

**VISOKO OBRAZOVANJE**

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**THE AFFECTIVE DIMENSION IN THE VIRTUAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS IN  
HIGHER EDUCATION – A CASE STUDY OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC  
PURPOSES COURSE<sup>2</sup>**

*Abstract*

*This study investigates the affective dimensions—motivation, communication anxiety, and self-confidence—of students participating in a Virtual Exchange (VE) program within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. The program was implemented through Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) between the University of Novi Sad and international partner institutions. Grounded in theoretical frameworks such as achievement motivation, willingness to communicate, grit, and foreign language anxiety, the research explores students' emotional engagement, motivation, and communication apprehension in intercultural contexts. A mixed-methods design was employed using a tailor-made online questionnaire to gather data from first- and second-year university students enrolled in ESP courses. The results indicate that high levels of satisfaction and reduced stage fright are positively associated with intrinsic motivation, improved English proficiency, and enriched intercultural exchange. In contrast, moderate satisfaction and persistent anxiety were found to be linked to extrinsic motivation and challenges such as language barriers and group dynamics. These findings underscore the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation and positive affective experiences to enhance student engagement in VE environments. The study*

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*offers pedagogical recommendations for educators aiming to integrate VE into ESP curricula effectively, promoting global citizenship, intercultural competence, and language development through structured, supportive virtual collaboration and scaffolded virtual interactions.*

*Keywords: Virtual Exchange (VE), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Affective Factors, Intrinsic Motivation, Intercultural Communication*

## **Introduction**

In an increasingly globalized educational landscape, Virtual Exchange (VE) has emerged as a transformative pedagogical tool, especially within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts. VE facilitates cross-cultural communication and collaboration by connecting students from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds through online platforms. These exchanges, often integrated into Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) frameworks, not only enhance linguistic competencies but also promote intercultural competence, global citizenship, and personal growth.

VE programs also facilitate the internationalization of the higher education, in terms of innovating courses and curricula design. This was recognized by the University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Sciences, whose professors and students have actively participated in several international VE programs, collaborating with institutions such as the University of Manizales (Colombia), Penn State University (USA), University Paris-Saclay (France), University of Szeged (Hungary), and Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (Germany), and quite recently University of Alcala and University of Porto. These projects have revolved around a variety of topics, in particular Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and intercultural communication topics, engaging students in meaningful dialogue based on real world issues and joint output creation.

While the academic and intercultural benefits of VE are well-documented, affective factors such as motivation, anxiety, self-confidence, and willingness to communicate remain underexplored, particularly in ESP courses in the context of virtual exchange. Understanding these emotional and psychological dimensions is crucial, as they significantly influence learners' engagement and success in foreign language learning.

This paper is focused on a case-study at the Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad, and investigates the affective aspects of ESP students' participation in a VE program, with a focus on their self-reported intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, levels of foreign language

anxiety, self-perceived communicative competence, and overall satisfaction with the program. By examining these variables and their interrelationships, the study aims to offer insights into student perceptions of the activity. The findings can help their language instructors to find effective ways to leverage emotional and motivational factors in order to improve the effectiveness of VE in ESP curricula.

### **Literature Review**

In the context of foreign language education in digitally mediated environments such as Virtual Exchange (VE), learner success is affected by a complex interplay of affective, motivational and cognitive variables. Drawing on McClelland's (1961) achievement theory and its expansion by Atkinson (1974) and Weiner (1985), the research foregrounds how students' intrinsic motivation and perceptions of success influence their academic behaviour. Simultaneously, constructs such as willingness to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018) and foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, 2017; Botes et al., 2020) highlight the emotional undercurrents of communication, emphasizing the significance of self-perception, classroom dynamics, and intercultural stressors in language learning. The inclusion of grit (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009; Lee, 2020) further enriches this framework, illustrating how perseverance and emotional resilience sustain motivation over time. Together, these perspectives offer a comprehensive lens to understand how affective and motivational factors intersect and shape students' engagement in VE, where communicative competence and psychological readiness are constantly negotiated. In this section, we will explore each of the dimensions in more detail.

