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## An Investigation of the Students' Perceptions of Motivating Teaching Strategies in English for Specific Purposes Classes

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# An Investigation of the Students' Perceptions of Motivating Teaching Strategies in English for Specific Purposes Classes

## Abstract

While studies on motivational strategies abound in the English as a foreign language acquisition literature, few studies have investigated their role in English for Specific Purposes classes in vocational higher education settings. This study examines the students' perception of motivational teaching strategies and the influence of social variables (age, gender) toward their perceptions. Students (n = 134) from a Faculty of Vocational Studies in a (country) Public University completed a questionnaire that reflected their perception of motivating teaching practices. The results show that students considered several teaching strategies that focus on assisting them master the skills in the practicum activity as the most motivating ones (providing clear instructions, assisting students in completing the tasks, providing constructive criticism and praise, building a positive relationship, and constantly encouraging students). Students' age had no significant relation with their perceptions. Although most of the teaching practices were considered motivating for both male and female students, two particular strategies (leading by example by being focused and driven, managing a variety of activities) were considered more motivating for female students than for male students. Findings suggest that teachers should recognize the students' individual needs for motivational strategies to assist them master the target language.

## Practitioner Notes

1. Investigating the motivational strategies in the English for Specific Purposes setting is pivotal to finding out the best method to assist the students in mastering the skills.
2. The questionnaire of the student's perception of the motivating teaching practices discovers the students' point of view on an effective teaching method that enhances their positive behavior.
3. The five most motivating teaching practices are providing clear instructions, assisting students in completing the tasks, providing constructive criticism and praise, building a positive relationship, and constantly encouraging students.
4. In vocational higher education, the specific method related to students' motivation should be employed to meet the study objectives aligned with the industrial needs.
5. Qualitative data research should be employed to determine the individual perceptions and influence of motivating strategies.

## Keywords

Motivation, Teaching Strategies, ESP, Vocational Education, Language learning

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## Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) differs from more general language studies in that it focuses on specific and intentional applications of the language (Hyland, 2022). A dedication to language training that addresses students' personal goals for learning English has earned ESP a unique position in the development of both theory and creative practice in language instruction. ESP has solidified and enlarged its function with many students and professionals all over the world needing to become fluent in their specific communicative domain of English in order to guide their studies and advance their professions.

ESP is currently extensively utilized to better satisfy students' communication demands since students are increasingly required to read and frequently compose academic papers in English, as well as comprehend the language use patterns related to social or professional problems (Basturkmen, 2021). This causes difficulties for both instructors and students. Students experience a range of English vocabulary that is considerably different from what they are used to hearing at school, at home, or on social media. Meanwhile, teachers recognize that they must go beyond teaching grammar in order to help students develop essential professional literacy skills. One of the critical issues related to ESP teaching and learning practices is motivation. Identifying learners' motivation is one of the procedures for discovering the ESP learner factor analysis (Basturkmen, 2010).

Several studies address the teaching and learning method in ESP context to improve students' motivation (e.g. Kerekovic, 2021; Rodríguez-Peñarroja, 2022; Salem, 2017; Simonova et al., 2021). The significance of teachers' perceptions on motivational teaching strategies in a foreign language learning has become the focal point in several studies (e.g. Bernaus, Wilson, & Gardner, 2009; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Kumazawa, 2013; Maeng & Lee, 2015; Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, & Ratcheva, 2013; Song & Kim, 2016). However, the study focusing on the students' perception on motivating teaching strategies or instructions in the classroom has not been explored. Although a number of studies address the students' motivations on ESP courses (Ayuningtyas et al., 2022; González Ardeo, 2016; Jafari Pazoki & Alemi, 2020; Navickienė et al., 2021), those studies only focus on the general students' perception, not their views of what teaching strategies that motivate them in the classroom.

Furthermore, some studies on motivation in English learning show that female students show better motivation than male students (Ahåt, 2013; Kim & Kim, 2011; Okuniewski, 2014; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). In terms of age, older students tend to have higher motivation than the younger ones (Akdemir, 2019; Geng & Jin, 2023; Okuniewski, 2014). Thus, there is a need to find out whether age and gender influence their perceptions of motivational teaching strategies. To shed light on this matter, the present study attempted to find out the students' perception on the motivational teaching practices in ESP classes

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in a vocational higher education setting, and how the social variables (age, gender) influence their motivation.

## **Literature**

### **Language Learning Motivation**

Motivation is critical to success in the foreign/second language (L2) learning domain. It deals with a unique characteristic that enables children to develop the persistence and perseverance necessary for language acquisition (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Dörnyei, 2001). It determines the students' effort, persistence, and success in learning a language (Ushioda, 2017). It also serves as the fundamental driving factor behind the language acquisition process and, eventually, as a sustaining force that aids in the strenuous and tedious trip toward mastery of a foreign language (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Ruesch et al., 2012; Ushioda, 2013).

The current discussions about motivation in language acquisition are dominated by the L2 Motivational self-system (L2MSS) (Dörnyei, 2005). There are three components of L2MSS; Ideal L2 self, Ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experience) (Dörnyei, 2009). The ideal L2 self embodies one's thoughts about oneself as a language learner. In other words, the ideal L2 self is the person a learner aspires to be regarding linguistic identity. As a result of the speaker's desire to close the gap between the actual and ideal selves, this construct may become a potent motivator to acquire an L2. The L2 ought-to self, on the other hand, indicates the trait one feels one should have to satisfy expectations and prevent potentially undesirable outcomes. It symbolises one's imagined future-self due to perceived tasks, duties, or commitments. As a result, the ought-to L2 self is more extrinsic and less internalized than the ideal L2 self. Finally, L2 Learning Experience is concerned with situated, 'executive' reasons connected to the existing learning environment and experience, including the effect of the instructor, the curriculum, the peer group, and the successful experience.

