

WHY SHOULD I STUDY IN ENGLISH? STUDENTS' PERCEPTION AND MOTIVATION

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Abstract. *In the context of globalized society, the education offer seeks to prepare young people to adapt as best as possible to the demands of the labour market. The best possible integration of young people into the labour market takes into account both opportunities on it and important decisions that they make to increase their chances of a good job. In an internationalized environment, the chances of a good job increase if the employee has a good knowledge of the concepts in an international language. The specialized literature offers various analyses and approaches regarding the motivation of young people to choose to access university studies in a second language. In order to find out what are the students' motivations for choosing to study business administration in English, we conducted 13 interviews with first year bachelor students from the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the University of Oradea. In our research, through semi-structured interviews applied to first year students who study in English, we aimed to highlight their opinion on the following topics: choosing the program in English, evaluating the educational offer or expectations related to the workplace and career opportunities. The students' answers are a good indicator of the perceptions regarding the motivation to choose to study in English. The motivation to study in English starts from the knowledge of the English language and extends to the opportunities that the study of business administration in English offers in relation to the future career. They are eager to find a job in Romania, but they will not refuse an opportunity in another country, if such an opportunity arises. Students' motivations and perceptions regarding education are an important indicator to have a more realistic picture of their expectations of the education offer as well as their integration and success on the labour market. In our future analyses regarding students' perceptions of the choice of studies, we will seek to expand the analyses both by specializations and by years and level of studies.*

Key words: business studies, second language, study opportunities, students' perception, labour market.

Jel codes: A11, A22, F66, I23, J24.

Introduction

Internationalization is one of the main priorities of universities (Roga, R., Inga Lapiņa, I., Mürsepp, P., 2015), an integral part of their strategies, thus contributing to the development of study programs in English. Higher education is an important source of income in many countries of the world. If until recently, the top destination countries of international students (Ahmad, A.B., Shah, M., 2018) were the USA, Great Britain, France and Australia and countries from which the most international students are recruited were countries from Asia, China or India, now a new trend is emerging. International students choose universities in China. Studies on the motivation of international students choosing to study in China are related to the distinctiveness of the Chinese language, the rise of the country's universities in global rankings, and the country's economic growth.

Factors determining learning in a foreign language

Learning motivation (Wang, J. N., 2016) in a foreign language has been an important topic of scientific analysis for the past 20 years. Studies on this topic have brought clarity to many aspects. The motivation to learn business in English increases (Wang, J. N., 2016), according to the linguistic pedagogy approach, and by the fact that learning English is done through collaboration and meetings, presentation and problem solving (Kumisbayeva, M., 2013). Hung, N.T.(2021). Qualitative and quantitative studies, which analyse the factors and motivations of international students to attend university and postgraduate courses in Asia or Taiwan, show that students' motivations and career planning are significantly correlated, both factors directly affecting the decision-making process. Mazzarol, T. and Soutar, G.N. (2002) describe a push-pull model of students choice to study abroad. The studies analysed show us that, in destinations such as Indonesia, Taiwan, China or India, the economic and social reasons in the country of origin are factors that lead students to choose studies abroad. They choose the most suitable country for them based on various attractive factors.

Building on extensive qualitative and quantitative analyses of the factors that determine international students' choice to study in the US, Judith Eder, Wayne W. Smith & Robert E. Pitts (2010) identify three driving factors (personal growth, language and career) and three pull factors (faculty details, geographical factors, and US culture). Empirical studies and analyses (Barus, I., & Simanjuntak, M., 2020) show that students perceive learning business concepts in English through a continuous repetition exercise structured on elements such as: language, usefulness, clarity, pleasure, efficiency, comfort and content. Haoda Sun & John T.E. Richardson (2016) show that there is a causal relationship between variations in their perception of the academic environment and variations in their learning behaviour that influence students' motivation to choose to study in English. Studying abroad is becoming more and more common. According to Presley, A., Datha Damron-Martinez & Lin Zhang (2010) attitude, perceived behavioural control and subjective norms are significant predictors of students' intention to pursue English language programs. According to Hovdhaugen E., Wiers-Jenssen, J., (2023), students' motivation to study in another country has also been analysed from the perspective of gender, social origin, field of study and mobility capital.

For young Europeans who enrol in higher education programs, studying in another country is an option they can easily use through Erasmus programs (Teichler, U. (2004). Despite some socio-economic barriers that can make access to Erasmus type mobilities to be more restrictive (Otero, M.S., 2008), adjustments are constantly made so that the offer addresses as many students as possible interested in the opportunity. Studies conducted with former Erasmus students show that they do not excel later through higher income or social status at the beginning of the career. Erasmus mobility in a European country remains (Teichler, U., & Janson, K., 2007) a valued professional experience for students from Central and Eastern European countries. The benefits that are brought to students by the Erasmus mobilities can be measured, as Cuzzocrea, V., Krzaklewska, (2023) have also achieved, by the number of mobilities completed by the student.

