

Mapping English for Specific Purposes: Foundations, Theoretical Perspectives, and Pedagogical Applications

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the concept and pedagogical significance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) by analyzing its theoretical foundations, learner-centered orientation, and implications for contemporary English Language Teaching (ELT). The study presents an overview of the scope of ESP, highlighting its origin, major components, and expanding areas of application. It further discusses the emergence of ESP as a specialized approach to language teaching that evolved alongside the growing international role of English in scientific, technical, academic, and professional communication. The study employed a qualitative theoretical and review-based methodology, drawing upon established literature and major scholarly contributions in the field of ESP and ELT. The findings revealed that ESP is best understood as an approach rather than a product, emphasizing learner needs, contextualized language instruction, and active learner engagement through relevant pedagogical strategies. The paper also covers the basic approaches to ESP studies which comprise needs analysis (NA), register analysis (RA), discourse analysis (DA) and genre tradition (GT). This study contributes to the field of knowledge by synthesizing major theoretical perspectives on ESP and offering practical pedagogical insights for designing learner-centered and context-sensitive English language teaching practices.

Key Words: English for Academic Purposes, Register Analysis, Needs Analysis, Learner-Centered Approach

1. Introduction

Research into teaching and learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP) began in the United Kingdom in the 1960s and has since grown considerably. In the course of time, ESP has grown into one of the major branches of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, as reflected in the increasing demand for ESP courses in various specialized disciplines. The field has also seen the emergence of an increasing number of academic journals, the most influential of which are English for Specific Purposes, launched in 1980 (later renamed ESP Journal), and the more recent Journal of English for Academic Purposes. Many scholars have played pioneering roles in shaping the development of ESP, notably among others John Swales, Larry Selinker, John Lackstrom, Tom Hutchinson, Alan Waters, Tony Dudley-Evans, Louis Trimble, and Henry Widdowson (Raisanen & Fortanet-Gomez, 2008).

English for Specific Purposes has emerged as a vibrant and established area within language education over the past three decades with the steady increase in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. The teaching of languages for specific purposes has a long and varied tradition (Strevens, 1977), but recent research and curriculum development has increasingly focused on English because of its dominant role in international science, technology and global commerce. Over the years TESOL has continued to evolve and this has created a large demand for ESP throughout the world. ESP is English for science and technology, business English, vocational ESL and other areas.

Two major developments have taken place in English for Specific Purposes since the late 1980s. One of the most important branches of ESP, and in many cases the leading one, has been English for Business Purposes. Second, progress in discourse and genre analysis, along with research into computer-aided language analysis, has provided us with greater understanding of how specialized written and spoken texts are constructed and function in different contexts.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has established itself as a recognized and important branch of English Language Teaching. Emerging in the early 1960s, ESP has progressively evolved into a major domain of English as a foreign and a second language education. Its growing relevance is evidenced by increasing the number of universities globally offering specialized graduate programs in ESP. For example, Aston University and University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom. Similarly, many universities in English speaking countries now offer ESP-oriented courses to international students. For example, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) offers advanced writing courses designed for disciplines such as science, engineering, social sciences, and architecture. The expansion of ESP is further evidenced by the presence of specialised international journals, such as *English for Specific Purposes*, and the active engagement of ESP Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, who regularly support ESP scholarship through national and international conferences.

The expansion of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is evidenced by the presence of specialized international journals, such as *English for Specific Purposes*, and the active engagement of ESP Special Interest Groups within professional associations, including the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, which consistently advocate for ESP scholarship through national and international conferences.

2. Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this article is to discuss the concept and development of ESP by exploring its origin, definitions, scope and importance within the broader field of English language teaching. It aims to explain the major theoretical underpinnings and salient features of ESP, differentiate it from General English and analyse the major approaches used in ESP studies, namely needs analysis, register analysis, discourse analysis and genre tradition. Moreover, the article aims to demonstrate how ESP has evolved into a learner-centered and purpose-oriented approach that caters for the specific academic and professional communication needs of learners at different levels and contexts.

3. Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative, theoretical and review-based research design to examine the concept, development, and major approaches to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) studies. The materials for the study consisted primarily of secondary sources, including scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles and major theoretical works related to ESP, applied linguistics, and English language teaching. The study reviewed major works in the field, including those by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), Strevens (1988), Swales (1990), Anthony (1997), Johns and Dudley-Evans (1991), Robinson (1980, 1991), Gatehouse (2001), Mackay and Mountford (1978), West (1998) and Pandey (2013, 2016).

The method involved systematic review, descriptive analysis and interpretive synthesis of relevant literature to trace the historical development of ESP, examine its definitions, scope, and importance, and analyze major approaches used in ESP studies. The analysis of four major approaches to ESP was of particular interest: needs analysis, register analysis, discourse analysis and genre tradition. The following authors were used as a basis for this part of the analysis: (Berwick, 1989; Bhatia, n.d.; Hyland, 2003; Munby, 1978; Richterich & Chancerel, 1977). The collected information was critically examined, compared, and organized thematically to provide a comprehensive understanding of ESP as a learner-centered and purpose-oriented branch of English language teaching.

4. Results and Discussion

The study revealed that English ESP has evolved as a significant and well-established branch of English Language Teaching in response to the growing global demand for English in academic, scientific, technological, and professional communication. The review of literature demonstrated that ESP differs fundamentally from General English because it is learner-centered and designed around specific communicative needs. The findings further indicated that the historical development of ESP was influenced by post-World War II globalization, advances in linguistics, and changing perspectives in educational psychology. The analysis also showed that major approaches to ESP studies include needs analysis, register analysis, discourse analysis, and

genre tradition. The study highlighted that ESP has gradually moved beyond teaching isolated grammatical structures toward a communicative, task-based, and context-sensitive approach, making it highly relevant for addressing the specific academic and professional language needs of learners.

4.1. *The Origin of ESP*

After World War II there was a gradual shift in which English replaced German as the dominant international language of science, technology and business communication. By the 1960s English had become the world's leading language in academic and professional settings. The publication of two influential articles by Barber (1962) and Herbert (1965) is widely recognized as a major catalyst in the emergence of a new field of study, English for Specific Purposes (Pandey, 2013). By the late 1980s, ESP had emerged as a well-recognized discipline as clearly demonstrated in the seminal work of Hutchinson and Waters (1987). Today's Information Society is marked by an unprecedented expansion of research into specialized languages, mainly due to the widespread recognition of the fundamental role played by language in the advancement, modernization and dissemination of knowledge in contemporary society.

ESP was developed in the 1960s as a major reform in English teaching. It contrasts with General English teaching in terms of syllabus design and materials production. Munby (1978), for example, defines ESP courses as

those where the syllabus and materials are determined in all essentials by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learner, rather than by non-learner-centred criteria such as the teacher's or institution's predetermined preference for General English or for treating English as part of a general education. (p. 2)

Notably, there are three reasons common to the emergence of all ESP: the demands of a Brave New World, a revolution in linguistics, and the advancement in educational psychology which focused on learners' needs and their attitudes (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, pp. 6-7).

The overall impact of these developments was to place increasing pressure on the language teaching profession to meet emerging expectations. While English had earlier shaped its own course, it now came to be influenced by the expectations, requirements, and demands of groups beyond language teachers, as "English had previously decided its own destiny, it now became subject to the wishes, needs and demands of people other than language teachers" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 7).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) observe that the emergence of ESP was shaped by two major historical developments. The first was the period following the Second World War, which marked "an age of enormous and unprecedented expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale. For various reasons, most notably the economic power of the United States in the post-war world, the role [of international language] fell to English" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 6). The second significant development was the Oil Crisis of the early 1970s, which led to a substantial transfer of wealth and Western expertise to oil-producing nations. As a result, English rapidly gained prominence as a language of business, and increasing commercial demands began to shape its development and use.

