

How genders differ in Taiwanese college students' part-time job interest, English learning motivation and anxiety

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Abstract

The study was conducted to investigate how genders differ in Taiwanese college students' part-time job interest, English learning motivation and anxiety. Participants were 91 students in a private university in south Taiwan. All were arranged to take a General English Proficiency Test (CEF, B1) and fill out questionnaires dealing with their personal background, part-time job employment, English learning motivation and anxiety. Findings showed that genders did play a role in the whole process. To enhance a positive attitude toward part-time employment and to keep a good balance of working and studying were recommended.

Keywords: gender differences, part-time job employment, motivation, anxiety

1. Background

As in a global village, English has become the “Lingua Franca” and been widely used as a tool for communication in many fields. To promote the English skills of its workforce and economic outlook, many countries have invested enormous resources in English language learning. Taiwan is not an exception. However, based on the report of The World's Top 60 Countries in English, 2013, Taiwan ranked 33, lower than that of some other Asia countries, such as South Korea (24), Japan (26), and Vietnam (28) (www.ef.com/epi/). The results has provoked much concern in Taiwan. Without doubt, language learning is a complex process and related to many factors. Among them, motivation is a key to any learning, both instrumentally and integrately. But what is Taiwanese students' motivation to learn the crucial tool, and what are the factors really related to their English learning? Nowadays, due to the influence of the social and economic development, more and more students are becoming interested in part-time working, in particular, more than 73% of Taiwanese college students had part-time job experience (Huang & Lin, 2010). Part-time working is both instrumentally and integratively oriented, and anxiety is believed to be related to learning. Hence, the study aimed to investigate, from the prospect of gender differences, the role of part-time job employment in Taiwanese college students' English learning.

2.Literature Review

Some related literature about English learning motivation, anxiety and part-time job employment were reviewed as followed:

2.1.Motivation and anxiety about foreign language learning

Gardner & Lambert (1959) were the first to introduce the integrative- instrumental approach to measuring motivation. Attention was shifted from the study of learner's behavior to the learning process of language learners. It was this shift that gave definition to the field of second/foreign language learning. Integratively motivated learners are those who wish to identify with another ethnolinguistic group, whereas instrumentally motivated learners are those who learn a second/foreign language for utilitarian purposes. It has been supported that motivation is the most important factor in second language achievement and proved to be related to attitude and motivational intensity (Hou, 2010). As for anxiety, language anxiety's affect on language learning is two folds: positive and negative. Appropriate tension is normal and necessary. It is suggested that some anxiety can improve performance (Scovl, 1978), positively relate to motivation, and influence both the quality of performance and the amount of effort invested in it. For students with higher self-esteem and strong motivation, anxiety may force them to study harder, arouse their potential and bring about unanticipated better outcome. On the other hand, anxiety's another affect lies in its negative influences on other variables, such as motivation, attitude, and strategy use, as well as in its interfering with language learning process and performance. Findings also show that anxiety is negatively correlated with Field Independence, participation of classroom activities, short-term and long-term memory, TOEFL scores and language achievement (Chung, 2010; Horwitz, et al.,1986; Hou, et al., 2012; Linh, 2011).

2.2.College students' part-time job employment

Due to the influence of the social and economic development, nowadays, more and more students are becoming interested in part-time working, in particular, more than 73% of Taiwanese college students had part-time job experience (Huang & Lin, 2010). According to the survey of Taiwan Council of Labor Affairs (2006), the top three reasons of Taiwanese college students' part-time working were "to make some pocket money" (53.7%), "to become jobless" (23.0%), and "to gain social experience" (17.4%). This approach has some pros and cons. On one side, people who encourage and support students to do part t-time job, believe that in the process, students can learn some important life skills, such as time management, independence, responsibility, being ready and well-prepared for the work culture and job market (Huang & Liou, 1995; Lin & Wang, 1992; Neill, Mulholland, Ross, & Leckey, 2004). On the other side, people who oppose students from doing part time job, have opinion that students should concentrate on their studies,which will be helpful for them to be qualified for building their career after graduation. In fact, in the survey of Taiwan Council of Labor Affairs (2006), 68.1% of the students self reported that their part time work did not relate to what they had learned. Fang (2005) found that family relationship was not negatively impacted by part-time work among the working students, but part-time work brought burdens on school work, participation of class and school activities. In addition to neglecting their study, some other drawbacks for part-time working students may include the challenges of working pressure, self-requirement, interpersonal relationship, adjusting the differences between professional knowledge and applications, particularly, the possible negative influences of their health, life habit, and work-value (Carr,.2005; Fang, 2005; Hewitt, 2002; Loughlin & Barling, 2001).

