



# Asian Journal of Distance Education

## Enhancing Online EFL Learners' Motivation and Engagement through Supplementary Activities on Facebook

Hasan Ucar, Nil Goksel

**Abstract:** This study offers an explanatory case study research that reflects on how the motivational design based supplementary activities are used in a social network site, namely Facebook, affect online EFL learners' process of learning. The participants consisted of 105 online EFL learners who contributed to the study on a voluntary basis. The data was gathered over a three-week period through a web-based open-ended questionnaire compiled by the researchers. The findings of the study indicate that using supplementary activities given on Facebook has a significant contribution to online distance EFL learners' course interest, motivation, volition, and academic performance. Besides, the supplementary activities sway the learners to persist in and make an effort to reach the learning goals. Based on the findings collected in this study, the authors posit that Facebook, as a powerful social network site, could be used as a supportive milieu for open and distance learning courses conducted for English Language Learning. In addition to the findings mentioned above, suggestions for future research directions and implications for practice are discussed.

**Key words:** Online learning, distance education, Facebook, motivation, EFL, online learners, supplementary activities

### Introduction

The rapid flow of human life has become inevitable by dint of information and communication technologies. Today, many people have begun to communicate, shop, work, and learn online. The web, which enables this flexible communication network to be brought to our home, is referred to as the second-generation internet services, which include social communication sites (Bosch, 2009). In these virtual communication environments with flexible content, online distance education applications that are accepted as the most common method of education technologies provide convenience for participants living in different life conditions (Chugh & Ruhi, 2018). Online learning supported by the internet, which has been continuing its development since the 90s can be considered as an indispensable part of today's learning contexts. Through the interactive learning environments that the 21st-century information society has managed to realize within the scope of internet and web applications, learners share their existing and gained knowledge in the microelectronics network, which is a structure strengthened with basic information and communication technologies (Castells, 2004).

Today, almost every person in society is a member of a social networking community. These online communities are increasing in number day by day and many new social network sites have been added in recent years like Facebook, which still seems to be a very popular social media tool. As of November 2019, with 1.62 billion daily and 2.45 billion monthly active users, Facebook can be regarded as the biggest social network site worldwide (Facebook, 2019). The website has a pivotal role in terms of its use in education thanks to its simple, fast and trouble-free connection with its social network structured domain. The widespread use of Facebook makes it appeal to online learners and instructors (Balcikanli, 2015; Bosch, 2009; Camus, Hurt, Larson, & Prevost, 2016). On online sites like Facebook, students can work collaboratively on a virtual space that is quickly and easily accessible.

As the borders between the instructors and learners become closer in online spaces, Facebook seems to become a necessity for instructors to use diverse ways of communication with learners. With its smooth connection, users can become active participants via shared visuals, contents on walls, private



and public related posts, personal and group comments, and virtual chats for self-expression. According to Thomé-Williams (2016), Facebook is a great chance to improve EFL learners' communication competence, and it motivates them to talk about their views, to share their ideas, and to gain more from their peers. In this sense, Facebook can be a beneficial tool for engaging and motivating online learners. However, in online education platforms students are mostly responsible for their learning and if they are not self-regulated learners, they mostly cannot overcome motivational and engagement problems (Deimann & Bastiaens, 2010; Keller, 2010). Motivation and engagement issues remain challenging for all partners in education contexts. In this connection, ARCS-V (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction, and Volition) motivational model (Keller, 2010) can be used as a remedy model to cope with the motivational challenges faced by online distance learners. Based on this issue, the authors of this study aim to explore how supplementary activities, designed according to the ARCS-V model, can stimulate, and sustain learners' motivation and enhance learners' engagement on Facebook.

## Literature

For learners, in both online and face to face learning environments, motivation is considered to be one of the most vital elements affecting the learning process (Keller, 2010; Li & Keller, 2018). If the learners' motivation is adequately promoted and engagement is enhanced, learners can be more active and thus more effective learning results can be obtained (Keller, 2008, 2010; Uçar & Kumtepe, 2016). Although many learners and educators get very excited about the possibilities offered by social network sites, the learners may not always be motivated to learn. However, many online learners want to take advantage of Facebook to reinforce their learning process, but many others tend to procrastinate (Reinecke et al., 2018). Thus, instructors can implement activities in social network sites to win and motivate procrastination-prone learners. As underlined by Fryer and Bovee (2016), without motivational support of the instructors in online learning environments, learners' motivation and engagement may decrease and their performance worsens. However, motivation does not solely express the learners' behaviors. Most especially, when learners face challenges, motivation factors may not be powerful enough to cope with these obstacles (Deimann & Bastiaens, 2010). To overcome these challenges and maintain motivation, one factor- that is volition- is needed (Deimann & Bastiaens, 2010; Keller & Deimann, 2012). For online learners, volition is considered to be very important (Uçar & Kumtepe, 2016, 2018). Online learners are distracted by many factors. These distractions may decrease their motivation and suspend their performance. In order to overcome this attenuated motivation, volitional strategies can be implemented (Keller, 2008; Deimann & Bastiaens, 2010; Uçar & Kumtepe, 2018).

Evidence shows that online EFL learners need motivational and volitional support. Thus, ARCS-V model strategies can be implemented to motivate and increase engagement of online learners (Keller, 2008, 2010; Keller & Deimann, 2012; Li & Keller, 2018; Ucar, & Kumtepe, 2019). This model includes five motivational factors that enhance learners' motivation and engagement. First of all, the strategies, used within this model, aim to attract the learners' attention; relate the course contents to the learning objectives of the learners; build confidence regarding course performance; satisfy the learners; and finally, maintain their commitment to achieve the learning goals (volition). Here, the authors present results from a case study research that reflected on how the supplementary activities, designed according to ARCS-V model strategies, used in Facebook, contribute to online EFL learners' process of learning, motivation, and engagement. The design of the supplementary activities in this study was based on the ARCS-V motivational strategies to enhance students' motivation and engagement.

