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R E V I S T A

Enhancing english language learning for specific purposes in military schools: Strategies to overcome academic and physical challenges

Potenciando el aprendizaje del inglés para fines específicos en escuelas militares: estrategias para superar desafíos académicos y físicos

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Abstract

This research evaluated the outcomes of implementing an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program in military institutes, considering the demanding physical and academic environment cadets face. The study focused on the impact of integrating military-related materials into language instruction, assessed students' opinions on interactive classroom activities, and identified the main obstacles to language learning. A mixed-methods design was used with 28 cadets selected from the "Tern. Lauro Guerreno" Military High School in Loja, Ecuador. Qualitative data were obtained from interviews and focus group discussions, while quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-tests. The intervention incorporated lessons set in military contexts, including instructional commands and modes of communication. Recommendations aimed at improving EFL instruction in military environments by strengthening teaching and learning resources, teacher professional development, and organizational culture. This research contributes to addressing gaps in context-based ESP training and proposing practical solutions to challenges in ESP teaching within military organizations.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP); military education; language proficiency; mixed methods; specialized curriculum.

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Resumen

Esta investigación evaluó los resultados derivados de la implementación de un programa de inglés para Fines Específicos (IFE) en institutos militares, dado el exigente entorno físico y académico de los cadetes. El estudio se centró en el impacto de la integración de materiales relacionados con el ámbito militar en la enseñanza del idioma, evaluó las opiniones de los estudiantes sobre las actividades interactivas en el aula y reveló los principales obstáculos para el aprendizaje del idioma. Se empleó un diseño de métodos mixtos, y se seleccionaron 28 cadetes del Colegio Militar “Tern. Lauro Guerrero” en Loja, Ecuador. Los datos cualitativos se obtuvieron de entrevistas y discusiones de grupos focales, mientras que los datos cuantitativos se evaluaron y recopilaban a través de pruebas previas y posteriores. La intervención incluyó lecciones establecidas en contextos militares, incluyendo órdenes de instrucción y la forma de comunicación. Las recomendaciones se orientaron a mejorar la enseñanza del ILE en entornos militares mediante el fortalecimiento de los recursos de enseñanza y aprendizaje, el desarrollo profesional docente y la cultura organizacional. Esta investigación resultó valiosa para subsanar las deficiencias existentes en la enseñanza del IFE basada en el contexto y para proponer métodos prácticos para abordar los desafíos de la enseñanza del IFE en organizaciones militares.

Palabras clave: Inglés para Fines Específicos (IFE); educación militar; dominio del idioma; métodos mixtos; plan de estudios especializado.

Introduction

Military institutions offer a unique environment characterized by high academic standards and intense physical training. Cadets must balance rigorous academic demands with demanding physical exercise, a combination that can hinder language development. In this context, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) study is essential, equipping cadets with the linguistic skills necessary for future professional demands such as international peacekeeping operations, strategic missions, and intercultural cooperation. However, EFL implementation in military contexts faces significant challenges, including insufficient resources, exhaustion from intense training, and limited classroom interaction time (Nguyen & Bygate, 2020). These factors impede effective English language acquisition, yet research addressing these specific challenges in military contexts remains scarce (Chen & Li, 2010).

While there is a growing recognition of the benefits of studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL), systematic research on adapting EFL practices to the specific constraints of military education remains limited. Studies on the effectiveness of contextualized learning in EFL have primarily focused on civilian professions, leaving a research gap regarding the applicability of this technique in military contexts (Chen & Li, 2010; Flowerdew, 2013; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). This gap highlights the need for further research into how experiential learning approaches can be effectively applied to military circumstances, as practical language acquisition is central to cadets' professional duties and obligations (Basturkmen, 2010). The alignment of educational materials with cadets' real-world experiences is an important factor to assess. Research indicates that relevant and practical learning materials significantly improve engagement and language retention (Flowerdew, 2013; Gilmore, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). For military students, this may involve incorporating operational vocabulary, command procedures, and mission-specific scenarios into English classes. However, the impact of this contextualization on motivation

and learning outcomes remains unclear. While several studies have examined motivational components of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), there is a notable lack of research directly addressing motivation within military education. Cadets are often driven by extrinsic goals such as professional advancement, but cultivating intrinsic motivation through engaging and relevant material is equally vital (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Macaro, 2018). Understanding how these driving forces interact with the demands of academic and physical training is key to developing effective ESP techniques.

