

ENGLISH PERFORMANCE AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ESP: A SEARCH FOR CONGRUENCE

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ABSTRACT

Attitude is regarded as a significant factor impacting language learning and language performance. This study investigated attitude in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) studies and English performance by medical students in Thaibinh University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Vietnam. The respondents were 82 second year undergraduate students in seven classes. Research instruments used included a Likert questionnaire to investigate students' attitude and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) test, a standardized test used across Vietnam to determine the English performance students. This study focused on quantitative research utilizing the descriptive-correlational method and SPSS software to describe and investigate the relationship between students' English performance and their attitude towards ESP. The findings illustrated that the overall students' attitude towards ESP is neither favorable nor unfavorable. However, across the six dimensions of attitude towards ESP, the students consistently gave the highest scores to learning materials and gave the lowest scores to learning activities. Results indicated that the English performance of the students for both listening and speaking is poor that is, they have not met the minimum competency required for EGP and ESP. The final result is that there is a significant relationship between the students' attitude towards ESP and their English Performance.

Keywords: Attitude, English performance, learning activities, learning materials.

INTRODUCTION

English is a global lingua franca because it plays an important role as a communication medium in many different fields including medicine, engineering, and education. It is a tool which can increase job opportunities for many undergraduate students. English is a core subject at schools and university in the Vietnamese education system. Before leaving university, students have to gain an English certification of B1 or equivalent level. Medical students at Thaibinh university of Medicine and Pharmacy are interested in a range of medical subjects including anatomy, surgery, pediatrics, biochemistry, radiology, neurobiology, obstetrics-gynecology, and physiology because they convinced that becoming a skillful doctor is more important than being competent in English. Additionally, these students learn English to pass the exam as opposed to an actual interest in this international language. According to Visser (2008), attitude is seen as a key component impacting language performance: "Achievement in a target language depends on both intellectual capacity and the learner's attitudes towards language learning. That is why learning language should be approached primarily not only as an academic phenomenon but also as a social and psychological one". Therefore, the researcher sought to identify the relationship between students' attitude and English performance of students at Thaibinh University of Medicine and Pharmacy. The research questions are the following:

1. What is the attitude of the students towards ESP in terms of:

- 1.1 Lesson content
 - 1.2 Learning materials
 - 1.3 Learning activities
 - 1.4 Time allotment
 - 1.5 Methodology
 - 1.6 Assessment
2. What is the English performance of the students based on the result of the CEFR test?
 3. Is there a relationship between students' attitude towards ESP and English performance?

METHODOLOGY

Figure 1 shows the paradigm of the study. The independent variable is the respondents' attitude towards ESP which includes lesson content, learning materials, learning activities, time allotment, methodology, and assessment. The dependent variable is the English performance of the respondents which was measured in terms of their CEFR test. This study used the descriptive-correlational design. The CEFR test was determined using frequency counts and percentage while the attitude of the students was examined using weighted means. The relationship between students' English performance and attitude towards ESP was identified by Pearson Product Moment Correlation and chi-square.

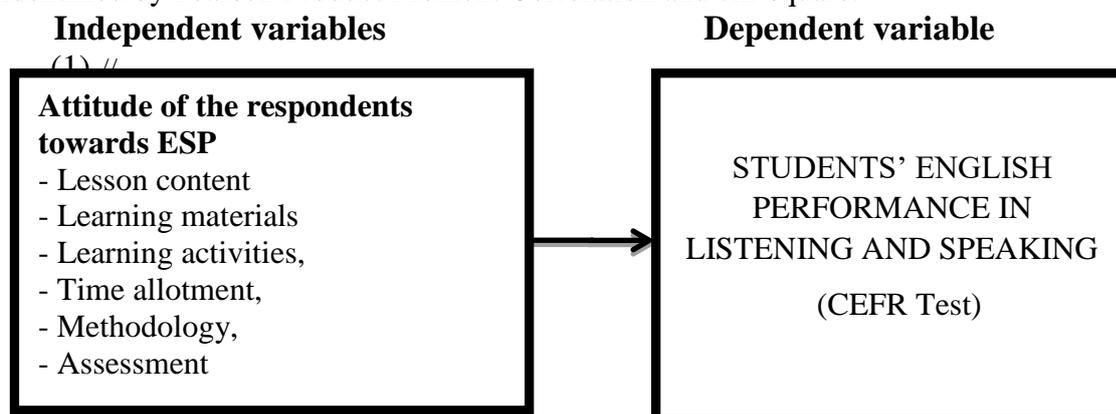


Figure 1. Study Paradigm

Participants

The population of the study constituted the group of 455 medical students in seven classes at Thai Binh University of Medicine and Pharmacy. The group was represented in the study by a sample size obtained through the Slovin's formula with a 10% margin of error resulting in a final sample of 82 medical students as the subjects of the study. The proportional allocation technique was subsequently applied to identify the number of respondents per class.

After the desired sample size was determined, simple random sampling was used to select the equal chance of respondents who were drawn by draw lots and by random numbers.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents

Classes	Number of Students
Y2-K45D	11
Y2-K45E	11
Y2-K45F	12
Y2-K45G	12
Y2-K45H	12
Y2-K45I	12
Y2-K45K	12
Total	82

Instruments

The study questionnaire was designed by the researcher and partly adopted from the checklists of Soleimani & Hanafi (2013). The questionnaire entailed medical students' attitudes towards the ESP course with six criteria: lesson/selection content, learning materials, learning activities, time allotment, methodology, and assessment. For 60 items of six criteria, students were asked to respond to statements on a five-point Likert scale of frequency, in which 1 = Strong Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strong Agree. The CEFR test consisted of a listening test with 25 questions divided into 4 parts and a speaking test with 4 parts lasted from 10 to 12 minutes each respondent.