The second important factor which played a vital role in the emergence of ESP was a revolution in the field of linguistics. Traditional linguists, like Ferdinand de Saussure, focused on describing the structural features of language and the rules that govern its use, particularly grammar, but newer linguistic studies and pioneering scholars started focusing on how language works in real communication. English for Particular Purposes Hutchinson and Waters (1987) point out that one of the important discoveries was the differences between spoken and written English. That is to say, the kind of English changes according to the context of use. This understanding has led to another realization that language teaching can also be adapted to meet the needs of learners in particular contexts, since language is different in different situations. Much work was thus devoted, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, to the description of English for Science and Technology (EST). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) mention Ewer and Latorre, John Swales, Larry Selinker Selinker and Louis Trimble Trimble as some of the leading pioneers in the descriptive study of EST.

The last reason offered by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) for the emergence of ESP has little to do with linguistics and everything to do with psychology. More emphasis was laid on the ways the learners acquire language and the differences in the ways of acquiring language than on the method of delivery of language. Learners were observed to engage in different learning strategies and skills, to come with different learning schemata and to be motivated by different needs and interests. Therefore, the needs of the learners were as central as the methods for spreading linguistic knowledge. It was a natural extension of this thinking to design specific courses to better meet these individual needs. The catchword in ESL circles to this day is learner-centred or learning-centred. Several scholars (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Pandey, 2024) have highlighted the significance of learner-centredness in ESP studies, emphasizing that it enhances learner engagement in English Language Teaching (ELT) and requires a comprehensive understanding of strategies that motivate and sustain active participation. In a learner-centred classroom, according to Pandey (2023), "Students are valued, and they are at the center of the whole learning process. Teachers should form close interpersonal relationships with the students, and the classroom process should foster independence and creativity in students." (p. 1204). Teachers are also satisfied in a learner-centred classroom. "The most satisfying thing they find in their professions is that they can help the adults learn. That is, they can contribute to the development of other individuals" (Pandey, 2020, p. 114).

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) describe ESP as one of the most dynamic and progressive fields in language teaching and research today. They are widely recognized for their practical and classroom-focused perspective on ESP, as well as for presenting their ideas in an accessible and engaging manner. Since its emergence in the 1960s, according to Dudley-Evans and

St John (1998), ESP has maintained a close relationship with Applied Linguistics and ELT. Reflecting their practice-oriented perspective, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) define ESP as a unique pedagogical approach that prioritizes the specific needs of learners while acknowledging their expertise in particular subject areas. Furthermore, English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) has increasingly developed as an important branch within the broader field of ESP.

The emphasis on practical outcomes has become the concern of ESP. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) succinctly claim:

It has been in the vanguard of the developments in ELT, moving from grammatical, functional and notional syllabuses to a more eclectic and task-based approach. EST was the dominant movement for many years, but ESP today is a much broader activity in which English for Business Purposes (EBP) has become increasingly important. (p. 32)

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is usually thought of as a highly pragmatic field, made up of methodologically oriented practices whose main aim is the attainment of practical outcomes. But teaching practice is not independent of assumptions about language, learners and the process of learning. In the course of time ESP has revealed a distinctive theoretical orientation in its continuous preoccupation with linguistic analysis, contextual appropriateness and the pedagogical simulation of the communicative practices of specific discourse communities. During the 1970s, a paradigm shift occurred towards communicative language teaching and ESP has built on and refined these principles through incorporating the theoretical perspectives considered most effective in improving pedagogical practice.

4.2. Definitions and Principal Components

As for a broader definition of ESP, Hutchinson and Waters theorize, "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p.19). Pandey (2019) states, "ESP takes into account certain basic questions like: Who the learners are, what their linguistic background or level of competence is, what their necessities, wants and lacks are, what particular skills or subskills they need to develop, etc" (P.4). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) succinctly state:

ESP must be seen as an approach not as a product. ESP is not a particular kind of language or methodology, nor does it consist of a particular type of teaching material. Understood properly, it is an approach to language learning, which is based learner-need. (p. 19)

English for specific purposes (ESP) is an international movement characterized by a concern with adult students' "wider roles" (Swales, 1988, p. viii) and by its grounding in pedagogy, for ESP "distrusts theories that do not quite work out in the litmus-paper realities of the classroom" (Swales, 1988, p. xvii).

