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FROM ENGLISH FOR GENERAL PURPOSES TO ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES: THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN SPAIN

Abstract

Motivation has been understudied in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as opposed to English for General Purposes (EGP) courses, especially in countries like Spain, where students still struggle in achieving full mastery of the L2. This study aims to compare undergraduates' motivation when learning ESP and EGP courses by ranking several motivational variables for 120 university students from a public university in Madrid in the academic years 2021-22 and 2022-23 using a validated questionnaire (Brady, 2019). Group 1 includes first-year Economics students who only took EGP in pre-university education. Group 2 consists of second-year Commerce learners who also took EGP courses in primary and secondary education and in their first year of studies at university. Group 3 comprises third-year Tourism students who have taken EGP courses at pre-university levels and in their first year of university studies but have also done an ESP course in their second year. The results indicate that Group 2 was the most motivated toward English, probably due to their upcoming first-time exposure to ESP, which directly aligned with their main interest. Regarding variables, the ideal self was rated the highest in all three groups, whereas attitudes toward past L2 learning experiences were ranked the lowest.

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Key words

English for Specific Purposes, English for General Purposes, university education, motivation, motivational variables questionnaire.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English as a *lingua franca* instruction has become the reality of many tertiary contexts worldwide where it is spoken as a foreign language. Many students believe this language works as a valuable tool (Yu & Liu, 2018), even as a commodity, which helps them have access to an increasingly competitive labor market (Martín-González, 2023). However, some Southern European countries, such as Spain, still struggle to learn English. In this line, according to a report published by the Spanish Sociological Research Center (CIS in Spanish), 59.8% of Spanish citizens could neither speak nor write or read English at the end of 2016 (CIS, 2016). Therefore, any effort to help the university students' L2 learning process, which will enable them to have a more internationalized study experience and improve their chances of being hired internationally (Hyland, 2022), must be welcomed. Motivation is one of the most popular EGP research topics (Boo et al., 2015). However, such interest has not been widely expressed in ESP studies (Brady, 2022; González Ardeo, 2016; Jafari Pazoki & Alemi, 2019; Mauludin, 2021; Sifakis, 2003; Yang & Wyatt, 2021). Since most university degrees entail the teaching of ESP (Hyland, 2022), it is relevant to understand how motivation can affect students' learning in ESP courses. This study, therefore, aims to analyze several dimensions of self-motivation (Brady, 2019) and how they vary depending on 120 students' experience with EGP and ESP courses from a public university in Spain. The dimensions we will focus on are: intended learning effort, ideal self, ought self, current attitude to L2 learning, attitude to past L2 learning, cultural interest, interest in the English language, instrumentality prevention, instrumentality promotion, integrativeness, international posture, language use anxiety, L2 self-efficacy, and parental encouragement.

The organization of this paper is as follows. First, we will discuss the importance of motivation in language learning, focusing on ESP research in Spain. The following section will describe the methodology of this study, which includes an account of the objectives, research questions, hypotheses, participants involved in the study, as well as procedures and instruments of analysis. We will continue explaining the study results, followed by a discussion. Finally, the implications of this investigation for further research will be presented, including some recommendations for professional teaching practice.

2. MOTIVATION IN ESP RESEARCH

The study of motivation as an essential psychological component of the language learning process, influenced by the works of Dörnyei (2005, 2009) over the last decade, has been one of the most recurrent topics in EFL teaching research (González Ardeo, 2016). Boo et al. (2015) collected a group of at least 416 publications on this topic in just one decade. However, the focus on motivation in ESP has been neglected in the literature. For example, the *Handbook of English for*

Specific Purposes (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013), published just ten years ago, does not include a chapter on motivation. Similarly, Kirkgöz and Dikilitaş's (2018) book *Key Issues in English for Specific Purposes in Higher Education*, which includes 18 chapters, does not address motivation *per se* as a relevant subject of ESP research and teaching practice.

Few studies have explored the role of motivation in ESP. Since the publication of Kantaridou et al. (2006), some case studies addressing this issue have appeared in the last decade. Altalib (2019) investigates the L2 motivation of 4,043 Saudi university students enrolled in ESP and EGP courses, finding that ESP students exhibited a higher ideal L2 self and displayed a more positive attitude toward the learning experience. García-Pinar (2019) studies the impact of multimodal pedagogy using TED talks on engineering undergraduates' L2 motivation in English, showing a positive influence on their L2 selves. Dos Santos (2020) addresses the preference of nursing students for ESP courses over EGP ones because of the former's applicability in the work environment. Özer (2020) explores the connection between motivation, anxiety, and achievement, indicating that the first can predict the other two but with contrasting effects. Kereković (2021) analyzes the motivation of students of English for mechanical engineering purposes when introducing formative assessment in a university course. Mauludin (2021) explores students' beliefs about the most motivating activities in ESP courses at a public Indonesian university, concluding that learners prefer more entertaining classes where they work with creative materials rather than focusing on just doing assignments. Simonova et al. (2021) attempt to prove that the employment of smart devices can suit all ESP and EAP learners of all motivation types. Argyroulis (2022) investigates the use of corpus teaching methods in ESP classes, demonstrating they motivate students more effectively than traditional methods. Lastly, Rodríguez-Peñarroja (2022) integrates project-based learning, task-based language teaching, and YouTube usage to enhance students' motivation in an English course tailored for advertising and public relations purposes.