So, we have a topic of interest for the academic community that will continue to be approached from various angles of analysis. For some countries, the subject is newer, as it is for our country. Seeking to have a more comprehensive picture of our subject of investigation, we consider appropriate to analyse a number of 285 articles from webofscience.com that have as their topic *business learning in second language*. Using the VOS viewer bibliometrics software, with the article's title and abstract as analysis content, the results (Figure 1) are grouped into three large cluster of concepts.

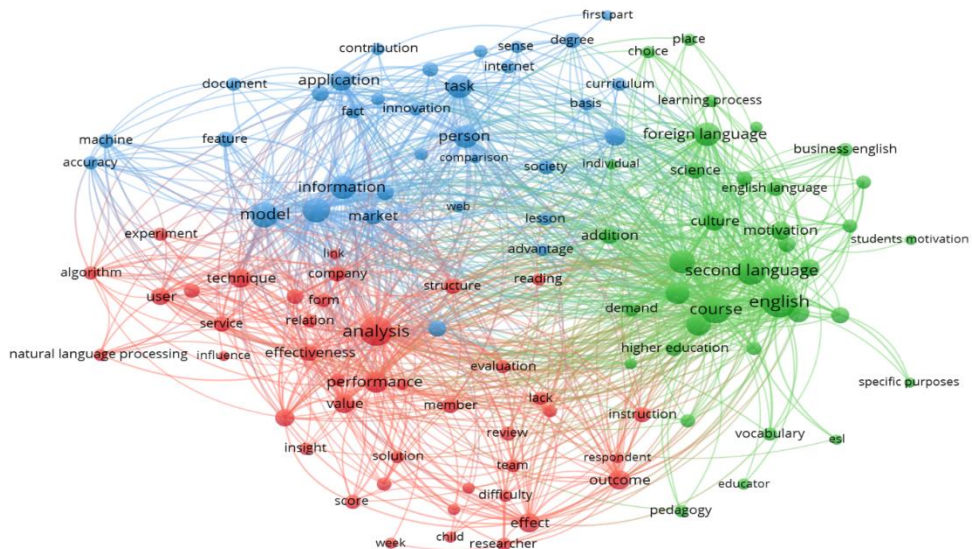


Figure 1. Concepts representation

Source: Our analysis in VOS viewer

The concepts grouped in the three clusters represent, on the one hand, the multitude of notions used in the articles that deal with the subject of business learning in a second language, and on the other hand, their grouping into clusters allows us to understand the context in which these concepts are used. The frequency with which these notions are used is also represented by the size of the point. The cluster which is represented by the green colour has concepts that come to describe the learning context through notions such as: English, course, second language, science, foreign language, higher education, vocabulary, culture, motivation, addition, business English or pedagogy. The second cluster, which is represented by the colour blue, groups concepts such as: information, model, task, market, application, fact, innovation, lesson, advantage, contribution, internet, machine or accuracy. In the third cluster, represented by red colour, we may find the following concepts: analysis, reading, performance, effect, difficulty, researcher, member, instruction, value, technique, outcome, natural language processing. Although the described clusters illustrate the frequency of various concepts, the fact that they are grouped into three categories helps us understand in which combination they are used in scientific articles. Thus, in the green cluster we find grouped notions that describe the subject, respectively learning in the second language, the second cluster includes elements that describe extrinsic factors of learning and the red cluster follows intrinsic characteristics of learning.

The purpose of our research is to analyse the factors that influence our students' choice to study business in English.

Methodology

This study represents the quantitative and qualitative results of an analysis of semi-structured interview, having as a target group the first-year students, Bachelor's degree of the Faculty of Economics, at Business Administration program in English. The interview was a face-to-face one and it lasted for approximately 30 minutes. The questions took into consideration the reasons for choosing the program in English, the assessment of the learning process and the expectations regarding the students' careers. The interviews were analysed through QNR Nvivo and Gephi softs.

The participants selected in our sample of analysis were chosen by means of a theoretical sampling. In the process of information gathering we applied the rule of theoretical saturation in qualitative research (Sanders et al 2018); this rule of qualitative research is not subject to the requirements of statistical representation, the sample being considered enough when the interviews do not add anything else to the level of information.

