

**Web-Chat Date: October 11, 2011**

**Topic: Applying English for Specific Purposes in EFL Classrooms**

**Abstract:**

With the spread of globalization has come the increasing use of English as the language of international communication, more and more people are using English in a growing number of occupational contexts. Predominately, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or English for Special Purposes arose as a term in the 1960's as it became increasingly aware that general English courses frequently did not meet learner or employers wants. What is the difference between the ESP and General English approach? How do ELT academics assess student's need, develop course curriculum, and motivate student's attitude for ESP programs? What are the factors influencing successful ESP programs? Particularly, how could ELT professionals apply effective pedagogical practice implementing ESP in their EFL classrooms whether this will be for academic studies, for vocational, and/or for professional purposes.

**Transcript:**

**Damon Anderson:** Hello everyone. Welcome to today's web chat on ESP. It is good to see you all.

**Damon Anderson:** Please feel free to begin sending in comments and questions. We will begin in just a couple of minutes.

**Chollada BKK:** Good afternoon kha.

**Damon Anderson:** Are any of you teaching ESP, or have you been teaching ESP?

**Phanisara:** Hello Everybody.

**Phanisara:** ESP should be the issues now for our EFL learners and teachers.

**Andy Halvorsen:** Hello everyone! I have taught a little ESP - for accounting and for marketing majors in an MBA program.

**sulaiya:** Good afternoon everyone

**Chollada BKK:** Hello Khun Damon and Khun Nina

**Tresha:** Good afternoon, Everybody!

**Damon Anderson:** As Khun Nina has written in the abstract for today's chat, ESP is becoming more and more in demand as English becomes a more important part of today's work place.

**Chollada BKK:** Now as we will be in the World Class standard school? the big job is to make the students to be good at English because it is the international language to use in connecting in the factory or working with foreigner from Burma, Laos, etc. so we have to make the new style of teaching English.

**Damon Anderson:** That is a good point, Aj. Chollada. English is now more than just an academic subject. It is a necessary skill for tomorrow's work force.

**Damon Anderson:** Is this true in all of your countries, as it is here in Thailand?

**Phanisara:** More and more as our students engage in such sources as social media and communicating in English with international audience; teachers should provide activities facilitating students to be more successful in applying ESP in their daily learning.

**Phanisara:** Very good point, Aj. Chollada.

**Damon Anderson:** What does this really mean for us in terms of our classes? I think it means we teach more to the needs of our students, for one thing. What do you all think?

**Marshall:** Good afternoon.... I think here in Burma, a lot of learners are very good at what they're learning yet they don't know the purpose of their learning English. So if anyone have any solution for that, please do share with me. Thanks.

**Damon Anderson:** Marshall, that is a great question. I think that one way to help students understand better the purpose is to do project work where the students help in designing the projects that are relevant to them.

**Phanisara:** We can view ESP from a more "informal" point of view, I believe. That is a project or topic based English teaching lesson plans that involve students to apply real world issues (i.e. climate, environment, ASEAN) in their English learning processes.

**Andy Halvorsen:** Yes, I agree. We teach to the needs of our students and give our students a voice in the content of the classes and the direction of the courses.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** As what Chollada says, In Cambodia and Vietnam people learn English because it will help them in their future careers. But students (and teachers) are often frustrated at the difficulty of learning/teaching English. How can we use ESP to help these students focus and progress?

**Damon Anderson:** William, good question. We could, for example, focus on office English and teach students good conversation and negotiation skills, giving them discourse markers for engaging in conversations and debates.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** @ Damon, I think one of the good points of ESP is that it pushes us teaches to think more clearly about 1) what do my students need now? 2) how can I help them get these skills now? instead of on 3) what do I have to teach from this chapter?

**Damon Anderson:** That is a good point William. It does force us to be more focused in what we present.

**Phanisara:** ELT academics (especially the MOE and policy makers) set the learning autonomy or life long learning as an educational objective. When Marshall mentioned about "purpose," I believe every learner has his or her own learning goals. That's why teachers should plan different kind of activities and provide students with choices in their learning activities. The flexibility will allow students to be motivated to learn.

**Phanisara:** I like William Wolf's points.

**sulaiya:** Hi everyone,I'm Somporn from PSU Demonstration School,Pattani Campus,Pattani province, THAILAND. Wishing everyone a better learning person via this webchat...