This study addressed these gaps by evaluating how the introduction of military-specific material into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction affects cadets' language competence and motivation. The research utilized a mixed-methods approach, merging quantitative assessments (i.e., pre- and post-tests) with qualitative data acquired through interviews and focus groups. The study was conducted at the Tcrn. Lauro Guerrero Military High School in Loja, Ecuador, with a sample of 25 cadets aged 17 to 20. The overarching question guiding this study was: How can ESP strategies be effectively applied in military schools under challenging conditions to improve cadets' English proficiency and motivation? To address this, the research investigated the primary impediments to English language learning in military schools, cadets' perceptions of motivational factors in ESP education, and the impact of incorporating military-specific information on language acquisition. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is founded on language acquisition theories that prioritize connecting education with the distinct learning goals of students. Needs analysis, a cornerstone of ESP, has been thoroughly investigated by Basturkmen (2010), who argues that recognizing students' professional or academic needs is vital to constructing effective courses. This approach aligns with constructivist learning theories, which emphasize the relevance of context in facilitating meaningful learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Addressing these gaps, this study evaluated the impact of integrating military-specific content into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction on cadets' language competence and motivation. Employing a mixed-methods design, the research combined quantitative assessments (i.e., pre- and post-tests) with qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus groups. The study was conducted at the Tcrn. Lauro Guerrero Military High School in Loja, Ecuador, with 25 cadets aged 17 to 20. This study aimed to answer the following overarching question: How can ESP strategies be effectively implemented in military schools facing challenging conditions to enhance cadets' English proficiency and motivation? To this end, the research explored the main obstacles to English language learning in military schools, cadets' views on motivational elements in ESP education, and the effects of incorporating military-related content on language acquisition. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is founded on language acquisition theories that emphasize the necessity of customizing education to align with individuals' particular learning goals. A central aspect of ESP, needs analysis, has been extensively studied by Basturkmen (2010), who asserts that identifying students' professional or academic needs is crucial for developing effective curricula. This aligns with constructivist learning theories, which underscore the role of context in promoting meaningful learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Domain-specific learning is also relevant, asserting that language is best acquired when utilized to comprehend ESP in a military context. Ellis (2003), highlighted task-based language teaching (TBLT), where classroom re-enactments simulate real-life exposure to the target language. In military training environments, verbal competency impacts operational effectiveness, making these techniques particularly significant (Macaro, 2018). Two important theories related to ESP are discussed below. Krashen's (1985), Input Hypothesis states that comprehension is crucial for language acquisition. In a military context, this theory is implemented using authentic but simplified materials that increase in complexity as learning progresses. Another significant approach, the Learner-Centered approach, established by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), emphasizes that training should adapt to meet learners' developing requirements and their individual working situations.

Motivation theory is equally relevant to ESP. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), studied how learners' motivational orientations affect language acquisition. In military ESP programs, cadets often rely on extrinsic motivators, such as professional progress or promotions. Nevertheless, fostering intrinsic motivation by presenting relevant and engaging content is equally vital (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). Developing intercultural communicative competence is another critical component for military learners who operate in international environments (Byram, 1997). In discussions on English as a lingua franca in professional contexts, Kirkpatrick (2012), also emphasizes the necessity of balancing language proficiency and cultural awareness. In recent years, there has been a significant growth in the scope of research on English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly in professional and institutional contexts, including the military. Therefore, the objective of this research is to identify effective methods for adapting ESP courses to the specific needs of the professionals who take them, while considering fundamental principles of language acquisition.

