issues, it can be seen in extracts such as: “those reasons that lead you suddenly to do an activity or to respond to an exercise... when I arouse enthusiasm, interest in someone to do something... just by responding to messages... that we propose a wide variety of exercises... that the student feel the company of the tutor... the tutor makes the platform really come alive” (Sections taken from the virtual tutors 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6). However, it should be

| Table 1. Socio-Academic statistical description of UVD online English tutors. |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Age years (Mean) | 37.5 |
| Gender | Female 5 Male 1 |
| Social Stratum (Mode) | Middle Social Class |
| Marital Status | Married 3 Single 3 |
| Educational Standard | Master Degree |
| Time interval for obtaining the last academic degree | 1999–2019 |
| Years of Teaching Experience (Mean) | Face-to-face 14.8 Virtual (online) 5.8 |

| Table 2. Codebook: Study about how an online tutor motivates E-Learning. |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Code 1 | Label | Motivation |
| Definition | Core guide about what drives a particular behavior or thought: 1. Extrinsic: external, introjected, identified, and integrated. 2. Intrinsic: autonomous behavior. |
| Description | Psychological process that analyses what drives individuals' particular behavior or thought in accordance to their environment. Human motivation varies according to the individuals' regulation capacity of the manner of conducting their own self. |
| Code 2 | Label | Online tutoring |
| Definition | Virtual pedagogical process |
| Description | It is a process to facilitate English learning by the use of virtual methodologies. Online tutoring is based on all tools designed to develop English language skills. |
| Code 3 | Label | Online tutor's role |
| Definition | Activities that an online tutor performs. |
| Description | Ensemble of activities, functions, skills and competences directed to guide, lead and facilitate online English learning process. |
kept in mind that motivation as a psychological process is related to personal aspects, which can be intrinsic and practically unchangeable (Deci and Ryan, 1985; 2008; 2014; Marshall, 2010; Mestre–Navas and Palmero-Cantero, 2004; Woon et al., 2016).

Regarding the virtual tutor’s role altogether with motivation process, explicitly in CALL model, is only possible if the tutors are committed to their work and additionally, they have high level of proficiency that guarantees their effort (Fernández-Jiménez et al., 2017; Gómez-Rey et al., 2017; Krasnova and Demeshko, 2015). This can be seen in the following extracts: “I believe that the English tutor is essential in learning and is evident from the mere fact of answering the messages … although virtual education is quite autonomous learning, in any case the tutor will be the guide and it will continue to be the engine that will encourage and help students in this learning process … let's say that we are that human part of accommodation and of course it vitally impacts the student … we know that a platform in itself can work alone, but there are many issues that need our support…” (Sections taken from the virtual tutors 1, 2, 3 and 4). However, it seems that proficiency concerning technical skills take a back seat, since human relations and communication are privileged.

Likewise, the relationship between tutor and student clearly influences both the tutoring process and the students’ motivation to learn English through virtual methodologies. The functions or roles performed by the tutor related to cognitive and teaching processes influence motivational processes. However, social presence seems to have a greater impact, as it facilitates social relationships, promotes group membership, processes emotional contact and strengthens communication (Esteve–González et al., 2017; Horzum, 2015; Satar, 2015). All of the above can be seen in the following sections: “the communication established with the student must be assertive ... the role of the tutor must be something that makes it easier for the student to access all the tools available in the classroom ... (the tutor) is a guide, is a support for the student and also facilitator of knowledge ... it is important to focus on the students who want to learn” (Sections taken from the virtual tutors 1, 2, 5 y 6).

On the other hand, the tutors usually adapt easily to the syllabus. However, they consider that the most important thing is to overcome the approach of transmitting information and move to a more communicative one, led by the various classroom activities, whether synchronous or asynchronous. In other words, the social presence must be promoted through the interaction between the tutor and the student, to boost social relations, group cohesion, emotional expressions and students’ identity. In this sense, if the tutor meets these conditions in their work, the motivation that is most commonly promoted in students would be more autonomous. Apparently, the motivational pattern that online students show tends to be intrinsic, while virtual education requires it (Berridi et al., 2015; Esteve-González et al., 2017; Gil-Jaurena and Dominguez, 2018).