#### **Virtual exchange and collaborative online international learning**

Virtual Exchange (VE) refers to structured online interactions between students from different cultural or national backgrounds, typically facilitated by educators from at least two respective institutions to foster dialogue, collaboration, sharing findings on the jointly chosen topics and intercultural understanding (O'Dowd, 2021). As a method rooted in experiential learning and intercultural communication, VE aligns closely with the goals of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where language learning is tailored to professional or academic domains. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), a widely adopted model of VE, embeds international collaboration into university curricula through joint modules and projects of different scopes. COIL initiatives promote global learning by encouraging students to examine international perspectives, co-create outputs, and engage with real-world issues

through culturally diverse perspectives. These programs are often interdisciplinary and emphasize equity, service-learning, and institutional cooperation.

Virtual exchange and COIL programs have already been recognized as beneficial for the development of soft skills, intercultural awareness and sensitivity (Vuković Vojnović & Knežević, 2023) and for the affective dimensions of the students (Porto, Golubeva & Byram, 2023). However, more attention should be given to the affective domain, in terms of motivation, expectations, miscommunication and other external factors such as technical issues or other academic obligations (Çiftçi & Savas 2018; Mestre-Segarra & Ruiz-Garrido, 2022).

### **Achievement motivation**

Achievement motivation encompasses the internal and external drivers that influence a student's engagement with learning tasks. McClelland's foundational work on the achievement theory (1961) introduces the concept of the need for achievement as a key motivating factor in human behaviour, providing an explanation for individual differences in the motivation for success. Furthermore, this theory suggests that the achievement motives are stable and unrelated to the context or domain, and that high achievers are more motivated and set higher standards and goals for themselves, whereas low achievers tend to avoid challenges. His theory was complemented by Atkinson (1974) who proposes that the achievement motivation is dual in character – people are either motivated by the willingness to succeed, i.e. to take part in something, or by the fear of failure, i.e. they tend to withdraw. Based on empirical evidence, more work was done on the relationship between achievement motives and academic success, as well as on the attribution of our achievement, i.e. how people explain their success or failure – if they see it as internal factor that can be controlled or as an external factor that is beyond our control (Weiner, 1985). Steinmayr et al. (2019) conceptualize achievement motivation through several constructs: ability self-concept, task values, goal orientation, and achievement motives. In the context of VE, these constructs influence how students approach intercultural tasks, manage linguistic challenges, and perceive their growth. High intrinsic motivation - defined by genuine interest and personal relevance - is often associated with deeper learning and sustained participation.

### **Willingness to communicate**

Achievement motivation is further scaffolded by the willingness to communicate (WTC), which is a critical predictor of success in foreign language learning and is closely related to language anxiety. WTC can be defined as a personal choice to engage in

communication, and it is individually constructed based on personality traits. It is immensely affected by the self-evaluation of one's ability to communicate, i.e. how people perceive their competence, as well as the afore-mentioned language anxiety or communication apprehension (McIntyre et al., 2003: 591). Dewaele & Dewaele (2018) argue that WTC is shaped by both learner-internal variables (e.g., motivation, self-confidence) and learner-external factors (e.g., classroom environment, group dynamics). In online and intercultural settings, WTC can fluctuate due to uncertainty, unfamiliar communication norms, and linguistic insecurity. However, positive affective experiences and supportive structures can enhance learners' readiness to communicate.

### **Foreign language anxiety**

Unlike achievement motivation and willingness to communicate which strongly support students' participation in virtual exchange activities, foreign language anxiety (FLA) can be a highly impeding factor to successful experience in virtual exchange. It refers to the apprehension and nervousness experienced by learners when using a foreign language. However, it is important to emphasize that foreign language learners can experience a specific type of foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) that is specific to the learning process. In addition, Horwitz (2017) emphasizes that FLA is context-specific and often heightened in settings that require spontaneous communication, such as virtual exchange which is organized online. Unlike a 'habitual anxiety', FLCA is connected to a specific situation, social anxiety, communicative apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety' (Botes et al, 2020: 28). In terms of correlations with other factors, high levels of anxiety can inhibit learners' WTC, reduce performance, and lead to avoidance behaviours. Conversely, environments that reduce stress and promote self-efficacy are more likely to foster language development.