Needs Analysis and ESP Design

Empirical research has shown the essential importance of requirements analysis in the development of effective English for Specific Purposes courses. For instance, research involving Korean naval officers utilized extensive needs analysis to design English language training tailored to their specific operational requirements, resulting in enhanced communication skills relevant to their tasks (Kim, 2013). Similarly, Lin (2013), explored the English demands of Taiwanese university students in technology domains, leading to individualized course designs that increased learner engagement and outcomes. In military contexts, needs analysis has proven pivotal; for example, a study at the Faculty of Public and Environmental Health at the University of Khartoum employed questionnaires and interviews to identify students' English language needs, resulting in more targeted ESP instruction. These studies demonstrate the significance of aligning instructional content with learners' unique professional settings to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of ESP programs.

Task-Based Learning and ESP

Since 2000, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a pivotal methodology in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), especially in scenarios demanding practical implementation. Ellis (2003) and Skehan (2009), posited that TBLT enhances language acquisition by engaging learners in real-world tasks. In military ESP programs, this method has been used to simulate scenarios such as radio communication, map reading, and equipment handling (Macaro, 2018). While beneficial, studies by Carless (2012) and East (2021), identified challenges in applying TBLT in resource-constrained settings, such as military schools with limited teaching time. Moreover, a scoping review by Chen (2024), of 30 years of research in military English language education highlighted the application of TBLT in military contexts, stressing its effectiveness in engaging learners in real-world tasks that mirror their professional responsibilities. These findings support the integration of TBLT into ESP programs to facilitate practical language use.

Motivation in Military ESP

Motivational studies have illuminated the factors influencing language acquisition in military environments. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), asserted that learner motivation is shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic elements. In military settings, extrinsic motivation often stems from career advancement opportunities, as noted by Rahman and Pandian (2018). However, cultivating intrinsic motivation through engaging and contextually relevant content remains a challenge. Studies by Lamb (2017) and Khan (2020), have emphasized the value of gamified learning and collaborative assignments in sustaining learners' interest and engagement.

Context-Based Learning and Authentic Materials

The effective usage of genuine resources in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching has been a key area of research. As Gilmore (2007), stated, the use of authentic materials helps learners apply the language learned in real-life situations. In military education, this includes materials such as tactical guides, mission after-action reviews, and operation orders. However, as noted by Basturkmen (2010), the creation of such materials requires significant teacher expertise and institutional support. Similarly, a study by Kaur et al. (2019), emphasized that the type of English required by military personnel falls along the EGP-ESP continuum, prompting needs analysis to identify their specific language requirements. These findings underscore the necessity of aligning instructional content with learners' professional contexts to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of ESP programs.

Institutional Challenges

Institutional support is essential for the efficacy of English for Specific Purposes programs in military schools. According to Shrestha and Coffin (2012), teacher training is key to ensuring that teachers possess the necessary knowledge to adapt teaching and learning materials to meet learners' needs. Kirkpatrick (2021), also pointed out that administrative support and resource allocation can address the challenges of limited teaching time and heavy workload among cadets. However, there is no comprehensive understanding of how institutional frameworks can be best adapted for language learning in the military.

Interactive Methods in Military English Teaching

The study by Kochetkov and Kochetkova (2023), analyzes the effectiveness of interactive training approaches in enhancing English language competency among military personnel. The authors explore several methodologies, including the Case Method, Business Game Method, Brainstorming, and the Problem Method, emphasizing the need of active participation and engagement in the learning process. They suggest that these participatory methods develop critical thinking and the practical application of language skills, which are vital in military contexts. The implementation of these methods has been shown to foster a collaborative atmosphere, enhance learners' independence and self-confidence, overcome language barriers, and encourage active participation from all students. Additionally, these strategies contribute to the expansion of knowledge and skills, preparing military personnel for real-world communication challenges.

