USING CHATGPT IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on exploring teachers' perspectives on using ChatGPT to teach English for Specific Purposes. The main objectives of the research include identifying the benefits and drawbacks of using ChatGPT in English for Specific Purposes teaching. After conducting three focus group interviews with ten teachers from three universities in northern Vietnam, the results show that teachers have used ChatGPT to simplify terminologies, tailor materials to suit learners' levels, translate terms, and create relevant exercises related to English for Specific Purposes topics. This tool also provides a vast amount of information and supplementary materials for teachers, promoting students' autonomous learning. However, concerns are raised about the accuracy and reliability of the information generated by ChatGPT, the risk of over-reliance on technology, equity in access, and challenges in using ChatGPT with existing English for Specific Purposes teaching methods. The study emphasizes the need for teacher training and investment in infrastructure to ensure the effective and equitable use of ChatGPT in education.

SỬ DỤNG CHATGPT TRONG GIẢNG DẠY TIẾNG ANH CHUYÊN NGÀNH: GÓC NHÌN CỦA GIÁO VIÊN

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Góc nhìn của giáo viên
Ích lợi
Bất lợi

TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu tập trung tìm hiểu quan điểm của giáo viên trong việc sử dụng ChatGPT để giảng dạy tiếng Anh chuyên ngành. Mục tiêu chính của nghiên cứu là xác định những lợi ích và bất lợi liên quan đến việc tích hợp ChatGPT vào giảng dạy tiếng Anh chuyên ngành. Kết quả phân tích ba cuộc phỏng vấn nhóm tập trung với mười giáo viên từ ba trường đại học ở miền Bắc Việt Nam cho thấy giáo viên đã sử dụng ChatGPT để đơn giản hóa các thuật ngữ chuyên ngành, điều chỉnh các tài liệu cho phù hợp với trình độ của người học, dịch thuật ngữ, tạo bài tập phù hợp liên quan đến chủ đề chuyên ngành. Công cụ này cũng cung cấp một lượng lớn thông tin và tài liệu bổ trợ cho giáo viên, thúc đẩy học tập tự chủ của học viên. Tuy nhiên, các mối lo ngại bao gồm độ chính xác và độ tin cậy của thông tin do ChatGPT tạo ra, nguy cơ phụ thuộc vào công nghệ, vấn đề về công bằng trong truy cập, và thách thức trong việc tích hợp ChatGPT với các phương pháp giảng dạy tiếng Anh chuyên ngành hiện có. Nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh nhu cầu đào tạo giáo viên và đầu tư vào cơ sở hạ tầng để đảm bảo sử dụng hiệu quả và công bằng ChatGPT trong giáo dục.

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1. Introduction

In the past, educators and applied linguists used the term EFL (English as a Foreign Language) to describe what we now refer to as General English. However, over the past few decades, the focus has shifted with ESP (English for Specific Purposes) becoming increasingly popular, particularly in countries where English is not the native language. The concept of ESP emerged in the 1960s, largely as a response to three main factors: the demand for specialized knowledge due to the rapid development of new disciplines, a revolution in linguistics that highlighted the importance of context in language use, and the focus on the learner as the central element of the learning process [1].

Strevens [2] defined ESP as a particular case of the general category of special purpose language teaching. He further identified four absolute and two variable characteristics of ESP. Accordingly, ESP's special characteristics included: (1) being designed to meet the specific needs of the learner; (2) related in content (in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations, and activities; (3) centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, and so on, and (4) in contrast with General English. Researchers reached a consensus that ESP is not a particular kind of language or methodology but rather an approach to language learning whose contents and methods are based on learners' needs. A prominent perspective in this respect is from Hutchinson and Waters [1] who emphasized that ESP is an approach to language teaching where all content and method decisions are driven by the learner's reason for learning. Similarly, Dudley-Evans and St John [3] also stated the goal of ESP is to meet the specific needs of the learner. It makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves; and it is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse, and genres appropriate to these activities.

The term "specific" in ESP refers to the particular purpose of learning English. Students engage with English through a field that they are already familiar with and find relevant [4]. This approach allows them to use English in specific, real-world settings and ensures that learners acquire the necessary language skills to perform effectively in their chosen fields. Hutchinson and Waters [5] even believed that ESP courses should be designed to meet not only learners' current needs but also their specific future needs. Therefore, ESP is often associated with a process to identify learners' needs, initiating "goal-oriented teaching practices and "process-oriented" learning [6]-[8].