Procedures

Having found the questionnaire valid and reliable, the researcher sent a request letter to the head of the office of Undergraduate Training and Management Department of Thaibinh University of Medicine and Pharmacy to allow her to conduct the study to undergraduate students who had finished their EGP and ESP courses (in four semesters). The researcher, with the assistance of two colleagues also teachers of English at the university, administered the questionnaire to the 82 subjects of the study.

After computing the respondents' attitude towards the ESP course from the questionnaire and finding that students have a negative attitude regarding the use of the ESP textbook to develop listening and speaking skills. The CEFR test was delivered to those students and marked by two teachers of English.

Then the researcher used Statistical Packages for the Social Science to conduct a series of statistical analyses on the collected data.

Data Analysis

The attitude of the students was examined using weighted means which were interpreted with the guides below.

The Scale of Attitude toward ESP

Scale	Mean range	Descriptive Category
5	4.20-5.00	Strongly Agree
4	3.40-4.19	Agree
3	2.60-3.39	Undecided
2	1.80-2.59	Disagree
1	1.00-1.79	Strongly Disagree

The English performance of the students based on the results of CEFR test was identified using frequency counts and percentage.

As regards their English performance, the respondents used the following rubric of CEFR listening and speaking:

Listening CEFR Scale

Scale	Marks	Equivalent description
5	21-25	Excellent
4	16-20	Good
3	11-15	Satisfactory
2	6-10	Poor
1	1-5	Very Poor
Total	25	

Speaking CEFR Scale

Scale	Equivalent description
5	Excellent
4	Good
3	Satisfactory
2	Poor
1	Very Poor

The relationship between the attitude of students towards ESP and English performance was analyzed applying the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and chi-square.

RESULTS

Attitude of the Students towards ESP

Attitude towards Lesson Content

Table 2 indicates the attitude of medical students towards lesson content. The data show that the over-all weighted mean of this dimension is 3.12 with a corresponding descriptive value of "Uncertain" or neither favorable nor unfavorable.

Among the indicators of attitude toward lesson content in the ESP course, they denote favorable attitude in the statements: *I am enthusiastic about furthering my knowledge of medical English* (4.01); *I study enthusiastically the content of medical English to get my teacher's and classmate's appreciation* (3.95); *The wide choice of lessons/selections in medical English class excites me* (3.90); and *I appreciate the content of English for Medical Purposes* (3.76).

On the other hand, the statements that the respondents show unfavourable attitude are along *I find the study of the course appealing to it allows the students to reflect, elaborate on, clarify further and master what I have learned* (2.48); *I find the content of the course not so meaningful for it does not integrate and correlate facts, concepts and values in a coherent manner* (2.49); *The content of the medical English is not fun to learn* (2.50) and *I am eager to learn the selection/lesson under medical English class* (2.79).

Table 2. Students' attitude towards the ESP instructional material in terms of lesson content

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
I appreciate the content of English for Medical Purposes.	3.76	Agree
The wide choice of lessons/selections in medical English class excites	3.90	Agree
I am eager to learn the selection/lesson under medical English class.	2.79	Disagree
I am enthusiastic in furthering my knowledge in medical English.	4.01	Agree
The content of the medical English is not fun to learn.	2.50	Disagree
I study enthusiastically the content of medical English to get my teacher's and classmates' appreciation.	3.95	Agree
The content of English for Medical Purpose which includes not only facts but also concepts and values captivates my desire to learn the course.	2.65	Uncertain
I am interested to learn English Medical Course for it considers the interest of the learners, their development stages, and their cultural and	2.66	Uncertain
I find the content of the course not so meaningful for it does not integrate and correlate facts, concepts, and values in a coherent manner.	2.49	Disagree
I find the study of the course appealing to it allows the students to reflect, elaborate on, clarify further and master what I have learned.	2.48	Disagree
Category Mean	3.12	Uncertain

Legend:

- 1.00 - 1.79 Strongly Disagree (Very Unfavorable)
- 1.80 - 2.59 Disagree (Unfavorable)
- 2.60 - 3.39 Uncertain (Neither favorable nor unfavorable)
- 3.40 - 4.19 Agree (Favorable)
- 4.20 - 5.00 Strongly Agree (Very Favorable)

Attitude towards Learning Materials

Table 3 shows the attitude of the students towards ESP in terms of learning materials. The over-all weighted mean for this dimension is 3.33 which has an adjectival value of “neither favorable nor unfavorable”.

The statements in which the students have a favourable attitude include the statements, *I find studying medical English course worth learning for the materials prepared for the subject are appropriate* (3.93); *I find the course very suitable for the materials have appropriate language in terms of sophistication and difficulty level of vocabulary* (3.93); *I find the course not so appealing for the design, format, texture of the materials do not interest me* (3.89), *I find the course interesting for the materials satisfy the objective of the course* (3.85); *I find the course beneficial for materials are of high-interest and foster critical thinking* (3.83) and *I find the course worth studying for the information contained in the materials is carefully chosen* (3.76).

Conversely, the statements that the respondents show unfavourable attitude are along: *I find English Medical very engaging for the materials are of high-interest, authentic and encourage the enhancement of communication and personal skills* (2.05); *I enjoy learning Medical English course for it is realistic* (2.45) and *I find studying the course impracticable for the materials are not so meticulously chosen to suit the students' cultural and ethnic background* (2.45)

Table 3. Students' attitude towards the ESP instructional material in terms of learning materials

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
I enjoy learning Medical English course for it is realistic.	2.45	Disagree
I find the course not exciting for the materials available in medical English course make me not enjoy the course.	3.16	Uncertain
I find studying medical English course worth learning for the materials prepared for the subject are appropriate.	3.93	Agree
I find the course beneficial for materials are of high-interest and foster critical thinking.	3.83	Agree
I find the course interesting for the materials satisfy the objective of the course.	3.85	Agree
I find the course very suitable for the materials have appropriate language in terms of sophistication and difficulty level of vocabulary.	3.93	Agree
I find English Medical very engaging for the materials are of high-interest, authentic and encourage the enhancement of communication and personal skills.	2.05	Disagree
I find the course not so appealing for the design, format, and texture of the materials do not interest me.	3.89	Agree
I find the course worth studying for the information contained in the materials is carefully chosen.	3.76	Agree
I find studying the course impracticable for the materials are not so meticulously chosen to suit the students' cultural and ethnic background.	2.45	Disagree
Category Mean	3.33	Uncertain

Legend:

- 1.00 - 1.79 Strongly Disagree (Very Unfavorable)
- 1.80 - 2.59 Disagree (Unfavorable)
- 2.60 - 3.39 Uncertain (Neither favorable nor unfavorable)
- 3.40 - 4.19 Agree (Favorable)
- 4.20 - 5.00 Strongly Agree (Very Favorable)

Attitude towards Learning Activities

Table 4 shows the attitude of the students towards ESP activities. The over-all weighted mean for this category is 2.57 which has an adjectival value of “unfavorable”.

