

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES OF THE STUDENT AT ACADEMY OF FINANCE

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ABSTRACT

For both teachers and students, teaching and studying English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become essential in the majority of academic subjects. The goal of the current study is to identify frequent characteristics that impact AOF students learning ESP and offered methods to address issues that reduce the subject's efficacy. A combination of student surveys and interviews. The results show that the course's goals are to improve students' ESP vocabulary ability, students' strong proficiency in vocabulary and grammar, teachers' good teaching competence, and its coursebook providing relatively sufficient and relevant ESP learning. However, the findings show that a number of factors, including those related to students, teachers, and the university itself, have a detrimental impact on ESP learning at the university. Additionally, the results have provided insight into some possible ways to address issues that both teachers and students have faced during the learning process.

Keywords: ESP, factors, learning English for Specific Purposes

CÁC YẾU TỐ ẢNH HƯỞNG ĐẾN VIỆC HỌC TIẾNG ANH CHUYÊN NGÀNH CỦA SINH VIÊN TẠI HỌC VIỆN TÀI CHÍNH

TÓM TẮT

Đối với cả giảng viên và sinh viên, việc giảng dạy và học tiếng Anh chuyên ngành (ESP) đã trở nên thiết yếu trong hầu hết các môn học thuật. Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu hiện tại là xác định các yếu tố thường gặp tác động đến việc học tiếng Anh chuyên ngành của sinh viên tại Học viện Tài chính và đưa ra các phương pháp giải quyết các vấn đề gây giảm hiệu quả của môn học. Nghiên cứu kết hợp giữa khảo sát và phỏng vấn sinh viên. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy yếu tố có lợi ảnh hưởng đến việc học tiếng Anh chuyên ngành đó là vốn từ vựng tiếng Anh chuyên ngành của sinh viên, trình độ ngữ pháp của sinh viên, năng lực giảng dạy tốt của giáo viên và giáo trình phù hợp. Tuy nhiên, các phát hiện cho thấy một số yếu tố, bao gồm cả những yếu tố liên quan đến sinh viên, giáo viên và bản thân trường đại học, có tác động bất lợi đến việc học tiếng Anh chuyên ngành tại Học viện Tài chính. Ngoài ra, nghiên cứu đã cung cấp cái nhìn sâu sắc về một số cách có thể giải quyết các vấn đề mà cả giảng viên và sinh viên đã gặp phải trong quá trình học tập.

Từ khóa: Các yếu tố, học tiếng Anh chuyên ngành

1. Introduction

As one of the most frequently used languages in the world today, English is crucial to the advancement of a number of industries, including the physical sciences, medicine, business, banking, and law enforcement. Because ESP greatly aids in landing a job, getting promoted, and other career related goals, the field of "English for Specific Purposes" (ESP) was established and developed to suit learners' language requirements for their work and operating efficiently in the workplace. However, no one disputes that teaching a broad range of English for Specific Purposes of specialist terminology is the main objective. ESP is perceived as something that

differs from General English because is quite challenging for language teachers to instruct. In reality, students also have troubles during their ESP learning process. Most of the students said that they had to deal with a wider range of unfamiliar words and cope with the sheer volume of specialized vocabulary with economics-related topics. As a ESP teacher at Academy of Finance, the teacher herself experiences many factors affecting in teaching and learning ESP. These probably arise from teachers and students' aspect, context learning at university. In an attempt to improve the effectiveness of ESP learning and teaching, the researchers decided to choose this topic for research.

2. Methodology

The current study has made use of qualitative research design to investigate common factors that affect learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at Academy of Finance (AOF). Sixty EFL students and teacher were given questionnaires and chosen to be interviewed using a focus group interview. According to Creswell (2013) focus group interview is “the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people, typically four to six” (p. 218). In the interview, the researcher carries out small questions to get answers about a specific topic. The interview process was initiated with the researcher identifying the purpose of study and conveying his gratitude to the participants for taking part in the study (Creswell, 2013). Every student was requested to respond to questions revolving around their attitudes towards common factors that affect learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP). During the interview process, the questions and respondents' replies were audio-recorded.

3. Results & Discussion

The results showed that junior students had specific demands that were not fully satisfied in the ESP classes they had taken. The teaching and learning process is impacted by both good and negative elements. These elements are examined using information gathered from surveys and interviews, and the results are shown as follows:

3.1. Positive elements

Students and teachers' aspect: Both teachers and students agreed that learning ESP is for their future employment. The ESP course made an effort to provide students with content and ESP terminology related to the specific subject, unique employment, and activities of business, even if it sought to cover all skills and English topics as a GE course. The course also attempted to impart relevant and essential knowledge about banking, finance in specific or economic matters in general which are in relation to the themes and issues pertaining to specialized knowledge that students must acquire.

