

CHAPTER 18

Teaching English for Occupational Purposes

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and internationalized labor markets, English has become an essential tool for employability, particularly in non-English-speaking countries. This has led to the emergence of *English for Occupational Purposes (EOP)* as a vital branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), focusing on preparing learners for effective communication in real workplace settings. EOP equips learners not only with language proficiency but also with communication strategies and industry-specific terminology that are crucial across professions such as business, healthcare, engineering, and tourism. The increasing use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) at universities further reinforces the relevance of EOP, as students are now expected to demonstrate language competence that extends beyond academic contexts into the professional world (Ekinci & Ekinci, 2025)

Despite its growing importance, EOP remains underdeveloped in many higher education institutions, especially in regions where General English still dominates the curriculum. Ibhar et al., (2025) highlight that while profession-specific English is widely acknowledged as a key graduate attribute, its integration into university programs is often minimal. Moreover, effective EOP instruction requires more than language training—it demands needs-based curriculum design, contextualized learning materials, and industry-informed teaching

approaches. Singh, N. (2018) underscores the necessity of research-driven needs analysis, strategic instructional planning, and motivational teaching methods to ensure successful EOP training programs. These insights reveal a critical need to systematically study and enhance EOP pedagogy, particularly in relation to syllabus design, digital integration, and workplace-aligned assessments, to better support students in becoming competent communicators in their respective fields.

2. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

2.1 Course Objective and Content

The English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) course aims to equip learners with practical language skills for real-world professional contexts. It focuses on developing the ability to use appropriate English forms in both written and spoken communication at work (Sarudin et al., 2013), as well as building job-specific communicative competence, including technical vocabulary and discourse practices (Ke & Yang, 2018). Learners are trained to function in authentic workplace situations—such as meetings, emails, and client interactions—while also developing cross-cultural awareness and appropriate register use (Guan, 2016; Huan, 2019). EOP further supports employability by targeting communication tasks needed for job entry, performance, and progression (Huan, 2019), and enhances fluency through interactive methods like peer collaboration and simulations (Fatima & Bouhadjer Fethi, 2023). Importantly, it also considers adult learners’ diverse needs by promoting lesson planning that adapts to varied learning styles, motivations, and life stages (Blanco-Navarro et al., 2026).

A core principle underlying the EOP course is Needs Analysis (NA), which determines target needs and authentic job-related tasks (Mohammed, 2025). This ensures that the syllabus is relevant, practical, and learner-centered. The topics in this EOP course are carefully selected based on several pedagogical and practical considerations. First, they respond to market demands for job-specific communicative competence, ensuring that learners are equipped with the language needed to function effectively in their chosen professions (Ke & Yang, 2018). Second, the syllabus reflects the need for cognitive development beyond mere language acquisition, encouraging learners to engage in

deeper thinking related to their occupational contexts (Mohammed, 2025). Third, the content emphasizes authenticity and alignment with real-world job tasks, making the instruction both functional and goal-oriented (Huan, 2019). Additionally, there is a strong focus on the integration of professional knowledge with language skills, which supports long-term retention and meaningful application of the content in workplace settings (Huan, 2019)

2.2 Teaching Method

The teaching of English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) requires approaches that go beyond traditional lecture-based instruction. EOP learners are often adult or vocational students who need immediate, practical, and relevant language skills for real-world application. Therefore, the most effective instructional methods are those that are learner-centered, task-based, interactive, and reflective of actual workplace communication. Several studies highlight the importance of making EOP courses more engaging, practical, and reflective of industry needs. For instance, Sarudin et al., (2013) report that over 90% of students preferred a fun and interactive approach, and critiques of the program noted an overemphasis on theory, lack of practical experience, and insufficient use of technology. As a result, recommended methods include project-oriented models, case studies from industry, hands-on document analysis, and collaborative writing activities, all of which offer students realistic exposure to occupational English use. Integration of digital tools—such as mobile apps, online platforms, and multimedia—is also encouraged to enhance learner engagement and simulate authentic communication scenarios.