As well, the tutor must seek to achieve immediacy (proximity) and intimacy (perceived familiarity), in such a way that physical and psychological distances are reduced, in a more empathetic environment (García et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2018). All this information can be verified in the following section.

“... They (the students) are going to have too much material, let's say the present simple, the verb to be, well, of all the topics that it has in English. But what makes us (believe, think?) that this is something different? ... That motivation we must give them and that additional point that is our explanation that is to talk to them a lot, is to tell them that it is not only the part of watching a video and that's it ... help them change their thoughts... they (the students) should always feel accompanied” (Sections taken from the virtual tutors 1, 3 y 5). In summary, the information derived from all the interviewees, as well as the analysis of the messages sent during the selected period, suggests that the role of the tutor is directly related to the flexibility that the teacher can play, the permanent attitude of openness, closeness and intimacy, in such a way that the entire pedagogical process is based on empathetic and affective communication. When the online tutor manages to display the previous skills or characteristics, the role of the online tutor can positively

| Tutor Number | English level conducted¹ | Number of courses conducted | Number of students | Number of messages sent | Main content type |
|--------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| 1            | A1                       | 4                           | 144               | 53                     | General information. |
| 2            | A1                       | 5                           | 177               | 55                     | Academic Alert.    |
| 3            | B1                       | 4                           | 151               | 37                     |                   |
| 4            | A2                       | 3                           | 114               | 42                     |                   |
| 5            | A1                       | 3                           | 118               | 70                     |                   |
| 6            | A1                       | 4                           | 102               | 71                     |                   |
| Total        | –                        | 23                          | 806               | 328                    |                   |

¹ This level corresponds to the international classification of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages-CEFR (Council of Europe, 2017).
affect the motivation of the students, because students are more autono-
mous and committed to their English E-learning as a foreign language, as
reported by the tutors who support this investigation.

5. Conclusions

Some of the most important elements that seem to be related to
promote autonomous behavior and intrinsic motivation in students not
only correspond to the immediacy with which the messages are
responded, but to the quality of the message. If the tutor is friendly and
seems interested in guiding the student, in an empathetic environment,
the student may have a better disposition to complete the activities of
the virtual course. How the students manifested themselves in the evaluation
of teaching performance (one of the reasons for selecting the 6 tutors). In
this sense, a high motivation must be characterized by autonomous be-
haviors, that is, an intrinsic motivation. It is important to remember that
online students spend a lot of time in autonomous work, so the support
provided by the E-tutors must be the warmest.

In the CALL model, the role that the tutor can play to modify posi-
tively (intrinsic and autonomous motivation), depends to a great extent on
the ability of the teachers to analyze the teaching situations mediated
by technology and provide effective support to their students. In other
words, the tutor could influence students’ motivation to learn if they
provide support that is reinforcing through fluid and comprehensive
communication. Communication seems to be the fundamental aspect
that influences students’ motivation and that is derived mainly from the
role of the tutor. The E-learning English tutor who manages to commu-
nicate effectively with their students tends to have better results.

The main implication of this study for E-learning is based on the value
or exaltation of the relationship that coexists between the tutor and his/
her students. Virtual education tends to rely on previously designed tasks,
but what was found in this study indicates that the main aspect that in-
fluences the learning of English as a foreign language is how the tutor
manages to be empathetic and warm during the entire online learning
and tutoring process.

6. Future studies

The next studies could focus on analyzing and establishing the
motivational change mechanisms around the learning process of a
foreign language using virtual technology, since the degree to which
communication can affect the motivation to learn is not clear. On the
other hand, it is necessary to investigate how to improve the learning
experiences of foreign languages online, since each educational program
must be able to adapt to the motivational and affective needs of the E-
learning students.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

F. G. Escobar-Fandino: Conceived and designed the experiments; Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data; Wrote the paper.
A. J. Silva-Velandia: Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data.

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Competing interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.
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