



Exploring Learning Motivation Through Contextual Learning in ESP Classes: A Study on Automotive Engineering Students

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Abstract

This research investigated how contextual learning influences students' motivation and English proficiency in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes for automotive engineering students. Motivated by the disconnect between general English curricula and students' vocational goals, this research applies contextual strategies aligned with the ARCS motivational model—Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. A total of 91 students participated, and data were collected using a validated questionnaire. Statistical analyses, including Cronbach's alpha (0.851), descriptive statistics, t-tests, and multiple regression, were used. The findings reveal that contextual learning significantly enhances students' motivation, especially in the areas of relevance and attention, and contributes positively to their English language performance. Regression analysis showed that motivational factors explained 18.1% of the variance in English proficiency scores, with "Relevance" emerging as the strongest predictor. Students reported higher satisfaction and engagement when learning materials reflected their professional context. This research confirms that integrating real-world content into ESP instruction not only improves student motivation but also supports linguistic outcomes. These results advocate for ESP curricula that are closely tied to industry-related content to better equip vocational students for future professional demands.

Keywords: ARCS Model; Automotive Engineering; Contextual Learning; English for Specific Purposes (ESP); Learning Motivation

1. Introduction

ESP is commonly divided into two main categories: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). EAP focuses on students who need English for their studies in fields such as science, engineering, medicine, or business (Fadlia et al., 2020). EOP, on the other hand, serves professionals and workers who require English for their jobs, such as pilots, nurses, engineers, or hotel staff. The content of ESP courses is closely related to the learners' real-world contexts and tasks, which makes the learning process more relevant and efficient (Kamaruddin et al., 2021).



Furthermore, the main purpose of vocational high school is to teach students practical skills that they can immediately use in the workplace, where everyone works together to reach a common goal by organizing their contributions (Shaidullina et al., 2015). Therefore, knowing deep learning well and thoroughly is more important than ever in tech-related fields like software engineering due to the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Furthermore, these challenges mostly arise from the technical details of the subject, the necessity for computational thinking skills, and the lack of instructional resources.

Subsequently, English language proficiency is increasingly essential in technical and vocational fields, where effective communication supports academic success and professional competence. Moreover, ESP is a customized approach designed to adapt to the constantly changing communication environment (Ningsih et al., 2024). In vocational education, particularly in automotive engineering, students must master specialized terminology and communication skills pertinent to their field to effectively engage with technical manuals, workplace interactions, and industry developments (Ayu et al., 2021). Students often struggle to grasp technical content without great drive; thus, a learning strategy is required that can stimulate their interests and needs (Dörnyei, 2020).

Despite the clear necessity of ESP, motivation among vocational students to learn English often remains low, largely due to the perceived irrelevance of general English curricula to their specialized fields (Smith, 2023). Contextual learning, which integrates language teaching with authentic, discipline-specific content, has been shown to enhance students' motivation by connecting learning to their professional goals and real-world applications (Brown, 2022). This approach aligns with the core principles of ESP, emphasizing needs analysis and material development based on learners' specific academic and occupational contexts (Hutchinson, 2021).



The latest research highlights that automotive engineering students benefit from ESP courses designed around their vocational needs, using authentic materials and interactive methods such as project-based learning and multimedia resources to foster engagement and motivation (Martinez, 2023; Nurhasanah et al., 2024). However, a thorough analysis is essential to ensure that the content aligns with students' current proficiency levels and the demands of their future workplace, thereby enhancing both their language skills and learning motivation.

Moreover, the following subsection emphasizes the importance of motivation in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning, particularly among engineering students (Brett D. Jones, 2013). Hence, instrumental motivation, motivated by a practical career, emerges as a major motivator for students to grasp English. Moreover, competency in English allows students to understand complicated technical documents, collaborate worldwide, and compete in the global employment market. Therefore, when ESP courses are tightly aligned with students' professional goals and include discipline-specific content, intrinsic motivation increases, resulting in more engaged and meaningful learning experiences (Manuel Rodríguez-Peñarroja, 2022).

Additionally, the use of context is essential for connecting language knowledge to real-world applications. Integrating actual materials into the curriculum, such as engineering case studies, instructional guides, and field-specific language, makes ESP instruction more relevant and engaging for students (Belcher, 2009; Dayan Liu, 2010; Nur Fitria, 2023). However, obstacles to applying contextual learning continue. Therefore, these include the difficulty of obtaining relevant, up-to-date resources and a lack of multidisciplinary collaboration, as many ESP educators may lack knowledge in both language instruction and technical subjects, such as engineering (Rahayu et al., 2025; Xueli et al., 2025).

