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Using Motivational Strategies in a Business English Course: An English Teacher in the Context of English for Specific Purposes

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Abstract: This study used a qualitative method to explore a teacher's use of motivational strategies in an English for specific purposes (ESP) course and students' perceptions. An English teacher in a business English class and her 32 students were recruited. The class was observed three times: at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the course. Two semi-structured interviews with the teacher were conducted: one before classroom observation, and the other after observation. Interviews with the students were conducted after each classroom observation. The teacher used seven motivational strategies to create a supportive and relaxed classroom atmosphere, and five strategies to facilitate students' language learning. Most students' perceptions of the teacher's use of motivational strategies were positive. However, the students perceived a gap between their expectations for the course and their experiences. Finally, the article concludes by offering insights into the implications and constraints related to pedagogy.

Keywords: *Business English, English for specific purposes, motivational strategy, students' perceptions.*

Introduction

English for specific purposes (ESP) was a term coined in the 1960s during the rapid development of the world's economy. According to Teodorescu (2010), in a commerce-driven world, learning English is crucial because it is widely used as the language of international communication. Nonnative speakers use it as a lingua franca for communication, business, and information sharing. ESP has helped target learners satisfy their professional and vocational demands (Fitria, 2020; Ramírez, 2015). In Asia, ESP education has been implemented since World War II to help countries industrialize and modernize (Calinao, 2023; Clayton, 2006; Goldman, 1994; Robertson, 2005). Particularly in Taiwan, with the forces of globalization and glocalization at play, ESP courses have been developed for various sectors such as the tourism and business industries, among others (Calinao, 2023; I. C. Chen & Wu, 2013; Kuo, 2017; Lo & Sheu, 2008). ESP education has numerous purposes. Originally, ESP had an academic purpose, particularly in the humanities and sciences, enabling academics to participate in international discourse (Tickoo, 1988). Then, English gradually became the language of international travel, business, politics, diplomacy, and the Internet. As a result, many Asian colleges began to offer classes such as English for scientists, English for business, and English for tourism (Blue & Harun, 2003; Lo & Sheu, 2008). Although ESP education in Asia has developed considerably, the need for ESP courses that prepare students for their careers remains.

The success of ESP courses depends on tailor-made teaching plans and syllabi. However, teachers encounter numerous challenges in this regard (Y. H. Chen, 2011; Fitria, 2020; Tao & Gao, 2017; Wang, 2007; Wu & Badger, 2009). According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP teachers often struggle to master the language and subject matter, but are often not required to do so (p. 160). Thus, the shortage of qualified teachers trained in both English and the subject matter is problematic. In response, many authorities in Taiwan appoint English for general purposes (EGP) teachers to teach ESP courses (Su, 2003; Tsao et al., 2008;). However, gaps between ESP and EGP courses remain in terms of teaching focus and teaching requirements (Gaffas, 2019; Hwang & Lin, 2010). EGP courses help students with basic language learning, whereas ESP courses elevate students' language abilities and provide expertise in specific fields. Thus, the teaching methodologies of ESP courses differ from those of EGP courses.

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Motivation is essential to language learning (Dörnyei, 1994; Gardner, 1985; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Schmidt et al., 1996; Ushioda, 1996) and often determines the success of second or foreign language acquisition (Dörnyei, 1994, 2001). Gardner's integrative motivation framework (1985) is foundational in second language acquisition, proposing that learners are driven by a desire to assimilate into the target language's culture—a dynamic mix of effort, aspiration, and positive emotional responses that draw learners towards both the language's culture and its speakers. Building on this integrative approach, Dörnyei classified motivation into three levels—language, learner, and learning situation—taking course-specific, teacher-specific, and group-specific motivational elements into account (1994). Within this framework, motivational strategies emerge as teaching and learning tools, creating a comprehensive approach and enduring positive effect to foster motivation in language learners (Dörnyei, 2001). Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) suggested motivational strategies as the instructional interventions employed by the teachers to motivate students and by students to maintain their motivation. Numerous studies have highlighted the positive correlation between L2 learning motivation and language learning outcomes, showing how the use of motivational strategies in L2 language instruction yields pedagogical benefits (Abdullah et al., 2019; Alison & Halliwell, 2002; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei, 2006; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Lin et al., 2021; Nugroho & Mayda, 2015; Williams & Burden, 1997). Accordingly, motivational strategies play a pivotal role in motivating students to learn languages.

