

The effect of Unsystemized ESP Course on the Students' Motivation and achievement in Kurdistan Technical Institutes

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ABSTRACT

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has great significance in undergraduate classes in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq since English is generally used for academic aims. In the Kurdistan Region Technical Institutes, Departments of Administration, an ESP course is taught under the name of "Administrative Readings in English". The design of the course curriculum is not based on a "needs analysis" i.e. the students' capacity, needs, and interests have not been considered in selecting the resources and method of teaching. The aim of this study is to find out how this course affects the students' motivation and language proficiency in Darbandikhan and Kalar Institutes, Sulaimani Polytechnic University given the fact that no studies have been conducted to assess the motivation and achievement of students in ESP courses in this area especially in the institutes. Data collection was done through conducting pre- and post- tests to assess the students' motivation and achievements. The participants of the study were 126 first-year students. They were asked to fill in a questionnaire prior and subsequent to the course to determine their pre and post attitudes about the English course. The results revealed that the students scarcely made any improvement in their General English and Basic Administration. However, in general, they approved of the English classes and their motivation increased. It can be concluded that a systemized ESP is mandatory to improve students' English proficiency.

KEY WORDS: Learning, Motivation, Needs Analysis, Institute Students, English for Specific Purposes

1. INTRODUCTION

When a language course is given time and efforts, it would be significant to see if it achieves its objectives. In addition, motivation is an essential aspect that affects language learning. (Gardner et al., 1985). Learners' various needs and interests, which are at the core of ESP, have significant impact on their motivation. Therefore, it is crucial to involve students in the learning process (Hutchinson and waters, 1987).

practical outcomes. That is why needs analysis and text analysis are key components of ESP as they are related to the students' future careers (Dudley-Evans & John, 1998). Despite these facts, in the technical institutes of Sulaimani Polytechnic University, Department of Administration, the ESP course is given to the first-year students without paying attention to needs analysis, and text analysis. As a result, there is a huge mismatch between the advanced level of the English used in the course content and the students' low levels of English language proficiency. This has forced the students to rely on rote learning (Najmaddin & Hama Sur, 2019), which does not suit the principles of language learning (Lightbrown & Spanda, 2013). The outcomes of such an unsystematized course have not been studied especially in the institutes of this specific area. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine how this ESP course in the technical institutes in Sulaimanya Polytechnic University, Department of Administration affects the students' motivation to learn

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As stated, ESP has constantly given importance to

English language and their English language proficiency. To this end, the study has collected data through tests before and after taking the course using questionnaires. It attempts to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the level of students' motivation to learn English before and after an unsystematized ESP course?
2. What is the students' proficiency level before and after an unsystematized ESP course?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Learning in ESP Course

The main aim of offering any course is learning. Therefore, it is crucial for a course to achieve this objective. According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which is stated by Lightbown and Spada (2013), learning happens in a context in which an individual interacts with a more knowledgeable other within the zone of proximal development (ZPD) of that individual. Learning does not happen beyond the zone of proximal development of the learner. Moreover, when students use a language in a context that is comprehensible and thought-provoking to them, they learn the language (Sajida, 2006).

A fundamental component of an ESP course is needs analysis and therefore, ESP teaching is based on the learners' needs (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, Offord-Gray and Aldred, 1998). Moreover, an element of Needs Analysis is Present Situation Analysis (PSA) in which data about students' language skills are collected. Another part is students' wants in which learners' learning style, reasons for studying ESP and learning experiences are studied. The gap between the learners' present skills and the target situation is also explored (Dudley-Evans/St. John 1998). An appropriate course is designed for students according to their ability, needs, and wants. To confirm this, a study was conducted to measure the efficiency of the application of a needs-based method to ESP course plan in Greek tertiary education. Oxford placement test was utilized before and after the ESP course to evaluate the groups' progress with and without a needs-based approach. As a result, the experimental group of students outperformed the control group in terms of total test score (Chostelidou, 2011).

Another study investigated students' and teachers' perceptions about the efficacy of ESP and it was found out that the students had thought that ESP was significant for political theory and social sciences. Besides, most learners believed that the curriculum materials kindled their enthusiasm to learn and the lectures encouraged them in the process of teaching and learning. They also believed

that teaching ESP for Social and Political programs benefited learners because it would develop their linguistic ability and enable them to cope with their upcoming academic and professional life (Tristina & Khabib, 2021). However, no studies have been conducted to assess the impact of ESP courses on undergraduate students in Iraqi Kurdistan, especially in the institutes.