When delving into the context of Spain, the lack of studies is even more noticeable. González Ardeo (2016) studies the types of English learning motivation and learning strategies employed by a group of 208 engineering students from Bilbao using a self-reporting questionnaire. The study primarily examined these two aspects while varying the variables of gender and age. This article found high motivation levels, mainly due to the "learners' concern about the career advantages that English proficiency can give them" (González Ardeo, 2016: 162). In broad terms, no major differences were discovered in the gender variable. Brady (2019) presents the validation of the questionnaire used in this paper, which was tested on a sample of over 500 Spanish students. Her work analyzes "67 items comprising 13 psychometric scales targeting the ideal L2 self, the ought L2 self, as well as a diverse range of goal-related and affective motivational variables" (Brady, 2019: 47). The results of the study confirmed that the ideal L2 self is a key concept for learners (Brady, 2019). However, the ought L2 self does not appear as pertinent for students

who do not believe that external obligations are compelling enough to motivate them. Then, Brady (2022) approaches the concept of positive psychology and emotions in the L2 motivation in the ESP field from a theoretical perspective. Although her study does not assess students' motivation, it opens new trends in researching this topic, such as the use of directed motivational currents (desires to do something that can be sustained over time, such as learning a foreign language) "for analysis of fluctuations in a learner's L2 learning path and levels of engagement" (Brady, 2022: 127) in ESP courses. Lastly, Mykykta et al. (2022) examine a boost in students' motivation when introducing Educaplay, an online digital tool, in English for physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and architecture purposes at a private university in Spain.

In this paper, motivation is regarded as an affective variable of the language learning experience that can openly help the learner nurture this process. Therefore, "motivation is a consistently strong predictor of successful language learning" (González Ardeo, 2016: 143). One of the first common misconceptions about motivation (Brady, 2022) is that there is a dichotomy between integrative or intrinsic (learning for the sake of it) and instrumental or extrinsic motivation (learning for an external purpose such as finding a job). This is not correct, as a learner always has both types but on different levels. "Extrinsic motivation to get good grades and enter university is strong and has been proven a predictor of L2 achievement" (Brady, 2022: 120).

Another fundamental concept in motivation research is the L2 motivational self-system (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), a theory grounded in Higgins's self-discrepancy theory (1987), which integrates the role of L2 learners in World English contexts by addressing three dimensions: the ideal L2 self, the ought L2 self, and the L2 learning experience. The ideal L2 self refers to how one sees oneself using the L2 in the future. It is associated with a desire to belong to the target language community and becomes the "most cited precursor to motivated language learning behavior" (Brady, 2019: 50). This view on motivation introduces "a globalized world citizen identity" (García-Pinar, 2019: 233), whereby learners see themselves as belonging to an international context rather than a specific local target L2 group (Yashima, 2002), that is, an imagined community. On the other hand, the ought L2 self is normally linked with external sources, such as family or teachers, who influence learners' behaviors. Previous studies have demonstrated that "Dörnyei's motivational framework can be implemented in different learning contexts and countries and cultural settings" (García-Pinar, 2019: 235). Lastly, the L2 learning experience refers to specific language learning episodes (both in the past or the present, in the classroom or outside). This dimension is unique to the L2 motivational self-system and "has no precedent in mainstream psychology research" (Brady, 2019: 51).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Objectives, research questions, and hypotheses

The main objective of this study is to determine the extent to which undergraduate students' motivation may differ depending on whether they are taught EGP or ESP in the university classroom. Additionally, a subsequent goal is to analyze which specific motivational variables are affected by the type of course pursued. The focus will be on: intended learning effort, ideal self, ought self, current attitude to L2 learning, attitude to past L2 learning, cultural interest, interest in the English language, instrumentality prevention, instrumentality promotion, integrativeness, international posture, language use anxiety, L2 self-efficacy, and parental encouragement.

In this context, we aim to address the following questions:

RQ1. To what extent does students' motivation get influenced by their learning experience with an EGP or an ESP course?

RQ2. How does the pattern of studying EGP differ between those who only studied it in primary and secondary education, those who also continued studying EGP in tertiary education, and those who combined it with one course of ESP at the university level? Furthermore, how do these different educational paths impact the motivation of undergraduate students toward the various variables under investigation?

Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H0 (null hypothesis). There is no correlation between higher motivation levels and the number of years learning ESP. Students do not experience increased motivation with a rise in the time they have spent studying the specific field of knowledge their degrees focus on.

H1. There is a correlation between higher motivation levels and the number of years learning ESP. In other words, students feel more motivated as they spend more time studying the specific field of knowledge their degrees focus on.

To address our research questions and test our hypotheses, this study employs a quantitative methodological approach for data collection. A quasi-experimental design with a single pre-experimental measurement has been utilized, and a pre-intervention has been taken. The research design is descriptive and inferential. The level of motivation has been operationalized using scores obtained from a questionnaire administered to the study's sample in September 2021 and 2022, during the first week of instruction before the classes commenced.

3.2. Participants

The participants (n=120) in this study were selected using a non-probabilistic intentional sampling method. Three groups of undergraduate students learning ESP or EGP from different degrees and years were chosen from a public university in Spain. Table 1 provides a summary of these groups. The experiment took place during the first week of classes, before the actual lessons commenced, during the Fall semester.

