



What is English Corner?

English Corner, an EAP initiative, was introduced some time ago to provide an authentic platform for EAP students to converse with 'English speakers'. This program is so successful that it now features as a formal part of the curriculum. Our dedicated English speaking volunteers include academic and general staff from all disciplines, a number of local students, and 'friends' from the community, who have all gained tremendous value from the cross-cultural exchanges. English Corner also provides the EAP students with opportunities to develop important social and academic networks within and beyond the university community.

Where and when?

English Corner sessions are held each week on **Wednesday afternoons 2.30 – 3.30pm** in the International Student Programs lounge (Union Building). Tea, coffee and biscuits are provided.

Background

The English and Academic Preparation program (EAP- School of BSSH) is an access and preparatory pathway program offered to non English speaking background international students as pre-entry to higher education degrees through articulation arrangements or for approved undergraduate or postgraduate study. The units studied in both the 20 and 10 week courses are based around developing the core skills of academic reading, writing, listening and speaking, and include many opportunities for students to critically examine the cultural variations in teaching and learning styles. Our EAP students are predominantly speakers of Chinese languages and come from our articulation partner institutions in China. We also receive students from other parts of the world who speak a variety of languages other than English, including, Spanish, Hindi, Farsi and Arabic.

The ability to speak fluently can be particularly problematic for students whose first language is based on an entirely different speech pattern. This is a real challenge for those students who come from cultures that do not recognize English as an official language or do not offer English language as part of the school curriculum or through the mainstream media. As a result, these students have limited exposure to English, and the few opportunities available to them are generally not 'authentic'.

For example, 'foreign' English teachers 'simulating' English discourse situations in the classroom. Whilst it is not uncommon for a student's first or other language to 'interfere' with language acquisition, the many 'varieties' of English also inhibit fluency and appear to be a great source of confusion and frustration for learners. 'Australian' English is a case in point because our brand of English is saturated with culturally exclusive (*depending on where you're from*) idiomatic phrases and colloquialisms, and 'we' are renowned for the way we drop sounds off the end of words, squeeze words together in a sentence to maintain our 'unique' rhythm, and use the 'schwa' sound – the most unstressed vowel sound in English, as in 'let's get tagetha' and "how's ya motha?" It is little wonder then that students, who have had little exposure to Australian English, have trouble understanding us. Such misunderstandings can lead to miscommunication, which can range from the humorous to the tragic.

Our EAP students really want to communicate competently. They want to 'sound' as natural as possible, as quickly as possible. One of the best ways to learn and master spoken English is through immersion into the English speaking community. In the classroom we simulate authentic speaking 'situations', such as class discussion, group work and oral presentations. Students also take pronunciation classes but these efforts fall short of immersing them in authentic social English conversations with competent speakers of English.

So, if you would like to be involved, you would be warmly welcomed!

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To register your interest or for further details please contact:

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