In addition, students' perceptions of their teachers' use of motivational strategies are related to students' motivation and experience in language learning (Den Brok et al., 2002; McEown & Takeuchi, 2014; Noels, 2001; Noels et al., 1999). Although motivational strategies have been investigated in the context of general English learning, few researchers have explored motivational strategies in ESP courses, which, unlike general English learning, prioritize both linguistic knowledge (Hyland, 2011, 2012) and the transfer of knowledge (James, 2014). Researchers have claimed that ESP courses should motivate students (Altalib, 2019; Basturkmen, 2010; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Despite extensive research on motivational strategies in general language learning, there remains a significant gap in exploring these strategies within the context of ESP courses. Unlike general English learning, ESP courses emphasize both linguistic knowledge and practical knowledge transfer (Basturkmen, 2010; James, 2014; Willingham, 2007). This study delves into the utilization of motivational strategies by an English teacher with 20 years of experience teaching English for General Purposes (EGP) within a business English course. By examining the application of motivational strategies in a specific ESP setting, this study aims to bridge this gap in the literature. By shedding light on the unique challenges and opportunities within ESP contexts, the researchers aim to contribute insights that can inform effective language teaching practices in specialized fields."

Literature Review

Studies on Teachers' Motivational Strategies

Strategies for motivating learners are crucial in L2 education. Since the 1990s, researchers have increasingly developed and analyzed motivational strategies in education (Alison & Halliwell, 2002; Brown, 2001; Chambers, 1999; Dörnyei, 2001, 2007; Lin et al., 2021; Williams & Burden, 1997). In the late 1990s, Dörnyei (1994) summarized key motivational strategies. In 1998, Dörnyei and Csizer analyzed 10 motivational macro strategies on the basis of the results of an empirical survey of motivational strategies used in the classroom. Later, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) replicated the study in Taiwan to explore strategies used in the East. By using an instrument based on the comprehensive and systematic framework developed by Dörnyei (2001), the study discovered that some strategies are culture sensitive. By using a self-report questionnaire and classroom observation, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) found a strong positive correlation between teachers' motivational teaching practices and their students' learning motivation in a large-scale investigation of 40 English as a second or foreign language classrooms in South Korea comprising 27 teachers and 1,300 students. Moskovsky et al. (2013) discovered that teachers' motivational behaviors increased motivation in L2 learners by using a quasi-experimental design to assess the effects of motivational strategies used by English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher in Saudi Arabia. Nugroho and Mayda (2015) also employed classroom observation, interviews, and questionnaires and found that teachers' use of motivational strategies in EFL classrooms determined their students' attitudes. It is revealed from research that teachers' motivational strategies affect learning behavior in the context of L2 learning (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Moskovsky et al., 2013; Nugroho & Mayda, 2015).

Need for an Investigation of Motivational Strategies Used in ESP

The results of studies on motivational strategies in the context of general English teaching may need to apply to ESP teaching. According to researchers, ESP learning involves frequent changes in motivation because of its integrative and instrumental orientation (Astuti, 2013; Dörnyei, 2001; Muslimin, 2018; Ushioda, 1996). According to Crookes and Schmidt (1991), "a program which appears to meet learners' own expressed needs will be more motivating, more efficient, and thus more successful" (p. 492). In an ESP course at Mataram State Islamic University, Muslimin (2018) discovered that ESP teachers used ten commandments (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007) to motivate language learners. The result shows that both teachers' use of motivational strategies can motivate students.

Summarized from the findings of previous literature, ESP courses are unique in that they combine language learning with specific subject matter related to professions (Calinao, 2023; Fitria, 2020). The promotion of student motivation requires the integration of motivational strategies in teaching, which has been scarcely found in the ESP area. This study tried to explore an English teacher's use and the students' perceptions of motivation strategies in an ESP course.

Methodology

Approach

The study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing classroom observation, interviews, and document analysis to gather data. Classroom observation was used to investigate the practical implementation of motivational strategies by teachers in class. Interviews were conducted to delve into teachers' beliefs regarding their utilization of motivational strategies in ESP business courses and to gain insight into how students perceive these strategies. Additionally, document analysis was performed to examine course materials, tests, and student notes, with the aim of triangulating the data obtained from classroom observation. The English teacher's motivational strategies were identified using Dörnyei's (2001) definitions.

