

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ENGLISH FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES LEARNING OF INFORMATICS TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS AT HAIPHONG UNIVERSITY AND SOME SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT: In an increasingly interconnected world, English for Special Purposes (ESP) plays an essential role in equipping informatics technology students with the necessary language skills for their field. This article investigates the current state of ESP learning among informatics technology students at Haiphong University and addresses the challenges they face. These students often confront limitations in accessing authentic materials, insufficient speaking and writing practice, and inadequate integration of language instruction with their core curriculum. To enhance their English language proficiency, the author proposes a set of solutions. These include providing access to authentic materials, practical language application, collaboration with the experts, integrating language instruction with the core curriculum, and establishing language support clubs. By bridging the gap between language learning and their field of study, Haiphong University can better prepare its students for the global demands of the informatics technology sector.

Keywords: ESP, Informatics Technology, Haiphong University

THỰC TRẠNG HỌC TIẾNG ANH CHUYÊN NGÀNH CỦA SINH VIÊN KHOA CÔNG NGHỆ THÔNG TIN ĐẠI HỌC HẢI PHÒNG VÀ MỘT SỐ GIẢI PHÁP

TÓM TẮT: Trong thế giới tương tác ngày nay, tiếng Anh chuyên ngành (ESP) đóng vai trò thiết yếu trong việc trang bị cho sinh viên công nghệ thông tin những kỹ năng ngôn ngữ cần thiết cho lĩnh vực của mình. Bài viết này tìm hiểu thực trạng học tập ESP và

những thách thức của sinh viên công nghệ thông tin trường Đại học Hải Phòng. Nhóm sinh viên này thường gặp phải hạn chế trong việc tiếp cận các tài liệu xác thực, chưa thực hành nói và viết đầy đủ cũng như chưa được tích hợp việc giảng dạy ngôn ngữ với chương trình giảng dạy cốt lõi của mình. Để nâng cao trình độ tiếng Anh của các em, tác giả đề xuất một loạt giải pháp, bao gồm việc cung cấp quyền truy cập vào các tài liệu xác thực, ứng dụng ngôn ngữ thực tế, hợp tác với các chuyên gia trong ngành, tích hợp giảng dạy ngôn ngữ với chương trình giảng dạy cốt lõi và thành lập các câu lạc bộ ngôn ngữ. Bằng cách thu hẹp khoảng cách giữa việc học ngôn ngữ và lĩnh vực nghiên cứu, trường Đại học Hải Phòng có thể chuẩn bị hành trang tốt hơn cho sinh viên của mình trước nhu cầu toàn cầu của ngành công nghệ thông tin.

Từ khóa: Công nghệ thông tin, Đại học Hải Phòng, Tiếng Anh chuyên ngành

1. INTRODUCTION

In an age of global communication and technology-driven progress, mastering the English language is no longer a mere advantage but a fundamental necessity. This is especially true for students pursuing careers in informatics technology, a field intricately connected to the ever-expanding global network of information and innovation. The domain of English for Special Purposes (ESP) has evolved as a critical educational branch, catering to the specific linguistic demands of various professional domains. Within this context, our article delves into an in-depth exploration of the state of ESP learning among informatics technology students at Haiphong University. We also propose an array of innovative solutions aimed at enhancing their English language proficiency.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of ESP

ESP is a specialized and tailored approach to language education designed to meet the specific linguistic needs and communication requirements of learners within a particular professional or academic field. ESP recognizes that language is not a one-size-fits-all skill; instead, it should be customized to serve the precise purposes and contexts in which it will be used. Unlike general English language instruction, ESP is highly focused and aims to equip learners with the vocabulary, discourse, and communication skills relevant to their specific discipline or area of expertise.

As technology continues to dissolve geographical boundaries and foster international collaboration, the ability to communicate effectively in English is a fundamental prerequisite for

informatics technology professionals. This demand is driven by the global nature of the technology sector, which relies on English as the lingua franca for research, development, project management, and communication with clients and colleagues worldwide.

We will consider some of the following explanations in order to properly comprehend the term ESP. Hutchinson and Waters' is the first (1987: 19). ESP is described as a way of teaching languages where all choices about method and content are made with the learner's purpose in mind. This explanation highlights the need for ESP to give students and their movements the proper consideration when studying it.