Social networking as a subcategory of social media helps learners to be in mutual communication and interact with other learners via web-based and mobile technologies. In other words, it helps educational communication transform into an interactive dialogue between learners. The online social networks for communication have been attracting millions of users and obviously change the way people send, receive, and share information (Akbari, 2015). In this result, the sites have become an essential part of the learning experience with their various features like video, link, document and post sharing, voice record, live presentations and video chats (Akbari, 2015; Yapıcı & Hevedanlı, 2014). Social networks can also be regarded as areas where interaction is positively reflected in learning. Many studies in related literature (Balcikanli, 2015; Bosch, 2009; Camus et al., 2016; Chugh & Ruhi, 2018; Sánchez, Cortijo, & Javed, 2014) have proved that learner interactions in social network communication areas have positive effects on learners. These areas created within the scope of this new learning revolution in the computer industry can be regarded as social networking sites that involve learner participation directly. Facebook, for instance, where many learners may be involved in activities with a high level of interaction, can be actively used within online EFL learning contexts. The potential of Facebook in

building a sense of community fosters learners' interactions and enhances the exchange of information (Aydin, 2017; Blattner & Fiori, 2009). As reported in related literature (Haque & Al Salem, 2019; Thomé-Williams, 2016) learners agree that social media platforms, like Facebook, are good tools to improve EFL learners' proficiency. In addition, these tools also develop positive attitudes towards learning English; thus, EFL learners seem to have positive opinions about the use of Facebook as an educational context to facilitate online EFL learning (Espinosa, 2015).

Facebook has the potential as it has a powerful technological infrastructure that can bring hundreds of users together simultaneously, support all types of files, be accessed easily, allow free supplementary activities within its closed groups. However, instructors need to be guided to use this potential. Also, there is a gap in the literature about how supplementary activities, in online EFL contexts, can stimulate and sustain learners' motivation and enhance learners' engagement in Facebook. To address this gap, the study aims to explore how supplementary activities, designed according to ARCS-V model strategies, stimulate, and sustain learners' motivation and enhance learners' engagement on Facebook. Within this case study, the instructors' supplementary activities pursued on Facebook were evaluated according to the responses of the learners who study or have already completed their compulsory courses in English (Level 1 and 2). In this connection, the following main research questions is addressed:

- How do EFL learners evaluate supplementary activities used in Facebook in terms of their language learning process, motivation, and engagement?

## Methodology

### Research Design

In this qualitative study, an explanatory case study research design is used in order to comprehend how the supplementary activities used in a social network site, Facebook, contribute to online learners' language learning process. Explanatory case study designs aim to determine cause and effect relationships (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Yin, 2003). The primary purpose of the explanatory design is to "determine how events occur and which ones may influence particular outcomes" (Hancock and Algozzine 2006, p. 33).

### Participants and settings

The participants in the Facebook group are Anadolu University Open Education Faculty students who are learning English at A1 and A2 levels. Of the participants, 28 are male and 77 are female. The age range of participants is between 19 and 66. The study areas of the participants include Public Administration, Public Relations and Advertising, Health Institutions Management, Finance, Office Management, Social Sciences, Turkish Language and Literature, Child Development Management, Home Administration and Sociology. Among the participants are graduates as well.

This study is conducted in a closed Facebook group called 'Distance Learners' (Figure 1). This online educational platform, which has been carried out virtually since 2014 and has more than 8500 members, is set up specifically for EFL learners. The learners have followed live classes, announcements, and messages that are regularly shared on Facebook every week in parallel with their e-seminar courses that are offered by Anadolu University. To invite the participants to the research, the researchers posted a virtual message regarding the subject matter and of these members, 105 volunteer participants accepted to take part in this study voluntarily. Even though there are many views on sample size in a qualitative case study, there is no exact number. As stated by Creswell (2012), the larger number of participants takes a lot of time in analyzing data, so the sample size may be up to 40. However, when the participants are easily reached and myriad, the researchers can collect data from more of them (Baker, Edwards, & Doidge, 2012). So, in this study, the researchers gathered data from some of the members of the group.



Figure 1. Screenshot of the Facebook group 'Distance Learners'.

## Procedure

The instructor, also one of the researchers of this study, met the learners online once a week and tried to help them to understand the subject taught in more detail and answered the questions privately or in a group discussion messages when needed. Since 2014, the researcher has been doing these supplementary activities such as live classes, announcements, and messages, without fitting them into any model or scheme. They have all been conducted spontaneously according to the needs of the learners. However, for the purpose of this research, all those supplementary activities were designed in parallel with a certain motivational design and applied to learners in 10 weeks

Before designing the supplementary activities, the researchers used the ten-steps ARCS-V motivational design process (see Figure 2). Based on this process, appropriate motivational and engagement strategies were designed to be used within the supplementary activities. The following four design phases and ten steps suggested by Keller (2010) were used in the composition of supplementary activities to obtain more detailed information about EFL learners and to make the supplementary activities more effective. Within the framework of the motivational design principles, the researchers completed the motivational design process with ten steps as follows, also considering their own experiences in online distance education and EFL teaching.



Figure 2. Four phases and ten steps in the ARCS-V motivational design process.