2.2. ESP and Motivation

Park, an ESP expert (2016, cited in Strevens, 1988) provides 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 information
- They are more cost-effective than General English courses.

Gardener claims that learners with more motivation have better performance than students with less motivation. As he explains, the students with higher levels of motivation have reasons to engage in the relevant activities, make effort, continue with the activities, show enthusiasm to accomplish the aim, and enjoy the activities (2006).

Another study shows that an ESP course in which students' majors, needs and professional needs are considered enables the students to have more internal motivation to learn English (Tabatabaei & Mokhtari, 2014). Moreover, in a study by Chien & Hsu (2010), a questionnaire was distributed to 576 students from different specializations. The results revealed that they highly recommended professional courses or ESP courses. Furthermore, another study investigated Saudi Arabia university students' motivation in ESP and English for General Purposes (EGP). 4,043 students who took ESP and EGP courses at four Saudi universities filled in an online questionnaire. It was found out that the students who enrolled in the ESP course had advanced second language and better perception about the second language learning experience than the EGP group (Al Talib, 2019). In another study, two groups, one with high level of English proficiency and the other with low level of proficiency were enrolled in an ESP course. The two groups appreciated the intensive effort and workload of the ESP course and were pleased with their improvement throughout the course, obtaining the verbal self-confidence, overwhelming anxiety of speaking in front of an audience. Besides, there was an insignificant variance in both group subjects' extrinsic motivation (Navickienė et al, 2015).

ESP courses are typically given to adult students who

have familiarity with English Language and their English proficiency is about pre-intermediate in higher education. However, if adaptation is made in the design of the course according to the students, it can be utilized with beginners (Cigan & Kordić, 2013 cited in Dudley-Evans/St. John 1998). However, in the technical institutes of Sulaimanya Polytechnic University, Department of Administration, the ESP courses are provided while the students' ability, needs, and wants are not considered. To explain this, the students with the beginner levels are exposed to advanced text materials. As a result, the students and the teachers are complaining about the inappropriateness of the syllabus (Najmaddin & Hama Sur, 2019). Moreover, the effect of this course on the students' motivation has not been explored.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. The Aim of the Study

This study explores the effects of a one-year ESP course on the students' General English proficiency and Basic-Administration and their motivation for learning English by examining the students' performances on a pre-test and post-test and pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire.

Three major hypotheses were made and examined:

- 1- The students' motivation toward learning English before the course is better than after the course.
- 2- The students' level of proficiency does not improve significantly in both General English and Basic-Administration in English.
- 3- The students' level of proficiency in English is too low to be enrolled in a course with high-level English content. The tables shown in this paper have been made using the data gathered within the research basis.

This paper is the extension of a study that was conducted on the same levels of students in the same department, and the same syllabus before. The teachers' and students' perceptions, the course materials, and student assessments were taken into consideration in the previous study. It was found out that the course did not reflect the students' needs and proficiency level according to their perceptions (Najmaddin & Hama Sur, 2019). This course is provided to the students four hours a week over a period of 18 weeks except for the exam days.

3.2. Participants:

The participants are 126 first-year students of the Department of Business Administration, in Darbandikhan and Kalar Technical Institutes. The sample

included male and female students aged 18 and above.

3.3. Instruments:

The items of pre- and post-questionnaires were mainly from Gardner's (1985) well-known Attitude/Motivation Test Battery and Husna & Murtini (2019) with some changes and adaptation according to the context of the study and the researchers' experience. The questionnaires consisted of eleven items using 6-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, may agree, I don't think I agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree) (See Appendix 1).

The pre-assessment and post-assessment consisted of 21 questions: 16 questions for General English and 5 for Basic Administration. Moreover, they were composed of different items from different sources but were both based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Level B1 for the pretest and posttest. The pre- and post-assessments were composed of two parts; the first part was concerned with testing grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure, i.e. the language levels of the students and the second part measured the students' mastery of English for administrative purposes (See Appendix 2).

The pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the semester to measure the students' mastery of English Language and their understanding of items related to administration before. After conducting the pre-test, the students are given a certain Administrative English course on which Najmaddin and Hama Sur (2019) conducted a study. The post- test was conducted at the end of the semester.