### **Grit and affective engagement**

Recent research has introduced the role of grit — defined as perseverance regarding the challenges and passion for taking up long-term goals (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009) — in foreign language education. Lee (2020) found that grit positively correlates with classroom enjoyment and willingness to communicate in a foreign language, suggesting that emotionally resilient learners are more likely to engage meaningfully in VE contexts. Similarly, Lee & Drajati (2019) highlight the affective variables, including enjoyment and self-motivation, significantly influence learners' participation in informal and formal digital learning environments.

Taken together, these theoretical frameworks underscore the importance of affective factors in shaping student outcomes in VE programs. It is important to create a positive environment in foreign language classes that will enable positive states, emotions and experiences for language for foreign language learners (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016). The present study builds on these insights to explore how such variables manifest in the experiences of ESP students engaged in virtual exchange at the Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad.

## **Methodology**

### **Virtual exchange procedure**

The virtual exchange initiative was introduced by the University Paris-Saclay (France), within the EUGLOH project<sup>3</sup>, in collaboration with international partners, including the Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad, University of Szeged (Hungary), and Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (Germany). Students first had two introductory webinars on intercultural communication and later were divided into multicultural, multidisciplinary groups and engaged in discussing intercultural topics within their groups. They also had some suggested reading materials to prepare for the online sessions, had to keep minutes of the meetings, prepare a roadmap for the project and prepare a final product of their collaboration. Activities were facilitated online through video conferencing and collaborative platforms, with tasks designed to foster cross-cultural exchange and collective output creation.

## **Research design**

This study employs a mixed-method research design to explore the affective element of the students' experiences in the VE program implemented within ESP classes at the Faculty of Sciences University of Novi Sad. The main research interests can be summarized in the following questions:

R1: How do students perceive their motivation, self-confidence and speaking anxiety in the international context of virtual exchange?

R2: What are the correlations between the affective aspects concerning their participation?

R3: What are their overall views on intercultural challenges and VE experience?

Based on the findings, the guidelines for further improvement and implementation of international VE in this particular context of ESP teaching and learning will be proposed.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.eugloh.eu/>

The research methodology combined quantitative data from closed-ended survey items with closer qualitative insights from open-ended responses, allowing for a nuanced understanding of students' motivation, anxiety, self-confidence, and willingness to communicate in an intercultural online context. The participants in the study were twenty-five (N=25) first- and second-year undergraduate students enrolled in ESP courses at the Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad. The students represented diverse academic modules, including Information Science, Mathematics, and Tourism and Hotel Management. All participants volunteered to join the VE program as part of their coursework. It needs to be mentioned that only twenty-one (N=21) students returned the fully completed questionnaire, so the discussion is based on these results.

The research instrument used for data collection was a tailor-made online questionnaire developed on basis of the previous studies of VE practice by the authors. The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms and included twenty questions. Thirteen closed-ended questions had multiple-choice or Yes/No formats, as well as a Likert scale for overall program assessment. In addition, there were seven open-ended questions, designed to elicit detailed reflections and explanations of students' affective experiences.

The survey focused on key constructs including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, foreign language anxiety, self-perceived communicative competence, and satisfaction with the VE experience.

### **Procedure**

Students completed the questionnaire at the conclusion of the VE program. Participation was voluntary, and responses were anonymized. The qualitative data underwent content analysis of the students' responses to identify patterns and correlations between affective variables and students' reported experiences. Key themes were categorized according to the theoretical framework of achievement motivation, willingness to communicate, and foreign language anxiety, which had been foregrounded in the previous section.