The following ten steps were performed to fit the aim of the study:

1. *Obtain course information:* One of the researchers had been instructing the course for the last 6 years; however, both researchers were already familiar with the milieu and the course.
2. *Obtain audience information:* Learners provided information about themselves in the Facebook group.
3. *Analyze audience:* The researchers' experiences of similar learner groups from the past helped them in estimating the learners' strengths and weaknesses towards learning English online.
4. *Analyze existing materials:* The experience of one of the researchers in teaching the subject matter course and managing the Facebook group over the past five years helped them to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the materials used.
5. *List objectives and assessments:* The goals, measurement, and assessment processes in the course were identified.
6. *List potential strategies:* The interactive tactics and strategies to enhance the learners' interest in the course and their motivation described according to the ARCS-V model were identified in accordance with the context of the course.
7. *Select and design strategies:* The strategies to be used in supplementary activities, in line with the ARCS-V model of motivational design, were selected and shared with the learners through Facebook.
8. *Integrate with the instruction:* The strategies established based on the ARCS-V model of the motivational design were used, along with such tools of communication as a video and messaging. In the process of implementation, messages were sent to learners collectively on Facebook each week.
9. *Select and develop materials:* In this step, interactive communication designs aimed at increasing learner motivation and engagement in the course objectives were prepared, and the supplementary activities were designed.
10. *Evaluate and revise:* The subject matter course was taught for the last past six years by the researchers. The researchers have also taken online courses in such learning environments and this issue helped them in assessing both learners and the course. Besides the past experiences in this course, a formative evaluation was performed. The researchers' experience, the questionnaires applied in previous years during the course, and the feedback received from learners about the learning environment can be considered sufficient resources to be used in the review and assessment phases of the current course.

Following the ten-step motivational process mentioned above, possible supplementary activities and strategies were decided to be used during the course. After analyzing the learners and the learning environment, ARCS-V based attention, confidence, and volition enhancing supplementary activities were used.

### Data Collection Process

Within the context of this study, the data gathered through a web-based open-ended questionnaire compiled by the researchers. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, two experts, who have been working on online learning environments, examined the questions. After the experts assessed the questions and provided suggestions, the researchers made some refinements and reduced the number of questions from eight to five. Thereafter, the open-ended questions were reviewed and answered by eight volunteers who were also the members of the Facebook group. The students answered the questions and discussed each question accordingly, and the researchers revised the questionnaire and shared the last version of it in the Facebook group.

In this questionnaire, the participants evaluated their instructor's supplementary activities pursued on Facebook. The questions answered by the participants are as follows:

- How do you assess the contribution of your instructor's posts on Facebook (messages, announcements, notes, etc.)?
- How did the posts of your instructor (messages, announcements, notes, etc.) contribute to the learning process and success of the lesson during the learning process?
- How effective are your instructor's posts (messages, announcements, notes, etc.) when you are

- motivated?
- How effective are your instructor's posts (messages, announcements, notes, etc.) when you are distracted?
  - When you evaluate your learning process, how do you see your current situation at the beginning and at the end of the semester?

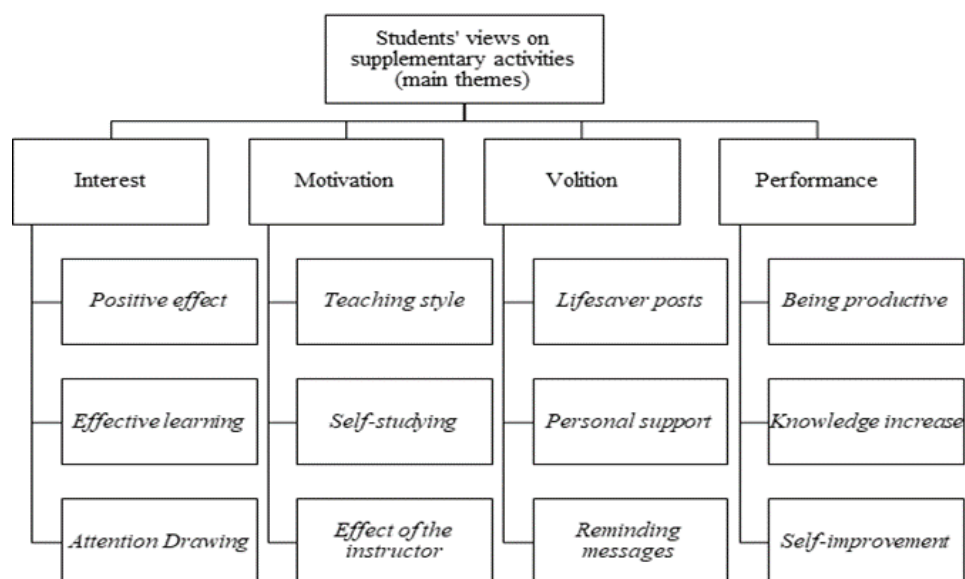
The answers to the above-given questions were collected over a period of three weeks.

## Data Analysis

The purpose of this case study is to gather a wide range of data to answer the research questions. The data are analyzed through the content analysis approach. Qualitative content analysis is a flexible and widely used research method in analyzing text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis, in this regard, is used to extract categories from collected data. In order to validate the categories extracted, two instructors other than the researchers of this study checked the findings. So, the data are analyzed by four researchers in total. First, each of the researchers checked and analyzed the data individually and specified the themes. Thereafter, all four researchers came together to discuss the initial categories and then decided on the themes. Accordingly, each researcher scrutinized the data again based on the agreed themes. Lastly, the researchers came together again and negotiated the themes and reached a consensus.