The interview guide included several subjects: English language, choice and use, educational content, work place. The questions are related to every theme and they can be found in the table below (Table1):

Table 1. Themes and questions of the interview

Theme	Question
The choice of the program in English	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why did you choose the program in English? 2. Did you take into consideration choosing another faculty? 3. Did you take into consideration to attend another specialization's courses at the Faculty of Economics?
The assessment of the educational offer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The courses offered by the faculty meet your expectations? Yes/No. Give reasons. 2. Did you attend activities or scholarships (e.g. Erasmus+) in which you practiced communication and learning in another language? If yes, give details of the context. 3. Do you have life contexts in which you communicate in English, some other ones than at the courses of the faculty?
Expectations regarding career opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will you search or are you searching for a place of work in the field of your degree? 2. Do you think that your current job is more prestigious, better paid and more interesting due to the graduated program in English? 3. Do you want to work in Romania? Yes. No. Give reasons.

Q1. Why did you choose the program in English?

The respondents talk about the choice of studying in English in terms of opportunity and perspective. If some of them underline the idea that the choice of studying in English is due to the fact that they know English, we also have the respondents who see in attending the program in English an advantage that will help them in the labour market. Thus, a student says: 'I have chosen to study Economics in English because I am sure that it will offer me more opportunities in the future but also because I feel that I need to take advantage of the knowledge in English that I have accumulated during high-school years.'

The opportunity that the students see in the fact that they already master the English language is expressed by a student who says 'The reason for my choice to study in English is the fact that I wanted to develop my communication and learning abilities in this language.' Or, another student says 'I have chosen to study in English because I wanted to have one more challenge, because to study in Romanian seems

very easy to me and because studying in English, I can have more opportunities in the future.'

On the other hand, the majority of students perceive this opportunity of studying business in English as a cumulative advantage, as an opportunity and perspective. 'I have chosen the program in English because I have always liked to study in a foreign language and practice it. I also have a Cambridge certificate in English and I want to take advantage of it. Studying in a foreign language makes me feel like I study abroad.' Another student says that 'The reason for choosing this program is the fact that I have always liked foreign languages, especially English. Moreover, I wanted to take advantage of my certificate in English and to enlarge my horizon regarding a future work place, maybe abroad.' Another student considers that for the large number of advantages, among which he mentions the practicing of the English language, possible connection with companies and people from other countries and the variety of the possible work places.

Q2. Did you take into consideration choosing another faculty?

A significant proportion of the students say that they have also considered the choice of another faculty. Thus, an answer is: 'Yes, I have considered going to the Faculty of History', or 'Yes, until the 12th grade I wanted to study Informatics but I changed my path because I considered that it was not what I wanted to do in life'. On the other hand, the students who did not take into consideration another faculty said that 'No, this was the first faculty I was thinking about since I was in high school'. The program in English is appreciated by the students in comparison with another specialization which is taught in Romanian'. I am enrolled at another program in Romanian, too, at the Faculty of Economics, Finance banks but I like more AAE program'.

Q3. Did you take into consideration enrolling to other courses, at another program, in the Faculty of Economics?

In the majority of cases the students say that they did not take into consideration enrolling to the courses of another specialization in the faculty. Their choice was defined by a student, as follows: 'I didn't think of enrolling to another program since I felt that this program is exactly what I need for my future career.'

Q4. Do the courses offered by the faculty meet your expectations? Yes/No. Give reasons.

Regarding the topic of assessing the program in English, the answers are complex and varied answers. The courses are appreciated regarding the way they are taught but also regarding their content. 'I consider that the majority of the teachers have good intentions and they are willing to give valuable advice to the students, The courses are interesting and different from the ones which were taught in high school'. Their expectations are regarding the practical part of the courses and the applicability of the theoretical notions that they learn. They expressed these appreciations as follows: 'The courses offered by the faculty are according to my expectations so far. In the future, meaning in the 2nd and 3rd year, I would like to have more practical

courses. Other students said that 'I would like the courses and the activities in the faculty to be more practical ones, because my program is named Business Administration and here, we learn more how to be an employee, rather than how to run a business of your own'.

The students mention some aspects that could be improved, referring to the teaching method, the aspects regarding the teachers' knowledge of English and the actuality of the didactic content. 'Yes, the courses are good. The syllabus of the courses and seminars are in concordance and they seem to be suitable', or 'As far as I am concerned, the content of the courses is very good but their presentation could be changed a little bit'. Another student said 'No, I consider that the majority of subjects are old-fashioned - there is no correlation between the events/the changes of the present and the courses. I consider that there is a need to study the way the Small and Medium-size Enterprises function / the management authorities', and 'No, I feel the need of more applicability' or 'Yes, I would like some teachers to speak better English than they do'.

Q5. Did you attend activities or scholarships (e.g. Erasmus+) in which you practiced communication and learning in another language? If yes, give details on the context.

Although only three of thirteen interviewed students say that they had a learning experience in another country, 'I had the opportunity of spending three weeks in Cyprus, part of an Erasmus program', but also, 'Yes, I attended an exchange program with a school in Germany', they express the interest and desire of having this type of experience 'I would like to attend a future Erasmus program'.

