



What factors motivate students in ESP learning?

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What makes Czech university students enthusiastic enough to learn English for Specific Purposes? In this paper I will outline several motivation factors and incentives for learning ESP in the Faculty of Informatics and Management at the University of Hradec Králové in the Czech Republic. This elective course, which focuses on business English, has been designed for 2nd and 3rd year students majoring in Management and Tourism. These students' level of English is more advanced in comparison with other students in the faculty, and every year the number of students who attend the course increases. To determine why so many students take this elective course, evaluation forms were distributed among course participants at the end of the summer 2006 course.

チェコ共和国の大学生に特殊目的の為の英語学習に情熱を持ってもらうにはどうしたらよいか? 今学会ではハラデツ・クラロヴェー大学の情報管理学科における、特殊目的のための英語学習(この場合はビジネス英語)へのいくつかの動機誘因について紹介を行う。今回発表するビジネス英語の特別コースは、普通は、観光事業のマネージメントを学ぶ2年生もしくは3年生が専門的な英語能力を拡げることを目的としている。これらの学生の英語のレベルは、同学部内で比較すると最も高いレベルに相当する。それにも関わらず、この科目を選択する学生の数は毎年増加している。いったいなぜ、これほど多くの学生が必修でもないコースを選択しようとするのであろうか? そのため今回は2006年の夏の学期終了時に、コースを選択している学生に対し、彼等がビジネス英語を学習する意欲とその課題について評価表を配ってアンケートを行った。その結果につて報告を行う。

In this article I would like to share my experience in teaching ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses at the Faculty of Informatics and Management in the Czech Republic. I will supplement this with data based on classroom research in the form of a course evaluation filled in by students at the end of the course and my interpretation of the results. In doing so, I hope to explain what motivated students to take this Business English course.

Strevens (1988), an ESP specialist, gives four implications for higher motivation in ESP courses:

- being focused on the learners' needs, they waste no time
- they are relevant to learners
- they are successful in imparting learning
- they are more cost-effective than *General English* courses.

Because there is no tuition for Czech state university students, I will address the first three implications in the following sections.

The Czech case

The elective Business English course has been designed specifically for students majoring in Management and Tourism. Students' English level is already quite high compared to other students (i.e., students majoring in Informatics or Financial Management). On average, students who take the elective Business English course have English language proficiency test scores that correspond to B2 on the Common European Reference Framework for languages; this corresponds to a TOEIC score of between 541-700 or an IELTS score of 5-6. Students usually choose this two-credit course in their final, 3rd year of study. In the last academic year (2005/06), 35 students successfully completed the course.

As this course is aimed at students who have no work experience, no needs analysis is undertaken. However, I have experience teaching students with and students without

work experience, and I use this knowledge of what students know and need to know to predict what skills and knowledge they might need in their future jobs. The course is taught interactively, and no particular textbook is used. Instead, students are given teacher-designed worksheets. The main topics and skills to be discussed and developed in the course are: company structure, telephoning, banking, business correspondence, interviewing, writing a C.V./résumé, meetings, negotiating, socializing, diplomatic language, annual reports, managerial styles, marketing, and cross-cultural issues.

Blended learning

The course is also supported by an online component that concentrates mainly on writing. This means that writing skills, such as writing letters, reports, or resumés can be developed outside the classroom. Such an approach is typical of blended learning (a mixture of e-learning and conventional classroom learning). This approach is particularly suitable for language learning when class time is devoted mainly to speaking skills. Students can undertake writing and reading tasks on their own, and in class teachers can concentrate on listening and speaking activities. Rychtářová (2004, p.105) has shown that among the four basic communication skills, the most important skills to master are speaking (94%) and listening (71%), while reading (62%) and writing (49%) are not as important for learners.

In the Faculty of Informatics and Management, e-courses are being created in a virtual learning environment called WebCT. The faculty has been intensely involved in the

application of e-learning in teaching since 1999 (Nocar, Hoblíková, Snášelová, & Všetulová, 2004, p. 63), as its teachers continuously attempt to improve the quality of their teaching. E-learning, which refers to using multimedia technology to improve the quality of learning, contributes enormously towards increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the educational process. In the case of our faculty, e-learning also enhances learner autonomy.