**Chollada BKK:** Now many schools in Thailand use this purpose :English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a sphere of teaching English language including Business English, Technical English, Scientific English, English for medical professionals, English for waiters, English for tourism and we were invited to have a lot of meeting with the our boss from the district area to change objective to motivate the students to have the best future of their life and ESP is the most important to follow. I think.

**Damon Anderson:** That is excellent, Aj. Chollada.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** @ Marshall, maybe one way to do this is to have students work for 15 minutes in small groups and come up with a short list of "purposes and settings in which I need English". Then have them prepare an activity outside class that involves this purpose/setting. The students might perform this in class or they might submit a script. The teacher could make corrections or give feedback on both and then share the results with the whole class (in a written form). This might help students focus on what they need, and it can save the teacher's time since the feedback for one group will help others in that class (and also others in classes in the future).

**Damon Anderson:** We now know that one size does not fit all. As William says, ESP can help us to meet the needs of our students. But what if you have a mixed class - mixed in the sense of language needs for different purposes?

**Phanisara:** Great samples, Aj. Chollada!

**Andy Halvorsen:** I like William's 15 minute idea here - doing this regularly will help keeps students focussed on long term learning objectives.

**Chollada BKK:** Thanks a lot kha Khun Damon and Khun Nina.

**Damon Anderson:** In Vietnam, does there seem to be a need for or a trend toward ESP?

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** @ Damon, I like the idea of teaching students negotiation skills and also helping them learn about and then correctly perform discourse markers. A book I used years ago--called "The Language the Meetings"--was very good for this. As teachers I think we often concentrate too much on vocabulary and grammar but not enough on things like pragmatics (the way we use language to do things) and negotiation and discourse markers are a very important part of pragmatics.

**sulaiya:** Somporn from Sulaiya's web...As we become Asean community very soon in fact....we are now emerged already...from my opinion ESP courses should be monitored nationwide throughtout THailand starting right now...if not it's gonna be too late to prepare our students to face with the ASEAN workflows.

**Phanisara:** Because of the MIX of different levels of language needs and interests, the more reason we need to provide differentiated instruction through ESP.

**Damon Anderson:** I believe that project work can help to address different students with different needs.

**Phanisara:** Great point, Aj. Sulaiya. You are from Pattani, correct?

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** One thing I like about an ESP emphasis is that it can encourage us teachers to create more teaching/learning materials. Since in ESP we are focusing on real world needs and not on any specific assigned text, we can make materials that we can then more easily use in similar classes in the future. This can also encourage us to collaborate with other teachers working on the same ESP subjects.

**Damon Anderson:** When one thinks about ESP, we often think about language corpus for different professions. There are many sites where these corpus can be found.

**Phanisara:** Like William Wolf's collaboration idea!

**sulaiya:** Yes, thank you Khun Nina...I'm Ajarn Somporn from Pattani...exploiting Sulaiya's machine.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** @ Damon, yes, in Vietnam there is a need for more ESP, though I don't think it's unique in that respect. As in probably most language classes in most places in the world, too often the texts and curriculum are too far from the students' needs (and present skills). But an ESP focus can help us teachers make (relatively short) materials that we can use right now and which we can re-use in the future.

**Chollada BKK:** Before I teach ,I always start with asking students in what term or topic they want to know and they should tell what they want to learn and they can help the teachers to decorate to lesson

**Chollada BKK:** And William's idea is very good.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** @ Sulaiya, you mentioned the ASEAN community (2015), and I think that can be one very good way to get students and teachers to use ESP. What might be some specific ESP topics you think students should work on that are connected with ASEAN Community (2015)?

**sulaiya:** Somporn...Once I've been in Siem Riemp and Phnom Penh...I firstly got impressed and surprised to see their people speak very good English...i can feel I was somewhere in....the English speaking countries.

**Damon Anderson:** I believe that when students are focused on learning English for a real need (not a perceived one), they learn better, deeper, and faster, than just learning English to pass a test in school.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** @ Phanisara, the mix of levels in a single class is (almost always) a real problem. But a ESP focus can help, I think, especially if teachers can provide in one class activities or materials in more than one level.

**sulaiya:** somporn...at sulaiya's ....what about English for ASEAN then.

**Phanisara:** I agree Aj. Somporn. Generally, from what I experienced, Cambodians do speak English better than Thai people could.