### **Factors that influence students' motivation**

Numerous factors contribute to the students' motivation, one of which is L2 learning experience. L2 learning experience is reported to be the strongest predictor of L2 learning success by several studies (e.g. Lamb, 2012; Teimouri, 2017; Zhu, 2019). The L2 learning experience recognizes the influence of classroom processes, teachers, and curriculum on learners' motivation to learn more. In the Hungarian context, it is considered to have a significant effect for university students (Csizer & Kormos, 2009). In the Indonesian junior high school setting, L2 learning experience was the most powerful indicator of motivated learning behavior and L2 proficiency (Lamb, 2012). Furthermore, difficult tasks and the joy of completing tasks with real materials appear to increase students' interest and promote to the development of their ideal L2 self-motivation, particularly among students with a high degree of English proficiency (Bobkina et al., 2021).

Several studies also emphasize the environment's role in inspiring students' conduct. Students' motivational growth is driven by ongoing interactions between their social context perceptions and their ideal L2 selves (Du & Jackson, 2018; Liu & Yu, 2021). The environment that fosters the development of a positive group of learners has a beneficial effect on increasing motivation in the L2 classroom (Chang, 2010). The environment plays a critical role, as insufficient learning

conditions, such as a lack of teaching utilities and equipment, tend to demotivate students (Alavinia, 2012). The availability of educational resources serves as an excellent medium for generating productive output in any learning situation (Zheng, 2012). Additionally, students' perceived autonomy is critical in creating a love of learning, which increases their level of motivation (Tanaka, 2017).

A great deal of studies have identified the environment and external influences as critical contributors in increasing motivation. Fandiño, Muñoz, & Velandia (2019) carried out research on students' motivation in e-learning environments. It discovered that the students' motivation to study English as a foreign language had been significantly affected by how well the teacher helped them and what tactics the teacher used in teaching. Additionally, Partovi & Razavi (2019) discovered that using game-based learning as an external motivation boosts students' academic motivation. According to Kulakow (2020), more positive motivation is generated by a student-centered approach rather than a teacher-centered one. This suggests that one strategy for increasing students' self-esteem and motivation is to create a competence-based learning environment in which students have more opportunity to interact with their friends. In short, student-centered learning is strongly associated with self-determined motivation within the learning environment (Baker & Anderman, 2020; Kulakow & Raufelder, 2020).

Then, gender is seen as a key aspect influencing learner motivation in second or foreign language learning (e.g. Ahât, 2013; Kim & Kim, 2011; Okuniewski, 2014; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013; You et al, 2016). In their study, female students in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region had higher foreign language learning motivation than male students (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). Female students were more integrative than younger and male students, and they were more intensely motivated (Okuniewski, 2014). Similarly, female Hungarian teenage students showed more motivated behavior than male students (Csizer & Dörnyei, 2005). Akdemir (2019) also mentioned that, in an L2 listening class, female students have better motivation.

In terms of age, Okuniewski (2014) reported that older students to have better attitude and showed higher motivation in a foreign language class than the younger ones. Similarly, Geng and Jin (2023) also mention that older students in a Chinese University have better motivation and persistence to learn L2. On the other hand, Akdemir (2019) reported that age has no relation with the students' motivation in an L2 listening class.

### **Motivational Teaching Strategies**

One of the examples of the L2 learning experience is motivational teaching strategies. Since academic achievement is positively related to teachers' ability and teaching style (Maeng and Lee, 2015; Lou and Noels, 2020; Mauludin, 2021), numerous studies have shown instructor motivation as a critical factor influencing students' L2 acquisition (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Mercè Bernaus et al., 2009; Han & Hiver, 2018; Pardede, 2019; Roohani & Dayeri, 2019). Motivational teaching strategies are the means by which teachers or language instructors use instructional mediation to inspire and support students' motivation (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Teachers' talents are critical in integrating motivational tactics into curriculum, as teachers' use of motivating strategies has a good correlation with students' motivation (Bernaus et al., 2009; Lai, 2013). The more motivated teachers are when teaching L2, the more motivating instructional tactics pupils perceive (Bernaus et al., 2009).

Numerous empirical studies have examined the role of teachers' motivational strategies in increasing students' motivation during the teaching and learning process. These studies consistently found a positive correlation between teachers' motivational strategies and student achievement (e.g. Carreira et al., 2013; Guilloteaux et al., 2008; Kumazawa, 2013; Liao, Chen, Chen, & Chang, 2018; Maeng & Lee, 2015; Mauludin, 2020; McEown, Noels, & Saumure, 2014; Moskovsky et al., 2013; Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011; Song & Kim, 2016). Dörnyei and Csizer (1998) suggested the 'Ten commandments for inspiring language learners' as a collection of macrostrategies for increasing students' motivation. They developed a set of motivational tactics for L2 students in their study, as the capacity to motivate students is a critical component of instructional efficacy. Additionally, it is revealed that teachers' motivational practices have a significant impact on students' motivated learning behaviors, as evidenced by the quantity of students' attention in class and their degree of participation in classroom assignments (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008).

Mauludin (2021) reconceptualised the Ten Commandments from the teacher's perspective into the students' perspective. He discovered the list of most and least motivating teaching strategies perceived by students. Furthermore, (Xaelani, 2020) combined the Actional Phase of the Process model of L2 motivation and the Complex Dynamic Systems theory which explored the connection between teaching practices and students' academic motivation. He also explored the engagement between teachers and students in the classroom.