The statements that obtained the highest means are *I find Medical English course activities not that challenging* (4.04 - favorable) and *I find medical English course activities important* (3.02 - neither favorable nor unfavorable).

The statement that registered the lowest mean is *I find the activities in medical English very beneficial for English listening and speaking skills were improved* (1.24 - very unfavorable). The second to the lowest mean in this dimension is the statement, *I find the activities very engaging for they are high-interest, authentic and encourage the enhancement of communication and personal skills* (2.16 - unfavorable).

Table 4. Students’ attitude towards the ESP instructional material in terms of learning activities

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
I enjoy the activities in medical English.	2.26	Disagree
I find medical English course activities important.	3.02	Uncertain
I find Medical English course activities not that challenging.	4.04	Agree
I find the course not worthwhile for the activities prepared in the subject inappropriate.	2.70	Uncertain
I find the course enjoyable for activities prepared in English make learning fun.	2.45	Disagree
I find the activities of Medical English very satisfying.	2.51	Disagree
I find the activities very engaging for they are high-interest, authentic and encourage the enhancement of communication and personal skills.	2.16	Disagree
I find the activities in medical English very beneficial for English listening and speaking skills were improved.	1.24	Strongly Disagree
I feel comfortable learning Medical English for the activities because of a range of learning styles and comfort levels of the learners.	2.54	Disagree
I find the course stimulating for the activities in the subject allow ample time for processing.	2.78	Uncertain
Category Mean	2.57	Disagree

Legend:

- 1.00 - 1.79 Strongly Disagree (Very Unfavorable)
- 1.80 - 2.59 Disagree (Unfavorable)
- 2.60 - 3.39 Uncertain (Neither favorable nor unfavorable)
- 3.40 - 4.19 Agree (Favorable)
- 4.20 - 5.00 Strongly Agree (Very Favorable)

Attitude towards Time Allotment

Table 5 shows the attitude of students towards ESP time allotment wherein the over-all mean for this category is 2.74 with an adjectival value of “neither favorable nor unfavorable”.

The statement which registered the highest mean for this category is *I do not enjoy learning the course for the teacher spends the lecture time just talking and writing on the board* (3.16 - neither favorable nor unfavorable).

The lowest mean is obtained by the statement, *Academic learning time for the course allows students to spend time actively working on tasks* (2.51 - unfavorable) and *I like the English lesson-hour for medical English course* (2.59 - unfavorable).

Table 5. Students' attitude towards the ESP instructional material in terms of time allotment

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
I am enthusiastic to study the subject for the time allotment is ideal for the course.	2.61	Uncertain
I find the course's time perfectly suitable to our needs.	2.65	Uncertain
I like the English lesson-hour for medical English course.	2.59	Disagree
I spend extra time studying medical English course.	2.67	Uncertain
I find learning Medical English course very conveniently scheduled on the part of the learners.	2.63	Uncertain
I do not enjoy learning the course for the teacher spends the lecture time just talking and writing on the board.	3.16	Uncertain
Studying the course is enjoyable for it is free from unscheduled interruptions, public announcements, fire drills, and other school activities disrupt learning time.	3.12	Uncertain
It is profitable to study the course for uneven transitions between activities and inefficient classroom management procedures do not disrupt learning flow.	2.73	Uncertain
Academic learning time for the course allows students to spend time actively working on tasks.	2.51	Disagree
It is efficient to study the subject for teachers allow the efficient transition to help students move in and out of the room smoothly without waiting much time.	2.77	Uncertain
Category Mean	2.74	Uncertain

Legend:

- 1.00 - 1.79 Strongly Disagree (Very Unfavorable)
 1.80 - 2.59 Disagree (Unfavorable)
 2.60 - 3.39 Uncertain (Neither favorable nor unfavorable)
 3.40 - 4.19 Agree (Favorable)
 4.20 - 5.00 Strongly Agree (Very Favorable)

Attitude towards Methodology

Table 6 shows students' attitude towards methodology with a mean of 3.07 and descriptive value of "neither favorable nor unfavorable".

The statements that the students find favorable attitude are *The methodology enables the students to enhance their medical related skills* (3.83) and *I find the course enjoyable for the methodology employed fits the objectives of the course* (3.73).

Meanwhile, the statements that obtained the lowest means are *I find the course beneficial for the methodology helps me improve my English communication skills* (2.21 - unfavorable) and *I find the subject helpful for the methodology allows the use of appropriate group-learning method such as simulation/game, a mediated feedback session or "real life" experience* (2.44 - unfavorable).