Before the experiment, a diagnostic test was administered to all participants to confirm that their L2 proficiency level was at B1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001). The students in each group received an equal number of classes, twice a week for 2 hours, throughout one semester. The groups can be described as follows:

- 1) Group 1: 1st-year students of the Economics degree who had previously studied EGP in primary and secondary education and were about to study ESP for the first time at the university level. The group comprised 28 participants (M:18.92; SD: 3.62). The gender distribution was balanced, with 50% female and 50% male students.
- 2) Group 2: 2nd-year students of the Commerce degree who had already studied EGP at the university level for one year, apart from learning it in primary and secondary education, and were about to study ESP for the first time. The group consisted of 46 students (M: 19.97; SD: 1.59). The gender distribution leaned slightly more toward female students, accounting for 56.52% of the group, while male students constituted 43.48%.
- 3) Group 3: 3rd-year university students pursuing a Tourism degree who had previously studied EGP in primary and secondary education as well as one year at the university level. Additionally, they took one year of ESP at university and were about to study a second ESP year. The group comprised 46 students (M: 21.60; SD: 2.75). The gender distribution showed a higher percentage of female students (73.91%) of the group, while male students accounted for 26.09%.

Group	Year	Degree	Academic year	Students enrolled	Female	Male
1	1 st	Economics	2022-23	28	14	14
2	2 nd	Commerce	2021-22	46	26	20
3	3 rd	Tourism	2021-22	46	34	12
Total				120	74	46

Table 1. Description of the participants in the study

3.3. Procedures and instruments of analysis

This research relies on the analysis of students' individual and anonymous responses to the pre-planned questionnaire distributed on the first day of classes using *Google Forms* to evaluate the participants' motivational variables. The students completed it in the classroom, using their cell phone devices, guided by an ESP instructor. All the participants were informed about the research's purpose before answering the questionnaire, adhering to the ethical criteria outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013). The questionnaire response and effectiveness were both 100%, resulting in a complete dataset for analysis.

This questionnaire was based on Brady (2019) and aimed to assess the students' level of motivation according to five main variables: i) criterion measure, ii) L2 motivational self-system variables, iii) attitudinal variables, iv) goal-related variables, and v) affective variables. Each of these further consisted of specific sub-variables, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of the students' motivation toward learning EGP and ESP:

- i) Criterion measure: intended learning effort.
- ii) L2 motivational self-system variables: ideal self, ought self, current attitude to L2 learning, and attitudes to past L2 learning.
- iii) Attitudinal variables: cultural interest, and interest in the English language.
- iv) Goal-related variables: instrumentality prevention, instrumentality promotion, integrativeness, and international posture.
- v) Affective variables: language use anxiety, L2 self-efficacy, and parental encouragement.

The questionnaire (see Appendix) consisted of seventy-one questions that employed a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The internal consistency of the different scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which measures the reliability of the items in each scale: intended learning effort ($\alpha=0.65$), ideal self ($\alpha=0.71$), ought self ($\alpha=0.30$), current attitude to L2 learning ($\alpha=0.74$), attitude to past L2 learning ($\alpha=0.82$), cultural interest ($\alpha=0.82$), interest in the English language ($\alpha=0.63$), instrumentality prevention ($\alpha=0.74$), instrumentality promotion ($\alpha=0.70$), integrativeness ($\alpha=0.72$), international posture ($\alpha=0.76$), L2 self-efficacy ($\alpha=0.62$), language use anxiety ($\alpha=0.85$), and parental encouragement ($\alpha=0.43$). Most scales demonstrated good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha values higher than 0.70. However, the ought self and parental encouragement had lower alpha values of 0.30 and 0.43, respectively, below the recommended threshold of 0.70. Despite these limitations, these scales were included in the study because of the lack of studies on the ought L2 self-concept in Spain, as noted by Brady (2019), and its connection with external

influences, such as family and environmental support in the L2 learning process – a sociocultural factor that may influence one’s self-beliefs (Beghetto & Karwowski, 2017). Parental encouragement seems to be especially relevant in Spain, one of the southern European countries with a belated emancipation (young people leave their homes in their thirties) (Eurostat, 2017), and the results could reveal important data for the study. Additionally, intended learning effort, interest in the English language, and L2 self-efficacy were also included, even though they contained fewer than ten items (5, 6, and 4, respectively), as they showed acceptable internal consistency with alpha values higher than 0.50.

Specifically, the steps involved in the analysis were as follows:

1. Reliability assessment. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient.

2. Normality assessment. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed to assess the normal distribution of the different constructs of the questionnaire (a p -value > 0.005 was obtained in all variables).

3. A descriptive analysis was performed to study the means and standard deviations of the different variables.

4. An inferential analysis was conducted using the Student’s t -test for independent samples to compare the diverse motivational variables among the three groups.

5. The Student’s t -test for paired samples was utilized to analyze the differences between past and present attitudes to L2 learning.

6. The Pearson correlation analysis was used to investigate the link between the different motivational variables and the intended learning effort; and the relationships among the different variables that each of the constructs comprises.