### **ESP Learning and Motivation**

In ESP research, needs analysis becomes the key component to define the elements of practices (Hyland, 2022; Tardy, 2022). It shapes its curriculum and resources, and it serves as a vital link between perception and practice, assisting ESP in staying grounded by tempering any excesses of theory-building with practical applications. It becomes crucial part in enhancing communication skills among professionals (Alshayban, 2022). In this case, authentic materials should provide motivating exercises that enhance students' interest. Linguistic study to offer descriptions of academic, professional, or workplace English is a long-standing topic of ESP research (Basturkmen, 2021). Inquiries are frequently prompted by instructional demands, such as the necessity for ESP instructors to give linguistic descriptions for second language learners. Therefore, examples of good teaching practice in ESP contexts play an important role in supplying ESP practitioners with new ideas (Stojković, 2020).

Several studies investigate the importance of motivation in ESP learning (e.g. Csizér & Illés, 2020; Hosseini & Shokrpour, 2019; Kerekovic, 2021; Xaelani, 2020). Xaelani (2020) explored the connection between the teaching practices and grouping ability on the students' academic motivation, self-concept and classroom engagement. The study combined two conceptual frameworks: The Actional Phase of the Process model of L2 motivation and Complex Dynamic Systems theory. The results show that the streaming activity increased students and teachers motivation as well as their self-concept and engagement. Meanwhile, Csizér and Illés (2020) conducted the systemic analysis to maximize the students' L2 motivation. The study revealed that students' motivation can be enhanced by engaging learners on their terms and incorporating their reality and creativity into the language learning process. Translation and reading are two methods and activities that allow students to behave as L2 users in language class. Furthermore, the

classroom as a place for authentic conversation can have a good influence on student motivation in language teaching practice.

Kerekovic (2021) presented a case study of an ESP course in which formative evaluation was used to boost student engagement and motivation. It refers to the monitoring of students' learning as well as the continual evaluation of student performance by the instructor and peers, who provide ongoing feedback to both the teacher and the students. The study revealed such formative activities and evaluations enhanced students' motivation and involvement in class. Furthermore, Hosseini and Shokrpour (2019) conducted a study comparing the motivation for learning in Iranian medical and nursing ESP language programs. The findings indicated that the medical ESP language class was more motivated as a result of the teachers' qualities, instructional materials, and personal goals.

## Method

### Participants

A total of 134 students participated in the study. They were enrolled in a Faculty of Vocational Studies of a Public University in (country) and took "Professional English class". Professional English class is an ESP class that focuses in teaching English communication for students in their respective major/field of study. They devoted 1.5 hours a week for one semester. They were in their second year of study and had completed basic ESP course (basic grammar and general conversation) in the previous year. Prior to admission to university, they had learned English starting from Elementary School to Senior High School. They had approximately 8 years' experience of English class in a formal education. However, since English is considered to be a Foreign Language, they rarely use English in their daily conversation. Prior to admission to the university, students took a University English Proficiency Test adapted from TOEFL paper-based test. The results showed that their English proficiency was between beginner and intermediate levels. Table 1 reports the basic demographic information of participants' age. Most participants ranged in age from 18-20 years old; 5 participants were 17 years old, and only 1 participant was 21 years old.

The students came from five different study programs; Physiotherapy, Tax Management, Library Science, Office Administration, and Veterinary Paramedic. Table 2 shows the demographic information of participants' gender. Most of the participants (73.1%) were female. The participants were selected based on the principle of convenience sampling. Because of the limited number of ESP class during the time of study, all students who took ESP class in the Faculty of Vocational Studies were invited.

**Table 1**

*Demographic information of Age*

Age (yr.)	n	%
17	5	3.7
18	55	41

19	55	41
20	18	13
21	1	.7
Total	134	100

**Table 2**

*Demographic information of gender*

Study Program	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female		n	%
	n	%	n	%		
Physiotherapy	3	16.7	15	83.3	18	100
Tax Management	8	30.8	18	69.2	26	100
Library Science	5	20	20	80	25	100
Office Administration	9	20	36	80	45	100
Paramedic Veterinary	11	55	9	45	20	100
Total	36	26.9	98	73.1	134	100

**Instrumentation**

The main instrument in this study was a questionnaire designed by Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) which aims to score the frequency and relevance of various motivating practices or strategies in the Hungarian English Classroom. The questionnaire was selected since it explored classroom teaching strategies and how it affects students' motivational state. It consisted of 51 micro-strategies (teaching practices) on which teachers were asked to rate the importance of each approach in the classroom. Students in the current study, on the other hand, were asked to rate the importance of those micro-strategies in the classroom. To prevent students from misinterpreting the instruments, they were provided in both English and (native language). The conceptual categories 'rule' and 'decoration' were discarded as motivational practices that were not present in ESP classes in a college-level classroom.

Unlike Dörnyei and Csizér' (1998) study, the current study focused on the degree to which each micro-strategy was regarded inspiring, rather than on the teachers' actual performances. Furthermore, the original questionnaire provided motivational strategies that were divided into various conceptual domains or macro-strategies, each of which had multiple micro-strategies. However, since this study focused on exploring the students' perception toward the micro-strategies regardless of their domain, the analysis of the domains was eliminated. As a result, the students were asked what kind of teaching methods they thought would drive them to study English in an ESP situation. The survey included a list of 46 instructional techniques that teachers



might utilize in an ESP lesson. They were translated (Native Language) to avoid misunderstanding. The students were asked to rate how important a certain activity was in encouraging them to learn English. On a five-point scale, each participant rated each technique. Table 3 shows the rubric for grading.