In addition, Recent research has emphasised the significance of contextual learning and its beneficial impact on motivation among students in ESP programs (Bazhutina & Tsepilova,



2024). For instance, CEFR-based training materials designed for the automotive sector have been found to improve integrative competency and student engagement (Humeniuk, 2024; Ronaldo et al., 2020). Moreover, the inclusion of scenarios and field-specific content dramatically improves students' confidence and comprehension of language (Nurchayani et al., 2024; Wijayanti & Nugroho, 2021). Based on the previous study, this research has two research questions namely:

1. How does student perceive the effectiveness of contextual learning for improving their motivation and English language skills in ESP classes?
2. How do contextual learning strategies affect students' proficiency in English language scores in ESP classes?

2. Method

This research employed a quantitative descriptive research design to investigate the level of learning motivation among automotive engineering students in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes that implement contextual learning strategies (Creswell, 2009). The purpose of this design was to obtain an objective and numerical description of students' motivation levels and to provide a statistical overview of their responses without manipulating any variables.

The research population will take place in SMK Negeri 15 Samarinda, with the sample of automotive engineering students in the tenth-grade students' enrolled in ESP courses at a vocational higher education institution. Therefore, the total respondents will be around 90 students who have experienced contextual learning approaches in their ESP classes.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on motivational constructs adapted from the ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction) model of motivation. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended items rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The instrument was validated



through expert judgment and piloted with a small group of similar students to ensure reliability and clarity.

The collected data will be analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including mean scores, percentages, and standard deviations, to determine the overall level of motivation and identify which motivational components were most and least prevalent. The results provided insights into students' motivational tendencies about contextual learning in ESP classes and served as a foundation for potential pedagogical improvements. Furthermore, this research employs a quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between contextual learning approaches and learning motivation among automotive engineering students in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) classes. Moreover, the research utilizes a descriptive approach to measure students' motivation levels and examine how contextual learning strategies influence their engagement and perceived relevance of ESP in their field.

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire undergoes a thorough review process. Content validity is established through evaluation by two ESP instructors and a linguistics researcher, who assess whether the items adequately measure the intended constructs of contextual learning and motivation. Construct validity is further confirmed through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which verifies that the questionnaire items load appropriately on their respective theoretical dimensions. Reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with all scales demonstrating internal consistency values above the 0.70 threshold, indicating strong reliability. Additionally, the pilot test results are analyzed to identify any potential issues with question interpretation or response patterns, allowing for final adjustments before the main data collection phase. These rigorous validation procedures ensure that the collected data accurately reflect the study's key variables and yield trustworthy results for subsequent analysis.



3. Findings And Discussion

3.1 Findings

The study investigates how students perceive the role of contextual learning strategies in fostering their motivation and developing their English language proficiency within ESP classes. To answer this first research question related to the students perceive fostering motivation and developing their English language proficiency, the researcher analyzes it by using Cronbach's alpha, descriptive statistics, and t-test

Based on the Cronbach alpha result, it was found that the reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha (see Table 1) resulted in a coefficient of 0.851, which indicates a high level of internal consistency among the 16 questionnaire items designed to measure the four key indicators of

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha result

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
,851	,851	16

Specifically, the attention items reliably assess the extent to which contextual learning captures and maintains students' focus during learning activities. The relevance items consistently measure students' perceptions of how applicable and meaningful contextual learning is to their real-life needs and professional interests. Similarly, the confidence items accurately reflect students' self-assurance in their ability to perform language tasks as influenced by contextual learning methods. Lastly, the satisfaction items effectively capture students' overall enjoyment and fulfillment derived from the learning process facilitated by contextual learning strategies.

The high reliability coefficient across these diverse yet interrelated indicators confirms that the questionnaire provides a stable and dependable measure of students' motivational



perceptions. Thus, the instrument is suitable for assessing how contextual learning strategies influence the different aspects of student motivation in ESP settings.

Moreover, to explore students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of contextual learning in enhancing their motivation in ESP classes, a one-sample t-test (see Table 2) was conducted on four indicators of motivation: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. The purpose of this analysis was to determine whether the students' average responses for each motivational indicator significantly differed from the test value of zero, which represents no perception or a neutral baseline.