On the other hand, reading is identified as one of the most required skills to develop and the ESP course was designed with the objectives to fulfill this need. Similarly, ESP vocabulary is the necessary knowledge students need to gain in both target need and present need and the course's objectives covered these needs.

Regarding the instructional language, most students wanted teachers to use both English and Vietnamese or only Vietnamese in class. In a similar way, the majority of instructors taught in both Vietnamese and English, just three of them selected their native

language as the primary language of teaching, and none spoke English exclusively in class. Since employing L2 exposes students to English-speaking environments, it is thought that this is a favorable component in ESP instruction. However, speaking in one's mother tongue might make it easier to understand complex and ambiguous concepts when lecturing. The other elements assisting students in meeting the current and desired requirements for acquiring language abilities are their high reading and vocabulary proficiency. In addition, students' strength of grammar also seems to be an advantage to assist students to achieve English language skills.

In conclusion, the most apparent factors affect positively ESP learning are: the ESP course with its objectives partly fulfilling students' needs such as reading and ESP vocabulary, students' good proficiency in their reading, vocabulary and grammar.

Teaching and learning-context factors: Regarding the overall assessment of the ESP curriculum, students concurred that the course gives them valuable information about the economics. This concept was also held by teachers. Regarding the ESP content, both teachers and students expressed some satisfaction with the coursebook's appropriate grammar points and enough vocabulary.

In conclusion, the two main advantages are that the ESP course offered helpful economics expertise and that the coursebook comparatively had adequate and pertinent ESP banking and finance-related information.

3.2. Negative elements

Students and teachers related problems: Although teachers and students both responded that student need to study ESP for work, it is apparent that need analyses must be done to specify what special and particular knowledge of English areas students really need to design a course to fulfill these needs instead of trying to cover all skills and English areas like the current ESP course.

Actually, students were supposed to utilize ESP mostly for speaking, listening, and reading. Writing has been viewed as less significant. According to a qualitative examination of teacher interviews, students should be taught all aspects of English, including specialized language expertise. However, certain specialized skills-such as speaking, listening, reading, and communication-should be more targeted for their employment. Because the course did not emphasize speaking, listening, or functional skills, and because there are very few dialogues in

the coursebook to practice speaking and communicative functions or to improve listening skills for both face-to-face and telephone-use communications, face-to-face communication has not met the target need for communication.

Furthermore, the majority of the coursebook's materials are academic texts. Students are not given any reports or talks to practice communicative language skills. Moreover, the coursebook's special subjects or themes for economics include topics about banking and finance, but neither marketing nor sales help are included. However in theory, the majority of students required to acquire the following English language abilities and areas/components in order of importance: reading, speaking, listening, and ESP vocabulary. The skills and areas students needed to improve urgently, in order of importance: speaking, ESP vocabulary and listening. In reality, the EFS course with its aims and objectives seems to be designed for a GE course to cover all general skills and English areas rather than for an ESP course. Actually after the course, students actually have mastered only the reading skill and ESP vocabulary. Thus the course failed in analyzing the real needs of learners for their focused English skills to help their communications at future work. Additionally, the rate at which teachers and students evaluated students' competency was low. Actually almost 50% of the students polled said they lacked enough experience learning English. Students' varied levels of English ability were also a result of this. These are the difficulties in teaching and learning ESP.

Students' cultural background information, another crucial learning need for ESP studies, was at an average rate, despite the fact that this type of knowledge is crucial. Furthermore, the majority of students have not yet studied economics-related topics at the start of the course, despite the fact that this knowledge is crucial for those studying ESP. Thus, these elements are not beneficial for advancing students' learning.

In respect of perspective on teaching and learning, most students believed that "Teaching and learning" means "Teacher gives knowledge, students receive". This perspective limits the efficiency of teaching and learning English in Vietnam because it does not appreciate and encourage students' learning autonomy and creativity. Moreover, it cannot create a favorable teaching environment to apply effective techniques and activities of CLT. The analysis also reveals students' low confidence in their English proficiency, which might demotivate students in their ESP study.

Concerning students' motivation, one of the important factors affecting English learning including goals, desire and effort in ESP studying, it is concluded that the intrinsic motivation was less than the extrinsic one in students' self-assessment. The extrinsic motivation may not be long-lasting and self-sustaining along with the learning process as the intrinsic one; so it affects the ESP teaching and learning process negatively. Moreover, the levels of students' desire and effort in studying ESP were not high. Thus students' low motivation is one of the important factors that reduce students' effectiveness in learning ESP at university.