3.Methodology

3.1.Research design

The research design is a descriptive study. The methodology of descriptive study was chosen as the research design because of its particular strength and advantages in being able to set an objective “to determine the factors, and relationships among the factors that have resulted in the current behavior or status of the study” (Gay, 1992, p.236).

3.2.Participants

A total of 91 students in a private university in south Taiwan participating in the study, including 26 male students (27.4%) and 65 female students (72.6%). Among them, 87% were English majors and 13% were non-English majors. In particular, 29.8% were freshmen, 30.9%, sophomores, 22.6%, juniors, and 16.7%, seniors. They were all arranged to take an English test and fill out questionnaires dealing with their part-time job interest, English learning motivation, and anxiety.

3.3.Research instruments

The research instrument included a General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), Intermediate level (CEF, B1), a short survey of students’ background (10 items), and a 53-item questionnaire, each item with 6 choices, dealing with part-time job interest (16 items) , English learning motivation (28 items), and English learning anxiety (9 items).

3.4.Research questions

The study intended to answer the following research questions, including:

1. the relationship among part-time job experience, English learning motivation, and anxiety
2. gender differences in part-time job interest, English learning motivation, and anxiety
3. factors related to students’ English performance

4. Findings

Findings included descriptions of (1) students’ background, (2) the reliability of the research instrument, (3) relationship among working experience, English learning motivation and anxiety, (4) gender differences in part-time job interest, English learning motivation and anxiety, and (5) regression analysis of part-time job interest, working experience, English learning motivation and anxiety predicting English performance.

4.1. Students’ background

The majority (90.5%) of the students didn’t have any experience of going abroad, including 78.2% of male students, and 95.1% of the female students ($p < .01$). A total of 68.7 % of the students ever worked part-time, particularly, 69.6% for male students, and 68.3% for female students.

4.2. Reliability of the research instrument

The reliability of the research instrument was Cronbach’s Alpha .759 (No of items=53). “If a test were perfectly reliable, the reliability coefficient would be 1.00....However, no test is perfect reliable.” (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p.141). Hence, the result indicated that the research instrument of the study was reliable.

4.3. Relationship among working experience, English learning motivation and anxiety

By using Pearson correlation analysis, it was found that students' working experience was strongly correlated with their English learning motivation ($p < .01$). In addition, English learning motivation was negatively related to English learning anxiety ($p < .05$). The finding was shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Relation among working experience, English learning motivation and anxiety

		Working experience	English motivation	English Anxiety
experience	Pearson	1	.438(**)	-.200
	Sig		.000	.070
	N	84	81	83
motivation	Pearson	.438(**)	1	-.247(*)
	Sig	.000		.026
	N	81	81	81
anxiety	Pearson	-.200	-.247(*)	1
	Sig	.070	.026	
	N	83	81	84

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

4.4. Gender differences in part-time job interest, English learning motivation and anxiety

For both male students and female students, the top five reasons for their doing part-time job were to: "have working experience" (item 8), "have practical learning experience" (item 4), "expend personal relationship" (item 9), "broaden eyesights" (item 7), and "apply professional knowledge into practice (item 5). By using ANOVA analysis, it was found that female students had higher interests in part-time jobs in order to "have working experience", "have practical learning experience", "expend personal relationship", "broaden eyesights" ($p < .05$). Regarding to English learning motivation, female students tended to be more motivated to learn English than male students. A significant difference existed in female students' trying to learn more English than male students ($p < .05$). Particularly, comparing with female students, more male students confessed that they would spend more time on other subjects rather than English ($p < .01$), and thought that it wasted their time to learn English ($p < .05$). However, after having working experience, male students recognized more the importance of English, though the difference didn't reach significant level. Additionally, regarding to English learning anxiety, the top five anxiety- evokings were "to order meals in English", "to talk to foreign tourists in English", "to be asked in English", "to talk on the phone in English", and "to speak English in front of foreigners and Taiwanese". Comparatively, male students had higher means in English learning anxiety, yet, the differences didn't reach significant level.