ESP encompasses a range of academic English varieties, such as English for science and technology, English for graduate teaching assistants, and "general" English for academic purposes, along with several occupational varieties of English, including English for business and vocational ESL (also referred to as English for the workplace). Stevens (1988), who played a significant role throughout his career in defining and advancing the ESP movement, proposed a broader definition of ESP and argued that its distinguishing features can be understood in terms of four absolute characteristics and two variable characteristics, which he outlined as follows:

- 1) Absolute characteristics: ESP consists of English language teaching which is: designed to meet specified needs of the learner, related in content (i.e., in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities, centered on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, etc., and analysis of this discourse, in contrast with "General English".
- 2) Variable characteristics: ESP may be, but is not necessarily: restricted as to the language skills to be learned (e.g., reading only), not taught according to any pre-ordained methodology. (pp 1-2)

The major claims made for ESP emphasize that it is specifically designed around learners' needs, ensuring that no unnecessary time is wasted on irrelevant content. Because it directly addresses the learners' academic or professional purposes, it is highly relevant to their goals and interests. ESP is also considered effective in facilitating successful learning outcomes, as the instruction is targeted and purposeful. Furthermore, compared to "General English," it is regarded as more cost-effective since it focuses only on the language skills and knowledge that learners actually require (Stevens, 1988).

Anthony (1997) points out that the boundary between ESP courses and general English courses is often unclear. He argues that many non-specialist ESL teachers adopt an ESP-oriented approach because their syllabi are designed on the basis of learners' needs analysis and their own specialized understanding of using English for authentic communication. In a similar vein, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, pp. 4–5) support the perspective advanced by Hutchinson and Waters. They characterize ESP by proposing two sets of criteria: absolute characteristics and variable characteristics, which are outlined as follows.

- 1) Absolute Characteristics: ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner. ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves. ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis, and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.
- 2) Variable characteristics: ESP may be related to or designed for specific disciplines. ESP may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English. ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be for learners at secondary school level; ESP is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, pp. 4-5)

Most ESP courses assume some basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners. (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, pp. 4-5)

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) describe the concept of needs analysis in ESP as the investigation of a number of important dimensions relating to learners and their language needs. It starts with the identification of the professional information about learners, especially the tasks and activities for which they are now using or are expected to use English in the future, widely known as target situation analysis. It also involves understanding personal information such as learners' prior learning experiences, cultural background, reasons for attending the course, expectations, attitudes towards English and other factors that influence the learning process. In addition, needs analysis measures learners' current English language abilities by current situation analysis, which helps determine their existing language skills and language use.

Based on this information, teachers can identify learners' *lacks*, referring to the gap between their current competence and the level of English required in the target context, while also determining *learning needs*, or the most effective ways of developing the necessary language skills. Needs analysis further examines how language is used in professional communication through linguistic, discourse, and genre analysis. It also considers what learners expect to gain from the course and evaluates the teaching environment, including the resources and contextual conditions under which the course will be conducted, an aspect referred to as *means analysis* (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, pp. 125).

Dudley-Evans and St. John appear to be heavily influenced by Strevens (1988) but they have improved it considerably by removing the absolute characteristic that ESP is "in contrast with 'General English'" and revising and increasing the number of variable characteristics. The division of ESP into absolute and variable characteristics for instance is very useful in settling quarrels about what ESP is and what it is. The definition makes it clear that ESP is not necessarily focused on a particular discipline, nor does it have to be targeted at a particular age group or ability range. ESP should be viewed simply as a 'approach' to teaching, or as Dudley-Evans refers to it, a 'attitude of mind'. This is in line with the statement of Hutchinson and Waters (1987) that "ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning" (p. 19).