### **Results and analysis**

Based on self-assessments, students rated their English language proficiency as good (N=2, 9.5%), very good (N=10, 47.6%), or excellent (N=9, 42.8%). Their overall social self-perceptions varied, with most students identifying themselves as moderately (N=11, 52.3%) or very communicative (N=9, 42.8%), while one student reported not being very sociable. Sixteen

students (76%) expressed a willingness to participate, while five (23.8%) were initially reluctant but completed the program successfully. The main reasons they mentioned can be summarized as the fear of unfamiliar situations and their personal perception of not being able to communicate successfully in English.

### **Motivation and satisfaction**

The analysis of the responses to an open-ended question ‘What would be the main reason for participating in the programme?’ revealed that students were primarily driven by intrinsic motivation. This involved a desire to improve their English language and communication skills, expand cultural knowledge and meet people from different cultures, as well as to engage in meaningful communication. Here are some of the students’ responses: ‘Meeting people from different cultures’, ‘Improve my English...I like meeting new friends’, ‘Meeting new people and cultures’, ‘Improve my communication skills in a foreign language’, ‘New experiences’, etc. This internal drive was closely linked to high levels of satisfaction with the VE program with 52.4% of the students saying they were completely satisfied with the program and 42.9% were very satisfied, whereas only one student was partially satisfied. Students who expressed strong personal interest in intercultural collaboration reported enjoying the exchange, gaining confidence in their English abilities, and feeling intellectually stimulated by the content and interaction.

There were only three students who were motivated by extrinsic factors, i.e. by getting a better grade and/or an additional certificate. They appreciated the opportunity for participation but reported communication problems in the group due to the lower level of English by other members of the group or general lack in meaningful communication and collaboration. This can be attributed to lower emotional engagement, when students are more likely to view the experience as a requirement rather than a learning opportunity. This has been already identified in previous studies, such as Ryan and Deci (2000) who have conducted research in educational psychology and motivation and confirmed that extrinsically motivated students often show lower emotional engagement and may perceive collaborative learning as a task rather than a meaningful opportunity.

### **Communication anxiety, emotional readiness and self-confidence**

In this section of the questionnaire, students were first given a multiple-choice question, and then they were asked to elaborate their answer:

*Question 8. Choose the best answer that describes your experience.*



- a) *I didn't have stage fright.*
- b) *Before the first meeting, I had stage fright, but it diminished gradually.*
- c) *Before each meeting, I had stage fright.*

*Question 9. If you had stage fright, what were its reasons.*

Students displayed varying degrees of foreign language anxiety, particularly at the beginning of the VE program. Twelve students (57%) said they did not experience any stage fright before online video meetings, seven (33%) had it on the first meeting, and only two students (9.5%) experienced this type of anxiety before every meeting. Common concerns included foreign language related anxiety such as fear of making mistakes, difficulties in understanding different accents or unsatisfactory level of English on behalf of other participants. One student said that they 'feared of being judged by others about the way they speak'. Other factors that influenced anxiety were related to more general perceptions. One student worried about 'meeting new people for the first time' and explained that 'this was their first experience to engage in an activity with a complete strangers'. A couple of students in addition to other factors expressed a general feeling of stage fright during video calls. However, for more than half of the participants these anxieties diminished over time as they became more familiar with the format, content, and collaborative nature of the project.

Questions 10 and 11 asked about the overall feeling students experienced during meetings. In question 10 students were asked how they felt during the meeting, and the options were: a) relaxed, comfortable and safe, b) comfortable but insecure, and c) uncomfortable and/or insecure. In question 11 they were asked to give more details if their answer was c) uncomfortable and/or insecure.

Most of the students reported feeling relaxed, comfortable and safe in meetings (90.5%) and only two reported that they felt comfortable but insecure, with one of them explaining that they were not aware of the ways to express themselves freely and engage in humorous interaction with people they've just met.

Based on the students' responses, one of the key findings was the correlation between reduced anxiety and increased self-confidence. Students who reported feeling comfortable and accepted by their international peers noted improvements in their communicative competence and a greater willingness to express themselves, even in imperfect English. Those who emphasized intrinsic motivation were also more likely to overcome initial nervousness and actively participate in discussions.