## Findings

The study's main research question was "How do EFL learners evaluate supplementary activities used in Facebook in terms of their language learning process, motivation, and engagement?" While answering it, the open-ended questions were directed to the students to obtain detailed information. In this connection, the responses of each participant were analyzed and direct citations to the most referenced subthemes were all given in the following sections below. The real names of the participants were accepted as confidential in accordance with the ethical rules of the research; therefore, each participant was given a unique nickname. The analysis of the data uncovered four themes: (1) interest, (2) motivation, (3) volition, and (4) academic performance (achievement) that contributes to learners' learning process positively (see Figure 3). So, based on the results of this study, the researchers indicate that supplementary activities made a noticeable difference in online learners' interest, motivation, volition, and academic performance in language learning on Facebook.



**Figure 3.** Main and sub-categories of the content analysis.

## Main Theme 1: Interest

The main theme and the sub-themes determined according to the opinions of the learner responses are included in this part. As a result of the analysis, 3 sub-themes (positive effect, effective learning, attention-drawing) have been identified under the main theme of "maintaining interest in English lesson". The answers given by the participants to the question "How do you assess the effect of the instructor's posts on Facebook (messages, announcements, notes, etc.) on your focus?" demonstrated that instructor's posts on Facebook have been found very useful for students to focus on the lesson.

### Positive effect (Sub-theme 1):

Under the theme of 'interest', it can be pointed out that the interviewed learners had a favorable approach towards supplementary activities. As connoted by the learners, Facebook were found to be beneficial. The following examples are some of the views of the students.

*I find it very good and useful; I couldn't learn English by myself, I actually learned it via my dear instructor, I am now trying to use it in my life. (Ayşe)*

*I always find the announcements and notes encouraging and useful. (Hülya)*

*It makes even those who say "I don't understand the lesson" look at every share and the activities arouse the desire to learn. (They helped learners to comprehend the subjects). (Zeynep)*

Additionally, the positive effect of the instructor is also observed.

*The focus of the instructor is excellent. The optimistic and cheerful mood adds positive energy to students. (Seyfi)*

*Our instructor, who is a positive person, made English lessons loved by all students. Even if the students had believed that they could not succeed in this course, they had high motivation in the end by their instructor saying: "No pessimism, no sad faces, you will succeed if you work". Apart from the lessons, she helped us to reinforce the subjects with the activities and live broadcasts she shared on Facebook. (Baran)*

### Effective learning (Sub-theme 2):

Under the theme of 'interest', it can be indicated that learners tend to believe more in themselves to achieve their learning goals. Here are some views of the students.

*It triggered my belief that I could achieve more effective learning and adaptation. (Nida)*

*Very effective indeed. (Ayla)*

They reiterated the impact of their instructors in achieving their learning goals in this section.

*Our instructor was very successful and made sharing as effective as the course itself. (Beren)*

### Attention drawing (Sub-theme 3):

Under the theme of 'interest', it can be remarked that learners found English lessons interesting and attention-getting. Thanks to the posts received, the students' attention was directed towards the lesson.

*Our instructor manages to draw our attention to the lesson. Thanks to her, I learned that English is such an enjoyable and attention-getting lesson. I have been away from English since I graduated, and now I'm trying to keep track of the posts our instructor shares. (Dilruba).*

Within the context of distance learning, instruction can be done by the attention-raising instructors who greatly contribute to the learning activity.

*Both live lessons and shared posts have a great contribution to us because I think there should be someone who leads us from time to time. Distance learning is a really difficult type of education and after a certain time, the desire to give up begins to increase. For this purpose, the instructor should attract learners' attention. (Mehmet)*

## Main Theme 2: Motivation

Based on the analysis, 3 sub-themes (teaching style, self-studying, the effect of the instructor) have been identified under the main theme of "motivation". The answers given by the participants to the question "On what do you think it depends whether you are motivated or not?" demonstrated that the instructor's teaching style is an essential factor for learners to get motivated. The learners who manage self-studying and do constant reviewing are also the ones who are highly motivated. In the following section, the participants' quotations that support these views are listed:

### Teaching style (Sub-theme 1):

Under the theme of 'motivation', it can be implied that the teaching style of the instructor is a crucial factor that increases students' interest in the lesson and motivation in feeling comfortable in learning activities. Responses of some of the students are as follows:

*It is based on understanding and following the course regularly. It becomes a more effective course with our instructor's teaching style. I can see the difference between the period I followed our instructor and the period I did not. This is how I get motivated. (Kerem)*

*The instructor's expression and the simple reduction of the unnecessary parts of the lesson with her own skills increased my motivation. (Beren)*

*The teaching performance of our instructor in class is motivating. (Celal)*

*It depends on both our work and our instructor's willingness to teach us. Her high energy passes to us. (Damla)*

In addition to the above comments, it can be said that as students' belief in what they can do increased, their motivation increased as well.

*As my belief in what I could do increased, so did my motivation. (Jale)*

### Self-studying (Sub-theme 2):

Under the theme of 'motivation', it can be revealed that learners are motivated when they manage to work on their own. In this connection, self-studying seems to be a significant sub-theme that triggers motivation. Some of the responses of the students are as follows:

*I don't think success or motivation depends on luck; I don't expect to understand the subject perfectly at the beginning. It depends on how much material with rich content I work with. I think the various study options like course activities are more efficient in the process of learning. I like studying by myself. (Kazım)*

*My motivation is related to my desire to work and learn alone. (Cansu)*

*My motivation definitely depends on my work. Success cannot be achieved without working hard by yourself. (Kamil)*

Under the theme of 'motivation', it can be designated that learners are motivated by doing constant revisions of the course subjects. Some comments from students on this theme include:

*Besides our instructor's positive approach towards us, the revision of the lesson increases my motivation. (Nur)*