The E, S, and P components of ESP have been explained in a comprehensible manner by Martin (1992: 16-23). One could interpret the 'S' element to mean 'specifiable'. "Languages for specific purposes" (LSP) is a general field that corresponds to the letter "E" in ESP. The term "P" in ESP stands for the learner's purpose, which is described as "a combination of ongoing intentionality and motivation and a predetermined or preselected goal." This definition of ESP provides us with a clear division and explanation of the three components. It is evident that the learner's objectives for mastering particular English have been stated in detail.

'Absolute' and 'variable' features are used by Evans and St John (1998: 2-5) to define the term ESP. This is what they define as follows:

1. Unchangeable features: ESP is focused on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), abilities, discourse, and genres suited for these activities. It is made to match the unique demands of the learner and utilizes the underlying methodology and practices of the discipline it serves.

2. Variable attributes: ESP might be associated with or tailored to particular fields; it might employ a different approach from basic English instruction in particular contexts.

ESP is designed to get pupils ready for "chosen communicative environments," where English "is used for a limited range of communicative events," according to Mohan (1986: 15) (in Basturkmen & Elder, 2004: 672). According to Richards and Schmidt (2010), "the content and aims... are fixed by the specific needs of a particular group of learners" in this manner.

ESP is probably intended for adult learners who are employed in professional settings or attend postsecondary institutions. However, as ESP is often meant for intermediate or advanced students, it could be utilized by secondary school students. Although the majority of ESP courses presume a basic

understanding of the language system, beginners can still benefit from them. This explanation introduces the ESP as meeting the demands of a diverse range of learners. It includes learning-appropriate linguistic elements and activities.

The author shares the belief that ESP meets the needs of the student in her capacity as an ESP instructor. This establishes the student's drive, mindset, and level of effort in studying ESP. ESP might be a specific English language learning environment designed for vocational learning, where students study the communicative language skills required for each particular field as well as the specific knowledge conveyed in this foreign language.

2.2. Key characteristics of ESP

- **Specialization:** ESP is all about customization. It caters to the specialized language needs of learners, whether they are in fields like medicine, law, engineering, aviation, or informatics technology. The content and materials are selected to match the terminology, conventions, and communication styles of that particular field.

- **Needs-Based:** ESP starts by identifying the specific language needs of the learners. This is determined through a needs analysis, which assesses the learners' language proficiency, their communicative requirements in their field, and their goals.

- **Authentic Materials:** ESP relies on authentic materials such as technical reports, research papers, industry-specific publications, and workplace documents. These materials expose learners to real-world language usage, including the jargon and conventions of their field.

- **Focus on Skills:** While ESP includes all language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), the emphasis on each skill may vary depending on the learners' needs. For instance, a business English ESP course might prioritize speaking and writing skills for effective communication in the business world.

- **Content-Based:** ESP often integrates language instruction with content from the learners' field. This means that learners don't just study language in isolation; they do so in the context of their professional or academic subject matter.

- **Task-Oriented:** ESP courses are task-oriented, aiming to equip learners with the language skills they need to perform specific tasks in their field, whether it's writing a research paper, giving a technical presentation, or negotiating a business deal.

2.3. Classification of ESP

Because the needs of learners vary from person to person and from group to group, it may be deduced from the explanation of ESP that these needs give rise to several categories

within ESP. For the purpose of this debate, various classification trends for the term will be examined.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 16-18) split ESP into three branches in the ELT tree:



Chart 1: Branches of ESP

These branches are divided into two smaller sections each: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes, English for Vocational Purposes or Vocational English as a Second Language (EOP, EVP or VESL).

They acknowledge that this classification “is not a clear-cut distinction: people can work and study simultaneously; it is likely that in many cases the language (EBE) and English for Social Studies (ESS) are used interchangeably.” Each of these branches is divided into two sub-branches: Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL), English for

Occupational Purposes, English for Vocational Purposes, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). As authors acknowledge, this categorization “is not a clear-cut distinction: people can work and study simultaneously; it is likely that in many cases the language learned for immediate use in a study environment will be used later when the student takes up, or returns to, a job.”

The many forms of ESP are suggested by Martin (1992: 39-41). He presents the five fundamental levels of specificity. These differ depending on how specific the learner, instructor, or course sponsor wants the learner's aim objectives (skills, knowledge, and affect) to be.