Context

This study was conducted in a commercial vocational high school in Taiwan. The school focuses on technical training to prepare students for work after graduation. Before graduating, students are encouraged to take qualification examinations to obtain technical certifications in international trade management. Majors in the school include data processing, business affairs, international trade, and applied English.

Students enroll in courses such as accounting, economics, commercial management, and e-commerce. Most courses are taught by business teachers, whereas business English, an elective course, is taught by English teachers. Teachers may choose to use textbooks or self-designed teaching materials. The English teachers are native Chinese speakers with English education certification from the Ministry of Education of Taiwan. The business English course aims at familiarizing students with technical terms and helps them pass the international trade management examination and obtain technical certification.

Participants

The participants were an English teacher and 32 students in the business English course. The students were 11th graders majoring in international trade, 6 male and 26 female, who had learned English for more than 10 years. The students were allocated to their majors on the basis of the results of their high school entrance examinations; they outperformed those in other majors, especially in terms of English. They enrolled in the course to improve their English for their careers. The teacher, Jessie, earned a master's degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages in Taiwan and had taught English for 20 years. However, she had not taught a business English course before. This is her first ESP course.

Instruments

Semi-structured interview probes were designed to identify the reasons why the teacher adopted specific motivational strategies (Appendix A) and to explore her students' perceptions (Appendix B). All interviews were conducted in the participants' first language, Mandarin Chinese, and audio recorded. Interviews with the teacher were conducted before and after classroom observation for 50 minutes. The teacher described EFL learning context and her teaching practice (Benner, 1994; Benner et al., 1996). The first interview covered the syllabus, the teacher's beliefs, and her relationship with the students. The second interview covered motivational strategies, the students' performance, and perceived factors affecting the students' motivation. Moreover, three interviews with six students were conducted after each classroom observation. The students were asked about the course, its requirements, opportunities to use English, their backgrounds, beliefs, learning goals, and their perceptions of the course.

Additionally, classroom observations were carried out three times to investigate the teaching process, motivational strategies, and student tasks and behavior: once prior to the first mid-term examination, once between the first and second mid-term examinations, and once following the second mid-term examination. Each observation session lasted for 50 minutes. Throughout these observations, researchers sat at the back of the classroom, noting the teacher's instructional methods, class tasks and activities, language and instructions employed by the teacher, as well as the interactions between the teacher and the students.

To ensure ethical standards were maintained in the study described, informed consent was obtained from all participants, including both the teacher and students. Participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the research, procedures involved, and their rights regarding confidentiality and privacy. They were assured of their voluntary participation and the ability to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

With the consent of the teacher and students, the researchers recorded the class, affirming that the observations would not impact the students' grades. Subsequently, participants in the business English class, including both the English

teacher and students, were provided an opportunity to verify the accuracy of the transcribed data from interviews and classroom observations. All collected data, comprising information from interviews and classroom observations, was treated confidentially and anonymized to safeguard participant identities. Participant anonymity was retained in all reports and publications to uphold confidentiality. Access to the data was restricted solely to authorized personnel to ensure the protection of information.

Data Analysis

The interviews and classroom observations data were transcribed verbatim and subsequently shared with the participants for validation. The transcriptions underwent a systematic coding process following the categories established by Dörnyei (2001) to facilitate analysis. Through iterative comparison and grouping, themes were derived from the coded data, revealing underlying patterns and insights. To ensure the credibility and rigor of the identified themes, an expert specializing in foreign language learning reviewed and validated the emerging themes.

Results

In line with our study's objectives, the results highlight the crucial role of the teacher's motivational strategies in supporting and enhancing student participation. This exploration directly ties into our research focus on exploring the impact of such strategies on student engagement in the learning process. Insights from student feedback revealed multiple facets, such as the teacher's emphasis on vocabulary acquisition, their perceived commitment to student learning, the adoption of innovative teaching methods, and a divergence between student expectations and their actual experiences in the course.