Teaching English Military Terminology in Military Classes

Bogusz (2017), examined the integration of military-specific English vocabulary into the curriculum of uniformed classes within Polish secondary schools in his article, "Teaching English Military Terminology in Military Classes". The Polish Air Force Academy (PAFA) program addresses the growing interest in military careers among youth while simultaneously strengthening national defense education. Bogusz argued that integrating military terminology into English education provides dual benefits: it enhances military readiness and cultivates respect for national symbols and traditions. The study developed a specialized syllabus covering military terminology for basic vocabulary, successfully reaching over 80% of students from participating schools. Data indicated that this methodology yielded substantial improvements in the understanding of military terminology, thereby enhancing student preparedness for military duty.

Bogusz concluded that successful English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs in military contexts require a holistic approach incorporating needs analysis, context-based learning, task-based learning, motivational strategies, institutional support, and interactive methods. By addressing the specific needs and challenges of military learners, such approaches can effectively enhance language proficiency and prepare them for success in their professional roles.

Methodology

Study Design

This study utilized a detailed sequential mixed methods design to fulfill the research objectives and attain a thorough comprehension of the research topics. It began with a quantitative phase that analyzed the influence of instructional practices on cadets' English language understanding. This was followed by a qualitative phase, consisting of interviews and focus group discussions, that explored cadets' attitudes and the challenges they experienced. The integration of mixed methods allowed for the convergence of numerical data and qualitative insights, providing a multi-faceted perspective on the research topic. This approach combined personal experiences with statistical data, ensuring a thorough examination of the research subject (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Techniques and Instruments

Quantitative Techniques: A simulated version of the Cambridge B2 First (FCE) exam, aligned with the official test's scoring scale, was administered to assess language skills before and after the intervention. The Reading and Writing sections evaluated the ability to interpret and generate mission reports and other documentation. The Listening and Speaking sections assessed real-time communication skills essential for issuing commands and participating in briefings.

The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB; Gardner, 1985) was adapted for military contexts to assess cadets' attitudes and motivation toward learning English. The modified AMTB included military-specific questions that explored opportunities for advancement, the need for English skills in reading technical manuals, and experience with foreign peacekeeping operations. These modifications ensured the instrument's relevance to the professional and operational challenges faced by cadets. New items addressed military cadets' motivational factors, including statements such as "English proficiency will improve my chances of promotion in the military" and "I need English to understand technical manuals for modern military equipment." Additionally, questions like "I use available technological resources to improve my English" focused on the use of modern learning tools in a military setting, providing deeper insight into cadets' engagement with English language learning in their professional context.

Qualitative Techniques: Focus groups and semi-structured interviews were employed to collect cadets' comprehensive insights about certain language activities and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching approaches. These techniques were selected for their capacity to provide rich and nuanced information about participants' experiences.

Participants and Sample

The study included 28 cadets from the "Tcrn. Lauro Guerrero" military high school in Loja, aged 17 to 20 years, with a basic to intermediate level of English proficiency. Participants

were young adults selected using a convenience sampling procedure based on their availability, willingness to participate, and informed consent.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants in this study were required to be actively enrolled cadets in a military academy. Regarding language skills, only cadets with a basic or intermediate level of English proficiency (Common European Framework of Reference [CEFR] level A1 or higher) were deemed eligible. To determine their English proficiency, all participants completed a simulated version of the Cambridge B2 First (FCE) exam, which followed the same scoring scale as the official test. This simulation evaluated their listening, speaking, reading, and writing competencies in accordance with the CEFR system. Despite the fact that the assessment was not an official Cambridge English certification, it was designed to match the format and difficulty level of the B2 First exam, ensuring an accurate assessment of cadets' proficiency. Additionally, participants were required to indicate their willingness to fully engage throughout the duration of the study.

Exclusion Criteria

Cadets who were unable to complete the intervention due to academic underperformance or medical treatments were excluded from participation. Furthermore, individuals demonstrating advanced English proficiency were ineligible, as the intervention was designed for learners at a basic or intermediate level. The same simulated Cambridge B2 First (FCE) exam used for the inclusion criteria was also utilized to determine whether participants met the exclusion criteria. A score above a predetermined threshold on the simulated FCE exam resulted in exclusion from the study.