Q6. Do you have context in which you communicate in English, others than the courses of the faculty?

The communicational contexts in English are diverse and frequent. Communication in English is found even in the family, according to what a student says 'Yes, I practice English a lot. I attended Olympiads and I took the Cambridge exams. My mother and my grandmother are teachers of English so I practice my English a lot' or another student mentions 'Yes, I communicate in another language every day, more exactly in English; in different contexts, with different people, some of them being friends or even family members'.

Another context described by the interviewed students is connected to the communication with the foreign Erasmus students. 'Yes, with an Erasmus student', or 'Yes, with some Erasmus students', but also 'Yes, with a colleague who came from Italy with the Erasmus program'. Some other contexts mentioned by these are connected to their visit abroad or by online gaming 'Yes. I was abroad and I practised my English there' or 'I communicated in English only by means of exercises and video games'.

Q7. Do you want to search for a job in the field of your degree?

The majority of students intend to search for a job in the domain of their degree 'Yes, I search for a job in the field of my degree. I hope that the graduated program (in

English) will represent an advantage in the moment of the interview for a job, in the field of Economics', also another student says that 'I already work in the wanted domain, I want my Bachelor's diploma just in case this becomes a condition at my job. I have chosen first my job and after that the faculty, this is why I don't rely very much on finding a job in accordance with the graduated program. Shortly, It has been a favourable context'.

The ones who consider that they do not want a job in the domain of their degree say that they will use the knowledge they got by attending the graduated program 'No, there is no passion about it. It was a challenge for me and in the same time it was a thing that arouse my curiosity. In the meantime, it is a 'help' for the future job that I want'.

Q8. Do you think that the job you will have will be more prestigious, better paid and more interesting due to the program you graduated in English?

The students have hued answers regarding the prestige of their future job. From their answers we can detect their maturity and realism 'Regardless of the attended program, in Romanian and English, your work will start at the lowest level. Without experience, nobody gives me the deserved salary. I am content with the fact that I start at the lowest level and I hope that the Bachelor's degree will help me at the salary scale' or 'I hope that graduating a program in English will have its advantages in the future. It will perhaps open some new doors, but I can't say that it will bring me more money' but also the potential and the opportunity. 'Yes, it opens the way to more possible jobs not only in Romania but also in other countries.

Q9. Is your desired job in Romania? Yes/No. Give reasons.

The students say that they want to stay in the country for different reasons, because of personal reasons 'Yes, I can't see myself working in another country' to appreciations regarding the job opportunities from the country's economic level of development 'Yes, I want to work in Romania because I think that Romania is the country of all the possibilities', or 'Initially I was thinking of going abroad, being attracted by the salaries but I decided to see how the labour market in Romania is and to gain some experience' or 'Yes, because I consider that in Romania there are a lot more important domains at their beginning, so a new beginning can be successful'. And another student says that 'Yes, because of the fact that Oradea is a continuously developing city and I consider that it has a proper environment for a business in Romania' or 'It depends on the opportunities I will have + the economic situation of the country in that moment. Now I want to be an employee at a foreign employer, but I want to work in the country'.

The respondents also take into consideration the possibility of getting employed abroad in the future. 'Yes. At first, I would like to work here, but later, after graduating, I would like to work abroad, if I have a better offer', or 'Yes, but regardless of this, I wouldn't refuse the opportunity of working abroad at the same ideal job'.

Discussion

In this paper we tried to make a first analysis regarding the motivation of our students to study in English. Starting from the concepts and analysis derived from the literature review, we have grouped our questions addressed to our students into three categories that refer to motivations, perceptions and expectations that students have in relation to their chosen specialization.

Conclusions

A lot of universities, all over the world, have internationalization as an important part of their strategy. The countries that attract a lot of students are those countries which offer interesting programs and job opportunities to future graduates. The motivation of learning in a foreign language (Wang, J. N., 2016) represents an important subject for scientific research that has been going on for more than 20 years. The studies undergone regarding students' motivation (Mazzarol, T. and Soutar, G.N., 2002, Judith Eder, Wayne W. Smith & Robert E. Pitts, 2010) describe a 'push-pull' model for the student's choice to study abroad. By analysing the answers of our students, we wanted to underline the elements that motivate them in their choice of studying business in English.

The students' answers are a good indicator of the perceptions regarding the motivation to choose to study in English. The motivation to study in English starts from the knowledge of the English language and extends to the opportunities that the study of business administration in English offers in relation to the future career. They are eager to find a job in Romania, but they will not refuse an opportunity in another country, if such an opportunity arises. Students' motivations and perceptions regarding education are an important indicator to have a more realistic picture of their expectations of the education offer as well as their integration and success on the labour market. In our future analyses regarding students' perceptions of the choice of studies, we will seek to expand the analyses both by specializations and by years and level of studies.

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