IBM SPSS 28.0. (IBM, 2021) was used for analyses, with a 0.05 significance level.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Motivational variables and samples

Table 2 shows the mean value and the standard deviation of each of the motivational variables studied across the sample. The Likert scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), except for certain items that described an unfavorable and/or undesirable behavior that demanded a negative answer (items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 47, 48, 49, 59, 60, 61, 67, and 71). In these items, the points were reversed during analysis.

	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Criterion measure						
Intended learning effort	3.75	0.65	4.00	0.53	3.80	0.60
L2 motivational self-system variables						
Ideal self	3.96	0.79	4.32	0.46	4.16	0.70
Ought self	2.64	0.38	3.22	0.40	2.93	0.81
Current attitude to L2 learning	3.52	0.84	3.82	0.86	3.54	0.60
Attitude to past L2 learning	3.04	0.90	2.84	1.06	2.78	0.95
Attitudinal variables						
Cultural interest	3.16	1.13	3.68	0.93	3.57	1.13
Interest in the English language	3.75	0.57	3.99	0.53	3.92	0.39
Goal-related variables						
Instrumentality prevention	3.81	0.64	3.86	0.69	3.88	0.71
Instrumentality promotion	3.98	0.51	3.98	0.40	4.03	0.48
Integrativeness	3.30	0.61	3.59	0.53	3.38	0.51
International posture	3.76	0.70	3.96	0.37	3.91	0.39
Affective variables						
Language use anxiety	3.75	0.65	3.39	1.11	3.80	0.60
L2 self-efficacy	3.59	0.90	3.70	0.89	3.75	0.67
Parental encouragement	3.81	0.82	4.04	0.67	3.80	0.57

Table 2. Descriptive statistics results of the different variables studied in the three groups

To compare the degree of motivation among the different groups that received varying types of EGP or ESP instruction, the inferential parametric Student's *t*-test for independent samples was applied.

4.2. Criterion measure

There were no significant differences in intended learning effort between Groups 1 and 3 ($p=0.94$), neither between Groups 1 and 2 ($p=0.43$) nor between Groups 2 and 3 ($p=0.91$). The three cohorts targeted their past and present learning activities and their intention to continue studying and learning English (EGP and/or ESP).

4.3. L2 motivational self-system variables

The comparison between Groups 1 and 2 showed statistically significant differences in the ideal ($p=0.03$) and the ought self ($p=0.00$) motivational variables. The former reflects the students' emotional involvement with English and their vision of using it in the future. Group 2 students, who were about to study ESP for the first time after a university EGP course, had a stronger emotional connection to the language and perceived it as more relevant for their future endeavors. Similarly, the ought self, associated with external influences and duties, showed higher variations

between groups. However, there were no significant differences in the current attitude to L2 learning ($p=0.92$) and the attitude to past L2 learning ($p=0.28$). Their past learning experiences may have not been very fruitful or enjoyable, and they may expect the same for the upcoming courses.

Groups 1 and 3 did not show substantial variations in their L2 motivational self-system variables: ideal self ($p=0.56$) and attitude to past L2 learning ($p=0.60$). These results can be explained by Group 3's previous traditional university experiences with the L2. This might have reminded them of their EGP pre-university learning time, where conventional student's books are commonly used as the core resource in Spain.

However, there were significant differences concerning the ought self in L2 ($p=0.00$) and the current attitude to L2 learning ($p=0.03$). As they study more than one language, Group 3's attitude toward English may also be influenced by the importance of foreign languages for their future job prospects. Furthermore, some students had completed internships in positions where employers emphasized the significance of English as a *lingua franca* (Jenkins, 2009) and were more influenced by external duties.

Regarding the analysis of Groups 2 and 3, substantial variations were observed for the ideal self ($p=0.04$), the ought self ($p=0.02$), and current attitude to L2 learning ($p=0.01$). These results suggest that learners become more aware of the benefits of language learning and its usefulness in future endeavors. However, their attitude toward past L2 learning ($p=0.51$) showed no significant difference, possibly due to unsatisfactory learning experiences in the past.

When comparing the results of the current attitude to L2 learning and attitude to past L2 learning, there was a noteworthy variation ($p=0.00$) across all groups. Despite not having a positive perception of their past EGP learning experiences in primary or secondary education, students exhibited an improved attitude toward language learning when starting tertiary education. In all groups, the mean values of their current attitude toward L2 learning were higher than their past attitude, especially in Group 2 (Group 1, 0.52 points increase; Group 2, 1.02 points increase; Group 3, 0.76 points increase), which showed a higher eagerness to learn English due to their first and immediate ESP experience, a specific language for their studies. Moreover, significant differences were found within each group, Group 1, 2, and 3 ($p=0.00$), respectively, suggesting that first-year students may not have been fully aware of the differences between pre-university stages and tertiary education. Second and third-year students, who have prior university experience, were more aware of these differences, leading to a noticeable change in their attitude toward language learning.

The ideal self was also higher in Group 2. This group of learners showed a positive current attitude toward their L2 learning, scoring 3.82 out of 5 points. These results demonstrate the intrinsic interconnection between these two motivational self-esteem variables.