Teacher's Motivational Strategies Used

Motivational Strategies to Create a Supportive and Relaxed Environment

Jessie, the teacher, implemented a comprehensive approach utilizing key motivational strategies to foster a positive learning environment. Identified strategies included providing constructive feedback to bolster student confidence, offering necessary assistance before assessments, and guiding students towards success by setting clear expectations. Recognizing the potential stress of quizzes, she tailored assessments to suit students' capabilities, ensuring thorough preparation. Furthermore, she invested in personalized support for struggling students, addressing their challenges and providing tailored solutions for improvement. By emphasizing student strengths and accomplishments and promoting a collaborative study environment through group activities, Jessie aimed to create a supportive and encouraging atmosphere in the classroom. Her commitment to individual student progress and dedication to nurturing confidence and motivation among all learners were evident throughout her instructional approach. The details of each motivational strategy relevant to creating a supportive and relaxed environment are outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Motivational Strategies to Create a Supportive and Relaxed Environment

Motivational strategy	Description
Providing Positive Feedback	Highlighted students' achievements and progress in a positive manner
Ensuring Students Receive Assistance	Offered support and guidance to students before quizzes and exams
Helping Students Expect Success	Encouraged a positive outlook and clear direction for success
Calming Students by Removing Anxiety	Adjusted quizzes to match students' abilities and facilitated discussion on upcoming assessments
Demonstrating Value for L2 Learning	Showed appreciation for language learning and its importance
Caring for Students' Progress	Reviewed quizzes, offered feedback, and provided additional support for underperforming students
Building Confidence through Encouragement	Encouraged students, highlighted strengths, and rewarded efforts

Motivational Strategies to Facilitate Language Learning

Jessie strategically engaged students in the learning process by employing various techniques to spark interest and enhance comprehension. She ensured lessons were not only educational but also enjoyable by creating stimulating activities and connecting subject matter to real-world scenarios. By highlighting student achievements and setting clear goals for each class, Jessie instilled a sense of purpose and motivation among her students. Her use of interactive games and rewards incentivized active participation and reinforced learning outcomes. Moreover, Jessie's effective strategy of relating vocabulary to students' daily lives helped solidify understanding and encouraged a practical application of the language. By fostering a sense of accomplishment through targeted tasks and fostering a goal-oriented mindset, Jessie empowered students to excel and progress effectively in their language learning journey.

The specifics of each motivational strategy pertinent to establishing a supportive and relaxed environment are delineated in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Motivational Strategies to Facilitate Language Learning

Motivational strategy	Description
Ensuring Stimulating & Enjoyable lessons	Engaged students through interactive and enjoyable class activities
Setting Clear Goals for Students	Defined achievable goals and expectations for each quiz or exam
Motivating Students with New Tasks	Introduced tasks creatively to stimulate interest and participation
Relating Subject Matter to Students' Lives	Connected lesson content to real-life experiences for better comprehension
Highlighting Students' Success	Encouraged students to build confidence through recognizing achievements

Students' Perceptions of the Class

The results show that the students perceived this class as: the teacher caring for their learning process, interesting teaching methods, the teacher emphasizing word memorization, and there being a gap between their expectations for and the design of the class.

Teacher Cares for Students' Learning Process

The teacher's caring approach had a noticeable impact on student responses. In an interview, one student shared, "Despite initially struggling with tests, the teacher's encouragement spurred me on to study harder. I gradually saw improvements in my word memorization skills." This account emphasizes the profound effect of the teacher's support on student motivation. Additionally, another student expressed gratitude for the teacher's commitment, recalling, "At the start of the course, my grades were consistently low, often leading to retakes. Jessie's encouragement during these retakes, along with her guidance on improving performance, was invaluable to me." Another student echoed a similar sentiment, stating, "The teacher's words pushed me to approach learning with renewed vigor."

During the observed classes, Jessie frequently started the session with a quiz. Before commencing the quiz, she provided a 10-minute preparation period, circulating the classroom to assist any students needing help. Throughout the class, Jessie actively engaged students by posing questions and assigning tasks to address any inquiries that arose during the learning process.

These quotes illustrated and Jessie's instructional approaches highlight the positive impact on student involvement and motivation, providing concrete evidence to support claims about the teacher's critical role in fostering a supportive and encouraging classroom environment.

Interesting and Supportive Teaching Methods

Most students found the teacher's methods captivating and engaging. One student expressed, 'I particularly enjoyed the course due to the teacher's animated facial expressions, which added a unique element to our lessons. I also found that engaging in group work helped alleviate any feelings of anxiety, creating a comfortable learning environment among peers.' Another student remarked, 'Participating in class activities with my classmates was incredibly enjoyable. The word memorization tasks, in particular, turned out to be quite fun.' Additionally, a student highlighted, 'The teacher's animated use of language added an intriguing dimension to the course, keeping the lessons engaging.'

