

# THE ENHANCEMENT OF SELF-DIRECTEDNESS IN THE STUDIES OF ENGLISH BOOKS FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES: AN ANALYSIS OF ESP STUDY BOOKS

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim.** It has been acknowledged by research that self-directedness proves to be fundamental in learning processes. Despite the fact that self-directedness is vital in the perspective of lifelong learning, there is an insufficient amount of known research that focuses on enhancing self-directedness in the studies of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In order to expand the body of knowledge in this field, the aim of this work is to establish the types of tasks used in ESP study books which contribute to learners' self-directedness.

**Methods.** The study employs the methods of relevant literature analysis and comparative analysis of three ESP study books published by Oxford University Press, Pearson Education Limited and Macmillan, which are designed for the intermediate and upper-intermediate students of Business English.

**Results.** The comparison shows that the analysed ESP study books contribute to the enhancement of self-directedness through a communicative type of tasks (reading, vocabulary building, speaking, listening activities), which correlates with the categories of *Remembering*, *Understanding*, *Applying*, *Analysing*, *Evaluating*, and *Creating* of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy by Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl (2001).

**Conclusion.** The findings allow concluding that reading, vocabulary building, speaking, and listening tasks provided in the three ESP study books are designed to develop not only learners' linguistic competences but also their self-directedness.

**Cognitive value.** Understanding the types of tasks that encourage learners to transition from low-order thinking skills to high-order thinking skills, which enables them to self-direct their learning, may be of fundamental importance in the studies of English for Specific Purposes.

**Key words:** self-directedness, enhancement, English for Specific Purposes, ESP study books, Business English



## INTRODUCTION

Self-directedness has gained interest in adult education since the mid-1900s. Adult education refers to an international interdisciplinary study of adults as learners in all kinds of environments (Rogers, 1996). Such terms as autonomous learning, lifelong learning, self-managed learning, independent learning are frequently associated with self-directedness (Robbins, 1988). Self-directed learning includes learners' abilities to take the initiative, establish their learning needs and the most suitable learning strategies, create learning goals, and evaluate learning results (Knowles, 1975). These abilities contribute to students' higher levels of self-confidence, autonomy, motivation as well as lifelong learning skills (O'Shea, 2003). Self-directed learning also requires such abilities as being open to learning, having self-control, acting upon plans (Tekkol & Demirel, 2018), which are necessary not only in adult education but in the perspective of lifelong learning as well. Thereby, self-directedness is vital in developing personalities with the essential abilities necessary in a lifelong process of personal development.

The paper examines three ESP study books published by Oxford University Press, Pearson Education Limited and Macmillan that are designed for the intermediate and upper-intermediate students of Business English. It further focuses on the analysis of the complexity of tasks based on the hierarchical models as well as their correlation with the components of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) by Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl. Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) by Anderson and Krathwohl classifies different layers of learning processes that commence with lower-order thinking skills (remembering, understanding) and proceed to higher-order thinking skills (applying, analysing, evaluating, creating). These thinking skills are expressed in verbs that are designed to describe an active learning process (Armstrong, 2010). When learners are taught the elements of Bloom's Taxonomy ranging from low-order thinking skills to high-order thinking skills, they gain the capacity to self-direct their abilities (Herring & Somoye, 2019). The aim of this research is to establish the types of tasks that contribute to learners' self-directedness through ESP study books. The research focuses on the tasks in three ESP study books by Oxford University Press, Pearson Education Limited, and Macmillan.

The following objectives of the research have been set in order to specify the aim: to define self-directedness and analyse its importance by conducting a literature review; to revise the elements of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001); to present a comparative analysis by establishing a type of tasks that correlates with a certain component of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) in order to see how it contributes to the development of learners' self-directedness.

The present paper reports on the results of the research beginning with a literature overview, followed by a description of the research method. Then, the results are presented and discussed. Finally, conclusions are drawn.

## LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Self-directedness is essential in adult education. The term first appeared in the field of adult education in 1970s, and it is still widely applied in this area. The literature overview shows that most of the research focuses on self-directed learning in adulthood (Brookfield, 1985; Chu & Tsai, 2009; Knowles, 1975; Loeng, 2020; Merriam, 2001; Oddi, 1987; Roberson, 2005; Terry, 2006). As it is defined by Malcolm Knowles, who tremendously contributed to the spread of interest in self-directedness, the process of self-directedness involves taking initiatives, diagnosing learning needs, formulating learning objectives, choosing suitable learning strategies and material resources as well as assessing learning results (Knowles, 1975; Towle & Cottrell, 1996). It has been established that the adult education framework can be applied to the development of ESP curriculum. To illustrate, Nicos Sifakis (2003) introduced an integrative model by applying the adult education framework for designing an ESP curriculum, which showed that those adult learners who possess autonomy and a need to set goals for their learning processes can successfully participate in ESP teaching/learning settings. The findings suggest that such adult learners can become more self-directed when they are encouraged to be active not only in a learning process but also while planning a syllabus or setting lesson goals. In another study, Marion Terry (2006) explored self-directed learning by undereducated adults. It was found that undereducated adults had lower levels of self-directedness compared to the adults who were highly educated. Thus, learners' self-reflection of subjects, assignment topics, individual adults' learning pace, and participation schedules should be taken into consideration while nurturing self-directedness.

Researchers relate self-directedness with metacognition, which involves learners' abilities to control, evaluate, and create their learning process plans (Havenga et al., 2013; Karatas & Arpaci, 2021; Kincannon et al., 1999; Okoro & Chukwudi, 2011; Shannon, 2008; Suchanova, 2008; Suchanova & Šliogerienė, 2006; Victori, 2004; Victori & Lockhart, 1995). Students who are taught metacognitive strategies tend to be more responsible, independent and dedicated learners, who develop higher levels of self-directedness (Havenga et al., 2013; Shannon, 2008). For example, Steven V. Shannon (2008) found that students who commence to think "how they learn" and choose a certain learning style become more self-directed learners. Similarly, Joyce Kincannon, Conrad Gleber and Jaehyun Kim's (1999) findings showed that when metacognitive practice is incorporated into content learning activities, it contributes to students' proficiency to guide their own learning process. In another study, Mia Victori (2004) investigated learners' perceptions towards language learning. In this case, metacognitive knowledge and how it is dealt with in self-directed learning programmes were examined. It was found that there are structured questionnaires, including written ones, and semi-open elicitation instruments, including formal and

informal interviews, autobiographies, and students' diaries with specific suggestions. They all foster learners' metacognitive knowledge. Therefore, it is vital to develop students' metacognitive knowledge in order to help self-directed learning students gain control and responsibility towards their learning approach.

The literature overview also revealed that self-directed learning can be an effective tool in the perspective of lifelong learning, which has been defined as a vital element in education by the OECD (Schuller, 2008). Similar findings were reported by an investigation conducted in management studies (Boyer et al., 2014). The authors found that control, motivation, support, and self-efficacy play a key role in increasing learners' willingness for self-directedness, which, as a result, improves their performance. Thus, it is significant to apply self-directed learning in promoting lifelong learning skills in students. Along similar lines, Petra H. M. Cremers's et al. (2014) findings showed that self-directedness, which is essential for lifelong learners, can be enhanced in a hybrid learning setting, where working and learning are integrated. The authors also found that self-directed lifelong learning requires an implementation of a social learning approach that would also increase learners' proficiency. In another study, Ilkay Askin Tekkol and Melek Demirel (2018) examined the relationship between university students' self-directed learning skills and their lifelong learning tendencies. Their findings demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between self-directedness and lifelong learning. Lifelong learning consists of such abilities as a desire to learn, curiosity, self-evaluation, and management of appropriate learning strategies, whereas self-directed learning involves motivation, enthusiasm, curiosity, organisation, and self-control. The similarities of these abilities explain the finding that both self-directedness and lifelong learning possess a positive relationship and are directly related to each other.