4.5. Regression analysis of part-time job interest, working experience, English learning motivation and anxiety predicting English scores

The findings showed that factors predicting students' English scores were their working experience (negatively) ($p < .05$) and English learning anxiety (negatively) ($p < .01$). The findings were shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Regression analysis of part-time job interest, working experience, English learning motivation and anxiety predicting English scores

variables	<u>B</u>	<u>SEB</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>sig</u>
(Constant)	148.327	52.010		2.852	.007
Part-time job interest	9.936	8.592	.176	1.156	.255
Working experience	-14.820	6.641	-.312	-2.231	.032
English learning motivation	13.867	13.011	.166	1.066	.293
English learning anxiety	-28.923	8.032	-.555	-3.601	.001

**p < .01

*p < .05

5. Conclusions and Implications

The conclusions and implications were described below:

5.1. Conclusions

1. The majority (90.5%) of the students didn't have any experience to go abroad, especially for female students (95.1%). Going abroad is costly. It reflects that in Taiwan society, parents still favor boys.

2. A total of 68.7% of the students had part-time working experience. The high percentage of college students' engaging in part-time working supported other studies (Taiwan Council of Labor Affairs, 2006, Fang, 2005, Huang & Lin, 2010).

3. Students' part-time working experience was found to be strongly related with their English learning motivation ($p < .01$). However, English learning anxiety was negatively related to English learning motivation ($p < .05$).

4. The top five reasons for students' interest in working part-time were to "have working experience", "have practical learning experience", "expend personal relationship", "broaden eyesights", and "apply professional knowledge into practice".

5. Female students were found to be more interested in part-time working and more motivated in learning English than male students ($p < .05$). However, after having part-time working experience, male students tended to more recognize the importance of learning English than female students.

6. Regarding to English learning anxiety, male students seemed to be more anxious about English learning than female students.

7. Factors related to students' English scores were part-time working experience ($p < .05$) and English learning anxiety, negatively ($p < .01$). In other words, students' part-time working experience and English learning anxiety could negatively predict their English scores.

5.2. Implications

1. Students' part-time working experience was strongly related to their English learning motivation ($p < .01$), but also negatively predictive to their English scores. Hence, on one hand, parents and teachers can hold positive attitudes toward students' part-time job employment, but on the other hand, students should be reminded to keep a good balance of studying and working.
2. Students' English learning anxiety was found to be negatively related to English scores. So, students should be encouraged to have self-confidence and trained to use more style-based strategies to improve English skills, especially speaking skills.
3. Gender differences did exist in the process of part-time working and English learning motivation. Despite of some traditional parents' gender favor, in general, female students were more motivated to learn English, to be interested in having part-time working experience, and to do well in many aspects. So, male students should motivate themselves to have a good balance of part-time working engagement and academic studying dedication.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