4.4. Attitudinal variables

Groups 1 and 2 displayed significant differences in cultural interest ($p=0.01$), being higher for the latter. Nevertheless, both groups showed similar interest in English ($p=0.54$), indicating consistent attitudes toward the language, irrespective of the amount of time spent studying at the tertiary level. Group 2's university EGP course might not have met their expectations, resulting in a lack of enthusiasm for the target language.

However, these results contrast when analyzing Groups 1 and 3 ($p=0.03$). This finding suggests that Group 3 expresses more interest in the language of their specialization field, Tourism, possibly due to exposure such as internships. Surprisingly, the cultural interest variable showed no significant variation ($p=0.93$) between these two groups.

Finally, the attitudinal factors did not report any statistical difference between Groups 2 and 3 (cultural interest, $p=0.84$; interest in the English language, $p=0.82$), since both were about to start an ESP course. The latter obtained the highest score in the item "Interest in the English language", compared to their L1 Spanish. However, Group 2 had higher cultural interest, which measured the extent to which students used the language outside the classroom, possibly due to higher parental encouragement.

4.5. Goal-related variables

Groups 1 and 2 did not differ significantly in their views of instrumentality prevention ($p=0.60$), the disadvantages of not learning English, instrumentality promotion ($p=0.20$), the pragmatic advantages of acquiring the language, and international posture ($p=0.13$), the use of English in contexts not directly related to native speaker communities. Both groups emphasized the importance of English as a *lingua franca*. However, integrativeness, which measures students' interest in engaging with Anglo-Saxon people and culture, showed a statistically significant difference ($p=0.03$), Group 2 being more motivated, probably due to their upcoming ESP experience.

Groups 1 and 3 displayed no statistical variations in instrumentality prevention ($p=0.41$), promotion ($p=0.87$), and integrativeness ($p=0.48$). Both groups showed similar awareness of the importance of English in all professional fields and its practical advantages. International posture showed a difference of $p=0.07$, not statistically significant but with a narrower margin. This suggests that Group 3 may be more conscious of the relevance of English due to their professional and personal experiences with the language and culture.

Regarding the results obtained between Groups 2 and 3, the findings are like the ones depicted when comparing the previous cohorts. There were no statistically significant variations in instrumentality prevention ($p=0.36$), integrativeness

($p=0.52$), and international posture ($p=0.98$) between the two groups. Nonetheless, the difference lies in the instrumentality promotion ($p=0.03$). This suggests that Group 3 may have a greater awareness of the pragmatic advantages of mastering English when compared to Group 2. It appears that since these students may soon begin their professional careers, they were more aware of the relevance of using English regularly.

4.6. Affective variables

Groups 1 and 2 did not show any statistically significant variations in any of the affective variables studied: language use anxiety ($p=0.98$), L2 self-efficacy ($p=0.51$), and parental encouragement ($p=0.21$). The emotional aspects of using English, the opportunities to speak it, and the level of parental support appear to be similar in both cohorts.

Groups 1 and 3 showed similar results regarding language use anxiety ($p=0.16$) and L2 self-efficacy ($p=0.09$) but displayed statistically different results concerning parental encouragement ($p=0.04$). This indicates that Group 3 receives more parental support than Group 1, and they view English proficiency as an essential resource for their future success and independence.

Regarding the study of these variables between Groups 2 and 3, language use anxiety ($p=0.36$) was not different. However, L2 self-efficacy and parental encouragement showed significant differences ($p=0.06$ and $p=0.02$, respectively). Again, Group 3 received more support from their family and were more informed about the opportunities mastery of English may bring them.

4.7. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis

When analyzing the different motivational variables, we observed moderate correlations¹ between current attitude to L2 learning ($r=0.33$, $p=0.00$), ideal self ($r=0.47$, $p=0.00$), instrumentality promotion ($r=0.43$, $p=0.00$), integrativeness ($r=0.40$, $p=0.00$), cultural interest ($r=0.35$, $p=0.00$), interest in the English language ($r=0.45$, $p=0.00$), self-efficacy ($r=0.33$, $p=0.00$), and low correlations with attitude to past L2 learning ($r=0.16$, $p=0.00$), ought self ($r=0.10$, $p=0.10$), instrumentality prevention ($r=0.29$, $p=0.00$), international posture ($r=0.21$, $p=0.00$), L2 anxiety ($r=0.04$, $p=0.42$), and parental encouragement ($r=0.17$, $p=0.00$). Except for anxiety, all showed a substantial difference. In Social Sciences, correlations are not usually high due to various factors (e.g., boredom, tiredness) when answering long questionnaires (like in our case), which may result in low correlations but still statistically significant.

¹ For the interpretation of the correlation coefficients, Pérez's (2013) guidelines have been respected.

The L2 motivational self-system variables provided interesting insights into students' language learning motivation, revealing a stronger correlation between intended learning effort and current attitude to L2 learning compared to their attitude to past L2 learning. Despite negative attitudes toward their past experiences, learners' current attitudes have improved, indicating a positive change. The correlations between the ideal self and both intended effort and current attitude to L2 learning were moderate ($r=0.47$, and $r=0.40$, respectively), highlighting the connection between students' emotional involvement and willingness to learn English and maintaining a positive attitude while studying the language.

The results regarding the attitudinal and goal-oriented variables provide valuable insights into learners' motivations and perceptions of English. The low correlation between cultural interest and motivation for English ($r=0.25$, $p=0.00$) suggests that students may be more focused on the instrumental use of the language for their future careers rather than having a strong interest in the language itself.