It has been reported in the literature that Bloom's Taxonomy is important in enhancing students' self-directedness. When the elements of Bloom's Taxonomy are applied in a certain course in order to successfully achieve the goals of a course, students have a possibility to master a skill to self-direct their cognitive and behavioural abilities. For instance, Tanya Herring and Omotolani Victoria Somoye (2019) established that the components that include action verbs of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy have proven to provide learners with the tools and resources that are necessary for self-directing their cognitive as well as behavioural skills. The authors also found that these skills proved to be vital ones in the development of competences in business and law studies. In another study, Victor Wang and Lesley Farmer (2008) investigated adult teaching methods in China and what impact lower-order thinking skills and higher-order thinking skills of Bloom's Taxonomy made on adult teaching methods. It was found that teaching higher-order thinking skills of Bloom's Taxonomy to Chinese adult learners might encourage them to engage in a learning process more actively and openly.

As little-known research has been focused on enhancing self-directedness in the studies of English for Specific Purposes, this research aims to fill this gap and to contribute to knowledge in the field by analysing the tasks in three ESP study books and the way they correlate with the components of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy.

## METHODOLOGY

This research goal is to establish the types of tasks which contribute to the enhancement of learners' self-directedness through ESP study books: *Business Result* for upper-intermediate students published by Oxford University Press, *Market Leader* for intermediate students published by Pearson Education Limited, and *The Business* for intermediate learners published by Macmillan.

### Methods

The main research methods used in the present study included the analysis of relevant research literature and qualitative research methods. While evaluating the types of tasks through which students develop their self-directedness, it is essential to choose appropriate methods. Researchers apply a qualitative comparative analysis when there is a need to find a relationship between a case-oriented and variable-oriented analysis (Rihoux, 2006). For that purpose, the comparative analysis of the tasks in three ESP study books was performed in the study.

### Research Limitation

The limitation of this study is its scope, i.e. the investigation comprised three ESP study books; therefore, this limitation does not allow for wide-scale generalisations.

## RESULTS

This research aimed to establish the types of tasks that contribute to the enhancement of students' self-directedness through ESP study books by applying the components of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) and correlating them with the tasks. The results indicate that the three ESP study books contain a communicative type of tasks (reading, vocabulary building, speaking, listening activities), which correlates with the categories of *Remembering*, *Understanding*, *Applying*, *Analyzing*, *Evaluating*, and *Creating* of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). *Business Result* consists of 16 units, *Market Leader* consists of 12 chapters, and *The Business* contains 8 units. The topics in

each study book are related to business, which proves that these ESP study books are designed for the learners of Business English. The titles of units in the three ESP study books are shown in Table 1.

Table 1  
*The Units of the Analysed ESP Study Books*

<i>Business Result</i>	<i>Market Leader</i>	<i>The Business</i>
Unit 1. First impressions	Unit 1. Brands	Unit 1. Corporate culture
Unit 2. Motivation	Unit 2. Travel	Unit 2. Customer support
Unit 3. On schedule	Unit 3. Change	Unit 3. Products and packaging
Unit 4. New ideas	Unit 4. Organisation	Unit 4. Careers
Unit 5. Customer service	Unit 5. Advertising	Unit 5. Making deals
Unit 6. Ethical business	Unit 6. Money	Unit 6. Company and community
Unit 7. Making decisions	Unit 7. Cultures	Unit 7. Mergers and acquisitions
Unit 8. Outsourcing	Unit 8. Human resources	Unit 8. International trade
Unit 9. Employees	Unit 9. International markets	
Unit 10. New business	Unit 10. Ethics	
Unit 11. Communications	Unit 11. Leadership	
Unit 12. Change	Unit 12. Competition	
Unit 13. Facts and figures		
Unit 14. Culture		
Unit 15. Performance		
Unit 16. Career breaks		

Source: own compilation on the basis of *Business Result* (Duckworth & Turner, 2008); *Market Leader* (Cotton et al., 2010); *The Business* (Allison & Emmerson, 2007).

Every unit of each ESP study book consists of a few parts. *Business Result* contains three parts, including "Working with words," "Business communication skills," and "Language at work." *Market Leader*, on the other hand, contains five parts, namely: "Starting up," "Vocabulary," "Listening" or "Reading," "Language review," and "Skills." *The Business* consists of six instalments beginning with the first part called "About business," then proceeding to "Vocabulary," "Grammar," "Speaking," and "Writing," ending with "Case study." The details of every unit and its parts with the types of tasks may be observed in Table 2.