Carter (1983, p. 45) identifies three types of ESP: English as a restricted language, English for Academic and Occupational Purposes and English with specific topics (as cited in Gatehouse, 2001, p. 3). The language used by air traffic controllers or by waiters are examples of English as a restricted language. Mackay and Mountford (1978) clearly illustrate the difference between restricted language and language with this statement:

. . . the language of international air-traffic control could be regarded as 'special', in the sense that the repertoire required by the controller is strictly limited and can be accurately determined situationally, as might be the linguistic needs of a dining-room waiter or air-hostess. However, such restricted repertoires are not languages, just as a tourist phrase book is not grammar. Knowing a restricted 'language' would not allow the speaker to communicate effectively in novel situation, or in contexts outside the vocational environment. (pp. 4-5 as cited Gatehouse, 2001, p. 3)

The second type of ESP recognized by Carter (1983) is English for Academic and Occupational Purposes. In the "Tree of ELT" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 16), ESP is categorized into three major branches: a) English for Science and Technology (EST), b) English for Business and Economics (EBE), and c) English for Social Studies (ESS). These three branches are each further subdivided into two areas: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). For instance, within the EST branch, an example of EOP is 'English for Technicians', while an example of EAP is 'English for Medical Studies'.

The third and final type of ESP identified by Ronald Carter (1983) is *English with specific topics*. Carter explains that it is only in this category that the focus moves from purpose to topic. This type of ESP is particularly concerned with the anticipated future English needs of learners such as scientists who require English for postgraduate reading, participation in conferences, or work in foreign institutions.

A common characteristic of all ESP programs is that they are intended for adult learners who share a professional or occupational purpose for learning English, operate within a similar context for using English, possess prior knowledge of their specialized field, and have already developed effective learning strategies. These learner characteristics form the foundation of two central dimensions of ESP course design: an emphasis on the learner and the use of task-based activities that mirror authentic uses of English beyond the classroom. In ESP, courses are typically designed on the basis of a needs assessment, which determines what learners are required to accomplish in English (tasks), the situations in which they are expected to use it (texts), and their existing level of English proficiency.

English for Specific purposes is a distinct area of language teaching as it is oriented to a learner's purpose," a purpose that is "not restricted to linguistic competence alone but that does involve the mastery of language skills in which language forms an integral part" (Phillips, 1981, p. 92 as cited in Graham & Beardsley, 1986, p. 229). ESP equally addresses the needs of nonprofessional workers and of special groups such as students (English for academic purposes) while addressing the communicative needs of professionals such as physicians or engineers.

The following definition of an ESP course encompasses the elements widely considered essential to ESP, plus indicating some of the possible variations:

An ESP course is purposeful and is aimed at the successful performance of occupational or educational roles. It is based on a rigorous analysis of students' needs and should be "tailor-made." Any ESP course may differ from another in its selection of skills, topics, situations and functions and also language. It is likely to be of limited duration. Students are more often adults but not necessarily so, and may be at any level of competence in the language: beginner, post-beginner, intermediate, etc. Students may take part in their ESP course before embarking on their occupational or educational role, or they may combine their study of English with performance of their role, or they may already be competent in their occupation or discipline but may desire to perform their role in English as well as in their first language. (Robinson, 1980, pp. 13-14)

Content-area ESL/EFL and ESP share several of the same guiding principles: for example, the importance of context; the importance of attending primarily to meaning, not language form; and consideration for the needs of the learner (Mohan, 1986). They employ many of the same methods based on communication and meaning. However, in some ways the two types of instruction are quite different, the most important differences stemming from their respective objectives.

Content-area ESL aims to teach content and to improve overall English proficiency, in addition to teaching particular language skills required for understanding the content. Language learning is achieved primarily through careful presentation of understandable material (Krashen, 1995). ESP, on the other hand, has the narrower objective of preparing learners to function in very specific environments. Thus, ESP courses are designed principally with a view to promoting efficient and effective acquisition of particular language and communicative skills.

Thus, English for specific purposes (also known as English for special purposes) is an area of English language teaching which focuses on preparing learners 'for chosen communicative environments'. It differs from general English in that it is based on a close analysis of the learner's communicative needs for a specific occupation or activity, as well as a detailed analysis of the language of that occupation or activity (Stevens, 1980). Unlike in general English courses, in an ESP course, English is taught "for a clearly utilitarian purpose of which there is no doubt" (Mackay, as cited in Robinson, 1980, p. 6), and it is taught "not as an end in itself but as an essential means to a clearly definable goal" (Mackay, 1978, p. 28). In other words, the language in an ESP course is not the subject matter but is being learned as part of the process of acquiring some quite different body of knowledge or set of skills (Robinson, 1980).