In conclusion, the ESP course's objectives that do not prioritize students' speaking, listening, and communicative skills result in students' actual ineffective outcomes; the language text types and some economics related topics are inappropriate for students' needs; Students' knowledge of their specialization and cultures is inadequate, their learning styles, perspective on teaching and learning, confidence, motivation, and anxiety do not support ESP learning, and their proficiency and experience with English studying fall short of the necessary levels. Additionally, ESP classes of mixed English proficiency make much contribution to this disadvantage.

Teaching and learning-context problems: In terms of the evaluation on the ESP course duration, most teachers suggested that the learning time should be from 60 to 80 periods in a course. It can be inferred that 45 periods as usual are not sufficient for the ESP course and that the course ought to last from at least 60 periods to 80 periods to ensure covering all of students' needs. Regarding the materials used for the ESP course, most teachers of the college agreed that the materials for teaching ESP at universities should be written by teachers of the university who have good experience to design the standard-meeting materials. So, the current coursebook satisfied this condition. However, both students and teachers did not highly appreciate the coursebook. In particular, the things should be improved immediately are the exercises in the coursebook. Furthermore, the information in the book is not updated sufficiently. In brief, to design new materials for teaching and learning English for specific purposes at the university is necessary.

3.3. Solutions to deal with those factors that hinder their ESP teaching and learning

Students' motivation: Teachers implemented the following strategies to address the issue of students' motivation when utilizing ESP both within and outside of the classroom: to encourage students by

substituting constructive criticism with encouraging remarks; to be patient and enthusiastic with students' learning and improvement; to create a relaxed and cooperative learning environment, where no one will be single out; to avoid fierce competitive evaluation and assessment; and to set up reasonable and suitable learning goals.

Teachers' aspect: When choosing the teaching general English resources and exercises, teachers were constantly conscious of the language competency levels of their students. When teaching ESP, English language teachers may not have the necessary professional expertise. Teacher should always study a lot of professional English-language books to solve the issue, or they may learn from their colleagues or even from their English-majoring students who excel in specialized fields. Additionally, instructors that teach ESP at AOF may run across issues with language education. It is clear that teaching ESP is a challenging task. In order to enhance their language instruction, college professors constantly researched English teaching methods on their own by reading books, taking classes on the subject, and learning from the experiences of their teacher colleagues.

Students' aspect: it is indicated that students should be offered all English skills, special knowledge of English language. However, some special skills for their future jobs such as reading, speaking, listening should be more focused. Furthermore, in order to meet the needs of job markets, students must enrich not only Security knowledge but also social knowledge. More importantly, students need to improve the critical competence of communication.

Context factors: For the class with different background knowledge, teachers should adjust their instructional style by encouraging autonomy, self-study, pairwork and groupwork. Additionally, they should be patient with and pay more attention to weak students to avoid students' de-motivation in ESP learning. Next, ESP course includes lots of knowledge, for example, language skills and specialized knowledge, but students only have two 7-period-class-meetings a week. Therefore, it seems that course duration is not enough and supported the idea of dividing the course into several courses so that teachers could offer more knowledge for students. They, however, could not make any changes except for giving recommendations to the administration of the university. Moreover, to overcome the problem, the teachers should encourage students self study.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

To sum up, learning and teaching ESP is a very complicated field with a lot of interconnected elements. Major concerns about common factors influencing EFS teaching and learning at AOF, as well as potential remedies for the detrimental aspects, have been taken into consideration and studied intensively in this study, both theoretically and practically within the university's framework. The researcher has offered some pedagogical recommendations to the universities and its instructors in the hopes that they would improve the impact of teaching and learning English for students majoring in English, based on the findings of certain positive and negative elements. Despite her best efforts, the sampling process, sample size, and language still have a number of limitations in this study. The current study is only limited to the students at Academy of Finance, future research could focus on the teachers' perceptions. In addition to that, the current study only focuses on the quantitative result, future research could use mixed method or cross-sectional study to explore and determine the drawbacks and benefits of teaching and learning ESP, as well as to find out other difficulties or challenges faced by teachers and learners. Nonetheless, it is possible that the institution and its instructors may find value in the information gathered from this study. Furthermore, more study using a variety of sample sources and additional research methodologies is required to gain a deeper understanding of ESP teaching and learning in relation to the AOF setting.

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