### **Willingness to communicate and engagement**

Most students reported an increased willingness to communicate (WTC) in the foreign language throughout the VE program, with 76% equally participating as their peers from other universities, and 19% who reported that they communicated more than others. Students were also asked if they had any problems during the collaboration (Yes/No question), and to disclose how they handled such situations, i.e., if they readily reached out to other group members to solve the issues. A vast majority of the students (85.7%) were ready to directly engage and openly ask for additional explanations from other members of the group during the sessions. Two of them did not engage directly but used asynchronous communication via email, while only one did not react at all when assistance regarding the groupwork was needed.

It can be concluded that most of the students were actively engaged with their international peers and who viewed the exchange as a space for mutual learning rather than evaluation. Open-ended responses revealed that students valued the opportunity to learn about different cultures, collaborate on meaningful intercultural topics, and challenge their assumptions in a supportive environment.

However, several students highlighted obstacles that affected their engagement. These included language barriers, lack of preparation, uneven group participation, and unfamiliar digital tools. In some cases, students reported that members from other universities with lower initial motivation or greater anxiety withdrew from active participation, indicating that without appropriate support, VE programs may exacerbate feelings of insecurity or exclusion.

### **Summary of key findings**

Based on the results obtained from this case study, the summary of positive correlations indicates that intrinsic motivation is positively correlated with higher satisfaction and lower anxiety, and that increased comfort results in greater willingness to communicate. Students who showed more emotional readiness contributed more to a stronger group cohesion and active participation within the entire group. Regarding the barriers, a negative correlation exists between extrinsic motivation and overall course satisfaction and the feeling of persistent anxiety among the students. Furthermore, the unfamiliar format of the VE, which was a completely new experience for the students, affected higher avoidance and lower engagement among only a few students. This is in line with the work of Topalov, Knežević and Halupka-Rešetar (2023) who explored students' anxiety in online ESP setting during the COVID pandemic and found that several factors contributed to avoidance and reduced student

engagement, where one of them was unfamiliarity with online learning formats, paired with other factors such as visual and audio overload, silence and turn-taking, self-perceived proficiency, technical challenges, and other factors.

These findings suggest that the affective domain plays a crucial role in shaping student experiences in VE programs. Motivation, emotional resilience, and the perception of a safe, inclusive environment emerged as critical factors for meaningful participation and learning and should be seriously considered when planning similar courses.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study illuminate the vital role affective factors play in shaping ESP students' experiences within virtual exchange programs. The correlations observed between motivation, anxiety, self-confidence, and willingness to communicate provide valuable insights into the emotional dynamics that underpin successful engagement in intercultural online learning.

#### **Intrinsic motivation as a driver of engagement**

One of the most striking results was the positive impact of intrinsic motivation on student participation in the projects, enhancing their affective comfort and promoting their sustained engagement. Students who joined the VE program out of genuine interest in intercultural communication and personal growth were more likely to report lower levels of anxiety and higher degrees of enjoyment. This supports the assertion by Steinmayr et al. (2019) that internalized goal orientation fosters deeper cognitive and emotional investment in learning tasks. The qualitative responses further suggest that intrinsically motivated students were more adaptable and open to the challenges of working in multicultural, multidisciplinary teams. A few students who experienced persistent anxiety were under external pressure to achieve the best grade and were not ready to learn in the community.

#### **Anxiety and communicative confidence**

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) emerged as a significant barrier among some of the students, particularly at the beginning of the program. However, this anxiety often lessened over time, especially among students who felt supported by peers and instructors. This finding corresponds to Horwitz's (2017) view that FLA is situational and can be mitigated by familiarity and positive reinforcement. Importantly, as anxiety decreased, students' communicative self-confidence increased, leading to greater participation and willingness to

communicate and engage both in the online sessions and task completion. This type of individual traits affecting group dynamics underlines the importance of scaffolding VE programs carefully by the teachers to promote early successes and encourage emotional safety.