Table 6. Students' attitude towards the ESP instructional material in terms of methodology

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
Learning the subject is never fun for the methodology employed in English medical class is not enjoyable.	3.17	Uncertain
I find the course enjoyable for the methodology employed fits the objectives of the course.	3.73	Agree
I find the course beneficial for the methodology helps me improve my English communication skills.	2.21	Disagree
I find the course satisfying for the methodology employed in the course helps to meet our learning needs in the subject.	3.13	Uncertain

I find the course practicable for the methodology will help me later in my medical job.	3.15	Uncertain
I don't find the course interesting for the methodology does not make me enthusiastic when studying medical course.	3.22	Uncertain
The methodology enables the students to enhance their medical related skills.	3.83	Agree
The methodology employed allows students to be involved actively in the learning process.	2.80	Uncertain
I am uncomfortable with some chosen methods employed.	3.05	Uncertain
I find the subject helpful for the methodology allows the use of the appropriate group-learning method such as simulation/game, a mediated feedback session or "real life" experience.	2.44	Disagree
Category Mean	3.07	Uncertain

Legend:

1.00 - 1.79	Strongly Disagree (Very Unfavorable)
1.80 - 2.59	Disagree (Unfavorable)
2.60 - 3.39	Uncertain (Neither favorable nor unfavorable)
3.40 - 4.19	Agree (Favorable)
4.20 - 5.00	Strongly Agree (Very Favorable)

Attitude towards Assessment

Table 7 shows students' attitude towards assessment and the computed mean is 3.24 with a corresponding description of neither favorable nor unfavorable.

The three statements that registered the highest means are *It is delightful to study English medical course because assessment for the subject is aligned to that of the curriculum* (3.66-favorable); *I like studying English medical course because assessment is aligned with the subject's instructional goal* (3.62-favorable); and *I relish the study the subject because the assessment for the course is carefully planned* (3.54-favourable).

Finally, the favorable attitude of the students regarding the statement, *I relish the study of the subject because the assessment for the course is carefully planned* (3.54).

Table 7. Students' attitude towards the ESP instructional material in terms of assessment

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
I enjoy the course because the knowledge, skills, and values are adequately assessed.	2.56	Disagree
Studying the course is beneficial because the assessment is reasonable, well-organized and methodical.	3.09	Uncertain
I take pleasure in studying the course because competencies are sufficiently assessed.	3.04	Uncertain
It is delightful to study English medical course because assessment for the subject is aligned to that of the curriculum	3.66	Agree
I relish the study the subject because the assessment for the course is carefully planned.	3.54	Agree
It is stimulating to study the course because assessment is congruent with the content of the subject.	3.52	Agree
I like studying English medical course because assessment is aligned with the subject's instructional goals.	3.62	Agree
I like studying English medical course because assessment give me an opportunity to improve self-assessment,	2.62	Uncertain
It is not satisfying to study English medical course because the assessment does not encourage independent learning.	3.50	Agree
It is helpful to study English Medical Course because assessment contributes positive attitude towards school work.	3.21	Uncertain
Category Mean	3.24	Uncertain

Legend:

1.00 - 1.79	Strongly Disagree (Very Unfavorable)
1.80 - 2.59	Disagree (Unfavorable)
2.60 - 3.39	Uncertain (Neither favorable nor unfavorable)
3.40 - 4.19	Agree (Favorable)
4.20 - 5.00	Strongly Agree (Very Favorable)

Summary Table on Attitude towards ESP

Table 8 illustrates the summary table showing the over-all attitude of the students toward ESP across the six dimensions. It reveals that the over-all attitude of the students is neither favourable nor unfavourable with a computed general weighted mean of 3.01.

Table 8. Overall Attitude of Students towards ESP along the six dimensions

Categories	Weighted Mean	Description
Lesson Content	3.12	Uncertain
Learning Materials	3.33	Uncertain
Learning Activities	2.57	Disagree
Time Allotment	2.74	Uncertain
Methodology	3.07	Uncertain
Assessment	3.24	Uncertain
Overall Mean	3.01	Uncertain

Legend:

1.00 - 1.79	Strongly Disagree (Very Unfavorable)
1.80 - 2.59	Disagree (Unfavorable)
2.60 - 3.39	Uncertain (Neither favorable nor unfavorable)
3.40 - 4.19	Agree (Favorable)
4.20 - 5.00	Strongly Agree (Very Favorable)

Students' English Performance Based on the Result of the CEFR Test

Table 9 illustrates the performance of the students in the CEFR tests across listening and speaking skills. The mean performance of the students for listening is 9.59 which has an adjectival value of poor while their mean performance for speaking is 1.85 with an adjectival value of poor.

For the listening test, a listening rubric was employed to analyze the students' scores. Ten respondents rated poorly in the listening test with 10 students or 12.2 percent of the total respondents. Forty-two or 51.21 percent was rated poorly while twenty-five or 30.5 percent performed satisfactorily. Four or 4.88 percent was rated very well while only one student or 1.21 percent was rated excellently during the listening test. Under the Vietnamese system of Education, those who fall under Category 1 and 2 are considered failed. Therefore only 30 of the 82 respondents or 36.6% of total respondents passed the listening test under the CEFR.

For the speaking test, only 15 of the 82 respondents or 18.3% of total respondents passed the Speaking test under the CEFR with 27 and 40 respondents performed very poorly and poorly respectively accounting for 32.9 and 48.8 per cent of the respondents respectively. No one among the respondents was rated very well and excellently.

Table 9. Students' English Performance in CEFR Tests along Listening and Speaking

Score	Category	Frequency (n=82)	Percentage
Listening Levels			
1-5	Very Poor	10	12.20
6-10	Poor	42	51.21
11-15	Satisfactory	25	30.50
16-20	Good	4	4.88
21-25	Excellent	1	1.21
Total		82	100
Mean Performance: 9.59	Poor		
Speaking Levels			
1	Very poor	27	32.9
2	Poor	40	48.8
3	Satisfactory	15	18.3
4	Good	0	0
5	Excellent	0	0
Total		82	100
Mean Performance: 1.85	Poor		

Legend:

- 1 - Very Poor
- 2 - Poor
- 3 - Satisfactory
- 4 - Good
- 5 - Excellent

Test of the Relationship between Students' Attitude towards ESP and English Performance

Table 10 shows the relationship between students' attitude towards ESP and English Performance. Results reveal that there is a positive association between the two variables.

The positive association between the two variables is reflected in the correlation coefficient of 0.702 and a probability value of 0.000.