➤ Type I: The objectives are routine, predictable, and highly specific. The goals are focused on specific and common text types encountered, with a secondary focus on narrow skills. For instance, in order to staff their restaurant, a multinational hotel must train waiters and waitresses.

➤ Type II: The targets can be identified or predicted with respect to their types. Both content and skills are part of the objectives. There are two categories of text types that can be recognized: routine and non-routine genres. The English course that isn't for a particular company is one illustration of this kind.

➤ Type III: There are partially specified and partially unpredictable targets. The goals include a balance between content and skills. There are many different definable types among the text-types that are encountered. One instance of this kind of situation is when polytechnic students have to graduate with the English proficiency required by the workforce.

In summary, ESP recognizes that language is a tool, and like any tool, it needs to be honed for specific tasks. Whether it's medical professionals, engineers, or informatics technology students, ESP empowers individuals to

use English effectively within their specialized domains, ensuring that their language skills align with the demands of their profession.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

A survey was given to a sample of 100 students at Haiphong University in order to gather comprehensive data regarding the study of English for Informatics Technology. The participants include students currently enrolled in Informatics Technology, and all of them were informed of the survey's objective. The participants had finished the English for Informatics Technology course by the time the survey was conducted. It implies that they have a particular level of knowledge.

3.2. Instruments

In the process of the study, the author used the questionnaire approach for some reasons. The questionnaire is the most dependable approach since the information is provided by the students themselves. Schmitt, N. (2000) argues that learners should have some input in the process of learning if they are to have the best grasp of their own strengths, weaknesses, and personal preferences in terms of individual and cultural learning styles.

The questionnaire contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions and aimed to gather information about the students' accessing authentic materials, speaking and writing practice, and integration of language instruction with their core curriculum.

4. RESULTS

When asked about their access to course materials, the majority of participants (78%) stated that they use physical textbooks, followed by using e-books (10%) and lecture notes (10%). Only a small percentage of participants (2%) reported that their primary method is reading online materials such as articles and journals.

Table 2: Access to Course Materials

Access to Course Materials	Percentage of Participants
Using physical textbooks	78%
Using E-books	10%
Using Lecture notes	10%
Using Online articles and journals	2%
Others	0%

The majority of students feel the need for additional resources related to their field of study, with many indicating

this need on a weekly basis. This suggests a demand for more extensive and readily available resources.

Table 3: Need for More Resources

Need for More Resources	Percentage of Participants
Daily	15%
Weekly	45%
Monthly	30%
Rarely	5%
Never	5%

The survey also aimed to identify the challenging understanding of technical terminology students face while doing the course. A significant portion of students find it difficult, indicating a need for language support in this area.

Table 4: Challenging Understanding of Technical Terminology in English

Challenging Understanding of Technical Terminology in English	Percentage of Participants
Yes, frequently	15%
Yes, sometimes	35%
No, rarely	35%
No, not at all	15%

Regarding frequency of practicing speaking in English, a notable proportion of students practice speaking in English occasionally, but there is room for

increased integration of speaking activities in the curriculum.

Table 5: Frequency of Practicing Speaking in English

Frequency of Practicing Speaking in English	Percentage of Participants
Frequently	20%
Occasionally	40%
Rarely	30%
Never	10%

The majority of students find ESP courses at least somewhat effective in helping them improve their language skills (55%), but there is room for further improvement, with 15% said that ESP course was not very effective and 5% agreed that it was not effective at all.

Table 6: Effectiveness of ESP Course

Effectiveness of ESP Course	Percentage of Participants
Very effective	25%
Somewhat effective	55%
Not very effective	15%
Not effective at all	5%

Students find technical vocabulary and writing components of ESP courses to be the most helpful, relatively 40% and 30%. This information can guide future curriculum development.

Table 7: Helpful Aspects of ESP Course

Helpful Aspects of ESP Course	Percentage of Participants
Technical vocabulary	40%
Writing	30%
Speaking	15%
Presentation	15%

5. DISCUSSION

Within this context, informatics technology students face unique challenges when it comes to mastering ESP. These challenges are not confined to language proficiency alone; they extend to the integration of language learning with the technical aspects of their discipline.

