ASPECTS OF ESP LEARNING MOTIVATION IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

Violeta Navickienė, Dalia Kavaliauskienė, Sigita Pevcevičiūtė
Klaipėda University

Abstract

Motivation has long been identified as one of the main factors affecting the English language learning. The study examines the type and level of ESP learning motivation (extrinsic and intrinsic) of 148 first-year undergraduate students of Klaipeda University as well as their attitudes towards learning the English language. Identification of the kind of students' motivation and their attitudes to learning will help to formulate measures for the improvement of students' learning motivation and the subject learning quality.
KEY WORDS: teaching quality, learning outcomes, tertiary education, intrinsic / extrinsic motivation, learner's attitude, second language teaching / learning.

Anotacija

Motyvacija – vienas pagrindinių anglų kalbos mokymąsi veikiančių veiksnių. Straipsnyje analizuojami 148 Klaipėdos universiteto pirmo kurso studentų profesinės anglų kalbos mokymosi motyvacijos aspektai (išorinis ir vidinis), jų požiūris į anglų kalbos mokymąsi. Nustačius studentų motyvaciją ir požiūrį į kalbos mokymąsi, bus galima pritaikyti priemones, kurios gali padėti tobulinti studentų motyvaciją mokantis profesinės anglų kalbos ir taip daryti įtaką studijų kokybei.
PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: mokymo kokybė, mokymosi rezultatai, aukštasis išsilavinimas, vidinė / išorinė motyvacija, besimokančiųjų požiūris, užsienio kalbos mokymas(-is).

Introduction

EU policy has recognized that education and training are essential to the development of today's knowledge society and economy. Since the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, the EU is focusing on growth, creation of new job places, recognition that knowledge and the innovation are the EU's most valuable assets, particularly in the light of increasing global competition. The EU Member States and the European Commission strengthened co-operation in 2009 with strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("ET 2020"), a follow-up to the earlier Education and Training 2010 work programme launched in 2001, recognizing that high-quality pre-primary, primary, secondary, higher and vocational education and training are fundamental to Europe's success. The Lithuanian education quality assurance policy is in compliance with European regulations and aspirations and it is made as one of the priorities of the Lithuanian education system development. In the State Education Strategy for 2013–2022

approved by the Parliament of Lithuania in 2012 great attention is paid to the tertiary education quality, which is being constantly assessed, improved and developed aiming to be competitive and adequate to other counterparts of the European Higher Education Area.

The term of quality assurance in higher education is increasingly used to denote the practices whereby academic standards, i.e., the level of academic achievement attained by higher education graduates, are maintained and improved. This definition of academic quality as equivalent to academic standards is consistent with the emerging focus in higher education policies on student learning outcomes – the specific levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities that students achieve as a consequence of their engagement in a particular education program (Brennan, Shah, 2000).

P. Boyle and J. A. Bowden (1997) in their scheme defined that study outcomes as one of indications of the study quality depend on the teaching – learning environment consisting of teaching process (approaches; attitudes, behaviour; materials; modes of learning); course design (content; organization; aims & expectations; teaching-learning methods); student approaches to learning; assessment and evaluation; practices, purposes & foci; learning climate (psychological environment; physical environment); and input factors (student characteristics, teachers' characteristics; institutional characteristics; and culture). This scheme presents the material, intellectual and human components of the teaching-learning environment, which is studied and discussed by scholars and practitioners of the higher education field, trying to assess their impact on the quality of studies and the ways how to improve it. The human aspect and analysis of the students' attitudes and their learning motivation are the key factors defining the study outcomes and in the long run – the study quality.

Motivation has long been identified as one of the main factors affecting the English language learning. The study examines the type and level of ESP (English for specific purpose) learning motivation (extrinsic and intrinsic) of 148 first-year undergraduate students of Klaipėda University.

Objectives of the Study: this study aims at investigating engineering and pedagogy study programme students' motivation and their attitudes towards learning ESP. The objectives are as follows:

- To determine which of the types of motivation towards learning ESP (intrinsic or extrinsic) have the most important effect on study outcomes;
- To determine the type of attitude that students have towards learning professional English.
- To determine reasons of the lack of learning motivation in a certain group of students.

The study was conducted with the sample selected from the first year undergraduate students of Klaipėda University learning ESP seeking to explore the dominant motivation of their English language learning. The data for this study is obtained through a questionnaire administered to the total number of 148 students. Identifying the kind of their motivation and attitudes to learning will help to formulate measures for the improvement of students' learning motivation in English language and will influence on the subject quality.

Study methods: review of literature sources, questioner, data analysis.