**Table 3**

*Rating Rubric*

Point	Description
1	This practice does not affect my motivation.
2	This practice plays a minor role in motivating me.
3	This practice plays somewhat a role in motivating me.
4	This practice plays a considerable role in motivating me.
5	This practice plays a major role in motivating me.

**Procedure**

The primary purpose of this study is to find out what teaching practices students perceive as motivating in the classrooms; thus, the lecturers can use the information to apply those specific instructions during the teaching and learning process. To avoid bias in participants' responses based on their immediate experiences (e.g., evaluating the lecturer's teaching style instead of expressing their motivating factors), the questionnaire was given out before the start of the academic year. The students were asked to reflect on their experience in the previous semester or their prior language learning in primary and secondary school. The aim is to collect information on what teaching instructions they deem motivating. Therefore, the lecturers can implement motivating teaching strategies based on the students' perceptions during the academic year.

It was administered through Google Forms. Prior to the study, a volunteer group of five university students piloted the questionnaire for clarity, and minor changes were made to reduce ambiguity and eliminate any language-related misinterpretations. Cronbach's alpha was administered to ensure reliability, showing strong internal reliability ( $\alpha = .960$ ). They were told the questionnaire was intended for research and would not affect their grades. It was their choice to participate, and their personal information was kept private. Within 30 minutes, the questionnaire was completed. The participants were aware of the study's purpose and were instructed only to complete the questionnaire if they agreed to participate. Because the questionnaire survey was conducted online and in complete anonymity, the submission of the questionnaire was regarded as consent by the participants. There was no informed consent form collected on paper.

**Data Analysis**

To answer the first research question, descriptive statistics were employed. The mean scores and standard deviations were calculated using IBM Corporation's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 21 (IBM corporation, New York). In line with the goal of using

questionnaire to uncover the students' expectations of the teachers' techniques in the learning processes, evaluating the data serves to unveil the students' expectations of the teaching method that could motivate them to learn English in ESP settings. Hence, the teaching practices were ranked from highest to lowest in terms of mean scores by determining the mean response of each teaching practice. The findings revealed which instructional techniques students found most motivating and which they found least motivating. The data was also evaluated by conceptual domain in order to create a list of the most and least motivating conceptual domains.

To answer the second research question, univariate and bivariate analyses were conducted. Univariate analysis was conducted to find out the frequency distribution of participants' socio-demographic's characteristic. Then, bivariate analysis was employed to investigate the influence of socio-demographic variables (age, gender) toward students' motivational state. Statistics test utilized 5% margin of error with  $p$ -value  $< .05$ . Spearman correlation test was utilized to find out the influence of students' motivation with their age. Mann-Whitney comparison test was employed to investigate the difference of students' perception based on their gender.

## Results

### The Most Motivating Strategies

To answer the first question, the mean scores from the descriptive statistics were rank-ordered from the highest to the lowest ones. Table 4 reported the order of the students' perception of motivational teaching practices from the most motivating to the least motivating. The letter 'p' in the table represents the 'motivational strategies'; thus 'p1' means "motivational strategy 1 (Properly preparing the courses)". Since the questionnaire employed 5-likert scales, it was considered that mean scores 4-5 were considered to be motivating.

The table depicted that in the vocational education setting, p9 (Providing clear instructions) was considered to be the most motivating teaching practices ( $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = .76$ ) for ESP students. The strategy of assisting students in completing tasks (p10) was also perceived to be motivating ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD = .77$ ) followed by p13 (Providing constructive criticism and praise,  $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = .76$ ). Meanwhile, p22 (Creating a challenging task for the students to participate in) was reflected to be the least motivating strategy ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = .91$ ). Providing regular groupwork (p38) was also shown to be less motivating ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ).

**Table 4**

*The most motivating strategies*

Code	Strategies	M	SD
p9	Providing clear instructions	4.45	.76
p10	Assisting students in completing tasks	4.43	.77
p13	Providing constructive criticism and praise	4.41	.76

p12	Building a positive relationship	4.40	.81
p15	Constantly encouraging students	4.38	.74
p46	Avoiding any student comparisons	4.38	1.06
p2	Leading by example by being focused and driven	4.32	.74
p14	Ensuring that students are successful on a regular basis	4.32	.74
p3	Behaving naturally and sincerely	4.31	.70
p1	Properly preparing the courses	4.29	.76
p11	Outlining the purpose and value of each work	4.28	.77
p42	Assisting students in realizing that success is primarily determined by effort	4.22	.98
p43	Emphasizing the language's utility	4.21	.87
p5	Creating a nice environment	4.18	.89
p6	Bringing fun, laughter, and smiles	4.09	.90
p39	Assisting students in getting to know one another	4.08	1.01
p30	Creating a number of distinct learning goals	4.04	.78
p32	Conducting a needs analysis on the students' goals and needs	4.03	.78
p25	Encouraging inventive and creative thinking	4.01	.87
p29	Assisting students in developing reasonable expectations	4.01	.87
p26	Encouraging students to raise questions and make other contributions	4.00	.81
p23	Instead than using scores/grades as the primary motivator for learning, focus on developing students' interests.	3.98	.81
p18	Choosing projects that are appealing to students	3.97	.92
p19	Choosing engaging themes and materials	3.97	.83
p4	Being compassionate and tolerant	3.96	.77
p20	Providing a diverse range of materials	3.96	.92
p35	Using authentic material	3.96	.84
p27	Sharing responsibility for organizing the learning process with students	3.92	.77
p21	Managing a variety of activities	3.90	.92
p24	Providing unexpected features to pique pupils' interest.	3.90	.89
p34	Familiarizing students with the English cultural background	3.90	.87
p33	Assisting students in creating their own study schedules	3.89	.91
p17	Choosing assignments that are not above the students' abilities	3.88	1.20