Variables

The independent variable in this study was the language training intervention, a structured program designed to enhance cadets' English skills. This intervention encompassed a comprehensive approach, operationalized through three key components: specific curriculum content (topics, vocabulary, and grammar points tailored to military contexts), diverse instructional resources (textbooks, authentic military texts, audio-visual aids, and online tools), and varied pedagogical strategies (task-based learning, communicative activities simulating military scenarios, and collaborative projects).

The effectiveness of the language training intervention was evaluated through two dependent variables: English language proficiency and communication effectiveness in professional military contexts. English language proficiency, reflecting cadets' overall ability to use English effectively, was measured quantitatively using scores on the simulated Cambridge B2 First (FCE) exam, administered pre- and post-intervention to assess reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.

Communication effectiveness, representing cadets' ability to communicate effectively in military-specific scenarios, was assessed qualitatively through thematic analysis of interview and focus group data, focusing on cadets' self-reported experiences and perceptions of their communication skills in military-related tasks.

Type of Data Analysis

Paired t-tests were employed to compare pretest and posttest findings, focusing on improvements in English proficiency. Thematic analysis of qualitative data revealed repeating themes, challenges, and effective techniques, offering profound insights into the cadets' learning experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Each participant signed a consent form ensuring voluntary participation and confidential data handling. All qualitative reports protect participant identities through the use of pseudonyms. Data will be stored securely and archived for five years in accordance with institutional data control standards.

Results

The results of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and English proficiency tests revealed significant trends in cadets' attitudes, motivation, and language acquisition. To quantify changes in language proficiency, quantitative data from pre- and post-tests were analyzed using paired t-tests. The examination results indicated enhancements in all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, subsequent to the intervention. Qualitative findings were derived from thematic coding of AMTB responses and interview data, providing valuable insights into cadets' reasons for learning English, the challenges they encountered, and the perceived impact of military-related content on their language mastery. The integration of quantitative and qualitative information provides a thorough comprehension of the cadets' advancement and the determinants affecting their language acquisition.

A total of 28 cadets from "Tcrn. Lauro Guerrero" Military High School participated in the study. For effective analysis, their responses were organized into three key areas: (1) motivation and attitudes toward English language learning, (2) identified challenges in acquiring English, and (3) the impact of military-related content on language proficiency.

Motivation and Attitudes

The responses on the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) reveal a notable correlation between cadets' perception of English as valuable for career advancement and international engagement and their overall motivation in the discipline (see Table 1). Responses were analyzed using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Promotion Opportunities: a substantial number of cadets indicated agreement regarding the link between English proficiency and promotion prospects. Specifically, 17 cadets strongly agreed (5), and 8 agreed (4) that acquiring English would increase their chances of military promotions. Overall, 89% of cadets (25 out of 28) perceived English as essential for career growth within the military.

International Missions: a significant proportion of cadets also expressed agreement concerning the importance of English for international missions. Thirteen cadets strongly agreed (5), and 13 agreed (4) that English is necessary for participation in international peacekeeping operations, suggesting a strong intrinsic motivation to use English in global missions.

Professional Profile: the vast majority of cadets believe that learning English will enhance their professional standing. Twenty-one cadets strongly agreed (5) and 6 agreed (4) with this sentiment, representing 96% of the cadets.

Table 1. Cadets' Motivation Toward English Learning

Motivation Statement	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
English will improve my chances of promotion.	17	8	2	0	1
I need English for international peacekeeping missions.	13	13	2	0	0
English will enhance my professional profile.	21	6	0	0	1

Source: own elaboration

Data presented in Table 1 were collected using a modified version of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), tailored specifically for military cadets. This instrument assessed cadets' perceptions of English as a tool for career advancement, participation in international peacekeeping missions, and professional development. Responses were analyzed using a Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) to evaluate cadets' motivation and attitudes toward studying English.