1. Types of motivation

R. Gardner (2006) states that motivation is a very complex phenomenon with many facets and it is not possible to formulate its simple definition. This is because the term *motivation* has been viewed differently by different schools of thought: the behaviouristic perspective sees motivation as the anticipation of reward (Brown, 2000). However, the cognitivist approach is the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they exert in that respect more related to the learner's decisions (Keller (1987). In the constructivist definition of motivation, further emphasis is made on social contexts as well as the individual's decisions. However, all the definitions of motivation given by the three schools emphasize the concept of "needs" and state that the fulfilment of needs is rewarding, requires choices, and in many cases must be interpreted in a social context.

The importance of motivation in enhancing second / foreign language learning is undeniable. Brown (2000) asserts that studies of motivation of second / foreign language learners often refer to a distinction between two types of motivation namely: instrumental versus integrative. However, some authors suggest a little different classification of motivation: e.g. J. Harmer (2001) groups integrative and instrumental motivations under the branch of the extrinsic motivation and assumes the types of motivation as extrinsic and intrinsic.

Extrinsic motivation refers to a desire to get a reward and avoid punishment and emphasizes external need to persuade the learner to take part in learning activities such as homework, grade, or doing something to please teachers as extrinsic motivation is based on external outcomes such as rewards and punishment (Arnold, 2000). This motivation could have a negative impact on the students, as students with extrinsic motivation do not learn with their strong intention or will but they study because they are pushed by the interest in the rewards or the punishment. When a student is learning because he is promised rewards or be-

cause he wants the rewards, he will be highly motivated to come to classes and learn and achieve the goal that is set for him. But when these rewards are taken away or sometimes even if students do not see any "punishment", they will not be interested in coming to class and learning the language any longer. Actually it can be stated that extrinsic motivation is the driving force in formal education as it implies 'reward' and 'punishment' in the form of learners' assessment. On the other hand the extrinsic motivation in higher education is highly supported by intrinsic motivation as students perceive the importance of the ESP subject for their future life and career.

Intrinsic motivation refers to learning as gaining reward (Arnold, 2000). It means the learners are willingly and voluntarily (not compulsorily) trying to learn what they think is worth or important for them. When students have intrinsic motivation, they have the internal desire to learn and they do not have the need for external outcomes. There are no negative impacts in having intrinsic motivation, which stimulates students to learn without rewards, because the need is innate or comes from inside or depends on their own will. P. M. Lightbown and N. Spada (1999) state that teachers do not have much effect on students' intrinsic motivation since the students are from different backgrounds and the only way to motivate students is by making the classroom a supportive environment.

2. Learners' attitudes

Motivation being a complex and many facet phenomenon is closely related to learners' attitudes towards a subject which are considered as components of motivation in language learning (Gardner, 1988). Motivation refers to the combination of effort and desire to achieve the goal of learning the language as well as favourable attitudes toward learning the language, which include cognitive, affective and behavioural components. A *cognitive* component covers the beliefs and ideas or opinions about the object of the attitude. The *affective* one refers to the feelings and emotions that one has towards an object: 'likes' or 'dislikes', 'for' or 'against'. Finally, the *behavioural* component refers to one's consistent actions or behavioural intentions towards the object. F. Karahan (2007) states that positive language attitudes let learners have positive orientation towards learning English and may play a crucial role in language learning as they would influence students' success or failure in their learning.

3. Factors that affect motivation in second language learning

According to J. Harmer (2001) the four factors that can be inauspicious to the learners' motivation, are the following:

- *physical conditions* which means the premises where classes take place. The hygiene norms are usually not a problem at Lithuanian schools and universities, but class-rooms equipped with IT devices and having access to the internet are more attractive and increase students learning motivation;
- *method of teaching* which refers to the way the students are taught will affect their motivation. Whenever the learners feel bored with the teacher's methods, their motivation would likely be lost or will gradually decrease. Harmer (1991) states that if a student loses confidence in the method, he becomes demotivated.
- *a teacher* as the most powerful variable of motivation and demotivation, can become a major part in demotivating the learners. Therefore, a teacher should be aware of the factors stimulating learners' intrinsic motivation: to set a personal example with his/her own behaviour; to create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom; to present the tasks properly; to develop a good relationship with the learners; to personalise the learning process; to increase learners' linguistic self-confidence; to make the language classes interesting; to promote learners' autonomy; to increase the learners' goal-orientation; to familiarize learners with the target language culture;
- *success* refers to the appropriate level of challenge designed by the teacher. If the difficulty of work and activity is too high or too low, it can lead students to a demotivated situation in learning.

4. Research Methodology

The respondents of the study were 148 first year undergraduate students of Klaipėda University. The selection of the target group was determined by the traditionally low study outcomes and dubious motivation of technical, pedagogical and social health speciality students, studying ESP in the first and second semesters in the academic year 2012–2013.

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire including 11 questions with self-assessment in a 10 point scale of:

- the four language skills;
- language learning history and experience in learning activities and forms;
- learning motivation;
- causes of low / high learning outcomes;
- comments on the problems, which affect the language learning motivation.