The results reveal a strong correlation between instrumental prevention and promotion ($r=0.64$, $p=0.00$), indicating students' awareness of the significance of mastering English and its numerous benefits. Moreover, the moderate correlations between instrumental prevention and promotion with integrativeness ($r=0.30$, $p=0.00$; $r=0.48$, $p=0.00$, respectively) show the link between instrumental advantages and their engagement with English speakers when communicating. Furthermore, the moderate correlation between integrativeness and the international posture of the language ($r=0.34$, $p=0.00$) suggests that participants perceive English communication beyond native speakers. However, the low correlation between instrumental prevention and promotion and the international posture ($r=0.16$, $p=0.00$; $r=0.27$, $p=0.00$, respectively) indicates that learners may primarily perceive English as a communication tool with native speakers.

Finally, the results related to the affective variables provide fascinating insights into the emotional aspects of students' language learning experiences. The moderate correlation between L2 anxiety and self-efficacy ($r=0.44$, $p=0.00$) suggests that undergraduates' emotional state during English usage can impact their perception of their language skills. On the other hand, the weak correlations between parental encouragement and anxiety ($r=0.10$, $p=0.09$) and self-efficacy ($r=0.12$, $p=0.05$) imply that external support from family and friends did not significantly influence students' levels of anxiety or self-efficacy in learning English. It seems that undergraduates' motivation and engagement in their English learning process were not primarily dependent on parental encouragement. Instead, they appeared intrinsically motivated and aware of the benefits and opportunities that English proficiency can provide them.

5. DISCUSSION

This paper aims to analyze the affective variable of motivation among undergraduates when studying EGP and ESP at university. The results reveal

unexpected values, as reflected in the descriptive, inferential and correlation analyses. The study's H0 (null hypothesis) is confirmed. Group 2, Commerce degree undergraduates, exhibited a higher level of motivation compared to Group 1, Economics degree students who had just started tertiary education, and Group 3, Tourism undergraduates facing their second ESP course and having previously studied one EGP university course. Group 2 was about to study ESP for the first time and seemed more engaged in classes with specific language related to their field, which was their principal interest.

Contrary to Dos Santos's (2020) findings, who conducted research with nursing students and observed higher motivation among undergraduates studying ESP rather than EGP, Group 2 was the most motivated cohort in our research. Consequently, H1 is not verified, as Group 3 did not show the highest motivation levels despite having already studied ESP for one year. This may be due to Group 2 learners anticipating a new approach to learning the target language in the ESP course, compared to Group 3 students, who were already familiar with this type of teaching. The ought self, which reflects the external influences on an individual or the fear of lacking competence in the L2 (Brady, 2019), showed significant differences among the three groups. It was expected that Group 3, closer to entering the labor market, would have a higher sense of the ought self. Surprisingly, Group 2 exhibited a higher sense of this concept. After studying ESP for one year, Group 3 students had already formed an opinion about the usefulness of such courses for their profession. However, Group 3 participants may not have encountered a teaching-learning experience that fully met their expectations (perhaps, learning focused on explicit vocabulary and grammar instruction), which may not have aligned with their future job tasks. As a result, they showed less motivation in terms of the ought self.

Additionally, a lack of oral skills practice in these courses is frequently due to the massification of classes, making it easier to correct written activities than oral ones (especially during the Covid-19 pandemic). All these experiences might explain such low ratings for Group 3 students, as learners might have felt that their expectations and needs had not been appropriately addressed in the past ESP experience.

As for the L2 motivational self-system variables, the ought self was substantially different in Group 2 from the other two groups. Group 2 rated external obligations significantly higher than Groups 1 and 3, implying the significance of instrumental and external commitments for this sample. Students in a globalized trade market and the business world seem to be highly aware of the demanding needs of their future endeavors, where the English language plays an essential role. This finding contrasts with Brady's (2019) study, where the sample rated the ought self very lowly on the scale, and Kormos and Csizér's (2008) study, where participants did not identify an ought L2 self-dimension.

On the other hand, similar to the findings highlighted by other researchers (Brady, 2019; Kormos & Csizér, 2008; You & Dörnyei, 2016), the visions of using English as an L2 in future professional and social contexts, or their ideal L2 self, were

quite relevant, with a high score of 4.32 out of 5 points, showing significant differences in Group 2. This group also showed noteworthy variations when evaluating their current attitude to L2 learning compared to Groups 1 and 3. Additionally, similar to Brady's (2019) findings, there were substantial differences between their current attitude to L2 learning and their attitude toward past L2 learning experience ($p=0.00$). This finding supports the negative value of their past secondary school education experience. The difference, once more, was higher in Group 2 (a difference of one point), which highlights the deep engagement and evaluation students had of their EGP and ESP lessons.

When studying the relationship among the four variables of the L2 motivational self-system variable, we observed moderate correlations between the ideal self and the current attitude toward L2 learning. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by Brady (2019), Ryan (2009), and Taguchi et al. (2009), who also found a strong association between these two variables. Furthermore, similar to the results of this study, previous research also showed low correlations between the ideal self and the ought self with the past attitude toward L2 learning. Additionally, there is a connection between the ought self and the current attitude toward L2 learning. Students might not perceive learning English as an imposition from external sources because they have integrated it into their ideal L2 self, meaning they see it as a relevant part of their identity and future goals.