Observations in the classroom revealed that the teacher assigned tasks and enjoyable activities to engage students in the learning process. After the teacher's dedication to explaining English terms in detail, students were then organized into groups to memorize sentences or words, followed by recitations in front of the class, with rewards given to those who excelled in memorization. Once a student fails to pronounce a sentence or word, he or she could turn to their group members for help. Through interviews and classroom observations, students can perceive that the teacher's teaching methods are interesting and supportive.

Teacher Emphasizes Word Memorization

Student experiences shed light on the predominant focus of word memorization for quizzes throughout the course. Reflecting student feedback, one participant shared, 'I found that a significant portion of our coursework involved memorizing vocabulary for quizzes. It was evident that vocabulary played a central role in our learning journey.' Additionally, observations underscored the course's emphasis on vocabulary, starting with preparatory vocabulary quizzes allowing students to seek assistance for pronunciation and usage challenges. Subsequent quizzes introduced new vocabulary, with interactive learning methods such as word repetition and definitions aiding comprehension. Towards the conclusion of each class, group activities were implemented to reinforce vocabulary retention. This structured approach contributed to keeping all students actively engaged and focused during the sessions."

By capturing student participants' viewpoints through interviews and backed by concrete evidence from classroom observations, it substantiates the assertions regarding the course's emphasis on vocabulary and its influence on student learning and engagement.

A Gap between Students' Expectations and Class Design

Students' candid remarks during interviews offered valuable insights into their experiences with the course. Highlighting the teacher's focus on vocabulary and preparing for an international trade qualification exam, a student expressed dissatisfaction, stating, 'Memorizing vocabulary felt tedious. Group activities centered around a few sentences didn't contribute much to my learning.' During the interviews, some students with higher- and lower-level student participants, found that the course did not meet their expectations, expressing a preference for practical skills such as customer interaction and business communication strategies rather than solely focusing on vocabulary memorization. One student expressed this viewpoint, saying, 'The course was geared towards certification in international trade, but it lacked real-world applications. I hoped to learn customer communication and persuasion techniques.' Another student echoed feelings of disinterest, commenting, 'I found the course repetitive, focusing extensively on memorizing vocabulary and sentences, tasks I could have managed on my own.' Interviews revealed a negative response from students regarding the course structure and activities not aligning with their anticipated learning outcomes. While acknowledging the teacher's motivational efforts, students expressed dissatisfaction with the course design, feeling it did not meet their expectations. The interviews provided a glimpse into how differing expectations impacted student engagement and motivation."

During classroom observations, while focusing on international trade qualification exam materials from the textbook, teacher Jessie dedicated time to elucidating the meanings of business-related words and sentences. However, there was a noticeable scarcity of tasks and activities centered around practical business communication skills.

The perceptions from students in this business English class mentioned above are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' Perceptions of the Class

Perception	Description
Teacher Cares for Students' Learning Process	Encouraged student progress, offered support, and motivated improvement
Interesting and Supportive Teaching Methods	Used interactive teaching methods, group activities, and rewards for engagement
Emphasis on Word Memorization	Focused on vocabulary quizzes and word memorization
Gap Between Expectations and Class Design	Students felt discrepancies between course focus on vocabulary and their expectations for practical language skills

Discussion

The findings indicated that the teacher's motivational strategies were effective in engaging the students and reducing their anxiety. Yet, addressing our specific research question about how well these strategies meet student needs, our study reveals a significant gap. This points to the need for refining ESP course designs in the future, ensuring better alignment with student expectations and requirements.