### **Willingness to communicate and social integration**

The study also highlights how willingness to communicate (WTC) in VE settings is influenced by both personal and environmental factors. This aligns with Dewaele and Dewaele (2018) who emphasize that WTC is shaped by learners' internal states and the perceived communicative context. In the current study, students who perceived the VE environment as non-judgmental and culturally enriching were more willing to contribute and initiate conversations. Conversely, when students felt unprepared, overwhelmed by unfamiliar tools, or unsupported by their peers, their WTC decreased.

### **Implications for practice**

The implications for ESP educators and program designers are significant. VE programs, while rich in pedagogical potential, must consider the emotional readiness of students. Activities should be scaffolded to gradually build confidence, and instructors should cultivate a psychologically safe environment. Additionally, fostering intrinsic motivation—through relevance, autonomy and self-drive, and meaningful intercultural themes—can greatly enhance the effectiveness of VE.

These findings also suggest the need for better preparatory work, including technical training, language support, and cultural orientation. Such measures can reduce early anxiety and facilitate smoother integration into the collaborative process.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

This study explored the affective dimensions of ESP students' participation in a Virtual Exchange (VE) program at the Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad, focusing on motivation, foreign language anxiety, self-confidence, and willingness to communicate. The limitations of the study are that it is a small-scale study based on the cohort of students participating in the program in one academic year. However, separate studies have been done in earlier years, and are planned for the future participants, so broader insights will be available. Having said that, the findings of this study comply with the theoretical views explained earlier and underscore that emotional and psychological readiness plays a decisive role in shaping students' experiences and outcomes in intercultural online learning environments.

Students with strong intrinsic motivation experienced higher satisfaction and lower anxiety, ultimately engaging more confidently and actively in communication tasks. In contrast, those driven by extrinsic goals often struggled with persistent anxiety and exhibited lower engagement. The study also showed that anxiety can be transient, decreasing as students become familiar with the VE format and supported by positive peer interactions.

Overall, the affective domain significantly influences the success of VE initiatives. Programs that nurture emotional safety, self-efficacy, and a sense of purpose are more likely to produce meaningful educational and intercultural outcomes.

Based on the findings, there are several recommendations proposed for educators and program designers involved in VE for ESP. Firstly, it is important to foster intrinsic motivation. This can be achieved by designing activities that are aligned with students' personal interests and professional goals, emphasizing the real-world relevance of intercultural communication and collaborative problem-solving. Secondly, it is important to address foreign language anxiety and incorporate confidence-building activity prior to VE program, instruct students that linguistic mistakes are normal and that they should focus on the growth mindset, i.e. that by practicing they will improve their language skills. Furthermore, it is crucial to create a supportive learning environment, ensure inclusivity and empathy, through structured icebreakers, collaborative tasks and mediation. For asynchronous communication, clear communication channels and norms should be established along with clear deadlines. Finally, since not all students are equally skilled in using digital platforms and intercultural communication strategies before the virtual exchange, teachers should provide training for students in need. During the program, as well as at the end, there should be enough opportunities for reflection and feedback to enhance critical thinking, self-evaluation and intercultural sensitivity. Formative assessments in regular courses can help teachers and students to evaluate their emotional readiness and adjust the activities accordingly. Students should be able to clearly express their feelings and challenges in a safe space through reflection essays and debrief sessions.

By integrating these strategies, VE programs in ESP contexts can maximize student engagement, reduce barriers to communication, and achieve their intercultural and linguistic learning objectives.

## **AFEKTIVNA DIMENZIJA U VIRTUELNIM PROGRAMIMA RAZMENE U VISOKOM OBRAZOVANJU – STUDIJA SLUČAJA KURSA ENGLESKOG ZA POSEBNE NAMENE**