To sum up, all the above definitions show that ESP belongs to English language teaching (ELT), and it may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English. But it is not a special kind of English language, for specialized aim or specific purpose and special language are two different notions. Mackay and Mountford (1978) mentioned:

The only practical way in which we can understand the notion of special language is as a restricted repertoire of words and expressions selected from the whole language because that restricted repertoire covers every requirement within a well-defined context, task or vocation. (as cited in Gatehouse, 2001, p. 4)

Whereas a specialized aim or a specific purpose refers to the purpose for which learners learn a language, not the nature of the language they learn. Besides, in practical teaching, it is hard to draw a clear line between where General English (GE) courses stop and ESP courses start, although we try to use such names as Business English or Medical English, etc. to distinguish between ESP and GE. And the common core of language is often used both in GE and in ESP. Hutchinson and Waters summed up the difference between the ESP and GE approaches as in theory nothing, in practice a great deal (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 53). Therefore, ESP is part of ELT in theory, and the purpose for which learners learn is different from that of general English, the former being more specific or specialized, whilst the latter more general.

4.3. Scope of ESP

The study of ESP now has become the international movement. There are a number of reasons for the character of ESP and its importance in EFL environments. As early as the 1970s, a conference on second language learning and national development in Asia, Africa, and Latin America summed up the need for English as follows:

The language problem in development stems from at least three communication needs which are increasingly being recognized both in developing countries themselves and in other countries aiding in their development: internal communication, transmission of science and technology, and international communication. (Mackay & Mountford, 1978 as cited in Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991, p. 301).

Countries such as India, Nigeria, Singapore, Fiji, and Kenya require English for internal communication, since this language is shared by educated citizens, and is the most neutral language available. Gueye (1990, as cited in Pandey, 2013) argues that in these contexts, ESP, through English for development purposes, should encourage students to understand their roles in the educational and social development of their own nations. Because of the internal English language needs, a number of countries have produced their own ESP textbooks that reflect the norms of local speech and discourse communities rather than any transnational standard. As economic communities form, the need for English often becomes central to their internal interaction as well. The explosion of scientific and technical English (EST) especially in professional publications and graduate schools has become another force in the internationalization of ESP. To cope with this explosion, conferences and seminars devoted to EST are becoming common.

Thirdly, the usefulness of ESP for international communication is emphasized by Mackay and Mountford (1978, as cited in John & Dudley-Evans, 1991)). The language of the airways is English; thus, ESP courses are designed for pilots and other air

personnel who must communicate without error with air traffic personnel. The language of the sea is also English; thus maritime workers throughout the world learn SEASPEAK, the International Maritime English (Pandey, 2013).

Moreover, international publications voice ESP (and language for specific purposes) concerns: for example, the ALSED-LSP Newsletter (from the Copenhagen School of Economics), published by UNESCO, a number of special issues and publications from the Regional English Language Centre in Singapore, FACHSPRACHE (Austria), ESPMENA (Sudan), similarly English for Specific Purposes (ESP): An international journal", published by Elsevier Science Ltd., Great Britain and several others (Johns & Dudley Evans, 1991).

4.4. Approaches to ESP Studies

The major approaches to ESP studies include needs analysis (NA), register analysis (RA), discourse analysis (DA), and genre tradition (GT). These approaches have shaped the development of ESP by focusing on learners' specific language needs, specialized language features, communicative functions, and the structure of texts used in particular academic and professional contexts, thereby establishing ESP as a learner-centered approach to language teaching.