Effects of Motivational Strategies

Most of motivational strategies used by the teacher were those proposed in Dörnyei and Csizer (1998) and in Dörnyei's (2001) framework of motivational L2 teaching, and they improved students' learning outcomes. The teacher focused on expanding the students' business English vocabulary through quizzes, explanations of words and phrases, and tasks involving memorization, which improved the students' vocabulary and grades. The teacher created a motivational classroom setting by fostering strong relationships with her students. Her strategies also minimized anxiety among the students, who indicated that they changed their attitudes toward memorization. The results of this study are consistent with those of others (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Chambers, 1999; Lawrence & Hanitha, 2017; Liu et al., 2015) in that motivational strategies positively affected learning motivation. The stimulating activities in the course also motivated the students, which indicates that enjoyment of the learning process creates intrinsic motivation (Ames, 1992; Moskovsky & Alrabai, 2009). The teacher's encouragement and positive feedback regarding the students' performance on tests prevented anxiety among the students, as previous studies have indicated (Joy, 2013; Saha, 2014; Tanveer, 2007; Young, 1991); this also strengthened the students' relationships with the teacher. The students would request help from their teacher whenever they encountered problems, which also motivated them and improved their performance. Figure 1 presents the effects of the teacher's motivational strategies on the students.
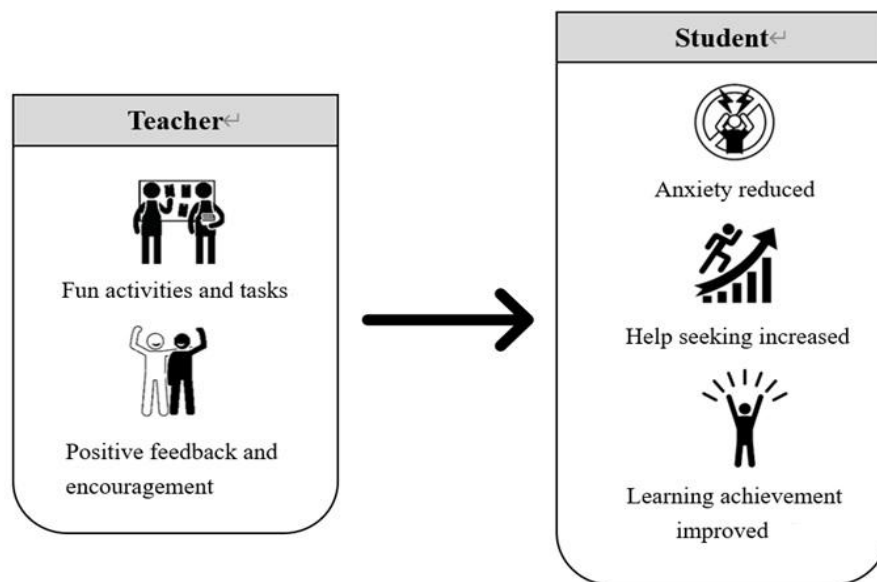
Figure 1. Effects of teacher's motivational strategies on students

Gap Between Student Needs and Lesson Design

The objective of the class was to help the students acquire English vocabulary for business and pass a test to obtain technical certification in international trade management. The course was focused on vocabulary and reviewing the textbook. This focus disappointed some students, who found the course too traditional or similar to EGP courses. Although the teacher helped them memorize vocabulary, pass exams, and understand sentence structure and grammar, the students indicated that they required more knowledge of English used in business, which was a cause for dissatisfaction.

The teacher, Jessie, noted that she focused the course on memorization because she believes that it is crucial. When Jessie was a student, she participated in general English programs, which focus on certain linguistic skills and proficiency. She expressed that she believes studying vocabulary is the optimal method of improving English although it seems traditional. Her training in English mostly involved mechanical drills on grammar and translation, and she received little instruction in business English. She also had little experience in the field or in ESP teacher training programs. The EGP teacher training Jessie received apparently did not equip her sufficiently to cope with the needs of ESP teaching context. According to researchers, ESP teacher trainings are crucial (Abdulaziz et al., 2012; Basturkmen, 2019; Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Saha, 2014) because they equip teachers with the professional competence to suit students' ESP needs (Constantinides, 2001). More ESP teacher training programs are needed in vocational education context.

Conclusion

This qualitative study examined a high school international trade ESP class in Taiwan, revealing the efficacy of the teacher's motivational strategies in engaging students and reducing anxiety, consistent with the findings of Dörnyei (1994, 2001, 2006) and Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008). However, a notable discrepancy was observed: the strategies, while creating a supportive environment, fell short in meeting students' needs for practical language skills relevant to their future careers. This gap aligns with the insights from motivation studies by Dörnyei and Csizer (1998) and Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008), which emphasize the importance of course content relevance to students' personal and professional goals for effective motivation.

The success of motivational strategies, as highlighted by this study, is intrinsically linked to their alignment with the specific needs and aspirations of the students. This insight is crucial both theoretically, underlining the need for alignment of strategies with student needs for effectiveness, and practically, calling for an approach that engages students while meeting their career-oriented goals.