*I have no problem with motivating myself in class. I'm constantly repeating the subjects after the live classes. (Kemal)*

### Effect of the instructor (Sub-theme 3):

Under the theme of 'motivation', it can be stated that learners had a positive effect of the instructor on their learning experience. Thanks to all the instructors' leading to learners who initially thought they could not succeed and felt pessimistic. They could finally make learning happen by being guided. Some comments from students on this theme include:

*In the past, I used to be very pessimistic about learning English. The instructor changed my negative point of view. In the end, I was able to take notes to pass the course and gained basic knowledge. (Lale)*

*Our instructor is familiar with the content of the course. Her voice actually sounded in my ears in the exam. I think it shows that ultimate success is not a coincidence. (Naz)*



*My instructor's live lectures and regular messages all helped me to pass. I did what I said I couldn't. I like English now. (Utku)*

### Main Theme 3: Volition

Based on the data obtained, 3 sub-themes (lifesaver posts, personal support, reminding messages) have been identified under the main theme of "volition". The answers given by the participants to the question "How effective are your instructor's posts (messages, announcements, notes, etc.) when you are motivated?" demonstrated that the posts and messages are seen as lifesavers by the learners. To keep track of volition, personal learning aims should be determined, and the course content should be attention-grabbing.

#### Lifesaver posts (Sub-theme 1):

Under the theme of 'volition', it can be indicated that learners found the messages shared by the instructor quite useful. The notes that were forgotten in busy lives were recalled by these posts. The following are the participant quotations that support these views:

*The messages are quite remarkable and important. The parts of the course are always in the foreground. This helps us a lot. (Nuri)*

*It's not just a lesson! Whenever I feel disconnected, my instructor's posts help me to come back and remember my aim of learning. If you witness her working until the morning you do not even understand how your motivation is automatically coming back. (Nilay)*

Such shared posts also reduced the stress of the learners and enabled them to concentrate on the learning process more positively.

*In times when the courses are inadequate, thanks to the messages, announcements, and notes on Facebook, our instructor tries to reduce our anxiety and increase our motivation. That works. (Eda)*

*The posts are found thought-provoking. The posts are extremely stimulating. (Beren)*  
*Motivation appears when we receive those posts shared by the instructor. (Ali)*

#### Personal support (Sub-theme 2):

Under the theme of 'volition', it can be marked that learners were highly warranted by the instructor's personal support. Thanks to this initiative, a tendency towards learning was observed.

*It is nice to know that the instructor's shares are actually for supporting the students and that support directed us to learn. (Adem).*

*The instructor was also believed to be empathized with the learners and had a deep insight into what learners need and how they feel while struggling for learning.*

*Every sharing of our instructor with us means 'I am here for you; I am with you'. The best thing is that a real educator can see through the eyes of the student and understand sincerely what emotions we actually have. It enables us to motivate and find ourselves, and then to focus on the subject more easily. (Bengisu)*

In this way, the learners were guided in terms of their learning priorities and needs.

*Her sharings are very helpful when I need to be and where I should go. (Celal)*

Under the theme of 'volition', it can be revealed that learners keep their volition towards learning via their instructor's guidance. They directly are affected by the efforts of the instructor to improve personal learning experiences.

*First of all, it is necessary to have an idealist instructor who is hardworking. Her efforts have always triggered my faith in my goals. That is why I have strong personal goals for learning. (Ahmet)*

*Our instructor always says that the more we study, and we love this lesson, the more successful we will be. I think personal goals and efforts should be at the forefront. (Gaye)*

### Reminding messages (Sub-theme 3):

Under the theme of 'volition', it can be embodied that when continuous repetition of messages is done by the teacher, this action becomes quite useful and effective for learning. They were found as essential reminders.

*The messages, announcements, and notes were very effective to pass the course. They were crucial reminders. (Cemil)*

*Thanks to our instructor's repetitions via messages, announcements, notes, and live lessons, the units are kept in mind and the success rate increases in this way (Helen).*

In addition to the continuous repetition of the lessons, reminding messages also increased the students' desire to reinforce the lesson. Some comments from students on this theme include:

*Our instructor keeps telling course subjects until we understand. In this way, I was comfortable to pass the first level. Even if I forget some subjects, I remember every detail thanks to the messages, announcements, notes shared by our instructor. These messages made a significant contribution to the course. (Hamid)*

*I don't miss the live classes on the group. When the week is over, I revisit messages, announcements, and notes shared by our instructor. The narrative style of our instructor makes a great contribution to keep details in mind. (Zeynep)*

*We learn effectively thanks to the fact that our instructor repeats the course continuously and writes the meaning of the words we do not know on the slides as -notes-. (Kenan)*

### Main Theme 4: Academic Performance

As a result of the analysis, 3 sub-themes (being productive, knowledge increase, self-improvement) have been identified under the main theme of "academic performance". The answers given by the participants to the question "When you evaluate your learning process, how do you see your current situation at the beginning and at the end of the semester? Can you compare yourself to the previous semester or the beginning of this semester?" demonstrated that learners feel productive and believe that there is an increase in their knowledge. They also indicate that they improved themselves in time. The following are the participant quotations that support these views.

#### Being productive (Sub-theme 1):

Under the theme of 'academic performance', it can be stated that learners felt productive after following live classes and the platform on Facebook. Although the learning process requires a great effort, students who do not give up over time have achieved academic success.

*I didn't have an e-campus account before, but I've been struggling to get good grades thanks to both live courses and the platform on Facebook. I feel more productive. (Parise)*

*I've just moved to A2 level. I can understand conversations and try to write sentences in English. I'm much more productive than I was before. (Aslı)*

*Frankly, I have made great progress, especially in English, because my English was very bad, so I did not like English during my education life, but this year I want to work more on learning English. (Can)*

The students who follow e-seminar courses regularly have achieved success and received good grades.