Belcher [9] outlines the evolution of ESP, highlighting its numerous branches and sub-branches. ESP encompasses English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which is further divided into English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP), English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP), and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). Additional sub-branches include English for Vocational Purposes (EVP), English for Medical Purposes (EMP), English for Business Purposes (EBP), English for Legal Purposes (ELP), and English for Science and Technology [10]. In today's context, the emergence of even more sub-branches reflects the increasing recognition by various stakeholders of the value of ESP tailored to the specific needs of diverse professional fields, aligning with the economic growth observed globally.

While ESP is still in its development, the emergence of ChatGPT (Generative Pre-training Transformer), a chatbot officially launched publicly by OpenAI in November 2022 [11], really transformed the practice of English language teaching in general and ESP in particular. The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education has gained significant attention, promising to revolutionize traditional teaching and learning methods. As a device or system capable of thinking like humans, with the ability to learn, perceive, and make rational and intelligent decisions [12], AI technology in general and ChatGPT in particular has made a groundbreaking leap that revolutionizes the whole world. ChatGPT can perform a variety of tasks such as generating human-like text based on input, providing personalized assistance, instant feedback, and a vast array of resources. ChatGPT's huge database enables it to give comprehensive and

accurate responses to various questions. Because of these benefits, ChatGPT can be used in a great number of natural language processing tasks [13].

There have been a lot of studies on the application of AI in EFL generally. Despite the promising potential of ChatGPT in transforming education, its integration into the classroom is not without challenges [14]. While some educators hail AI, others express concerns about its risks. Regarding a closer look at the application of ChatGPT in ESP, a few recent studies emphasized the importance of using ChatGPT effectively to support ESP students' learning [15], [16]. In fact, there has not been much research on the perception of ESP teachers regarding the use of ChatGPT in the classroom, especially in the Vietnamese context.

Therefore, this study aims to fill that research gap by exploring the perspectives of ESP teachers on the advantages and disadvantages of using ChatGPT in their lessons. The primary objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the perceived benefits of using ChatGPT in ESP lessons from the teachers' perspectives.
2. Highlight the challenges and concerns associated with the integration of ChatGPT in ESP teaching.

By examining the viewpoints of ESP teachers, this study contributes to the broader discourse on the future of ESP education in the era of AI, offering valuable insights into how emerging technologies can enhance teaching and learning outcomes in specialized English programs.

2. Methodology

In this study, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis [17] serves as the primary conceptual framework for understanding teachers' perspectives on using ChatGPT in teaching ESP. TAM posits that two main factors influence users' acceptance of technology: Perceived Usefulness (PU), the degree to which a person believes that using a particular technology will enhance their job performance; and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU), the degree to which a person believes that using the technology will be free of effort. These factors shape users' attitudes toward the technology, which subsequently influence their behavioral intention to use and actual usage. This framework will help examine how ChatGPT is perceived by teachers and how it can be used in their teaching practices.

This study employs a qualitative research design, using focus group interviews to gather in-depth insights from ESP teachers regarding the advantages and disadvantages of using ChatGPT in their lessons. Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for exploring attitudes and understanding participants' experiences and perspectives in a detailed way [18]. The focus group allows for dynamic interaction amongst participants, facilitating the generation of rich and contextually grounded information [19].

The study involved ten ESP teachers from three universities located in the north of Vietnam. These teachers were selected based on their experience in teaching ESP courses (they have been teaching ESP for 5 to 15 years) and their familiarity with using ChatGPT in teaching practices. The participants varied in terms of their specific ESP teaching domains, which included English for International Relations, English for Journalism and Technical English, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives and insights.

The data collection process involved conducting three focus group interviews using Vietnamese, each comprising participants from one of the three universities. Participants were contacted and provided with information about the study's purpose, the interview format, and consent forms. They were assured of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their participation. The focus group interviews were conducted in a quiet, comfortable setting inside each university to ensure a conducive environment for open discussion. Due to logistical considerations, one of the focus groups was conducted online via the video conferencing platform Microsoft Teams. Each focus group interview lasted approximately 60 minutes, allowing enough time for discussion without causing participants feel too tired. The focus group interviews were moderated by the researcher, who

facilitated the discussion using a semi-structured interview guide. This guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about the teachers' perspectives towards ChatGPT in their ESP lessons. Key topics included advantages, challenges, and concerns in the use of ChatGPT.