Table 10. Test of the Relationship between the Students' Attitude towards ESP and English Performance

Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Prob.	Statistical Inference
Attitude towards ESP and English performance	0.702	0.000	Significant at 0.01

DISCUSSION

Students' Attitude towards ESP

Attitude towards Lesson Content

The rating of the respondents in this dimension reveals that they neither appreciate nor dislike the content of English that they are formally learning. It may also indicate that they are half-hearted in their attitude towards learning ESP materials which may account for their poor performance in the EGP and ESP tests.

The favorable attitude of the respondents regarding the statement *I am enthusiastic in furthering my knowledge in medical English* implies that they are excited and have an active interest in learning medical English. It also indicates that they are motivated to read and master medical English, an important factor for competencies in their field of specialization. Even when students performed poorly because of negative attitude, they remain aware of the

global importance of English nowadays when the students also have a positive attitude toward English generally, they will succeed in receiving high ESP grades (Ivan et al., 2010). On the other hand, the favorable attitude of the respondents to the statement, *I study enthusiastically the content of medical English to get my teacher's and classmate's appreciation* indicates that they are encouraged to study medical English as they obtain appreciation and positive feedback from their classmates and teachers. Having a good communicative skill in English elevates their self-esteem as knowing how to speak English fluently is a symbol of good education and brilliance in Vietnamese society.

The favorable statement: *The wide choice of lessons/selections in medical English class excites me* reveals that the respondents are appreciative of the diverse learning materials that are presented to them by their teachers. It also connotes that they enjoy learning medical English if they are presented in diverse, fun and interesting manner. All these rich learning material repertoires allow students to be excited and motivated to learn medical English. Similarly, the favorable score obtained by the statement, *I appreciate the content of English for Medical Purposes* conveys that they understand the worth of the lessons that are taught to them. It also means that the respondents appreciate the value of their lessons because they are able to connect with their lessons in medical English while mastering the technicalities of their field of specialization.

The unfavorable attitude of the students relative to these statements: *I find the study of the course appealing for it allows the students to reflect, elaborate on, clarify further and master what I have learned* ; *I find the content of the course not so meaningful for it does not integrate and correlate facts, concepts and values in a coherent manner* ; and *I am eager to learn the selection/lesson under medical English class* implies that the teaching of medical English does not proceed to Higher Ordered Thinking Skills since there are few opportunities for the students to reflect, elaborate and clarify concepts. In short, the approach is not very intellectually engaging for them. Moreover, the lessons are perceived by the students to be boring and irrelevant because they are not able to see the connection between what they are learning in medical English to what they learn in their major subjects. The fragmented or lack of connection between these two subjects makes the students develop an unfavorable attitude toward learning ESP. Ivan et al. (2010) and Joseba (2003) agree that positive attitudes to a second language or foreign language are extremely significant because ESP connects medical contents with other major subjects.

Attitude towards Learning Materials

The “Uncertain” attitude of the students regarding this dimension implies that they exhibit ambivalence in their attitude toward learning materials in medical English. In short, students have not yet fully developed a favorable attitude towards the learning materials that they encounter or study in their class. Additionally, these learning materials may not present strong relevance to their degree. Perhaps, the reason for neither favorable nor unfavorable attitude of the respondents may be accounted for by the fact that they still focus more on their major subjects than their English materials. Also, since English is considered as a foreign language, they are not really mandated or compelled to learn.

The favorable attitude of the students to the statement: *I find studying medical English course worth learning for the materials prepared for the subject are appropriate* reveals that they find the materials to be relevant. They, too, are able to appreciate the materials in preparing themselves for their future career and day to day life especially when they will be confronted with English speaking people. Similarly, Vičić (2011) states that “When determining what

tasks to include in ESP materials, teachers should thus above all strive to select and/or design tasks that will simulate the learner's real-life business situations as closely as possible".

Meanwhile, the favorable attitude of the student regarding the statement, *I find the course very suitable for the materials have appropriate language in terms of sophistication and difficulty level of vocabulary* implies that they perceive the learning materials to fit with their English language competence and to the level of their vocabulary. This means that the lessons are tailor-fit or customized to their needs as tertiary students. Joseph (2011) emphasizes that vocabulary choice is also an essential and demanded factor of any language learning process supporting enjoyment for language learners.

Some respondents "agree" to the statement *I find the course not so appealing for the design, format, texture of the materials do not interest me* indicates that the learning materials in terms of their design, format, and texture are not suitable to the kind of lessons to be learned relative to their level, orientation and culture. Perhaps, since most of the materials used in medical English are adopted or borrowed from native English speakers such as American, Australian and British, there is a tendency for the students to see these to be disconnected with their culture. This, therefore, necessitates the need to localize the learning materials to the Vietnamese culture so that the students are able to relate to it better. Foreign-made learning materials may be perceived by Vietnamese students as being detached from their day-to-day lives as they could not connect with them. Mahabadi (2012) illustrates that the students executed better when they are used integrating localized materials in the classroom. The unfavorable attitude of students relative to these statements conveys that they do not find the learning materials to be intellectually engaging and authentic. This finding confirms the earlier finding that the medical English materials are very foreign in nature and students do not find them to be interesting and engaging because they are not localized or custom fit with the Vietnamese culture and daily life. Thus, there is lack of connection with what they learn from the materials and what they actually do in life.

Finally, the unfavorable attitude of the students relative to the statement, *I enjoy learning Medical English course for it is realistic* also implies that learning materials are not realistic or truly depictive of actual situations in life. The artificiality of the learning materials supports the earlier finding that there is a too much foreign adoption of medical English materials that are used in Vietnamese classes. These foreign materials are not representative of the setting where the students live. As a result, they find them to be unrealistic and totally detached from their way of life. Vičič (2011) believes that subject-specific materials will help provide undergraduates with the essential skills and knowledge, and subject-specific materials should serve ESP students' wants taking into account different tastes relating to their needs, learning styles, and interests. The material selection may be a readily available textbook or a tailor-made material depending on the students' subject scope. In addition, Vičič (2011) reveals that "These materials should also relate closely to the learners' specific skills and content needs, which is an important precondition for full exploitation of the materials as well as the learners' motivation".