Table 2

*The Types of Tasks in Every Unit of Each ESP Study Book*

<i>ESP study book</i>	<i>Unit parts</i>	<i>The types of tasks</i>
Business Result	Working with words	Reading comprehension Vocabulary building activities Listening practice Speaking: discussions with a partner, in small groups
	Business communication skills	Reading comprehension Listening practice Discussing in small groups, pairs
	Language at work	Reading comprehension Discussing in small groups, pairs
Market Leader	Starting up	Discussion Listening
	Vocabulary	Matching words Filling in the gaps Listening
	Listening/ Reading	Text comprehension Completing texts with phrases Matching words
	Language review	Grammar revision
	Skills	Listening comprehension Discussions
The Business	About business	Discussions Reading comprehension Listening activities Role-play/ discussions in groups
	Vocabulary	Listening Gap-fill activities Matching Crosswords
	Grammar	Listening Discussing in pairs, groups Completing gaps Speaking
	Speaking	Discussions Listening comprehension Speaking while role-playing
	Writing	Discussions Reading comprehension Writing practice
	Case study	Discussions Reading Listening Writing Delivering presentations

Source: own compilation on the basis of *Business Result* (Duckworth & Turner, 2008); *Market Leader* (Cotton et al., 2010); *The Business* (Allison & Emmerson, 2007).

The types of tasks in the analysed ESP books were aligned with the cognitive levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001). The levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) are ranged in a bottom-up approach beginning from low-order thinking skills (remember, understand) and proceeding to higher-order thinking skills (apply, analyse, evaluate, create). The types of cognitive levels are shown in Figure 1.

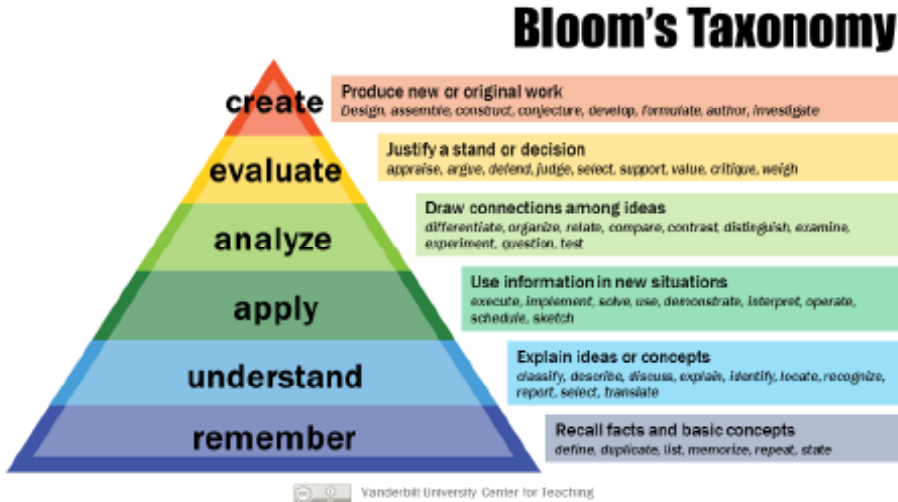


Fig. 1. Cognitive Levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy







Source: from *Bloom's Taxonomy*, by Armstrong, 2010, Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching (<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>). CC BY 2.0.

Each unit of *Business Result* begins with a reading comprehension, which shows that learners have to complete a reading comprehension task in order to recall certain facts and understand the general meaning. These reading comprehension activities correlate with lower-order thinking skills (remembering and understanding). On the contrary, the initial tasks of *Market Leader* encourage learners to discuss or listen to some extract in order to remember and understand information. For instance, the first unit is called "Brands" and its initial activity consists of brand names, such as "Coca-Cola," "Ikea," "Microsoft," "Tesco," "Chanel," "IBM," "General Electric," "Virgin," "Nokia," "Kellogg's," "Toyota," "Google," "Intel," "Samsung," "Ford," "McDonald's," "Mercedes-Benz," "Disney," "Marlboro," "China Mobile." In order to understand the general meaning and recall particular facts, learners are asked to decide and discuss with a partner if they were willing to purchase any of the previously listed brands. Further questions, such as "How loyal are you to the brands you have chosen? For example, when you buy jeans, do you always buy Levi's? Why do people buy brands?", enhance learners' cognitive levels as they encourage them to comprehend the topic more. Similarly, *The Business* begins