Ten teachers were labeled from Teacher 1 to Teacher 10 to ensure the anonymity of the interview participants. The data analysis follows a thematic analysis approach developed by Braun and Clarke [20], which was later revised in 2019 [21]. It is a systematic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within data. The researcher carefully read the data and coded them by paying attention to specific words, phrases, or sentences that connected to the research questions. Afterwards, the researcher organized and grouped the codes into potential themes to highlight the suitable data in the context of the research question. Both approaches of coding (theory-led and data-led) were employed. To be more specific, theory-led coding (guided by predetermined theoretical frameworks) was used to identify themes related to the TAM model, while data-led coding (which emerged from the data without a pre-existing theory) was applied with insights that were not anticipated in the initial framework.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1. Advantages of using ChatGPT in ESP lessons

One significant advantage of Chat GPT is its capability to help students gain a better understanding of ESP contents. The participants emphasized their frequent use of ChatGPT to simplify terminologies and tailor ESP passages to accommodate different students' levels, which is particularly beneficial in a heterogeneous classroom setting as in their universities. "*When my students find one reading passage too challenging, I use ChatGPT to adjust its language level according to the student's proficiency, making it more comprehensible*" (Teacher 3). The interviewed teachers revealed that the proficiency levels of ESP students in their universities are not uniform. While the language level of ESP materials is mostly at B2, many students have not yet reached this level, making teaching difficult. Therefore, they use ChatGPT to simplify the reading materials from B2 to a slightly easier level. This adaptability allows students of varying proficiency levels to receive appropriate and targeted assistance, enhancing their overall learning experience. "*It's impressive how ChatGPT can provide customized examples and explanations. When explaining complex concepts, I frequently use Chat GPT to make them easier*" (Teacher 4). Apparently, the capacity of ChatGPT to deliver this type of personalized support helps address the diverse needs of students, ensuring that each learner can progress effectively. Moreover, teachers reported using real-time translation functions from Chat GPT to assist students who have difficulties with English in comprehending the material. "*This support ensures that language barriers are minimized, making ESP lessons more accessible to all students*" (Teacher 5).

Similarly, every interviewee reported regularly using ChatGPT to quickly create suitable exercises for ESP students. By generating vocabulary exercises that focus on topic-specific terms, ChatGPT helps students acquire and retain the language crucial for their professional domains. As Teacher 10 shared:

"*I usually list the vocabulary words needed for the lesson and ask ChatGPT to create vocabulary exercises with those words. ChatGPT generates various types of exercises based on my requirements, such as matching definitions, gap-filling, etc. The great thing is that these exercises are really appropriate with the disciplinary context*".

Teachers 6, 7 and 9 expressed their satisfaction with the speed and accuracy of ChatGPT in creating a wide range of reading comprehension exercises to help learners understand the lesson. "*From an ESP passage, I ask ChatGPT to create various reading comprehension exercises such as True/False/Not Given, Matching, Multiple-choice, etc. This is an effective way to ensure that students understand the content of the material*" (Teacher 7). ESP courses must use the content knowledge relevant to the learners' specific fields. Therefore, reading comprehension exercises designed by Chat GPT help students practice English as well as use content knowledge in the field.

The vast amount of information and resources related to ESP that ChatGPT can provide was greatly appreciated by the participants. Authentic materials that reflect real-world tasks and scenarios in the learners' specific fields are essential for effective ESP teaching. However, finding or creating such materials can be difficult and time-consuming for teachers. Using ChatGPT is particularly useful for generating appropriate examples and explanations as well as for finding such supplementary materials. For example, Teacher 6 viewed ChatGPT as an endless resource bank because it could generate numerous examples and contexts related to Technical English, which saved a lot of preparation time. This feature allows teachers to access a wide array of relevant materials without extensive preparation, thereby optimizing teachers' time and effort. In fact, ESP teachers not only teach English but also need to have a deep background in the specific discipline. This dual requirement demands additional preparation and ongoing learning. "*I myself have acquired a lot of knowledge related to the field from ChatGPT. Also, its effectiveness in providing content relevant to the specific field I am teaching is truly beneficial*" (Teacher 2). The ability to quickly produce content tailored to specific fields of study enhances the relevance and effectiveness of ESP instruction. Teachers can use them as supplementary materials for their students without spending much time looking for additional resources by themselves, thereby reducing the teachers' workload and allowing them to focus more on teaching activities.