Attitude towards Learning Activities

Students' "unfavorable" attitude relative to this dimension indicates that they are not interested in the ESP learning activities provided by their teachers. It also means that these activities are not motivating and teachers do not engage students. Therefore, students will not enjoy and learn more about medical English.

Although the statement (*I find Medical English course activities not that challenging*) is negatively stated, it can be interpreted that the students perceive the learning activities to be not interesting and enjoyable. Students find learning activities boring and not applicable to life. Moreover, such findings may also connote that the learning activities do not fit providing little opportunity for the students to use their analytical skills. On the other hand, the favorable attitude that students have to the statement, *I find medical English course activities important* means that they appreciate the value and worth of their activities. They are also able to see the practical use of learning medical English in their future career as medical practitioners.

Students' unfavorable attitude regarding the statement: *I find the activities in medical English very beneficial for English listening and speaking skills were improved* conveys that most of them do not see the benefit of learning medical English for improving their listening and speaking skills. Perhaps, the reason for this is that most of them would like to practice medicine in their own country and have no intention to practice medicine abroad. These students conclude that there is no need to learn medical English at a competent level as their future clients are Vietnamese. The key point to motivate and change the learners' negative attitude towards English is providing students with a good opportunity to speak about relevant topics that are easy for them and suitable to their level (Rocío, 2012). The author also suggests that it is valuable to give students chances to exercise their speaking and listening skills in real life situations. This will supply them with a sense of what they are learning situations which do not exist in the classroom.

Students' unfavorable attitude regarding the statement: *I find the activities very engaging for they are high-interest, authentic and encourage the enhancement of communication and personal skills* affirms the earlier finding that they do not find the learning activities of their English teachers to be challenging, engaging and interesting. It also means that these activities are irrelevant in their life as they do not enhance their communication and personal skills in life. As noted earlier, the reason for this may be that most of the learning materials utilized by the English teachers are foreign-made or adopted from native speakers of the language. Using these materials does not make them promote understanding of accents, for example, pronunciation because native speakers are unfamiliar with accents. In Štěrba's (2014) study, it is important to use activities to make effective and motivating conversation as well as to create activities to meet the students' needs and interests. In addition, it should focus on simple and clear instruction to enable the learners to achieve the highest results, that is, when they understand what to do and which activity they are involved in.

Attitude towards Time Allotment

The finding connotes that the students have a middling attitude regarding the time allotment and schedule used for learning medical English. It also conveys that they have not yet developed a positive attitude to learning medical English because they are ambivalent about the time allotted to the subject.

The neutral attitude of the students regarding the statement (*I do not enjoy learning the course for the teacher spends the lecture time just talking and writing on the board*) implies that sometimes they appreciate and other times they dislike the use of lecture time in learning medical English. Lecture type is appreciated when students get to learn more from the teachers. However, they may get bored listening to the teachers and prefer actual activities to be conducted in the classroom. By involving themselves in all the activities, the students have more fun and interest in the classroom. As discussed by Elhaj and Ali (2015), in order to

encourage and maintain students' concerns, lectures should provide them with the chance to listen, take notes, or grasp information which has been taught, enabling them to participate more fully in the lecture.

The unfavorable attitude of the students with the statement: *Academic learning time for the course allows students to spend time actively working on tasks* implies that they do not find the time to be sufficient to work on the particular task in medical English. Either the tasks are too long to accomplish, or the time is insufficient to complete the activity. On the other hand, Students' unfavorable attitude to the statement: *like the English lesson-hour for medical English course* implies that the time allotted for English lesson is too short. They want a longer allotted time to study medical English in order to finish the activities or tasks required by the teachers. Most often students complain that they are not able to finish the tasks because there is insufficient time to complete them inside the classroom. The situation is the same as noted by Robinson (1991) and other researchers: "ESP courses are generally constrained by a limited time period in which their objectives have to be achieved and are taught to adults in homogeneous classes in terms of the work or specialist studies that the students are involved in". Abdulaziz et al. (2012) suggest some methods that tackle time problems in ESP class relating to classroom size, student motivation, or class time duration, that is, specifically decreasing the course content or student number of each class, or rising time duration or course duration.

Attitude towards Methodology

The neutral attitude of the students concerning methodology may connote that they are not appreciative of the methodology used in teaching medical English. At times, they may find the methodology to be good. However, at other times they find it to be uninteresting or demotivating.

The favorable attitude of the students to the statement: *The methodology enables the students to enhance their medical related skills* reveals that the methodology employed by the teachers is effective in enhancing their medical related skills. This may be explained by the fact that most books in medicine are written in English and having a good proficiency in the language makes students understand their course more effectively and efficiently. On the other hand, the favorable attitude of the students to the statement: *I find the course enjoyable for the methodology employed fits the objectives of the course* implies that the methodology utilized by their teachers meets their learning objectives. In short, they use learning methodologies to facilitate their learning objectives. Hence, there is congruency of their learning methodology with their learning objectives. This finding is the same as the point shown by Elhaj and Ali (2015) that the learners will be demotivated if they lose their confidence in the method. Therefore, teaching methods play a vital role not only in influencing motivation and facilitating learning processes but also in enhancing students' performance.

The unfavorable attitude of the students relative to the statements (*I find the course beneficial for the methodology helps me improve my English communication skills*) and (*I find the subject helpful for the methodology allows the use of appropriate group-learning method such as simulation/game, a mediated feedback session or "real life" experience*) reveal that some of them perceive the methodology to be ineffective in improving their communication skills. Probably, the reason behind this can be accounted for the fact that teaching English in Vietnam focuses much more on grammar than communication skills. Students learn much about the parts of speech and their usage. As a result, students find difficulty speaking the language because they are not taught in a communicative way. Thus, English teaching is

taught more as a subject rather than a language by itself. Rocío (2012) shares an effective way to motivate and encourage students to study languages by applying new teaching method technologies because they will discover something different and funny.

