Language Attitudes and Learning
Exploring ESP Learners' Attitudes and
Motivation to Learn English and French

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Abstract: The aim of the present study was to get a better insight into what relationship exists between motivation and language attitudes of students attending English and French for specific purposes and the learning process they are exposed to. Twenty students were administered questionnaires to carry out this investigation. The interest of the study lies in students' attitudes towards English and French in parallel with the factors/criteria along which they express their language attitudes. Students' learning experiences and strategies are considered efficient and useful in order to acquire a foreign language. Results suggest that students' attitudes are determined by their own experiences of language use, and in this sense, we can differentiate between a language for identification – built upon specific emotional, affective, and cognitive factors – and language for communication)

Keywords: Attitudes, English/French learning for specific purposes, Language learning, Motivation

Introduction

Motivation for learning English and French for specific purposes (ESP/FSP) is considered as an enhancing element to promote the scientific knowledge of students. It should be noted that motivated students are expected to be more ambitious for both acquiring and making use of the language in different situations. However, unmotivated students would show less interest wherefrom class activities become tiring and burdensome. Interestingly enough, creativity can be a solution to situations where teachers are supposed to utilise different techniques to enhance learners to acquire the target language more effectively. Research usually reveals that ESP learners are assumed to be involved in every class, which is not always the case when learners do not show real enthusiasm. ESP students are sometimes not conscious of the importance associated with courses assignments and exams. Hence, they tend to lack interest and wisdom to concentrate on activities that facilitate better understanding of the language assignments they need in order to improve effective language use.

Nonetheless, students of ESP are exposed to other technical learning, hence, they are not always expected to come into every course motivated to deal with material as the ESP teacher would like. For instance, if a student feels some uneasiness when going through learning procedure he will not be involved and will not participate effectively. Consequently, the teacher is expected to intervene as a qualified discoverer to find out the students' main interest with the suitable material that could be regarded as intellectually relevant. Creating a real desire to tackle various language activities such as grammar and conversation is not an easy task so the instructor should think of appropriate as well as enjoyable techniques to achieve such important educational goals.

One can ask this question? What kind of attitudes do learners hold towards ESP learning and different instructional strategies such as grammar and conversation? What kind of strategies

can an instructor follow to enhance motivational intensity in classes? One may suggest that the degree of learning motivation involves personal relevance, some control of class material in the learning process and positive feelings towards the target language.

A. Research Objectives

1. To investigate the attitudes that learners hold towards the learning of English and French for specific purposes.
2. To examine the learners' motivation for different instructional strategies in ESP learning as well as desire to deal with English and French in accordance with their roles in the world.
3. To find out the relation between the need of the language and motivational efforts expected by the learners in relation to the actual use of the target language.
4. To find out what educational purposes are considered by learners to improve their competence in French and English to help them perform the languages appropriately and effectively.

B. Proposed Hypotheses

1. It is proposed that students 'attitudes correspond with the importance of the language.
2. It is suggested that more highly motivated learners appreciate performing different instructional strategies.
3. ESP learners tend to hold more favourable attitudes towards English when related to science and technology.
4. More favourable opinions are expressed towards French when it is related to tangible and practical educational purposes.
5. Male and female differences appear when prestige criterion is considered.

I. Literature Review

A. Definition of ESP (Dudley-Evans, 1997)

Dudley Evans and St John (1997, p. 5) analyses ESP with regard to two main characteristics: "absolute" and "variable". Absolute characteristics are as follows:

1. ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners.
2. ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves.
3. ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre.

Variable Characteristics:

1. ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines.
2. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of General English.
3. ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level.
4. ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students.
5. Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language systems.

Dudley-Evans tackles the two characteristics in terms of extended definition claimed by Strevens' (1988). In spite of the fact that he has developed it substantially by removing the absolute characteristic that ESP is "in contrast with 'General English'" (Johns et al., 1991, p. 298), and has increased more variable characteristics. The distinction of ESP criteria into absolute and variable characteristics, in particular, is indispensable in resolving arguments about what is wrong and right and in ESP. Therefore, it is remarkable that ESP can but is not necessarily concerned with a specific discipline, nor is it the purpose in goal of a given age group or ability range. ESP should be regarded as a simple 'approach' to teaching, or what Dudley-Evans describes as an 'attitude of mind'. This is equally stated in a statement made by Hutchinson et al. (1987, p.19) who sees that "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning".

Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p.53) provide a clarification to the difference between 'General English' and ESP as, "in theory nothing, in practise a great deal". Teachers of ESP are conscious that the selection of an appropriate textbook of the class material should be made on the basis of the assessment of the learner's needs, wherefrom, the syllabus is adjusted to the course aim. ESP learners are most of the time adults who have some knowledge of English and possess various content subjects that are not well-understood by teachers. So they need to be equipped with professional communicative skills to be able to be efficient in job-related tasks.

B. Attitudes towards Learning Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes

Research reveals that motivating is a necessary and a fundamental aspect of good teaching. It is expected that university students should be ambitious to learn in every class, which is not always the case. Educational goals are based on fundamental elements such as assignments and exams since learners are not yet well-equipped with enough experience and wisdom to recognize what appropriate courses are important to achieve good learning. It is assumed that learners' attitudes towards the language and its speakers have an impact on language learning process and the learning outcomes. Previous research and studies on attitudes and motivation in language learning (Csizér 2007, Dörnyei 2009) acknowledge that attitudes and motivation are strongly related. Positive attitudes towards the language and its speakers can urge students to be more interested and then obtain better learning achievements and positive attitudes towards various class activities. Motivation for learning foreign languages for specific purposes emerges from intrinsic and extrinsic criteria. While extrinsic motivation starts from outside the learner and its learning is done for the sake of rewards such as grades or praise, intrinsic motivation as explained by Vallerand et al (1989, cited in Dörnyei, 1998) rises from many sources such as knowledge, accomplishment and stimulation. Achieving efficient accomplishment consists of an essential trigger of intrinsic motivation. ESP practitioner can face difficulties when exposing different language tasks, for example, in understanding lexical items. Therefore, most of the time a struggle is expected until the teacher overcomes the problem. Hence, whenever a task is well-accomplished, it increases motivation and gives emergence to solve another task.

C. The Role of the ESP/FSP Teacher (practitioner)

The main duty of the ESP teacher is to perform the right choice of teaching methods and techniques that are fundamentally related to the students' linguistic and communicative

performances. For instance, the instructor can possibly take profit from exercises involving problem-solving, simulations, observations, role-plays, case studies, discourse analyses should be close to everyday work situations.

As far as the methodology is concerned Richards and Rogers, 2001; Nunan, 2004 propose the following figure 1.
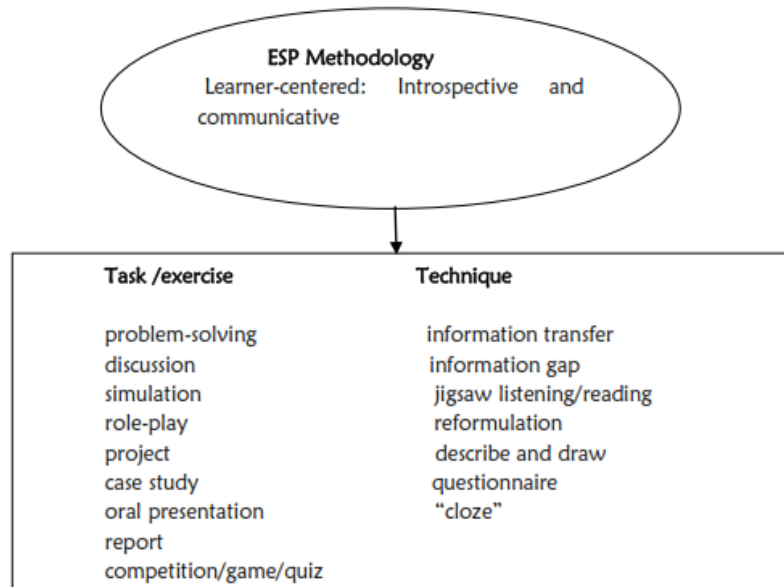