To address this, we propose a dual approach: First, a thorough analysis of students' needs should be conducted to tailor the course content more effectively (Otilia, 2015; Ouarniki, 2022; Robinson, 1991). Second, ESP teachers should undergo professional development (Basturkmen, 2019; Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Errey, 2001; Otilia, 2015) to better understand and implement strategies that bridge the gap between general English and ESP teaching. This professional development is essential for equipping teachers with the skills to align motivational strategies with the specific needs of students in ESP courses.

By elaborating on these aspects, the study contributes to the theoretical understanding of motivational strategies in ESP courses and suggests practical applications to enhance their effectiveness. This approach not only clarifies the implications of the findings but also points to future directions for research and pedagogical practice in ESP education.

Due to the multifaceted nature of their roles, which encompass designing courses and materials, conducting researching, evaluating, and teaching (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), it is advisable that these teachers receive ESP teaching training to acquire the necessary skills (Basturkmen, 2019; Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Errey, 2001; Otilia, 2015; Savaş, 2009). Future research is suggested to study the motivational strategy use of teachers having received ESP training to provide comprehensive pictures in this area.

Recommendations

Based upon the findings of this study, some recommendations are proposed. First, ESP courses should begin by conducting a thorough needs analysis to understand students' specific goals, expectations, and language requirements. This will help tailor the course content to better match students' needs and reduce perceived gaps between expectations and learning experiences. Second, we encourage the development and implementation of ESP teacher training programs (Basturkmen, 2019; Bayram & Canaran, 2020; Errey, 2001; Otilia, 2015; Savaş, 2009). These programs should focus on equipping teachers with the expertise needed to bridge the gap between general English and ESP, ensuring that teachers are well-prepared to meet the specific needs of their students. Third, while vocabulary was seen as a crucial aspect of the ESP courses in this study, instructors should consider a more comprehensive approach that includes not only language proficiency but also specific business communication skills, cultural aspects, and negotiation strategies relevant to the students' intended careers. Finally, instructors can collaborate with industry professionals or organizations related to the field of study (Basturkmen, 2010) to gain insights into the current demands and trends in the job market. This can help in designing courses that are directly aligned with industry needs.

In summary, by tailoring content to student needs, providing specialized teacher training, diversifying course content, and collaborate with industry professionals or organizations, thus narrowing the gap between student expectations and their educational experiences.

Limitations

In spite of valuable insights gained from this study, it has limitations. Firstly, its findings, derived from a single vocational high school in Taiwan, may not fully capture the diversity of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts across different educational institutions and regions, thus limiting generalizability. Secondly, the study's small sample size, involving only a few students and one teacher, restricts the breadth of perspectives on the effectiveness of motivational strategies in ESP courses. Finally, the teacher's limited expertise in business English, while a drawback, also highlights the need for further exploration into ESP teachers' qualifications and training. These limitations, as outlined, lay the groundwork for future research, indicating paths for refinement.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Tsai: Conceptualization, software, methodology, investigation, resources, data curation, formal analysis, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing, project administration, visualization, validation, funding acquisition. Huang: Conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing, visualization, supervision, validation, funding acquisition.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured interview probes for the teacher

Beliefs regarding teaching and course design

1. What do you think is the most important part of teaching English as a foreign language?

2. Could you please briefly introduce your course? How did you design the course?

Motivational strategies and students' performance

3. What motivational strategies do you use in your teaching?

 (1) What motivational strategies do you use during warm-up activities?

 (2) What motivational strategies do you use in class?

 (3) What motivational strategies do you use to conclude lessons?

 (4) Why do you use these strategies?

Appendix B

Semi-structured interview probes for the students

Students' Perceptions of the Course's Design, Requirements, and Opportunities to Use

English

1. This is an elective course. At the beginning of the semester, you selected one of two elective courses, one on the financial market and one on business English. Why did you select business English?

2. Are you interested in business English? Why?

3. Did you like the business English course? Why?

4. Did the teacher, Jessie, explain the requirements at the beginning of the course?

5. Were you able to meet these requirements? Why?

6. Did you use English often in class?

6. In what kind of activities did you use English?

7. Did the course correspond to your expectations? Why?

Students' Backgrounds, Beliefs Regarding Learning, and Goals

1. Tell us about your experience learning English. When did you start?

2. What has helped you the most in the process of learning English? What encouraged or discouraged you to continue learning?

3. What do you think is the best way to successfully learn English?

4. What is your goal in learning English?