MOTIVATIONAL DRIVES FOR ESP STUDENTS – CASE STUDY

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Abstract: *Nowadays, learning a second or a third language for special purposes has become an issue of most importance, due to the fact that the process of globalization is in a continuous progress. The purpose of this article is to establish the most important factor that drives the ESP students' extrinsic motivation during English for special purposes courses, taking into consideration the following relevant factors: the physical conditions, the method used and the teacher. Also, the study tries to point out the most important factor that drives the students' intrinsic motivation, namely: worldwide communication, improvement of English language or ESP, the curriculum or professional advancement.*

Keywords: *English, ESP, motivation.*

Introduction

Learning a second or a third language nowadays has become an issue of most importance, due to the fact that the process of globalization is in a continuous progress. A second language can be learnt for different reasons: for communication reasons, in order to get a better job and even to improve one's linguistic knowledge. What is of most interest nowadays is the fact that languages are more and more required independent of the field of activity one applies for. Therefore, knowing as many foreign languages as possible can be a great advantage for anyone living in our society, both socially and professionally. The stages of learning a second language are somehow different from those of acquiring a first or native language. Even though the learner is not conscious of this fact, he/she may encounter some difficulties in learning a second language, problems that were not present in the process of acquiring his first language. These difficulties may appear because of the fact that acquiring a first language is a subconscious process, while learning a second/third language is a conscious one.

In psychology, learning is defined as the process by which a relatively lasting change in potential behavior occurs as a result of practice or experience (Lenneberg, Maranette, 1967:76). We can easily make a distinction between language and other processes like behavioural changes, due to the fact that there is evidence according to which neurotic symptoms and patterns of mental illnesses are considered to be learnt beahviour as well. The process of learning takes place throughout the life of animals and humans, their learnt behavior being responsible for a great part of their natural behavior further in life. The three models currently used to explain changes in learnt behavior are based on:

- the establishment of stimuli-responses relationship;
- the establishment of cognitive structures (Stenick, 2003:87).

Albert Bandura stated that learning occurs through observation of others or of models, for example when children are exposed to violence in the media or in their own family (Bandura, 1977:34). One of the most interesting conclusions of researchers regarding the connection between language and the brain is that language learning

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represents a natural phenomenon, occurring without any intervention. Most English people find remarkable that someone can use more than one language in their every day life, while for the majority of people in Cameroon there is no surprise in them using four or five languages in the course of a day. Thus, to some of us, learning a second language may be quite a difficult task, but for others it is an ordinary and not so exceptional activity. Harding and Riley pointed out that "there are about 3000 and 5000 languages in the world, but only 150 countries to fit them all into" (Harding, Riley, 1986:136). A European survey on young people found out that 83% of 20-24 year olds in Europe had studied at least a second language [9]. This does not represent a surprising fact nowadays, as knowing a second language is a normal part of our lives; on the contrary, the unusual thing would be for someone to know only one language in present times, especially within the context of globalization.

Why do people learn a second language?

This is not a simple question for one to answer. As Harmer put it, people want to study English either for pleasure, in order to get a better job, to better understand Shakespeare, or just for their own fun (Harmer, 1997:35). Among the most interesting reasons for language study, we mention the following ones:

1. school curriculum;
2. advancement in the professional life;
3. worldwide communication;
4. for special purposes (ESP);
5. to familiarize with the English culture;
6. etc.

Of course that there are great differences in the internal drive or motivation for each of the situations enumerated above; a student who learns English for fun would treat this matter in a total different way than one who studies it for special purposes. It all depends on the outcome required by each of these instances of studying and, eventually, learning the English language. All teachers know that there are situations when certain "motivated" students behave significantly better than others, in what language learning is concerned; these students will frequently succeed in any apparent unfavourable conditions or despite the use of methods considered unsatisfactory by experts. Faced with such phenomena, it seems reasonable to think that the motivation brought to class by students is one of the most important factors affecting their success in language learning.