*I did not attend the courses in the previous semester and failed, but I succeeded in the first exam by following the Facebook group in this semester. (Umut)*

*I didn't pass this class last year. I see a lot of difference this year, thanks to live broadcasts on the group. My grades got better. (Adil)*

#### Knowledge increase (Sub-theme 2):

Under the theme of 'academic performance', it can be stated that learners increased their knowledge through the English course they got. Some responses from students on this theme include:

*This year I passed the English course I could not pass for 2 years. That was my biggest academic performance. (Ayfer)*

*This course gave me a lot and my knowledge has increased. (Arda)*

*Last semester, I didn't even have basic knowledge, but now I feel like I have gained the necessary knowledge. (Sevcan)*  
*My desire and knowledge have increased. (Hakan).*

Under the theme of 'academic performance', it can be expressed that learners' academic performance enhanced. In line with the opinions of the students, the reason for the improvement of the exam results can be stated as the increase in academic performance. Some comments from students include:

*I got 30 from this course before; however, I am currently receiving 71,250. I can say that my self-confidence has increased considerably. (Leyla)*  
*I was successful with my own knowledge of the ENG -A1 level. Once I started ENG A2 level and searched what was missing, I met the group of learners called "Distant Learners". I did not have much time to study for the last days, but I watched all the videos and read the announcements. I got 50 from the midterm exam and that was a good result. (Baran)*  
*I got 70 from the last exam. Thanks to my instructor, English became a better lesson. (Mehmet)*  
*I could understand the questions beforehand but could not answer them. Now I can see the consequences of learning and getting good grades. (Emel)*  
*My success rate increased. (Ayla)*

### **Self-improvement (Sub-theme 3):**

Under the theme of 'academic performance', it can be stated that learners have the belief of being improved. By comparing their current levels with those of the previous ones, it is possible to say that they have developed over time.

*During the years I learned English, I was struggling and trying to learn by my own efforts. After meeting our instructor, I realized that English was easy and fun to learn. I couldn't even compare my current situation with the previous one. I have an improvement. (Onur)*

The learners, who changed their perspectives against English learning, gained their self-confidence.

*As a student who has been consistently studying English 1 and 2, I have realized that English is not that difficult. There is a lot of difference between the last semester and this semester. I improved myself. (Eda)*  
*It is true I showed a great change. My vocabulary has increased so I can read English books now. I can do the tasks given by my instructor without any difficulty. Now I trust myself and I am taking strong steps. (Sudenaz)*

When the whole process was evaluated, their learning speed increased.

*My learning process has accelerated. (Hayri)*

### **Other comments**

As a result of the analysis, different views and comments received from the participants about different subjects. Some learners wanted e-campus to be updated and reformed according to their learning needs. Some comments from students include:

*If possible, the records of our English courses at e-campus should never be deleted. Not even after graduation... Whether or not the Open Education Faculty students have passed the course, he/she may be allowed to reach the live lessons of English class whenever he/she wants. If the language is to be learned, we do not want any restrictions. Please do it in all compulsory courses as well. (Emirhan)*  
*Like English, we want the same platform in numerically weighted subjects such as Mathematics and Accounting. The same system can be set up on Facebook. (Ramiz)*  
*The current tests belong to the previous years; I would be more than happy if they are updated. (Dilara)*  
*Test questions can be solved on e-campus 2 days a week. I became a student after 23 years, but there was some uneasiness. I would like to thank the instructors for their great efforts and motivation. (Ahu)*  
*Everything is perfect and flawless; the study activities are very good. Thank you very much for your efforts (Nida).*

## Discussion

When many studies are examined, the potential of social media is viewed effective and changed the nature of the traditional way of teaching settings (Manca, 2020). In this regard, it can be stated that social media has been creating a connecting environment among online learners. These environments enable the new generation of students to reconnect to higher education institutions (Junco, 2014) by being in close relationship with other learners, instructors, and the milieu itself. Studies conducted on social networking sites predicate that these platforms have already situated in current practices in education and they were found remarkably motivating (Taşkıran, 2018). Similar results have been reached in various studies conducted to date in related literature (Aubry, 2013; Chugh & Ruhi, 2018).

Facebook with its various features such as filtering the content, live streaming, scheduled posts, and applications group interactions may be utilized for language learning purposes. In this regard, the site with specific leading and clear guidance of instructors can become a milieu for effective learning, interaction, and engagement (Akbari, Pilot, & Simons, 2015; Buga, Căpeneală, Chirasnel, & Popa, 2014; Donlan, 2014) where learners can boost their confidence in using the language, encourage their participation in-class activities and help improve their fluency in English (Fithriani, Dewi, Daulay, Salmiah & Fransiska, 2019).

Facebook as a rewarding platform can function to keep learner interests at the highest level (Naghdipour, 2017). It can also help online learners to develop their native language skills via given assignments and online discussions to be followed (Karal et al., 2017). Facebook is generally reflected as a miscellaneous space that increases the level of collaboration and interaction between not only the course instructor and learners but between learners and other learners as well. In this connection, as a communication tool, Facebook enhances learners' motivation (Aubry, 2013) and can engage learners' attention (Chugh & Ruhi, 2018). That is, the findings of this research were consistent with previous studies that showed students' motivation and engagement could be enhanced and as a result student might perform better through social networking sites. The data obtained in this study signify that the activities used in the Facebook group maintained learners' interest, enhanced motivation, volition, and academic performance.