Fig.1. ESP Methodology

Learners are exposed to a wide range of vocabulary items and little grammatical structures, in fact, the student is supposed to deal with grammatical exercises and correct mistakes while performing, and this, is almost the most important detail in class work. The teaching of grammar, pronunciation as well as sentence structure do not constitute the main aim of the language course. Instead, the practitioner should orient the learner's focus towards the homogeneous sentence that contains the appropriate technical concepts. Form and function are then the main criterion of the teaching selection so as to obtain sociolinguistic usability. Hence, the main construct of ESP learning is functional syllabuses which are responsible for the coordination between class work and appropriate communicative performances based on aims that are associated with different students' achievements (Richard, 2001).

II. Methodology

In this study the questionnaire method was considered as suitable, so informants were administered a number of questions. The questionnaire form functions as a study tool to collect primary data in this investigation. The questionnaire encapsulates the questions which measure the opinions, attitudes and acceptance of foreign language learning for specific purposes. The researcher was present when answering questions and explanations were provided in case of ambiguity (cf. Appendix).

A. Research Design

The questionnaire contains 36 questions with the items 'agree' 'no opinion' and 'don't agree'. They were divided into two main parts: measuring the attitude towards the learning of French then English for specific purposes as well as the motivation for attaining knowledge using different techniques. The statements and their aims are stated as follows:

Statements	Aims
1. It is interesting to learn English/French. 2. It is highly recommended for ESP learners to study English /French.	Motivational intensity : Create situations in Which students feel a sense of accomplishment
-Students feel familiar with French /English in class.	Students' familiarity to personalise the classroom environment.
-I feel natural to use French/ English in class	Preference of class activities to develop students' confidence.
-It is used in most of the movies, shows and video clips I watch.	Connect language learning to students' interests outside class
1.good in academic settings 2. modern	High status
-prestigious	prestige
1. easier to understand 2. simpler 3. clearer	Easiness in use
-beautiful	Easthetic aspect
-It is better if French is used around the world.	Wish to have World Wide Use

1. I like translation in French/English when
     explaining activities.
 2. I like grammar exercises
 3. I like communication activities like
     dialogues
 4. I like listening to conversations
 5. I like reading texts in English/French
	Attitudes towards Instructional Strategies

B. Participants

The present study is conducted with 20 male and 20 female second year students enrolled in engineering branch in the Superior School in Sciences and Techniques in Tlemcen. ESP is taught during 1st, 2nd years, for one hour and a half a week. Those students are meant to study technical and scientific modules during five years. They finish their studies as engineers in several fields such as control engineering, industrial engineering and electronics (www.epst-tlemcen.dz).

III. Results and Discussion

Motivational intensity scores are higher in English in comparison to French wherefrom one notices that motivating students encompasses not only leading them to the target language, but also keeping their interest for knowledge and understanding. Nonetheless, students' personal familiarity with the foreign languages had lower rating. This may be due to the fact that more learners identify themselves with the ESP/FSP that require learners to remember, practice, and communicate more. However, English gained more preference when both genders express their involvement with class work. Moreover, all male informants were in favour of using this medium out of classroom circle (cf. table1).

Table 1. Evaluation of Foreign Language Interest by Gender

Statement	Languages			
Connect language learning to students' interests outside class.	French		English	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
	4	2	11	20
Students' Familiarity to personalise the classroom environment.	6	9	11	11

Unlike French, more students correlate English with high status and prestige criterion which reveal that learners express their willingness to participate actively in the English learning process (cf. table2). It is clear that our informants can be motivated in various ways: utilization of various attractive activities, new techniques such as technology practices, setting expectations and cooperative activities.

Table 2. Evaluation of French and English Status by Gender

Statement		Languages			
High Status		French		English	
		Females	Males	Females	Males
	1-Good in academic settings	8	9	14	18
	2-Modern	10	5	17	17

Practically, English and French learning involves listening, speaking, reading, and writing capabilities in order to give access to efficient practicing in and outside class. Remarkably, results

reveal that French is considered more difficult as lower ratings were recorded concerning easiness in use (cf. table 3).