**Damon Anderson:** When I was in Turkey and went to the grand bazaar, I met young Jr. high school age students who spoke English very well and could ask me all kinds of questions. It was there job to engage potential customers and they could do so in several languages. But students in the schools at the same age could barely speak English enough to say hello to me.

**Phanisara:** I agree with William Wolf. Students with approximately the same language level and interest can even paired/grouped up to help each other with the learning tasks.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** @ Chollada, asking students to do a self-assessment is a good idea at the start of class. Something I try to do is to then give them a progress sheet on which they take one goal and then at the end of each week write down what progress they've made. They don't need to make a lot of progress, but if they make some each week, after one course, they'll have real improvement. Sometimes the progress sheet just asks them for overall progress, but other times I break it down, so they have to write what specific progress they've made (on that topic) in vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading, writing. This can also be used to create a portfolio which will document their progress and give them their own DIY (do it yourself) teaching-learning material.

**Phanisara:** And even the "corpus" of different linguistic difficulty levels and topics can easily be investigated by both teachers and students via the web.

**Damon Anderson:** Can we teach general English with an ESP focus? Should we?

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** @ Damon, very good points about Turkey and also about the ways that meaningful practice is usually more important than mere teaching.

**sulaiya:** Somporn...Woww...it really is...I wish Thai students to meet that kind of potentials like the Cambodians do...Thank you again Khun Nina...At least...you have experienced this the same as I did...and I'm dreaming for having the Thai people to be likely the same as the Cambodians' English learning.

**Chollada BKK:** Yes , we can teach general English with an ESP focus.

**Andy Halvorsen:** Damon, the example from the bazaar is excellent. It highlights the role of motivation and investment very well!

**Phanisara:** I really like Aj. Chollada asking students for their input. That is TOTALLY strange and not a method commonly acceptable in Asian context. Teachers don't ask students for their preferences; they simply (traditionally) just tell the students what they (teachers) want the students to do.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** @ Damon, I think every general English class should have at least some ESP focus. Many of us already do this when, for example, we have students give presentations on a topic that interests them. But I think that a key missing link in much of this is that we students often just give students oral feedback in class or we give them written feedback but then don't turn this feedback into some teaching-learning material that we can then use in another class in the future or with other teachers now (collaboration).

**Phanisara:** I believe we can and we should teach general English with ESP focus. Then that "general" English will become more useful for the learners.

**Chollada BKK:** Ha ha ha ..That is the ancient teacher. Now we should have changed new thing in our lesson plan.

**Damon Anderson:** William, I like your point. I think that lessons should not be just a single event, but should be linked to future classes (recycled information) and to things outside the class. Too many classes are just focussed on the time in class and maybe some homework, but that is it.

**Marshall:** General English with an ESP? I also think is a great idea. So students will know their target of learning better.

**sulaiya:** Somporn...the ESP courses should serve the needs both locally and internationally in terms of exposures.

**Phanisara:** Aj. Chollada....you are a model teacher.

**Damon Anderson:** Vivian has raised her hand. Go ahead Vivian and just type in what you would like to say.

**Chollada BKK:** ....William and Khun Damon .. the feedback will help us to make a new thing or new way for solving teaching problem, sometimes we teach in voice that maybe the students can't hear ,if they tell us .. we can make it louder or solve something better in our teaching.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** In a general English class, if students have trouble coming up with their own ESP focus, we teaches could suggest a handful (maybe 5-6) and ask students to choose. For an intermediate class, these might be appropriate topics: taking a reservation at the reception desk of a hotel, complaining about service in a restaurant, describing a class schedule to a new student, etc. The advantages of limiting the number of ESP topics are 1) it makes it easier for students to work in small groups with others who have the same ESP goal and 2) it makes it easier for the teacher to do time management and provide feedback (and create teaching-learning materials) for a very small number of topics.

**Damon Anderson:** While ESP may make English more relevant to the students, how do we cope with the need to pass "the test"?

**Chollada BKK:** Those are very nice and interesting lesson William.

**Damon Anderson:** I think that if we combine a basic general English with ESP, our students will be able to pass the tests and feel better about their English, and enjoy learning English more.