Identified Challenges

Cadets identified several challenges in their language learning process. Data presented in this section were gathered using the modified Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), customized for military cadets. This modified AMTB examined cadets' motives, attitudes, and the challenges they experience learning English within the military context. The stated challenges, as shown in Table 2, demonstrate the impact of both the demanding military environment and psychological variables on their ability to effectively engage with language learning.

Physical Fatigue and Schedule Constraints: a majority of cadets reported that physical and academic demands hindered their capacity to learn English. Specifically, 17 cadets strongly agreed (5) and 6 agreed (4) with this statement. Conversely, 3 cadets disagreed (2), and 2 strongly disagreed (1) with the statement, indicating they did not find time and energy to be significant barriers.

Speaking Anxiety: responses concerning anxiety related to speaking English in front of superiors were mixed. Eleven cadets were neutral (3), while 10 agreed (4) that they experience anxiety when speaking English publicly. Conversely, 4 cadets disagreed (2) and 3 strongly disagreed (1) with the statement about anxiety.

Use of Technological Resources: a significant number of cadets indicated that they leverage available technology to improve their English. Fifteen cadets strongly agreed (5) and 11 agreed (4) that they use technological resources (e.g., videos, books, and online platforms).

Table 2. Challenges Faced by Cadets in Learning English

Challenge	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)
Physical fatigue and schedule constraints	17	6	0	3	2
Speaking anxiety	0	6	17	2	3
Use of technological resources	15	11	2	0	0

Source: own elaboration

Data presented in Table 2 were acquired using the modified Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), specifically tailored for military cadets. The instrument assessed cadets' perceptions of challenges encountered in learning English, including physical fatigue, speaking anxiety, and the utilization of technological resources.

Impact of Military-Related Content on Language Proficiency

Incorporating military subjects into English classes aims to enhance cadet engagement through direct application between language learning and military operational experiences. The inclusion of military content (e.g., tactical terminology, radio communications, and mission briefings) in English classroom teaching demonstrates its influence on cadet performance throughout their learning experience. To examine this impact, proficiency levels were measured before and after an intervention in which conventional English classes were replaced with military-related content. Results, presented in Table 3, indicate a significant improvement in cadets' language skills, supporting the need for contextualized teaching approaches.

Pre-Test Results: Initially, 17 cadets scored below 140, placing them at the A1–A2 level. The remaining 11 cadets scored between 140 and 159, equivalent to the B1 level. No cadets scored within the B2 range before the intervention.

Post-Test Results: Following the intervention, 17 cadets achieved scores between 140 and 159 (B1 level), and 3 cadets improved to 160 or higher (B2 level). The number of cadets scoring below 140 (A1–A2) decreased to 8.

Table 3. Impact of Military-Specific Content on English Proficiency

Proficiency Level (FCE)	Range of scores	Pre-Test (%)	Number of Cadets	Post-Test (%)	Number of Cadets
Basic (A1-A2)	Below 140	60%	17	28%	8
Intermediate (B1)	140-159	40%	11	61%	17
Upper-Intermediate (B2)	160 or higher	0%	0	11%	3

Source: own elaboration

Language proficiency was assessed using a simulated version of the Cambridge English Scale before and after the intervention, in which general English sessions were replaced with military-focused content. The results indicate that contextualized instruction significantly enhanced cadets' competence. While 17 cadets initially scored below 140 (A1–A2), following the intervention, 20 cadets achieved at least a B1 or B2 level, illustrating the effectiveness of a military-oriented curriculum.

Discussion

This study's findings provide essential insights into the obstacles and advantages of implementing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction in military academies. While cadets recognize the value of English proficiency for career advancement and international assignments, they face significant challenges, including physical fatigue, time constraints, and anxiety about speaking in formal contexts.