N=91. male=26, female=65

Background	English %					Other%				
	gender	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	M	SD	sig	
Majors		86.9					13.1			
2.grade : (1).first year (2).second year (3).third year (4).fourth year (5).fifth year	all	29.8	31.0	22.6	16.7					
3.gender : (1).male (2).female	all	27.4	72.6							
4.time to live in English-speaking country: (1).none (2).less than 1 year (3).1-3 years (4).more than 3 years	male						1.34	.77	.007	
	female						1.04	.21		
	all	90.5	7.1	1.2	1.2		1.1	.45		
5.years to learn English : (1).3-5 years (2).5-7 years (3).7-10 years (4).more than 10 years	male						2.80	1.15	.137	
	female						3.20	.99		
	all	11.4	15.2	25.3	48.1		3.10	1.04		
6.weely extra English learning time (1).less than 2 hours (2).2-4 hours (3).4-6 hours (4).6-8 hours (5).more than 8 hours	male						1.81	.79	.935	
	female						1.80	.91		
	all	43.9	37.8	12.2	6.1		1.80	.88		
7. parat-time working experience? (1).no (2).yes	male	26.9	73.1				1.73	.47	.535	
	female	30.2	69.8				1.69	.46		
	all	29.2	70.8				1.71	.46		
8. time for part-time working: (1).less than 6 months (2).0.5-1 year (3).1-2 year (4).2-3 year (5).more than 3 years	male						2.17	1.28	.290	
	female						2.58	1.34		
	all	31.0	24.1	22.4	12.1	10.3	2.46	1.32		
9. father's educational background: (1).graduate school and above (2).college/university (3).high school (4). below high school	male						2.52	.66	.031	
	female						2.91	.74		
	all	2.4	31.7	48.8	17.1		2.80	.74		
10.mother's educational background: (1).graduate school and above (2).college/university (3).high school (4). Below high school	male						2.63	.84	.074	
	female						3.01	.84		
	all	6.2	22.2	45.7	25.9		2.91	.85		

II. Part-time job interest , English learning motivation and anxiety

1=completely disagree , 2=disagree , 3=somewhat disagree , 4=somewhat agree , 5=agree , 6=completely agree N=91. male=26, female=65

Part-time job interest	gender	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	M	SD	Sig (rank)
1.to satisfy my desire of learning	male							4.17	.57	.567
	female							4.31	1.08	
	all	1.2	3.6	10.7	44.0	32.1	8.3	4.27	.97	
2.to meet my interest	male							4.21	.95	.937
	female							4.19	1.10	
	all	1.2	3.6	17.9	40.5	25.0	11.9	4.20	1.06	
3.to have self-accomplishment	male							4.47	1.12	.308
	female							4.73	.99	
	all	2.4	0	9.5	22.6	47.6	17.9	4.66	1.03	
4.to have practical learning opportunity	male							4.65	.98	.113
	female							5.03	.96	
	all	1.2	1.2	6.0	14.3	50.0	27.4	4.92	.97	
5.to apply for professional knowledge	male							4.47	.94	.169
	female							4.81	1.02	
	all	0	2.4	9.5	25.0	39.3	23.8	4.72	1.01	
6.to express my enthusiasm of service	male							4.39	.94	.448
	female							4.57	.99	
	all	0	1.2	10.7	42.9	25.0	20.2	4.52	.97	
7.to broaden my eyesights	male							4.39	1.23	.041
	female							4.90	.90	
	all	1.2	1.2	8.3	22.6	42.9	23.8	4.76	1.02	
8.to have working experience	male							4.65	1.30	.010
	female							5.27	.81	
	all	1.2	0	6.0	15.5	34.5	42.9	5.10	1.00	
9.to expend relationship	male							4.43	1.23	.046
	female							4.93	.91	
	all	0	0	14.3	21.4	34.5	29.8	4.79	1.02	
10.to have family's encouragement	male							3.47	1.70	.219
	female							3.91	1.34	
	all	8.3	10.7	19.0	32.1	14.3	15.5	3.79	1.45	
11.to be introduced by relatives	male							3.43	1.61	.219
	female							3.16	1.52	
	all	19.0	13.1	22.6	25.0	10.7	9.5	3.23	1.54	
12.to be influenced by friends	male							3.65	1.36	.478
	female							3.04	1.28	
	all	11.9	14.3	35.7	23.8	7.1	7.1	3.21	1.32	
13.to meet school's requirement	male							3.21	1.73	.063
	female							2.65	1.44	
	all	27.4	17.9	23.8	14.3	10.7	6.0	2.80	1.54	
14.to earn money for personal expenses	male							4.39	1.37	.137
	female							4.47	1.46	
	all	4.8	8.3	8.3	21.4	29.8	27.4	4.45	1.43	
15.to support family's expenses	male							3.21	1.53	.812
	female							3.68	1.54	
	all	11.9	17.9	15.5	21.4	23.8	9.5	3.55	1.54	