Besides, since the last part, English for Administrative Purposes, in the pre-test involves reading comprehension tasks, the same items were not repeated verbatim in the post- test. However, they retained the same level of difficulty.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data have been analyzed using excel sheet. The means of the opinions in both prior and subsequent questionnaires have been indicated for both groups in the following Tables. In general, the tables show the mean scores of the students' perceptions about their English courses.

Table 1
Mean Scores of the Items That Show the Students' Eagerness to Have English Courses

The statements	Preques.	Postques.
1- I'm excited about going to the English class every week	3.75	4.61
2- English is one of my favorite courses.	4.14	4.46
3- I like my English class so much; I look forward to studying more English in the future.	3.84	4.12
4- I think my English class is interesting.	2.87	3.35

Table 1 shows the students' positive attitudes about the course. Most of the students' responses indicate their preference and eagerness for the English class in both the pre and post-questionnaires. The students in general agreed that they like their English classes (4.14, 4.34 = agree) (3.84, 3.75 = may agree) except for statement four which shows a slight disagreement (2.87 = I do not think I agree). However, they agreed more on the statements that show their preference after the course (4.61, 4.46, 4.12, 4.73, 4.3 = agree). It is clear that the students' approval of their English course in the post-questionnaire has increased considerably. To explain this, the students' attitude has changed towards strongly agree in all the statements differently as it is stated respectively (0.86, 0.32, 0.28, 0.39, 1.43).

Table 2
Mean Scores of the Items That Show the Students' Readiness to Have English Courses

The statements	Preques	Postques
1. I can ignore other distractions during lessons	2.94	3.66
2. I keep up to date with English by working on it almost every day.	3.85	3.98
3. I would rather spend my time on English more than the other subjects.	2.55	2.74
4. My English class is really worthy and we should spend time on it.	4.33	4.49

Table 2 shows the students' enthusiasm for their English class before and after the course. The students' interest in the English class is mainly on the agreement side except for statement 3 in both pre and post questionnaires and statement one which is slightly under I may agree. In addition, the students' enthusiasm has increased to some extent throughout the course. The differences before and after the course has been shown according to the order in table two (0.72, 0.13, 0.19, 0.16).

Table 3
Mean Scores of the Items that Show the Practicality of
the Course

The statements	Preques	Postques
1. I am delighted about this English course since I gained knowledge that is necessary in the following course or in my job in the future.	4.34	4.73
2. Studying English is important because I will need it for my career.	4.19	5.14

According to table 3 which is about the usefulness of the English class, the students in general are highly in agreement on the statements. The students' perception has altered towards more agreement to the extent that is more than the other points and aspects in the questionnaire over the course period. The difference between the pre- and post-questionnaires are (0.39, 0.95), which is considerable. To make this clearer, the students' point of view about the second statement changed to the next point which is strongly agree throughout the year.

Table 4
Mean Score of the Item that Shows the Relevance of
the Course

11. The course corresponds to my level	4.10	4.35
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Referring to table 4 the students' perception about the relevance of their English class in both pre- and post-questionnaires was in I agree point. However, in the post questionnaire, their attitude was more toward I strongly agree and the difference was (0.25).

Table 5

The statements	G1 questionnaire	G2 questionnaire		G1 postquestionnaire	G2 postquestionnaire
1. I'm excited about going to the English class every week	3.95	3.55	4.88	4.33	
2. I can ignore other distractions during lessons	2.87	3	3.79	3.53	
3. English is one of my favorite courses	3.75	4.53	4.69	4.23	
4. I like my English class so much, I look forward to studying more English in the future.	3.70	3.98	4.5	4.19	

5. I am delighted about this English course since I gained knowledge that is necessary in the following course or in my job in the future.	4.21	4.47	4.91	4.54
6. I keep up to date with English by working on it almost every day.	3.44	4.25	4.74	3.22
7. I would rather spend my time on English more than the other subjects.	3.04	2.04	1.69	3.79
8. Studying English is important because I will need it for my career.	4.28	4.09	5.56	4.71
9. I think my English class is interesting.	2.98	2.76	3.5	3.2
10. My English class is really worthy and we should spend time on it.	3.33	3.33	3.71	3.37
11. The course corresponds to my level	4.28	3.82	4.79	3.91