A key finding is that incorporating military-related content, such as tactical terminology, radio communication exercises, and mission briefings, significantly increased cadet engagement and learning outcomes. Cadets demonstrated greater proficiency in ESP content relevant to their military responsibilities (e.g., technical language, communication skills) compared to general language tasks. This supports the principle that contextualized learning, where knowledge is directly applicable to career goals, enhances both motivation and retention. Nevertheless, although the data indicate significant improvements in language proficiency, additional research is necessary to comprehensively assess the long-term effects of military-specific training on cadets' operational efficacy.

Motivation and attitudes emerged as central factors in cadets' language learning experiences. Although many recognize the professional benefits of English, some express reluctance toward sustained engagement in ESP due to the demanding nature of military training. Cadets reported difficulty maintaining consistent engagement with the ESP curriculum, citing the cognitive strain imposed by competing military and academic demands. To mitigate this, targeted interventions focused on enhancing motivation through real-world applications and goal-oriented tasks may foster long-term commitment and competence (Ellis, 2008). Furthermore, while the structured environment of military education can promote concentration, it may also limit opportunities for autonomous learning and self-motivation. This cognitive strain and mental fatigue can further diminish motivation for language learning (Swain & Lapkin, 2001). Addressing these issues requires innovative approaches, such as integrating language practice into routine military activities and utilizing gamified learning strategies to enhance engagement. Prior research also suggests that incorporating intrinsic motivational techniques, emphasizing personal and professional rewards, can improve long-term engagement (Brown, 2007). Encouraging cadets to set personal language goals and rewarding achievements may cultivate a sense of progress and ownership in their language learning journey.

Cadets also reported experiencing anxiety about speaking English in front of superiors, with approximately one-third expressing significant apprehension. While speaking practice is a common focus in ESL training, this study suggests that language programs should incorporate confidence-building activities, such as role-playing and peer assessments, to address these psychological barriers (Swain & Lapkin, 2001). These barriers can substantially impede effective communication in professional military environments (Brown, 2007).

Despite the progress made in understanding ESP in military settings, several gaps persist. First, additional long-term studies are required to evaluate the enduring effects of ESP programs on cadets' professional success. Second, there is a need for empirical investigations exploring the relationships between motivation, authentic materials, and task-based teaching specifically within the military context. Finally, additional research should examine how factors such as physical fatigue and competing responsibilities influence language learning among cadets. These areas of inquiry will benefit from integrating perspectives from linguistics, education, and military science.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence supporting the successful application of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) strategies in military schools while also highlighting key challenges. The research demonstrated that physical fatigue, limited study time due to competing military and academic duties, and speaking anxiety serve as primary barriers to English language acquisition among cadets. These factors directly impact their engagement and progress in learning English. However, the study also confirmed that cadets recognize the importance of English for their military careers, exhibiting high levels of motivation when learning is directly connected to their professional context. Results indicated that integrating military-specific content into English lessons significantly improves language proficiency and engagement. Specifically, post-test results showed an increase in the number of cadets reaching intermediate and upper-intermediate levels, reinforcing the effectiveness of a contextualized ESP curriculum. These findings validate the need for tailored language instruction that aligns with the operational realities of military personnel.

This study contributes to the expanding body of research on English for Specific Purposes in military education by providing empirical evidence regarding the benefits of contextualized learning. While previous studies have emphasized the role of motivation and real-world application, this research demonstrates measurable improvements in language skills when ESP programs are designed to meet cadets' specific needs. The study's findings underscore the necessity of refining ESP curricula to ensure that language instruction remains practical, relevant, and aligned with military objectives.

Notwithstanding these contributions, the study is constrained by its very small sample size and brief intervention duration. Future research should investigate long-term proficiency retention and assess the effectiveness of digital learning tools in supporting ESP instruction. Additionally, exploring the role of self-directed learning strategies within military environments could yield valuable insights into optimizing language acquisition for cadets. Ultimately, this study reinforces the importance of implementing structured and evidence-based ESP programs in military institutions. As international military collaboration continues to expand, equipping cadets with strong English language skills remains a priority. Strengthening ESP programs with targeted strategies will enhance communication, operational efficiency, and professional development within military education.

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