Moreover, the unfavorable attitude of the students may be caused by lack of group activities or collaboration undertaking as a methodology used by the teachers. Often teachers resort to lectures which rarely engage and provoke students to communicate inside the classroom. As a consequence, the students get bored and they find the English language to be difficult to learn.

Attitude towards Assessment

The data imply that students are ambivalent (neutral attitude) regarding assessments that are utilized in medical English instruction. The results infer that assessments are not helpful to motivate students much in acquiring a foreign language.

The favorable attitude of the students relative to the statement, *It is delightful to study English medical course because assessment for the subject is aligned to that of the curriculum* implies that they perceive the constructive alignment of the subject matter to the medical curriculum. They look at the medical English subject as an essential component of their course. Probably, they see the importance of English language in the medical course because most books and recent trends and innovations in medical practice are all written in English. English has been considered as the global language for medicine and with this, the students think that English plays a critical role in making them become competent medical practitioners in the future.

Additionally, the favorable attitude of the students to the statement, *I like studying English medical course because assessment is aligned with the subject's instructional goal* reveals that they see the coherence of the learning assessment with the instructional goals of the teachers. Most often, the teachers use learning assessments that facilitate the accomplishment of the instructional goals. It may also mean that the teachers are effective in choosing the kind of assessment tools that are essential to realizing their instructional goals because once learners have a positive attitude toward both the teacher and evaluation method this will lead to a positive attitude towards English and studying English (Ivan et al., 2010).

The statement (*I relish the study of the subject because the assessment for the course is carefully planned*) reveals that their teachers think and prepare well for assessing the learning obtained by their students. They also think that their teachers are well prepared in assessing their learning because they employ numerous assessment tools just to determine their level of proficiency in the English language.

Summary Table on Attitude towards ESP

This finding of the study implies that the students have not yet developed a positive attitude towards studying ESP because they pay too much attention to their major subjects in the field of medicine. Students believe that those subjects are very helpful to their future career since the majority of their patients are Vietnamese, and hence at least some of them prefer to learn ethnic languages as they will work in mountainous areas to treat ethnic minority patients. In short, at least some of them question the need for medical English in their lives. Their attitude shows ambivalence or neutrality in liking or disliking medical English. This also implies the need to further develop their favorable attitude towards learning medical English associated with making themselves become globally competitive medical practitioners in the future.

Among the six dimensions, the students have the highest score related to learning materials and the lowest in learning activities. Although the highest score relates to learning material usage, it has to be stressed that students are about whether they agree or disagree. Significantly, the unfavorable attitude of the students in terms of learning activities reveals that they do not like the learning activities provided by their teachers. They find these learning activities to be boring, irrelevant and unrealistic to Vietnamese life and culture. This finding is in disagreement with the results of the study conducted by Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) in the Malaysian context, where "Learning English to be part of the culture of its people had the least impact on students' English language motivation". The finding may also imply that they need to have activities focusing on four macro skills as this study limits to speaking and listening. Infusing other macro skills in the study of medical English would make them more interested and engaged in all the activities of the lesson.

Students' English Performance Based on the Result of the CEFR Test

The poor mean performance of the respondents to both listening and speaking indicates that the students have not met the minimum competency required for EGP and ESP. Their general performance, therefore, is below the requirement of the B1 category under CEFR. Among 82 respondents, there are only 30 medical students who passed the B1 level requirement for listening and only 15 students passed the B1 level for speaking. This may mean that students lack listening comprehension skills and listening techniques, as a result, they have difficulties in responding to the questions and producing the utterances.

Test of the Relationship between Students' Attitude towards ESP and English Performance

This finding implies that having a higher grade in English for both EGP and ESP results in more positive attitudes towards ESP. That is, excellent English performance in EGP and ESP creates a favorable attitude towards ESP. This is similar to Quyen's (2013) result that students who possess a positive attitude toward English performance in this case means English speaking may get higher English performance level. Conversely, student who have a negative attitude toward English speaking performance possibly have average or low level performance. Differently, in Makrami's (2010) findings, students have higher motivation and attitude in EGP performance in contrast with their decreased attitude in ESP performance by the end of the semester.

The positive correlation between the two can be attributed to the fact that those who perform well in English EGP and ESP gain more experience and exposure in the ESP. Conversely, those who perform poorly have negative experiences and exposure. Furthermore, this finding could also be attributed to the fact that EGP and ESP teachers, who are able to influence their students to perform English in their classes, are more able to develop students' English performance and motivate them to have more favorable attitude towards ESP.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that the overall attitude of students towards ESP is neither favorable nor unfavorable. Among the six dimensions of attitude towards ESP, the students have the highest score across the learning materials and they have the lowest score related to learning activities. The students' English performance results for both listening and speaking are poor, that is, they have not met the minimum competency required for EGP and ESP.

There is a positive association between the medical students' attitude and English performance which means that having a higher grade in English for both EGP and ESP impacts attitude towards ESP positively, or in other words, English performance in EGP and ESP creates a favorable attitude towards ESP.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher would like to acknowledge her sincerest gratitude to the following people who in countless ways helped in the completion of this study.

Dr. Cheilito Antonio Malamug, her adviser, for his unselfish help, guidance and support.

The 82 medical students, her respondents, for their full cooperation during the conduct of the study.

The Board of Rectors, Undergraduate Training and Management Department, Head and members of Foreign Language Department of Thaibinh University of Medicine and Pharmacy, for their encouragement, support of the study, their faith and trust in her, and their wonderful collaboration.

Her family and relatives for their unceasing help, support, inspiration, encouragement, and concern for her during her research work.