Each part of the online course starts with self-study information input and concludes with tasks, quizzes, or assignments. Self-study is one of the most important learning methods. As Badger (2003) has pointed out, time available for learners to spend on improving language skills will always be limited. For many learners, there will never be enough time or money available to attend regular language classes, but all learners can find the time and money for self-study. Moreover, there are several key factors which influence successful self-study:

- learner motivation—job satisfaction, enhanced job performance, financial rewards, possible promotion, tests and examinations
- time—it is necessary to create a level of interest in self-study that can compete with other necessary activities in learners' lives
- learner support—close link between self-study and classroom based tasks, regular contact with a tutor, contact with fellow students, access to a language support website
- affordability—comparatively low cost of self-study for companies

- study materials—materials must be highly accessible and easy to study.

The course

The course consists of nine main sections:

1. Key characteristics of successfully written business English
2. Writing formal business letters
 - 2.1 Letter layout and phrases
 - 2.2 Model letters
 - 2.3 Linking words
3. Formal vs. informal written business English
4. Email correspondence and abbreviations
5. Writing reports
 - 5.1 Reports
 - 5.2 Paragraphing
 - 5.3 Punctuation
6. Writing a C.V. and a letter of application
7. Writing résumés and developing *revamping* vocabulary
8. Miscellaneous business writing
9. Consolidation

Students' course evaluation

To discover the answer to the question set at the beginning of this paper, *What motivates students to attend this elective Business English course?*, students were given the following evaluation form:

- 1) Please comment on the overall structure and content of the course.
- 2) Did you find the online component of the course useful/not useful? Why?
- 3) List three activities which were the most useful to you.
- 4) Were there any activities you found not useful? Why?
- 5) Please number the following skills/structures (1-10) as to their importance, 1 being the most important and 10 being the least important.

active listening	telephoning
business correspondence	interviewing
business vocabulary	meetings
diplomatic language	reading comprehension
grammar structures	socializing

- 6) What motivated you to attend the course?
- 7) If you had the opportunity, would you sign up for the course again?
- 8) Any further comments?

Out of 35 students, 22 students submitted the evaluation form. Generally, all respondents were very satisfied with the overall structure and content of the course. In particular, they liked the organization of the course and the appealing topics. In addition, they felt they had learned a lot.

The online course also seemed to be quite useful. Students appreciated the well-elaborated structure, immediate feedback on exercises they could do at any time, and being able to print all the materials to use in their future jobs that could also help in communicating with future business partners. Moreover, students could discuss online any issue which was not quite clear to them in the class.

The most useful activities according to the respondents were: listening, interviewing, learning new terminology, and business correspondence. These activities were also among the most important in their answers to question 5. Furthermore, there was no activity that students considered not worth doing. Only two students commented that there had been too much business vocabulary to study. The least important activities according to the respondents were grammar structures and, surprisingly, meetings and socializing. This might be connected with respondents' lack of job experience.

As for question 6, the main motivating factor for attending the course was students' eagerness to learn new words/terminology and improve their English (64%). The second largest motivating factor was the impact the course might have on their future career (36%). Additional motivating factors were obtaining needed credits and the teacher's charisma.

Students' feelings about the course are reflected in the following quotes:

- I wish we had more such subjects.
- The best English course in this academic year.
- Better than other practical English courses.

Overall, the responses to the evaluation were very positive.

Conclusion

Although I did not carry out systematic data analysis, on the basis of the theoretical implications and the outcomes mentioned above, one of the key motivating factors seems to have been the course's focus on learners' needs. These needs were mostly satisfied through in-class discussion and relevant classroom activities. I also tried to contribute to the qualitative process of students' learning by offering an online course component in which challenging but authentic tasks were set and by checking new words every other lesson. Additionally, the English level of the course was aimed to push students but not overwhelm them. Finally, I think that showing enthusiasm for teaching and students' learning inevitably leads to a classroom atmosphere in which motivation arises easily. Such courses can definitely motivate students to enrich their business English, even if the course is an elective one.

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