with speaking and reading activities, which correlate with the levels of remembering and understanding. Higher-order thinking skills, including the levels of applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating, correlate with vocabulary building, listening, and speaking tasks of *Business Result*, whereas *Market Leader* consists of listening, reading, and vocabulary building activities which encourage learners to apply, analyse, evaluate, and create. For example, in order to improve the vocabulary related to the first unit called "Brands" and use information in a similar context, learners are asked to match certain word partnerships to their meanings. "Brand loyalty," "brand image," "brand stretching," "brand awareness," and "brand name" are some of the terms that have to be matched to their meanings. In this way, learners' cognitive level and self-directed learning skills increase as they have to apply, analyse, and evaluate particular information. Meanwhile, in *The Business*, the complexity of tasks increases through listening, speaking, writing, and reading activities which align with the higher categories of (2001) and involve applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating. It is worth noticing that speaking activities in all the units of the analysed ESP study books are designed for both lower-order thinking skills and higher-order thinking skills, which means that learners not only have to remember and understand through speaking, but also evaluate and create. The results of the types of tasks and their correlation with cognitive levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) are presented in Table 3.

Table 3  
*The Types of Tasks and Their Correlation with Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001)*

<i>ESP study book</i>	<i>Bloom's level</i>	<i>The types of tasks</i>
Business Result	 Creating Evaluating Analysing Applying Understanding Remembering	 Speaking Listening Vocabulary building Reading Speaking
Market Leader	 Creating Evaluating Analysing Applying Understanding Remembering	 Speaking Listening Vocabulary building Reading Speaking
The Business	 Creating Evaluating Analysing Applying Understanding Remembering	 Speaking Writing Listening Reading Speaking

Source: own research.

The comparative analysis reveals the types of tasks that enhance learners' self-directedness. The complexity of tasks of *Business Result* increases from speaking and reading activities and proceeds to vocabulary building, listening, and speaking tasks, whereas higher level of thinking in *Market Leader* is required through speaking, reading, listening, and vocabulary building activities. The complexity of tasks of *The Business* increases from speaking and reading activities, and proceeds to listening, writing as well as speaking tasks. The findings suggest that a communicative type of tasks (speaking, listening, reading, vocabulary building) prevails in all three ESP study books: *Business Result*, *Market Leader*, *The Business*. The comparative analysis proved that tasks in the analysed ESP study books encourage learners to link existing knowledge by remembering and understanding with new knowledge by applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating. Thus, the communicative type of tasks develops not only learners' linguistic competences but also their self-directedness.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to establish types of tasks that contribute to the enhancement of learners' self-directedness through ESP study books. The main conclusion of this research is that a communicative type of tasks (speaking, reading, listening, vocabulary building) encourages learners to self-direct their learning.

More specifically, the findings revealed that the complexity of tasks in the analysed ESP study books increases gradually, which means the further learners proceed to completing tasks in a particular unit, the more complex they become. This finding was supported by the hierarchy of cognitive levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001) that emphasise an active learning process. When students complete one task and proceed to another one which requires higher-order thinking skills, they gain the capacity to self-direct their cognitive ability in order to successfully achieve objectives - in this case - complete a communicative type of tasks.

The most alarming finding of this research is that a communicative type of tasks (speaking, reading, listening, vocabulary building) in the analysed ESP study books is designed to develop not only learners' linguistic competences but also their self-directedness. A lot of teachers tend to assume that most ESP study books can be used to improve only linguistic competences; however, it should be taken into consideration that these tasks are designed following a bottom-up approach which encourages learners to increase their cognitive abilities by switching from low-order thinking to high-order thinking skills. Thus, the tasks designed in the ESP study books also enhance learners' self-directedness, which is vital in learning processes as well as in the perspective of lifelong learning.

This research may be found innovative, as no other similar investigations which focus on the enhancement of students' self-directedness through ESP study books have been conducted. The study contributes to the literature as it enhances understanding of self-directedness and its relation to other areas, such as adult education, lifelong learning, metacognition, and Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (2001).

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