The following are the main challenges identified by the participants:

5.1 Difficulties

5.1.1 Limited exposure to authentic materials

One significant challenge is the lack of exposure to authentic materials in English. Many students have limited access to English-language textbooks, journals, and online resources in the field of informatics. This hampers their ability to understand technical terminology and discourse, as much of it is highly specialized and may not be readily available in their native language.

5.1.2. Insufficient practice in speaking and writing

ESP learning should not be limited to reading and understanding texts. Students need to practice speaking and writing in the context of their field to gain proficiency. Unfortunately, informatics technology students often have limited opportunities to develop these skills. While they may excel in understanding the theoretical aspects of their field, they might struggle to communicate their ideas effectively in English, whether it is in presentations, documentation, or collaborative projects.

5.1.3. Inadequate integration with their core curriculum

The integration of ESP courses with the students' core informatics technology curriculum is often suboptimal. This separation of language instruction from their primary field of study can hinder their ability to apply their language skills effectively in a professional setting. In many instances, students may see language courses as a separate endeavor, disconnected from their core studies. This divide can lead to a lack of motivation and a failure to see the relevance of language skills in their future careers.

5.2. Some suggested solutions

To address the aforementioned challenges and improve the ESP learning experience for informatics technology students at Haiphong University, several solutions can be implemented:

5.2.1. Authentic materials and resources

To provide students with exposure to authentic materials, universities can invest in English-language textbooks, journals, and online resources related to informatics technology. Collaborating with digital libraries and other universities to share resources can help expand access. Additionally, organizing seminars, webinars, and workshops conducted in English can help students stay updated with the latest trends and terminology in their field. Such events can not only enhance language skills but also provide a platform for students to interact with experts and professionals in the informatics technology domain.

5.2.2. Practical language application

English language courses should incorporate more practical applications within the informatics technology context. Students can benefit from activities such as technical writing,

software documentation, and coding exercises in English. These activities will help them build language skills while directly applying them to their field of study. For instance, students could be tasked with translating technical documents into English or creating user manuals in the language. Moreover, involving them in research projects where they must present their findings in English can be an effective way to combine language acquisition with academic work.

5.2.3. Collaboration with industry experts

Engaging industry experts who are proficient in English can be a valuable asset. Collaborative projects, internships, and guest lectures by experts can provide students with real-world exposure and opportunities to enhance their language skills in a professional setting. This can also facilitate networking and mentorship, which can be beneficial for their future careers. Partnerships with local IT companies or international organizations can open doors for such interactions.

5.2.4 Integration with core curriculum

Incorporating English language instruction into the core informatics

technology curriculum is essential. Students should not perceive English as a separate entity but as an integral part of their profession. Universities should promote cross-disciplinary projects and research activities that encourage students to use English as a means of communication within their field. For example, group projects that require students to collaborate in English to design and implement a software application or solve a technical problem can be highly effective. Furthermore, universities should consider developing integrated courses that merge language and informatics technology subjects, giving students a holistic and context-rich learning experience.

5.2.5 Set up language support clubs

Establishing language support clubs within the university can offer students a dedicated space to practice English. These clubs can provide tutoring, conversation partners, and access to language learning resources. They can serve as a hub for students to seek help, practice conversational English, or work on language assignments. Additionally, language support clubs can offer specialized ESP courses tailored to the informatics technology field, addressing specific

language needs and challenges that students face.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The investigation into the English for Special Purposes (ESP) learning of Informatics Technology students has shed light on the language challenges faced by this specialized group. ESP is crucial for informatics technology students at Haiphong University and other institutions aiming to produce professionals who can compete in the global job market. Overcoming the challenges associated with ESP learning and implementing the suggested solutions can help students become not only proficient in the English language but also confident and effective communicators in their field.

By bridging the gap between language instruction and the informatics technology curriculum, universities can better prepare their students for the demands of the modern workforce. The importance of English language proficiency cannot be understated, especially in a field as dynamic and global as informatics technology. Through investments in resources, practical applications, collaboration with industry experts, curriculum integration, and dedicated support centers, a comprehensive ESP

learning experience that equips students with the skills they need to succeed both academically and professionally can be provided. The future of informatics technology is international and intercultural, and effective ESP learning is the key to unlocking its full potential for students at Haiphong University and beyond.

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