The interview reveals that all participants encouraged their students to use ChatGPT. They observed that ChatGPT enhances students' responsibility for their learning and promotes autonomous learning so they allowed their students to use ChatGPT independently. Teacher 3 informed the fact that her students could use ChatGPT outside of class to practice and look for more information. This autonomy helps them become more independent learners. "*It's great to see students using ChatGPT to clarify their doubts on their own, without always relying on the teacher*" (Teacher 1). Teacher 8 told a story when his students quickly found out an interesting topic for presentation after asking for suggestions from Chat GPT. This leads to another primary advantage highlighted by the participants about the enhanced engagement and motivation among students when using ChatGPT. The interactive nature of ChatGPT and its ability to provide instant responses made learning more dynamic and enjoyable for students. "*My students seem to be more engaged when they interact with ChatGPT. It's like they are communicating with a real person, which makes the learning process more interesting*" (Teacher 4). This opinion was echoed by Teacher 5, who observed that the communication with ChatGPT kept students motivated as they enjoyed seeing how Chat GPT gave explanation and suggestions. The immediacy and interactivity of ChatGPT really stimulate student interest and sustain their involvement in learning activities, contributing to a more engaging classroom environment.

3.2. Disadvantages of using ChatGPT in ESP lessons

Despite the notable advantages of using ChatGPT in ESP lessons, the focus group interviews with ten ESP teachers from three universities in the north of Vietnam also revealed several significant disadvantages. One of the primary concerns raised by the participants was the issue of accuracy and reliability of the information provided by ChatGPT. Despite its capability of generating high-quality text, ChatGPT is not infallible and can produce incorrect or misleading information. Teacher 4 expressed this concern after witnessing some cases when ChatGPT provided information that was not accurate or completely off-topic. "*This can be very confusing for students or even for novice teachers if they believe everything generated by ChatGPT*" (Teacher 4). This issue is particularly problematic in the context of ESP, where precise and domain-specific knowledge is crucial. "*In technical English lessons, accuracy is paramount. If ChatGPT provides incorrect technical terms or explanations, it can lead to misunderstandings and misinformation*" (Teacher 7). Teacher 2 and Teacher 5 recalled a time they utilized an ESP document generated by ChatGPT but later discovered that the document was entirely fabricated by ChatGPT. Teacher 2 and 8 shared some instances when ChatGPT translated the terminologies

incorrectly from Vietnamese to English. The potential for errors necessitates careful monitoring and verification of the content generated by ChatGPT, adding to the teacher's workload.

Another disadvantage highlighted by the participants is the risk of over-reliance on technology, both by teachers and students. The ease and convenience of using ChatGPT can lead to a dependency that might hinder the development of essential skills and critical thinking. "*I personally feel that I am dependent on ChatGPT. I now use it daily to prepare all my lessons. Sometimes I wonder if I could be a good ESP teacher without ChatGPT*" (Teacher 6). Speaking about the students' dependence on ChatGPT, Teacher 9 showed his concern. "*I notice that some students tend to rely heavily on ChatGPT for answers rather than trying to think critically and solve problems on their own. This dependency can undermine their ability to develop independent learning skills*" (Teacher 9). This concern was further elaborated by Teacher 10. "*ChatGPT cannot replace traditional teaching methods. There is a danger that teachers and students might become too reliant on it and neglect the fundamental aspects of language learning*" (Teacher 10). There are lots of things Chat GPT cannot do as well as teachers in ESP classes. Human teachers offer empathy, encouragement, and personalized motivation, which are crucial for maintaining student engagement in a classroom. All interviewees reached an agreement that Chat GPT lacks the deep contextual knowledge and experience that teachers bring to their instruction because teachers can draw from their own experiences to provide better real-world examples. They can also create a sense of community and collaboration among students, fostering group work and discussions, which cannot be done well by Chat- GPT.

Access to ChatGPT is now uneven, leading to issues of equity and access. Participants noted that not all teachers and students have equal access to this tool. All ten teachers mentioned the issue that not every building in their universities had Internet access, so they could not always use Internet or ChatGPT in the classroom. Similarly, some teachers and students can access the Internet via 4G, while others cannot. This disparity can prevent teachers and students from fully benefiting from the advantages that ChatGPT offers. Teacher 8 commented about financial constraints. "*We know that the newest version ChatGPT-4 is the fully-featured version but it requires a fee, and the university does not have the budget, so we would have to pay for it ourselves if needed*" (Teacher 8).