**sulaiya:** From Somporn...the ESP textbooks/courses should be more realistic rather than an English text/book...otherwise...it seems impractical in application...what is real...is the language use in daily life...not just a booklike.

**Phanisara:** Very good point, Aj. Somporn. Exposures to even different types of linguistic pragmatics, even with varieties of linguistic diversity and world Englishes in the local and international contexts. The use of video clips and other authentic materials would help.

\* Damon Anderson:

**Chollada BKK:** Is the test mean: National Test or ONET in Thailand. ?

**Andy Halvorsen:** In terms of having students come up with ESP specific contexts, I like to work backwards and talk to them about where they would like to be in 5-10 years and then decide on the types of English they will need in those settings. That can help to focus their study.

**Phanisara:** LIKE William's ideas. Great sub ESP topics.

**Vivian Tang:** Yes, ESP should be lectured in "time-bound" manner.

**LINH CHI DOAN:** Hello everyone,

**Phanisara:** I like K. Andy's idea on focusing first on the students ultimate plan then the students can detail and focus tasks and learning activities to achieve his or her goals.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** @ Damon, that's a good question (and one that I often fail to address explicitly). One way to do this is to use structured ESP activities. If the curriculum says "present perfect passive in grammar class" for today, we can give students an ESP activity that requires that they use this tense. Just telling them "use it" won't work. We need to structure the (ESP) activity so that it naturally leads to that grammar goal. So, to take a prior example of "taking a reservation at a hotel reception desk" we can tell students to incorporate "present perfect passive" in their activity: "after the customer has been registered, the key is given to her" or "Have you been told about some of the discounts we have?"

**Damon Anderson:** William, great suggestions. Teachers need to know both the requirements for the test and their students needs and try to blend the two.

**Vivian Tang:** @ Chollada: + TOEIC test

**Chollada BKK:** Yes , the students feel better about their English and enjoy learning if we use ESP ,they can make their goals in the best way, and the students will be the best world citizens in the future.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** @ Andy, working backwards is a GREAT idea. I kind of did that (both with students and also with my own lesson planning) but when I returned to college for an M.Ed, this "kind of" became much more systematic. Since that class, I now always ask why students to talk (and write) about "life goals" and "language goals" (not just "English goals") for 10 years in the future, 5 years, 1 year, and then for the end of the semester. It's the making of "language goals" and "life goals" for the near future that is the hardest. But after we've done this, I give them the Progress Sheet on which they have to show what incremental progress they've made each week.

**Damon Anderson:** Sometimes, teachers feel too tied to the required textbooks. They can just use the textbooks for introduction, reference and review, then do ESP group and project work in the class. What do you all think about this idea?

**sulaiya:** From Somporn...once the teachers make students perceive English as an international language...not a foreign language...in fact it is...I think ESP could help this point then.

**LINH CHI DOAN:** Am I right if I think that in order to help students learn ESP successfully, first of all, we should help them to acquire language patterns and grammatical structures well first?

**Andy Halvorsen:** Yes, students often get caught up in the "micro" parts of English learning (verb tenses, etc.) and lose track of the big picture. We need to help them see their end goals and chart their progress along the way.

**LINH CHI DOAN:** From my own teaching practice, students will learn ESP without difficulty if they are good at general English.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** Here in Phnom Penh I'm on an extended "between jobs" break and am working with some Khmer monks who teach ESL in the evening. I'm going to use some of the ideas mentioned in this Webchat to help them give more structure (through ESP) to the classes they're teaching. Their students want to learn English but have no real idea how to move forward. Using Andy's backward planning and Chollada's ideas about real world uses of a global language might help.

**Damon Anderson:** We are always happy to see these chats have relevance to your present contexts. With that said, we are almost at the end of today's chat. Does anyone have suggestions for the topic of our next chat in November?

**Andy Halvorsen:** Damon, I think ESP textbooks often don't work too well anyway in that they fail to take into account the very specific contexts and individualized needs of students. At the most they should serve as reference material for student centered ESP courses.

**Marshall:** I like the idea of "language goal" and "life goal". If we could bridge those goal by motivating students to bring relationship for those two goals and let them create more out of their related goals, that would be useful for their language learning as well as their ambition..

