

Motivation in teaching english for specific purposes

Nguyễn Ngọc Thảo*

*ThS., Trường Đại học Sư phạm Kỹ thuật Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh

Received: 10/5/2024; Accepted: 16/5/2024; Published: 27/5/2024

Abstract: English is currently a mandatory subject at all educational levels, especially at the university level. One of the requirements for recruiting candidates to meet the company's needs and have many job opportunities and high-paying positions is foreign language ability. Therefore, motivation in ESP teaching plays an important role in helping learners best adapt in an ever-changing and dynamic labor market context. In this article, the author uses the secondary data research method to synthesize research from many previous authors to provide a general perspective on this issue, and at the same time observe the current situation of create motivation in ESP teaching, thereby proposing some suggestions to create a proactive and attractive ESP learning environment for Vietnamese students.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes, ESP teaching, motivation in teaching English, motivational teaching

1. Introduction

In the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), the importance of motivation in the teaching and learning process is undeniable. By its nature, ESP is intricately linked to the specific language needs of learners in their chosen areas of expertise. At the same time, the goal of ESP is to equip learners with English application skills in specific majors, and the mindset to self-develop language abilities in the context of their future careers. This article delves into the key role of motivation in ESP teaching, exploring the importance and value of language teaching and learning. Through analysis of motivation theories and practical applications, the author sheds light on the relationship between motivation and effective ESP teaching through suggestions for future improvement.

2. The problem

In actuality, providing students with a solid foundation in general English—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—does not conflict with the objective of teaching specialised English. Specialised English, on the other hand, is meant for professional, particular uses, directing the learner's attention towards the linguistic and communication demands of a certain field of competence. Specialised English instruction has seen multiple phases of development in developed nations since the 1950s of the 20th century, with a variety of standard texts and methodologies ranging from basic to advanced in teaching various subjects. We can mention modules such as “English for Banking and Finance” for students majoring in Banking and Finance, “English for Economics” for students majoring in Economics, “English for Tourism” for students majoring in tourism, or “English for Accounting” for students majoring in Accounting,

etc.

The current English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching landscape faces multifaceted challenges that affect learner motivation. One of those problems is the specialization of ESP, focusing on a certain field, not spread out like General English (GE), therefore, to acquire specialized knowledge, it requires learners should have ability from B1 to B2 or higher, otherwise it will be very difficult to complete the lessons in that module. It can be seen that ESP is a very important subject, it is a bridge between general English and specialized teaching in English, it is a gate for learners to open to enter a professional field in English. At this gate, the level of expertise is only basic but the language ability is at a high level. Therefore, lecturers teaching this subject need to have a high level of language ability, and have a basic understanding of the major, without needing to have too in-depth knowledge like someone in that major.

3. The importance of motivation in teaching english for specific purposes

Motivation is one of the most important factors in language learning. Students with a good attitude toward English will be more likely to study hard and keep going when things get tough. Therefore, the author points out two main types of motivation to promote motivation in English teaching. ESP is to motivate learners to realize the purpose and value of learning, and at the same time promote interested in the curriculum so that they can see their ability to absorb and progress.

ESP teaching is a combination of second language teaching and specific career contexts, aimed at addressing language needs within the professional field. Therefore, ESP instructors play an important

role in equipping students not only with language skills, but also ensuring lessons are relevant to reality and immediately applicable to learning. ensure the requirements of the profession, industry and students' aspirations. Another key driving force in the ESP teaching process is the application of language skills to specific situations, helping students have a clearer view, for example, using specialized English for self-studying company documents, or better adaptation in conversations between colleagues and, best of all, the opportunity to become an employee in a multinational environment, when ESP is a main language for communication at work, thereby helping learners promote enthusiasm, leading to a natural commitment in the learning process and creating motivation to master specialized knowledge/terminology for application in the specific profession.

4. Literature review

Theoretical Framework

According to Michell (1982), "motivation is the degree to which an individual wants to achieve and chooses appropriate action. Author Robbiun (1998) uses the term "motivation" to mean "willingness to act to achieve the best results". Linking motivation to language acquisition, Gardner (1985:10) believes that "Motivation is a combination of effort and desire to achieve language learning goals along with a positive attitude towards language learning". Gardner's motivation includes four aspects: goals, efforts, desire to achieve goals and positive attitudes toward learning activities. In the same vein, author Ellis, R. (1997:75) points out that "Motivation involves attitudes and emotional states that influence the level of effort learners make to learn a second language". Thus, motivation to learn a second language is the extent to which an individual works or strives to learn a language out of a desire to do so and finds satisfaction in learning a new language.

Role of Motivational Strategies in ESP Teaching

Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) argue that integrating authentic materials is essential to improve motivation in ESP classrooms. This is a combination of language teaching and application of real-life situations, helping students hone their language better in specific work situations and stimulate the process of creativity and flexibility in the environment. actual workplace. An important element of ESP motivation is goal setting and task-based learning. According to Locke and Latham's (2002) research on goal-setting theory, established goals improve motivation and performance. Learning to do and learning to master are both components of goal orientation. While achievement orientation

focuses more on demonstrating ability, achieving high scores, and outperforming other learners, mastery orientation focuses more on absorbing content, as Dörnyei's research shows. (2000). Therefore, mastery-oriented learners think that hard work will pay off and that learning a second or foreign language will emphasize personal development. On the other hand, performance-oriented learners only view learning a second or foreign language as a means to achieve a goal and receive acclaim from the community.