p31	Increasing the group's aim-orientedness	3.87	.90
p44	Offering incentives other than grades	3.79	1.16
p7	Playing games and engaging in enjoyable activities	3.66	1.05
p28	Filling the assignment with personal content that is relevant to the students	3.66	.91
p36	Inviting native speakers	3.63	1.21
p41	Organizing extracurricular out-of-class activities	3.63	1.24
p40	Participating as an ordinary member of the group as much as possible	3.61	1.08
p8	Holding competitions that are similar to games	3.60	1.04
p37	Finding pen pals	3.58	1.22
p45	Allowing students to produce items that they may show off or perform	3.57	1.07
p16	Emphasizing that mistakes are a natural part of learning	3.42	1.16
p38	Providing regular group work	3.35	1.13
p22	Creating a challenging task for the students to participate in	3.34	.91

### Factors that influence the students' perception (age, gender)

To investigate the correlation between age and motivation, Spearman test was conducted. The results (Table 5) revealed that the majority of the teaching strategies had no correlation with ages ( $p > .05$ ) which means that all of ages offered similar perception. For instance, teaching practice p12 (Building a positive relationship) was considered to be motivating for students all ages in the ESP class ( $p = .20$ ,  $r = .12$ ). Similarly, teaching strategy p13 (Providing constructive criticism and praise) was considered to be motivating regardless of their age ( $p = .75$ ,  $r = .02$ ). Providing regular work (p38), which was in the previous result was one of the least motivating strategies, was also perceived similarly for all ages in the ESP class ( $p = .04$ ,  $r = -0.17$ ). Students of all ages in the ESP class also agreed that p22 (Creating a challenging task for the students to participate in) was the least motivating teaching practice in the vocational education setting ( $p = .7$ ,  $r = .15$ ).

There were two particular teaching practices that showed significant results ( $p < .05$ ) which means there is a correlation between age and the specific teaching practices (p1 and p38). Properly preparing the courses (p1) was perceived differently based on their ages ( $p = .01$ ,  $r = .20$ ) to be a motivating teaching practice ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = .76$ ). On the other hand, p38 (Providing regular group work) was also perceived differently according to their ages ( $p = .04$ ,  $r = -0.17$ ) as one of the least motivating teaching practices. However, looking at their correlation values which are not significant, it was revealed that their perception was not much different. To further investigate this, the detailed analysis for p1 and p38 was shown in table 6.

Table 6 revealed the ESP students' perception according to their age for the motivational teaching strategy p1 and p38. It was shown that p1 was perfectly considered to be motivating for 21-year old student ( $M = 5$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) followed by 19-year old students ( $M = 4.49$ ,  $SD = .66$ ). The lowest mean score was shown for 17-year old students ( $M = 4$ ,  $SD = .71$ ). Nonetheless, all students

considered this particular strategy to be motivating by showing the high average mean scores ( $M \geq 4$ ). Thus, the difference between their perceptions was not apparent. Similarly, p38 was considered to be one of the least motivating teaching strategies for all ages. Although 18-year-old students showed higher results ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) than 21-year-old students' results ( $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ), both considered this strategy to be less motivating compared to other strategies.

Then, to find out the students' perception based on genders, Mann-Whitney test was employed. The results showed that most of the strategies did not reflect different results related to their genders except p2 (Leading by example by being focused and driven,  $p = 0.2$ ) and p21 (Managing a variety of activities,  $p = 0.4$ ). The strategy p2 showed a slightly different perception between male and female students. However, their perceptions were not apparent as both male ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = .71$ ) and female ( $M = 4.4$ ,  $SD = .74$ ) students still consider this particular strategy motivating. On the other hand, the strategy p21 unveiled that female students ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = .84$ ) considered this strategy more motivating than male students did ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ).

**Table 5**

*Correlation between age and motivation (Spearman) and the students' perception based on gender (Mann-Whitney).*

Code	Spearman		Mann-Whitney				
	<i>p</i> -value	<i>r</i>	Male		Female		<i>p</i> -value
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
P1	.01	.20	4.19	.71	4.33	.78	.23
P2	.16	.12	4.11	.71	4.40	.74	.02
P3	.33	.08	4.25	.69	4.34	.70	.43
P4	.76	.02	4.06	.72	3.92	.80	.44
P5	.64	.04	4.19	.79	4.17	.93	.84
P6	.26	-.09	3.92	1.05	4.15	.84	.26
P7	.74	.02	3.58	1.18	3.69	.99	.69
P8	.88	.01	3.53	1.32	3.63	.92	.94
P9	.30	.08	4.28	.85	4.51	.72	.14
P10	.66	.03	4.28	.82	4.48	.75	.17
P11	.49	-.05	4.31	.75	4.27	.78	.83
P12	.20	.11	4.42	.77	4.39	.83	.89
P13	.75	.02	4.42	.77	4.41	.78	.86
P14	.18	.11	4.36	.64	4.31	.78	.92