### *Apstrakt*

*U kontekstu globalnog obrazovanja koje se neprekidno razvija, posebno sa pojavom novih tehnologija i digitalnog okruženja, virtualna razmena (Virtual Exchange - VE) postala je uticajna pedagoška praksa, posebno u okviru programa engleskog jezika za posebne namene (English for Specific Purposes - ESP), ali svakako nije ograničena samo na nastavu jezika. Virtualna razmena olakšava međukulturnu interdisciplinarnu saradnju povezivanjem studenata iz različitih kulturnih i geografskih sredina putem online platformi. Ove razmene, koje se često sprovode u okviru prakse kolaborativnog onlajn međunarodnog učenja (Collaborative Online International Learning - COIL), podržavaju razvoj znanja jezika, interkulturalne kompetencije, kritičkog mišljenja i globalne svesti (O'Dowd, 2021). Uprkos značajnim zabeleženim iskustvima iz prakse o lingvističkim i akademskim prednostima virtualne razmene, afektivne dimenzije kao što su motivacija, anksioznost, samopouzdanje i spremnost na komunikaciju – ostaju nedovoljno ispitane, posebno u kontekstima engleskog jezika za posebne namene.*

*Ova studija istražuje emocionalne i psihološke faktore među studentima sa Prirodno-matematičkog fakulteta Univerziteta u Novom Sadu koji su učestvovali u programu virtualne razmene. Sprovedena u okviru projekta EUGLOH, na inicijativu Univerziteta Pariz-Sakle, a u saradnji sa drugim međunarodnim partnerima, studija istražuje unutrašnju i spoljašnju motivaciju studenata, anksioznost u vezi sa komunikacijom na stranom jeziku, percipiranu komunikativnu kompetenciju i sveukupno zadovoljstvo studenata iskustvom virtualne razmene. Metodologija istraživanja podrazumeva kombinovani model pre svega usmeren na analizu kvalitativnih rezultata. Pokušalo se odgovoriti na sledeća istraživačka pitanja: (1) Kakva je percepcija studenta u vezi sa njihovom motivacijom, samopouzdanje i anksioznost tokom virtualne razmene? (2) Koje korelacije postoje između ovih afektivnih varijabli? (3) Kako studenti pristupaju interkulturnim izazovima i kakvi su njihovi sveukupni utisci u vezi sa ovim iskustvom?*

*Teorijski okvir ukratko integriše ključne konstrukte iz psihologije motivacije za postignuće (McClelland, 1961; Atkinson, 1974), teorija atribucije (Weiner, 1985) i novije modele koji naglašavaju samopoimanje, vrednosti zadataka i orijentaciju cilja (Steinmayr et al., 2019). Ovi konstrukti pomažu da se objasni kako učenici pristupaju interkulturnim i*

jezičkim izazovima u grupnom onlajn radu putem virtuelne razmene. Pored toga, studija se oslanja i na istraživanje u vezi sa spremnošću da se komunicira (MacIntyre et al., 2003), a koje indentifikuje samopouzdanje, percipiranu kompetentnost i faktore okruženja kao elemente uticaja na sklonost studenata da se uključe u komunikaciju. Anksioznost u vezi sa komunikacijom na stranom jeziku, kao što navode Horwitz (2017), Botes et al. (2020), tretira se kao situacioni konstrukt koji može da varira na osnovu konteksta, posebno u onlajn interakcijama u realnom vremenu.

Emocionalna otpornost takođe ima važan uticaj pri donošenju odluke da se učestvuje u aktivnostima virtuelne razmene, kao što su rad na zajedničkim projektima u onlajn timovima. Istrajnost i zainteresovanost za dugoročne ciljeve (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009) pozitivno su povezani sa odlučnošću, voljom i uživanjem u procesu učenja (Lee, 2020). Ovi afektivni elementi su posebno relevantni u onlajn okruženju, a gde se učenici moraju prilagoditi novim komunikativnim normama i digitalnim alatima.

Kao što je već spomenuto, ovaj program sproveden je u okviru međunarodne univerzitetske alijanse EUGLOH u partnerstvu sa institucijama iz Francuske, Mađarske i Nemačke, a istraživanje je sprovedeno među studentima Prirodno-matematičkog fakulteta u Novom Sadu, kako bi se implikacije rezultata mogle primeniti u planiranju budućih sličnih saradnji. Učestvovalo je ukupno 25 studenata, a 21 je u potpunosti ispunilo upitnik nakon razmene tako da su ti rezultati obrađeni. Instrument je uključivao 13 zatvorenih i 7 otvorenih pitanja, distribuiranih putem Google obrazaca, ispitujući afektivne aspekte vezane za iskustvo studenata.