Table 5 compares the two groups of students' perceptions about all the statements. It is clear that there are differences between the two groups about the statements. However, the discrepancies are not so large to be significant except for the results of statement seven. The statement which is the students spending time on English more than other subjects, the first groups' preference has decreased considerably and the difference is 1.35. This result does not conform to the norm of the results of the whole questionnaire as the students' positive attitudes towards the course in general have increased. This contrary result may be attributed to the nature of the question in which they have to compare the English course to the other subjects. To explain this, there is more probability that they prefer the other subjects that are introduced to them in their native language because they can make progress in their own field. Another reason might be the researchers' way of explaining that specific point differently in the two groups as a huge difference

exists between the two groups in that specific statement. This is because the first group's preference about the course has gone toward the negative side about 1.65 while the second group's has gone toward the positive side 1.75. Nonetheless, there is enough consistency between the two groups to confirm the reliability of the study from the results of the questionnaire as a whole.

Table 6
Mean Score of the Result of Pre- and Post-Tests Separately

Groups and exams	Pretest	Posttest	Out of
Basic administration	1.32	1.51	5
G1 General English	4.66	4.8	16

Table 6 shows the students' mean scores of both pre- and post-tests, of both Basic Administration and General English separately. It is obvious that their English is poor according to the pre-tests. Moreover, they have made an insufficient improvement in the test as a whole

In terms of the students' level of General English proficiency, they have only beginner level (A1) in both pre- and post-test. In the pretest, the students' mean score is 4.66 out of 16, while they have gained about the same mark in the posttest which is 4.8 out of 16. This shows that they have scarcely made progress in their general English.

Similarly, there is little progress in the Basic Administration test. To explain this, the students' mean score in the pre-test was 1.32 out of 5, while they made only a miniscule improvement in the post-test which is 1.41.

Table 7
Mean Score of the Result of Pre- and Post-Tests Together

Groups and exams	Pretest	Posttest	Out of
Basic Administration & G1 General English	5.98	6.31	21

In table 7, both of the General English and Basic Administration tests are brought together to see the students' progress throughout the course. It is obvious that in the pretest, all the students' mean score for both General English and Basic Administration is 5.98. Then, in the post test they could gain 6.31. This means that for all the period, they have made 0.33 progress in their General English and Basic Administration.

Table 8
The Mean Scores of the Results of Each Group

Groups and exams	Pretest	Posttest	Out of
G1 Basic administration	1.34	1.56	5
G2 Basic administration	1.28	1.46	
G1 General English	4.15	4.58	16
G2 General English	5.17	5.02	

In table 8 the two groups' results of the pre and post-tests are compared to check the reliability of the study. Both groups have about the same results in the pre-test and have made about the same progress throughout the course. The first groups' mean scores of their results in the pretest in Basic Administration is 1.34 and in the posttest 1.56. Thus, they could make 0.22 progress throughout the course which is slightly above two points. Moreover, the second groups' mean score of their results in both pre and posttest were 1.28-1.46 respectively. So, their progression throughout the course is 0.18 which is about two points. The two groups' results in both pre and posttests are hardly different. Accordingly, having such similar results by both groups shows the reliability of the tests in Basic Administration.

On the other hand, the first groups' mean score of their results in both pre and posttest in General English were 4.15-4.58 respectively and they have 0.43 increase in the end- of -year performance. Contrariwise, the second groups' General English in both pre and posttests were 5.17-5.02 respectively. The second groups' marks have decreased by 0.15. Despite the fact that there is difference between the two groups' performance, the difference is too slight to affect the reliability of the tests.

As it was found in the previous study by Najmaddin and Hama Sur (2019), the language that is used in the course does not match the students' level of English. The pre-test in which all the students' mean score for both General English and Basic Administration is 5.98 out of 21 confirms the previous study. This is because the students' English level is only A1 while their course materials are texts that are authentic and meant for advanced speakers or native language speakers. Consequently, they cannot get a good grip on the course content and depend on their teachers and on rote memorization. This could have affected the students' attitude towards their English course negatively if the teachers did not make adequate modification in their teaching methods and questions. Teachers said they adapted the course materials and questions regarding the students' level of English

(Najmaddin & Hama Sur, 2019). To explain this, the teachers assessed the learners' first level of knowledge in accordance with Blooms' Taxonomy, which is recalling. Nonetheless, despite the inappropriate course design and course materials, the students still have a positive attitude towards their English course. However, the results of the pre- and post-test show the deficiency of the course.