Code	Spearman		Mann-Whitney				
	p-value	r	Male		Female		p-value
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
P15	.59	.04	4.31	.71	4.41	.76	.33
P16	.37	.07	3.50	1.28	3.39	1.12	.52
P17	.29	.09	3.94	1.15	3.86	1.23	.80
P18	.12	.13	3.81	1.04	4.03	.87	.26
P19	.22	.10	3.92	.77	3.99	.86	.50
P20	.86	.01	3.89	.95	3.98	.91	.58
P21	.96	.00	3.61	1.08	4.01	.84	.04
P22	.07	.15	3.17	.85	3.40	.93	.18
P23	.78	-.02	3.89	.92	4.01	.77	.54
P24	.58	.04	3.92	.91	3.89	.88	.83
P25	.69	.03	3.92	.91	4.05	.85	.44
P26	.96	-.00	3.92	.91	4.03	.78	.58
P27	.56	.05	3.94	.79	3.91	.76	.82
P28	.57	-.04	3.78	.96	3.62	.89	.36
P29	.79	-.02	3.83	1.06	4.08	.78	.23
P30	.40	.07	3.97	.81	4.06	.77	.43
P31	.80	.02	3.83	.91	3.89	.90	.59
P32	.46	.06	3.89	.71	4.08	.81	.13
P33	.25	.09	3.67	1.01	3.97	.87	.09
P34	.66	-.07	3.83	.94	3.92	.85	.62
P35	.22	.16	3.89	.82	3.92	.85	.45
P36	.63	-.04	3.50	1.40	3.68	1.14	.70
P37	.52	-.05	3.44	1.36	3.63	1.16	.52
P38	.04	-.17	3.31	1.24	3.37	1.09	.89
P39	.35	-.08	4.33	.96	3.99	1.02	.04
P40	.55	-.05	3.47	1.25	3.66	1.02	.57
P41	.60	-.04	3.89	1.30	3.53	1.20	.07
P42	.75	-.02	4.28	.85	4.19	1.02	.86

Code	Spearman		Mann-Whitney				
			Male		Female		
	<i>p</i> -value	<i>r</i>	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>p</i> -value
P43	.68	-.03	4.14	.80	4.23	.89	.36
P44	.43	-.06	3.81	1.12	3.79	1.18	.97
P45	.18	-.11	3.72	1.03	3.52	1.09	.33
P46	.88	-.01	4.39	1.13	4.38	1.04	.65

**Table 6**

*Mean and Standard Deviation based on Age*

Code	Age									
	17		18		19		20		21	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
P1	4.00	.71	4.13	.75	4.49	.66	4.22	1.00	5.00	1.00
P38	3.40	1.14	3.53	1.09	3.40	1.05	2.67	1.33	3.00	1.00

## Discussion

### The Most Motivating Strategies

The current study presented that 'providing clear instructions', 'assisting students in completing the tasks', 'providing constructive criticism and praise', 'building a positive relationship', and 'constantly encouraging students' as the most motivational teaching practices. Compared to the previous studies, there is no exact similar list of most motivating strategies. However, there are some similar strategies that are considered to be motivating. Mauludin (2021) also regarded 'giving clear instruction' and 'developing a good relationship' as some of the most motivating teaching strategies in his study in ESP setting. However, the he found out the rest of motivating strategies including 'creating a pleasant atmosphere', 'showing a good example' and 'bringing humor', which was not considered to be the most motivating in the present study. Ruesch et al., (2012) reported 'develop a good relationship' and 'present task properly' as most motivating teaching strategies as well.

The results are different from Cheng & Dörnyei's (2007) study which revealed that 'show students you care about them' as the most motivating ones, followed by 'establish good rapport with students', 'show your enthusiasm for teaching', and 'recognise students' effort and achievement'. However, there is one similar strategy that is similar which is 'provide students with positive feedback'. Other studies provided one similar most motivational teaching strategies, which is 'show students you care about them' (Al-Mahrooqi et al., 2012; Vibulphol, 2016). To explore

further, the following are the five most motivating teaching practices that were selected in the present study.

The strategy “providing clear instructions” was considered to be the most motivating one. This result is similar to the prior study that shows that the way a teacher delivers learning instructions has a substantial influence on how students grasp the activity (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Fandiño et al., 2019). Students require cognitive help in the form of clear and appropriate examples in order to tackle the challenges. Moreover, teachers also need to deliver a clear demonstration to solve the problem. The demonstration and modeling allow them to focus on certain steps, reducing the amount of cognitive work they have to do in their memory. The use of a creative technique pedagogy in presenting the work affects students' motivation to learn positively (Hosseini & Shokrpour, 2019; Liao et al., 2018). It can be used to increase students' interest in the activity and their chances of completing the work successfully (Dörnyei & Otto, 1998; Mauludin et al., 2021). Students can also use task presentations to help them define realistic learning goals and develop effective techniques for achieving them.

Assisting students in completing the tasks is the second most motivating teaching strategies perceived by the ESP students. In the vocational education setting, students are expected to perform more practices and demonstrate their ability instead of learning theoretical knowledge. Hence, the teachers' role in assisting the students have major impacts. To put it another way, the classroom should be set up to encourage students' sense of positive autonomy from their teachers (Csizér, 2020). When the teachers provide guidance and positive atmosphere, the students feel more motivated (Lou & Noels, 2020; Mauludin, 2018). Furthermore, assisting students to solve the problem during the assessment gives the teachers' insight on how significant the students have improved (Mauludin, 2018). This attention will boost the students' positive behavior and increase their motivation.