The questionnaire was orientated to encourage students' self-assessment of their study outcomes, their learning attitudes and motivation.

Validity and reliability of the collected data was ensured by a quite ample number of the subjects, representing various study programmes as well as three researchers, who in their practical pedagogical activities observe, analyse and deal with students' learning motivation problems.

5. Data analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaires was analysed and calculated in figures and percentage. The analysis of the data allowed dividing the respondents into three groups: high, moderate and low degree of motivation, which makes the analysis of learning motivation more evident and easier to analyse the focus of the study: low motivation. The 148 subjects of the study rated as follows:

Table 1. Rating of the respondents according to the grades

	Final score	Number of students
Group I	10–8	85
Group II	7	25
Group III	6–5–4	48

The academic groups with traditionally low learning outcomes were selected as the aim of the study was to find the reasons for the lack of motivation in order to look for the ways how to boost the motivation and increase the learning quality of the students.

Table 2. The academic groups with traditionally low learning outcomes.

Academic group	Number of students	Final score 10–8	Final score 7	Final score 6–5–4
Information Engineering	14	8	4	2
Construction Engineering	20	7	5	8
Mechanical Engineering	15	9	2	4
Environmental Engineering	10	6	2	2
Energetic Equipment Engineering	12	10	1	1
Navigation	16	8	5	3
Educology	8	7	1	0
Physical Culture	26	9	1	17
Pre-school Education	7	0	0	7
Social Pedagogy	6	3	0	3
Childhood Pedagogy	13	12	1	0
Total number	148	79	22	47

In Group I the questionnaire data revealed high level of extrinsic motivation: learning for a higher grade, which is important to the majority of students during a study course of any subject; intrinsic and personal motivation as well as attitudes towards the learning professional English. The respondents of this group are rather reserved and modest in self-assessment of their language skills and none of them assessed themselves at the highest score (10). The self-assessment results of this group of respondents were as follows:

Table 3. Self-assessment results of the representatives of Group I

Skills/Mark	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
Reading	0	43	35	7	0	0	0
Speaking	0	19	47	15	4	0	0
Writing	0	2	27	35	16	15	0
Listening	2	19	47	19	8	0	0

Respondents of this group admitted learning English at school systematically and with great input (85 %); stated having good and qualified teachers, constant control, feeling of progress (89 %). The learning motivation in this group of learners is clearly expressed in the answers to the questionnaire questions which can be summarised in the following way:
- learners understand the importance of a foreign language and especially professional language for their future career (93 %);

- learning the ESP course at the university was useful for the future studies and working career (95 %);
- the course was challenging but gave satisfaction in achieving results (89 %);
- the course helped to overcome speaking fear (91 %);
- learning a foreign language is attractive and interesting (8 %);
- learners will continue learning English at other courses or individually (96 %).

Group II includes learners with average learning results. It is the smallest of the three groups consisting of 25 students. Their self –assessment of the 4 language skills was as follows:

Table 4. Self-assessment results of the representatives of Group II

Skills/marks	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
Reading	0	0	2	12	5	5	1
Speaking	0	0	1	16	3	3	2
listening	0	0	1	12	9	2	2
Writing	0	0	0	5	20	0	0

The learning motivation of this group of learners is clearly evident in their statement which level of skills they would like to achieve: the goal or rather a dream is to have grades 10–9 in all skills, but they clearly state why the results were lower: their secondary school input was not adequate (92 %), and the main drawbacks being: frequent turnover of teachers (85 %), laziness (79 %), no particular interest in the subject (75 %); not sufficient time input (83 %).

The satisfaction with the ESP course at the university was quite high and little differed from the Group I data:

- learners understand the importance of a foreign language and especially professional language for their future career (90 %);
- learning the ESP course at the university was useful for the future studies and working career (95 %);
- the course was challenging but gave satisfaction in achieving results, however, sometimes the learning load was too big (72 %);
- the course helped to overcome speaking fear (80 %);
- will continue learning English at other courses (45 %) and / or individually (80 %).

The respondents of this group expressed their attitude towards the course favourably ('rather productive skill development during the course', 'gained better skills in text analysis and perceiving factual information'; 'a lot of speaking which was different from school were was 'just grammar, grammar, grammar!'; 'many texts on the professional field, which helped to learn new words'). There were also answers, including some dissatisfaction, such as 'too many texts to account for, there could have been fewer as it took a lot of time to learn the material', 'it was hard to account on time and when the unaccounted material accumulated it was difficult to make oneself start learning'. However, about 90 % of the respondents stated that after the study course they feel more confident in speaking in public, admit reading their first book in English and discovering that they can do it; and state that their motivation in learning English has increased. Though only 45 % are going to continue learning English as an optional subject, 80 % claim to do this individually.