Table 2. The result of the t-test

	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Attention	59,458	90	0	2,99725	2,8971	3,0974
Relevance	47,351	90	0	3	2,8741	3,1259
Confidence	45,763	90	0	2,81319	2,6911	2,9353
Satisfaction	51,958	90	0	2,97253	2,8589	3,0862

The results indicate that all four motivation indicators show statistically significant mean scores well above zero. For the attention indicator, the mean score was 2.99 with a standard deviation of 0.48, and the t-test result was significant at $p = 0.00$ ($t = 59.45$, $df = 90$). Similarly, the relevance indicator had a mean score of exactly 3.00, with a standard deviation of 0.60, and the result was also statistically significant ($p = 0.0$, $t = 47.35$, $df = 90$). The confidence indicator showed a mean of 2.8132 and standard deviation of 0.58, with the t-test yielding significance ($p = 0.00$, $t = 45.763$, $df = 90$). Lastly, the satisfaction indicator had a mean score of 2.9725, a standard deviation of 0.54575, and a statistically significant result ($p = 0.000$, $t = 51.958$, $df = 90$).

Since all p-values are less than 0.05, these results suggest that students positively perceive the role of contextual learning in motivating them in ESP classes across all four



indicators. Specifically, the highest mean score was seen in the relevance indicator ($M = 3.0000$), suggesting that students strongly believe that contextual learning makes learning English more applicable and meaningful to their needs. The attention, satisfaction, and confidence indicators also yielded high means, indicating that contextual learning strategies are effective in keeping students engaged, confident, and satisfied in the learning process.

These findings provide strong statistical evidence that students perceive contextual learning as an effective strategy to enhance their motivation in ESP classes. This perception spans the key motivational components of attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction, all of which are significantly above the neutral test value.

The descriptive statistics analysis was conducted to explore students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of contextual learning in enhancing their motivation across four indicators: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction. Each indicator was measured through four statements answered using a Likert scale by 91 students.

For the Attention indicator, indicating that students generally agreed that contextual learning strategies successfully captured and maintained their focus during ESP classes. Specifically, the highest mean score under this indicator was 3.07, suggesting that some aspects of contextual learning effectively drew students' attention. The Relevance indicator received slightly higher average mean scores, ranging from 2.86 to 3.15, with the highest mean recorded at 3.15. This suggests that students perceived contextual learning activities as strongly related to their personal or professional goals, reinforcing the relevance of what they learn in ESP classes. For the Confidence indicator, the mean scores were relatively lower, which suggests that some students may feel uncertain about their abilities despite the contextual learning strategies. Regarding the Satisfaction indicator, it demonstrates that students generally felt satisfied with the ESP learning process involving contextual learning methods.



Overall, these results show that students positively perceive the role of contextual learning in increasing their motivation in ESP classes. The highest perception appeared in the Relevance indicator, meaning students found the learning activities meaningful and applicable to their needs. Although the Confidence indicator received the lowest mean in one item, the overall average remained positive, suggesting that with more support or practice, confidence could be further enhanced.

Table 3. The Result of the Percentages of the Questionnaire

No	Item	Percentages				Mean	SD
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree		
Attention							
1	The materials used in my ESP class (e.g., manuals, videos, texts) catch my attention.	6.6%	9.9%	64.8%	18.7%	30	0,74
2	Real-world tasks used in class keep me interested in learning English.	4.4%	22.0%	54.9%	18.7%	29	0,75
3	I feel curious and motivated when English lessons relate to automotive topics.	5.5%	13.2%	49.5%	31.9%	31	0,81
4	My teacher uses different methods (e.g., videos, problem-solving tasks) to keep lessons engaging.	6.6%	8.8%	54.9%	29.7%	31	0,8
Relevance							
5	The English I learn in class is useful for my future career in the automotive industry.	8.8%	7.7%	42.9%	40.7%	32	0,9
6	Learning technical terms in English helps me understand automotive manuals and documents.	4.4%	13.2%	52.7%	29.7%	31	0,77
7	I can relate what I learn in English class to my vocational training.	4.4%	20.9%	54.9%	19.8%	29	0,76
8	English lessons are tailored to automotive topics that are relevant to me.	4.4%	26.4%	47.3%	22.0%	29	0,8



Confidence							
9	I feel confident when using English in discussions about automotive topics.	15.4%	30.8%	41.8%	12.1%	25	0,89
10	Contextual examples help me better understand difficult vocabulary and grammar.	7.7%	25.3%	52.7%	14.3%	27	0,8
11	I believe I can improve my English if I continue learning through real-world tasks.	7.7%	14.3%	50.5%	27.5%	30	0,85
12	I can complete class tasks more easily when they are related to automotive content.	4.4%	17.6%	48.4%	29.7%	30	0,8
Satisfaction							
13	I feel satisfied when I can apply what I learn in class to practical situations.	8.8%	6.6%	62.6%	22.0%	30	0,8
14	I enjoy learning English more when it is connected to automotive content.	5.5%	20.9%	54.9%	18.7%	29	0,77
15	I feel a sense of accomplishment after completing context-based English tasks.	6.6%	13.2%	50.5%	29.7%	30	0,83
16	The use of real-world automotive content makes English learning more enjoyable for me.	4.4%	15.4%	54.9%	25.3%	30	0,76