The second motivating strategy was providing constructive criticism and praise. Since vocational education emphasizes more on practical ability, the students spent most of the time in the practicum session. In ESP class, for instance, the students spend the time practicing on English presentation or memorizing phrases and expressions to be used in certain context. The teachers' guidance in evaluating their mistakes by emphasizing their efforts and giving rewards show that students' attempt is being appreciated. Since language learning is a long and often tiresome process with a lot of temporary ups and downs, the learners' success was highly influenced by their teachers that keep them on course (Csizér, 2020; Dörnyei, 2009).

Building a positive relationship is the fourth most motivating strategy perceived by ESP students. The findings are similar to those of a prior study, which ranked this strategy as one of the top five strategies. Teachers should establish positive relationships with students so that they are familiar with the tolerance norm (Dörnyei, 2001). Likewise, a friendly bond with the teachers enables students to admit mistakes as a natural measure of the learning process, allowing them to keep positive attitudes about language learning. Furthermore, by cultivating a positive relationship, teachers are able to expose their previous experiences of learning the language, congratulate students' accomplishments, and help students create genuine and attainable objectives that are useful in lowering anxiety levels (Liu & Huang, 2011).



Constantly encouraging students' rounds up the five most motivating strategies in ESP classes. Providing encouragement to the students create a positive atmosphere and enjoyable situation. In this case, a pleasant classroom environment motivates students to work more. When teachers use praise and encourage students to customize their classroom ambience to their preferences, a caring and enjoyable classroom climate is created (Ruesch et al., 2012; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2017). Furthermore, students' intrinsic motivation is heavily influenced by how much fun they are having (Carreira, 2011). The key to piquing students' interest and curiosity is to provide them with pleasurable condition. This element contributes to a positive perception of the learning activities. Furthermore, incorporating encouragement in learning activities allows students to reduce their anxiety (Bernaus et al., 2009).

As for the least motivating strategies, the current study discovered 'Finding pen pals', 'Allowing students to produce items that they may show off or perform', 'Emphasizing that mistakes are a natural part of learning', 'Providing regular group work', and 'Creating a challenging task for the students to participate in'. The results were somewhat similar to Mauludin's (2021) study which reported 'providing regular group work', and 'creating challenging task' as the least motivating ones. Ruesch et al (2012) also revealed that "group work" as the least motivating teaching practice. The results were somewhat different from Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2012) and Vibulphol (2016) which mentioned that 'Encourage students to share personal experiences and thoughts' and 'Present various auditory and visual teaching aids' as the least motivating ones.

### **The Students' Perceptions based on their Age and Gender**

The findings reflected that the students' perception in motivational teaching practices in ESP classes was not significantly influenced by their age. The results were different from the previous studies which mentioned that age has significant influence in students' motivation (Akdmir, 2019; Geng & Jin, 2023; Okuniewski, 2014). On the contrary, the current study supported previous findings that in language learning, age does not really affect students' motivation (e.g. Muñoz, 2014; Sougari & Hovhannisyan, 2013). Even though young learners exhibit more positive attitude toward target language in comparison to the older learners, their self-confidence plays the biggest role (Sougari & Hovhannisyan, 2013). Instead of age, their motivation is highly influenced by their prior learning experience. Personal development, school experience, attitudes of parents, instructors, and community form the students' individual perspective of learning a foreign language (Muñoz, 2014). In that sense, the beliefs of older students happen to be dynamics, emerging, and context-dependent. In vocational education settings, students' experience reflects their ability to perform a task. Hence, their positive behavior is built upon the number of practices they demonstrate in the classroom. In this case, age does not influence significantly.

Based on the data analysis, though the majority of the strategies have no correlation with gender, two particular strategies showed that they are more motivating for female students; leading by example by being focused and driven, and managing a variety of activities. These two particular strategies supported the previous studies which mentioned that females students have higher motivation (Ahåt, 2013; Carreira, 2011; Kim & Kim, 2011; Oga-Baldwin & Fryer, 2020a; Okuniewski, 2014; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). Motivational profiles provide a means of understanding individual students' preferences and can point to successful methods according to their needs. Female students mostly possess highly self-determination (Oga-Baldwin & Fryer,

2020b). In language learning situations, girls feel more motivated to learn the language and have a greater interest in foreign nations (Carreira et al., 2013). Also, boys are less persistent than girls in completing the task.

However, since most of the strategies have no correlation with gender, the current study also provide evidence that the students' perception of motivating teaching strategies were not highly influenced by gender. In vocational education setting, the rigorous practices and performances are expected every week. Since the study focuses on the practicum, the students should show determination and resilience in spending time to demonstrate their ability. Students that possess those conducts have a positive attitude toward the learning materials, believe in their value, and show an interest in them. Students who believe in these motives for learning have better self-control, establish mastery objectives, have more in-depth learning approaches, and get better marks. As a result, their self-motivation has a big impact on their perseverance.

## **Conclusion**

The findings revealed that ESP students in vocational higher education settings perceived five motivational strategies as the most motivating ones; providing clear instructions, assisting students in completing tasks, providing constructive criticism and praise, building a positive relationship, and constantly encouraging students. As for the social variables, their motivation is not significantly influenced by their age, which means that students of all ages have similar perceptions of the motivating teaching strategies. As for gender, although most of the strategies have no correlation with gender, two particular strategies show that they are more motivating for female students; Leading by example by being focused and driven and Managing a variety of activities. Furthermore, there are some strategies perceived to be least motivating; Finding pen pals', 'Allowing students to produce items that they may show off or perform', 'Emphasizing that mistakes are a natural part of learning', 'Providing regular group work', and 'Creating a challenging task for the students to participate in'.