4.4.1. Needs Analysis in ESP

The formal concept of NA in modern language teaching was first made by the Council of Europe Modern Language Projects group during the 1970s (Richterich, 1973/1980). The team was responsible for developing a new approach towards teaching the major European languages to European adults. The Council of Europe team felt that successful language learning resulted not from mastering linguistic elements, but from determining exactly what the learner needed to do with the target language. One of the terms, which the team came up with, was the "Common Core". The common core suggests that language learners share certain interests despite their different goals in learning foreign languages. Research and studies conducted by the Council of Europe team resulted in the emergence of the communicative approach to language learning which replaced the situational approach dominant in language teaching and learning at that time. In 1971, the Council recognized the importance of dividing the task of learning into smaller units, each of which could be credited separately, and also the necessity of basing curricula on learner needs rather than on language structures. One of the major outcomes of this policy was the "threshold level", specification (Van Ek, 1975).

Needs analysis plays an integral role in the process of designing and carrying out any language course, whether it be English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or general English course, and its centrality has been acknowledged by several scholars and authors (Berwick, 1989; Brindley, 1989; Chambers, 1980; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Johns, 1990; Munby, 1978; Pandey, 2016, 2019; Richterich & Chancerel, 1977).

4.4.2. Register Analysis (RA)

English for Specific Purposes (ESP), also referred to as English for Special Purposes, emerged as a branch of applied linguistics during the 1960s. Early attempts to define and explain the concept can be traced back to Stevens (1977), who sought to capture the meaning and scope of the term. Later, Robinson (1980) provided a comprehensive review of the theoretical perspectives and interpretations of ESP prevalent at that time. Building on this foundation, Coffey (1985) revisited and updated Stevens' work, recognizing ESP as an important component of communicative language teaching more broadly.

Approaches to linguistic analysis for ESP has witnessed many shifts in content, aim and method of language teaching since its emergence in the 1960s. Robinson (1991) succinctly points that changing approaches to linguistic analysis for ESP involve not only change in method but also changing ideas of what is to be included in language and its description. One of the earliest studies carried out in this area focused on vocabulary and grammar (the elements of sentence). "This stage took place mainly in the 1960s and early 1970s and was associated with the work of Peter Stevens (Halliday, McIntosh, and Stevens, 1964), Jack Ewer (Ewer and Latorre, 1969 and John Swales (1971)" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 8). It was 'register analysis' which served as a major means to design ESP courses. The first significant ESP- EST textbook *The Structure of Technical English* was first published by Herbert in 1965. The work is designed for students who have studied some English but needed training in 'special structures and linguistic conventions of the English used in technical and scientific writing so that they may be able to follow current literature in English in their particular subject (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). A *course in basic scientific English* compiled by Ewer and Latorre (1969) is a typical example of an ESP syllabus based on register analysis. The main motive behind register analysis was the pedagogic one of making the ESP course more relevant to learners' needs. Ewer and Hughes-Davies (1971) compared the language of texts their science students had to read and the language of some widely used school textbooks. They concluded that the school textbooks ignored some of the language forms commonly found in Science texts, for instance, compound nouns, passives, modal verbs. Therefore, they highlighted the importance of ESP course which give precedence to these forms.

Register analysis, also called "lexicostatistics" by Swales (as cited in Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998, p. 1) and "frequency analysis" by Robinson (1991, p. 23) focused on the grammar and "structural and nonstructural" vocabulary (Ewer and Latorre, 1967, p. 223, as cited in West, 1998). The assumption behind register analysis was that, while the grammar of scientific and technical writing does not differ from that of general English, certain grammatical and lexical forms are used much more frequently (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

Researchers study the language used in a particular situation under the rubric of 'register.' The term 'register' "is one of the number of terms used by British and American lexicographers to denote a particular kind of limitation on the use of a word or phrase" (Cowie, 2006, p. 475). According to Biber (2006):

Register is a cover term for any language variety defined by its situational characteristics, including the speaker's purpose, the relationship between speaker and hearer, and the production circumstances . . . Registers differ in their situational characteristics. They are planned to different extents, interactive to different extents, and addressed to different kinds of audiences. They also have different topics, and they are written with different goals or purposes. (pp. 476-477)

4.4.3. Discourse Analysis and Communicative Genres in English

Discourse analysis in ESP involves examining written or spoken language, mainly with the aim of developing curricular materials. Over the course of its development, ESP scholars have focused on identifying and evaluating the significance of features found in authentic, or 'genuine' (Widdowson, 1981, p. 4), language used in contexts where learners are expected to apply English. In many regions of the world, this type of analysis emphasizes word or item frequency counts, commonly referred to as 'lexicostatistics' (Swales, 1988, p. 189). Over time, these counting methods have become more advanced and refined (Gunawardena, 1989). Among the most promising contemporary approaches to item counts are analyses based on tense/aspect/mood functions, 'communicative notions,' and concordancing.