The results obtained from the attitudinal variables did not provide significant insights. Undergraduates showed that they used the English language mainly for its instrumental value, focusing on its use in their academic and professional careers rather than for the enjoyment of using the language itself or understanding cultural expressions.

Regarding the goal-related variables, integrativeness was moderately related, but it scored higher than international posture, which indicates lower rates regarding students' interest in using English as a *lingua franca* for international communication. These findings differ from those reported by Brady (2019), where integrative orientation was more important than using English as a *lingua franca*. This discrepancy could be attributed to the age and experience of the sample in this research, as suggested by González Ardeo (2016), as intrinsic motivation tends to decrease as learners reach higher educational stages (Ryan & Deci, 2000), as it occurs with the participants of this research.

Parental encouragement showed significant differences with Group 2 but did not show meaningful effects with the other cohorts or when studied with other variables. This suggests that as participants become young adults and enter tertiary education, they may feel more independent and less influenced by their parents' encouragement, as also observed by Brady (2019). However, these results are contrary to those obtained by Kormos and Csizér (2008) and Lamb (2012), whose studies with younger adolescent samples showed substantial results of parental encouragement. Despite none of the groups being emancipated, Groups 1 and 3 felt less support from their parents than Group 2. Group 2 students may feel more

pressure and an urgent need to be proficient in English due to the rapid internationalization of the trade market, their field of specialization. Their parents and environment must share similar feelings too, whereas Groups 1 and 3 showed a more relaxed attitude.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study examines motivation in higher education EGP and ESP courses by surveying 120 undergraduates from three different degrees and years at a public university in Madrid. The study aimed to determine if the type of English course (EGP or ESP) affected learners' motivational outcomes and identify factors influencing their motivation in language learning at the tertiary level.

Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that the 2nd-year undergraduates pursuing the Commerce degree exhibited the highest motivation levels. This could be attributed to their upcoming first-time exposure to ESP, which directly aligned with their principal interest. The variable of ideal self was rated highest in all three cohorts, indicating that learners were emotionally invested in their ESP learning and envisioned themselves using English in their future endeavors. The second highest-rated variable was instrumentality promotion, closely linked to their ideal self. Moreover, the lowest-rated variables were associated with students' attitudes toward past L2 learning experiences. However, their motivation seemed to have significantly changed when faced with ESP and higher education. Despite negative past experiences, their current attitude toward L2 learning was optimistic, reflecting an awareness of the language's importance for their careers. Furthermore, the ought self received low ratings, indicating that learners did not feel pressured by external entities to learn English. This suggested that their motivation was more intrinsic and self-driven.

Regarding attitudinal variables, Group 3 surprisingly did not display higher cultural interest when compared to Group 2 even though their field of study was directly related to cultural tourism. However, Group 3 showed higher rates in goal-related variables like instrumentality promotion, possibly due to their proximity to the labor market, which correlated moderately with instrumentality prevention and integrativeness. In terms of affective variables, parental encouragement was more prominent in Group 2 but did not display significant differences or correlations with the other affective variables studied. Anxiety rates were low, facilitating the learning process, and students generally had positive perceptions of their language proficiency.

The findings of this study carry valuable implications for ESP and EGP teachers at tertiary education. These results help us enhance motivation toward L2 learning by adapting our methodology toward a more learner-centered approach. As Yang and Wyatt stated (2021), it is important to be aware of L2 motivation to shape

students' beliefs and practices. Several practical educational strategies can be considered to address the motivation levels observed in the study.

First, ESP courses should be evaluated more often, for instance, by identifying students' needs and expectations prior and after an ESP course, which will allow us to understand how to motivate learners better. Second, young adults' enjoyment of classes can be enhanced by integrating technology into the classroom. Using virtual apps and online resources can enhance autonomous language learning. Third, fostering intercultural communication can heighten students' intrinsic motivation to learn L2. Lastly, teachers can encourage peer collaboration and open discussions, thus creating a supportive and relaxing learning environment that could lower learners' anxiety levels (Dörnyei, 1994). Despite the low anxiety rates observed in the sample, it is still beneficial to incorporate joyful learning strategies that integrate digital resources to foster participation, positive relationships, autonomy, and self-confidence in a safe environment (Ahmed, 2014; Harvey, 2013; Lamb, 2017). Since self-efficacy did not yield high results, a positive feeling of efficacy should be enhanced through different learning strategies and environments that promote learners' progress (Marashi & Dakhili, 2015). Teachers can employ cognitive strategies (such as elaboration to deepen language understanding), metacognitive strategies (like planning to regulate the learning process), motivational strategies (e.g., fostering self-efficacy to boost engagement), and management strategies (such as finding, navigating, and evaluating resources) (Dignath et al., 2008) to create a suitable learning environment.

Moreover, teachers should encourage reciprocal questioning to foster open dialogs among students, engage in three-step interviews, use the devil's advocate approach to prompt critical thinking, organize peer-teacher activities where peers instruct their classmates, and incorporate game-based learning to address student difficulties effectively. Additionally, teachers can create positive learning environments by challenging learners, prompting reflection on progress, and fostering a sense of belonging among students to create positive learning environments.