Group III was the focus of this study as the number of students (48) falling under the quite low grade group and belonging to certain study fields is quite big. That is why the study and understanding of the reasons of their poor learning outcomes could be helpful to find the ways how to improve the situation and increase the quality of learning.

Table 5. Self-assessment results of the representatives of Group III.

Skills / marks	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
Reading	0	0	0	2	7	10	29
Speaking	0	0	2	9	11	11	15
Listening	0	0	1	2	4	14	16
Writing	0	0	0	0	1	8	39

The data of this group analysis reveals that:
- learners understand the importance of a foreign language and especially professional language for their future career (80 %) but their achievements are very low and actually they admit not being able to comply with the requirements for the functioning efficiently (95 %);
- learning the ESP course at university was useful for the future studies and working career (95 %) but motivation was interfered with a low level of language knowledge (92 %);
- the course was challenging and gave little satisfaction in achieving results as it was too difficult as the learning load was too big (72 %);
- the course helped to overcome speaking fear (30 %);

- the students will continue learning English at other courses (24 %) and / or individually (30 %).

The respondents tried to define the reasons and causes of their low study outcomes among which the low level of knowledge of the English language was related to the secondary school problems and personal performance during the secondary education period, which can be grouped as follows:

1) great turnover of teachers ('teachers were changing very often, each had different requirements and ways of teaching so it was difficult to adjust to', 'had a good teacher only in the 10th form, but we had so poor knowledge of English and so we could work only from sixth form textbooks', 'in one year we had 7–8 new teachers') 76 %;

2) were neglected by teachers being not able to cope with the course ('those who were not learning well were allowed to do whatever they wanted during a lesson, the mark was put just for coping a text, doing grammar exercises', 'we played cards during lessons and the one who won got a ten'; 'if you did not choose to take an English exam, you could do what you wanted during classes') 82 %;

3) the most popular and common teaching method was doing grammar exercises ('we would do some grammar exercises or tests and get a mark, we never did any speaking during classes', 'sometimes we had to do some projects, then come in front of the class and read what we have copied or found in internet') 81 %;

4) low language learning abilities ('I am not good at languages', 'I wanted to learn English, I understand that it is very important for my future, but it is very difficult to learn it'): 42 %;

5) negative attitude to learning ('at school I was not trying to learn a lot, my main interest was sports and some other school subjects') 46 %;

6) negative attitude to learning English ('I did not want to learn English at school, I think the best way to learn a language is to go to live to a foreign country and learn a language from communication with people') 40 %;

7) personality problems ('I am lazy, I know that I should learn, do the tasks, but somehow it is very difficult to make myself even come to the classes; 'somehow the problem to get a mark for English was solved in a simple way, I just got it and that›s it'; 'my sport achievements helped me to get a mark in English') 40 %.

Conclusions

1. The study results support Hedge (2000) who indicated that high English proficiency subjects are more extrinsically motivated than low English proficiency subjects. However, there was no significant difference in the level of extrinsic motivation between two first groups of subjects. Both group subjects are satisfied with the intensive work and work load of the ESP course and felt and appreciated the progress, acquiring the linguistic self-confidence, overcoming the fair of public speaking, however, the Group II subjects admitted having to work more to cope with the tasks but were not discouraged by slightly lower results comparing with the peers of the Group I as they feel that their basic language knowledge and skills from secondary school did not allow them to achieve better results during such a short ESP course. However, only 45 % are going to continue learning English as an optional subject, 35 % claim to do this individually. By comparison to 96 % of Group I respondents, who state that they will continue learning English at other courses or individually.

2. Group III subjects with low level of knowledge of the English language have lower motivation at learning ESP at university, the attendance is low; accounting for the tasks is minimal. Though students understand the importance of the language learning, they find the ESP course not very attractive as they cannot cope with the tasks, they try to apply their old school skills and habits of learning everything by heart, translating texts, or presenting reading for speaking; feel not able to equal to peers; are ashamed of their low level of English knowledge; have negative attitude to the subject. And as Spolsky (1989) stated in a particular learning situation, students who are less motivated are likely to lose their attention, misbehave and even cause discipline problems.

3. The respondents of Group III revealed their shocking experience from the secondary school of being neglected by English teachers for a simple reason of being not very good at languages, lacking learning motivation and skills. Such learners make up 32.6 % of the target group and they deserve special care and attention. This situation has to be viewed as a problem of the education system of Lithuania, which allows children and young people being treated as unnecessary for the system, not helped and paid no attention to. A short ESP course at the university cannot change the situation and by the present study the authors aimed to state the fact that education

quality depends on all levels of education and there are problems which need attention and efforts to be solved.

4. Students should be admitted to university having at least B2 level of foreign language knowledge. That would eliminate or at least significantly diminish language learning motivation problems faced by Group III respondents.

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