Research and Practical Application

Nguyen (2017) conducted an empirical investigation to examine the effects of autonomy-supportive teaching on motivation inside an ESP business course. The results demonstrated the effectiveness of autonomy in ESP scenarios by showing a positive link between students' intrinsic motivation and autonomy-supportive methods. The practical application of motivational theories in developing instructional tactics that effectively align with learners' intrinsic drives is highlighted by this research. Smith et al. (2020) investigated the application of task-based learning in an ESP engineering programme through a case study. The findings showed that students working on practical, industry-relevant projects showed higher levels of motivation and language competency.

Challenges and Opportunities

One of the main problems ESP teachers encounter is resistance to conventional teaching methods and barriers to obtaining reliable resources. For specialized English teaching at universities today, the method of assessing learning outcomes is not highly reliable when the exam questions are compiled by the classroom teachers themselves. Most schools do not have specialized English test banks. Furthermore, a major obstacle hindering the development of rich and realistic learning experiences is the lack of accurate and industry-relevant content. However, these difficulties also hold the potential for revolutionary breakthroughs in ESP teaching. Currently, most specialized English teaching materials are designed to develop four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing and the ability to translate documents. However, there are many opinions (mostly from specialized teachers who directly teach specialized English) that it is only necessary to supplement students with as much specialized vocabulary as possible to support professional knowledge. Many specialized English teaching textbooks are compiled by teachers themselves and are unbalanced in terms of developing the four skills, focusing only on reading skills and specialized vocabulary exercises. Therefore,

students do not have interest in learning.

However, in the context of digital technology and the priority of educational transformation, combining digital technology is a potential approach, changing the current situation of ESP teaching so that training institutions can provide dynamic, highly interactive learning programs that attract the attention and increase the level of participation of learners, at the same time, teachers are required to continuously develop their expertise and update their adaptability/ Use technology in teaching, to correct/innovate and inspire students. On the other hand, bridges between organizations and businesses tend to connect more closely with universities/educational establishments, with experts in each specific field, to supplement professional knowledge, Helps students actively absorb practical knowledge. Therefore, the motivation for teaching ESP lies not only in improving the learning environment, but also expanding connections with business/society, and improving the quality of accreditation/innovation in teaching curricula.

5. Suggestions and recommendations for motivating esp teaching in vietnam

Based on the current situation of motivation in ESP, especially identifying the inadequacies in teaching and learning this subject, and with the experience of people who have participated in teaching this subject for many semesters at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education, the author offers some suggestions to contribute to improving the quality of ESP teaching and applications for universities.

Applying technology platforms in the learning process is essential in the digital context to promote creativity in teachers' teaching methods and make students more interested. By combining e-learning textbooks and multimedia materials, it will attract students to follow lessons more effectively than traditional teaching methods, and help them approach learning in a dynamic and proactive way. It is possible to organize a number of thematic webinars specific to each field, online projects and virtual field visits, to increase the practical value in learning ESP today.

Focus on improving the quality of ESP teaching of lecturers to calibrate training programs and update market trends in specific career fields. The author suggests that lecturers can attend scientific seminars, seminars and practical projects to update scientific perspectives and practical aspects so that knowledge does not become outdated. In addition, increasing coordination with industry experts to integrate practical knowledge or inviting them as guest lecturers can also provide learners with experience of applied

language in the workplace or specific purposes.

Recognition and rewards are also one of the motivations for students in the learning process. Instructors can use forms of recording review achievements by playing online games (typically Quizlet and Kahoot platforms) to help students remember lessons better. Besides, outside the scope of the curriculum, lecturers can create motivation with international exchange opportunities and internships at businesses/organizations that are partners of the university to motivate students to have excellent academic achievement, because this is also one of the opportunities when learners successfully complete the course objectives, not just stopping at acquiring enough knowledge to pass the subject.

Involving students in the course co-design process is also a successful case study like Fulbright University Vietnam, to empower students, take students as the center to listen to their needs and aspirations. The author finds that learners will have a sense of their orientation when they have the opportunity to participate in creating learning activities, participating in experiments and surveys with lecturers and the school council. This approach will encourage motivation, ensuring the ESP program is tailored to the student's needs and goals. However, this proposal at the present time may face limitations and difficulties due to the strict quality control process, the need for time to evaluate its suitability and the high cost of pre-testing before deployed in reality.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the development of motivational strategies for teaching ESP needs to be consistent with the current situation, needs of learners and the quality of output to serve the process of finding high-quality human resources for the country, because Therefore, it requires a careful and thorough planning, testing, and implementation process. In addition, ESP teaching needs to focus on immediate application to the fields students choose, encouraging students to actively imagine and practice using specialized English in real-life situations.

Bibliography

1. Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. (2002). Some dynamics of language attitudes and motivation: Results of a longitudinal nationwide survey. *Applied Linguistics*, 23(4), 421-462.
2. Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *Teaching and Researching Motivation*. Longman.
3. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Plenum Press.