Before using specialized motivational teaching approaches in ESP classrooms, teachers should identify students' many forms of learning motivation. Teachers can choose any teaching method that is comfortable for them and that they believe will benefit their students; nevertheless, for the teaching method to be effective, students must share the same perceptions about it (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008). The students' negative reactions to the teaching method are likely due to their lack of motivation to learn English. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that several teaching practices are deemed motivating by teachers and students. On the contrary, some teaching practices are deemed motivating by teachers but not students and vice versa. As a result, students' judgments of instructional procedures impact their motivation, whereas teachers' perceptions have no such effect. This emphasizes the importance of teachers assessing students' perceptions before implementing specific instructional approaches in an ESP setting. Based on the results, teachers should consider implementing the motivating teaching strategies and avoiding the least motivating strategies.

It should also be noted that there is no absolute teaching method since its application is constantly changing. The learning environment, learning contexts, and students' and teachers' individual

personalities all play a role in the application. In a vocational education setting, the findings showed that ESP students prefer teaching approaches that focus on improving their skills in the practicum session. The results also suggest that teachers should identify students' motivational state before implementing specific teaching strategies. This study also emphasizes that students' perspectives matter since teaching strategies will only function if perceived as motivating.

There are several limitations to the present study and recommendations for further research. To begin with, the data interpretation result is limited because it simply comprises a questionnaire. Since numerous factors influence students' motivation, further research with more data should be conducted. Second, this research was conducted in ESP classes at (country) Vocational Higher Education with (country) students. Therefore, the results may differ depending on the cultural context. It is critical that this study be replicated in a variety of contexts. This study also only involved age and gender as the examined social variables, more variables should be included to strengthen the finding. Since the present study was employed in a homogeneous learning setting, more studies in a heterogeneous learning environment would bring a better understanding of how the students perceive teaching strategies to be motivational.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors confirm that there is no actual or perceived conflicts of interest. The current study was funded by Faculty Research Excellence of Universitas Airlangga. **The authors have produced this manuscript without artificial intelligence support.**

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## APPENDIX

### Student questionnaire

For each of the following statements circle the number which best represents your answer.

1. This practice does not affect my motivation.
2. This practice plays a minor role in motivating me.
3. This practice plays somewhat a role in motivating me.
4. This practice plays a considerable role in motivating me.
5. This practice plays a major role in motivating me.

p1	Properly preparing the courses	1	2	3	4	5
p2	Leading by example by being focused and driven	1	2	3	4	5
p3	Behaving naturally and sincerely	1	2	3	4	5
p4	Being compassionate and tolerant	1	2	3	4	5
p5	Creating a nice environment	1	2	3	4	5
p6	Bringing fun, laughter, and smiles	1	2	3	4	5
p7	Playing games and engaging in enjoyable activities	1	2	3	4	5
p8	Holding competitions that are similar to games	1	2	3	4	5
p9	Issuing clear instructions	1	2	3	4	5
p10	Assisting students in completing tasks	1	2	3	4	5
p11	Outlining the purpose and value of each work	1	2	3	4	5
p12	Building a positive relationship	1	2	3	4	5
p13	Providing constructive criticism and praise	1	2	3	4	5
p14	Ensuring that pupils are successful on a regular basis	1	2	3	4	5
p15	Constantly encouraging students	1	2	3	4	5
p16	Emphasizing that mistakes are a natural part of learning	1	2	3	4	5
p17	Choosing assignments that are not above the students' abilities	1	2	3	4	5
p18	Choosing projects that are appealing to students	1	2	3	4	5
p19	Choosing engaging themes and materials	1	2	3	4	5
p20	Providing a diverse range of materials	1	2	3	4	5
p21	Managing a variety of activities	1	2	3	4	5
p22	Creating a challenging task for the students to participate in	1	2	3	4	5

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p23	Instead than using scores/grades as the primary motivator for learning, focus on developing students' interests.	1	2	3	4	5
p24	Providing unexpected features to pique pupils' interest.	1	2	3	4	5
p25	Encouraging inventive and creative thinking	1	2	3	4	5
p26	Encouraging students to raise questions and make other contributions	1	2	3	4	5
p27	Sharing responsibility for organizing the learning process with students	1	2	3	4	5
p28	Filling the assignment with personal content that is relevant to the students	1	2	3	4	5
p29	Assisting students in developing reasonable expectations	1	2	3	4	5
p30	Creating a number of distinct learning goals	1	2	3	4	5
p31	Increasing the group's aim-orientedness	1	2	3	4	5
p32	Conducting a needs analysis on the students' goals and needs	1	2	3	4	5
p33	Assisting students in creating their own study schedules	1	2	3	4	5
p34	Familiarizing students with the English cultural background	1	2	3	4	5
p35	Using authentic material	1	2	3	4	5
p36	Inviting native speakers	1	2	3	4	5
p37	Finding pen pals	1	2	3	4	5
p38	Providing regular group work	1	2	3	4	5
p39	Assisting students in getting to know one another	1	2	3	4	5
p40	Participating as an ordinary member of the group as much as possible	1	2	3	4	5
p41	Organizing extracurricular out-of-class activities	1	2	3	4	5
p42	Assisting students in realizing that success is primarily determined by effort	1	2	3	4	5
p43	Emphasizing the language's utility	1	2	3	4	5
p44	Offering incentives other than grades	1	2	3	4	5
p45	Allowing students to produce items that they may show off or perform	1	2	3	4	5
p46	Avoiding any student comparisons	1	2	3	4	5

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