Although there are various studies about the educational use of Facebook, studies particularly focusing on foreign language learning at a distance seem to be limited. In this connection, the findings of this research provide support for the effectiveness of the ARCS-V based motivational design in EFL teaching. Previous studies conducted by Annamalai (2016), Hung, Chao, Lee, and Chen (2013), Ucar and Kumtepe (2019), Yuncu Kurt and Kecik (2017) also implemented ARCS motivation design in EFL courses. Four studies revealed that using ARCS based motivational strategies enhanced the motivation, engagement, and interest of the EFL learners. In this connection, the results of this study and previous studies could be considered an additional support for the effectiveness of the motivational design model in EFL environments.

Based upon the results gathered from the above-mentioned studies conducted mainly on education and rarely on foreign language learning, Facebook, can be regarded as a social media tool that provides a virtual milieu where students can easily create learning communities as members, develop group awareness and support learning desire. When there is observable interaction between learners, the site can facilitate foreign language learning and teaching (Mills, 2009). Similarly, the findings reached in this study, support the idea of using Facebook as a supportive learning tool in higher education contexts with supplementary activities including instructor's posts, personal messages, announcements, notes, and live broadcasts. To the authors of this study, Facebook, with its proper motivational activities, makes a remarkable difference in increasing online learners' motivation, promoting engagement and interest of EFL learners toward English learning. In addition, this study contributes to the literature by both handling the social networking within the context of distance learning and applying activities according to the ARCS-V model.

## Conclusion

By creating educational platforms out of class and integrating social networking sites into the teaching-learning process, the traditional 'chalk-and-talk' instruction can be changed and built upon the new generation educational concept of learning. With this notion in mind, the researchers of this study mainly focused on the question of " How do EFL learners evaluate supplementary activities used in Facebook

in terms of their language learning process, motivation, and engagement?” and tried to reveal the evidence provided by the informants. While seeking an answer to this question, the researchers were particularly concerned with the difficulties of learners trying to learn the English language at a distance. In distance learning process, the student is usually alone and may not be able to reach the instructor easily. To overcome this problem, it may be useful for learners to communicate with other learners who have similar learning goals. In this regard, the results of this study suggest that supplementary activities provided by the course instructor on Facebook helped learners to exist in a virtual community and felt content during the learning activities. By these activities, learners did not feel abandoned and Facebook enhanced online learners' interest, motivation, volition, and academic performance.

However, this study had two limitations. The first one was the large sample size of 105 participants. Even though the authors had more divergent opinions on supplementary activities, it may be probable not to get deep perspectives of learners. The other limitation was that since the authors used the volunteer participants as a sample, the results may be biased and superficial. The convenience sampling chosen by the researchers might have given diverse results. Therefore, more in-depth data should be collected from a specific group of online learners. An essential point of future research would also determine which supplementary activities are better in enhancing online learners' motivation and engagement. By exploring the preferences of online learners taking part in the supplementary activities may provide more detailed results regarding English language learning in online social network sites where EFL learners can experience more autonomous learning approaches with high interaction and flexible timing.

Considering such findings of this study, virtual communities on Facebook can be exploited in detail. Even though Facebook is already situated in current practices in education, more application-oriented studies in language learning may broaden researchers' perspective.

## References

- Annamalai, S. (2016). Implementing ARCS model to design a motivating multimedia e-book for polytechnic ESL classroom. *Journal of Telecommunication, Electronic and Computer Engineering*, 8(8), 57–60.
- Anderson, T. (2003). Getting the Mix Right Again: An Updated and Theoretical Rationale for Interaction. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v4i2.149>
- Anderson, T. & Garrison, D. R. (1998). Learning in a networked world: New roles and responsibilities. In C. Gibson (Ed.), *Distance Learners in Higher Education* (pp. 97- 112). Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing.
- Aydin, S. (2017). A Descriptive Study on EFL Learners' Perceptions of Facebook. *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 21(2), 381-400.
- Akbari, E., Pilot, A., & Simons, P. R. J. (2015). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in foreign language learning through Facebook. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 48, 126-134.
- Aubry, J. (2013). Facebook-induced motivation shifts in a french online course. *TechTrends: Linking Research and Practice to Improve Learning*, 57(6), 81–87.
- Baker, S. E., Edwards, R., & Doidge, M. (2012). How many qualitative interviews is enough?: Expert voices and early career reflections on sampling and cases in qualitative research. Accessed July 4, 2019: [http://eprints.brighton.ac.uk/11632/1/how\\_many\\_interviews.pdf](http://eprints.brighton.ac.uk/11632/1/how_many_interviews.pdf)
- Balcikanli, C. (2015). Prospective English language teachers' experiences in Facebook: Adoption, use and educational use in Turkish context. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (IJEDICT)*, 11(3), 82-99.
- Blattner, G., & Fiori, M. (2009). Facebook in the language classroom: Promises and possibilities. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning*, 6(1), 17-28.
- Bosch, T. E. (2009). Using online social networking for teaching and learning: Facebook use at the University of Cape Town. *Communicatio: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, 35(2), 185-200.
- Buga, R., Căpeneață, I., Chirasnel, C., & Popa, A. (2014). Facebook in foreign language teaching—A tool to improve communication competences. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 128, 93-98.
- Camus, M., Hurt, N. E., Larson, L. R., & Prevost, L. (2016). Facebook as an online teaching tool: Effects on student participation, learning, and overall course performance. *College Teaching*, 64(2), 84-94.