Additionally, the participants raised concerns about the use of ChatGPT in combination with their current ESP pedagogical practices. While ChatGPT can provide valuable support, it needs to be effectively utilized in the curriculum to complement rather than disrupt traditional teaching methods. "*Integrating ChatGPT into our teaching practices requires careful planning and alignment with our curriculum objectives. It should enhance our teaching, not replace it*" (Teacher 3). All interviewees shared the situation that most ESP teachers in their universities now are still maintaining their well-established teaching methods. The duration of ESP classes is limited, so incorporating ChatGPT into the classroom could disrupt the planned syllabus. Additionally, the existing ESP curricula require teachers to adapt their teaching content and methods to ensure that the learning outcomes are still met, which is time-consuming. This adaptation process must be approved by the academic council and cannot be changed at the teacher's discretion. "*Without proper integration, it can be more of a distraction than a benefit. We do not have any guidelines on how to effectively integrate ChatGPT in our ESP lessons. All has been done based on our own experience after some trials*" (Teacher 6).

3.3. Discussion

The findings from this study offer valuable insights into the advantages and disadvantages of using ChatGPT in ESP lessons, providing a better understanding that aligns with existing literature on AI in language education generally. The benefits of ChatGPT in ESP classrooms identified by the teachers in this study are largely consistent with the advantages of AI-supported learning noted by other researchers like Luckin et al. [22] and B. Du Boulay [23]. However,

within the context of ESP, the importance and application of these benefits in practical ESP teaching scenarios may be unique to the subject. For example, ChatGPT can simplify terminologies or create vocabulary exercises with contexts specific to the students' fields of study. Chat GPT can offer an extensive array of information and resources that teachers can use as supplementary materials for their ESP classes.

However, the disadvantages revealed through the focus group interviews underscore significant challenges that need to be addressed to fully realize the potential of ChatGPT in ESP teaching. Issues such as the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated content, the risk of over-reliance on technology, equity in access, and the complexities of integrating AI tools with existing pedagogical practices present substantial concerns. The potential for inaccuracies in AI responses can lead to misinformation, which is particularly problematic in ESP settings that demand high precision and relevance. These challenges resonate with the concerns raised by Selwyn [24] and Hockly [25].

The implications of these findings for ESP teaching practice are significant. To harness the benefits of ChatGPT while mitigating its drawbacks, ESP educators need to adopt a strategic approach that includes continuous monitoring of Chat GPT outputs, fostering a balanced use of Chat GPT. Teachers should be trained to effectively use ChatGPT in their curriculum, using it to enhance rather than dominate their current teaching practices. ChatGPT should be used for supplementary support while traditional methods remain essential for developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Being trained to critically evaluate and supplement ChatGPT's outputs, educators can mitigate the risk of inaccuracies and ensure that Chat GPT serves as a reliable teaching aid. Therefore, continuous professional development is essential for ESP teachers to enhance their subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, and familiarity with new technologies and resources. Furthermore, institutions should promote equitable access to the internet by providing the necessary technological infrastructure and support to all teachers and students, thereby ensuring that the benefits of Chat GPT in education are broadly distributed.

4. Conclusion

The significance of this research lies in its particular examination of both the advantages and the drawbacks of integrating ChatGPT into ESP teaching. In terms of advantages, ChatGPT can simplify complex terminologies and tailor reading passages to in shape numerous students' proficiency levels, thereby enhancing subject matter unique knowledge. It presents translation assistance and generates contextually applicable vocabulary exercises, making it easier for students to increase their subject-specific vocabulary. ChatGPT additionally creates various reading comprehension exercises and helps find out a considerable array of supplementary materials, enriching the ESP curriculum. By boosting autonomy, it makes the learning process become more dynamic and fun for college kids, encouraging students to explore ESP topics independently.

Despite its benefits, ChatGPT has several drawbacks in ESP instructions. The accuracy and reliability of the information it generates can be questionable, probably main to the dissemination of wrong information. There is also a danger of over-reliance on the era, which would possibly diminish students' and instructors' essential thinking and problem-solving abilities. Issues of equity rises up when considering that not all teachers and students have equal entry to internet connectivity, leading to disparities in learning opportunities. Furthermore, integrating ChatGPT with existing ESP pedagogical practices can be tough, requiring careful plans to make sure that it complements rather than disrupts traditional teaching strategies.

The findings of this research provide valuable insights for teachers, university administrators and policymakers, highlighting the need for professional training, funding in infrastructure to facilitate effective and equitable use of ChatGPT in education.

Future research may continue to discover the impact of ChatGPT on ESP teaching and learning, with a focal point on assessing relationship of applying ChatGPT and student academic

performance. Research can additionally look at the effectiveness of different strategies for integrating Chat GPT into diverse instructional contexts, thinking about the various needs and challenges of different learning environments.

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