16.to buy some luxurious stuff	male							3.30	1.66	.215
	female							3.81	1.36	
	all	9.5	13.1	17.9	31.0	16.7	11.9	3.67	1.45	(12)
Total	male							4.03	.59	.205
	female							4.22	.60	
	all							4.17	.60	.324
English learning motivation		1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	M	SD	sig
17.It's good to learn English.	male							5.04	1.42	.488
	female							5.22	.93	
	all	2.4	1.2	2.4	13.1	32.1	48.8	5.17	1.08	
18.I hate to learn English*	male							2.65	1.66	.395
	female							2.37	1.15	
	all	29.8	25.0	25.0	14.3	2.4	3.6	2.45	1.31	
19.I really like to learn English.	male							3.91	1.47	.212
	female							4.29	1.14	
	all	3.6	4.8	16.7	35.7	22.6	16.7	4.19	1.24	
20.I'd rather spend time on subjects other than English.*	male							3.65	1.40	.014
	female							2.86	1.21	
	all	14.3	11.9	45.2	14.3	8.3	6.0	3.08	1.30	
21.English is an important part of school curriculum.	male							4.91	1.23	.453
	female							5.11	1.03	
	all	2.4	1.2	3.6	14.3	38.1	40.5	5.05	1.09	
22.It wastes time to learn English.*	male							2.26	1.42	.116
	female							1.81	1.00	
	all	47.6	23.8	21.4	2.4	3.6	1.2	1.94	1.14	
23. I plan to learn English more.	male							4.34	1.33	.144
	female							4.78	1.17	
	all	3.6	1.2	7.1	32.1	25.0	31.0	4.66	1.22	
24.I love to learn English.	male							3.78	1.70	.118
	female							4.32	1.28	
	all	6.0	7.1	13.1	33.3	17.9	22.6	4.17	1.42	
25.I think it's boring to learn English.*	male							2.82	1.74	.803
	female							2.73	1.31	
	all	25.0	17.9	29.8	17.9	2.4	7.1	2.76	1.43	
26. I will completely give up English after graduation because I am not interested in it at all.*	male							2.34	1.69	.461
	female							2.10	1.21	
	all	41.0	25.3	22.9	3.6	1.2	6.0	2.16	1.35	
27.It's important to learn English to get along with English-speaking people.	male							4.86	1.52	.191
	female							5.23	.94	
	all	2.4	2.4	2.4	11.0	35.4	46.3	5.13	1.13	
28.It's important to learn English to know kinds of people.	male							5.00	1.08	.398
	female							5.21	1.00	
	all	1.2	0	6.0	15.5	29.8	47.6	5.15	1.02	
29.It's important to learn English to understand and appreciate the life of English speaking people.	male							4.91	1.23	.342
	female							5.16	1.00	
	all	1.2	1.2	7.1	11.9	34.5	44.0	5.09	1.07	
30.Its' important to learn English to communicate	male							4.95	1.10	.686
	female							5.06	1.09	