In the pretest, all the students' mean scores for both General Language and Basic Administration is 5.98 out of 21. This confirms the students' and teachers' perception in the previous study (Najmaddin & Hama Sur 2019). Then, in the post test they could gain 6.31. This means that for all the period, they have made 0.33 progress in their General English and Basic Administration. It has been recommended that learners in positive environments need about 180-200 guided learning hours to achieve A2 from A1. Moreover, this has been achieved in in-country courses, in more qualified classes in which competent teachers use good materials (Lopriori 2014). This course took 72 hours which is above one third of the time needed to get to the next level. However, in this study, the students did not make even 2% of the improvement that is made in an average course. Moreover, though the main purpose and subject of the course was Basic Administration, the students' about 2% progress was insignificant. This contradicts with a study by Navickienė et al. (2015) in which they found that the students in an ESP course were happy with their progress. Another study contrasts with the present study by highlighting the effectiveness of conducting a needs analysis as a key element of an ESP course. In that study, a controlled group and an experimental group were tested before and after the course, and the experimental group achieved significantly higher marks following the course. (Chostelidou, 2011). Tiristina and Khabib (2021) also found out how ESP course kindled more interest for learning.

It can be concluded that this course has made an insignificant improvement in the students' Basic Administration but not in their English Language. This result also agrees with the results of the former study by Najmaddin and Hama Sur (2019) as the researchers stated, due to the huge gap between the students' level of English proficiency and the course materials, they have to teach and test the students' knowledge only on the remembering level. With regard to the students' performance, the students complain about the course content being too difficult to deal with and, being so, they are not able to express themselves using their own words, therefore, they depend on memorization. These confirm Vygotsky's socio cultural theory who states that leaning

happens in the zone of proximal development of the learner (Lightbrown & Spanda, 2013).

In other words the students still have a strong belief that the course matches their level of English. This point is contrary to the fact that they have hardly made any progress in their English. Moreover, in the previous study by Najmaddin and Hama Sur, they complained about the level of the course which did not match the students' levels. This must be because the teachers simplify the course materials and tests. As it was found in the aforementioned study, 78% of the students could pass in the exams. Besides, they must be unaware about the fact that they have not made any progress in their English after all the efforts they have made from the beginning to the end of the year.

Moreover, the students have approved of the statements related to their need for English language in their future courses and occupations. This must be a part of their eagerness to study English. Still, the students express less keenness about the efforts they make for the English class, especially when it is compared to the other subjects. This might be the outcome of the unsuitability of the course design.

The fact that the students' motivation and eagerness for the course has increased throughout the course after they took an ESP course conforms with Tabatabaei & Mokhtari (2014), Chien & Hsu (2010), and Navickienė et al (2015).

5. CONCLUSION

ESP courses are practical and have efficient learning outcomes due to their appropriate methodological approaches. They also cultivate students' motivation because they reflect the students' needs, wants and capacities. Based on the data and investigation of this study and the preceding one, an unsystemized ESP course results in the following consequences:

1. Overall, the learners are optimistic about their English course and they think it is a prerequisite to make improvements in their future academic career. The teachers' modification of their teaching methods and tests has enhanced the students' positive attitude about the course.
2. Regarding both tests, the students' levels of English are too low to be involved in a course with such advanced content.
3. The enormous gap between the students' English proficiency and the given course material has caused the students to scarcely make progress in both their General English and Basic Administration.

4. Because of the teachers' simplification of the course material and tests, the students still think the course matches their proficiency. This points out that the students cannot clearly realize the fact that this course does not really improve their proficiency only because they can pass in the exams.
5. The students think that they need English in their future career.
6. The students' enthusiasm for the English classes is less than for the other subjects they study.

After conducting the earlier study (Najmaddin & Hama Sur, 2019) and this study, it can be determined that these courses are repeated unsuccessful efforts. Hence, it is crucial to design a course that suits the students' ability. This requires training, mentoring, and less restrictions for the teachers.

Implication for Further Research

This paper assessed the effectiveness of the ESP course on developing students' language skills. However, there is need for other studies to assess the impact of ESP course on the development of other skills to know how this course affects each skill separately.

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