Lastly, implementing ESP from the first year at university could be a beneficial approach. English is widely studied as the first foreign language learned in Spain (studied by 98.5% and 97.7% of students in primary and secondary education, respectively) (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2016). By introducing ESP in higher education, learners can build upon their existing language proficiency and immediately apply it to their chosen field of study. This approach can lead to higher language proficiency, as well as more motivation and engagement among undergraduates.

This research has several limitations. The sample size is relatively small, and the investigation is focused on specific ESP learners from three degrees. Therefore, its findings require careful interpretation and avoid generalization to other contexts. To strengthen the validity of the findings, future research should aim for larger and more diverse samples. Additionally, a longitudinal design could also provide valuable insights into how motivational variables evolve, helping identify any

fluctuations in motivation over the years. Considering the importance of instructors in shaping L2 motivation (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009), future research should explore teacher-related variables in more depth (teaching materials, methodologies, teacher's role). Furthermore, comparing ESP syllabi and teaching approaches can help design more effective courses. The creation of customized ESP syllabi that align with professional interests can enhance learners' linguistic competence and success in international business, thus contributing significantly to the improvement of ESP teaching and learning practices in higher education.

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Appendix

Motivational Factors Questionnaire (Brady, 2019)

INTENDED LEARNING EFFORT (5 questions)

1. I am willing to make a great effort at learning English.
2. I fully intend to spend time abroad to improve my English.
3. I'm working hard to learn English.
4. I think I am doing all I can to learn English.
5. I will likely continue to study English after my degree.

ANXIETY (4 questions)

6. I would get very nervous speaking to a native speaker.
7. I always think others will laugh at my English.
8. If a foreigner asked me for directions in the street, I would get quite nervous.
9. I feel a sense of ridicule when I speak English.

ATTITUDE TO LEARNING (PRESENT) (3 questions)

10. I don't speak English for fear of making mistakes.
11. Learning English is really interesting.
12. I usually enjoy English lessons.

ATTITUDE TO LEARNING (PAST) (4 questions)

13. I learned a lot of English at secondary school.
14. My experience in English lessons has always been positive.
15. I loved English lessons at secondary school.
16. At secondary school I had very good English teachers.

CULTURAL INTEREST (4 questions)

17. I like British and American music.
18. I like to watch British and American TV series in English.
19. I read novels, magazines, press, etc. in English.
20. I like to watch films in English.

IDEAL SELF (5 questions)

21. I see myself living abroad and communicating in English.
22. When I think of my professional career, I see myself using English at work.
23. I see myself in a situation where I speak English to international friends.
24. I dream about being fluent in English.
25. I can't imagine my future without English.

INSTRUMENTALITY PREVENTION (5 questions)

26. If I don't learn English, I can't work at what I want.
27. Given the economic situation in Spain I will need English to work abroad.
28. I don't want to fail at learning English because my professional career depends on it.
29. Not failing at English is important to me to be considered well-educated.
30. To not study English will have a negative impact on my life.

INSTRUMENTALITY PROMOTION (6 questions)

31. Learning English is important to me because it will be essential for work.
32. Learning English is important to me because I can travel internationally.
33. Learning English is important because I mean to study abroad.

34. It's important to learn English for a better-paid job.
35. Learning English is important to me because it is a challenge in life.
36. To know English is important to be considered a well-educated person.

INTEGRATIVENESS/ATTITUDE TO L2 COMMUNITY (7 questions)

37. I would like to be similar to North American people.
38. I would like to be similar to British people.
39. I think it is important to know English to know more about the culture of its speakers.
40. I would like to live and work for a long period of time in the UK.
41. I would like to live and work for a long period of time in the USA.
42. I would like more contact with and know more about the British.
43. I would like to travel to English-speaking countries.

INTEREST IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (6 questions)

44. I love how English sounds.
45. I like learning English.
46. I am very curious about the structure and vocabulary of English.
47. I would prefer to learn/study another language other than English.
48. Studying English is a waste of time.
49. Studying English is boring.

INTERNATIONAL POSTURE (7 questions)

50. I like to meet people from non-English speaking countries.
51. I want to know English to communicate with non-native speakers.
52. I want to travel to countries other than English-speaking ones.
53. I like Northern European values and customs.
54. In general, I like other cultures.
55. I like other cultures' values and customs.
56. I prefer to communicate in English with non-natives.

OUGHT L2 SELF (7 questions)

57. I want to learn English because the people around me consider it important.
58. If it weren't for my loved ones, I wouldn't learn English.
59. Actually, I feel obliged to learn English, it is not my desire.
60. My family thinks I should make more effort at English.
61. I need English for the official B2 certification to teach.
62. My friends have a positive influence on my desire to learn English.
63. All my friends talk about the importance of learning English.

PARENTAL ENCOURAGEMENT (4 questions)

64. My parents have always encouraged me to learn English.
65. My parents have sent me to lessons since I was small.
66. My family thinks it is important to spend time abroad to improve one's English.
67. My parents would be equally happy with me if I never reached a command of English.

L2 SELF-EFFICACY (4 questions)

68. I find it quite easy to learn English.
69. If I make an effort, I could reach a command of English.
70. I try to take advantage of chances to communicate in English.
71. English is very difficult for me.