Table 3. Evaluation of the International Use of French and English by Gender

Statement		Languages			
Wish to have World Wide Use	1- It is better if it is used around the world.	French		English	
		Females	Males	Females	Males
		5	1	11	15

As far as aesthetic aspects are concerned, informants judged English positively; furthermore, prestige criterion emerges when females mainly evaluate French more favourably. This consideration can inform us that learners attribute to languages stereotypic traits associated with given views such as 'beautiful'. In other words, language attitudes have been ingrained in mind to reflect people's evaluation towards different linguistic media. Even though, the scores were not noticeably high, English is preferred as a world language instead of French (cf. table 4).

Table 4. Easiness in use of French and English by Gender

Statement	Languages			
Easiness in Use	French		English	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
1- easier to understand	9	12	15	15
2- simpler	6	9	16	18
3- clearer	10	10	15	14

So our respondents seem to be conscious of the effective role that a language has in order to reinforce abilities and academic needs. Mao (2011) states that these differences are mainly brought about by factors such as age, ethnic background, and beliefs. This implies that learners consider that English is the language of science and technology. English speakers have more opportunities to deal with others in different fields and to discover new ideas and innovations (David Crystal 2003).

When tackling the results of attitudes towards instructional strategies, one notices that learners focus on listening, reading and speaking skills rather than grammar and translation since higher scores were registered with these statements (cf. table 5).

Table 5. Attitudes towards Instructional Strategies of French and English by Gender

Languages				
Attitudes towards Instructional Strategies	French		English	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
1-I like translation.	7	9	6	5
2-I like grammar exercises.	6		10	6
3- I like listening to conversations.	12	11	14	15

This expresses the wish of learners to achieve seriously efficient communicative competence using various strategies. This explains why the role of the teacher being a stringent facilitator as well as a practitioner (Bain et al., Y. Liu, 2010) entails maintaining motivation as an integral element of the language learning process. When a teacher succeeds in selecting appropriate and useful activities, he is more than a strict instructor. In fact, he transmits the educational message and develops a positive attitude, which consequently arouses the students' potentialities in learning. According to Gardner (2010), pursuing predesigned curriculum does not always fulfil student needs—customizing teaching strategy is now the way to go.

Conclusion

ESP/FSP students seem to be involved in communication as qualified communicators who should participate in effective communicative situations. The collected data revealed that integration of well-established teaching in both French and English is fundamental to create communicative competence which is a decisive way in modern learning environment. Hence, motivation is closely related to the kind of strategies that students would like to be exposed to, particularly the use of assorted fascinating activities, appropriate techniques, setting expectations and use of rewards and creation of a positive learning environment. Attitudes are clearly expressed towards English as a world language associated with values such as modernity and scientificity. The student's attitudes towards English learning and the language itself determine his or her perceptions about the curriculum; favourable attitudes imply better foreign language performance. French is mainly selected by girls as a prestigious medium wherefrom female attraction of aesthetic aspect is confirmed.

Appendix

Questionnaires

French

1. It is interesting to learn French.
2. It is highly recommended for us to study French.
3. Students feel familiar with French in class.
4. I feel natural to use French in class.
5. French is used in most of the movies, shows and video clips I watch.
6. French is good in academic settings
7. French is modern
8. French is prestigious
9. French is easier to understand
10. French is simpler
11. French is clearer
12. French is beautiful
13. It is better if French is used around the world.
14. I like translation in Arabic when explaining words.
15- I like grammar exercises.
16- I like communication activities like
    dialogues.
17- I like listening to conversations.
18- I like reading texts in French.

English

1. It is interesting to learn English.
2. It is highly recommended for us to study English.
3. Students feel familiar with English in class.
4. I feel natural to use English in class.
5. English is used in most of the movies, shows and video clips I watch.
6. English is good in academic settings.
7. English is modern.
8. English is prestigious.
9. English is easier to understand
10. English is simpler
11. English is clearer
12. English is beautiful
13. It is better if English were used around the world.
14. I like translation in French when explaining words.
15- I like grammar exercises.
16- I like communication activities like dialogues.
17- I like listening to conversations.
18- I like reading texts in English.

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