Ke & Yang (2018) propose a range of flexible and varied teaching methods, especially task-based learning, project-based learning, and role-play, which place real-world tasks at the center of instruction. These methods motivate students by allowing them to learn through performance, rather than passive absorption. Evaluation in such a context is best done through formative assessments, such as peer feedback, self-assessment, group evaluation, and teacher reviews, combined with summative performance tasks. Similarly, Huan (2019) emphasizes a student-centered “training-based” model, where learners

engage in continuous classroom practice through group-based tasks, situational simulations, and micro-lesson video recordings. This approach leverages situational interaction methods to immerse students in realistic work environments and help them develop both language fluency and workplace confidence. Furthermore, Huan advocates for a three-stage evaluation model—incorporating class participation, mid-term project, and final assessment—to encourage consistent engagement and skill accumulation throughout the semester.

2.3 Activity Types

Teaching activities in an English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) course must reflect the authentic use of language in workplace contexts. Unlike general English instruction, EOP focuses on preparing learners to communicate effectively in real job scenarios. Therefore, the learning process should be grounded in task-based, hands-on, and learner-centered activities that simulate professional environments. According to Sarudin et al., (2013), effective EOP delivery should include practical activities that give students opportunities to apply language in realistic situations. In fact, the authors suggest that the course be extended across two semesters to allow more space for such activities, indicating the importance of in-depth language practice. Additionally, Blanco-Navarro et al., (2026) highlight the challenge of designing meaningful yet time-efficient activities for adult learners, emphasizing the need to balance thorough instruction with respect for learners' limited availability. Activities like role-plays, collaborative writing, and authentic document analysis can bridge the gap between classroom learning and workplace application while maintaining engagement through relevance and practicality. These formats also boost student engagement, especially when aligned with their future job roles and communication needs.

2.4 Materials and Media

An effective *English for Occupational Purposes (EOP)* course must be supported by up-to-date, relevant, and context-specific materials that reflect the communicative needs of the modern workplace. The course content should go beyond generic textbooks and integrate authentic

resources, multimedia tools, and task-based learning aids aligned with real-world professional practices. The importance of a comprehensive curriculum includes useful workplace skills and updated training materials. The course materials should not only teach language functions but also provide learners with exposure to real occupational genres such as emails, reports, manuals, meeting notes, and interview scripts. Incorporating varied and current materials ensures that learners are familiar with contemporary workplace language and expectations.

EOP courses utilize a diverse range of materials and media to support practical and engaging learning. Authentic workplace documents—such as memos, emails, job advertisements, and CV templates—help expose learners to real job communication formats. Industry-specific texts, like medical charts or technical manuals, build field-related vocabulary and discourse familiarity. Audio-visual media, including training videos and workplace podcasts, aid listening comprehension and pronunciation. Interactive tools like Kahoot, Padlet, and Google Docs promote collaboration and learner autonomy (Hasbi, 2021). Simulations and case studies offer contextualized practice through role-play prompts and scenario scripts. In addition, the integration of technology and media plays a critical role in enhancing engagement and authenticity. Tools such as videos, podcasts, recorded interviews, virtual simulations, and mobile applications can simulate professional contexts and offer multimodal input. Digital platforms (e.g., Google Workspace, Zoom, Canva, Grammarly) can also be used to support collaborative learning and real-time communication practice (Hasbi et al., 2025).

2.5 Vocabulary and Grammar Building

In *English for Occupational Purposes (EOP)*, vocabulary and grammar instruction is not simply a repetition of general English principles but must be tailored to the linguistic demands of specific professions. While many EOP programs emphasize productive skills (speaking and writing), the importance of receptive skills—especially vocabulary acquisition, grammar control, and pronunciation—remains central (Sarudin et al., 2013). Mastery of these foundational elements is necessary for learners to function accurately and confidently in

occupational contexts. In addition, productive skills can only develop effectively when supported by proper grammar and vocabulary instruction, which includes exposure to technical terms, professional collocations, and workplace-specific sentence structures. These language elements enable learners to engage in industry-related communication tasks such as writing reports, participating in meetings, or understanding instructions. Therefore, an EOP program must integrate grammar and vocabulary not in isolation, but as part of task-based, context-rich activities that reflect real-world scenarios.