Further, according to the table above, the descriptive analysis of students' responses toward contextual learning in ESP classes shows generally positive perceptions across all four motivation indicators: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. Most students agreed or strongly agreed with the statements related to each indicator. For example, in the attention indicator, more than 80% of students agreed or strongly agreed that contextual learning helped them focus during lessons. Similarly, the relevance indicator received the highest positive perception, with over 83% agreeing that the learning materials were meaningful and applicable to their needs. The confidence indicator, while slightly lower, still showed that a majority of students (above 70%) felt more confident when contextual learning strategies were applied. Lastly, the satisfaction indicator revealed that around 77% to 84% of students were satisfied



with their learning experience. The mean scores for all items ranged from 2.50 to 3.15, indicating overall agreement, with relatively low standard deviations showing consistent responses among students.

The second research question sought to determine how contextual learning strategies, represented by the four motivation indicators (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, Satisfaction), relate to students' English language proficiency scores in ESP classes. To explore this relationship, a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted.

Table 4. Correlation

		Attention	Relevance	Confidence	Satisfaction
Attention	Pearson Correlation	1	,385**	,569**	,495**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0	0
	N	91	91	91	91
Relevance	Pearson Correlation	,385**	1	,502**	,779**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0	0
	N	91	91	91	91
Confidence	Pearson Correlation	,569**	,502**	1	,507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0		0
	N	91	91	91	91
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	,495**	,779**	,507**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	
	N	91	91	91	91

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis results in Table 4 above show that all four motivational indicators are significantly and positively correlated with each other at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Specifically, Attention was positively correlated with Relevance ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$), Confidence ($r = 0.56$, $p < 0.01$), and Satisfaction ($r = 0.495$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that students who felt more engaged (attention) also perceived the lessons as more relevant, felt more confident, and were more satisfied.

Moreover, Relevance showed a strong positive correlation with Satisfaction ($r = 0.77$, $p < 0.01$) and a moderate positive correlation with Confidence ($r = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that when students view learning materials as relevant to their real-world needs, they



tend to feel more confident in their abilities and are more satisfied with the learning process. Similarly, Confidence was positively associated with Satisfaction ($r = 0.50, p < 0.01$), meaning that higher confidence levels contributed to greater learning satisfaction. These significant and positive intercorrelations among motivation indicators suggest that contextual learning strategies holistically enhance various aspects of students' learning experiences in ESP classes. Higher levels of attention and relevance not only foster confidence but also satisfaction, which could collectively contribute to better English language proficiency.

To answer the second research question regarding the effect of contextual learning strategies (represented by the motivation indicators: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction) on students' English proficiency scores in ESP classes, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted (see Table 5). The dependent variable was the Pretest (English proficiency score), while the independent variables were Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Table

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,425 ^a	,181	,142	4,95138

a. Predictors: (Constant), Satisfaction, Attention, Confidence, Relevance

The Model Summary shows an R value of 0.425, indicating a moderate positive relationship between the combined motivation indicators and the English proficiency score. The R Square value is 0.181, meaning that approximately 18.1% of the variance in the students' English scores can be explained by the four motivational predictors. Although this value suggests a moderate explanatory power, it indicates that other factors outside of motivation also influence the English proficiency scores.



In conclusion, this regression analysis supports the assertion that students' motivation, as influenced by contextual learning strategies, has a significant effect on their English language proficiency scores. While the effect size is moderate, the relationship is statistically significant, suggesting that improving motivation through contextual learning can contribute positively to students' ESP performance.

3.2 Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of contextual learning strategies in enhancing students' motivation and improving their English language skills in ESP classes for Automotive Engineering students. Findings from both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses provide valuable insights into how contextual learning influences students' learning experiences and proficiency outcomes.

For the first research question, the descriptive statistics and t-test results revealed that students generally perceive contextual learning as effective in fostering their motivation across four key indicators: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. The highest mean scores were observed in the **relevance** and **attention** indicators, indicating that students strongly felt the learning materials were meaningful and directly related to their field of study. This supports the findings of (Bazhutina & Tsepilova, 2024), who emphasized that the development of CEFR-based indicators tailored to the automotive industry can enhance integrative competence and motivation through real-world relevance. Similarly, the importance of contextual material in building motivation echoes the study by (Ronaldo et al., 2020), which stressed the necessity of field-adapted ESP content to sustain student interest and engagement in vocational education.

