



# ChatGPT as a useful tool for ESP course design

**Zuzana Motešická**

looks at an interesting aspect of AI.

Initial reactions to ChatGPT were a mix of fascination and caution. We all marvelled at its ability to generate coherent responses in seconds but also expressed concerns about potential biases and ethical implications. The technology's broad applications sparked excitement and discussions about responsible generative AI use in various fields.

My first testing attempts included all sorts of questions, from when is the best time to trim oleanders to more sophisticated ethical questions. Very soon I realised that ChatGPT could be of great help for us language teachers and I started to explore its potential in the field of English for specific purposes (ESP).

ESP is a fascinating area allowing for a lot of interdisciplinary overlapping and providing a lot of opportunities to broaden your horizons – not only concerning language usage and communication. Teachers, as supervisors of the learning process and specialists of linguistics, get insight into fields of study they did not study. They are both teachers and learners. This aspect requires a specific approach. So what set of skills,

qualifications and characteristics should an ESP teacher possess? I will try to outline some key aspects.

## Language proficiency and content area expertise

- Proficiency in general English and the terminology, and the discourse patterns relevant to the ESP field they are teaching
- Familiarity with the subject matter of the specific ESP field (business, medicine, engineering) and understanding of industry-specific practices, conventions and communication needs.

## Pedagogical skills

- Ability to develop and adapt materials that are tailored to the specific needs of the learners in their chosen field; and skill in integrating language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking, mediation) within the context of the specific ESP domain
- Openness to incorporating technology and innovative teaching methodologies into the ESP curriculum

- Flexibility to adjust teaching methods based on the evolving needs of the industry or profession
- Ability to effectively convey complex concepts and terminology in a clear and accessible manner
- Skill in designing assessments that reflect real-world communication tasks within the specific industry
- Ability to provide constructive feedback to help learners improve their language skills in a professional context.

## Interdisciplinary collaboration and continuous professional development

- Willingness to collaborate with professionals from other disciplines
- Growth mindset: engagement in ongoing professional development activities to stay updated on advancements in both language teaching methodologies and the ESP related specific topics.

In summary, teachers of ESP courses ideally have a combination of language proficiency, subject matter overview and

pedagogical skills to effectively prepare learners for communication within their specific professional contexts. Let us have a closer look at some possibilities how ChatGPT could help ESP teachers in course design in order to master this complex process. In this article I would like to share my experience using ChatGPT for designing ESP lesson activities, not how to use it directly in lessons with students. Here are some areas suitable for incorporating ChatGPT into ESP course design.

## Vocabulary and topic selections

It is quite demanding to find out which vocabulary is relevant and really used in specific fields of science and work practice, especially when ESP teachers start to teach a new field. In this situation ChatGPT could be of great help to generate context-specific vocabulary lists tailored to the industry or profession of the learners. AI can also contribute to more precise and relevant topic selection for discussions and further work in the lessons. Here are some examples of prompts for medicine:

- Give me the 15 most frequently used words / expressions in dermatology / urology / surgery and their definitions.
- Give me the ten most common children's diseases.
- Give me the five most common tropical diseases.
- Which topics should be discussed in ESP courses for medical students?
- Give me the five most relevant questions about ethics in the field of medicine.
- Give me the most relevant 20 expressions concerning operations.
- Give me the ten most frequently used verbs in scientific medical texts.

## Text production and/or adaptation

Using ChatGPT for text creation in ESP offers several advantages. It can quickly generate tailored, domain-specific content to meet the needs of learners in specialised fields like business, medicine or technology. This enhances efficiency by providing relevant vocabulary and

context-specific language, saving time for the instructor. Moreover, ChatGPT can adapt texts to different proficiency levels, which is especially useful in heterogeneous groups, a common scenario in ESP courses. This is particularly helpful for A2-level learners, where authentic texts may be too lengthy or complex in their full form.

ChatGPT is also an excellent tool for creating short texts for testing purposes, allowing to focus on specific language structures and vocabulary covered in the course. The generated texts can differ from those in the coursebook, providing variety while reinforcing key concepts.

Understanding and defining concepts or processes are essential skills practised in ESP classes, and AI can assist in this area. By generating definitions, AI provides material that teachers can use to prepare reading comprehension tasks, whether for class activities or tests. It offers variety, helping students encounter different ways of expressing the same idea, which deepens their understanding. This approach makes lesson preparation quicker and more flexible, giving instructors more time to focus on other aspects of teaching.

Here are some aspects to consider when formulating prompts:

- **Length of the text:** define the desired word count or range to ensure the text fits the task.
- **Language level:** specify the proficiency level (A2, B1, C1) to match the students' abilities.
- **Target vocabulary or grammar structures:** include specific words or grammatical forms that should appear in the text to reinforce learning.
- **Style:** indicate the desired tone or style (academic, scientific, informal) to suit the context.
- **Text type:** specify the format (article, dictionary entry, essay, statement) to guide the structure and purpose of the text.

This approach helps ensure that the generated text aligns with your teaching objectives.

## Task production

Generative AI can be a significant timesaver, which is especially valuable considering the busy lives of teachers. It can generate tasks based on a given text or vocabulary set in seconds, tasks that would otherwise take hours to create. These include activities like gap-filling exercises, true/false statements, comprehension questions, word formation tasks and definitions. By automating such repetitive tasks, AI frees up teachers to focus on what truly matters: engaging students, refining lesson plans and fostering a more dynamic learning environment.

Other areas where generative AI can be particularly helpful include open-ended tasks, such as generating discussion questions, designing real-life scenarios within a professional context, providing instructions for role plays and supporting project-based learning. AI can assist in creating authentic learning content that helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills relevant to their future careers.

Generative AI can be a very helpful and efficient tool, but it cannot fully replace the teacher. Without precise formulation of prompts and careful editing and implementation of the generated teaching material, AI would be of little value. The prepared texts and tasks need to be reviewed, as they may sometimes contain mistakes, be too easy or become repetitive. Often, several adjustments are necessary to ensure the final result meets the desired quality. Therefore, it's more of a collaborative process, where AI serves as a support tool rather than a replacement for the teacher.



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