- Castells, M. (2004). Informationalism, Networks and the Network Society: A Theoretical Blueprint. Accessed July 20, 2019: <http://annenbergl.usc.edu/images/faculty/facpdfs/Informationalism.pdf>
- Chugh, R., & Ruhi, U. (2018). Social media in higher education: A literature review of Facebook. *Education and Information Technologies*, 23(2), 605-616.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Deimann, M., & Bastiaens, T. (2010). The role of volition in distance education: an exploration of its capacities. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 11(1). 1-16.
- Donlan, L. (2014). Exploring the views of students on the use of Facebook in university teaching and learning. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 38(4), 572-588.
- Espinosa, L. F. (2015). The use of Facebook for educational purposes in EFL classrooms. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 5(11), 2206-2211.
- Facebook (2019). "Stats", Accessed August 30, 2019. <https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>
- Fithriani, R., Dewi, U., Daulay, S. H., Salmiah, M., & Fransiska, W. (2019). Using Facebook in EFL Writing Class: Its Effectiveness from Students' Perspective. *KnE Social Sciences*, 3(19), 634–645. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i19.48>
- Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2009). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (7th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Fryer, L. K. & Bovee, H. N. (2016). Supporting students' motivation for e-learning: teachers matter on and offline. *Internet and Higher Education*, 30, 21-29.
- Haque, S. F., & Al Salem, N. M. (2019). Social Media in EFL Context: Attitudes of Saudi Learners. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(5), 1029-1040.
- Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, B. (2006). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288.
- Hung, I. C., Chao, K. J., Lee, L., & Chen, N. S. (2013). Designing a robot teaching assistant for enhancing and sustaining learning motivation. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 21(2), 156–171.
- Junco, R. (2014). *Engaging students through social media: Evidence-based practices for use in student affairs* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA : Jossey-Bass.
- Karal, H., Kokoc, M., & Cakir, O. (2017). Impact of the educational use of Facebook group on the high school students' proper usage of language. *Education and Information Technologies*, 22(2), 677-695.
- Keller, J. M. (2008). First principles of motivation to learn and e-learning. *Distance Education*, 29(2), 175–185.
- Keller, J. M. (2010). *Motivational design for learning and performance: The ARCS model approach*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Keller, J. M. & Deimann, M. (2012). Motivation, volition, and performance. In R. A. Reiser & J. V. Dempsey (Eds.). *Trends and issues in instructional design and technology*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Li, K., & Keller, J. M. (2018). Use of the ARCS model in education: A literature review. *Computers & Education*, 122, 54-62.
- Manca, S. (2020). Snapping, pinning, liking or texting: Investigating social media in higher education beyond Facebook. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 44, 100707.
- Mills, N. A. (2009, October). Facebook and the use of social networking tools to enhance language learner motivation and engagement. *Paper presented at the Northeast Association for Language Learning Technology Conference*, New Haven, CT. Accessed July 14, 2019, [http://works.bepress.com/nicole\\_mills/29/](http://works.bepress.com/nicole_mills/29/)
- Naghdipour, B. (2017). 'Close your book and open your Facebook': A case for extending classroom collaborative activities online. *The Journal of AsiaTEFL*, 14(1), 130–143.
- Özdemir, E. (2017). Promoting EFL learners' intercultural communication effectiveness: A focus on Facebook, *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 30(6), 510-528, DOI: 10.1080/09588221.2017.1325907
- Reinecke, L., Meier, A., Aufenanger, S., Beutel, M. E., Dreier, M., Quiring, O., ... Müller, K. W. (2018). Permanently online and permanently procrastinating? The mediating role of Internet use for the effects of trait procrastination on psychological health and well-being. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 862–880.
- Sánchez, R. A., Cortijo, V., & Javed, U. (2014). Students' perceptions of Facebook for academic purposes. *Computers & Education*, 70, 138-149.

- Taskiran, A. Gumusoglu, E. K., & Aydin, B. (2018). Fostering foreign language learning with Twitter: Reflections from English Learners. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 19(1), 100-116.
- Thomé-Williams, A.C. (2016). Developing intercultural communicative competence in Portuguese through Skype and Facebook. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 25(1), 213–233.
- Ucar, H., & Kumtepe, A. T. (2019). Effects of the ARCS-V-based motivational strategies on online learners' academic performance, motivation, volition, and course interest. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12404>
- Uçar, H. & Kumtepe, A. T. (2016). Uzaktan eğitimde ARCS-V motivasyon tasarımı modelinin kullanımı. *AUAd*, 2(4), 37-54.
- Uçar, H. & Kumtepe, A. T. (2018). Integrating Motivational Strategies into Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs): The Application and Administration of the Motivation Design Model. In *Administrative Leadership in Open and Distance Learning Programs* (pp. 213-235). IGI Global.
- Wagner, E.D. (1994). In support of a functional definition of interaction. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 8(2), 6 – 26.
- Yapıcı, İ. Ü., & Hevedanlı, M. (2014). Educational use of social networks: Facebook case study. *European Journal of Research on Education*, 2(4), 16-21.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Yuncu Kurt, P., & Keçik, İ. (2017). The effects of arcs motivational model on student motivation to learn English. *European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 2(1), 22-44.

### Notes

An earlier version of this study was presented in International Open and Distance Learning Conference (IODL-2019), Eskisehir, Turkey.

### About the Authors

**Hasan Ucar**, hasanxucar@gmail.com; Anadolu University, Eskişehir, Turkey; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9174-4299>

**Nil Goksel**, ngoksel@anadolu.edu.tr; Anadolu University, Eskişehir, Turkey; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3447-2722> (Corresponding Author)

### Suggested citation:

Ucar, H., & Goksel, N. (2020). Enhancing online EFL learners' motivation and engagement through supplementary activities on Facebook. *Asian Journal of Distance Education*, 15(1), 154-168. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3881576>