2.6 Targeted Language Skills

In the English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) branch of ESP, there is a clear priority on productive skills—namely speaking and writing—over receptive skills such as reading and listening. This is because professional environments demand employees who can actively communicate, present ideas, and write formal documents in English, rather than just understand them passively. Sarudin et al., (2013) emphasize that oral communication is the most essential language skill in the workplace, both for day-to-day operations and for career advancement. Their findings indicate that approximately 70% of English language use during job interviews and work-related evaluations involves speaking, while 30% relates to writing tasks. Additionally, speaking skills—such as participating in meetings, giving presentations, and handling customer interactions—are often directly linked to job success and promotion opportunities. Writing, although slightly less emphasized, is still critical in the form of emails, reports, proposals, and documentation.

While receptive skills like reading and listening are not ignored, their primary function in EOP is to support the development of speaking and writing abilities. For example, reading job-related documents helps learners understand professional formats and tone, while listening to meetings or client instructions improves verbal responsiveness and accuracy in spoken tasks. In sector-specific contexts such as the oil and gas industry, however, listening takes precedence due to the high frequency of meetings and verbal briefings. Nugraha & Zaki, (2024) found that listening is the most essential skill in this field,

followed by speaking, reading, and writing. Workers often struggle most with listening in meetings, speaking during phone calls or when explaining work progress, and writing emails. These findings underscore the need for targeted skill development tailored to specific professional domains, where receptive skills may hold greater weight depending on workplace demands.

2.7 Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment in English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) must extend beyond traditional final exams to effectively measure learners' readiness for real-world communication. Since the primary goal of EOP is to build communicative competence in professional contexts, both formative and summative evaluations are necessary. Sarudin et al., (2013) emphasize the importance of continuous assessment methods such as oral presentations, written assignments, role-plays, and project-based tasks—complemented by a final written exam. These varied formats allow learners to demonstrate proficiency across different workplace functions. Ke & Yang, (2018)) also advocate for blending teacher feedback, peer evaluations, and group projects with final assessments to ensure a more complete and authentic evaluation of language skills (Hasbi et al., 2026).

EOP courses benefit from a multi-dimensional approach that integrates teacher evaluation, peer review, self-assessment, and performance-based tasks. This model supports a more comprehensive view of learners' language use, where rubrics guide objective grading, peer input enriches collaborative learning, and self-reflection fosters learner autonomy. Simulated workplace tasks—such as writing reports, participating in meetings, or resolving customer complaints—serve as authentic performance-based assessments. Huan (2019) proposes a three-stage structure: ongoing classroom performance, a midterm project, and a final task, which keeps students consistently engaged. Fatima & Bouhadjer Fethi (2023) further stress the need to evaluate all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—while linking performance to real job requirements. They also recommend issuing a certificate upon course completion, reinforcing the course's vocational value.

3. FURTHER DISCUSSION

Recent developments in EOP teaching have sparked a growing interest in curriculum reform, digital innovation, and communicative competence as central pillars for improving learner outcomes. (Li, 2024) highlights the critical need to align EOP instruction with market-driven competencies by integrating practical teaching, school-industry partnerships, and digital learning ecosystems. This development model not only addresses linguistic proficiency but also builds learners' intercultural and problem-solving abilities. The call for top-down instructional planning—through institutional support, expert involvement, and leadership coordination—marks a shift from teacher-centered delivery to systemic, outcomes-based design.

At the same time, digital technology is reshaping EOP classrooms through the adoption of simulation-based tools and augmented reality (AR) that provide authentic professional contexts for language use. Amerian (2025) emphasizes how these tools enhance contextualized learning, improving language retention and learner engagement by immersing students in real-world scenarios. However, challenges remain in syllabus design and implementation, as noted by Marisa & Nurcholifah (2023), who call for better integration between policy, syllabus development, and classroom realities. These insights suggest that EOP's future lies in adaptive, tech-enhanced, and collaboration-rich teaching models, with continued research needed to evaluate their effectiveness across diverse educational contexts.

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