Motivation represents some kind of internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of action. If we have a goal and that goal is attractive enough for us, we will be strongly motivated to do whatever is necessary to reach that goal. Goals may be of different types: short-term goals and long-term goals. Regarding English learning, short-term goals may be represented by wanting to pass an end-of-semester examination or to finish a unit in the textbook. On the other hand, long- term goals may include the desire to get a better job or to be able to communicate with other people from a different community or culture. As a generally established remark, strongly motivated students with long-term goals are easier to teach than those with other type of goals, namely with no real inner drive. We may say that this inner drive is part of the so-called intrinsic

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motivation. As far as factors such as physical conditions, method used or the teacher are concerned, they are considered to be the triggering points for the extrinsic motivation (Harmer, 1997:62).

Case Study—What Motivates ESP Learning?

Purpose of the Study

The study was performed in order to establish the most important factor that drives the ESP students' extrinsic motivation during English for special purposes courses, taking into consideration that the most relevant factors presented by the specialty literature are the following: the physical conditions, the method or the teacher.
Also, the study tries to point out the most important factor that drives the intrinsic motivation, from the ones enumerated in a previous section of this article, namely: worldwide communication, improvement of English language or ESP, curriculum or professional advancement.

Material and Method

The study was conducted on 100 students, aged between 19 and 21 years old, currently studying within the University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Craiova. They were asked to fill in anonymous questionnaires reviewing their main reason for choosing the English language course and the most important external factor that may influence their learning.

Results and Discussions

As far as the main reason regarding their intrinsic motivation connected to their wish to learn English, most of the students (45%) pointed out that they had decided to follow the English course in order to improve their English language, 35% admitted that they needed English for a better worldwide communication, 15% for professional advancement and only 5% considered English necessary only because it was part of the academic curriculum.

Table1. Intrinsic Motivation Factors for ESP Learning

Worldwide Communication	Improvement of English	Academic Curriculum	Professional Advancement
35%	45%	5%	15%

From the results above, we may draw the conclusion that the improvement of their English represented the intrinsic factor that played the most important part in the decision of medicine students regarding the ESP learning, closely followed by the one regarding the need for worldwide communication. We may state that this was a satisfactory outcome, due to the fact that it is very important that the student come with a strong intrinsic motivation such as improving their basic English knowledge.

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The evaluation of the completed questionnaires also gave us important information about the intrinsic motivation of the students regarding the English for special purposes course within the University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Craiova. The interesting outcome was that the most important external factor they considered to influence their desire to take up such a language course was the method used by the teacher (50%), in that the former should meet their goal of learning ESP. The other two factors, physical conditions and the teacher were rated in the same way, namely 25% each, thus leading to the conclusion that a further investigation should be carried out in order to better establish the most important extrinsic factor that may interfere with the students' aim of learning English for special purposes during their first two academic years.

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Table 2. Extrinsic Motivation Factors for ESP Learning

Physical conditions	Method used	The teacher
25%	50%	25%

Conclusions

In conclusion, the final results of the study have shown that the students were more interested in the intrinsic motivation factors than in those related to extrinsic motivation. Thus, the most important factor that could affect their intrinsic motivation was based on their need to improve their English language knowledge, followed by those connected to worldwide communication, professional advancement and school curriculum. As far as the extrinsic motivation factors, the most important one was considered to be the method used by the ESP teacher, closely followed by those of physical conditions and the teacher.

As we all know, there may be a great deal of various reasons for choosing to learn English as a second language. Therefore, we considered appropriate to include in our study both those students who have themselves made the decision to study ESP and also those whom the study of ESP is compulsory due to the fact that English is a part of the academic curriculum.

Teachers, too, should be aware of the importance that the success of learning may have on the students' motivation. The former must be able to assess the students' ability in order for them to be faced with the appropriate degree of challenge, but success should, nevertheless, be treated either in terns of "too easy" or "too difficult".

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