Rezultati su pokazali da većina studenata doživljavala svoje znanje engleskog jezika kao veoma dobro ili odlično, a većina sebe smatra komunikativnim. Šesnaest studenata bilo je motivisano da od početka aktivno učestvuje u aktivnostima programa, dok je pet izrazilo početno oklevanje, prvenstveno zbog straha da se neposедуje odgovarajući nivo jezičkih sposobnosti i zbog nepoznatog okruženja. Unutrašnja motivacija se pojavila kao dominantan afektivni pokretač. Studenti koji su nastojali da poboljšaju svoje jezičke veštine i kulturnu svest pokazali su veće zadovoljstvo, manju anksioznost i aktivnije učešće. Nasuprot tome, studenti vođeni spoljnim ciljevima (npr. mogućnost dobijanja veće ocene ili sertifikata) imali su poteškoće u komunikaciji i smanjen angažman.

Anksioznost povezana sa komunikacijom na stranom jeziku bila je najizraženija na početku programa, a neki studenti su doživljavali tremu i nesigurnost u vezi sa nerazumevanjem različitih govora ili vokabulara. Međutim, anksioznost je imala tendenciju da se smanjuje kako je program napredovao i kako su studenti razvili osećaj sigurnosti, upoznali se bolje sa svojim

*vršnjacima i kao i formatom saradnje. Ovo smanjenje anksioznosti bilo je pozitivno povezano sa povećanjem samopouzdanja i spremnosti da se komunicira.*

*Spremnost na komunikaciju značajno se povećala kod većine učesnika. Skoro 76% je izjavilo da je podjednako učestvovalo kao i njihove kolege sa drugih univerziteta, a 19% je navelo da su čak i više doprinostili. Studenti su često istakli vrednost direktnog angažmana u radu grupe, uzajamnog učenja i okruženja koje nije ocenjivačko. Ipak, nekoliko studenata je kao izazove navelo grupnu dinamiku, tehničke barijere i neujednačen nivo posvećenosti, posebno među nekim kolegama iz partnerskih institucija.*

*Rezultati ukazuju na nekoliko kritičnih korelacija: unutrašnja motivacija je pozitivno povezana sa zadovoljstvom, samopouzdanjem i smanjenom anksioznošću; osećaj emocionalne sigurnosti olakšava učešće u komunikaciji; povećana spoljna motivacija je povezana sa persistentnom anksioznošću i nižim učešćem. Ovi ishodi su u skladu sa prethodnim istraživanjima koja naglašavaju važnost emocionalne spremnosti i psihološke sigurnosti u kontekstu spremnosti za komunikaciju na stranom jeziku (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016).*

*Pedagoške implikacije za edukatore su značajne. Programi virtuelne razmene moraju biti podržani od strane profesora i pre početka same razmene kako bi se afektivne potrebe studenata uočile i na njih adekvatno odgovorilo, i kako bi se stvorila podržavajuća, inkluzivna atmosfera. Neophodna je priprema pre razmene - posebno u digitalnoj pismenosti i interkulturalnoj komunikaciji kako bi se ublažila anksioznost i povećao angažman studenata. Na kraju je neophodno sprovesti i analizu, refleksiju i samoprocenu nakon razmene, kroz grupne aktivnosti i u pisanoj formi.*

*U zaključku, studija pokazuje da afektivne varijable značajno oblikuju iskustva studenata u programima virtualne razmene. Motivacija, samopouzdanje i smanjena anksioznost doprinose dubljem angažmanu i smislenijoj komunikaciji. Kao takvi, edukatori i dizajneri programa treba da daju prioritet emocionalnoj spremnosti i unutrašnjoj motivaciji prilikom razvoja i implementacije sličnih inicijativa.*

*Ključne reči: Virtuelna razmena (VE), engleski jezik za posebne svrhe (ESP), afektivni faktori, unutrašnja motivacija, interkulturalna komunikacija*

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