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Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions below are designed to examine students' attitudes towards English for Medical Purposes (EMP). Please read every statement and give the answers as instructed. Do NOT write your name on this questionnaire. Your response will be anonymous and never be linked to you personally. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Please answer all items comfortably. Thank you for your cooperation.

Part 1: Bio Data

Please circle or write the appropriate response.

1. **Sex:** a) Female b) Male
2. **Parents' highest educational attainment:**
a) elementary b) secondary c) high secondary d) tertiary e) mastery f) doctoral
3. **Native Language:**
a) Kinh b) Tay c) Thai d) Muong e) Khmer f) H'mong g) other _____
4. **Years of studying English:** _____
5. **Grades:** term 1 _____; term 2 _____; term 3 _____; term 4 _____
6. **Class:** _____

Part 2: Attitudes towards ESP

Please indicate your attitude towards the following statements by circling your response using this scale

- 1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
- Strongly Disagree Disagree Uncertain Agree Strongly Agree

A. Lesson/Selection content

No	Items	SD	D	U	A	SA
1	I appreciate the content of English for Medical Purposes.	1	2	3	4	5
2	The wide choice of lessons/selections in medical English class excites me.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am eager to learn the selection/lesson under medical English class.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am enthusiastic in furthering my knowledge in medical English.	1	2	3	4	5
5	The content of the medical English is fun to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I study enthusiastically the content of medical English to get my teacher's and classmate's appreciation.	1	2	3	4	5
7	The content of English for Medical Purpose which includes not only facts but also concepts and values captivates my desire to learn the course.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I am interested to learn English Medical Course for it considers the interest of the learners, their development stages and their cultural and ethnic background.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I find the content of the course meaningful for it integrated and correlated facts, concepts and values in a coherent manner.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I find the study of the course appealing for it allows the students	1	2	3	4	5

	to reflect, elaborate on, clarify further and master what they have learned.					
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B. Materials

No	items	SD	D	U	A	SA
1	I enjoy learning Medical English course for it is realistic.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I find the course exciting for the materials available in medical English course make me enjoy the course.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I find studying medical English course worth learning for the materials prepared for the subject are appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I find the course beneficial for materials are of high-interest and foster critical thinking.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I find the course interesting for the materials satisfy the objective of the course.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I find the course very suitable for the materials have appropriate language in terms of sophistication and difficulty level of vocabulary.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I find English Medical very engaging for the materials are of high-interest, authentic and encourage the enhancement of communication and personal skills.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I find the course appealing for the design, format, texture of the materials interest me.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I find the course worth studying for the information contained in the materials is carefully chosen.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I find studying the course practicable for the materials are meticulously chosen to suit the students' cultural and ethnic background.	1	2	3	4	5

C. Activities

No	items	SD	D	U	A	SA
1	I enjoy the activities in medical English.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I find medical English course activities important.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I find Medical English course activities challenging.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I find the course worthwhile for the activities prepared in the subject appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I find the course enjoyable for activities prepared in English make learning fun.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I find the activities of Medical English very satisfying.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I find the activities very engaging for they are high-interest, authentic and encourage the enhancement of communication and personal skills.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I find the activities in medical English very beneficial for English listening and speaking skills were improved.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I feel comfortable learning Medical English for the activities because of a range of learning styles and comfort levels of the learners.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I find the course stimulating for the activities in the subject allow ample time for processing.	1	2	3	4	5

D. Time allotment

No	items	SD	D	U	A	SA
1	I am enthusiastic to study the subject for the time allotment is ideal for the course.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I find the course's time perfectly suitable to our needs.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I like the English lesson-hour for medical English course.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I spend extra time studying medical English course.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I find learning Medical English course very conveniently scheduled on the part of the learners.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I enjoy learning the course for the teacher spends the lecture time not just talking and writing on the board.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Study the course is enjoyable for it is free from unscheduled interruptions, public announcements, fire drills and other school activities disrupt learning time.	1	2	3	4	5
8	It is profitable to study the course for uneven transitions between activities and inefficient classroom management procedures do	1	2	3	4	5

	not disrupt learning flow.					
9	Academic learning time for the course allows students to spend time actively working on tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
10	It is efficient to study the subject for teachers to allow the efficient transition to help students move in and out of the room smoothly without waiting much time.	1	2	3	4	5

E. Methodology

No	items	SD	D	U	A	SA
1	Learning the subject is fun for the methodology employed in English medical class is enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I find the course enjoyable for the methodology employed fits the objectives of the course.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I find the course beneficial for the methodology helps me improve my English communication skills.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I find the course satisfying for the methodology employed in the course helps to meet our learning needs in the subject.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I find the course practicable for the methodology will help me later in my medical job.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I find the course interesting for the methodology makes me enthusiastic when studying medical course.	1	2	3	4	5
7	The methodology enables the students to enhance their medical related skills.	1	2	3	4	5
8	The methodology employed allows students to be involved actively in the learning process.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I comfortable with the chosen methods employed.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I find the subject helpful for the methodology allows the use of the appropriate group-learning method such as simulation/game, a mediated feedback session or “real life” experience.	1	2	3	4	5

F. Assessment

No	items	SD	D	U	A	SA
1	I enjoy the course because the knowledge, skills and values are adequately assessed.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Studying the course is beneficial because the assessment is reasonable, well-organized and methodical.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I take pleasure in studying the course because competencies are sufficiently assessed.	1	2	3	4	5
4	It is delightful to study English medical course because assessment for the subject is aligned to that of the curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I relish the study the subject because the assessment for the course is carefully planned.	1	2	3	4	5
6	It is stimulating to study the course because assessment is congruent with the content of the subject.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I like studying English medical course because assessment is aligned with the subject’s instructional goals.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I like studying English medical course because assessment give me an opportunity to improve self-assessment,	1	2	3	4	5
9	It is satisfying to study English medical course because the assessment encourages independent learning.	1	2	3	4	5
10	It is helpful to study English Medical Course because assessment contributes positive attitude towards school work.	1	2	3	4	5