The early pioneers of discourse analysis (also known as rhetorical or textual analysis) included Trimble, Selinker, Lackstrom, Huckin, and Tarone (Selinker, Tarone, & Hanzeli, 1981). Their work shifted attention away from the sentence level toward the text as a whole, and from linguistic form toward the writer's communicative purpose (Robinson, 1991). One of the most notable publications produced by this group focused on the passive voice. In practical application, as West (1998) explains, this approach largely emphasized understanding how sentences function in carrying out acts of communication and developing teaching materials based on communicative functions.

Since register analysis operated almost entirely at word and sentence level, this phase of development shifted attention to the level above the sentence and tried to find out how sentences were combined into discourse (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). West (1998) further argues that the reaction against register analysis in the early 1970s shifted attention toward the communicative functions of discourse rather than focusing primarily on the lexical and grammatical features of register.

4.4.4. Genre Tradition

In the tradition of ESP, genre is commonly understood as "structured communicative events engaged in by specific discourse communities whose members share broad communicative purposes" (Swales, 1990, pp. 45-47). One of the most influential frameworks for genre analysis in ESP was developed by John Swales (1990, 2004). Swales's initial model focuses on the analysis of 'moves', which refer to the "defined and bounded communicative act that is designed to achieve one main communicative objective" (Swales, 2004). Later, this framework was expanded through socially oriented theories of language, leading to a wide range of studies describing the "regularities of purposes, forms, and situated social actions" (Hyland, 2003, p. 27). Discourse analysis may overlap with genre analysis. Dudley-Evans and St. John give a clear distinction between the two terms:

Any study of language or, more specifically, text at a level above that of sentence is a discourse study. This may involve the study of cohesive links between sentences, of paragraphs, or the structure of the whole text. The results of this type of analysis make statements about how texts -any text-work. This is applied discourse analysis. Where, however, the focus of text analysis is on the regularities of structures that distinguish one type of text from another, this is genre analysis and the results focus on the differences between text types, or genres. (1998, p. 87)

The term 'genre' was first used by Swales (1981, as cited in Robinson, 1991). His definition of genre is: "a more or less standardized communicative event with a goal or set of goals mutually understood by the participants in that event and occurring within a functional rather than a personal or social setting" (Swales, 1981, pp. 10-11, as cited in Robinson, 1991). Bhatia who is one of the researchers in the field of genre analysis has his definition of 'genre analysis' as the study of linguistic behavior in institutionalized academic or professional setting (Bhatia, undated).

5. Conclusions

The present study examined the historical emergence, theoretical foundations, defining characteristics, scope, and major approaches of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that have shaped its development within the broader field of English language teaching. Using a qualitative and review-based research design, the study systematically analyzed major theoretical contributions and scholarly literature in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of ESP as a specialized area of language education. The analysis showed that ESP has gradually evolved in response to changing global academic and professional communication demands and has established itself as a learner-centered approach that emphasizes purposeful language learning based on specific communicative needs. The study further highlighted the central role of approaches such as needs analysis, register analysis, discourse analysis, and genre-based perspectives in defining both the theory and practice of ESP. The importance of this study lies in its contribution to strengthening theoretical understanding of ESP by bringing together diverse perspectives that explain its evolution and pedagogical orientation while also contributing to ongoing research in applied linguistics and specialized language education. Nevertheless, since the study relied exclusively on theoretical and secondary sources, it lacks empirical validation from actual classroom contexts and therefore cannot fully capture contextual variations in ESP implementation.

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