However, the **confidence** indicator yielded relatively lower mean scores compared to the other motivational dimensions. This may suggest that, although students find contextual materials relevant and engaging, they may still lack self-assurance in using English, particularly in professional or technical communication settings. This could stem from limited



practice opportunities, anxiety about language accuracy, or unfamiliarity with workplace-specific terminology. Addressing this gap may require additional scaffolding strategies such as role-plays, simulations, or formative feedback to help build learners' confidence in applying English skills practically.

The positive perception of relevance and satisfaction aligns with the results of (Nurchayani et al., 2024), who demonstrated that materials grounded in the automotive context can significantly boost student engagement and motivation. Likewise, (Wijayanti & Nugroho, 2021) highlighted that ESP-based teaching materials designed specifically for the automotive sector increase students' enthusiasm and practical language understanding. These parallels suggest that contextual learning, when aligned with students' professional interests, can effectively foster greater motivation. This is further supported by the high internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.851) and the overall positive student responses in this study.

Regarding the second research question, the correlation and regression analyses indicated a significant and positive relationship between motivational indicators and students' English proficiency scores. The regression analysis showed that attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction together predicted 18.1% of the variance in students' English scores, with a statistically significant model ($p = 0.002$). This suggests that while contextual learning motivation contributes meaningfully to proficiency, a large portion of the variance (over 80%) remains unexplained—highlighting the influence of other potential factors such as prior language exposure, teaching quality, learning environment, and cognitive abilities. Future studies should explore these additional variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of what drives English proficiency in ESP settings.

It is also important to acknowledge the limitations inherent in self-reported questionnaire data. Students may respond based on perceived expectations or social desirability, which can introduce response bias and affect the validity of the findings. While the instrument showed strong reliability, triangulating these results with qualitative interviews,



classroom observations, or performance-based assessments could offer richer, more objective insights into learners' motivation and language development.

Overall, the findings reinforce the conclusions of previous studies that stress the importance of contextual, profession-oriented ESP teaching for enhancing motivation and language competence in vocational education settings. The alignment between the present results and prior literature highlights the critical role of developing learning materials directly connected to students' future careers—in this case, the automotive engineering industry. These results provide strong empirical support for integrating context-based approaches into ESP curricula to foster both motivational engagement and linguistic advancement. Additionally, the study underscores the need for continued research into confidence-building strategies, external influences on proficiency, and the triangulation of data sources to ensure a holistic understanding of language learning in vocational contexts.

4. Conclusion

In overall, this research concludes that contextual learning strategies significantly enhance student motivation and positively impact English language proficiency in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes, particularly for Automotive Engineering students. The findings demonstrated that students perceived contextual learning as highly effective across four motivational indicators: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction—with relevance receiving the highest ratings. The high internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.851) confirmed the reliability of the motivational constructs, and statistical analyses, including t-tests and descriptive statistics validated students' positive perceptions. These outcomes highlight the importance of aligning ESP materials with students' professional contexts to make learning more meaningful and engaging.



Furthermore, the correlation and regression analyses confirmed that higher motivation, fostered by contextual learning, has a statistically significant effect on English proficiency outcomes. Although motivation explained a moderate portion (18.1%) of the variance in students' scores, the results reinforce the value of profession-specific content in vocational education. The study supports previous research emphasizing the need for context-based ESP materials, indicating that when students see a clear connection between classroom content and their future careers, their motivation and academic performance improve. Therefore, integrating contextual learning into ESP curricula is essential for fostering both linguistic competence and learner engagement in vocational settings.

Moreover, teachers and curriculum developers are encouraged to design ESP materials that reflect students' vocational realities, especially in technical fields like automotive engineering. Incorporating authentic tasks, real-world problem-solving, and industry-based materials can increase students' interest and motivation. Teachers should also receive training in both language instruction and the technical content of students' fields to ensure interdisciplinary coherence and maximize learning outcomes. Additionally, students should be given opportunities to practice English in contexts that mirror their future workplace demands to build both confidence and competence.

Future researchers should explore longitudinal studies that track the impact of contextual learning strategies on language development over time. It is also recommended to expand the scope of study to other vocational disciplines (e.g., nursing, IT, hospitality) to assess the broader applicability of contextual ESP teaching. Further, integrating qualitative approaches such as interviews or classroom observations could provide deeper insights into learners' experiences and challenges. Finally, policymakers in vocational education should consider embedding contextual ESP frameworks into national curricula to ensure alignment between language instruction and industry needs.



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