**Phanisara:** Linh Chi Doan, I think you can teach "language patterns and structures" through ESP.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** @ Damon, about using the texts for introduction, reference and review but then using ESP...I think that's a great idea. The biggest problems with this are, I think: 1) teachers not having enough time to make lots of extra activities and materials 2) and teachers not being confident enough in their ability to make these things. But collaborating with other teachers (either those in the same school or--by the Internet--with those from far away) can help.

**sulaiya:** From Somporn...it would be better ...maybe...to start the idea from the teachers first...learning

a language is learning to produce out that language...once the teachers help make their students acquire the language or whatever...I think we can see the success of learning or teaching a language...we teach students a language to make them produce out the language...through speaking...writing...or even reading....Am I right ??

**Ada C.H. Hung:** Good afternoon, everybody. Nice to learn from all of you. There are so many topics we can discuss about ESP but the time is limited. I think that no matter general English or ESP we are teaching, the most important thing is to have students know how to use the language instead of learning the language.

**Damon Anderson:** Ada Hung, yes, I agree that skill over just knowledge is best. Good point.

**Chollada BKK:** I agree with Aj Somporn and William .

**Phanisara:** I agree with Aj. Somporn. Production of the language is the goal of language learning---not just abstractly understand the subject of the linguistic nature of the language but actually being able to communicate in the language.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** As for topics for November, I'm trying to think of what my monk friends (who are both students and teachers of English) would suggest. What kinds of things do such teachers (and learners) need?

**Chollada BKK:** How about : How to use Language to develop our life /countries.

**Phil Owen:** @William, teacher-teacher collaboration is really a key. I've had other teachers use my stuff and I've used their's, but rarely have we ever collaborated. There is real potential in it.

**Phil Owen:** potential in it.

**sulaiya:** From Somporn....I agree with you...The work of the language teacher is to help students use the language ...not to learn and keep it without use...it's the language...we must to use it...

**LINH CHI DOAN:** I totally agree with Ada C. H. Hung: We should teach students in such a way that they can use the language as a tool in their future job and life

**Damon Anderson:** Two more minutes in this chat. Any final comments or thoughts?

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** How to help teachers (who know they aren't perfect in a language) use more student production in class? ...and the "(who know they aren't perfect in a language)" includes, of course, even native speakers (none of whom are "perfect")

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** I'd love to collaborate with anyone on this chat if you're interested.

**Damon Anderson:** Thank you all so much for participating in our chat today. I think there were many great ideas and concepts shared. There is definitely room for more discussion on this topic.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** Feel free to email me with ideas that we can explore. If you're a non-native speaker and want some ESP text on topics, email me, and I'll try to write some for you (at various levels) that you can use.

**LINH CHI DOAN:** How about the topic: How to help students learn English effectively with limited time in class.

**Andy Halvorsen:** Agree with William!

**sulaiya:** From Somporn....Yes...Mr.Damon...I'm Jude from Pattani...I think to teach is to help students use the language...once we get this idea out...whatever English courses we teach...it seems we meet the goals...don't you think ??

**Damon Anderson:** Jude, good to see you. Yes, I agree, but unfortunately many teachers either don't see this or don't feel they have the time or skill to teach this to their students.

**Chollada BKK:** Thank you very much Khun Damon and Khun Nina and It's the great time to meet all of you .The great teachers!!

**sulaiya:** From Somporn...We have a great sharing and learning today..Thank you all.

**Phanisara:** Thank you everybody. See you next month. Have a great day.

**Marshall:** It's nice meeting you all.

**Vivian Tang:** Same here: kshvt00@hotmail.com...."time-limited" or "English for event management"...those are my areas of interest. Thanks.

**Damon Anderson:** Thank you everyone. We will post the transcript. When we post the transcript, however, we will not leave the email addresses in. This is more for your protection. In the meantime, I will leave this up for people to read. Thank you so much for all the great participation.

**Phil Owen:** Bye. Wish I had gotten here on time.

**LINH CHI DOAN:** Thank you all for sharing your ideas. See you next time.

**Chollada BKK:** Time fly .. Bye Bye

**sulaiya:** From Somporn ...Thank you All. Have a very good day.

**Ada C.H. Hung:** Great to meet you! I will expect to meet all of you next time.

**William Wolf, Phnom Penh:** next time Phil!

**Marshall:** Thank you.

**Marshall:** See you all again next time.

**Damon Anderson:** The Chat is now closed. Thank you all.

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