

## Report on Webinar on ESP

The 75- minute lively and interactive webinar on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2017, the first of its kind organized by the ELT@I Besig ChairMs. Lalitha Murthy and her dedicated team, was a unique and edifying experience for ELT professionals like me, who had the privilege of attending it.

The choice of the presenter, Evan Frendo, was a master stroke I would say. In many conferences and seminars we have 'experts' who have very little direct and current contact with the classroom/training room realities. In Evan we had an ESP specialist with enviable multidimensional qualities and skills, being a teacher, presenter, corporatetrainer and a writer/publisher of several books in the field.

As the seminar progressed, the presenter established his credentials and revealed his close and authentic familiarity with all key spheres of the ESP, making for a truly educative and enlivening session. The topic too was of great practical relevance to the functional communication needs of the workplace.

The presentation was well structured and right in the beginning, the participants were given a clear idea of what was to be expected.

It tackled, head- on, the basic concept of ESP, and the potential challenges in the successful implementation in any given

training context. He termed this the critical success factors. He outlined the qualities expected of a successful ESP trainer. His focus was on the corporate training aspect of ESP, the most challenging scenario perhaps, and shared valuable insights. He also dwelt on the need for a proper '*needs analysis*' in ESP training, more than in any conventional teaching context.

The fine blend of pedagogic / linguistic principles with practical illustrations and anecdotes made it easy and interesting for the participants to keep pace with the proceedings. The delivery was marked by assurance, clarity and smoothness.

The illustrative ppt. slides had a very professional touch and contributed to the general impact of the presentation. They carried just enough info and the apt use font and images served to capture our attention. It was an object lesson for us when we attempt to prepare slides for our presentations.

The presenter also ensured periodic active involvement of the participants through survey questions and by calling for comments and questions, and handled them at the end, without hindering the smooth flow of the presentation.

Aslide that particular caught my attention

was about the role of 'small talk', including office gossip as an inevitable aspect of oral business communication. The discussion on the degree of formality/informality in even written communication and the need to have an open and flexible stance was an eye opener. The conventional approach of imposing 'native speaker' norms on learners in such diverse environments may not be feasible or desirable. Evan also made a clear distinction between 'language about business' and 'language for doing business'.

We were provided with an effective summing up of the salient features before Evan took up a few of the questions we had typed in, and answered them in a precise and assured manner.

As someone who had spent the past year or so at a couple of Oil and Gas Industry camps

for on-site training of staff in Technical English, I could easily identify with different aspects of the discussion that broadened my understanding.

Overall, it was a valuable learning experience. I would eagerly look forward to more such sessions. Those who failed to show up after registering for the webinar may not realize what they missed. I do hope when the next such session comes up, a good number of our SIG members would attend and derive the same benefit as attending a regular conference session, but in the comfort of their home, anywhere in the world. That will also be a well-deserved appreciation of the special efforts put in by the organizers.

Rajan Philips

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