with English-speaking people.	all	1.2	0	9.5	16.7	28.6	44.0	5.03	1.09	
31. I have strong desire to learn English.	male							3.82	1.40	.303
	female							4.16	1.30	
	all	3.6	8.3	17.9	38.1	11.9	20.2	4.07	1.33	
32. Learning English is not the major goal in my life.*	male							3.52	1.41	.760
	female							3.41	1.39	
	all	12.0	6.0	37.3	25.3	8.4	10.8	3.44	1.39	
33. If I have choose, I will use all my time to learn English.	male							3.08	1.50	.364
	female							3.37	1.21	
	all	9.5	15.5	32.1	28.6	7.1	7.1	3.29	1.29	
34. Sometimes I think about giving up learning English.*	male							3.69	1.69	.665
	female							3.52	1.57	
	all	15.5	10.7	19.0	23.8	17.9	13.1	3.57	1.60	
35. I want to learn well because some day it will become part of my life.	male							4.04	1.58	.741
	female							4.16	1.45	
	all	8.3	7.1	11.9	27.4	26.2	19.0	4.13	1.14	
36. I lost my interest in learning English.*	male							3.56	1.53	.772
	female							3.45	1.47	
	all	9.5	17.9	25.0	21.4	14.3	11.9	3.48	1.48	
37. I try to learn English more	male							3.47	1.47	.028
	female							4.29	1.49	
	all	9.5	9.5	7.1	31.0	23.8	19.0	4.07	1.52	
38. Honestly, I don't want to learn English at all.*	male							3.52	1.87	.472
	female							3.21	1.69	
	all	17.9	21.4	19.0	15.5	7.1	19.0	3.29	1.74	
39. I hope to speak English fluently.	male							4.13	1.76	.264
	female							4.60	1.71	
	all	10.7	7.1	9.5	9.5	22.6	40.5	4.47	1.73	
40. Except for basic English, I have no intention to learn other advanced English.*	male							3.04	1.49	.754
	female							3.16	1.59	
	all	19.0	15.5	29.8	15.5	9.5	10.7	3.13	1.55	
41. English is important because it's crucial in the job market.	male							5.00	1.04	.698
	female							4.90	1.02	
	all	0	3.6	3.6	23.8	34.5	34.5	4.92	1.02	
42. English is important because it makes me well-educated.	male							4.34	1.46	.143
	female							4.77	1.03	
	all	1.2	2.4	13.1	26.2	27.4	29.8	4.65	1.17	
43. English is important because it helps me to get a job.	male							4.91	1.08	.967
	female							4.90	1.12	
	all	1.2	0	10.7	21.4	28.6	38.1	4.90	1.10	
44. English is important because other people will respect me because fo my good English.	male							4.30	1.25	.898
	female							4.34	1.27	
	all	2.4	3.6	20.2	28.6	22.6	22.6	4.33	1.26	
total	male							4.24	.73	.212
	female							4.44	.64	
	all							4.39	.64	
English learning anxiety		1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	M	SD	sig
45. I feel anxious to talk to tourists in English.	male							3.95	1.63	.397
	female							3.65	1.36	

	all	13.1	4.8	16.7	35.7	20.2	9.5	3.73	1.44	
46. Wherever I go, I worry about speaking English.	male							3.17	1.40	.822
	female							1.35	.17	
	all	14.3	19.0	26.2	26.2	9.5	4.8	3.11	1.35	
47. Speaking English doesn't bother me at all.*	male							2.86	1.42	.875
	female							2.91	1.18	
	all	11.9	28.6	29.8	21.4	3.6	4.8	2.90	1.24	
48. I feel bothered if I need to talk on the phone in English.	male							3.52	1.44	.758
	female							3.42	1.18	
	all	7.1	14.3	29.8	28.6	15.5	4.8	3.45	1.25	
49. I am not nervous if I need to tell the direction in English.*	male							2.86	1.21	.184
	female							3.24	1.12	
	all	9.5	16.7	35.7	28.6	7.1	2.4	3.14	1.15	
50. I don't feel comfortable if I need to speak English out of class.	male							3.60	1.37	.192
	female							3.21	1.17	
	all	9.5	11.9	33.3	33.3	6.0	6.0	3.32	1.23	
51. I will feel comfortable to speak English if there are Taiwanese and foreigners around.*	male							3.39	1.55	.830
	female							3.45	1.16	
	all	8.3	11.9	32.1	28.6	13.1	6.0	3.44	1.27	
52. I will feel anxious if other people ask me something in English.	male							3.81	1.53	.644
	female							3.68	.94	
	all	2.4	10.8	25.3	42.2	12.0	7.2	3.72	1.11	
53. I feel confident when I need to order meals in English.*	male							4.00	1.38	.213
	female							3.60	1.24	
	all	3.6	7.1	41.7	25.0	7.1	15.5	3.74	1.28	
total	male							3.67	.75	.388
	female							3.53	.59	
	all							3.57	.63	